

AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP WITHIN LOCAL GOVERNMENT: AN EMPIRICAL
EVALUATION

by

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Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree of
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Abstract

This research study established the current issue of low authentic leadership in business as a known issue that has contributed to lower confidence in leadership throughout various organizations. The study aimed to investigate the relationship between authentic leadership and confidence in leadership in a medium to large size department of a local government located in the Commonwealth of Virginia. To achieve this aim, the researcher adopted a descriptive and diagnostic analytical approach. The sample of the study consisted of 207 participants, consisting of positions consistent with regular positions within local government. The researcher used two survey instruments to achieve the aim of the study. The first instrument was the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire, which consisted of 16 questions, and the second instrument was the Leadership Efficacy Questionnaire, which consisted of 22 items. The literature review, theoretical framework, and research methods established a foundation for answering the research questions "To what extent, if any, is there a relationship between authentic leadership and confidence in overall organizational leadership within local government?" and "To what extent, if any, is there a difference in the relationship between authentic leadership assessment scores and lower confidence in leadership between direct supervisors and indirect supervisors within local government?" Further analysis of the findings of the research could be expanded to better understand authentic leadership theory and the impact on the public sector, particularly local government.

Key words: authentic leadership, local government, confidence, trust

Dedication

I dedicate my dissertation work to my wife, Jennifer, and two daughters, Madeline and Eleanor. Their undying support and encouragement bolstered my spirits in times of doubt and strengthened my resolve, without them I would not have been able to complete this long journey.

I also dedicate this dissertation to mother, Sylvia, and my father, Dilmer, who instilled in me the value of hard work. These values have long provided me the foundations for all of my success in life, of which I am forever grateful.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

The foundation of the study provides the groundwork for the first phase of the dissertation process. The research study focused on authentic leadership and the relationship with confidence in leadership throughout an organization. Existing literature is very expansive and has been evolving as ongoing research is conducted and scholars obtain a better understanding of leadership in general and the attributes that facilitate leadership abilities and great organizations. One aspect of leadership that continues to be of interest is the impact of such theories to organizations, employees within an organization, and society as a whole. This researcher sought to build on the existing robust research and literature related to leadership and evaluate the relationship between authentic leadership and confidence in leadership through the use of an empirical study.

Background of the Problem

Leadership within both the public and private sectors continues to be of high interest to both researchers and practitioners alike as a means to improve organization performance (Seijts & MacMillan, 2018). Starbird and Cavanagh (2011) suggested that to be successful in any business endeavor, one must have the right tool for the job. It is prevailing knowledge that leadership plays a vital role in ensuring public and private sector organizations are successful; without proper leadership, organizations have limited direction. Kettl (2018) conveyed that there continues to be a steady decline in trust and confidence in government leadership and that there is no indication of notable improvement.

Seijts and MacMillan (2018) theorized that the recent financial crisis of 2008 and multiple high-profile business corruption cases have shifted leadership theory to focus less on organizational theory and primarily on the character aspects of leaders. Kettl (2018) disagreed

and suggested that trust and confidence in organizations are impacted or lowered from the perceived confidence or trust in other associated organizations and sectors, concluding that some levels of distrust may be inherent due to the historical relationship between the groups. Kettl (2018) further theorized that the best way to improve confidence and trust is to engage directly with individuals. Hollis et al. (2018) agreed that engagement is essential and recommend building engagement in organizations by being authentic and communicating effectively across the organization.

Ribeiro et al. (2018) suggested that authentic leadership is an emerging leadership style that improves organizational performance and has the potential to create an environment of openness and trustfulness centered on the leader's desire to be true to their moral character and concern for others. The research conducted builds on and strengthen existing research on the character aspect of leadership theory by examining the impact that authentic leaders have on the perceived confidence of different levels of organizational leaders and their ability to successful navigation the challenging conditions faced by organizations today. In addition, the research provides insight into the degree of impact that authentic leadership and the subsequent confidence in leadership have in regard to the varying levels of leadership within an organization.

Problem Statement

The general problem to be addressed is the low level of authentic leadership in business, which has resulted in lower confidence in organizational leadership throughout organizations. Liu et al. (2018) conveyed that there continues to be a significant amount of organizational misconduct, which one can attribute to low levels of authentic leadership in both the public and private sectors. O'Leary (2018) reviewed the Edelman Trust Barometer and found that the trust

in government leaders in the United States continues to decline and was at an all-time low in 2017. This finding reflects a crisis point and need for leadership improvements, such as authentic leadership, to build back the lost trust (O'Leary, 2018). The research conducted by Leroy et al. (2015) agreed with the finding that that authentic leadership within organizations is low; they surveyed 25 leaders across 35 Belgian Service companies and found that the mean authentic leadership score was a 3.32 out of a five-point scale. Blanchard et al. (2016) conveyed that effective leaders within organizations must maintain constant vigilance to ensure that the welfare of employees is looked after by the leader; this includes both new and seasoned employees. Asencio and Mujkic (2016) suggested that overall confidence and trust in leadership in the public sector has declined in recent years, more so related to federal government leadership. The specific problem to be addressed by this study is the low level of authentic leadership within local government, resulting in lower confidence in organizational leadership across multiple layers of the organization.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative, case study was to explore the relationship between authentic leadership and the confidence that followers have for the same leadership within a medium to large department of approximately 302 full-time employees within the chosen local government, Chesterfield County, located in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The significance of the relationship between self- perceived leadership characteristics and follower-perceived leadership characteristics were examined in detail and may generate an increased understanding of authentic leadership in the context of local government. The study used validated and reliable measures to assess the variables under investigation. The independent variable, authentic leadership, is categorized into four separate attributes, as defined by Northouse (2016): self-

awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. This researcher determined the value of the independent variable through the use of a validated Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) that was provided by the researcher to organizational leaders and followers within the chosen department of Chesterfield County. This researcher categorized the dependent variable into two aspects: self-perceived and follower perceived. The dependent variable, confidence in leadership, will be defined as the perceived overall confidence an employee has in their organization, their department leadership, direct supervisors, and indirect supervisors. This researcher determined the leadership confidence level through the use of the Leadership Efficacy Questionnaire (LEQ). The LEQ was utilized to quantify leadership confidence. Further reflection on the findings of this research could help organizations identify key leadership attributes and characteristics, which could be potentially utilized to strengthen local government leadership development and decrease the likelihood of low confidence in organizational leadership.

Nature of the Study

This researcher utilized a quantitative approach for the research study. In conjunction with the quantitative approach, the researcher used a correlational design to establish if there was a significant relationship between the two variables of authentic leadership and confidence in leadership. Both the method and design of the research were determined to be the most appropriated based on the research questions.

Discussion of Method

The research approach for this study was a quantitative research method. This researcher chose the quantitative research method because the quantitative method typically aligns with research that has such items as linear attributes, measurement, and statistical analysis (Stake,

2010). According to Creswell (2014), qualitative methods align more with text and image analysis. As a result, a qualitative method was discarded by this researcher as a potential research method for the study. The mixed-method research design contains both quantitative and qualitative aspects (Creswell, 2014); this researcher did not choose this method due to limited alignment with qualitative research attributes. Creswell and Creswell (2018) agreed with the use of the quantitative method for the research and explain that the quantitative approaches utilize close-ended questions or numeric data, which generally aligns well with exploring the relationship between two variables. The chosen method supports the primary goal of the method, which is to discover the quantity and characteristics in the sample population so that the researcher can infer the same relationship to the parent population (Brannen, 2017).

Discussion of Design

There are three approved research designs for quantitative research at Liberty University: descriptive, correlational, and casual comparative/quasi-experimental. This researcher chose not to use the causal-comparative design for the research, due to the design being a form of ex post facto research involving two or more groups (Gall et al., 2007). The research utilized one group and two variables. This researcher eliminated the descriptive design as an option for the study due to non-alignment with the research questions. Leavy (2017) conveyed that the descriptive design is appropriate to provide robust descriptions of research, thereby proving meaning and context but not relationships between variables. Yin (2018) conveyed that three conditions exist to determine a research design: the form of the research question, the control that the researcher has over behavior events, and the degree of focus on contemporary or historical events. The design that most appropriately aligned with the conditions expressed by Yin (2018) was a nonexperimental correlational design. The chosen design approach is the most appropriate design

due to it being nonexperimental and allows for the association between two variables with the same study group (Gliner et al., 2016).

Identification of Survey Tools

The research utilized a quantitative research method in conjunction with a nonexperimental correlational design. This researcher utilized a survey approach that allowed the researcher to generalize information from the sample population to that of the general population (Creswell, 2014). In addition to the ability to infer information about the population, the chosen tool was both cost-effective and flexible. For this research, there were two cross-sectional surveys utilized, the ALQ and the LEQ; the sample design was a single-stage design. The chosen department within Chesterfield County employs approximately 302 full-time employees, across four divisions, and 16 different centers. For the ALQ, this researcher provided all leadership positions the survey and requested that the leaders evaluate themselves and that the followers also evaluate the leaders. All employees within the department were provided the LEQ, leaders were asked to evaluate themselves and followers were asked to evaluate their leaders. Access to the results were provided directly to the researcher for use upon completion of the survey and were retained by the researcher on the researcher's computer. The ALQ utilized the template presented by Walumbwa et al. (2008). The preferred method of distribution was a paper survey distributed to the individuals in a group setting; this allowed the research background to be discussed in depth so that all parties are informed. Upon completion of the surveys, the researcher used statistical software to evaluate the independent variable, authentic leadership, to the dependent variable, leadership confidence, to determine statistical significance.

Research Questions

The findings of the research will expand the field of knowledge related to authentic leadership and the impact such leadership may have related to confidence in leadership. The research will gather data from Authentic Leadership Questionnaires, created by Walumbwa et al. (2008), to explore and validate all research assumptions regarding authentic leadership. The questionnaires were distributed to gain data related to the self and follower perceived authentic leadership characteristics of leaders within the chosen local government department and quantify follower confidence in organizational leadership. The data were used to determine if a relationship exists between authentic leadership and confidence in leadership throughout multiple layers of local government, including direct supervision and indirect supervision. A statistical evaluation was performed to provide insight into the relationship mentioned above to answer the following research questions.

Research Question 1

To what extent, if any, is there a relationship between authentic leadership and confidence in overall organizational leadership within local government?

Research Question 2

To what extent, if any, is there a difference in the relationship between authentic leadership assessment scores and lower confidence in leadership between direct supervisors and indirect supervisors within local government?

Hypotheses

H10: There is no statistically significant relationship between low authentic leadership assessment scores and lower confidence in overall organizational leadership.

H1_a: There is a statistically significant relationship between low authentic leadership assessment scores and lower confidence in overall organizational leadership.

H2₀: There is no statistically significant difference in the relationship between authentic leadership assessment scores and lower confidence in leadership between direct supervisors and indirect supervisors within local government.

H2_a: There is a statistically significant difference in the relationship between authentic leadership assessment scores and lower confidence in leadership between direct supervisors and indirect supervisors within local government.

Theoretical Framework

There has been a multitude of classification systems developed over the last half of the century to attempt to classify and categorize the dimensions of leadership (Fleishman et al., 1991). Fleishman et al. (1991) were able to categorize 65 different classifications concerning leadership dimensions, demonstrating how extensive existing literature on leadership theory is. In recent literature, authors suggest that the power dynamic of leadership has shifted from being centralized with the leader to being more centralized with the follower (Kellerman, 2012). The change in the power dynamic suggests that researchers studying the impact on followers need a higher level of emphasis on perceived attributes of effective leadership (Kellerman, 2012). Northouse (2016) rationalized that the central phenomenon of leadership consists of four main concepts: leadership is a process; leadership involves influence; leadership occurs in a group; leadership involves common goals. The research study examined this central phenomenon of leadership, as defined by Northouse (2016), through the context of authentic leadership and the impact such leadership has in the public sector to follower perceived confidence and trust in leadership.

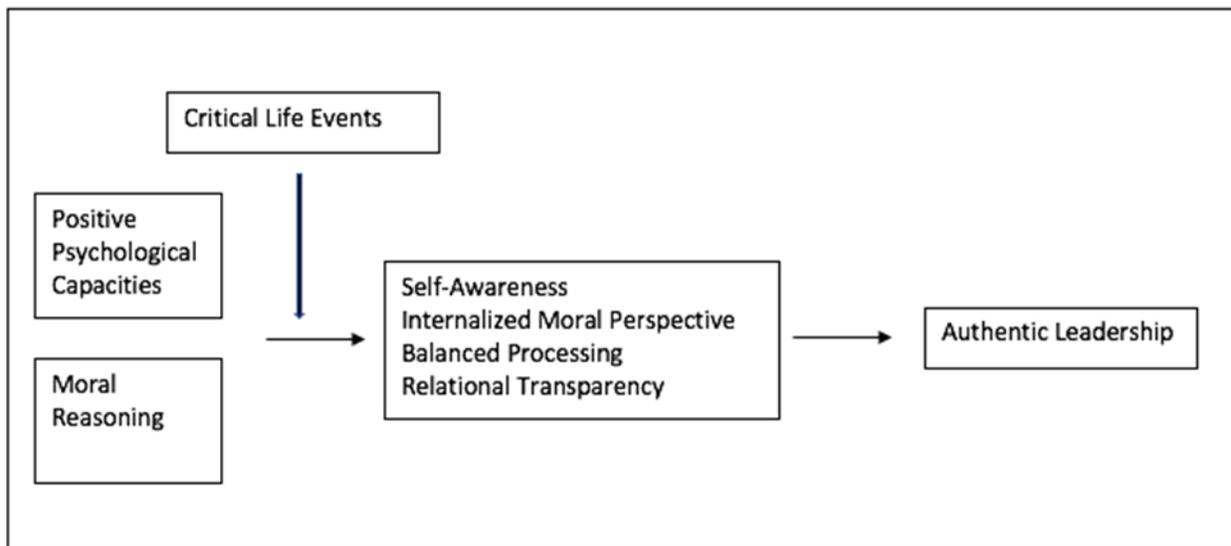
Discussion of Authentic Leadership Theory

Authentic leadership theory, much like central leadership theory in general, does not have a clear definition and can be categorized into three different perspectives: intrapersonal, interpersonal, and developmental (Northouse, 2016). The research utilizes the developmental perspective, specifically authentic leadership theory, as defined by Walumbwa et al. (2008), which suggests that authentic leadership can be nurtured and developed in a leader rather than being inherent to specific individuals. The intrapersonal perspective of authentic leadership suggests that a leader's personal experiences and convictions contribute the most to their ability to be authentic leaders (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). The last perspective, interpersonal, suggests that leaders form authentic leadership from the relationship created between the leader and the follower, further suggesting that the process of authentic leadership development requires a reciprocating component between the follower and the leader (Eagly, 2005). Each of these perspectives differs on the way that authentic leadership is created in an individual, and all have valid contributions to authentic leadership theory. Northouse (2016) suggested that fundamentally, these perspectives all use four primary factors to establish the characteristics of authentic leadership: self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. Walumbwa et al. (2008) developed a 16-item questionnaire focused on these four primary factors to establish a balanced approach to evaluating authentic leadership. The developmental perspective was chosen to further the understanding of how authentic leadership development impacts overall confidence or trust in leadership and the existence of a relationship between the two chosen variables, authentic leadership, and confidence in leadership. The research findings could strengthen the understanding of the developmental perspective of authentic leadership as an effective means for the public sector to increase

leadership capabilities and overall confidence in leadership through the use of additional resources.

Figure 1

Relationship between Attributes of Authentic Leadership



Adapted from leadership: Theory and practice (p. 202), by Northouse, 2016, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Discussion of Leadership Confidence

Researchers can interpret leadership confidence as both the confidence the leader has in their abilities and the confidence that a follower has in the leader's abilities. Söderhjelm et al. (2018) suggested that as confidence in leadership weakens, there can be an increase in overall employee dissatisfaction. Yasir et al. (2016) examined the confidence and subsequent trust in leaders by looking at multiple leadership styles (transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire) and the subsequent impact on trust and confidence. Yasir et al. (2016) concluded that organizations are more effective at change management based on which type of leadership style is displayed, and the confidence or trust that followers had in the leadership also changed

depending on the leadership style. Researchers can directly attribute overall organizational effectiveness to trust and confidence in leadership (Chughtai et al., 2015).

Discussion of Authentic Leadership and Leadership Confidence

There exist four positive psychological attributes that have an impact on authentic leadership: confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience (Lee et al., 2019). Kouzes and Posner (2017) suggested that individuals follow someone when they are honest, competent, inspiring, and forward-looking. These attributes mirror the psychological attributes that impact authentic leadership, suggesting that there may be potential for a significant relationship between the variables of authentic leadership and leadership confidence. In addition, the self-awareness attribute of authentic leadership suggests that individuals that are highly self-aware and confident will be more likely to be attuned to their abilities and the perceptions of their followers.

Summary of the Theoretical Framework

General leadership theory is hugely expansive and continuously evolving, the research study utilized the developmental perspective of authentic leadership theory to characterize the leadership attributes of leaders within the chosen organization and explore the relationship between authentic leadership and confidence in leadership. This author rationalizes that the three perspectives of authentic leadership are similar concerning the core components and differ concerning how individuals become authentic leaders within organizations. This study does not seek to examine the difference in the creation of authentic leaders but seeks to expand on the existing knowledge of the core components of authentic leadership and establish a relationship between the follower's perceived attributes of the leader's abilities. This author theorizes that there may exist a positive relationship that is similar to that of transformational leadership and trust.

Definition of Terms

Authentic leadership: Scholars define authentic leadership as a new field of leadership research that emphasizes genuine or real leadership (Northouse, 2016).

Trust: Trust can be defined as the belief among a group of individuals or an individual that another individual will behave in a manner that aligns with their previous commitments, both explicit and implicit; is honest in their interactions; does not take advantage of others, even if opportunities present themselves (Kramer & Tyler, 1996).

Assumptions, Limitations, Delimitations

The research study has several assumptions, limitations, delimitations that need to be addressed to ensure the research was conducted in a proper manner. Three assumptions were identified: participants are truthful, there is a sincere interest by the participants in the research, and that the participants represent a typical government. Five limitations were identified: response rate, population size, degree of generalizability, potential for sample bias, and time constraints. The delimitations of the research were determined primarily due to the chosen design of the research and subsequently prevented the researcher from establishing causation between the variable, which was not desired for this study due to the complex nature and multiple factors contributing to confidence in leadership.

Assumptions

This researcher assumed that participants of the research study responded truthfully to the surveys presented. This researcher sought to minimize the risk that participants may not answer truthfully, for fear of retribution, by keeping their identities confidential through the use of unique identifiers. Lelkes et al. (2012) conveyed that the most used technique for minimizing the potential for dishonesty is the use of confidentiality while completing surveys. The researcher

disclosed this practice to the participants before providing the surveys. In addition, this researcher assumed that participants had a sincere interest in participating in research and did not have any ulterior motives for participating in the research study. Raihani and Bshary (2015) examined the motivations of individuals to help others and found that individuals inherently help one another in a cooperative environment. The third assumption for the research study was that the chosen department is representative of the typical positions found in local government. Ponto (2015) conveyed that in order for research to be able to draw conclusions about the populations then the sample must include characteristics about the population. A review of the positions within the chosen department indicates that there were the following positions in the department: accountants, engineers, inspectors, administrative support staff, equipment operators, field personnel, customer support personnel, information system personnel, and record specialists; these positions reflect similar positions in local government. The final assumption for the research study was that the response pattern was normally distributed to allow for a more robust statistical evaluation of the results. Sullivan and Artino (2013) conveyed that parametric test can be used for Likert scale response; however normally distributed responses provide a more robust evaluation.

