



UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

Leader-Follower Dark Triad Traits Congruence  
and Perceived Leader Authenticity:  
A Cross-Cultural Perspective

Ana Salgado

Católica Porto Business School, Universidade Católica Portuguesa  
setembro 2024



UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA PORTUGUESA

Leader-Follower Dark Triad Traits Congruence  
and Perceived Leader Authenticity:  
A Cross-Cultural Perspective

Master Final Work  
submitted to Universidade Católica Portuguesa  
for the obtainment of the Management Master Degree

by

Ana Salgado

under orientation of  
Jon Gruda

Católica Porto Business School, Universidade Católica Portuguesa  
setembro 2024



# Acknowledgments

As this dissertation draws to a close, I would like to thank all the people who, directly or indirectly, contributed to keep me motivated to develop this work.

I would like to express gratitude to my supervisor, Jon Gruda, whose solid support, guidance, and expertise were invaluable throughout this journey. His insightful feedback was essential in shaping this dissertation.

Also, I would like to thank my parents, my sister and my close friends for their unwavering support and encouragement. Their belief in me has been a constant source of motivation and strength.



# Resumo

A presente dissertação examina a complexidade inerente à autenticidade na liderança relativamente aos traços de personalidade obscura e ao contexto cultural, centrando-se especificamente na congruência destes traços de personalidade entre líderes e seguidores. A liderança autêntica, reconhecida por promover a genuinidade e a integridade, é contrastada com a natureza frequentemente manipuladora dos traços de personalidade obscura – narcisismo, maquiavelismo e psicopatia. Através de uma análise de regressão multinível com uma amostra de 4040 participantes distribuídos por 13 países, o estudo examina a forma como a congruência destes traços afeta as percepções dos seguidores relativamente à autenticidade do líder, analisando o papel moderador da dimensão cultural distância-poder.

Os resultados confirmam que a congruência entre líder e seguidor nos traços obscuros está associada positivamente às percepções de autenticidade. Além disso, torna-se evidente que, em culturas de elevada distância-poder, a congruência dos traços narcisísticos aumenta a percepção de autenticidade.

Esta investigação dá um contributo à literatura existente ao integrar a congruência de traços psicológicos e as dimensões culturais na compreensão da autenticidade na liderança. Apesar das limitações relativas aos dados auto-relatados e a uma abordagem de estudo transversal, este estudo destaca o impacto significativo destes fatores na formação de percepções de autenticidade na liderança, encorajando futuras explorações académicas na área.

Palavras-chave: Traços de Personalidade Obscura; Autenticidade; Líder; Seguidor; Poder-Distância; Narcisismo; Maquiavelismo; Psicopatia.



# Abstract

This research examines the complex dynamics of authentic leadership in relation to Dark Triad traits (DTT) and cultural contexts, specifically focusing on the congruence of these traits between leaders and followers. Authentic leadership, known for promoting genuineness and integrity, is contrasted with the often manipulative nature of DTT – narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. Using multi-level regression analysis on data from 4040 participants across 13 countries, the study examines how congruence in these traits affects follower perceptions of leader authenticity and the moderating role of power-distance.

The findings confirm that leader-follower congruence in DTT have a positive association with perceptions of leader authenticity. Additionally, it becomes evident that in high power-distance cultures, congruence in narcissistic traits enhances perceived authenticity. Surprisingly, shared high levels of these traits between leaders and follower do not diminish perceptions of authenticity, suggesting a complex dynamic where similarities foster mutual understanding and perceived authentic behaviour.

This research contributes to the literature by integrating psychological trait congruence and cultural dimensions into the understanding of authentic leadership. Despite limitations regarding self-reported data and a cross-sectional study approach, this study highlights the significant impact of these factors in shaping perceptions of leadership authenticity, encouraging further scholarly exploration into effective global leadership strategies.

**Keywords:** Dark Triad Traits; Authenticity; Leader; Follower; Power-Distance; Narcissism; Machiavellianism; Psychopathy;



# Contents

Acknowledgments .....	iii
Resumo .....	v
Abstract .....	vii
Contents .....	ix
Figures Index.....	xii
Tables Index.....	xiv
Introduction .....	16
Literature Review .....	20
1. Authentic Leadership .....	20
1.1 Authenticity .....	20
1.2 Leadership Authenticity .....	21
1.3 Followers Perceptions of Leaders.....	23
1.3.1 How are their perceptions shaped? .....	23
1.3.2 Perceived Authenticity .....	23
1.4 Predictors of Perceived Authentic Leadership .....	24
1.4.1 Shared DTT as a Predictor of Perceived Authenticity .....	25
1.4.1.1 Narcissism .....	25
1.4.1.2 Machiavellianism.....	26
1.4.1.3 Psychopathy .....	27
1.4.2 Cultural Influence: Power-Distance as a Moderator.....	28
1.4.2.1 Cultural Influence on Leadership .....	28
1.4.2.2 Power-Distance Dimension .....	29
2. Conceptual Framework.....	30
2.1 Research Model.....	30
Methodology.....	33
1. Methods.....	33
1.1 Procedure and Sample .....	33
1.2 Measures .....	35
1.2.1 Authenticity.....	35
1.2.2 Dark Triad Traits .....	36
1.2.3 Power-Distance Dimension .....	37

1.2.4 Big-Five Personality Traits .....	37
1.2.5 Controls.....	37
1.3 Data Analysis.....	38
1.3.1 Statistical Approach .....	41
Results .....	42
1. Leader-Follower Congruence in DTT .....	42
2. Power-Distance as a Moderator.....	45
Discussion .....	48
1. Discussion of the findings regarding Hypothesis 1.....	49
2. Discussion of the findings regarding Hypothesis 2.....	50
3. Theoretical Contributions and Implications .....	51
4. Limitations and Future Research.....	52
5. Conclusion .....	53
References .....	55
Annexes .....	62



# Figures Index

<b>Figure 1:</b> Leader-Follower DTT congruence effect on perceived leader authenticity moderated by Power-Distance.....	31
<b>Figure 2.</b> Effect of congruence in narcissistic traits between leader and follower on perceived leader authenticity .....	44
<b>Figure 3.</b> Effect of congruence in Machiavellian traits between leader and follower on perceived leader authenticity.....	44
<b>Figure 4.</b> Effect of congruence in psychopathic traits between leader and follower on perceived leader authenticity.....	45
<b>Figure 5.</b> Effect of congruence in narcissistic traits between leader and follower on perceived leader authenticity moderated by power-distance dimension.....	47



# Tables Index

<b>Table 1:</b> Frequency of responses per culture (STATA).....	34
<b>Table 2.</b> Means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alphas and correlations ...	40
<b>Table 3.</b> Relationship between leader-follower congruence in DTT and perceived leader authenticity .....	43
<b>Table 4.</b> Relationship between leader-follower congruence in DTT and perceived leader authenticity moderated by power-distance dimension .....	46



# Introduction

The pursuit of effective and ethical leadership remains a paramount concern for organizations, particularly as the global business landscape becomes increasingly diverse and complex. Contemporary leadership research emphasizes the importance of the cultivation of authentic leadership, characterized by genuineness, integrity, and transparency, as a cornerstone of organizational success (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; George & Sims, 2007). Authentic leaders inspire trust, loyalty, and engagement, fostering a positive and productive work environment. However, recent research has shed light on the complexities of the authentic leadership and the potential influence of personality traits that can potentially undermine it, particularly those associated with the Dark Triad (Paulhus & Williams, 2002).

