



Credible Leadership: Characteristics and Effects on Leader Performance

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Abstract

Current perspectives on leadership view it as an influential force, leading to the emergence of innovative approaches such as authentic, spiritual, adaptive, and servant leadership. There is a strong relationship between the leader and the followers, as they collaborate to achieve shared objectives. The aim of this study was to identify the traits that establish leaders as credible and to understand the impact of leadership credibility on a leader's performance. Data was gathered through literature reviews and telephone interviews with key informants. From the responses, major themes were identified, and the data was categorized based on different concepts. The interviewees characterized credible leaders as those who demonstrate integrity, ethics, honesty, selflessness, servant leadership, motivation, inspiration, thoughtfulness, exemplary behavior, empowerment of their followers, and the fostering of team spirit. The study concluded that credible leaders engage in ethical behavior and humility, invest in their own growth and that of others, possess effective communication skills, and are attentive listeners.

Keywords: *Credible, Leadership, Characteristics, Leader, Performance*

1.0 Introduction

The concept of leadership has been interpreted from various perspectives by researchers. Many have attempted to dissect the intricacies of leadership, ranging from its definition to the essence of the concept itself. Scholars like Bass (1990), Gardiner (1990), Bryman (1992), and Hickman (2009) have recognized leadership as a multifaceted issue that warrants deeper exploration for a more profound understanding. There are differing viewpoints among researchers; some suggest leadership is a trait or behavior, while others consider it a relationship or a process of information processing, as Northouse (2016) discusses. In the 21st century, researchers have proposed diverse theories to elucidate leadership, with current paradigms framing it as a form of influence, leading to novel approaches such as authentic, spiritual, adaptive, and servant leadership. The study of leadership has been emphasized greatly by individuals, academic institutions, and organizations, the latter of which are particularly focused on recruiting individuals with leadership competencies.

Leadership has been defined in numerous ways by various scholars. Bass (1990) referred to it as a process with the leader at the forefront of a group. Other academics have described leadership as specific traits or characteristics that aid individuals in achieving their objectives. Some believe leadership is the behaviors exhibited by leaders that influence their followers toward change. For a number of scholars, leadership is a power relationship, with leaders utilizing their power to effect change in their followers. Others see leadership as a transformational process that encourages followers to exceed expectations. There are also those who regard leadership as a skill that renders leaders effective in their roles. Northouse (2016) synthesized these differing viewpoints to propose a comprehensive definition of leadership: a process in which an individual influence a group to attain a common goal. Therefore, leadership involves a process, influence, common objectives, and occurs within a group dynamic. Leaders and followers engage in a closely intertwined relationship, striving together toward a mutual aim. Kouzes and Posner (2011) note the evolution of leadership from a hierarchical, command-and-control approach to one that is inspirational and merit-based, emphasizing that leadership must be earned daily through the choices people make about whether to follow. Leadership is fundamentally a relationship between the leader and followers, and the success of any skills, tactics, and strategies hinges on this foundational understanding.

Chalmers (2016) contends that leadership is about influence and relationships, where followers should align with the vision and be driven and motivated by the leader to achieve goals. Leaders should consistently demonstrate behaviors that reflect concern for their followers' welfare. Key traits that people expect from their leaders include integrity, competency, inspiration, and credibility (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). The admired dimensions of credibility in leaders encompass honesty, competence, and the ability to inspire. People are inclined to follow leaders they can trust, who are reliable and competent, and who can motivate them to utilize their full potential. Credible leaders foster trust through their authentic behavior. Authentic leaders, known for their genuineness and trustworthiness, build their credibility throughout their leadership journey and adhere to values that guide their actions.

1.1 Credibility

According to Kouzes and Posner (2011), credibility describes how leaders earn confidence and trust from their followers. Credibility is about what leaders must do to win the commitment of the

followers in giving of their time and energy towards a common cause. Credibility is measured by those who are led and not the ones who lead. Credibility is the foundation on which leadership is built. Credibility is earned over time and has to developed on a daily basis. The leader has to spend time with the followers so that they get to know them before they decide on whether they will put their trust in them. Competence alone does not give a leader credibility. Credibility creates a firm foundation on which the leader builds the vision of the organization. Without credibility the foundation is shaky, and the leader may succeed only for a while. Leaders who are credible make a positive difference in the lives of their followers, thus raising their self-esteem and performance level. Credible leaders inspire the followers to be loyal and committed to their tasks which raises the performance of the organization. The credibility of the leader raises the followers' willingness to give of their energy, time, talents, creativity, experience and intelligence in order to achieve the highest levels of performance. The leader must show that they are concerned about the welfare of their followers and that they are keen to develop them. The leader must sustain credibility by being honest, disciplined and committed to their work throughout. In order to continue building and sustaining credibility, the leader should follow the disciplines of affirming shared values, discovering themselves, appreciating the followers, serving a purpose, developing capacity and sustaining hope.