Limitations

The participants of the research study were individuals within a medium to large department with a local government. The population of the department was approximately 302 with the desired response rate of 170 individuals; this response rate will provide a confidence level of 95 percent and a margin of error of 5 percent. The desired response rate of the chosen department was slightly higher than the typical response rate at 67 percent. If adequate responses were not received, then the sample population would have not been considered representative of

the desired population and the statistical results would not have been able to be generalized to the larger population; however, this was not the case for the study.

In addition to potential sample size limitations, there was a potential for a limitation in the degree of generalizability. The research study sought to study a medium to large department with a local government within the Commonwealth of Virginia. Inherent work cultures for the Commonwealth of Virginia may have differed from those in other regions of the United States or worldwide. Resources for the research study were limited, expanding the scope of the study to increase the potential for generalizability was not practical due to access to additional participants from different geographical regions and inherent time constraints. The researcher selected the chosen department due to the availability of access to participants. As a result of the ease of access, there was a potential for sample bias due to the researcher working for the organization over multiple years. Individuals that have worked with the researcher closely may have been more or less likely to respond depending on past relationships and this relationship may have impacted the response rate for those individuals. Previous assumptions related to maintaining confidentiality through unique identifiers may have improved the likelihood of more respondents and reduced the potential for sample bias. It is important to note that the researcher is in a leadership position within the chosen local government. To prevent bias of results, the researcher utilized an additional individual to record the responses from individuals that the researcher has a direct leadership relationship. This extra step, in conjunction with the unique identifiers, ensured that any bias was limited and not impactful to the findings of the research.

As mentioned above, the research was restricted by time and ability of the researcher to provide the surveys, review the data, and report on findings. Expanding the sample populations further across multiple departments, the entire local government, or multiple local governments

would have created a time constraint that would have been unrealistic and impractical to accomplish within the limited timeframe provided. Future studies may desire to expand on the initial research to include multiple departments within a local government, an entire local government, or multiple local governments.

Delimitations

This researcher limited the research to one medium to large department with the chosen local government within the Commonwealth of Virginia to evaluate the relationship between authentic leadership and confidence in leadership across multiple layers within the same department. The chosen population for the study was approximately 302 local government employees, with an expected sample size of 170 participants.

The researcher determined that a correlational study evaluating authentic leadership and confidence or trust in leadership would provide value to the field of research and organizations by showing the significance of the relationship between the variable authentic leadership and confidence or trust. The research study did not seek to determine causation between the variables, as many factors contribute to each variable that is beyond the scope of this study to examine in detail.

The researcher utilized the ALQ and LEQ as survey instruments for the study. The ALQ is a 16-question questionnaire designed around the four dimensions of authentic leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2008). The LEQ is a 22-question questionnaire adapted for self-efficacy (Bobbio & Manganelli, 2009). This researcher used the LEQ as a metric for followers to evaluate the efficacy of the leader from the follower perception instead of the traditional leader perceived pathway. There exist limited validated surveys for authentic leadership; this researcher was limited to ALQ. There are many questionnaires available for trust or leadership confidence, both

in a team and individual settings (Bobbio & Manganelli, 2009). The researcher chose the LEQ questionnaire due to the simple nature of the survey, length, and ease of adaptation to the research.

Significance of the Study

The research seeks to fill existing gaps in research related to authentic leadership by contributing to empirical and practitioner classifications of research. The research also seeks to provide a viewpoint into public sector, primarily the local government, which appears to be not well represented in existing research. The research further seeks to strengthen the available public sector research related to authentic leadership. The research builds on the existing leadership's research and authentic leadership research by examining how leaders perceive their own authentic leadership, how followers perceive the authentic leadership, and the subsequent impact to confidence in leadership from both.

Reduction in Gaps in the Existing Literature

The types of publications on authentic leadership can be divided or classified into three main categories: theoretical, empirical, and practitioner; most publications being theoretical in nature (Gardner et al., 2011). The study seeks to strengthen existing research by expanding on the available research that is empirical and practitioner in nature. In the review of existing literature, there exists a significant amount of research related to the private sector that focuses on the rapidly changing business environment and ways to improve an organization's ability to sustain market challenges through leadership (Arda et al., 2016). Existing research and studies of the public sector are primarily focused on the healthcare sector of the public sector (Coxen et al., 2016). Coxen et al. (2016) concluded that authentic leadership had an indirect impact on organizational citizenship behavior through the context of trust. The research study seeks to

focus on the less evaluated division of the public sector, local government and expand on the knowledge related to the impact that authentic leadership has on local government operations through the context of authentic leadership the relationship between followers and leaders.

Implications for Biblical Integration

There exist numerous examples of authentic leadership throughout the Bible, with the most prominent example being Jesus Christ, who has had the most significant impact on the Christian faith. The ALQ offers a unique opportunity to demonstrate through the four attributes of authentic leadership: self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency, within the questionnaire mentioned above, examples found in the biblical scripture of Jesus Christ being an authentic leader. The first question provided by the ALQ, which reflects self-awareness, asks a leader to list their three most significant weaknesses and demonstrates self-awareness. Jesus Christ was tested on his self-awareness and his weakness when the Spirit led him into the wilderness for forty days and nights (*New International Version*, 2011, Matthew 4:1-11). Through this test, Jesus demonstrates his ability to acknowledge his weakness and overcome them. The second question of the ALQ, which reflects an internalized moral perspective, asks the leader to evaluate if their action reflects their core values. Jesus Christ's actions truly do reflect his core values; this is demonstrated through his display of humility and servanthood when he washed the feet of his disciples (*New International Version*, 2011, John 13:1-17). The third question of the ALQ, which reflects balanced processing, asks if the leader seeks the opinions of others before making a decision. Scholars can see this attribute in Luke 2:46 (*New International Version*, 2011); Jesus Christ spent three days in the temple, sitting among many teachers, both listening to them and asking them questions to gather a better understanding. The fourth question of the ALQ, which reflects relational transparency, asks the

leader if they openly share their feelings with others. It is a well-known fact by scholars that Jesus Christ shared his opinions frequently and openly with others. An example of this can be seen by researchers when Jesus Christ prevents the stoning of women that he did not directly agree with, Jesus proclaimed “Let anyone of you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her” (*New International Version*, 2011, John 8:6-8). These examples are only a few of the many times that authentic leadership display by Jesus Christ in scripture; many more exist at every recount of his life experiences.

Relationship to Field of Study

The research examines the impact that authentic leadership plays in local government with regards to the overall confidence employees have with leaders that exhibit authentic leadership traits. Gardiner (2017) conveyed that authentic leadership first emerged as a leadership theory to overcome the notion that there were ethical concerns with the current leadership and subsequently morphed into a theory that seeks to improve organizational efficiencies. Authentic leadership theory investigates leadership characteristics across four primary factors: balanced processing, internalized moral perspective, relational-transparency, and self-awareness (Gardiner, 2017). Sidani and Rowe (2018) suggested that one of the prime drivers of authentic leadership is the perception of moral judgement, indicating that authentic leadership is the follower’s perception of the moral judgment of the leader. This research examines the moral judgment through the lens of the leader’s internalized moral perspective on a finite level. Hsieh and Wang (2015) rationalized that the trust or confidence of an employee is gained by a leader when that leader demonstrates authentic leadership that is congruent with employee expectations. The research allows this author to examine the leader-follower relationship of authentic leadership on two levels, how leaders perceive their own authentic

leadership, how followers perceive the authentic leadership and the subsequent impact to confidence in leadership from both. Effective leadership remains a topic of research that is driven by the desire to improve both organizational and individual performance (Hadian-Nasab & Afshari, 2019). The research concepts will strengthen the existing research on authentic leadership to facilitate a better understanding of effective leadership and improving the interaction between leaders and followers. Hadian-Nasab and Afshari (2019) conveyed that there is a growing demand for research to further enhance the understanding of ethically sound leadership approaches to today's work environments.

Summary of the Significance of the Study

The research study sought to strengthen the understanding of the impact of authentic leadership, fill two existing gaps in research and literature: empirical studies and government sector research, and build on the robust and authentic leadership standard established in biblical scripture through the life experiences of Jesus Christ. The research is heavily grounded in current leadership theory and seeks to examine local government leaders across four primary factors: balanced processing, internalized moral perspective, relational-transparency, and self-awareness to be better understand the relationship between authentic leadership and confidence or trust in leadership. The findings of this research will be of high importance to leadership researchers, public sector leaders, public sector followers, individuals seeking to step into a leadership role within the public sector, public sector human resource managers, and public sector talent development personnel.

A Review of the Professional and Academic Literature

Scholars have increasingly recognized leadership as a critical function of organizational and institutional management, which facilitates the maximization of efficiency and promotes the

achievement of the organizational goals and objectives (Li et al., 2016). Accordingly, an effective leader is expected to initiate action, motivate and guide followers, create confidence, build morale, coordinate, and create a positive and progressive work environment for the employees. The following literature review will provide the reader a background on the key historical progression of leadership research, ranging from the Great Man theory on leadership to the recent transformation leadership theory to convey a broad understanding of the different leadership theories. The four core characteristics of authentic leadership are defined by this author, along with the three different perspectives and also the positive psychological attributes. Business and public sector aspects are examined to provide perspective on how leaders apply authentic leadership to those environments. The concepts of leadership and confidence/trust are examined to provide an understanding of the unique relationship and impact when confidence in leadership or trust is lost. The concept of trust is examined by this author to establish the benefits of trust, how trust can be established on an organizational level and at an individual level, and how organizations need a higher level of trust in the ever-evolving business environment.

History of Leadership Theory Prior to Authentic Leadership Theory

There exist a multitude of literature on leadership, in the past few decades the research has developed to incorporate how leadership impacts an organization's ability to sustain profits, increase productivity, and establish or maintain a competitive advantage (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). As a result, there have been significant classifications and theories generated to explain the concept of leadership, often with the newest theory expanding on the previous concepts (Khan et al., 2016). Some of the theories that have emerged over recent history include the Great Man theory, Trait theory, Style and Behavioral theory, Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-Faire leadership theory (Khan et al., 2016). The historical review of leadership concepts

will touch on some of these theories and is not intended to be all-inclusive; an extensive review would be too robust and beyond the scope of this literature review.

Great Man Theory. The Great Man theory was established in 1840 by Thomas Carlyle when he provided six public lectures on the topic of heroes and history (Spector, 2016). The traditional Great Man theory suggests that great men or leaders are born; however, current Great Man theory suggests that great men can be made (Mouton, 2019). Examples can be found in today's corporate world and can be seen through the ever-increasing upward trend of CEO pay, even though there have been abundant examples of misconduct or misdeeds by those same CEOs (Spector, 2016). The same corporations often seek a great leader to pull a failing organization from the pit of failure, suggesting that current organizations still believe that great leaders can shape history (Spector, 2016). Mouton (2019) further contended that the Great Man theory is still very much present in today's political environment and that the phenomenon is easily demonstrated through the continual existence of dictatorships and the idealization of influential political figures.

Frisk (2019) researched heroism as an aspect of the Great Man theory through four perspectives: the traditional study of great men, hero stories, heroic actions, and heroic institutions. Frisk (2019) provided a potential negative viewpoint of Great Man theory, dark heroism, and suggests that highly charismatic such as those found in Nazi Germany, can have a very damaging impact on society. Allison and Goethals (2016) rationalized that individuals within society have always been drawn to the concept of the *Great Man* or the stories of heroes and that these tales can be found in the earliest literature and include aspects of mythology. The concept of the *Great Man* or hero through literature promotes two essential human development functions, the epistemic function and the energizing function (Allison & Goethals, 2016). The

epistemic function refers to the ability to impart knowledge through the telling of stories about *Great Men*, and the energizing function inspires individuals to emulate the *Great Men*, be it for better or for worst (Allison & Goethals, 2016).

Trait Theory. Research in the early 1900's lead scholars to begin to seek to understand what differentiates leaders from everyone else and further sought to explain why specific individuals were more effective as leaders (Derue et al., 2011). Zaccaro (2007) conveyed that leadership traits were initially understood to be innate or heritable qualities of the individual; however, this thinking process shifted to establishing traits of leadership that could be obtained to become an effective leader. Scholars can see the trait approach as a moderate advancement from the Great Man theory, with the primary difference being a shift from a focus on impactful leaders to the leadership traits of those same leaders (Clark & Harrison, 2018). Stogdill (1948) conducted extensive research on trait leadership and concluded that there were eight primary traits found in leaders: intelligence, alertness, insight, responsibility, initiative, persistence, self-confidence, and sociability. Current scholars still debate on which traits are essential for leaders for trait leadership theory, for example, the United States Marines have 14: justice, judgment, dependability, initiative, decisiveness, tact, integrity, endurance, bearing, unselfishness, courage, knowledge, loyalty, and enthusiasm (Custis, 2017). Tropman and Blackburn (2018) disagreed with the concept that there needs to be an extensive list of traits and argues that there are genuinely only four traits needed for exemplary executive leadership: integrity, empathy, genuineness, and humility.

Behavioral Theory. Behavioral theory challenged the concept that leaders are born and have inherent abilities to lead and replaced the previous concept with actions that leaders take and how they react (Clark & Harrison, 2018). Three of the most influential contributions of this

period of leadership theory are the three leadership styles by Lewin et al., Four Factor theory by Bowers and Seashore, and Theory X and Theory Y by McGregor (Clark & Harrison, 2018). In addition to these significant contributions, scholars in Michigan and Ohio State performed essential studies that established that employee orientation and consideration were two fundamental dimensions of leadership behavior related to behavioral leadership theory (Kunannatt, 2016). Another way of considering the two dimensions identified is the research conducted by Ohio State, which conveys the dimensions as consideration and initiation structure or also known as task and relationship orientations (Gartzia & Baniandrés, 2016). Scholars can define the relationship orientation as the level of concern that a leader shows toward their team (Gartzia & Baniandrés, 2016). Scholars can define the task orientation as the degree to which the leader is centered on achieving goals or specific metrics (Gartzia & Baniandrés, 2016). Research in behavior leadership theory has produced extensive literature on characteristics of effective leaders, including such items as the seven attributes or habits of effective leaders and the five emotional intelligence attributes (Allen, 2018). It is important to note that research in behavior leadership does not propose that there is a single characteristic of leadership that is effective in every possible scenario (Allen, 2018).

Contingency and Situational Theory. Contingency theory emerged in the 1960s based on the idea that leadership styles were dependent on situations and attempts to analyze a leader's effectiveness related to unique situations (Tal & Gordon, 2016). In 1967, Fiedler formulated the contingency theory on leadership to provide context on the leader task and relationship orientation, evaluating these attributes against the overall effectiveness of the leader (Allen, 2018). In 1969, Hersey and Blanchard emerged with the concept of situational leadership that attempted to address the overall needs of workers and the ability of leaders to meet those same

needs (Allen, 2018). Clark and Harrison (2018) suggested that contingency theory is linked to situational theory and that the major contributors to this era were Katz and Kahn's organizational structures, Vroom and Yetton's Normative Decision Model, Stogdill's Role Attainment theory, Homans' Leader Role theory, House's Path-Goal theory, Fiedler's Contingency theory, and Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership theory. Kunnanatt (2016) agreed with the above concepts and suggests that the various contingency or situational theories are based on the concept that a leader's effectiveness is highly dependent on the situation that the leader is placed in; as a result, the impact of those same leaders can vary dramatically. Wright (2017) proclaimed that situational leadership theory is the most common leadership theory used currently in the business environment, primarily because it identifies a right or wrong leadership style. The effectiveness of the leader to judge the appropriate response to different needs and abilities of the team members is a significant component of the theory and suggests that leaders need to continually readjust their approach based on the needs of the follower (Wright, 2017).

Leader-Member Exchange Theory. The leader-member exchange theory emerged in the 1970s and attempted to explain the leadership-follower relationship based on the dynamics of the interactions between the same individuals (Tal & Gordon, 2016). The leader-member exchange theory furthered the understanding of leadership by exploring the relationship between a leader and the follower and rejected the situational approach that suggested leadership styles should be adapted (Clark & Harrison, 2018). Nie and Lämsä (2015) agreed with the importance of understanding the leader-follower relationship and convey that leader-member exchange theory establishes that a high-quality relationship between leaders and followers enables both individuals to meet work demands and gives them further opportunity to develop socially and morally, which contributes to the overall success of the organization.

Sheer (2015) agreed with the importance of the leader-follower relations but contends that there are limited resources available to the leader and that the leader develops an in and out-group of followers. The ingroup of followers receives much attention and high-quality support. The outgroup receives less attention and less support from the leader (Sheer, 2015). As a direct result, the ingroup employees tend to have a higher level of performance than the outgroup employees (Sheer, 2015). Zhao et al. (2019) agreed and rationalized that increased support and encouragement enhances the follower's perception of their value and thereby creates an environment that motivates them to identify the organization's values as their own. Zhao et al. (2019) further suggested that the identification with the organization shapes the social identity and is the primary factor that shapes cooperative attitudes and behaviors.

Transactional Leadership Theory. Transactional leadership is not known for innovation or creativity; however, this type of leadership has played a critical role into today's organizations because it provides the basic understanding of expectations, contract negotiating, clarification of responsibilities, and providing incentives to reward and recognize employees so that they achieve organization objectives (Hussain et al., 2017). The central theme of transactional leadership is the exchange between the leader and the follower; this type of behavior provides an environment that strives for excellence and efficiency (Hussain et al., 2017). Jensen et al. (2019) agreed and conveyed that transaction leadership is focused primarily on leaders rewarding employees for demonstrating high levels of effort and penalizing them for low levels of effort or low performance. Leaders and organizations accomplish the goal of recognition by creating incentive structures to promote employee engagement in accomplishing the ultimate goals of the organization (Jensen et al., 2019). Research conducted by Xenikou (2017) supported this conclusion and found that contingent reward mechanisms were positively

related to affective identification, also known as providing meaningful and positive feelings about the social group or organizational group. Xenikou (2017) theorized that when there is clear identification of tasks and roles, a reward system is in place, and followers receive adequate rewards for their accomplishments, then emotional bonding between the employee and organization takes place.

Transformational Leadership Theory. Transformational leadership developed in the 1980s as a means to explain the impact of charisma and the ability of charismatic leaders to transform themselves, their organizations, and their followers (Tal & Gordon, 2016). Transformational leadership is the opposite of the previous transactional leadership approach, which established that employees had minimum ambition in their work duties that they would avoid responsibilities when possible, and that employees received rewards when they complied with performance expectations and organizational goals (Kwan, 2019). Transformational leaders, unlike transactional leaders, believe their followers have a genuine desire to perform and garner accomplishments and attempts to lead them to embrace and internalize the mission, vision, and goals of the organization, thereby transforming them to be motivated and to take on more responsibilities (Kwan, 2019). Jensen et al. (2019) agreed and argued that transformational leadership encourages followers to transcend their own needs or self-interest for the sake of the organization's goals and interests.

Ma and Jiang (2018) pointed out that researchers must consider some negative aspects of transformational leadership. The charisma and natural narcissistic characteristics of individuals who typically identify as transformation leaders create the potential for the leader to be overly confident and optimistic in their abilities or the ability to control others (Ma & Jiang, 2018). These mentioned characteristics potentially have a negative outcome associated with employee

creativity and their sense of security (Ma & Jiang, 2018). Xenikou (2017) suggested that transformation and transactional leadership are complementary forms of leadership and that when they are considered together, they augment the potential weakness of one another; therefore, these leadership styles are subsequently more likely to contribute to overall organizational effectiveness than if transformational or transactional leadership was considered alone.