Comprising narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy, the Dark Triad represents a constellation of socially aversive traits often associated with manipulative, self-serving, and unethical behaviours (Furnham et al., 2013). While traditionally viewed through a negative lens, the presence of these traits in both leaders and followers introduces a fascinating complexity to the leadership dynamics, potentially influencing follower perceptions of authenticity.

This research seeks to examine how the congruence of Dark Triad traits between leaders and followers relates to the followers perceptions of their leaders authenticity. Furthermore, recognizing the significant role of cultural factors in shaping leadership perceptions, it explores the moderating effect of power-distance on the relationship between leader-follower Dark Triad congruence and perceived authenticity. Power-distance, as described by Hofstede (1980), refers

to the degree to which less powerful members of societies accept and expect that power is distributed unequally.

Guided by these objectives, this research addresses the following questions:

1. Does congruence between leader and follower Dark Triad traits influence followers' perceptions of leader authenticity?
2. Does power-distance moderate the relationship between leader-follower Dark Triad traits congruence and perceived leader authenticity?

This dissertation will explore these relationships through the use of multi-level regression analysis of data collected from 4040 participants across 13 countries. It is organized into four chapters in order to establish the different phases of this research.

First, Chapter 1 provides a comprehensive review of the existing literature on authentic leadership, Dark Triad traits, and power-distance. This chapter establishes a foundation by defining key concepts and exploring their individual and collective impacts. It is also in this chapter that it is developed a conceptual framework for the research, outlining the key variables and relationships that will be examined. It also presents the hypotheses that are expected to be validated using multi-level regression analysis.

Then, Chapter 2 moves into the methodology where it is detailed the data collection procedures, the measures used, and the statistical analysis techniques employed.

Chapter 3 presents the findings of the analysis, examining the significance and patterns observed in the data.

Finally, Chapter 4 discusses the implications of the findings. This chapter examines the theoretical contributions of the study, highlighting the importance of integrating the congruence of leader-follower Dark Triad traits and the

cultural context into a comprehensive understanding of authentic leadership. It also proposes practical recommendations for leaders, followers and organizations seeking to cultivate more authentic and ethical leadership practices.



# Chapter 1

## Literature Review

### 1. Authentic Leadership

This dissertation prioritizes authentic leadership (AL) and emphasizes the importance of studying basic concepts such as authenticity, authentic leaders and leadership. Additionally, it aims to investigate two important aspects in detail that might affect followers' perceptions of their leaders' authenticity – crucial component in determining leadership effectiveness and outcomes. It will specifically look at how congruence between leader and follower Dark Triad Traits (DTT) – narcissism, Machiavellianism, psychopathy – and power-distance dimension influence perceived leader authenticity. By exploring the theoretical foundations and empirical evidence that surround these factors, this literature review aims to establish the basis for testing their validity as predictors of perceived leader authenticity in the subsequent research phases.

#### 1.1 Authenticity

To effectively explore authentic leadership, it is essential to first define the concept of authenticity. Gardner et al. (2011) underscored this point in their comprehensive review of 91 research papers on leadership.

The notion of authenticity is deeply rooted in Greek philosophy, encapsulated by the conception of “to thine own self be true” (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). As

Luthans & Avolio (2003) articulate, this concept revolves around self-awareness and the alignment of one's actions with their true self, manifested through genuine thoughts and beliefs.

Ryan & Deci (2003) proposed that individuals achieve a state of authenticity when they engage in self-regulation processes guided by their internal values rather than external pressures such as social norms or incentives. Their research suggests that individuals with high levels of authenticity experience positive physical and psychological well-being.

It is crucial to comprehend that authenticity is not a binary state. Instead, it is more accurate to visualize it as a spectrum, as suggested by Erickson (1995), with individuals occupying various positions based on circumstances and personal growth.

## 1.2 Leadership Authenticity

The growing concern about the ethical behaviours of leaders has underscored the need for leadership grounded in authenticity and values. Luthans & Avolio (2003) argued for developing a theory-driven model to identify the key variables and relationships guiding AL development.

The intersection of authenticity and leadership concepts presents a paradox in organizational discourse. While leadership involves influencing and being influenced by others, this dynamic interaction can complicate maintaining authenticity. Authentic leadership requires aligning actions and behaviours with deeply held values and principles, fostering trust, integrity and ethical conduct. However, leadership's complex nature, characterized by power dynamics, competing interests and organizational pressures, may challenge the authenticity of those involved (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

George's contributions (George, 2003; George & Sims, 2007) have significantly influenced both practitioner and scholarly interest in AL. George identified five

dimensions of AL: (1) pursuing purpose with passion; (2) practicing solid values; (3) leading with heart; (4) establishing enduring relationships; and (5) demonstrating self-discipline. Though using different terminologies, Kernis and Goldman (Kernis, 2003; Kernis & Goldman, 2006) proposed components of authenticity aligning closely with George's dimensions.

The Gallup Leadership Institute (GLI), led by Bruce Avolio, William Gardner, Fred Luthans, Doug May, Fred Walumbwa, and colleagues, embarked on a research program to refine AL's definition (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner et al., 2005). Their efforts culminate in a model of AL development rooted in Kernis's (2003) multi-component conception of authenticity. Walumbwa et al. (2008) provided a comprehensive definition:

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

The previous definition of AL identifies four main components: (1) *self-awareness*, which is the process of continuously assessing one's strengths and weaknesses through self-reflection and feedback; (2) *balanced processing*, which calls the objective evaluation of pertinent information prior to making decisions, even if it goes against the leader's initial position; (3) *relational transparency*, which is the act of expressing one's true thoughts and feelings to others; and (4) *internalized moral perspective*, in which leaders act in accordance with their moral principles despite outside pressures (Gardner et al., 2005). Walumbwa and associates operationalized and validated this model through the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

## 1.3 Followers Perceptions of Leaders

Throughout time, there has been a shift in leadership research from focusing exclusively on leaders, to examining how followers perceive their interactions with them (Bligh & Schyns, 2007). Meindl's (1995) social constructionist approach suggests that leadership arises when followers view their relationship as having a leader-follower dimension, meaning that followers contribute to empowering leaders and influencing their actions and decisions.

### 1.3.1 How are their perceptions shaped?

Research reveals that the perceptions followers hold about their leaders are shaped not only by the behaviours exhibited by those leaders but also by the inherent characteristics of the followers themselves (Felfe & Schyns, 2010). For instance, when leaders and followers share similar values, it fosters a sense of comfort and mutual understanding (Bjugstad, 2006). Followers are more inclined to connect with leaders who display traits they admire, enhancing the significance of value alignment (Ehrhart & Klein, 2001).

Further explorations into leadership styles, such as charismatic (see Gardner & Avolio, 1998) and transformational leadership (see Hater & Bass, 1988), corroborate the idea that followers' perceptions are affected by their personality traits and perceived similarities with their leaders (Keller, 1999).