1.2 Authenticity

Authentic leadership though complex to define is viewed as one which is real and genuine. As explained by Northouse, (2016), scholars have tried to define authentic leadership as intrapersonal, interpersonal and developmental. Shamir and Eliam (2005) describe authentic leadership as intrapersonal based on what happen within the leader, where the leaders exhibit genuineness, lead from conviction and they are original. Eagly (2005) describes authentic leadership from the perspective of interpersonal where he says the leader and followers are in a reciprocal relationship which they have both created. Other scholars describe leadership as developmental (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner, Avolio & Walumbwa, 2005; Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernising & Perterson, 2008). From this developmental perspective authentic leadership is a pattern of behaviour which the leader develops based on positive psychological qualities and strong ethics. Leaders who are authentic are able to understand their values and their behaviours towards their followers are based on these values. Authentic leaders possess the characteristics of self-knowledge, self-regulation, self-concept and build strong relationships with their followers (Northouse, 2016). Authentic leadership is developed over time by the leaders, and it is characterized by self-awareness and strong ethics which the leader adopts as behaviours. Authentic leaders will build an environment of trust and freedom in the organization. Followers gain trust in their leaders if they are authentic in their behaviours (Kouzes & Posner, 2011).

1.3 Methodology

The research applied qualitative approach in the information gathering. Information on credible leadership was gathered from three identified leaders drawn from different organizations. The aim was to try and answer the following questions: 1. How would you define credible leadership? 2. What characteristics would you expect in a credible leader? 3. What do you think are the five most critical values which a leader must have? 4. What effects would you expect credible leaders to have on the people they lead? 5. What should a person do to become a credible leader? The

information collected was analyzed according to the different themes based on the research questions and grouped together based on the various concepts.

1.4 Definition of Credible Leadership

Credible leadership is anchored on the bedrock of integrity, ethical conduct, and positive character attributes such as honesty, trustworthiness, and the ability to put others' interests before one's own. This definition emerges from the responses of the interviewees in the study. Interviewee 1 emphasized the importance of integrity, ethical leadership, and positive character traits like honesty and integrity, as well as the ability to prioritize others over self. Similarly, Interviewee 2 defined credible leadership as one that is ethical and exhibits positive character attributes, including honesty, integrity, and placing the interests of followers and institutions before self. Interviewee 3 described a credible leader as one who is knowledgeable, trustworthy, respectful, and empowers others, highlighting the qualities of mutual respect and being respected and trusted. The virtues of integrity, ethics, honesty, and considering others before oneself are critical components of credible leadership, as highlighted by the interviewees. Kouzes and Posner (2011) describe credibility as the process by which leaders earn the trust and confidence of their followers. Credibility is about what followers expect from their leaders before they can willingly commit their hearts and minds to a common cause. Leaders must take specific actions to earn and sustain the credibility and commitment of their followers. Integrity, honesty, and prioritizing others' interests are among the values that contribute to a leader's credibility.

In addition, credible leaders are authentic, genuine, and stand by their words; they are original. Gardner et al. (2004) describe authentic leaders as individuals who know who they are, what they think and believe, and how they behave, and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others' values, moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths. Authentic leaders are also aware of the context in which they operate, and they possess confidence, resilience, hopefulness, and a strong moral character. These qualities of authenticity, self-awareness, and moral fortitude are essential components of credible leadership, as identified by the interviewees and supported by theoretical frameworks. Credible leadership is also characterized by empowerment and respect for followers. As Interviewee 3 mentioned, credible leaders empower others and foster an environment of mutual respect. This aligns with the findings of Kouzes and Posner (2012), who identify "enabling others to act" as one of the five practices of exemplary leadership. Credible leaders empower and enable their followers by fostering collaboration, building trust, and promoting a sense of ownership and accountability among team members. Moreover, credible leaders exhibit ethical decision-making and uphold moral principles in their actions and decisions. Brown and Treviño (2006) highlight the importance of ethical leadership, which they define as "the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making." Credible leaders serve as ethical role models, communicating and reinforcing ethical standards, and making decisions that are consistent with moral principles and values.