Laissez-Faire Leadership. Laissez-Faire leadership can be considered the absence of leadership and typically describes leaders that avoid issues or decisions or overall choose not to accept responsibility for their actions or team (Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016). Pahi and Hamid (2016) generally agreed and conveyed that literature paints a picture of laissez-faire leadership being depicted as the non-leadership or as a destructive leadership style. Wong and Giessner (2018) disagreed and contended that the Laissez-Faire leadership style and approach of empowerment are one in the same, dependent on the perspective of the follower. The typical concept of laissez-faire leadership is that it is a passive leadership style that relies on followers to make decisions; this concept is very similar to empowerment, where the leader actively gives the decision-making process to the follower (Wong & Giessner, 2018). Yang (2015) argued that the passive approach of laissez-faire leadership leads to positive outcomes like autonomous motivation, generic empowerment, and self-leadership. Yang (2015) further contended that the situation or environment that the leader and follower are exposed to plays a significant factor in determining if a laissez-faire leadership style will be useful. Pahi and Hamid (2016) agreed with this concept and reflect that the laissez-faire leadership style can be useful when employees are highly skilled, highly experienced, well educated, have pride in their work, and when the employee is driven to succeed.

Overview of Authentic Leadership Theory

Scholars and researchers have increasingly recognized leadership as a critical function of organizational and institutional management, which facilitates the maximization of efficiency and promotes the achievement of the organizational goals and objectives (Schein & Schein, 2018). Authentic leadership has recently emerged in the last two decades from the initial work by Kernis in 2003 that focused on authentic functioning; this work conveys that authentic leadership is an open and non-defensive means of interacting with others and with oneself or an aspect of internal reflection (Gill et al., 2018). Gill et al. (2018) proposed that authentic leadership is not only an effective leadership style but also is needed for ensuring alignment between intended, actual, and perceived human resources practices through the leader's intrapersonal qualities and the inherent trust established between these leaders and followers. Covelli and Mason (2017) rationalized that authentic leadership is a multi-dimensional leadership theory that has influences from a multitude of other theories, including but not limited to transformational leadership, servant leadership, ethical leadership, and situational leadership. The unique difference in authentic leadership from other leadership theories is that leader strives to be authentic in all actions above all else and that there is no defined traits, style, or skills needed to accomplish this overall goal (Covelli & Mason, 2017). Covelli and Mason (2017) argued that this unique concept allows the leader to adapt to specific situations based on past experiences more effectively. The increased frequency of public and corporate scandals has raised the interest in positive leadership that promotes ethical, moral behavior in addition to the traditional expectations to initiate action, motivate and guide followers, create confidence, build morale, coordinate, and create a positive and progressive work environment for the employees (Hoch et al., 2018).

Almost 2,500 years ago, the Greek philosopher Socrates stressed the significance of self-awareness, building on this concept current researchers of authentic leadership would agree with the importance of self-awareness (Podrez, 2017). Current practitioners and researchers have further established self-awareness, authenticity, and self-regulation as crucial elements of leadership (Wei et al., 2018). The philosophical declaration of self-awareness as the value of self-worth was eventually built upon by Chester Barnard when he analyzed the functions of organizational executives (Williamson, 1995). Under this investigation, Bernard underscored the importance of authenticity as the backbone of corporate and institutional management (Williamson, 1995), which can be further interpreted by individuals and scholars as leadership authenticity being an essential parameter for measuring the quality of a competent executive. Among the popular models for authentic leadership from the organizational context is the Bill George's model, which popularizes the need for authentic leadership in popular culture and management research through the reflection on his successes over three decades as an international entrepreneur (Qureshi & Hassan, 2019). George and Sims (2007) established the essential qualities of authentic leaders as purpose, strong values, relationships, self-discipline, and heart. These traits align with the concepts of self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. George and Sims further suggest that the key to authentic leadership is establishing a vision of the person that the leader is or a *True North* (George & Sims, 2007). This vision of *True North* reinforces the importance of self-awareness as a critical component of authentic leadership.

The value of the internal moral perspective has gained increased awareness in recent decades and has led to the general understanding that the internal perspective, or self, plays a critical role in the moral judgment of an individual (Jennings et al., 2015). Morality can be

considered a central characteristic of a person and is understood by scholars as not only simple moral reasoning but the true center or heart of an individual (Jennings et al., 2015). Garrigan et al. (2018) disagreed and argued that moral judgments are not inherent to the character but a result of learned life experiences over time, suggesting that individuals can gain an internal moral perspective as they progress through life. Jennings et al. (2015) suggested that learned experiences are not enough by rationalizing that the moral perspective of self is intensely centered on a person's self-identity and the actions taken related to the particular way an individual think and regularly behaves. A moral perspective is a powerful component to action; an individual may choose to disobey laws or social norms based on the misalignment of their moral perspective with the action under consideration (Garrigan et al., 2018). Individuals that can use an internal moral perspective effectively can guide their behaviors so that those same behaviors are consistent and resistant to external pressures that may seek to influence them (Onyalla, 2018). This concept suggests that those same individuals adhere to virtue ethics, as defined by Aristotle (Onyalla, 2018).

Individuals can see balanced processing as the ability of leaders to show that they have objectivity when analyzing information or data and that the leader considers all pieces of information before reaching a final decision (Larsson & Eid, 2012). Guenter et al. (2017) built on this concept and expressed that balanced processing demonstrates that an individual is open to both positive and negative information while also limiting the impact of self-defense mechanism that is triggered by other with opposing viewpoints. Evaluating both positive and negative information and receiving feedback from followers allows the organization or team to develop an accurate and reflective sense of their position with the team and leader to establish a better relationship over time (Guenter et al., 2017). Shapira-Lishchinsky (2014) agreed with these

findings and found through research that principals often demonstrated authentic leadership and caring through ethical decision making that was based primarily on considering different perspectives, thereby demonstrating that they genuinely cared about the best way to lead in the educational sector.

Relational transparency is one of the most accepted cornerstones of authentic leadership theory and has been consistently present throughout the conceptualization of authentic leadership as a leadership theory (Kempster et al., 2019). Literature suggests that relational transparency requires individuals to share information openly but also through a filter, often regulating emotions to reduce the likelihood of inappropriate emotions (Datta, 2015). Kempster et al. (2019) further suggested that there is potential for conflict to exist when a leader attempts to promote relational transparency and conveys that a paradox exists for leaders in that they are asked to be authentic and transparent, but also asked to restrict pure emotion to promote the follower and organizational expectation of sound leadership. The ability of a leader to effectively utilize relational transparency impacts the perceived trustworthiness of the leader through the viewpoint of the follower, which has shown to improve the job performance and job satisfaction of the employee (Gilbert et al., 2015). Gatling et al. (2017) built on the importance of relational transparency to job performance and conveyed that poor relational transparency can dramatically impact a followers' ethical behaviors. The lack of relational transparency often can result in followers distrusting the leader and hiding mistakes and errors to the detriment of the organization and leader (Gatling et al., 2017).

Criticism of Authentic Leadership Theory

All leadership theories have some level of criticism from scholars. Ford and Harding (2011) rationalized that authentic leadership is also not entirely without criticism and conveyed

that authentic leadership has the potential to damage followers. Followers of authentic leaders that have low self-identification or self-clarity may strive to emulate the leader's characteristics and, in doing so, become unauthentic themselves (Ford & Harding, 2011). Hanold (2017) agreed that authentic leadership theory has its flaws and conveys that the power relationship between the leaders and the follower remains a relatively underdeveloped concept and suggests that the current concept of authentic leaders requires the leader to continually work on being authentic with little attention on collaboration and competing interests. Hanold (2017) further suggested that a critical attribute missing from authentic leadership is *witness* thinking and explained that *witness* thinking is allowing others to connect to the *self* of the leader to enable them to influence the inner dialogue of the leader. Berkovich (2014) agreed with the concept that authentic leadership theory lacks an essential communication component and suggested that communication between the individual is the sole path to self-authentication. Berkovich (2017) further suggested that in order for a leader to be effective and develop that the four attributes of genuine dialogue must be incorporated, which are presently absent from traditional authentic leadership theory: *candor*, *inclusion*, *confirmation*, and *presentness*. The discussion of communication and relational transparency introduces another concept of criticism, too many authentic conversations (Alvesson & Einola, 2019). Alvesson and Einola (2019) rationalized that the positive perception of the authentic relationship is flawed and that unfiltered social interactions may cause workplace damage as conflict emerge and escalate, which calls into question the validity of relational transparency.

Ladkin et al. (2018) provided additional criticisms of authentic leadership theory by rationalizing that current dominant positive images of authentic leadership presented by research and literature can cause leaders to suppress their true-self and only display those characteristics

widely accepted. The action of leaders to suppress their true self can then lead to a paradoxical inauthentic behavior, which is not the true intent of authentic leadership theory (Ladkin et al., 2018). Ladkin et al. (2018) further contended that in order for authentic leadership to be effective, individuals need to look past the traditional authentic leadership template and accept that leaders also have real non-positive characteristics that must be accepted. Crawford et al. (2020) suggested that there are three additional flaws with authentic leadership theory beyond those provided above concerning the leader component of authentic leadership: ambiguity between an authentic individual and an authentic leader, construct clarity, and leader centrality. Crawford et al. (2020) explained that recent authentic leadership research and literature have not differentiated between authentic followership and leadership and remain very leader centric. Crawford et al. (2020) further explained that researchers in the literature do not clearly establish different characteristics between an authentic leader and an authentic person and, as a result, also creates some construct confusion with respect to the existing literature.

Business Concepts of Authentic Leadership

Low authentic leadership within organizations can manifest in leaders as lack of purpose and can contribute to a lack of self-awareness regarding where the leader stands, their direction, and their purpose (Qu et al., 2019). Qu et al. (2019) further conveyed that leaders in business that are authentic, act in a manner that is reflective of their words and values, thereby creating a resistance to external pressures that could comprise those values into today's business environment. In the above definition of authentic leadership, self-awareness plays a critical component. It emphasizes the need for individuals to understand themselves related to weaknesses and strengths, as well as the impact that they have on others. Self-awareness is a career-long process rather than an end in and of itself, mainly because authentic leadership has

the ability to influence followers' work engagement, which in turn can have a positive or negative effect on job performance over the years (Wei et al., 2018). One can further conclude that a leader that lacks authenticity is not aware of their identity, motives, emotions, and passion. According to Sandhu and Dastgeer (2019), a leader's purpose is demonstrated by them through passion; non-authentic business leaders lack interest in what they do, they lack the intrinsic motivation and enthusiasm from which authentic leaders derive their energy and internal will to execute their leadership duties.

An internalized moral perspective, the second aspect of authentic leadership, can also be viewed through the lens of business. Over the last few decades, organizations have come to recognize the prominent role that values have with accomplishing their goals and have used them as a means of promoting consistent behavior within the organization and stakeholder engagement (Bjørge & Whittaker, 2015). The lack of values can manifest within organizations, both by the employees and their leaders. In particular, when a leader's behaviors fail to show their commitment to morality, there is a potential for illegal business transactions and a disregard for an employee's rights (Schein & Schein, 2018). Social learning theory suggests that employees within an organization learn appropriate behavior from the behavior and norms observed through a credible source, or a leader within an organization (Cheng et al., 2019). One can reasonably conclude that the absence of values demonstrated by leaders in an organization can lead to observed negative behavior, these behaviors include an employee's willingness to steal from the company and customers, taking shortcuts in their execution of tasks, and engaging in other practices that contradict the company policy and rules. Internal moral perspective is interpreted as the self-regulatory process in which leaders use their inner moral values and standards to guide their behaviors as opposed to succumbing to external pressure that may control their

actions and judgment, the absence of an internalized moral perspective undermines the authenticity of leadership in an organization (Wei et al., 2018). Qureshi and Hassan (2019) emphasized the significance of the self-regulatory element of authentic leadership by arguing that individuals can control the magnitude to which they accept the influence of others on their practices. The resilience of some individuals to the influence of a leader does not diminish the overall impact of a leader with a reduced internal moral perspective and their tendency to act in ways that are inconsistent with the morals and beliefs that they express, which may adversely impact the organization's values.

Authentic leadership within an organization is also determined based on the level of balanced processing demonstrated by leaders throughout the same organization or institution (Iszatt-White & Kempster, 2019). Therefore, the low levels of authentic leadership that are evident in modern leadership may involve leaders that are biased and openly give preferential treatment to different employees on various personal or group issues (Qu et al., 2019). Such leaders practice imbalanced processing by failing to solicit viewpoints from all of their followers, mainly those they believe would provide contradicting opinions to what they propose. As a result, the unauthentic, autocratic, or transactional leaders tend to expect followers to agree with, accept, and comply with the leader's opinions or direction in exchange for such items as gratitude, monetary reward, organizational resources, and even, in some cases, to avoid punishment (Masa'deh et al., 2016). Qureshi and Hassan (2019) noted that the importance of the idea that authenticity should be reinforced by openness on a personal perspective level without losing sight of the objectives of the business and organizations when accommodating others' views. Authentic leaders strive to keep an open mind to all possible solutions and actions in order to be fair-minded and lead others to make similar open-minded decisions to promote the

best possible outcome (Duberman, 2015). Scholars can view authenticity in modern businesses through the relationship between constructive professionalism, personal relationships, and between the connectedness between leaders and their followers. This concept is supported by Blekkingh (2015), who suggested that some leaders in modern organizations elevate and isolate themselves from their followers to demonstrate that they occupy a superior position with a higher degree of power than their followers. Scholars have associated such behaviors with incompetent and insecure leaders, who are desperate to instill fear and coerce loyalty to retain their authority in the organization (Schein & Schein, 2018). These non-authentic leaders are unwilling to share ideas and experiences with their peers and followers, as well as fail to establish connections with employees.

Relational transparency involves presenting oneself to followers and colleagues openly and honestly, which appears inconsistent with the self-regulation that is demonstrated by leaders when they control their openness with others (Stajkovic et al., 2015). Through the self-regulation processes, resources are evaluated, distributed, and adjusted as needed based on the activity and demands (Stajkovic et al., 2015). Iszatt-White-White and Kempster (2019) conveyed that relational transparency occurs when leaders make deliberate moves to share their sincere feelings, part of which is their inclinations and emotions with others appropriately. Accordingly, both the negative and positive aspects of self should be expressed by individuals through open communication that is characterized by the ability and courage to be genuine and real when interacting with the followers and peers (Iszatt-White & Kempster, 2019). The leader reveals low authenticity through their secrecy about impending business changes or the thoughts and motivations behind such changes. Authentic leaders often talk to their followers about their work, personal and professional hardships and successes, and their perspective of professional

growth and development (Wei et al., 2018). At the same time, authentic leaders listen to their followers empathically and keenly when they talk about their lives. Because of the relational transparency with employees, authentic leaders earn genuine respect from their followers and enable the followers to connect with the leader's values, beliefs, goals, and activities over time and become more committed to their development and the organization (Mehmood et al., 2016).

Similar to self-regulation, as described above, self-discipline is another prominent characteristic that authentic leaders and organizations must consider. Sandhu and Dastgeer (2019) defined self-discipline as the ability to identify and focus on a particular goal and moving forward to actualize the strategies that facilitate its attainment, setbacks, and resistance. However, non-authentic leaders lack consistency in their planning, delegation, organization, and coordination of business functions and duties and often are known for their reactive and rash decisions to different situations, leading to unpredictability and inconsistencies in their leadership practice (Qu et al., 2019). The leadership of such firms lack focus and are unable to adjust to changing market and organizational factors (Wei et al., 2018). The implementation of new processes in such organizations also becomes confusing and stressful for the employees whose roles and responsibilities are less clear. According to Blekkingh (2015), employees are often vulnerable to stressful and depressing conditions during their interactions with their leaders and colleagues at the workplace, as well as when dealing with other life issues outside the company. One could conclude that leaders with low levels of authenticity lack compassion for followers in terms of their personal and professional lives.

Perspectives of Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership can be analyzed by scholars from multiple viewpoints, including intrapersonal, interpersonal, and developmental perspectives (Northouse, 2016). From the

observations made by Wei et al. (2018), the intrapersonal point of view evaluates authentic leadership based on what occurs within the leader, including such items as self-regulation, self-conceptualization, and self-knowledge. Shamir and Eilam (2005) contended that the intrapersonal perspective of authentic leadership rests heavily on the meanings that the specific leader interprets from their life experiences. Shamir and Eilam (2005) further contended that leaders derive three focuses from the leader's life experiences: self-knowledge, self-concept clarity, and person-role merger. The life experiences not only provide clarity and pathway for leaders to be authentic; they also provide followers a means of gathering knowledge about the leader to reflect on their authenticity (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). Blekkingh (2015) agreed and noted that the intrapersonal perspective of leadership underscores the life experiences of the leader, as well as the meanings that they attach to their experiences, and that these components of intrapersonal perspective are considered vital to the development of authenticity in leadership.

Dasborough et al. (2019) explained that the interpersonal perspective of authentic leadership originates from the contacts, conversations, and discussions between a leader and a follower, creating a very dependent relationship between the leader and follower related to the effectiveness of leadership approach. Epitropaki et al. (2017) agreed and confirmed that there is a growing body of leadership literature that has been focusing on the leader and follower relationship, ranging from identity dynamics to process and development dynamics. Research also suggests that identity threat is a topic of concern from the interpersonal level of authentic leadership and has shown that these threats can cause a decreased level of performance, decrease desire for leadership, change management sabotage, and non-conformance (Epitropaki et al., 2017). Six typical identity threat responses can be seen by researchers when evaluating the interpersonal perspective: concealment, derogation, importance change, meaning change,

identity deletion, and positive distinctiveness (Epitropaki et al., 2017). Authentic leadership is deeply rooted in the concept that the leader's deep sense of knowing who they are and what they stand for anchors them (Epitropaki et al., 2017), knowing the typical types of identity threat response assist an individual with being authentic in their leadership.

Qureshi and Hassan (2019) asserted that the developmental perspective is the most popular amongst current scholars and researchers and reflects characteristics that organizations can nurture in individuals as opposed to those same characteristics being a fixed attribute within a leader. Wei et al. (2018) agreed with the developmental approach and conceptualized authentic leadership as a quality that is developed from and grounded within a leaders' positive psychological attributes and their strong ethics. After a comprehensive analysis of the previous research findings and review of elite interview responses from organizational managers, Qu et al. (2019) concluded that authentic leadership is a leadership behavior pattern that promotes and draws upon positive ethical climate and psychological capacities. Yadav and Dixit (2017) agreed with the concept that authentic leadership is developed over a lifetime and concluded that individuals have the potential to become authentic leaders through the learned experiences of their lives and those individuals that have favorable characteristics such as self-discipline, trustworthiness, optimism, resilience, and strong moral character. Yadav and Dixit (2017) also presented the finding that there is more to authentic leadership than knowing oneself; the individual must also develop leadership capabilities through experiences.

Positive Psychology Attributes of Authentic Leadership

The positive psychological capacities of authentic leadership have gained substantive popularity over recent decades and include such items as resilience, optimism, confidence, and hope (Lee et al., 2019). These concepts are drawn from the positive organizational behavior and

positive psychology fields and characterize an authentic leader using the positive psychological attributes demonstrated by the individual (Qu et al., 2019).

Confidence or self-efficacy is a person's personal belief that they can develop and create success based on past experiences (Na-Nan & Sanamthong, 2019). An individual with a high level of confidence is more likely to perform a task with the expectation that a good outcome will result, and an individual with low confidence will have the opposite effect (Na-Nan & Sanamthong, 2019). Qureshi and Hassan (2019) provided a simplistic viewpoint of confidence and described as the belief that an individual is capable of accomplishing a particular task. Numerous scholars and researchers have confirmed the notion that confident leaders have a higher likelihood of becoming inclined towards or motivated by success and subsequently more productive. Ali et al. (2018) found that there was a positive relationship between leadership self-efficacy and leadership effectiveness when they researched 124 banking leaders and 344 of the followers within the same organization. Leadership effectiveness was defined by Ali et al. (2018) as the leader's impact on the bottom line of the organization, the quality of the products or services, and the overall effectiveness of the team when faced with challenges. Brender-Ilan and Sheaffer's (2019) findings supported this concept and concluded that self-efficacy, in general, had a negative relationship with counterproductive work behavior. Brender-Ilan and Sheaffer (2019) defined counterproductive work behavior as any intention or controllable behavior on the part of an individual that could be perceived as opposed to legitimate organizational goals or interests.