### 1.3.2 Perceived Authenticity

According to Černe et al. (2013), authentic leadership is not only about internal congruence<sup>1</sup> but also about being perceived as genuine and trustworthy by those who follow. This perspective highlights that authenticity is not exclusively

---

<sup>1</sup> Internal congruence includes all the four components that were mentioned on the previous topic (Leadership Authenticity), including: self-awareness, balanced processing, relational transparency and internalized moral perspective.

defined by leader's self-perception but also by how followers perceive them (Lord & Maher, 1993). Goffee and Jones (2005) and Harvey et al. (2006) argue that authenticity cannot be exclusively self-proclaimed; it also must be recognized and attributed by followers, making it a relational quality perceived through the leader's actions and behaviours.

Adding a practical dimension, Taylor and Ladkin (2010) emphasized the role of a leader's enactment style. They noted that how leaders present themselves – including body language, tone of voice, and overall manner – significantly determines followers' perceptions of their authenticity. This connects to the foundational ideas of Stanislavski (1996), who focused on "physical action" as a critical component of performance, which can be analogously applied to leadership.

As the field continues to grow, there is a recognized need for further research to explore how followers' perceptions of their leaders align with leaders' self-perceptions in authentic leadership. Understanding this dynamic will enrich our knowledge of the relational aspects between leaders and followers, recognizing authenticity as a construct defined by the interaction of leader behaviours and follower perceptions.

## 1.4 Predictors of Perceived Authentic Leadership

Followers' perceptions of leadership are influenced by individual and group factors shaping their cognitive structures (Stelmokiene & Endriulaitiene, 2015). To understand the relationship between a leader's authentic behaviour and follower's perceptions, it is essential to consider two key predictors: congruence in leader-follower Dark Triad traits (DTT) and the cultural context, specifically the power-distance dimension. By examining these elements, I can develop some comprehensive hypothesis that will serve as a foundation for further validation.

### 1.4.1 Shared DTT as a Predictor of Perceived Authenticity

The interplay between leader and follower dynamics, particularly in the context of Dark Triad traits, represents a fascinating area of study within organizational psychology and leadership research. The Dark Triad encompasses three distinct but related traits – narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy – each of which uniquely influences styles and effectiveness (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Understanding these traits offers valuable insights into how they shape workplace interactions, potentially affecting not only leaders' behaviours but also perceptions of their followers (Furnham et al., 2013). By studying these dynamics, researchers can better predict outcomes related to organizational performance.

#### 1.4.1.1 Narcissism

The term *narcissism* originates from Greek mythology, with the tale of *Narcissus*, a young man who became fixated on his own reflection in a pool of water, leading to his eventual demise due to his inability to look away. In a psychological context, describes a personality characterized by a grandiose sense of self-importance, a need for admiration, and a lack of empathy (Braun, 2017).

In leadership, narcissism can significantly influence dynamics within teams. Narcissistic leaders often maintain a grandiose self-image, viewing themselves as superior and deserving of special treatment (Rosenthal & Pittinsky, 2006). This inflated self-perception can lead to a leadership style that prioritizes personal recognition and achievement over the needs and contributions of followers.

While narcissism is often viewed negatively, it can have both positive and negative implications for leadership. On the one hand, narcissistic leaders can be charismatic and visionary, inspiring followers with their confidence and ambition (Schmid et al., 2021). However, the narcissistic leader's need for admiration can also lead to a lack of empathy towards followers (Fatfouta, 2019),

potentially fostering a work environment where criticism is unwelcome, and followers feel exploited.

The impact of narcissistic leadership is multifaceted, contingent on factors such as the leader's narcissism level, organizational culture, and followers' personalities. Some followers might be drawn to a narcissistic leader's charisma, finding inspiration in their confidence, while others could find the leader's self-centredness demoralizing (Grijalva & Harms, 2014).

#### 1.4.1.2 Machiavellianism

Rooted in the political philosophy of Niccolò Machiavelli, the term *Machiavellianism* describes individuals who prioritize power acquisition above moral considerations (Jones & Paulhus, 2009). This personality construct involves manipulation, and a pragmatic, often ruthless approach to achieving goals (Wilson et al., 1996).

While Machiavellianism is often viewed negatively, particularly in the context of ethical leadership, some argue that certain Machiavellian traits, such as strategic thinking and the ability to make tough decisions, can be advantageous in specific situations, particularly in highly competitive environments where the ends justify the means (Jones & Paulhus, 2009).

Leaders high in Machiavellianism are often skilled at navigating organizational politics, using their charm and persuasiveness to influence others and achieve their goals, even if it means bending ethical rules or exploiting others (Furnham et al., 2013).

They are often strategic thinkers, able to anticipate challenges and develop plans to overcome them. However, their lack of ethical boundaries and disregard for others' well-being can create a climate of distrust and fear within an organization (Jones & Paulhus, 2009).

#### 1.4.1.3 Psychopathy

Psychopathy, the third and often considered most malevolent trait in the Dark Triad, is characterized by a distinct lack of empathy, remorse, and guilt, coupled with shallow emotions, impulsivity, and antisocial tendencies (Hare & Neumann, 2008). Unlike narcissism and Machiavellianism, which primarily focus on self-promotion and strategic manipulation respectively, psychopathy ventures into emotional detachment and behavioural deviance with potentially far-reaching impacts. This trait is marked by a blend of emotional and interpersonal deficits, leading to a troubling disregard for the rights and well-being of others (Hare, 2006).

Although not everyone with psychopathic traits turns to crime, there is a strong correlation between psychopathy and a predisposition for violence, particularly instrumental aggression aimed at achieving specific goals (Dhingra & Boduszek, 2013).

The presence of psychopathic traits in leadership positions can threaten organizational health and well-being. Their leadership often lacks genuine empathy and concern for others. This can lead to a toxic work environment characterised by high turnover, decreased morale, and an erosion of trust and ethical conduct (Babiak & Hare, 2006).

Recognizing and addressing psychopathic traits in leadership positions is crucial for mitigating the potential damage they can inflict.

#### 1.4.1.4 Leader-Follower Congruence in DTT

The degree of congruence between the DTT of leader and follower can have a big impact on how well they get along and interact with each other.

Examining this congruence through the lens of similarity attraction can be very helpful. According to the similarity-attraction paradigm, which was first put forth by Byrne (1971), individuals are naturally inclined to be drawn to others

who have similar traits, beliefs, and attitudes. Improved interpersonal relationships can result from leaders and followers sharing DTT, such as manipulation or self-centredness.. According to Engle & Lord (1997), such shared characteristics can promote a sense of relatability, which in turn can augment perceptions of authenticity.

Additionally, shared traits within the Dark Triad can lead to a deeper mutual understanding and empathy. For instance, a Machiavellian follower might appreciate a Machiavellian leader's strategic ability, considering their actions to be wise and essential (Grijalva and Newman, 2015).

Furthermore, adaptive leadership strategies highlight the necessity for leaders to adjust their methods to align with followers' traits. Successful leaders tailor their communication and decision-making to reflect shared traits, therefore improving group cohesion and reinforcing a sense of authenticity within the team (Côté et al., 2011).

In summary, the interplay among similarity attraction, mutual understanding, and adaptive strategies highlights the complexity of leader-follower dynamics.

## 1.4.2 Cultural Influence: Power-Distance as a Moderator

Understanding the complexities of leadership across diverse cultures is essential for predicting diverse outcomes in our increasingly interconnected world. Among the cultural dimensions that significantly influence leadership dynamics, power-distance stands out. Introduced by Hofstede (1980), power-distance refers to the degree to which less powerful members of organizations and institutions accept and expect that power is distributed unequally.