1.5 Characteristics of A Credible Leader

The interviewees identified several key characteristics that define a credible leader, including integrity, honesty, servant leadership, self-driven motivation, the ability to inspire others, and a

considerate nature. These characteristics resonate with the findings of Kouzes and Posner's (2011) studies, which revealed that leaders who are greatly admired by people possess qualities such as integrity (trustworthiness, truthfulness, character, and convictions), leadership (decisiveness, inspiration, and direction-setting), and competence (capability, productivity, and efficiency). In today's leadership landscape, leadership is a relationship and an inspiration that must be earned every day, as people make the choice to follow or not follow a leader. Leadership has evolved beyond the traditional command-and-control approach, and leaders must make continuous efforts to gain the trust of their followers.

According to Kouzes and Posner (2011), the four main characteristics of admired leaders are honesty, the ability to inspire others, forward-thinking, and competence. These characteristics align with the responses of the interviewees, who emphasized the importance of honesty, integrity, inspiring others, and competence. A credible leader must be trustworthy, truthful, and possess strong moral character and convictions. Additionally, they must be capable of motivating and inspiring their followers, providing direction and a vision for the future. Competence in their respective fields and the ability to deliver results are also crucial for a credible leader to earn the respect and trust of their followers. In addition, the interviewees highlighted the significance of servant leadership and consideration for others as essential characteristics of a credible leader. Servant leadership is a leadership philosophy that prioritizes the needs and interests of followers over the leader's self-interest (Greenleaf, 1977). Credible leaders must be considerate of their followers, empowering them, and fostering an environment of mutual respect and collaboration. This aligns with Kouzes and Posner's (2012) finding that "enabling others to act" is one of the five practices of exemplary leadership. Credible leaders empower and enable their followers by building trust, promoting a sense of ownership and accountability, and encouraging collaboration within the team. Honesty is a fundamental characteristic of credible leadership, as it implies that the promises made by the leader to their followers are kept. It means that the leader adheres to their words, earning them respect and raising the confidence of their followers. Honesty is a key essential in leadership because people will only follow leaders whom they are sure can be trusted, truthful, and principled. Followers can only put their trust in a leader who exhibits honesty. Dishonesty, on the other hand, is like poison – it breaks trust and cohesion within the team (Kouzes and Posner, 2011). Honesty is the foundation upon which credible leadership is built, as it fosters an environment of trust, respect, and confidence among followers. Moreover, honesty is closely tied to integrity, another vital characteristic of credible leadership. Kouzes and Posner (2011) emphasize that honesty is a crucial component of integrity, which is essential for leaders to build credibility and earn the trust of their followers. Leaders who consistently demonstrate honesty in their words and actions are perceived as having high integrity, which in turn enhances their credibility and effectiveness as leaders.

Credible leaders are authentic, and they live with integrity (Hollis, 2018). Integrity is a firm adherence to moral and ethical principles, character, honesty, and one's personal value system. It is a focus on one's moral values with consistency. A person is said to practice integrity if they are able to follow their value system most of the time. Authentic leaders have values that encompass truthfulness, keeping their word, fairness, and loyalty to their followers and the organization. When a leader operates with integrity, their followers will align themselves with the leader's values, creating a culture of integrity within the organization. It is crucial for a leader to be able to identify

their values clearly. The foundation of a person's values is based on what they believe in, what they appreciate, what they think about, what they talk about, what is important to them, how they judge others, and how they judge themselves. When leaders are clear about their values, they are able to create teams of high integrity within the organization. Oginde (2011) found that integrity was a key factor that people considered when describing the characteristics of good and admired leaders. Followers are ready to follow leaders who are authentic and possess integrity.