Scholars agree that emotions and decision-making are often interconnected (Huang et al., 2019). Swanepoel et al. (2015) provided multiple definitions of hope that center the definition of hope around the concept that it is needed to improve the quality of an individual's life and

individuals with hope have a positive outlook on the potential future based on planning and internal strength. Authentic leaders generally reflect hope in their actions because they have definite goals and that they believe they can accomplish those same goals, their hope thereby inspires their followers to trust and believe in their causes (Wei et al., 2018). At the same time, optimism's positive psychological capacity entails the cognitive processes of viewing situations from a positive perspective and developing favorable expectations about the future; this allows individuals to adapt effectively to change (Strauss et al., 2015). From the observations made by Qu et al. (2019), leaders who demonstrate optimism are often positive and confident about their capabilities and their achievable outcomes. There exists broad empirical support for the positive function of hope and optimism, and these concepts have been shown to have positive outcomes on performance across varying settings, including academic, athletic, health, and social adjustment (Strauss et al., 2015).

Another vital positive psychology attribute of authentic leadership is resilience, which is the leader's and organization's capacity to recover from and adjust to adversarial conditions at the place of work, and this includes their ability to adapt to suffering and hardships (Iszatt-White & Kempster, 2019). Accordingly, one can examine leadership practice in terms of the individual's capability to bounce back after encountering challenging situations, drawing some strength from the challenges, and growing increasingly resourceful as they overcome the obstacles and frustrations in their organizations (Wei et al., 2018). Organizational resilience is enacted through the coordinated practices of an organization's leaders and allows employees of the organization to engage with one another actively, thereby utilizing the resources more effectively and have a more adaptive response to the changing scenario (Barton & Kahn, 2019).

In addition to the four elements of positive psychological capabilities, authentic leadership also demands moral reasoning and consideration for life events (Northouse, 2016). One of the most influential theories on moral reasoning is Kohlberg's 1969 theory of moral development, which suggests that an individual's self-perception or judgment of morally right or wrong choices is defined by how the individual reasons about moral issues (Giurge et al., 2019). Sandhu and Dastgeer (2019) agreed with this concept and define moral reasoning as a process that enables organizational leaders to be selfless and enhances their ability to make decisions that promote the greater interest of the group, company, or community, part of which is the advancement of rightful things and justice for all. Giurge et al. (2019) explained that there are three types of moral reasoners; pre-conventional, conventional, and post-conventional. Pre-conventional moral reasoners are concerned with cause and effect type of actions associated with their self-interest, this is contrary to the post-conventional moral reasoner who places the collective well-being over their self-interest (Giurge et al., 2019). The conventional moral reasoner can be viewed as interested in their self-interest but also obtaining general social approval (Giurge et al., 2019). In conjunction with moral reasoning, critical life events can be viewed by researchers as either negative or positive significant events, which shape an individual's life, thereby acting as potential catalysts in their personal growth process (Iszatt-White & Kempster, 2019). There is a general agreement among scholars that life experiences have a significant impact on the leaders' performances; this is particularly true for authentic leadership because of the dependence on the understating of personal life experiences (Lee et al., 2019). When leaders acknowledge and appreciate their moral reasoning and personal life experiences, they demonstrate a higher level of authenticity in their behaviors and practices.

Authentic Leadership in Local Government

Leadership within local government differs significantly from that of the corporate sector and other public sectors due to unique characteristics, expectations, and competition within the units of governance (Reffo & Wark, 2014). At the corporate level, authentic leadership is a concept that has gained immense popularity recently because of the disturbing behaviors portrayed by unethical leaders at these organizations, which include greed and unethical conduct (Johnsen, 2018). Unlike the private corporate sectors, local government leadership requires exceptional skills and motivation, given that welfare, regardless of the provider of services, and building the society trust are the leaders' primary objectives (Qureshi & Hassan, 2019). For instance, whereas the leaders in the private sector are led by well-defined corporate goals and objectives, with their most significant concern being the ability to generate the desired revenues and organizational competitiveness, the government leaders have to formulate their mission statements and government goals, which accommodate the diverse and occasionally contrasting needs of their electorates (Iszatt-White & Kempster, 2019). Do Monte (2017) agreed with the difference in the public and private sector; however, conveys that the primary difference between the two is that the private sector tends to have a higher level of compensation and level of effort compared to the public sector that tends to have a higher level of job security.

The public sector, government included, has seen a significant reoccurrence of conflicts and crises that have called into question the capability of leaders to adequately respond and lead during these challenging times (Kellis & Ran, 2013). Kellis and Ran (2013) defined the three tenets of public sector leaders as the leader being authentic, the leader focusing on the follower's development, and that the leader must be able to navigate the extensive public sector organizational network. Landes's (2018) research supports the first tenet and through the

observations regarding authentic leadership theory, it was found by the researcher that authenticity demands leadership qualities that involve demonstration of trustworthiness and authenticity. Many sources remind government leaders of the fact that their supporters will always be aware of their mischief or misdeeds whenever they deviate from their beliefs (Iszatt-White & Kempster, 2019). Klein and Robison (2019) conveyed that social media platforms have enabled the public to quickly determine when a public sector leaders' personality become inconsistent with what the supporters consider to be truthful and that the government leaders inevitably lose the trust invested in them. According to Reffo and Wark (2014), leaders take risks on certain occasions to abide by the values for which they stand. One can reasonably conclude from the available literature that just like leaders in the private sectors, public sector leaders must demonstrate their strong leadership skills by taking risks without undermining their stated values and beliefs from the perspective of their stakeholders, the general public.

Modern society settings are experiencing a continuous evolution of trends, most of which require constant open dialogue and social intelligence, which are further promoted by the increasing prominence of social media at the private, public, and individual levels (Qureshi & Hassan, 2019). Klein and Robison (2019) hypothesized that the increase in social media has begun to polarize the evaluation of government and that individuals tend to align themselves with others of similar predispositions; this often increases negative attitudes and evaluations of the public sector. Klein and Robison's (2019) hypothesis and supporting data suggest that citizens yearn for leaders that can navigate through the trends and engage them in uncharted territories, as well as demonstrate their values and vision to energize and create meanings for people working in their government organizations and citizens in general. Schein and Schein (2018) further defined the level of authenticity in local government and establish that the low

levels of authenticity in local government is occasioned by the inability of the leaders to combine their strong vision with a passion for the creation of governments of the future, a failure to foster a sustainable vision, a failure to collaborate effectively, and a failure to establish trust within society.

Authentic leaders in local governments have a hugely diverse group of stakeholders within the community and organizations that they serve; anyone can ascertain this fact by merely looking at the demographics across the United States. These leaders are under constant pressure to ensure that the public services provided are adequate and match the expected standards of the citizens, which is an important dimension similar to that taken by private sector leaders when addressing their consumer needs (Iszatt-White & Kempster, 2019). According to Qu et al. (2019), the local government leaders must genuinely understand the responsibility of their government as a platform for solidifying, which includes balancing between legal and human rights that touch on the people. Authenticity promotes positive forms of leadership that are required to develop trust and positive work environments for employees and increase job performance and lower attrition rates (Azanza et al., 2015).

Society entrepreneurship is another aspect of leadership that demonstrates competitiveness and authenticity among local government leaders. Social entrepreneurship is a unique form of motivation that incorporates more traditional methods of leading to confront pressing social and economic issues such as poverty, empowerment of women, social transformation, foster growth in marketplaces, and bring about institutional change (Saebi et al., 2019). Lee et al. (2019) found a lack of clear and compassionate missions for the low levels of authenticity in the modern local governance. The lack of compassionate mission or vision is indicated in most cases by the fact that the unauthentic leaders do not have dreams or visions that

energize, inspire, and move people, or they may simply lack goodwill and commitment to their proclaimed values and beliefs (Qu et al., 2019). Authentic leaders utilize the relationship between the leader and follower to improve the organizational functionality and improve society's issues through the leader's influence of the follower, to such extents as fulfilling promises, adhering to their true self/convictions and abiding by their mission and goals (Ford & Harding, 2011).

Local government leaders also demonstrate their competencies by acknowledging that their authentic selves should not be static, these leaders have to be free and willing to learn, interact, evolve, and create new experiences (Schein & Schein, 2018). The citizens' expectations and needs are continually changing, thus becoming more demanding. The challenges of today include such items as globalization, rapid technological advances, social unrest, political unrest, and public mistrust over misconduct (Iszatt-White & Kempster, 2019). The financial and economic crisis of 2007 and 2008 had a significant impact on local governments around the world, which resulted in a decrease in revenue and an increase in expenses (Ladner & Soguel, 2015). Local governments are often asked by citizens to retain their level of services with reduced incomes or risk going into reserves or further debt until the economy stabilizes (Ladner & Soguel, 2015). This conflict represents a crisis point for leaders, especially authentic leaders that strive to be true to themselves and their followers.

Another essential element that needs to be considered by scholars when discussing authentic leadership is pseudo-authenticity, which involves decoupling between self-regulatory and self-awareness processes when serving the target population (Landesz, 2018). According to Landesz (2018), the distinction between authentic and pseudo-authentic leaders center around the fundamental difference in the consistent behaviors of the leader, which should be guided by their

true active self as authentic leaders and not when acting in a pseudo-authentic manner. In this case, pseudo-authenticity local leaders may show some dysfunctional cognitive disequilibrium, which manifests in their low self-esteem, negativity, distorted self-schema, and incongruent behaviors (Iszatt-White & Kempster, 2019). At the same time, the pseudo-authentic leaders behave inconsistently by decoupling from their working self-concept because of their inability to attain self-concept clarity or lack of commitment to their leadership cause (Iszatt-White & Kempster, 2019).

Overview of the Concept of Confidence in Leadership and Trust

Scholars continue to examine leadership self-confidence, and there exist multiple leadership theories that attempt to examine and explain the concept, including the recent and highly popular transformational leadership theory and several others (Fu et al., 2016). Fu et al. (2016) explained that scholars typically break leadership confidence into two major broad areas, self-confidence, and confidence in followers. Confidence can be further examined and broken into four levels: self-confidence, which creates an environment for high expectations on a personal level; dyadic confidence, which represents the shared faith between two parties and improves positive engagement; organizational confidence, the belief that the existing organizational structure will hold individuals accountable, maintain fairness, and foster collaboration within the organization; and external confidence, the belief that resources will be available to complete tasks (Fu et al., 2016). Martins et al. (2018) generally agreed with the concept of self-confidence and rationalize that an individual's self-perception of their abilities impacts the perception of the same individual's ability to meet goals and objectives. Individuals that do not have a high self-confidence are therefore less likely to be effective in achieving their goals and subsequently will have a fear of failure; this fear results in anxiety and predisposition

to avoid the risk that could result in said failure (Martins et al., 2018). Asano et al. (2016) agreed with the value of dyadic confidence and contend that individuals seeking to develop a healthy relationship and confidence with one another must accept the other individual, have open communication about life events, and contribute significant resources to the relationship. Asano et al. (2016) further established that there are levels of conceptualization related to this concept: the individual's ability to impact the shared objectives, the individual's expectation on the ability of the team to impact the shared objectives, and the shared viewpoint of the team to achieve the desired outcome. The second level of confidence is closely related to the third level, organizational confidence, but on a larger scale. Feeney and Boardman (2011) contended that organizational confidence is composed of three simplistic statements that an individual can ponder about their respective organization: (a) the organization has high ethical standards, (b) the overall quality of work being done by employees is excellent, and (c) there is a sense of pride working for the organization. When an individual has confidence in their organization, they are more likely to develop a sense of devotion to the same organization and exhibit positive organizational behaviors (Feeney & Boardman, 2011). The last level of confidence, external confidence can be rationalized through the concept of scarcity. Research suggests that as resources are reduced by any means within a community or organization and scarcity increases, the behaviors of the individuals change and promote behaviors that are beneficial solely towards the individual and at the detriment of others or the community (Roux et al., 2015). Research examples of this phenomenon demonstrate the level of trust and confidence that individuals have when resources are scarce, the findings suggest that individuals within resource-limited neighborhoods tended to engage in less altruistic behaviors and focus primarily on their own needs (Roux et al., 2015).

Similar to confidence, trust is an essential concept for researchers to understand, and individuals can further examine the concept through two lenses: calculated trust and relational trust (Poppo et al., 2016). Calculated trust can be defined as the belief that an individual knows where they stand when there is a system of rewards and penalties in place that are enforced by leaders (Poppo et al., 2016). Individuals can define relational trust as an individual's ability to understand another's perspective over time through social relations and understands or can anticipate the other individual's preferences and priorities (Poppo et al., 2016). Recent literature remains fragmented on which perspective of trust is correct; however, relational trust is acknowledged by researchers as being more anchored in sociological and psychological thinking, and research appears to give primacy to relational trust over the calculated trust (Schilke & Cook, 2015). Schilke and Cook (2015) suggested that all business interactions utilize both forms of trust, calculated and relational trust and that on an aggregate level, researchers agree that all trust is generally associated with positive outcomes. The results of the research conducted by Schilke and Cook (2015) found that calculative trust has a stronger impact than relational trust, suggesting that developing stronger policies and incentives may be of higher value to leaders and organizations. Schilke and Cook (2015) also found that relational trust had a higher impact on performance, reinforcing the benefit of utilizing both forms of trust within an organization. Wise (2016) built on the concept of trust and suggests that cognitive-based trust, personality-based trust, and institutional-based trust form the collective measurement of trust that can be evaluated by individuals. Institutional based trust is based on equity, this concept of trust can be evaluated based on how an individual perceives that the institution treats them when they compare themselves to others that experience similar events (Wise, 2016). Personality based trust can be defined as trust that is learned through the experience gained through relationships and

experiences (e.g., a person may learn to be distrustful of individuals that exhibit similar characteristics to someone that was untrustworthy in the past: Wise, 2016). Cognitive or cognition-based trust is a trust that is grounded by an individual's logical or rational evaluation of information and can be seen when individuals evaluate other individuals based on the ability to trust them based on rational reason or evidence (Wang et al., 2016).

Existing literature suggests that integrity is another crucial component to building trust and that integrity is universally linked to value-based concepts such as ethics, honesty, and morality (Krylova et al., 2017). Subsequently, there are generally five concepts that identify with integrity in the existing literature; those are wholeness, consistency of words and actions, consistency in adversity, being true to oneself, and general moral or ethical behavior (Krylova et al., 2017). Existing research also suggests that integrity-based causes to the loss in trust of an individual are more challenging to repair than competence-based causes to the loss in trust; furthermore, integrity-based trust loss is almost impossible to repair entirely when lost (Krylova et al., 2017). A significant component of evaluating the impact of moral character and the decision to trust the moral judgment of an individual is the individual's actions and the inherent beliefs or desires that cause those actions to take place (Cushman, 2015). Tomažević and Aristovnik (2019) found that individuals inherently are trusting of other individuals and that employees and leaders express this same relationship. The outcome associated with the loss of trust or moral judgment is also highly dependent on the outcome or severity of the actions caused by the individual (Cushman, 2015). Tomažević and Aristovnik (2019) agreed with the concept of severity of action with loss of trust and also suggested that the level of trust at the point of betrayal or perceived betrayal has a major impact on the amount of trust lost. The level of trust at the point of trust being lost can significantly impact the possibility of repairing the lost trust to

the level of trust that was previously held between two individuals or an employee and supervisor.

Bachmann et al. (2015) examined the loss of trust on an organizational and institutional level and conclude that there is no single fix for restoring lost trust; however, there are six critical mechanisms that can assist with rebuilding lost trust. The six key mechanisms for repairing and restoring trust on an organizational level are sense-making, relational, regulations and control, ethical culture, transparency, and transference (Bachmann et al., 2015). Sverdrup and Stensaker (2018) disagreed and contended that there are three stages involved with trust repair that the stages share some similarities and have some differences from the six previous mechanisms: restoring reciprocity, renegotiating the psychological contract, and extending the psychological contract. Restoring reciprocity consists of making an offering to the other party, typically this is seen as the leader making an offering to the employee, to show that previous acts that caused the violation of trust will be corrected and often new leadership is brought in by an organization to assist with this process (Sverdrup & Stensaker, 2018). This stage in the process is very similar to the sense-making mechanism identified by Bachmann et al. (2015). Renegotiating the psychological contract is a complex process that establishes the rules and expectations for future collaborations between individuals within the organization (Sverdrup & Stensaker, 2018). When compared to the six mechanisms, this stage resembles closely to the regulation and control mechanism and has some components of transparency mechanism. The last stage of extending the psychological contract consist of strengthening the relational bond between the parties through the use of informal interactions and communications that are more on a personal level than on a professional level (Sverdrup & Stensaker, 2018). When examined against the six mechanisms, the third stage clearly aligns with the relational mechanism.

The current business environment continues to evolve due to new technological advances, which has resulted in a change in the dynamic of the employee to leader trust relationship (Guinalú & Jordán, 2016). Zhu and Lee (2017) rationalized that traditional leadership is not effective in the virtual environment and that trust-building among team members results in a leadership dynamic that has a central theme of shared leadership. Ford et al. (2017) agreed that virtual teams are developing more and defined virtual teams as a group of two or more geographically or organizationally dispersed individuals who coordinated work demands through a combination of telecommunication technologies. Guinalú and Jordán (2016) agreed with both of the above statements; they suggest that these changes in the business environment have also resulted in increased flexibility with operations but have also created a different environment with how organizations manage virtual teams and subsequently the trust dynamic. Zhu and Lee (2017) suggested that employees that are engaging in virtual teams or working from a virtual work environment are inherently more likely to get confused or misunderstood by other workers or their leader, thereby impacting the overall trust between individuals in leadership and team roles. Zhu and Lee (2017) further suggested that establishing a high level of trust is an effective means of decreasing communication costs and the overall need to monitor employees closely; this typically results in a higher level of job satisfaction and job performance related to personal and professional goals.

Zak (2018) agreed with the overall importance of trust within an organization, the research conducted by their research team determined that the chemical oxytocin reduce the overall fear of trusting. In addition, research determined that stress is a high oxytocin inhibitor and that oxytocin increases a person's ability to empathize (Zak, 2018). Zak (2018) established eight means of building trust between a leader and follower based on the findings: recognize

excellence, induce challenge stress, give people discretion on how they work, enable job crafting, share information broadly, intentionally build relationships, facilitate whole-person growth, and show vulnerability. Gjonjeska et al. (2019) disagreed with the complexity of trust and suggested that individuals rely primarily on trust when relating to other individuals and that behavioral and neural evidence suggests that trustworthiness evaluation of individuals are made quickly, within 100ms, and those evaluations are done automatically without thought. Gjonjeska et al. (2019) also rationalized that situational factors can impact trust for individuals; however, individuals tend to form bonds with others with similar characteristics and that this creates strong group bonds that can both have a negative and positive impact on trust.

Variables in the Study

The research study used validated and reliable measures to assess the two variables under investigation. The independent variable, authentic leadership, was categorized into four separate attributes, as defined by Northouse (2016): self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. This researcher categorized the dependent variable, confidence in leadership, into two aspects: self-perceived and follower perceived.