### 1.4.2.1 Cultural Influence on Leadership

Leadership styles and organizational behaviours are shaped by culture. The cultural dimensions model proposed by Hofstede (1980), which includes power-

distance, individualism *versus* collectivism, masculinity *versus* femininity, uncertainty avoidance, long-term orientation *versus* short term orientation, and indulgence *versus* restraint, offers a structure for comprehending these impacts.

From culture to culture, authenticity is perceived in significantly different ways. For instance, it is linked to fostering autonomy and self-expression in high individualism cultures (Triandis, 1995), cultures that are also characterized by high power-distance levels. Furthermore, it is linked to combining principles with group objectives and putting an emphasis on harmony in collectivist societies (House et al., 2004), that are also characterized by low levels of power-distance.

Therefore, it is intended that different cultures prioritize different leadership qualities, what makes them formulate their own perception of authenticity. While low-context cultures value explicit communication and transparency, high-context cultures value implicit understanding and non-verbal cues in which concerns authentic leadership (Gudykunst & Ting-Toomey, 1988; Hall, 1976).

#### 1.4.2.2 Power-Distance Dimension

Acceptance of the power distribution in societies represents the focus of power-distance. Power imbalances are recognized as essential to social order by high power-distance cultures, which place a strong emphasis on hierarchy. Equality and reduction of power disparities are preferred in low power-distance cultures (Hofstede, 1980).

Leaders are frequently expected to be authoritative and directive in high power-distance cultures. Followers in such cultures may view a leader's strong, decisive actions as authentic because they align with cultural expectations of leadership. On the other hand, since they represent the cultural value of equality and shared power, participative and democratic leadership styles are more likely to be seen as authentic in low power-distance cultures (Hofstede et al., 2010).

These cultural influences are supported by empirical evidence. While generalizations should be approached with caution, a prevailing understanding within cross-cultural research suggests that Western countries, like the United States and Australia, often exhibit lower levels of power-distance. Conversely, Eastern countries, such as China and South Korea, are frequently characterized by higher levels of power-distance (Hofstede, 1980; Janićijević, 2019; Lok & Crawford, 2004).

## 2. Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this research examines how congruence between leader and follower DTT influences followers' perceptions of leader authenticity, while considering the moderating role of the power-distance cultural dimension.

### 2.1 Research Model

The core of this dissertation investigates the following hypotheses:

**H1:** *The congruence between leader and follower Dark Triad traits will positively affect followers' perceptions of leader authenticity.*

**H1a:** *Congruence in narcissistic traits between leaders and followers is positively associated with followers' perceptions of leader authenticity.*

**H1b:** *Congruence in Machiavellian traits between leaders and followers is positively associated with followers' perceptions of leader authenticity.*

**H1c:** *Congruence in psychopathic traits between leaders and followers is positively associated with followers' perceptions of leader authenticity.*

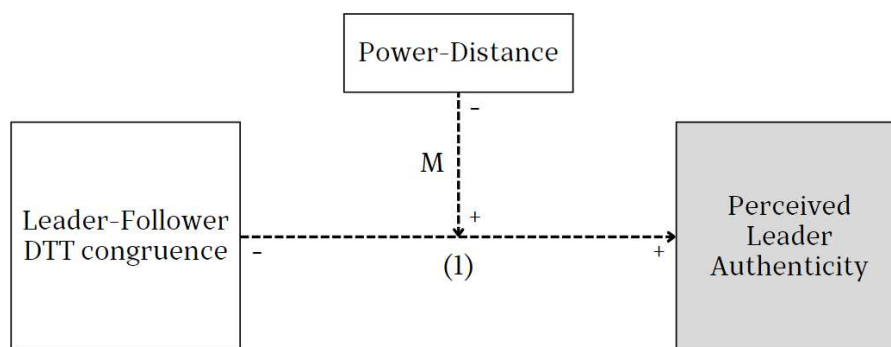
**H2:** Power-distance moderates the relationship between leader-follower Dark Triad traits congruence and perceived leader authenticity, so that in high power-distance cultures, the relationship between Dark Triad traits congruence and perceived authenticity is expected to be stronger than in low power-distance cultures.

**H2a:** In high power-distance cultures, the relationship between narcissistic traits congruence and perceived authenticity is expected to be stronger than in low power-distance cultures.

**H2b:** In high power-distance cultures, the relationship between Machiavellian traits congruence and perceived authenticity is expected to be stronger than in low power-distance cultures.

**H2c:** In high power-distance cultures, the relationship between psychopathic traits congruence and perceived authenticity is expected to be stronger than in low power-distance cultures.

Bellow is an illustrative diagram representing the research framework:



**Figure 1:** Leader-Follower DTT congruence effect on perceived leader authenticity moderated by Power-Distance

According to the model, the alignment of followers' and leaders' DTT (narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy) acts as an independent variable that is expected to influence perceived leader authenticity, which in our research represents the depend variable [this relationship is depicted in Figure 1 by (1)]. Each trait will be examined separately to determine its individual impact.

Furthermore, power-distance is regarded as a moderating variable, denoted by M in our framework (Figure 1). It is anticipated that in societies with high power-distance, the congruence in DTT will have a stronger positive effect on followers' perceptions of authenticity, in comparison with low power-distance cultures.

# Chapter 2

## Methodology

### 1. Methods

#### 1.1 Procedure and Sample

Participants in 13 different countries provided data for this quantitative study. Table 1 provides some demographic information as well as response frequencies regarding each culture. The sample for each country was expected to contain at least 200 responses, with Ghana being an exception, with only 192<sup>2</sup> obtained responses.

For convenience and wide distribution, the survey was conducted online. Prolific, a reliable crowdsourcing platform known for its large user base and high data quality (Palan & Schitter, 2018), was used to recruit participants from all countries involved in this research, with the exception of Ghana, as previously mentioned. To ensure the accuracy of responses, the survey was designed as an 8-minute task with the following requirements:

1. **Language Proficiency:** Prolific makes it possible to filter participants based on their language proficiency, guaranteeing that those who responded are fluent in English questions;

---

<sup>2</sup> Data collection for Ghana was conducted using the personal network of one of the co-authors of this research. Despite failing to meet the 200 responses threshold, Ghana's inclusion remained crucial due to its distinctive cultural context, which is often underrepresented in psychological research (Henrich et al., 2010).

2. **Number of Responses Threshold:** To guarantee a large enough sample size, a threshold was outlined for each country (200 responses minimum);
3. **Quality Control:** Proper response rejection is made possible by Prolific, which is a crucial component of quality control that keeps data integrity intact (Palan & Schitter, 2018).

culture	Frequency	Percentage	Male	Female
Armenia	383	9.40	75	308
Australia	295	7.24	149	146
Austria	214	5.25	115	99
Ghana	192	4.71	63	129
India	496	12.17	327	169
Israel	208	5.10	100	108
Mexico	288	7.07	137	151
Poland	285	6.99	172	113
Portugal	288	7.07	171	117
Romania	482	11.83	175	307
South Africa	292	7.16	89	203
Spain	283	6.94	149	134
US	370	9.08	216	154
<b>Total</b>	4076	100.00	1938	2138

**Table 1:** Frequency of responses per culture (STATA)

Participants filled out a questionnaire evaluating their personalities, as well as how they perceived the personality and authentic behaviour of their supervisors. Among the quality checks were:

1. **Reversed-Scored Items:** Items that have been reverse-coded to force the respondent to use the opposite end of the rating scale to produce a response that would be consistent with prior items (Curran & Hauser, 2019) (e.g. “I’m the life of the party” vs “I don’t talk a lot”);

2. **Attention Check Item:** E.g., “I do not understand a word of English”, to exclude participants who were not paying attention;
3. **Leader-Follower Relationship Tenure:** I included this measure in order to take into consideration favourable perceptions that followers may initially have of leaders who score high on DTT soon after joining a team. Research indicates that narcissistic leaders, for instance, can often appear charismatic and friendly, and may even be perceived as authentic in initial interactions. However, over time, this positive perception tends to diminish as followers get to know better their leader’s true nature (Grijalva et al., 2015).