People will typically admire leaders who show enthusiasm, positivity, dynamism, and optimism. Inspiring leaders are able to share their vision with their followers, enabling them to work together towards a common goal (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). Oginde (2011) found that followers expect their leaders to inspire and motivate them. The leader should be able to inspire their followers with optimism, encouraging them to work willingly towards goal attainment. Followers will be committed to leaders who are able to inspire them. Moreover, inspiring leaders have the ability to ignite passion and motivation within their teams. They can articulate a compelling vision that resonates with their followers, fostering a sense of purpose and direction. Inspiring leaders also demonstrate unwavering belief in their followers' abilities, empowering them to achieve greatness. Through their words, actions, and unwavering determination, inspiring leaders can rally their followers to overcome challenges and achieve remarkable feats (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). Consequently, followers are more likely to be engaged, committed, and willing to go the extra mile for a leader who inspires them.

A key characteristic of a credible leader, as identified by the respondents, is being considerate and embodying the principles of servant leadership. Servant leadership is a leadership philosophy that prioritizes the welfare, empowerment, and growth of followers over the leader's self-interest. Servant leaders are deeply concerned about the well-being of their followers, showing empathy and nurturing their development. They place the needs of their followers before their own, empowering them to reach their full potential and achieve their goals. Servant leaders operate with a strong ethical foundation, working for the greater good of the organization and society as a whole. According to Northouse (2016), the characteristics of a servant leader include listening actively, demonstrating empathy, possessing a healing mindset, cultivating self-awareness and awareness of others, practicing persuasion rather than coercion, having a conceptual understanding of the organization and its goals, exhibiting foresight and anticipating future challenges, serving as a steward of the organization's resources, building a sense of community within the team, and being committed to the personal and professional growth of their followers. These qualities enable servant leaders to create an environment of trust, respect, and empowerment, where followers feel valued, supported, and motivated to contribute their best efforts towards shared objectives.

1.6 Five Most Critical Values of a Credible Leader

The respondents identified several critical values that a credible leader should possess. The most prominent values that emerged were honesty, integrity, humility, inspiration, selflessness, commitment, vision, ethics, trustworthiness, self-awareness, and emotional intelligence. The ability to engage and empower others, listen to opinions, practice self-reflection, and a willingness to learn and be competent were also highlighted as essential values for credible leaders. Honesty, integrity, and being ethical were consistently mentioned as critical values across all respondents. These values form the foundation of credible leadership, as leaders must be trustworthy,

principled, and uphold moral standards to earn the trust and commitment of their followers. Copeland (2014) emphasizes that values-based leadership, grounded in ethics and morals, is demonstrated through authentic, ethical, and transformational leadership styles. When leaders are committed to their values, they become more effective, and their impact extends beyond organizational performance, inspiring followers to create long-term, value-driven organizational cultures. In addition, the respondents emphasized the importance of humility, sincerity, and being visionary. A credible leader should remain grounded, reflect on their journey, and acknowledge their shortcomings and those of their followers without fear of punishment. Encouraging an environment where mistakes are accepted and learned from fosters confidence and innovation among followers. Moreover, credible leaders must be sincere, committed to the organization's goals, and able to inspire others with a clear vision. By modeling these values, leaders become role models for their followers, enhancing their commitment to the shared values and goals of the organization.

The characteristics and values of credible leaders, as given by the respondents, overlapped in terms of honesty, integrity, the ability to inspire, and ethical conduct. The other critical values identified included humility, sincerity, commitment, visionary thinking, trustworthiness, self-awareness, emotional intelligence, willingness to learn, competence, engaging and empowering others, listening to diverse opinions, and self-reflection. Copeland (2014) posits that values-based leadership is about the behaviors of a leader grounded in ethics and morals, demonstrated through authentic, ethical, and transformational leadership. When leaders are committed to their values, they become more effective, and the effects extend beyond organizational performance. Organizations today need leaders with values, purpose, and integrity to inspire followers and create organizational cultures with long-term values. Honesty, integrity, humility, sincerity, inspiring vision, selflessness, high commitment, ethical behavior, trustworthiness, self-awareness, emotional intelligence, willingness to learn, competence, engagement, empowerment, active listening, and self-reflection are critical values that define credible leadership, as evidenced by the respondents' insights and supported by scholarly literature (Copeland, 2014; Kouzes & Posner, 2011; Northouse, 2016). The five most critical values of a credible leader are discussed below:

1.6.1 Humility

The leader should always reflect back on where they started and especially when they become successful. Genuine humility helps the leader to value all the followers and treat them respectfully. When leaders notice any shortcomings either from themselves or the followers, they should be ready to admit it. People should be encouraged to admit shortcomings without fear of being punished for them. However, both leaders and followers should be willing to apologize for their mistakes (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). Humility plays a big role in creating confidence and innovation among the followers.