Summary of the Literature Review

Leadership theories continue to evolve as scholars and organizations seek to improve on their employees' and organization's performance. The Great Man theory was one of the first leadership theories that focused on examining the characteristics that improved performance and suggested that individuals were born with leadership qualities that contributed to the excellence of the leader. As time progressed, different theories evolved, suggesting that individuals could develop leadership traits and that behavior or situational attributes contributed to leadership excellence. Most recently, literature has focused on ethical leadership characteristics due to high

profile corporate scandals and mistrust. Authentic leadership has emerged as a topic of interest to assist organizations and leaders to regain confidence and trust internally and externally to their respective organizations. Similar external pressure has been exerted by society on local governments, which despite not being profit-oriented establishments, serve a population with high social, economic, political, and cultural expectations, authentic leadership is positioned to fulfill these societal needs. Authentic leadership focuses on four primary characteristics of leaders: self-awareness, internal moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. When leaders have a high function in these four characteristics of authentic leadership, they are viewed by followers as "real and genuine," and several positive psychology attributes emerge, including self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism. In conjunction with the four identified positive psychology attributes, moral reasoning surfaces as another critical attribute, and contributing reason why authentic leadership is relevant in today's ethically aware society. Authentic leadership theory builds on the learned experience from the leader's life to incorporate three perspectives into authentic leadership development the intrapersonal perspective, the interpersonal perspective, and the developmental perspective.

Literature suggests that followers and society desire authentic and ethical leadership. When leaders do not exhibit these behaviors or ignore them, trust is lost, and confidence in leadership is lost. Once trust is lost, it is often hard to reestablish. Although trust and confidence are challenging to restore, they both are not impossible to restore and can be repaired by individuals through the dedicated efforts of leaders within the impacted organization. Research has also shown that high levels of trust result in overall higher levels of job satisfaction, which researchers have seen through brain chemistry, and that leaders can impact trust levels of followers through their positive or negative actions. Emerging trends in the business industry

also show that work environments and teams are evolving, and with that evolution, the trust dynamic between leaders and followers is changing to need a higher level of trust. As more and more organizations incorporate technology into their business, the emphasis that those same organizations place on authentic leadership and trust need to be considered by leaders within the organization and evaluated more closely.

Transition and Summary of Section 1

The research examines the impact that authentic leadership plays in local government with regards to the overall confidence employees have with leaders that exhibit authentic leadership traits. The research seeks to examine local government leaders across two variables further, authentic leadership, and confidence in leadership. This researcher examines authentic leadership across four primary factors: balanced processing, internalized moral perspective, relational-transparency, and self-awareness. Confidence in leadership was further evaluated by the researcher from the perspective of both the follower and leader to obtain a better understanding between authentic leadership and confidence or trust in leadership. To accomplish the goal of the research, the researcher seeks to answer the research questions “To what extent, if any, is there a relationship between authentic leadership and confidence in overall organizational leadership within local government?” and “To what extent, if any, is there a difference in the relationship between authentic leadership assessment scores and lower confidence in leadership between direct supervisors and indirect supervisors within local government?”

Current research and literature on leadership ranges greatly from the *Great Man* theory of leadership to the more recent transformational leadership and even more recent authentic leadership theory. Existing leadership literature suggests that original leadership research has focused primarily on the leaders of the past and how present and future leaders could emulate

those traits or behavior characteristics to become better leaders themselves. Recent scandals in both the public and private sectors have changed the perspective of what is needed for effective leadership. Authentic leadership theory has subsequently emerged as a leadership theory of interest due to inherent need for more ethical based leadership. The research study seeks to build on existing research that have established the positive psychology attributes of authentic leadership (self-efficacy, hope, resilience, and optimism) and the characteristics of authentic leadership (self-awareness, internal moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency) and explore the relationship that authentic leadership has with confidence or trust in leadership, both from the perspective of the leader themselves and the perspective of the individuals that they seek to lead within their organization. The research study seeks to strengthen existing research by expanding on concepts identified in the available research, providing additional research that is empirical or practitioner in nature, and by providing research that is directly related to the public sector.

Section 2: The Project

The first half of the project section of the research study provides the foundation for how the researcher will conduct the study for the second phase of the dissertation process. The research study focuses on authentic leadership and the relationship with confidence in leadership within local government. The role of the researcher and how the researcher will access the participants are discussed to provide a clear understanding of the responsibilities of the researcher and typical procedures needed for effective research. The research approach for this study is a quantitative research method that utilizes a non-experimental correlation design, the rationale behind choosing these selections will be examined in detail to provide the reader a clear understanding of the study's method and design. The population being evaluated by this study is the population of a medium to large size department within a local government, consisting of approximately 302 employees. The researcher will utilize the ALQ and the LEQ as survey instruments to examine the chosen population for the study, a review of both instruments, permissions, and how the researcher will implement both are examined in detail by the researcher.

The second half of the project section of the dissertation will consist of reviewing the data collection process for the project. It will provide insight into the techniques used to collect data, describe the systems utilized by the researcher to track, store, and secure the data for the research project. Since this research study employs a quantitative method, a detailed discussion of each variable will be provided by the researcher to include the data type, dependency, how each of the variables relates to the research problem, research questions, and hypotheses. The researcher will provide adequate descriptive statistics and statistical studies to determine the

quality and validity of the data to support the research conclusions. The final portion of the project section will discuss the general reliability and validity of the study.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative, case study was to explore the relationship between authentic leadership and the confidence that followers have for the same leadership within a medium to large department of approximately 302 full-time employees within the chosen local government, Chesterfield County, located in the Commonwealth of Virginia. The significance of the relationship between self- perceived leadership characteristics and follower-perceived leadership characteristics was examined in detail to generate an increased understanding of authentic leadership in the context of local government. The study used validated and reliable measures to assess the variables under investigation. The independent variable, authentic leadership, was categorized into four separate attributes, as defined by Northouse (2016): self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency.

This researcher determined the value of the independent variable through the use of a validated authentic leadership questionnaire that was provided by the researcher to organizational leaders and followers within the chosen department of Chesterfield County. This researcher categorized the dependent variable into two aspects: self-perceived and follower perceived. The dependent variable, confidence in leadership, was defined as the overall confidence an employee has in their organization, their department leadership, direct supervisors, and indirect supervisors. This researcher determined the confidence level of leadership through the use of the LEQ. The LEQ utilized the leadership self-efficacy scale to quantify leadership confidence. Further reflection on the findings of this research could help organizations identify key leadership attributes and characteristics, which could be potentially utilized to strengthen

local government leadership development and decrease the likelihood of low confidence in organizational leadership.

Role of the Researcher

The researcher for this project has worked as a leader in the nuclear, water, or wastewater field for over 16 years and holds an Associate of Science in Environmental Science and Technology, a Bachelor of Science in Nuclear Engineering Technology, a Master of Business Administration, a Master of Science in Information Systems, and is currently in the process of completing a Doctorate in Business Administration. The researcher has been trained through the doctoral process and years of academic study in the skills necessary to carry out the designed study. The researcher selected the survey instruments, ALQ and LEQ, to utilize for the research. The researcher was solely responsible for the selection of eligible participants based on full-time employment with the chosen department with no other selection requirements. The researcher is very familiar with public speaking and interviewing; he has interviewed multiple people during the hiring process, conducted workplace investigations, and been involved with numerous speaking engagements related to supporting internal and external awareness of key initiatives. Based on the background of the researcher, the researcher will provide an overview of the study for each participant and answer questions asked about the research. The researcher will not collect the data directly; this was done to ensure the confidentiality of responses. The researcher reviewed the response rate from the provided survey instruments to determine if the desired response rate of 170 individuals was met. The chosen response rate requirement provided a confidence level of 95 percent and a margin of error of 5 percent. The researcher conducted a statistical analysis of the data to determine and report the findings of the research conducted.

Participants

The sample population was drawn from a population of local government employees who worked for a medium to large department within the same local government. No minimum time requirement of employment was established as a requirement to be eligible to participate. All participants were required to be in a position that was classified as full-time, and there were also no age or gender limitations established for the study. All participants had to be fluent in both written and spoken English, but English was not required to be the native language. The current professional role of the researcher is a member of the management team for the department participating in the research. The director of the chosen department granted initial access to participants, permission to conduct the research, and permission to request participation. There existed a potential for sample bias due to the researcher working for the organization over multiple years. Individuals that have worked with the researcher closely may have been more or less likely to respond depending on past relationships and that relationship may have impact the response rate for those individuals. The researcher chose to use unique identifiers instead of names for participants and also utilize a separate administrative assistant to collect and record responses into the research database to ensure participants were comfortable in responding truthfully and also to limit the potential biases. The researcher scheduled time with each section leader to provide background on the research prior to meeting with the potential participants. The researcher also scheduled time to inform the potential participants of the same research and provide the potential participants the selected surveys. Each potential participant had the opportunity to voluntarily participate and ask any questions regarding the research to the researcher. Once all questions were answered, the researcher removed himself from the room to allow participants to respond. The administrative assistant provided the ALQ and LEQ surveys,

collected the completed questionnaires, and recorded the unique identifiers for each participant that chose to participate in the research study, no names of respondents were directly provided to the researcher. The same procedure was conducted for each section of the chosen department.

Research Method and Design

This researcher utilized a quantitative approach for the research study. In conjunction with the quantitative approach, the researcher used a correlational design to establish a significant relationship between the two variables of authentic leadership and confidence in leadership. Both the method and design of the research were determined to be the most appropriate based on the research problem, variables in the research, research questions, and alignment with the purpose of the study.

Discussion of Method

There exist two very distinct traditional methods for research quantitative and qualitative; these two methods can be compared to one another by how they view variables within the study (Brannen, 2017). Brannen (2017) rationalized that historically the quantitative researcher defines variables and links them together to form hypotheses that are tested by the data collected, while the qualitative researcher defines very general concepts on which they seek to evaluate patterns within the previous general or unspecified set of concepts. Kwadwo and Hamza (2015) agreed and conveyed that the quantitative method approach uses a deductive approach that utilizes the testing of theories or hypotheses. The variables for the research project, authentic leadership and confidence in leadership, have been clearly defined within the first section of this dissertation. The research study also formulates two null hypotheses from the variables and tests those same hypotheses through data collection and analysis; therefore, the research study more clearly aligns with the quantitative method approach.

The chosen method for a study should build a clear, in-depth understanding of existing research, the gap in existing research, and how the research problem can address all three (Curry & Nunez-Smith, 2015). Existing authentic leadership research has typically been prominently theoretical; the research seeks to fill the gap in research by utilizing an empirical and practitioner approach that aligns with numerical evaluation found in quantitative methods. The purpose of the study was to explore the relationship between authentic leadership and the confidence that followers have for the same leadership, these variables and concepts are well defined in existing literature (Bobbio & Manganelli, 2009; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Kwadwo and Hamza (2015) communicated that the quantitative method approach involves data analysis that identifies the statistical relationship among variables. Ang (2014) agreed and imparted that the quantitative method approach involves significant amounts of data and has a fundamental need to generate statistically proven findings. Ang (2014) further conveyed that the quantitative approach amalgamates well when there are large amounts of data available or readily accessible and when theories are well established or can be adapted easily. The chosen research utilized a large amount of data through the use of the ALQ and LEQ questionnaires, sought to establish if there exists a statistical relationship between authentic leadership and leadership confidence, and encompasses an established theory, authentic leadership theory.

Discussion of Design

The quantitative research method has three primary types of designs that need to be considered by researchers: experimental, quasi-experimental, and correlation design types (Borbasi & Jackson, 2015). Kwadwo and Hamza (2015) conveyed that the quantitative approach typically has a final report that contains critical statistical information, which includes correlations, comparisons of means, and reporting of statistical significance of findings. Based

on the chosen method and alignment with research purpose, this researcher chose to use a non-experimental correlational design as the most appropriate design for the research. The research sought to determine if a significant relationship exists between the two variables of authentic leadership and confidence in leadership that were established in the problem statement and purpose of the research. The correlational research design is a form of research, where the researcher measures two variables to gather a better understanding of the statistical relationship between the same two variables in the absence of any extraneous variables (Curtis et al., 2016), as such the chosen design is in alignment with the research problem and purpose. The correlational design does not seek to establish causality but examines the patterns of correlation between two variables and the strength of those same relationships (Curtis et al., 2016). Seeram (2019) agreed and expressed that a correlational design is a research design that allows the prediction and explanation of relationships between variables. The research purpose sought to explore the relationship between authentic leadership and leadership confidence, determine the strength of those relationships, and infer any findings for organizations and researchers alike. Seeram (2019) expressed that the key features of a correlational design included the correlation between multiple variables, collecting data at a singular point in time, using values for the variables that are on a continuum, and using statistical evaluations in the report of findings. The research study met all of the requirements of correlational design due to the two variables, the scale on the questionnaires, and the statistical evaluation of the research.

This researcher determined that the experimental, correlational design was not an appropriate correlational design for this research study and that a non-experimental design was the most appropriate design. For an experimental, correlational design to be suitable, researchers establish control and experimental groups with random assignment of participants to each group

(Crane et al., 2017). Although conditions exist for a correlation design, as defined above, conditions did not exist for an experimental correlation design. The non-experimental design was also chosen due to the difficulty with establishing multiple groups within the confines of time, due to the duration needed to develop both confidence and leadership with multiple groups, including the control group.

Summary of Research Methods and Design

The purpose of this quantitative research study was to explore the relationship between authentic leadership and the confidence that followers have for the same leadership within local government. The chosen research method and design were established as effective and appropriate to explore the general research problem of low levels of authentic leadership in business and the lower confidence in organizational leadership. The general problem was examined through the context of local government by evaluating the statistical significance between two variables, authentic leadership and confidence in leadership. The qualitative and mixed-method approach to research was determined to be less appropriate when compared to the quantitative method approach. The researcher considered three initial designs for the research study: experimental, quasi-experimental, and correlation design. The correlation design was determined to be the most appropriate due to the clear variable established and desire to explore the relationship between the same two variables in a non-experimental environment.

Population and Sampling

Discussion of Population

Approximately 3,509 individuals are employed in a full-time capacity for the local government of Chesterfield County, Virginia, including general governmental administrative, social services, public safety, parks, and utility positions (Chesterfield County, 2019). While this

author's preference would have been to utilize the entire chosen government as the population for this study, the process of contacting local government employees through their department directors would have been prohibitively time-consuming. It would also have increased the potential for limited access to non-respondents. Therefore, the Chesterfield County Department of Utilities was contacted by the researcher to request permission to survey a sample of the departmental employees for the study. The researcher subsequently received a verbal agreement of participation from the director of the department and other members of the departmental management team.

The Chesterfield County Department of Utilities consists of approximately 302 full-time employees with different functions, including accountants, clerical staff, field operations, engineers, laboratory, equipment operators, plant operators, and technology-based positions needed to maintain affordable rates and a continuously stable financial position (Chesterfield Utilities, 2019). Only current full-time employees from Chesterfield County Department of Utilities were include as part of the population of the study. The departmental director was selected as the point of contact with scheduling a systematic survey of the full-time employees within the department.

Discussion of Sampling

The simplest method for determining the sample population is through the use of a sample population calculator with defined values for the confidence level and the confidence interval. Commonly used confidence levels for research are 90%, 95%, and 99%, the standard being 95% (Salkind, 2010). The margin of error that is generally accepted for survey research that allows for findings to be generalized by the population is between five and ten percent (Suresh & Chandrashekara, 2012). Based on the above criteria, this researcher determined that

the sample size, for a confidence level of 95 percent and a confidence interval of 5 percent for the study's population of 302, needs to be approximately 170.

The sampling method chosen was a purposive sampling method, specifically total population sampling. Purposive sampling methods are a type of nonprobability sampling techniques that facilitates a researcher's ability to choose a sample population from the known population (Etikan et al., 2016). For the purpose of this research the sampling frame was the entire population. Based on the researcher's knowledge of the typical response rate for voluntary surveys provided to employees within the chosen local government, response rates are typically slightly above the 56.1 percent needed to establish a 95 percent confidence level with a 5 percent confidence interval; the researcher conducted in-person surveys to increase the response rate above the typical historical rate. Reducing the sample size below the total population could result in a condition of a smaller sample size and lower reliability. Researchers should take caution against using small sample sizes, as it could reduce the reliability of a survey's results and may also create bias in the results (Lin, 2018). Typical research response rates of 60 percent should be the goal of researchers with an ideal response rate of over 80 percent (Fincham, 2008). A 60 percent response rate would result in 181 responses, above the identified sample size. An 80 percent response rate would result in 242 respondents, well above the needed 170. Researchers should also allow for an additional 10 to 20 percent removal of participants to account for missing data or withdrawals from the research (Suresh & Chandrashekara, 2012). The band of the stated lost range would put the desired sample population between 162 and 218, the sample population proposed for a 95 percent confidence level with a 5 percent confidence interval falls within the additional lost range.

The researcher determined that the entire population needed to be sampled by the researcher to meet the minimum threshold for a quality research study. The use of the total population helped strengthen the generalizability of findings from the study by meeting the above metrics. All full-time departmental employees were determined to be eligible to participate in the study regardless of gender, race, age, educational background, or employment history with the organization. The researcher intentionally excluded part-time employees from the study due to the variability of each employee's interactions with their supervisor; hours worked varied highly, which could result in skewed data. The total population sample ensured adequate representation of variables of the study, authentic leadership and leadership confidence, throughout the entire population and not just one subset of the population. Demographics of the sample population were provided based on position number within the organization.

Summary of Population and Sampling

The chosen population for the research was determined to be a medium to large department, Utilities, within the local government of Chesterfield County. The population was determined to consist of approximately 302 employees, ranging in job classifications and other demographics. The researcher determined that a 95 percent confidence level with a 5 percent confidence interval was required based on current research standards and that a purposeful sampling method needed to be taken by the researcher. Additionally, the researcher determined that a purposeful sampling method was the most appropriate, that the sample frame was the total population, and that the only employees excluded from the study would be part-time employees. The criteria established by the researcher ensured that the reliability of the study would not adversely impact the findings and that the findings of the study would be able to generalize to the defined population.

Data Collection

Instruments

For the purpose of this research study, the two instruments that were used by the researcher were the ALQ and the LEQ questionnaires. The first instrument used in the study was the ALQ. The ALQ has two forms, the self, and the rater form. For the purpose of this research, both of the forms were used by the researcher, and all participating employees filled out the rater form, and the participating supervisors filled out the self-form. The ALQ is a 16-question instrument that has four components: self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing (Avolio et al., 2009). The balanced processing construct refers to one's ability to objectively evaluate data before making critical decisions, while the internalized moral perspective construct refers to an individual's ability to self-regulate based on their moral standards (Avolio et al., 2009). The relational transparency construct refers to one's ability to present their authentic self to others by opening sharing information in appropriate situations, while the self-awareness construct refers to one's ability to understand their own strengths and weaknesses (Avolio et al., 2009).

The ALQ's 16 questions are rated on a five-point ordinal scale from 0 to 4. Questions 1 through 5 are associated with relational transparency. Questions six through nine are related to an internalized moral perspective. Questions 10 through 12 are associated with balanced processing. Questions 13 through 16 are related to self-awareness. The inputs for the four categories are averaged to determine the overall score for the four primary constructs. The higher the overall score for each construct indicates that there is a higher level of alignment with authentic leadership and the four individual constructs. For the purpose of this research, all four construct scores were averaged. Walumbwa et al. (2008) conducted a confirmatory factor

analysis of the ALQ using two independent samples from a high-tech manufacturer in the United States, sample population 224, and from a state-owned company from the People's Republic of China, sample population 212. It is understood by researchers that there is no one acceptable limit that indicates an adequate fit (Cheung & Rensvold, 2002); however, a CFA value of .95 and an RMSEA value of .06 or less is also accepted by researchers as an adequate fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999). A χ^2/df ratio that is less than the value of 3.00 is considered a good fit (Kline, 2005). Table 1 summarizes the confirmatory factor analysis conducted by Walumbwa et al. (2008) and demonstrates the validity of the ALQ. Table 2 provides three of the 16 questions found on the ALQ, only three sample items in the questionnaire were authorized for reproducing within the research dissertation by the owner of the survey instrument.