The final sample included 4.076 participants (47.6% male and 52.4% female), the majority of whom (71,45%) were between the ages of 21 and 37. The participants had an average age of 33 ( $SD = 10.45$ ), a relationship duration with their leaders of 4.31 years ( $SD = 6.65$ ), 10.32 ( $SD = 9.50$ ) years of work experience.

## 1.2 Measures

The validity and reliability of the measurements were guaranteed by the use of well-established psychometric tools. A thorough explanation of each measure can be found below.

### 1.2.1 Authenticity

Authentic leadership was measured using the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ), developed and validated by Walumbwa et al. (2008). The scale<sup>3</sup> contains 16 items designed to assess the four key components of authentic leadership: *self-awareness* (4 items; e.g., “My leader solicits feedback for improving his/her dealings with others”), *relational transparency* (5 items; e.g.,

---

<sup>3</sup> For the purpose of my research the scale was slightly modified.

“My leader clearly states what he/she means”), *internalized moral perspective* (4 items; e.g., “My leader shows consistency between his/her beliefs and actions”), and balanced processing (3 items; e.g., “My leader ask for ideas that challenge his/her core beliefs”). Participants rated the behavioural statements about their supervisor on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*). The Cronbach’s alpha values for the four subscales were between 0.71 and 0.83, and for the entire scale 0.89 demonstrating acceptable reliability.

### 1.2.2 Dark Triad Traits

The Dark Triad traits (narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy) were assessed using the Dirty Dozen Scale (Jonason & Webster, 2010). This 12 item scale allocates four items to each trait: *narcissism* (e.g., “I tend to want others to admire me”), *Machiavellianism* (e.g., “I tend to manipulate others to get my way”), and *psychopathy* (e.g., “I tend to be callous or insensitive”). Each item is rated on a 5 point Likert scale ( 1 = *not at all like me*, 5 = *very much like me*). The Dirty Dozen Scale is recognized for its concise yet effective measurement of dark triad traits and has been widely employed in psychological research due to its strong psychometric properties (Jonason & Webster, 2010).

To assess the congruence of DTT between leaders and followers, participants completed this scale twice. First, they completed the scale to assess their own levels of DTT. The Cronbach’s alpha values obtained for the three subscales were between 0.84 and 0.88, and for the entire scale 0.87, which are considered reliable. Then, they completed the scale again, this time rating their perception of their leader’s personality on the same traits. This time, the Cronbach’s alphas for the subscales were between 0.87 and 0.91, and a extremely reliable value of 0.93 for the entire scale. This two-step approach was crucial to further validate our hypotheses.

### 1.2.3 Power-Distance Dimension

Power Distance was assessed indirectly through participants' country information available in Prolific's personal data records. The country information for each respondent was subsequently aligned with the corresponding score on the Power Distance Index (PDI) derived from Hofstede Insights (2023), which is closely aligned with Hofstede's original theoretical framework (Hofstede, 1980).

The PDI scores were extracted to determine the degree to which various cultures accept and expect unequal power distribution within their societal structures. Hofstede's PDI is a rigorously validated measure that is frequently employed in cross-cultural studies to offer insights into both organizational and social dynamics.

Utilizing these scores ensures robust cross-cultural equivalence and enhances the validity of our study's interpretations regarding the relationship between cultural dimensions and perceptions of leadership authenticity.

### 1.2.4 Big-Five Personality Traits

The Big-Five Personality Traits were assessed using Goldberg's (1990) scale, which comprises 20 items that measures five broad personality dimensions: agreeableness, neuroticism, extraversion, openness, and conscientiousness. Each trait was measured using a set of 4 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree). Accounting for these traits was essential due to their correlation with the Dark Triad traits, ensuring the precision of the observed relationships.

### 1.2.5 Controls

Several controls were employed to limit competing theories and prevent confounding effects on the depend variable:

1. Follower's and leader's *gender*: the perception of leadership authenticity may be significantly influenced by the leader and follower gender. This control is meant to make sure that any trends that are seen aren't just the result of gender stereotypes.
2. Follower's *age*: an important factor in determining what is expected of a leader. By taking age into consideration, we'll be able to determine how distinct personality traits impact followers perceptions of authentic leadership at various stages of like;
3. Follower-leader *relationship tenure*: the dynamic nature of leader-follower relationships, which develop and deepen over time (Dulebohn et al., 2012), suggests that the duration of the relationship might significantly influence follower perceptions of their supervisors.

### 1.3 Data Analysis

The dataset was analysed using Stata software. Descriptive statistics including means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alphas and intercorrelations of the variables, are displayed in **Table 2**.

Authentic leadership and each one of the leader's DTT were clearly negatively correlated ( $r(2,1) = -0.386$ ;  $r(3,1) = -0.440$ ;  $r(4,1) = -0.467$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). This result aligns with the theory that leaders who exhibit excessive DTT may be viewed as less trustworthy or sincere.

Although there is a slight positive correlation ( $r(5,1) = 0.049$ ;  $p < 0.01$ ), this relationship is not as strong as the negative correlations found between authenticity and leader DTT. This implies that presence of DTT in leaders has a much bigger impact on perceived authenticity in comparison with presence of narcissistic traits in followers.

There is no statistically significant relationship between follower Machiavellianism and psychopathy, and perceived leader authenticity.

For the power-distance dimension, the analysis reveals a statistically significant positive correlation with perceived leader authenticity ( $r(8,1) = 0.090$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). This suggests that power distance might play a moderating role in the relationship between DTT congruence and perceived authenticity. However, further research is needed to confirm this hypothesis.

Gender differences, at least according to the data gathered, do not significantly affect followers' perceptions of leader authenticity.

As expected, there is a statistically significant positive correlation ( $r(11,1) = 0.037$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) between follower age and perceived leader authenticity. This suggests that as followers become more experienced, their perceptions of leader authenticity become more complex. In addition, there is also a positive significant correlation between tenure (duration of the leader-follower relationship) and perceived leadership authenticity ( $r(12,1) = 0.085$ ;  $p < 0.001$ ). This could mean that followers who spend more time with their leader develop a deeper understanding of their values and leadership style, which increases or decreases their perception of authenticity.