1.6.2 Commitment

Leaders must take the first step when it comes to taking up tasks or roles in the organization. Going first shows commitment and they act as role models for the followers. The followers follow the behaviours of the leader, and this therefore means that leaders must be great examples (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). Followers watch the commitment of the leader in upholding the shared values. When the leader is committed to the values the followers will be willing to adhere to them as well.

The leader should be committed to the organization goals and to the followers in order to enhance the commitment of followers as well. The followers look up to the leader as their role model. Therefore, the leader should be committed to adopt behaviours that are consistent with their values and those of the organization (Hollis, 2018). Integrity enhances the commitment of the leader.

1.6.3 Self-awareness

Self-awareness is the ability of the leader to know themselves, that is their behaviours, traits and feelings. Self-awareness helps the leader to understand their strengths and weaknesses, so that they focus on their areas of strength and work on their weaknesses (Drucker, 2008). Credible leaders are aware of themselves, and they use their strengths and talents to motivate their followers. Leaders who have high levels of self-awareness are able to create strong relationships with their followers. Self-awareness motivates leaders to keep learning in order to develop themselves. Kouzes and Posner (2011) posit that credible leaders keep developing themselves as well their followers. Developing followers helps them to attain their full potential, and they become motivated to perform beyond what is expected of them. Luckman et al. (2019) posits that self-awareness makes the leaders to be considerate in decision-making as they are concerned about the effects of their decisions on the followers. When the followers feel that the leader is concerned about them, they are motivated to work, and this improves organizational performance.

1.6.4 Emotional Intelligence

Goleman (2004) states that when a leader is able to identify and control their own emotions and those of others, they will be able to create good relationships with followers and this enhances their performance. Emotional intelligence helps the leader to make better decisions when they face situations in the organization. Social skills and empathy which are components of emotional intelligence have been associated with better relationships, and they help the leader to direct followers towards the desired direction. Credible leaders strive to improve their relationships with the followers and it is important that they build their emotional intelligence. Emotional intelligence has been associated with effective communication and good listening skills. Oginde (2011) found that admired leaders possess good listening skills, and they are effective communicators. Effective communication improves team spirit and enhances the performance of followers.

1.6.5 Inspiration

People will normally admire leaders who show enthusiasm, positivity, dynamism, and optimism. Leaders who are inspiring are able to share their vision with their followers so that they work together towards a common goal (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). Oginde (2011) found that followers expect their leaders to inspire and motivate them. The leader should be able to inspire the followers to optimism such that they may work willingly towards goal attainment. Followers will be committed to leaders who are able to inspire them.

1.7 Effects Credible Leaders May Have on the People They Lead

Credible leaders have a profound impact on their followers, inspiring them to embrace the leader's vision, believe in the cause, and commit to achieving shared goals (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). The respondents highlighted that credible leaders serve as role models, providing positive examples

through their actions and behaviors. Their authenticity and genuine nature foster trust and respect among their followers, who are more inclined to emulate leaders they admire and perceive as credible. Moreover, credible leaders empower their followers by developing their skills and capacities. They allocate resources for capacity building, enabling followers to enhance their competencies, build confidence, make informed choices, and take calculated risks. This empowerment not only improves organizational performance but also challenges leaders to remain focused and act authentically, even in difficult circumstances. By fostering a growth mindset, credible leaders encourage their followers to learn from mistakes, continuously improve, and take ownership of their choices and outcomes (Cashman, 2017).

Northouse (2016) defines leadership as a process where the leader influences the followers to work towards the achievement of common goals. Leadership is a transactional event that occurs between leaders and followers. In credible leadership, followers follow the leader because of the trust they have in him/her. For followers to have trust, the leader must be authentic, they must be genuine. Authentic leadership involves interactions between the leader and followers. Gardner et al. (2008) describe authentic leadership as a developmental process that the leader nurtures over time; it is not a single trait. They depict that the leader builds the behaviors of self-awareness, balanced processing, internalized moral perspective, and relational transparency over time, which are key components in authentic leaders. Today, people are not only interested in leaders but are looking for leaders with authenticity, those who can be trusted. To be a person of influence requires that people have trust in the leader, not just competencies and skills. Followers are keen to follow leaders who are good role models in the way they behave.