Table 1

Confirmatory Factor Analysis of ALQ

Models	χ^2	df	χ^2/df ratio	CFI	RMSEA
One Factor Model, US	356.78	102	3.50	0.91	0.11
First Order Factor Model, US	272.65	96	2.84	0.94	0.09
Second-Order Factor Model, US	234.70	98	2.39	0.97	0.05
One Factor Model, China	249.79	102	2.44	0.90	0.09
First Order Factor Model, China	208.71	96	2.17	0.93	0.08
Second-Order Factor Model, China	107.03	98	1.09	0.95	0.06

Note. Derived from Walumbwa et al. (2008)

Table 2*Sample ALQ*

Item	My Leaders is	Scale 0-4 From Not at all to Always
1	Says exactly what they mean	
6	Demonstrates beliefs that are consistent with actions	
10	Solicits views that challenge their deeply held positions	

Note. Derived from Walumbwa et al. (2008)

The second survey instrument used in this research study is the LEQ. Similar to the ALQ, the LEQ has two different surveys, one for self-evaluation and one for external evaluation. The LEQ consists of 22 questions that center around three constructs of leadership: leader action efficacy, leader means efficacy and leader self-regulation efficacy. Items one through seven are related to leader action efficacy, items 8 through 14 are related to the leader means efficacy, and items 15 through 22 are related to leader self-regulation efficacy. Each question is rated from a score of 0, no confidence, to a score of 100, complete confidence. The 100-point ordinal scale produces a robust ordinal scale. The inputs for the three categories are averaged to determine the overall score for the three primary constructs. The higher the overall score for each construct indicates that there is a higher level of alignment with confidence in leadership efficacy and the three individual constructs. For the purpose of this research, all three constructs' scores were averaged.

The LEQ is based on two aspects of a leader's efficacy: the leader's confidence in their abilities and the subordinate's confidence in the leader's ability to lead (Hannah et al., 2012). Hannah et al. (2012) examined the discriminant validity and determined that there was adequate support for discriminant validity. Evidence of discriminant validity is determined by evaluating

the results of several sets of the chi-square difference tests (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). The first model allows the factors for consideration to be allowed to correlate and the second model fixes the correlation at zero; if the chi-square is significantly lower in the second model, then there is validity (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Table 3 summarizes the chi-square results from Hannah et al. (2012) and demonstrates that in all cases, the second model was significantly lower than the first model. Table 4 provides sample questions from the LEQ.

Table 3

Validity Test for LEQ

Model	N	χ^2 (1)	χ^2 (2)	χ^2 (3)	χ^2 (4)	χ^2 (5)	χ^2 (6)
First	265	1651.34	1352.11	1511.74	1188.73	1571.39	1046.87
Second	216	1708.28	1397.53	1679.88	1251.31	1768.55	1123.45
Difference	N/A	56.94	45.42	168.14	62.58	197.16	76.58

Note. Derived from Hannah et al. (2012)

Table 4

Sample LEQ Questions

Item	This leader displays a sense of confidence that they can	Scale 0-100 From Not at all to Always Confident
1	Energize their followers to achieve their best	
8	Rely on organization to provide the resources needed to be effective	
16	Motivate themselves to take charge of their group	

Note. Derived from Hannah et al. (2012)

Data Collection Techniques

The researcher conducted all data collection through the use of a site visit and paper survey or virtual meeting. The researcher coordinated visiting each section with the chosen department over several days. During the site visits or virtual meeting, the researcher described

the purpose of the research in great detail and provided the questionnaires. The researcher created unique identifiers for each supervisor and participants within the department and provided those to each participant. This technique allowed the participants to feel confident that the survey results would remain anonymous. Upon completion of the survey, the researcher exited, and the support personnel collected and recorded the responses. The researcher reviewed the survey responses for errors and then evaluated data with statistical software.

At the time of the research there existed a high level of concern related to COVID-19, which created a potential for the research to be impacted by reducing the availability of participants for the study. The researcher provided two alternatives to the primary data collection method, site visit and paper surveys. The first alternative was for the researcher to prerecord the introductory presentation and provide the paper survey along with video, thereby promoting social distancing. A majority of the department personnel that would be participating in the study were classified as essential, which reduced availability and may have further reduced participation rates. The second alternative was to conduct the survey through a virtual platform, also promoting social distancing. At the time of the research study the chosen department had access to Microsoft Teams, which allows video conferencing between members within an organization. The video conferencing alternative were available for onsite essential staff; however, were not available for nonessential staff that had self-quarantined in their homes. Similar to alternative one, there was a concern that participation rates were decreased due to availability of staff during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Data Organization Techniques

The researcher proposed to retain two copies of the electronic data on two separate flash drives that will be secured by the researcher in a locked cabinet in the researcher's office along

with the survey documents for a period of five years. Each participant was assigned a unique identifier and paired with their supervisor for data entry. The responses were inputted by the support staff into an excel spreadsheet for ease of tracking and then by the researcher into the statistical software. After the five-year period has expired, the researcher will destroy the data in accordance with the data retention policy of the participating organization. The researcher will be the only person with access to the research data throughout the research project, except for the support staff that assisted with electronically inputting the survey results.

Data Analysis

This section of the research project provides details related to the data analysis techniques that were used for the project. The researcher compared the mean scores from the ALQ and the LEQ across the entire chosen medium to large local government department. In addition, the ALQ and LEQ responses were compared by the researcher to determine the extent of correlation between direct and indirect supervisors within the same department. The independent variable, authentic leadership, and the dependent variable, leadership confidence were evaluated through a correlational analysis and *t*-test. The researcher compared the mean scores for the independent variable and dependent variable from the supervisor perspective and the subordinate perspective to determine if there is a potential misalignment present. All statistical data were evaluated by the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), version 25.

Variables Used in the Study

There were two variables used for this research study, authentic leadership and leadership confidence. Authentic leadership was determined to be the independent variable and leadership confidence was determined to be the dependent variable. The independent variable, authentic leadership, was categorized into four separate attributes, as defined by Northouse (2016): self-

awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency. The average score between each of the four categories were used as the authentic leadership variable score for each respondent and was the primary means for evaluating the first hypothesis identified for this study. This researcher categorized the dependent variable, leadership confidence into two aspects: self-perceived and follower perceived. The average score between the two categories was used to determine the score for the dependent variable of leadership confidence for each respondent. In addition, the authentic leadership and leadership confidence scores were coded against the direct and indirect supervisor demographic. For the purpose of this study the indirect leadership demographic was considered the center manager of the employee and the department management team member, employees filled out questions for each of these types of leadership positions.

These variables were used to answer the first research question (to what extent, if any, is there a relationship between authentic leadership and confidence in leadership in overall organizational leadership within local government) and the second research question (to what extent, if any, is there a difference in the relationship between authentic leadership assessment scores and lower confidence in leadership between direct supervisors and indirect supervisors within local government). To examine the first research question, both variables were utilized as described above. To examine the second research question, the confidence in leadership variable was examined across two groups, direct supervisors and indirect supervisors. To accomplish this task the means of the two groups were compared, the indirect supervisors included the center manager scores and the department management team member. This researcher determined that the authentic leadership variable was appropriate to evaluate both research questions due to current use in existing research. Ling et al. (2017) is one of many examples of existing research

were the variable of authentic leadership was evaluated through the use of the ALQ construct created by Walumbwa et al. (2008). This research compared authentic leadership and servant leadership to gauge which was more effective.

This researcher further evaluated the appropriateness of leadership confidence as a variable through the construct of the LEQ. The LEQ construct evaluates across the perceived capability of a leader to execute critical actions, the perceived ability to execute through complex situations, and the overall effectiveness of a leader to utilize individuals to their full potential (Hannah et al., 2012). Hackworth et al. (2018) agreed with these attributes of leadership confidence in research and convey that the perception of self-confidence and self-efficacy in leader are essential leader cognitions and are vital to confidence and leadership success. This researcher determined that the variable of leadership confidence was appropriated and substantiated by existing research.

In order to choose the most appropriate statistic tool to use, the variables must be properly defined and categorized. Each variable in a research project is classified as a dependent or independent variable, by the category of data produced (ordinal or normal), and if the data produced will be normally distributed (Morgan et al., 2013). Ordinal variables are ordered from low to high and have ranks assigned; however, the intervals between the categories are not equal (Morgan et al., 2013), as such the authentic leadership variable is classified as an ordinal variable. Morgan et al. (2013) conveyed that normal variables are also ordered; however, have somewhat of a normal distribution between scores. The leadership confidence variable may be classified as a normal variable once the normal distribution is confirmed by the statistical software program and researcher; however, is considered an ordinal variable at this point in time.

Table 5 summarizes the variables for the research project and provides a quick reference on how the variables were calculated from each instrument used in the study.

Table 5

Variables in Research

Variable Name	Variable Type	Research Questions	Instrument Used	How Variable is Calculated
Independent Variable: Authentic Leadership	Ordinal	1 and 2	ALQ, Questions 1-16	Average Score Between Leader and Subordinate Questionnaires, Research Question 1 and 2
Dependent Variable: Leadership Confidence	Ordinal	1 and 2	LEQ, Questions 1-22	Average Score for Supervisor and Indirect Supervisors, Research Question 1 Average Score for Supervisor and Mean Score for Indirect Supervisors, Research Question 2

Hypotheses 1

The first null hypothesis tested for this study was that there was no statistically significant relationship between low authentic leadership assessment scores and lower confidence in overall organizational leadership. For the purpose of evaluating this hypothesis, the authentic leadership assessment scores were compared against the leadership confidence scores to determine if a statistically significant relationship exists. The independent variable, authentic leadership and the dependent variable, confidence in leadership are both at least ordinal and the variable scores are assumed to be monotonically related to each other, therefore the Spearman correlational coefficient was the most appropriate statistical tool to evaluate the hypothesis (Morgan et al., 2013).

Hypotheses 2

The second null hypothesis tested for this study was that there was no statistically significant difference in the relationship between authentic leadership assessment scores and confidence in leadership between direct supervisors and indirect supervisors within local government. For the purpose of evaluating this hypothesis the difference in mean authentic leadership assessment and leadership confidence scores were compared for direct supervisor against the difference between the authentic leadership and leadership confidence scores of indirect supervisors. When comparing the difference between two unrelated groups, the *t*-test is appropriate if the following assumptions are not violated: the variance of the dependent variable of the two populations are equal, the dependent variable is normally distributed in each population, and the scores are independent (Morgan et al., 2013). The researcher determined that none of the assumptions were violated. The Levene's test for equality of variances was used to test the assumption of equal variance along with the *t*-test to evaluate the hypothesis (Morgan et al., 2013).

Statistical Analysis

The Pearson correlation coefficient is typically used by researchers when evaluating jointly normally distributed data (Schober et al., 2018). Ordinal data that are not normally distribution or data that have relevant outliers is not appropriate for the Pearson correlation test, instead a Spearman's rank correlation can be used by researchers to measure the relationship (Schober et al., 2018). Norman (2010) expressed that data that are reasonably distributed, such as those in research surveys and questionnaires, can be utilized by both methods of determining correlation and produce nearly identical values. Both the Pearson and Spearman's rank correlation coefficients are scaled from -1 to +1; the 0 value signifies no association and an

absolute value of one demonstrates a strong relationship, either linear for Pearson or curved for Spearman's rank (Schober et al., 2018). This researcher decided to use the Spearman's rank correlation coefficient to determine the degree of relationship between the two variables authentic leadership and leadership confidence due to the potential for the normality assumption to be violated if the data were skewed.

A *t*-test is a statistical test that is used to compare the means of two groups (Kim, 2015), in the case of the research question the two groups were determined to be the direct supervisors and indirect supervisors. The *t*-test is a parametric method where the researcher defines the probability distribution and makes inference on the distribution (Kim, 2015). Salkind (2010) agreed and confirmed that an independent samples *t*-test is a hypothesis test for determining if the means of two independent groups are the same.

Summary of Data Analysis

This researcher analyzed the data generated from this research through the use of the SPSS software package. The SPSS software package is widely used in quantitative research and the researcher was familiar with the software package due to its use at Liberty University. The researcher properly defined and categorized the dependent and independent variables for the research as ordinal variable and used the Spearman correlation coefficient to determine statistical significance between authentic leadership and confidence in leadership. In addition, the researcher compared the mean authentic leadership scores with the mean leadership confidence score of direct and indirect supervisors to determine if there was a significant difference between those two groups. The hypotheses for the research were reviewed in conjunction with the statistical analysis to ensure that they properly aligned with the research. The researcher

reviewed statistical methods and assumptions and determined that the analysis was in accordance with typical research approaches.

Reliability and Validity

Assessment instruments in research must be reliable and valid, to accomplish this goal each instrument must be examined against the reliability and validity for each assessment tool in conjunction with the application of research to be credible (Sullivan, 2011). Reliability for quantitative research can be defined as is the replicability of both the process performed by the researcher and also the ability to produce the same results (Leung, 2015). Validity in research refers to how accurately a concept is accurately measured, it consists of three items: content, construct, and criterion validity (Heale & Twycross, 2015). Content validity measures the ability to cover all the content that should be evaluated by the research tool, this is different than construct validity that measures the ability of the tool to produce inferences from the scores (Heale & Twycross, 2015). Criterion validity measures the extent that an instrument may be related to another research instrument that measures the same variable (Heale & Twycross, 2015). The reliability and validity of the ALQ and LEQ are discussed in depth to provide a clear understanding of the strength of those research tools.

Reliability

One way for a researcher to determine internal consistency reliability is for the same researcher to utilize the Cronbach's coefficient alpha, this value is based on the average correlation among the items and number of items in the same scale (Chau, 1999). Although there is no one value that guarantees reliability the generally accepted values for preliminary research are 0.7, 0.8 for basic research, and 0.9 for applied research (Chau, 1999). The Cronbach's alpha for the four measurements of the ALQ instrument were .92, .87, .76, and .81 for self-awareness,

relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing (Walumbwa et al., 2008). The values obtained for the ALQ instrument fall within the 0.7 and 0.8 range and would be appropriate for the research. The reliability of the LEQ was tested by Hannah et al. (2012) through the use of multiple unique samples, the Cronbach's alphas for leadership self and means efficacy were .93 and .94. The values obtained for the LEQ instrument fall above the 0.9 value for applied research and would be appropriate for the research study.

Validity

As discussed, there are multiple forms of validity, the construct validity was previously discussed in the instrument section of this dissertation through the use of confirmatory factor analysis, or CFA and will be excluded from additional discussion. The second form of validity discussed will be criterion validity or discriminant validity. Evidence of discriminant validity can be seen by the extent that scores on different scales reflect different constructs (Campbell & Fiske, 1959). Discriminant validity is determined by comparing the chi-square of the unconstrained model with the second constrained model, if the unconstrained model is significantly lower than the constrained then there is discriminant validity present (Anderson & Gerbing, 1988). Walumbwa et al. (2008) completed this analysis for the ALQ and found that when compared to ethical leadership and transformational leadership constructs the results met that criteria. For ethical leadership the results were $\chi^2(298) = 629.77$ for the constrained model and $\chi^2(299) = 685.46$ for the unconstrained; $\Delta\chi^2 = 55.69$, $p < .01$ (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Walumbwa et al. (2008) completed the same analysis for transformational leadership and found the unconstrained correlation was $\chi^2(458) = 1107.02$ and the constrained correlation was $\chi^2(459) = 1131.51$; $\Delta\chi^2 = 24$, $p < .01$). Hannah et al. (2012) evaluated the discriminant validity for the LEQ as it relates to other relevant constructs and found that all of the six chi-square comparisons

for the unconstrained model were significantly lower ($p < .01$) than the constrained model: 56.94, 45.42, and 168.14 as compared to 62.58, 197.16, and 76.58. The analysis determined that the LEQ tool was distinct from the other three constructs of self-esteem, state hope, and general self-efficacy.

Content validity is another validity that must be considered. Walumbwa et al. (2008) originally derived 35 items for the ALQ and reduced that number to 22, a content validity assessment was performed and determined that 80 percent of the time the categories were properly assigned. The results of the content validity assessment resulted in 6 items being removed from the ALQ, reducing the questionnaire to the current 16 questions (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Similarly, the LEQ has been validated for content validity with an interrater consistency of between .77 and .94 (Hannah et al., 2012). Both the ALQ and the LEQ content has been validated and accepted by multiple researchers since publication (Cervo et al., 2016; Harper & Harper, 2016).

Summary of Reliability and Validity

This researcher provided evidence of the appropriateness of the ALQ and LEQ as instruments for use in research. The reliability of the ALQ and LEQ were established by demonstrating that the Cronbach's alphas for the research tools were above the typical standard of 0.7. The content validity of both the ALQ and LEQ were demonstrated by the original authors through content validity assessments. The construct validities were established through the use of confirmatory factor analysis. The criterion validity was established by the original researchers through evaluations against known constructs, demonstrating discriminant validity. Both constructs were determined to be have been previously used by researchers on multiple

occasions. All evidence indicated that the ALQ and LEQ are valid and reliable tools that can be used for the research study.

Transition and Summary of Section 2

Section 2 provided a strong foundation on how the research was conducted by first reestablishing the purpose of the research, the relationship between authentic leadership and the confidence that followers have for the same leadership within a medium to large department of local government, then discussing the means by which the research was conducted. The primary focus of the research was on authentic leadership and confidence of leadership within local government. The researcher determined that a quantitative approach and a correlational design was the most appropriate method and design to determine if there was a significant relationship between the two research variables. The researcher further examined the chosen population and determined that a purposeful sampling method was the most appropriate and that the sample frame should be the total population. This decision ensured that the reliability of the study would not adversely impact the findings and that the findings of the study would be able to generalize to the defined population. The researcher discussed in detail the instruments for the study, the ALQ and LEQ, then provided documentation on the reliability and validity of the instruments. A general discussion was provided on data collection, data organization, and data analysis to ensure researchers are able to replicate the study in the future. The research project was established as an effective project to investigate the business problem of low authentic leadership in local government.

The next section of this dissertation, Section 3, consists of reviewing the research and providing professional and practical application. The section will cover such items as a general overview of the research, a presentation of findings, evaluation of the hypotheses and relation to

the research questions, a summary of findings, recommendations for action, and recommendations for future studies. This researcher will also present a professional reflection on the research conducted and provide a summary of the conclusions from the research.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

Research regarding organizational success and effectiveness is ever-expanding and ever in conflict with determining what attributes truly need to be analyzed; however, most researchers agree that leadership is a crucial analyst of organization success and effectiveness (Madanchian et al., 2017). Recent leadership literature is limited for the public sector, particularly local government. Local government research has had some research interest, typically focusing on efficiencies within the organization (Narbón-Perpiñá & De Witte, 2018). The review conducted by Narbón-Perpiñá and De Witte (2018) found only 85 useable studies over a 26-year period. Local government research is challenged with limited research and a need for further research in leadership so that they are strategically positioned to provide structure and guidance to their employees and provide adequate services to the community.

Section three of the research study provides additional insight into the research conduct to better position local government organizations. The section contains a brief overview of the research study, a presentation of findings, application to professional practice, a biblical framework, recommendations for action, recommendation for future actions, a personal reflection on the research conducted that includes biblical principles related to research, and concludes with a summary that clarifies the most salient points of the research study. The presentation of findings offers readers the opportunity to review the data collected within the research study to further understand the findings of the research study. The application to professional practices section highlights the research findings and applies them to the business environment, with an emphasis on local government. The recommendations for action and future studies section examines the findings of the research and offers alternatives that should be considered to improve business practices and to enhance future research. The personal

reflections section provides further insight into the researcher's personal experience and insight while conducting the research.

Overview of the Study

Both the public and private sectors acknowledge that leadership is a critical component of successful organizations. The public sector, particularly local government, provides many services to the community. These communities rely on the local government to provide services, which supports the need to ensure that there is effective leadership within local government and that there is adequate confidence in leadership within the same organization. Kettl (2018) suggested that trust and confidence in organizations are impacted or lowered from the perceived confidence or trust in other related groups, hinting that some distrust may be inherent due to historical relationships. This research study sought to understand the relationship between authentic leadership and leadership confidence or trust within local government by examining two variables against one another to determine if the relationship is correlated and the extent that the relationship is impacted differently for a direct and indirect supervisor.