Notes: (f), followers' DTT; (l), perceived leaders' DTT; n = 4.040; <sup>a</sup> calculated as a mean of unstandardized items; <sup>b</sup> male = 1, female = 2; \* p < 0.001; \*\* p < 0.01; \*\*\* p < 0.05;

Variables	M	SD	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)	(11)	(12)
(1) authenticity <sup>a</sup>	3.7128	0.7675												
(2) leader narcissism <sup>a</sup> (l)	3.9246	1.6217	-0.386*											
(3) leader machiavellianism <sup>a</sup> (l)	3.2556	1.7357	-0.440*	0.813*										
(4) leader psychopathy <sup>a</sup> (l)	3.2623	1.6657	-0.467*	0.768*	0.862*									
(5) narcissism <sup>a</sup> (f)	3.2331	1.5333	0.049**	0.438*	0.400*	0.379*								
(6) machiavellianism <sup>a</sup> (f)	2.6755	1.5204	-0.003	0.404*	0.494*	0.461*	0.679*							
(7) psychopathy <sup>a</sup> (f)	2.5970	1.4349	-0.004	0.384*	0.471*	0.497*	0.615*	0.778*						
(8) power distance	61.7875	23.9123	0.090*	0.087*	0.121*	0.095*	0.127*	0.089*	0.087*					
(9) leader gender <sup>b</sup>	2.4153	0.4928	0.017	-0.049**	-0.044**	-0.060*	-0.031***	-0.068*	-0.082*	0.028				
(10) gender <sup>b</sup>	1.5245	0.4995	0.013	-0.057*	-0.062*	-0.084*	-0.053**	-0.143*	-0.194*	0.087*	0.387*			
(11) age	32.9951	10.4493	0.037***	-0.047**	-0.050*	-0.086*	-0.165*	-0.175*	-0.125*	-0.006	-0.017	0.050**		
(12) tenure	4.3076	6.6450	0.085*	0.048*	0.060*	0.050*	0.041*	0.051*	0.071*	0.069*	-0.013	0.019	0.316*	
(13) work experience	10.3178	9.5015	0.021	-0.063*	-0.075*	-0.113*	-0.185*	-0.187*	-0.158*	-0.058*	-0.026	0.028	0.868*	0.307*

**Table 2.** Means, standard deviations, Cronbach's alphas and correlations

### 1.3.1 Statistical Approach

Multilevel regression analyses were used to test the hypotheses. Since our data was organized hierarchically, with respondents nested within various cultural contexts, this methodological approach was essential. The use of standard linear regression, which relies on the independence of observations, would have underestimated standard errors and possibly produced false statistical conclusions. The multilevel model properly accounted for the dependencies within the data by adding random effects, producing more reliable results.

In my models, we controlled for several variables that could influence the outcomes, which were previously mentioned in a very descriptive way (see 1.2.5 Controls). This approach allowed us to isolate the effect of our key predictor variables more accurately.

To examine leader-follower congruence in DTT influence on perceived leader authenticity, we plotted interaction effects at the 5<sup>th</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> percentiles<sup>4</sup> of the distribution. These percentiles were selected based on the importance of capturing the full range of extreme values to ensure that our analysis encompasses the diversity and potential outliers in leader-follower traits, providing, in this way, a comprehensive perspective on their influence on perceived leader authenticity.

In addition, for the power-distance dimension, interaction effects were plotted at the 5<sup>th</sup>, 50<sup>th</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> percentiles of the distribution. In the same way as before, this method was chosen to capture the entire range of low, medium, and high power-distance values, to ensure a comprehensive analysis. By plotting these percentiles, we were able to identify patterns and potential nonlinear effects that might be missed if only averages were considered.

---

<sup>4</sup> Even with moderate skewness in the distribution of DTT, employing wider percentiles was justifiable. The use of the 5<sup>th</sup> and 95<sup>th</sup> percentiles instead of the mean  $\pm$  1 SD allowed us to focus on the extreme behaviours, which are often pivotal in psychological and leadership research.

# Chapter 3

## Results

### 1. Leader-Follower Congruence in DTT

The results of the multilevel regression analysis that looked at how followers' perceptions of a leader's authenticity were affected by the congruence of leader and follower DTT are shown in this section. The purpose of the analysis was to validate *hypotheses 1a, 1b* and *1c* and consequently *hypothesis 1* (see Research Model; Chapter 1). We adjusted for the variables previously listed in the Methods section in order to test these hypotheses.

*Hypothesis 1a*, which predicted a positive relationship between follower perceptions of leader authenticity and congruence in narcissistic traits between leader and follower, was found to be supported ( $\beta = 0.0621, p < 0.01$ ; Table 3, Model 1a). This finding suggests that the detrimental effects of leader narcissism on perceived authenticity are somewhat mitigated when both leaders and followers display high levels of narcissism.

The same was proved to be true for *hypothesis 1b* ( $\beta = 0.0677, p < 0.001$ ; Table 3, Model 1.b) as well as for *hypothesis 1c* ( $\beta = 0.0816, p < 0.001$ ; Table 3, Model 1.c), this time regarding to Machiavellian and psychopathic traits, respectively.

As a result, *hypothesis 1* was validated by our findings, demonstrating the beneficial positive association leader-follower congruence in DTT on perceived leader authenticity.

Notes: \* p < 0.001; \*\* p < 0.01; \*\*\* p < 0.05; n = 4.040; values between parentheses correspond to SE.

Dependent variables	Perceived Leader Authenticity		
	Model 1a	Model 1b	Model 1c
Intercept	5.0641 (.0418)*	4.7769 (.1303)*	5.0002 (.1171)*
Controls			
Leader Gender (Female)	0.0261 (.0182)	0.0241 (.0148)	0.0104 (.0142)***
Follower Gender (Female)	-0.0186 (.0240)	-0.0054 (.0272)	-0.0180 (.0262)
Tenure	0.0054 (.0016)**	0.0050 (.0017)**	0.0050 (.0014)**
Work Experience	0.0006 (.0019)	0.0000 (.0017)	-0.0004 (.0020)
Follower Narcissism	omitted <sup>5</sup>	0.0581 (.0137)*	0.0500 (.0102)*
Follower Machiavellianism	-0.0152 (.0109)	omitted	0.0001 (.0092)
Follower Psychopathy	-0.0349 (.0253)	-0.0159 (.0227)	omitted
Age	-0.0006 (.0018)	0.0007 (.0018)	0.0000 (.0016)
Predictors			
Leader Narcissism	-0.4250 (.0418)*		
Follower Narcissism	-0.1387 (.0731)		
Leader Machiavellianism		-0.4460 (.0321)*	
Follower Machiavellianism		-0.1940 (.0679)**	
Leader Psychopathy			-0.4960 (.0296)*
Follower Psychopathy			-0.2537 (.0554)*
Interactions			
Leader Narc x Follower Narc	0.0621 (.0185)**		
Leader Mach x Follower Mach		0.0677 (.0157)*	
Leader Psycho x Follower Psycho			0.0816 (.0162)*