Credible leaders are keen on building the capacity of their followers to perform their tasks effectively. When the capacity of followers is built to the extent that they can put into practice the shared values, the performance of the organization improves greatly, and the credibility of the leader rises to a high level (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). To grow in credibility, the leader needs to grow their followers. The leader has to be willing to allocate resources for capacity building to develop the talents and skills of the followers so that they can become competent, build confidence, make better choices, and be ready to take risks. Building the skills and competencies of people has been found to enhance their productivity much more than technology and resources. Leaders need to develop themselves as they develop others, as this will make them well-equipped and encouraged as they perform their work. When followers' capacity is improved, it raises their confidence levels, and they feel motivated to work (Neider & Schriesheim, 2014). Developing followers challenges the leader to remain focused and act authentically, even under difficult circumstances. Credible leaders empower their followers to have a mindset shift so that they are free to use their competencies in making choices and own the results of these choices, even when they have made mistakes. Followers learn from their mistakes to improve themselves.

Credible leaders create a team spirit among their followers. Respect between members helps strengthen teamwork. Followers should be encouraged to learn self-respect and respect for others. Honesty and communication are key in fostering respect and team spirit (Vilma, 2018). Followers want to work with dependable and cooperative people; they need collaboration among their colleagues. Cooperation is essential in accomplishing individual and group tasks in an organization. Cooperation makes the team committed to accomplishing organizational goals (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). Robbins and Judge (2017) posit that for teams to be effective in an

organization, the leader should ensure they are competent, there is a climate of trust, resources are allocated, and an evaluation system exists. Team members should have the necessary skills and traits. With global changes, teamwork is encouraged in organizations today for competitiveness in the global market. Leaders should check the statements they make so that they have the intended message for the audience. In their communication a leader should not make commitments or promises which they cannot fulfil as this can be termed as dishonesty. Information sharing and feedback develops the capacity of followers and also builds the trust that people have in the leader. Transparency with information clears any suspicion among the members within the organization and builds the credibility of the leader (Kouzes & Posner, 2011). Giving followers feedback on their performance motivates them to aim higher and keep improving. When people find themselves deficient in their performance, they will be motivated to put effort and improve their performance when their levels of confidence and competence have been elevated. Credible leaders should be able to express themselves in a manner which is authentic and assertive (Bryant & Kazan, 2012). To be understood leaders should be trusted, respect the followers, confident, a listener and use good communication channels.

Oginde (2011) found listening as one of the habits found in admired leaders. People are concerned about the behaviour of the leader when it comes to paying attention to what they are saying. Leaders should listen to the followers as this motivates them to perform their tasks. Listening to the concerns of followers shows that the leader is empathetic. Good listening skills and empathy are components of emotional intelligence which are important markers of credibility. Good listening requires that one does not jump to make conclusions but takes time to review the feedback (Drucker, 2008). Being a good listener helps the leader to understand their followers and learn a lot from them.

1.8 Conclusion

The study shows that essential characteristics and values define credible leadership, as well as the profound impact credible leaders have on their followers and organizational performance. The respondents' insights provide a comprehensive understanding of what it takes to be a credible leader and the far-reaching effects such leaders can have. Credible leaders are distinguished by their unwavering integrity, honesty, and ethical conduct. They lead by example, serving as role models for their followers and exhibiting a genuine commitment to the organization's goals and the well-being of those they lead. Credible leaders are considerate, embodying the principles of servant leadership, putting the needs of their followers before their own, and inspiring them to achieve their full potential. Humility, self-awareness, and emotional intelligence are critical qualities that enable credible leaders to foster strong relationships, make well-informed decisions, and navigate complex situations with empathy and resilience. In addition, credible leaders possess the ability to influence and empower their followers. Through effective communication, active listening, and a commitment to developing others, they cultivate a sense of ownership and belief in the organization's vision. By creating an environment of trust, respect, and collaboration, credible leaders foster a strong team spirit, where followers feel valued, motivated, and dedicated to achieving collective goals. This empowerment not only enhances individual and organizational performance but also challenges leaders to continuously grow, learn, and act with authenticity, even in the face of adversity. In essence, credible leadership is a multifaceted concept that transcends mere competence or authority. It is a journey of self-discovery, personal growth, and a

steadfast commitment to ethical principles and the well-being of those entrusted to a leader's care. By embodying the characteristics and values outlined in this research, leaders can inspire trust, foster innovation, and create a lasting legacy of positive change within their organizations and communities.

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