The research conducted was of a non-experimental correlation design and was structured around obtaining data from individuals within local government concerning authentic leadership through the ALQ and leadership confidence through the LEQ. Research conducted by Walumbwa et al. (2008) demonstrated that the ALQ provides reliable data on authentic leadership through the constructs of transparency, moral/ethical behavior, balanced processing, and self-awareness. Research conducted by Hannah et al. (2012) demonstrated that the LEQ provides reliable data on perceived leadership confidence through the constructs of leader perceived capacity to execute actions, the perceived capacity to think through complex situations, and the perception that the leader can draw on resources to improve their leadership.

This study's primary goal was to accurately articulate the research findings in an unbiased way and evaluate the association between authentic leadership and leadership confidence within local government.

Presentation of Findings

Research on authentic leadership is not new, Henderson and Hoy (1983) performed one of the first attempts to refine the definition and constructs of leadership authenticity in 1983, where the authors broke the concept of authentic leadership into three constructs: the responsibility of actions, non-manipulation of subordinates, and salience of self over position (Gardner et al., 2011). Over the next 14 years, there was minimal discussion in research related to authentic leadership; however, the topic reemerged in 1997 when Bhindi and Duignan (1997) presented four constructs: authenticity, intentionality, spirituality, and sensibility (Gardner et al., 2011). Walumbwa et al. (2008) refined the concepts of authentic leadership and provides a foundation for the research conducted by this study that examines authentic leadership with leadership confidence within the context of local government.

This non-experimental correlation-based research study was conducted by this researcher with a sample size of 207, $n = 207$. The data were collected and then analyzed in June of 2020. At the time of the research study, the Chesterfield County Department of Utilities consisted of approximately 302 full-time positions with different functions. The exact count of filled positions differed from the available positions; at the time of the research study, staff occupied 283 of the 302 full-time positions and were eligible to participate in the research study. The participation rate for the study was 73.14 percent of the population or 207 participants. After review of the completed surveys, participants completed only 196 survey responses entirely. The completed response rate equates to 69.26 percent of the population. This researcher previously

determined that a sample size of 170 was needed to meet the minimum standards established for quantitative research. The 196 participants exceeds the minimum standard and reflects high standards for the research conducted.

The researcher performed descriptive statistics for the completed dataset obtained from both the ALQ and LEQ. There were no notable outliers in the data that would significantly impact the statistical evaluation; all data remained in the statistical evaluation for the study. The overall authentic leadership and leadership confidence scores were obtained by averaging the direct supervisor, center manager, self, and management team member scores. The direct supervisor scores from both instruments were pulled directly from responses. The researcher calculated the indirect supervisor scores from both instruments by averaging the center manager and management team member scores. The mean scores for overall authentic leadership, direct supervisor authentic leadership, and indirect supervisor authentic leadership were found by the researcher to be very similar and ranged from 3.10 to 3.13. The mean for overall authentic leadership was determined by the researcher to be 3.13 and had a standard deviation of 0.65. The mean for authentic leadership for direct supervision was determined to be 3.10 and had a standard deviation of 0.83. The mean for authentic leadership for indirect supervision was determined to be 3.11 and had a standard deviation of 0.80. The mean score for the self-evaluated authentic leadership was much higher at 3.33 and had a much smaller standard deviation of 0.41. The mean scores for overall leadership confidence, direct supervisor leadership confidence, and indirect supervisor leadership confidence were found by the researcher to be very similar and ranged from 76.38 to 78.91. The mean for overall leadership confidence was determined by the researcher to be 77.95 and had a standard deviation of 18.51. The mean for leadership confidence for direct supervision was determined to be 76.38 and had a

standard deviation of 22.21. The mean for leadership confidence for indirect supervision was determined to be 78.91 and had a standard deviation of 20.50. The mean for the self-evaluation of leadership confidence for supervisors was much higher at 82.36 and also had a much smaller standard deviation of 12.03. An overview of the descriptive statistics of the data for the fully completed surveys is available in Table 6 for the ALQ and in Table 7 for the LEQ.

Table 6

Descriptive Statistics for ALQ

	Range	Min. Score	Max. Score	Mean	Variance	Skewness
Overall Authentic Leadership	3.60	0.40	4.00	3.13	0.42	-1.04
Direct Supervisor Authentic Leadership	3.94	0.06	4.00	3.10	0.69	-1.25
Indirect Supervisor Authentic Leadership	4.00	0.00	4.00	3.11	0.64	-1.38

Table 7

Descriptive Statistics for LEQ

	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Variance	Skewness
Overall Confidence in Leadership	94.85	5.15	100.00	77.95	342.78	-1.31
Direct Supervisor Confidence in Leadership	97.73	2.27	100.00	76.38	493.50	-1.26
Indirect Supervisor Confidence in Leadership	96.59	3.41	100.00	78.91	420.33	-1.48

Both variables exhibit a high degree of skewness. Researchers can consider data normally distributed when the absolute value of the skewness is less than one (Morgan et al., 2013). For the purpose of this research, the researcher normalized the leadership confidence score to the

same scale as the authentic leadership score. The normalization was accomplished by dividing each participant's scores for leadership confidence by 25. Table 8 provides a summary of the normalized data. Figure 2 and Figure 3 are histograms of the overall organizational authentic leadership and normalized leadership confidence scores. These histograms have the normal curve overlaid on the histogram and provide a visual representation and confirmation that the data are skewed to the left.

Table 8

Normalized Descriptive Statistics for LEQ

	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Variance	Skewness
Overall Confidence in Leadership	3.79	0.21	4.00	3.12	0.55	-1.31
Direct Supervisor Confidence in Leadership	3.91	0.09	4.00	3.06	0.79	-1.26
Indirect Supervisor Confidence in Leadership	3.86	0.14	4.00	3.16	0.67	-1.48

Figure 2

Histogram of Overall Organization Authentic Leadership

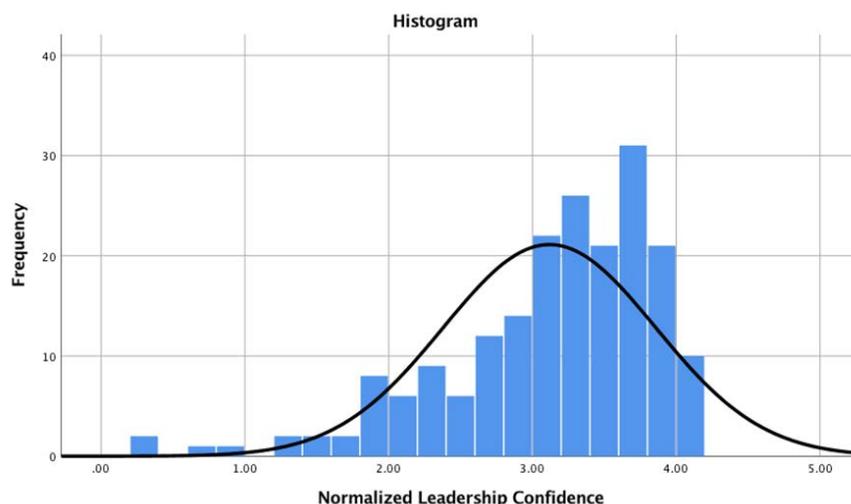
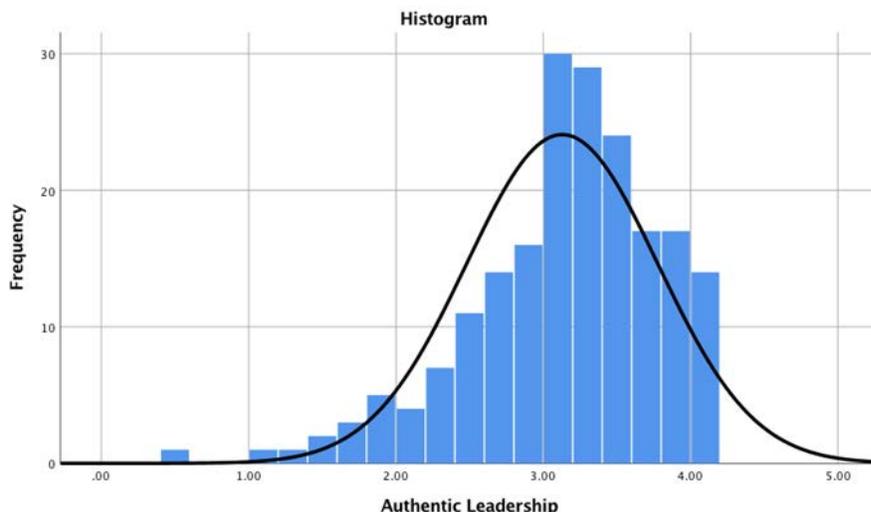


Figure 3

Histogram of Overall Organization Leadership Confidence



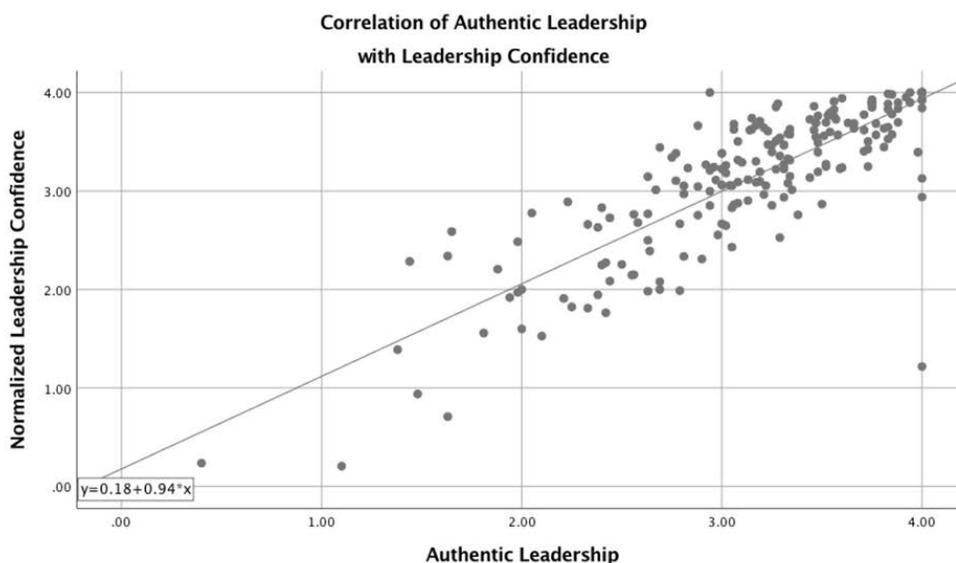
Hypotheses 1

The first null hypothesis was established by the researcher as there was no statistically significant relationship between low authentic leadership assessment scores and lower confidence in overall organizational leadership. The independent variable, authentic leadership, and the dependent variable, confidence in leadership, scores are both at least ordinal and the variable scores are monotonically related to each other. Therefore, the researcher previously established the Spearman correlational coefficient as the most appropriate statistical tool to evaluate the hypothesis. The previous review of skewness for the variables of overall authentic leadership and leadership confidence indicates that normality is remarkably violated, -1.04 and -1.31, the researcher validated the previous assumption that the researcher could not use the Pearson correlation coefficient. The assumptions for the Spearman correlational coefficient are that the data are at least ordinal and the values of one variable are monotonically related to the other (Morgan et al., 2013). The researcher demonstrates the monotonical relationship between the variables in Figure 4. In general; the variables follow a linear pattern when the researcher

performed linear regression on the data points; $y = 0.18 + 0.94x$, $r^2 = 0.68$ and $r = 0.82$. The Spearman correlational coefficient was calculated by the researcher, $r(196) = 0.795$, $p = <.001$.

Figure 4

Scatterplot of Authentic Leadership and Leadership Confidence



The correlation was positive, reflecting that supervisors of participants in the study who had higher authentic leadership scores tended to have higher leadership confidence scores. Cohen (1988) expressed that the effect size was much larger than typical when r is equal to or above the absolute value of 0.70. The r^2 indicates approximately 63.2% of the variance in leadership confidence scores can be predicted from authentic leadership scores. The p -value of < 0.001 reflects a statistically significant relationship between low authentic leadership assessment scores and lower confidence in overall organizational leadership. Table 9 provides the Spearman correlational coefficient for authentic leadership and leadership confidence.

Table 9*Spearman Correlation for Authentic Leadership and Leadership Confidence*

Spearman's rho		Authentic Leadership	Normalized Leadership Confidence
Authentic Leadership	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.795
	Sig. (2-tailed)		<0.001
Normalized Confidence in Leadership	Correlation Coefficient	.795	1.000
	Sig. (2-tailed)	<.001	

Hypotheses 2

The second null hypothesis was established by the researcher as there was no statistically significant difference in the relationship between authentic leadership assessment scores and confidence in leadership between direct supervisors and indirect supervisors within local government. The assumptions for the *t*-test are that the variance of the dependent variable of the two populations is equal, the dependent variable is normally distributed in each population, and the scores are independent (Morgan et al., 2013). Interactions between different individuals and the perception of those same individuals were determined by this researcher to be independent; therefore, the two populations' scores were considered independent. The data for each population, direct supervisors and indirect supervisors were previously established as skewed or not normally distributed. The researcher adjusted the data by reflecting the data, taking the log of the reflected data, and then reflecting again. The following data then followed a normal distribution and met the assumption of the *t*-test. The absolute value of the skewness for all parameters evaluated ranged from 0.40 to 0.59, aligning with a normal distribution (Morgan et

al., 2013). The resultant minimum scores ranged from 1.00 to 2.61 and had mean values ranging from 2.01 to 2.05. Table 5 provides a detailed summary of the descriptive statistics for the adjusted data.

The researcher used the adjusted data to determine if the relationship between authentic leadership assessment scores and confidence in leadership between direct supervisors and indirect supervisors was significant. This task was accomplished by subtracting the leadership confidence scores from authentic leadership scores and comparing them against the two populations, direct supervisors and indirect supervisors. Table 10 provides the descriptive statistics for data and demonstrates the data had a normal distribution; the absolute value of skewness was less than one at 0.56. The researcher used Levene's test for equality of variance to test the assumption of equal variance; these values are available in Table 11. The F values for comparing the two populations against authentic leadership and leadership confidence ranged from 0.29 to 1.06 and had significant values between 0.30 and 0.60. Levene's F was determined not to be statistically significant; it was higher than 0.05 (Morgan et al., 2013). The researcher met all assumptions for the t -test for the statistical analysis.

Table 10

Descriptive Statistics for Adjusted Data

	Range	Min.	Max.	Mean	Variance	Skewness
Direct Supervisor Authentic Leadership	1.60	1.00	2.60	2.04	.161	-.40
Indirect Supervisor Authentic Leadership	1.61	1.00	2.61	2.05	.150	-.40
Direct Supervisor Leadership Confidence	1.59	1.00	2.59	2.01	.171	-.50
Indirect Supervisor Leadership Confidence	1.58	1.00	2.58	2.05	.154	-.59

Table 11*Descriptive Statistics for Difference in Scores*

	Range	Min. Score	Max. Score	Mean	Variance	Skewness
Difference	2.58	-1.22	1.36	0.14	.07	.56

Table 12*Independent Samples Test*

	F	Sig.	t	df	Sig (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	95% Confidence Interval
Difference in Scores	0.29	0.60	1.07	390	0.29	0.03	-0.02 to 0.08
Authentic Leadership	1.06	0.30	-0.88	390	0.38	-0.04	-0.12 to 0.04
Leadership Confidence	0.33	0.57	-0.17	390	0.86	-0.01	-0.09 to 0.07

Table 12 demonstrates the *t*-test values and conveys that there is not enough evidence to say that there is a systematic difference between direct and indirect supervisors when comparing authentic leadership against leadership confidence; $t = 1.07$, $(df) = 390$, and $p = 0.29$. The same is true when comparing authentic leadership scores for indirect supervisors and indirect supervisors; $t = -0.88$, $(df) = 390$, and $p = 0.38$. The same also holds true for leadership confidence between direct and indirect supervisors; $t = -0.17$, $(df) = 390$, and $p = 0.86$. There is also verification through the 95 percent confidence interval that there is not sufficient evidence to declare a statistically significant difference; all of the confidence intervals contain both positive and negative values. Morgan et al. (2013) conveyed the finding of zero difference within the confidence interval's lower and upper limits supports no evidence of statistical significance.

Relationship of Hypotheses to Research Questions

This correlational research aimed to address the gaps in current literature and empirical data related to the government sector concerning authentic leadership and leadership confidence. The researcher identified authentic leadership as the independent variable and leadership confidence as the dependent variable. The first research question examined whether there was a relationship between authentic leadership and confidence in overall organizational leadership within local government. The corresponding null hypothesis conveys that there was no statistically significant relationship between low authentic leadership assessment scores and lower confidence in overall organizational leadership. The corresponding alternative hypothesis for that research was that there was a statistically significant relationship between low authentic leadership assessment scores and lower confidence in overall organizational leadership. The researcher analyzed the null hypothesis with the assistance of the participants within the research study population and determined the Spearman correlation coefficient. The Spearman correlational coefficient was determined to be 0.795 and the probability was < 0.001 . The correlation was positive, which reflects that supervisors of participants in the study who had low authentic leadership scores tended to have a lower leadership confidence score. The p -value of < 0.001 reflects that there is a statistically significant relationship between low authentic leadership assessment scores and lower confidence in overall organizational leadership. Based on the statistical results, the researcher rejected the null hypothesis and accepted the alternative hypothesis for the first research question.

The second research question examined was if there was a difference in the relationship between authentic leadership assessment scores and lower confidence in leadership between direct supervisors and indirect supervisors within local government. The corresponding null

hypothesis conveys that there was no statistically significant difference in the relationship between authentic leadership assessment scores and lower confidence in leadership between direct supervisors and indirect supervisors within local government. The corresponding alternative hypothesis for that research was that there was a statistically significant difference in the relationship between authentic leadership assessment scores and lower confidence in leadership between direct supervisors and indirect supervisors within local government. The researcher analyzed the null hypothesis through the use of the *t*-test. The *t*-test value demonstrates that there is not enough evidence to indicate that there is a systematic difference between direct and indirect supervisors when comparing authentic leadership against leadership confidence; $t = 1.07$, $(df) = 390$, and $p = 0.29$. The *p*-value of > 0.05 reflects that there is insufficient evidence to reject the null hypothesis. Based on the statistical results, the researcher cannot accept the null hypothesis nor accepted the alternative hypothesis for the second research question.

Summary of the Findings

There are two critical findings determined by the research conducted that relate to the research topic of authentic leadership and leadership confidence. These findings add to the empirical data available to local government, authentic leadership, and leadership confidence. The first finding was that the research demonstrated that there was statistical evidence to reject the first research question's null hypothesis, concluding that authentic leadership has a relationship to leadership confidence. The research also demonstrated that the relation or correlation was positive, meaning that low authentic leadership correlated with low leadership confidence and that high authentic leadership correlated with high leadership confidence. The second finding of this research was related to the relationship between authentic leadership and

leadership confidence at different levels of supervision, specifically direct and indirect supervision.

The research did not demonstrate that there was adequate statistical evidence to reject the null hypothesis of the second research question; therefore there is insufficient evidence to support a finding that there is a difference in the relationship between authentic leadership and leadership confidence when compared to direct and indirect supervisors within local government. These findings can be utilized by local government leaders to focus on leadership training programs and to better understand the relationship between authentic leadership and leadership confidence. The empirical data provides essential background on the need to support adequate leadership training programs that encompass aspects of authentic leadership within local government. Given the recent increase in authentic leadership interest over the last several decades, this research also provides empirical data that local government leaders and scholars can utilize to understand further critical aspects of authentic leadership that is currently absent in research. The findings from this research study provide useful information and insights for researchers as well as practitioners to examine and continue to further the expansion of knowledge with respect to authentic leadership and leadership confidence.