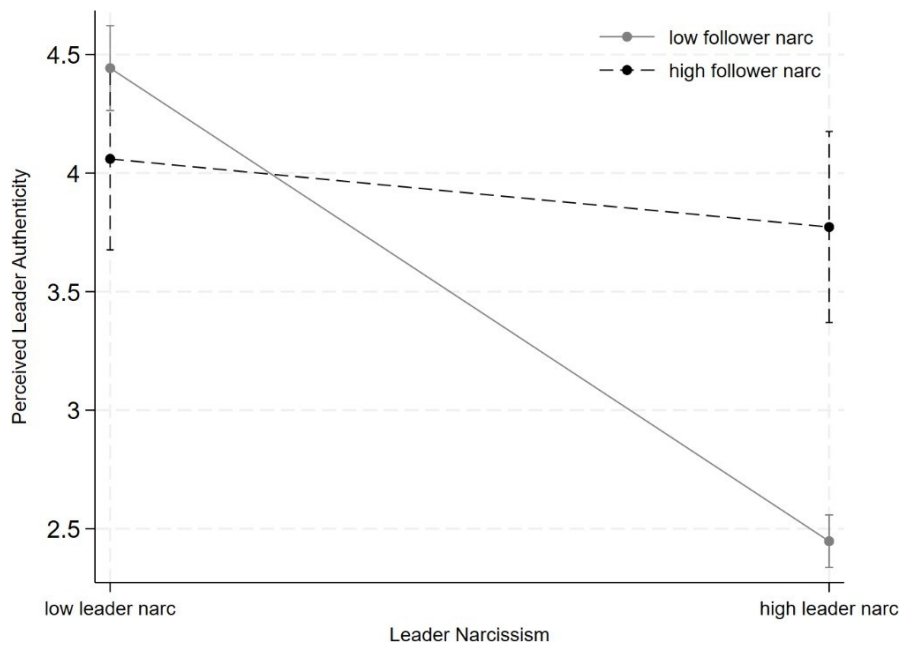
**Table 3.** Relationship between leader-follower congruence in DTT and perceived leader authenticity

Even after our first hypothesis was confirmed, it is still important to visually analyse the results using the graphs depicted in **Figures 2, 3** and **4**. It became clear that when leaders and followers share low levels of DTT then perceptions of leader authenticity are significantly higher. When both leaders and followers exhibit high levels of DT, followers still perceive their leaders as authentic, though slightly less so compared to the previous case analysed (shared low levels of DTT).

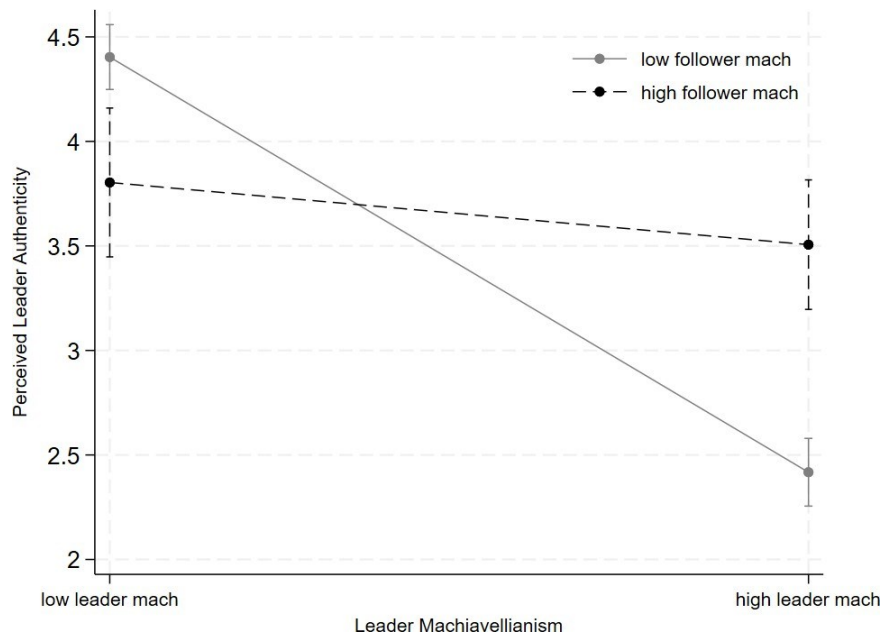
The outcomes slightly altered when leaders and followers' DTT were not congruent. When followers exhibited low DTT and their leaders displayed high DTT, the perception of leaders' authenticity declined dramatically. However,

<sup>5</sup> Whenever testing a hypothesis involving a specific DTT variable, that DTT variable is excluded from the control variables due to collinearity concerns.

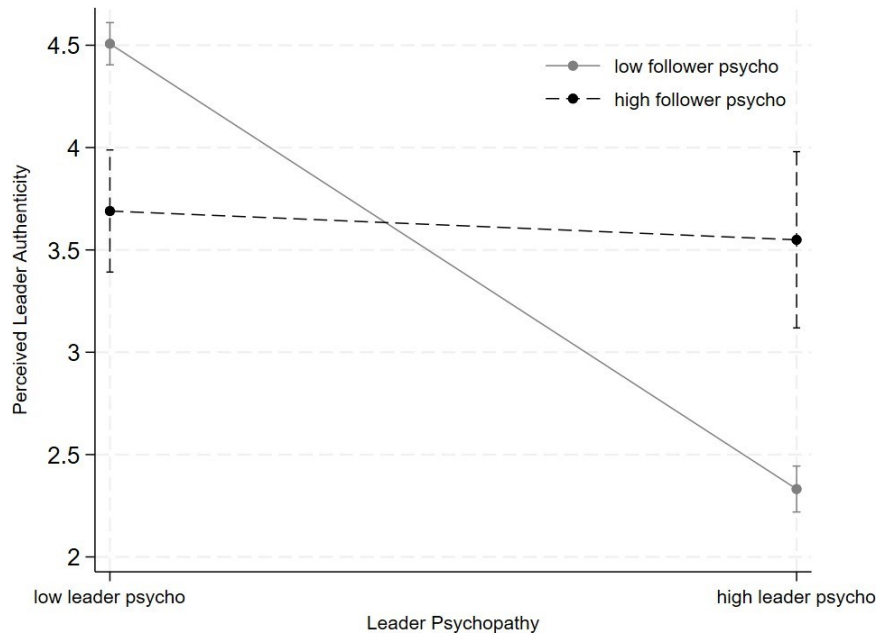
perceptions of authenticity remained significantly high in the opposite scenario, where followers scored highly and leaders poorly on DTT.



**Figure 2.** Effect of congruence in narcissistic traits between leader and follower on perceived leader authenticity



**Figure 3.** Effect of congruence in Machiavellian traits between leader and follower on perceived leader authenticity



**Figure 4.** Effect of congruence in psychopathic traits between leader and follower on perceived leader authenticity

## 2. Power-Distance as a Moderator

This section reports the results of the multilevel regression analysis, which examined the power-distance dimension's role as moderator of the preceding relationship. As a result, *hypothesis 2* is confirmed if the analysis's predictions for *hypotheses 2a*, *2b* and *2c* are met (see Research Model; Chapter 1). The controls utilized in this regression were identical to those used in the test of the earlier hypotheses.

In contrast to our original predictions, in two of our models, the interaction with power-distance dimension was not statistically significant (see Table 4). Only hypothesis 2a was supported ( $\beta = 0.0009$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ; Table 4, Model 2.a). As such, in high power-distance cultures as opposed to low, there is greater positive influence of leader-follower narcissistic traits congruence on perceived leader authenticity.

Notes: \*  $p < 0.001$ ; \*\*  $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < 0.05$ ;  $n = 3.848^6$ ; values between parentheses correspond to SE.