Application to Professional Practice

The research's primary finding was that there was significant statistical evidence that there was a correlation between authentic leadership and leadership confidence or trust in leadership. The secondary finding of the research shows that there was inadequate evidence to conclude that direct and indirect supervisors had a difference in the relationship between authentic leadership and leadership confidence. These findings have significant applications to the public sector and local government concerning training programs, financial impact, and

employee retention. A further reflection of the biblical framework and relationship to authentic leadership development and leadership confidence can be applied to gather a better understanding of the application of these findings to professional practice.

Training Development and Financial Impact

Leaders in the public sector and local government need to benchmark to ensure governments have the best leadership development strategy to attract and retain employees who can effectively and efficiently provide services to the communities. This research study provides one such benchmark for other public sector and local governments to utilize to more effectively train leaders within their organizations. The data provided within the study provides a reference point for local government leaders to evaluate their performance with a similar organization. The overall authentic leadership scores for this study had a broad range with a minimum score of 0.40 and a high score of 4.0. The mean score was 3.13 and had a standard deviation of 0.65; this conveys that there is room for improvement concerning authentic leadership for the local government studied.

It is also essential for leaders in local government to understand how their subordinates perceive leaders within their organization and to know the effectiveness of the same leaders in instilling confidence and trust in their leadership abilities; this understanding ensures that adequate resources can be applied to improve leadership training programs further, where needed. Effective utilization of resources remains a hot topic for the general public; this can be seen through taxpayers' continued scrutiny regarding expenses and public sector compensation (Edwards, 2010). Public sector productivity research in the educational sector further suggests that merely increasing resources across the board does not guarantee increased productivity or success (O'Leary, 2015). O'Leary (2015) further clarified that training is one of several

significant factors to consider in the public sector for improving productivity. Rego et al. (2012) contended that adults cannot develop authentic leadership skills. Learned behaviors are hard to change once an individual established their behavior (Rego et al., 2012). Local governments may find value in focusing on new leaders to further maximize training resources on the most responsive individuals within their organization. Rego et al. (2012) further suggested that some non-genuine leaders may hide their true selves and only portray what is expected of them if they have established their leadership behavior. With limited resources, both financial and staff, one can reasonably conclude that effective leadership development programs should include some aspect of authentic leadership development to ensure the organization focus on topics that have a strong correlation to leadership confidence and trust. Effective programs could focus on young or emerging leadership to maximize the effectiveness of the training programs.

Retention of Employees

Retention of employees is a critical aspect that all leaders and organizations should consider; low retention has a significant impact ranging from lost productivity to low morale and even reduced service levels (Mamun & Hasan, 2017). Brown et al. (2015) agreed with Mamun and Hasan (2017) and suggested that increased productivity is positivity associated with organization trust. The study demonstrated high variability in leadership confidence or trust in leadership; the lowest score seen was 5.15, and the highest was 100. The mean value for overall confidence in leadership was 77.95 and had a standard deviation of 18.51; this suggests that there is room for improvement in the local government evaluated for this study. While low levels of organization trust can lead to turnover, research suggests that some level of turnover is considered healthy; this value is approximately 10 to 12 percent (Pittman, 2020). Pittman (2020) further declared that excessively high turnover can create an inherently unstable environment

that damages the organization over the long-term. Supervisors play a critical role in overall organization trust and retention; supervisors regulate subordinates' undesirable behavior and protect those same employees from others, strengthening the relationship between both parties (Liu et al., 2018). Local government organizations with high levels of employee turnover can utilize the findings of the research study to strengthen their leadership programs. The research study findings demonstrate the extent that supervisors in local government impact organization trust through multiple layers of supervision, both direct and indirect. The high correlation for both direct and indirect supervisors suggests a value for local governments with high turnover to examine more closely the confidence in organization leadership and provides insight on how authentic leadership could potentially strengthen organization trust. There exist potential that local governments may be able to decrease the attrition rate and increasing the overall productivity of their organization through the development of authentic leaders.

Biblical Framework

Leaders within the public and private sectors are often confronted with issues that have different ethical values within today's business environment. The conflict often correlates with a mistrust in leadership, which can be translated by leaders to followers through a misunderstanding of organizational priorities and positive moral values. The strong correlation of authentic leadership and leadership confidence is also available for scholars through biblical references. The Bible demonstrates a plethora of examples of the aspects of authentic leadership and the aspects of leadership confidence that reaffirms that these variables studied within this research are rooted firmly in the Christian faith. Paul provides an example of both authentic leadership and leadership confidence in 2 Corinthians 1:12-24 (*New International Version*, 2011). Paul previously promised to visit Corinth two times and had failed to follow through his

commitments; he explained to the Corinthians that his intent was not to deceive but to visit when he could bring them joy (*New International Version*, 2011, 2 Corinthians 1:24). The Corinthians demonstrate confidence in Paul's leadership in the Bible through the understanding that even though the Corinthians did not know all the reasons behind Paul's actions that they could trust his actions as pure (*New International Version*, 2011, 2 Corinthians 1:14).

The second aspect of authentic leaders is moral or ethical behavior, and it is apparent through Proverb 3:5-6 (*New International Version*, 2011), which asks individuals to submit to the values of God and not rely solely on their judgment. The concept of ethical behavior is also apparent through Proverbs 16:12 (*New International Version*, 2011), which expresses that kings or leaders are held to a higher standard of ethical behavior. Scholars can see this moral compass through many biblical characters; however, this author will focus on Daniel. Daniel retained a high position in the government, and many of his colleagues were jealous (*New International Version*, 2011, Daniel 6:1-5). The same colleagues caused the king to change the law and forbid prayer to no one other than the king (*New International Version*, 2011, Daniel 6:6-9). Daniel maintained his moral convictions and prayed regardless, and as a result, he was cast into the lion den (*New International Version*, 2011, Daniel 6:19). Daniel's ethical behavior was reward and confidence in both him and God was restored when he emerged from the lion den unharmed (*New International Version*, 2011, Daniel 6:21-23).

The third aspect of authentic leadership is balanced processing and Rehoboam exemplifies the lack of such traits through Rehoboam's action in 1 Kings 12 (*New International Version*, 2011). Rehoboam refused to listen to his father's advisers; in so doing, he demonstrated that he did not have balanced processing and also did not possess the capacity to think through a

complicated situation. As a direct result of these actions, he lost half his kingdom and confidence of his followers (*New International Version*, 2011, 1 Kings 12).

The fourth construct of authentic leadership is self-awareness and is referenced by biblical authors in Proverb 20:5 (*New International Version*, 2011), which conveys that the mind of an individual is complex and that an individual that seeks knowledge will have a better understanding of themselves. The primary example of self-awareness in the Bible is Jesus Christ; he understood who he was, when Jesus spoke to the woman at the well, he conveyed that he had self-consciousness and that he was a deity (*New International Version*, 2011, John 4:10). Similar to how the research demonstrated that there was a significant relationship between authentic leadership and leadership confidence, Jesus Christ also exhibits both characteristics. Jesus Christ exemplifies the last aspect of leadership confidence, the ability to draw on other resources to enhance their leadership. This aspect can be seen through Jesus Christ's use of the disciples to continue his mission and spread the word of God further (*New International Version*, 2011, Mark 16:15) assessment scores and lower confidence in leadership between direct supervisors and indirect supervisors within local government.

Recommendations for Action

The researcher performed descriptive statistics for the completed dataset obtained from both the ALQ and LEQ. The research demonstrated that there was a correlation between authentic leadership and leadership confidence in the local government and that there was not adequate significant statistical evidence that the relationship between authentic leadership and leadership confidence was different between direct and indirect supervisors. The researcher will provide the researcher's findings to the leaders of the individuals that participated in the study, and these findings will be made available to the participants through those same leaders. The

researcher has offered to meet any individual that participated in the study; this was done by the researcher to provide an opportunity for the participants to ask questions and to provide further insight. Government leaders can utilize these findings to focus on training efforts, reallocate funding for effective training, and improve staff retention. Scholars can utilize these findings to understand further how authentic leadership impacts individuals in the government sector and continues their research efforts.

Training

Training is critical to improving employees' quality of performance so that they have adequate managerial and technical capabilities (Rahayu et al., 2019). Often ineffective training programs in the public service sector lead to low commitment, decreased productivity, decreased quality, and increases in complexity of developmental problems (Rahayu et al., 2019). Local governments often benchmark staff performance to garner the effectiveness of training and other parameters to improve governmental efficiency (Spren et al., 2020). This research provides such a benchmark for organizations to evaluate what training is essential for the development of public sector leaders within their organization. Getha-Taylor et al. (2015) expressed that the development of leaders in local government is essential to ensuring local governments remain productive and efficient and that the development provides support to succession planning through the enhancement of future leadership capacity. Findings of this research support local government leaders evaluating their current leadership development programs and determining the need for additional training on authentic leadership. Jewson et al. (2015) expressed that the public sector typically has a training participation rate of approximately 19 to 23 percent. Local government departments and governments in their entirety should perform a similar evaluation that was conducted by the research study on supervisors to determine the level of authenticity

that is demonstrated to staff to further assist those organizations with determining development program needs. The second step that should be taken by those same organizations is determining which leaders should be developed within the organization to utilize resources more effectively; this is particularly of value due to the low participation. The research provided was unable to provide statistical evidence to support a finding of statistical difference between direct and indirect supervisors; however, Rego et al. (2012) suggested that junior supervisors should be the focus due to learned behavior not being established. Once local government leaders have determined the needs of the training programs, the next course of action for local government leaders to consider is the determination of how to fund such programs.

Reallocation of Funding

Jewson et al. (2015) expressed that researchers frequently see employer-provided training at a higher level of funding in the public sector than in the private sector and that often in times of financial crisis, those training and development funds are cut. Jewson et al. (2015) further suggested that organizations should modify modes of delivery instead of establishing funding cuts. In 2018, on average, training budgets were reduced by 6.8 percent (Training, 2018). Other training budgets decreased overall to \$29.6 billion in 2018, from \$44.5 billion in 2017 (Training, 2018). Due to COVID-19, recent financial concerns have created a new potential for budgetary cuts to programs such as training, even in the public sector. The high correlation of authentic leadership with leadership confidence demonstrates a need for public sector organizations such as local governments to reevaluate training budgets to ensure that confidence in supervisory leadership is maintained, even during periods of financial concerns. Training (2018) expressed that governments and the military had the highest total budget for training than any other group evaluated. A potential alternative local government leader should consider may be to lower the

budget for tools and focus on critical training to improve leadership confidence and trust.

Leaders should evaluate the training tools' effectiveness against the value that the training tool provides to employees. Reduction in technology-based learning and training platforms, in line with service industries, manufacturers, retail, education, associations, and nonprofits, may offer a means to reallocate resources to meet the organization's needs better. Holistically, local governments and the public should review and improve training program budgets to support authentic leadership development programs due to the high correlation with leadership confidence that could improve local government leadership trust.

Improved Retention of Staff

There is evidence that training and development programs increase profitability, enhance the organization's reputation, and reduce overall organizational attrition (Spren et al., 2020). Authentic leadership development is critical for local government leaders to retain staff. Mwita et al. (2018) demonstrated through their research study of commercial banks that there is a linear relationship between leadership and retention. It stands to reason that local governments that improve authentic leadership, a new leadership style will also improve employee retention based on past research. Another reason training and succession management of existing staff is essential is that in recent years there has been an increasing number of retirements of many public sector managers in both the United States and the European Union; this rate is expected by researchers to continue over the next decade (Cregård & Corin, 2019). Existing research is limited in extensiveness to public-sector voluntary managerial turnover, with very few research articles published in recent years (Cregård et al., 2017). This period in time represents a critical juncture where local governments need to reevaluate their organization's succession management programs for key leaders. In addition, the findings of this research support local government

leaders developing and molding up and coming leaders to be better suited for authentic leadership and improve existing organization trust organically through the focused efforts on junior staff. Without the additional focus, there will there be a void of leadership and potential further lost in organization leadership confidence and trust.

Recommendations for Further Studies

Future studies should evaluate the variables of authentic leadership and leadership confidence against each variable's primary constructs to determine if one construct has more correlation than the others on overall leadership confidence. This study's time limitations prevented an experimental design that could provide causation between the two variables; however, future researchers may find value in evaluating authentic leadership and leadership confidence over a period of time where additional development was provided to leaders to improve authentic leadership characteristics. Future research on causation could provide value to local governments with respect to further refining development programs. Future researchers may also find value in expanding the realm of research beyond a single organization; this expansion would increase the amount of empirical research on the topic of authentic leadership.

Correlation of Primary Construct

The primary goal of the research conducted was to determine if there was a correlation between two variables, authentic leadership and leadership confidence. The instruments utilized in the study further refine those variables from their primary constructs. The primary constructs of authentic leadership are transparency, moral or ethical behavior, balanced processing, and self-awareness (Walumbwa et al., 2008). The primary constructs of leadership efficacy or leader confidence are the perceived capability to execute critical actions, the perceived capability to think through complex situations, and the perceived ability to draw on resources to enhance

leadership abilities (Hannah et al., 2012). The data points for authentic leadership's constructs could be summarized from existing data and compare against overall leadership confidence to determine if there is a higher correlation between the primary constructs of authentic leadership and leadership confidence. Conversely, the three primary constructs of leadership efficacy could be summarized and correlated with authentic leadership to determine if a higher relationship exists. The additional examination could provide additional insight into the relationship between authentic leadership and leadership confidence.

Correlation and Causation

Although sometimes misinterpreted correlation does not imply causation (Huang, 2014). When two variables are correlated, such as authentic leadership and leadership confidence, it does mean that the first variable causes the second or vice versa (Huang, 2014). Altman and Krzywinski (2015) provided further insight on dependence and causation by explaining that in order to show dependence, one variable has to show influence on the other. An experimental design over a period of time, where additional training is provided, may offer future researchers a means to show dependency or causation between the variables of authentic leadership and leadership confidence.

Other Public Sectors

The research population consisted of a single department within local government; the total population of the entire local government was approximately 3,509 individuals. This researcher rationalized that the process of contacting local government employees through their department directors would have been prohibitively time-consuming, especially in the context of a time-restricted study. The process would also increase the potential for limited access to non-respondents, especially during time periods of crisis, such as COVID-19. Expanding the research

to include more departments within local governments has the potential to increase data related to the field of study. This researcher recommends that additional studies be done at different localities or municipalities and that future researchers focus on different departments with different sizes. The population studied for this research was a medium to large-sized department; future researchers may examine multiple small departments or focus primarily on large-sized departments within local government. The benefit of such research is that it provides a better understanding of the larger population of local government, allowing the research to be more reflective of the local government population (Salkind, 2010).

Reflection

The researcher for this study has worked as a leader in various fields, including the nuclear, water, and wastewater field for more than 16 years. The researcher also holds several degrees, including an Associate of Science in Environmental Science and Technology, a Bachelor of Science in Nuclear Engineering Technology, a Master of Business Administration, and a Master of Science in Information Systems. The research study provided this researcher with their first-ever experience with scholarly research and provided an opportunity to refine valuable research skills during the course of the study. The researcher had experience in practical application with utilizing the statistical analysis to address common dilemmas related to business applications; however, the research provided new learned experience with primary data collection and independent analysis. As a direct result of the research's time constraints during the research balancing family commitments and work commitments with the research commitments, the researcher has a new understanding of time management.

The research findings supported the researcher's initial preconceived ideas related to authentic leadership and leadership confidence based on anecdotal evidence from past leadership

experiences. The researcher has had many positions within the military and the water/wastewater industry; this experience has shown the researcher that authentic leaders typically garner trust from their team and unauthentic leaders typically instill misgivings in followers. The correlation found through the study was much higher than the researcher suspected; this reaffirmed the researcher's previous position that there was a relationship between authentic leadership and leadership confidence. The researcher also had a preconceived idea that direct and indirect supervisors would have a difference in the relationship between authentic leadership and leadership confidence; however, the research findings did not support the researcher's previous perception of direct and indirect supervisor relationships. Life experiences had previously demonstrated to the researcher that the close relationship between supervisors and subordinates typically created stronger responses due to the direct day to day interactions than is typically seen with indirect supervisors. The research findings suggest that this preconceived concept may not be accurate or that there may be unique circumstances within the chosen population that are exceptions to the rule; further studies are needed by researchers to determine which idea may be correct and more appropriate with reflecting on this study's participants.

As mentioned earlier in the study, there is a potential for sample bias due to the researcher working for the organization over multiple years. The bias could have created an opportunity for sample results for indirect supervisors to be impacted, since the researcher was an indirect supervisor for many of the participants. In addition, individuals within the chosen organization have worked closely with the researcher for many years and at various levels within the organization; therefore, some bias in response may be present concerning the researcher. It is important to note that the researcher is in a leadership position within the chosen local government. It was also established by the researcher to the participants that confidentially

would be maintained through unique identifiers; however, there still exists a potential that some participants may not have entirely accepted the confidentiality and ranked inherently higher when evaluating their management team members. To prevent bias of results, the researcher proposed to utilize an additional individual to record the responses from individuals that the researcher has a direct leadership relationship. This extra step, in conjunction with the unique identifiers, ensured that any bias was limited and not impactful to the research findings.

Biblical Principles

Winston (2018) expressed through a review of current literature on leadership that followers, through observation and interpretation, will attribute a motive to a leader's actions. The Bible reflects this concept through Matthew 5:13–16 (*New International Version*, 2011). The verses suggest that once someone loses their true self, they are worthless and have no purpose. The verses further suggest that Christian leaders should retain their values or core selves and that through that conviction they are examples or provide light to others, and through their pure actions, they glorify God. This visual is powerful imagery, especially in the context of the verse. Through Jesus Christ's use of imagery, he is suggesting that the light on the hill that shines for miles around is the same as the light a Christian leader shines when they demonstrated authentic Christian values to others within their organization. The authentic leader must be true to their values, but they must also be true to their word. Matthew 5:33–37 (*New International Version*, 2011) provides context to this statement and proclaims that individuals should not make false vows or lie, but instead should fulfill the commits to God. In today's organizations, it is more important than ever to adhere to these principles of honestly and trueness to self so that we can lead collectively as Christians.

Summary and Conclusion

Research in leadership continues to be of high interest for both the public and private sectors; this interest is not limited to the academic setting; practitioners also have an interest in understanding leadership and improving on it. The inherent desire to understand and improve on leadership is compounded by the recent loss in confidence and trust in government, especially during times of crisis. Existing research by Hannah et al. (2012) and Walumbwa et al. (2008) provided the foundation for examining the variables. The research builds on existing research and fills existing gaps in research related to authentic leadership by contributing to research's empirical and practitioner classifications. The research further filled existing gaps in research by providing a viewpoint into the public sector, primarily the local government, which is not well represented in existing research.

The research study examined one local government through the lens of authentic leadership and leadership confidence to further understand the relationship between the two variables and to strengthen existing knowledge in the field of study. The research utilized a quantitative approach in conjunction with a correlational design to determine if there was a significant relationship between the two variables of authentic leadership and confidence in leadership. The primary finding of the research was that there was significant statistical evidence that there was a correlation between authentic leadership and leadership confidence or trust in leadership. The secondary finding of the research shows that there was inadequate evidence to conclude that direct and indirect supervisors had a difference in the relationship between authentic leadership and leadership confidence. Based on the finding of the research, the researcher proposed three actions that local government leaders could take to strengthen their organizations: improve training programs to incorporate aspects of authentic leadership;

reallocation of resources and funding effective training programs; and strengthening succession management programs by focusing efforts on the junior leaders that may have the most significant impact on organization trust in the long-term. Further study related to authentic leadership and authentic leadership is needed to advance the field of study; however, the research study provides a stable building block to enhance understanding and provide local government leaders insight into ways to improve local government organizations through authentic leadership.

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