Dependent variables	Perceived Leader Authenticity		
	Model 2a	Model 2b	Model 2c
Intercept	4.4587 (.3003)*	4.4781 (.2302)*	4.7241 (.1888)*
Controls			
Leader Gender (Female)	0.0290 (.0194)	0.0271 (.0160)	0.0125 (.0159)
Follower Gender (Female)	-0.0305 (.0021)	-0.0198 (.0274)	-0.0334 (.0262)
Tenure	0.0043 (.0016)**	0.0042 (.0018)***	0.0042 (.0015)**
Work Experience	0.0005 (.0021)	0.0003 (.0018)	-0.0000 (.0021)
Follower Narcissism	omitted	0.0591 (.0122)*	0.0510 (.0094)*
Follower Machiavellianism	-0.0161 (.0102)	omitted	-0.0002 (.0017)
Follower Psychopathy	-0.0396 (.0238)	-0.0216 (.0228)	omitted
Age	-0.0000 (.0017)	0.0011 (.0018)	0.0002 (.0017)
Predictors			
Leader Narcissism	-0.2787 (.0678)*		
Follower Narcissism	0.0675 (.0661)		
Leader Machiavellianism		-0.4280 (.0567)*	
Follower Machiavellianism		-0.0475 (.0652)	
Leader Psychopathy			-0.4297 (.0513)*
Follower Psychopathy			-0.0920 (.0613)
Power Distance	0.0101 (.0056)	0.0052 (.0037)	0.0042 (.0034)
Interactions			
Leader Narc x PD	-0.0024 (.0013)		
Follower Narc x PD	-0.0033 (.0018)		
Leader Narc x Follower Narc	0.0029 (.0190)		
Leader Narc x Follower Narc x PD	0.0009 (.0005)***		
Leader Mach x PD		-0.0003 (.0010)	
Follower Mach x PD		-0.0024 (.0015)	
Leader Mach x Follower Mach		0.0306 (.0208)	
Leader Mach x Follower Mach x PD		0.0006 (.0004)	
Leader Psycho x PD			-0.0009 (.0009)
Follower Psycho x PD			-0.0024 (.0015)
Leader Psycho x Follower Psycho			0.0237 (.0230)
Leader Psycho x Follower Psycho x PD			0.0008 (.0004)

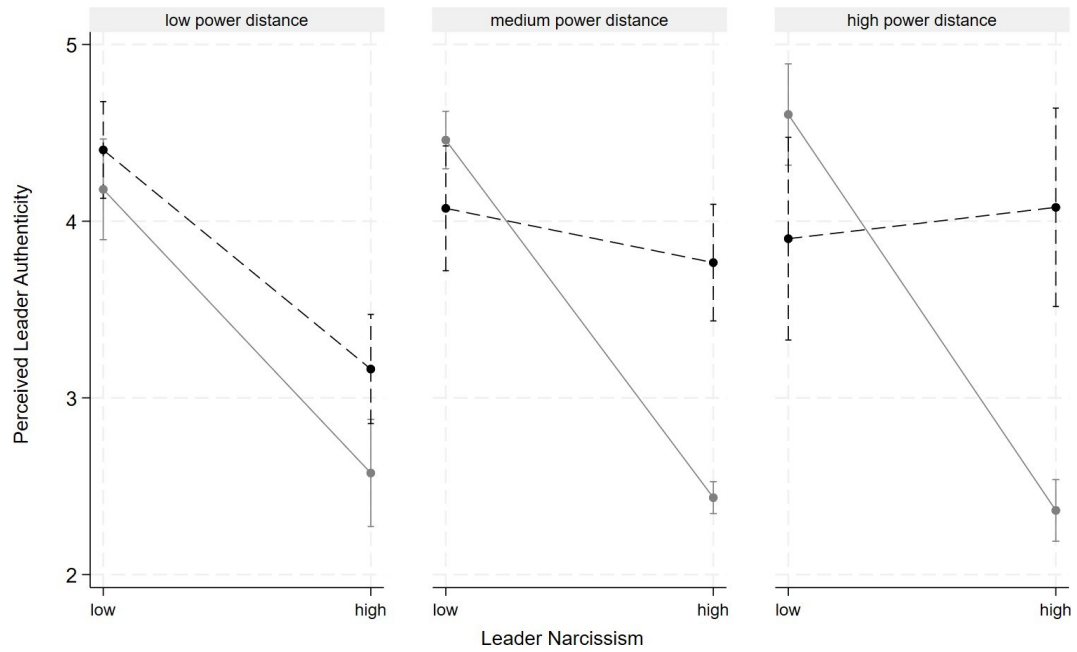
**Table 4.** Relationship between leader-follower congruence in DTT and perceived leader authenticity moderated by power-distance dimension

Since the main interactions in two of our models were not significant, we graphed the only significant interaction, namely between leader-follower narcissism and power distance (Figure 5).

In contrast to low power-distance cultures, followers in high power-distance cultures were more likely to view their leaders as authentic when sharing similar

<sup>6</sup> Data from Ghana was excluded from these specific models to ensure more reliable and significant results

narcissistic traits. Later in the discussion, this point is discussed in more detail in the Discussion section.



**Figure 5.** Effect of congruence in narcissistic traits between leader and follower on perceived leader authenticity moderated by power-distance dimension

# Chapter 4

## Discussion

This research aimed to contribute for a better understanding of the complex dynamics that underlie the influence of DTT on perceptions of authenticity. More specifically, by examining both followers and leaders (from followers perspective), we sought to prove the existence of a positive relationship between leader-follower shared levels of DTT and perceived leader authenticity.

Additionally, we proposed to study the influence of power-distance dimension on the above outlined relationships. For this part, we focused our attention on assessing the presence of significant differences along diverse cultural contexts (from low to high power-distance cultures).

We obtained a solid set of data to improve the reliability of our findings, by gathering data from 4076 participants from 13 different countries. The rich cultural variety within our data set served as an extra advantage, given that a significant portion of leadership studies primarily focused on Western nations. Moreover, some scholarly research have acknowledged this considerable disparity in the field's literature and the importance of incorporating insights derived from non-Western countries (see House et al., 2004). As so, countries like Ghana and India that belong to the considered non-Western part of the world were included in our research, in order to fill the existent gap in the literature.

# 1. Discussion of the findings regarding Hypothesis 1

One of our initial findings highlights that any DTT, when present in leaders, tends to negatively impact perceptions of authenticity. This was later confirmed by our hypothesis 1, and was found to be consistent with existing literature suggesting that such traits are often associated with manipulative and self-centred behaviour, which can undermine trust and openness (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Authentic leadership is generally viewed through the lens of transparency and ethical behaviour – qualities that obviously contrast with those associated with the Dark Triad (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Shifting our focus from the mere presence of Dark Triad Traits in either leaders or followers to the dynamic interplay between them reveals a nuanced understanding of how authenticity perceptions can be different depending on the context in which they are being studied. Our results demonstrated that certain negative effects are mitigated when followers and leaders exhibit similar psychopathic, Machiavellian or narcissistic traits. This similarity promotes a feeling of mutual understanding, since most of the typical behaviours of narcissistic, Machiavellian or psychopathic leaders that normally would be recognized as selfish, are in this situation perceived as congruent with the follower's own values and behaviours. This finding aligns with the similarity-attraction paradigm that was introduced in this dissertation's literature review. Furthermore, it is consistent with the notion that value congruence shapes how people perceive leadership (Bjugstad, 2006).

Hypothesis 1, predicting a positive influence of leader-follower DTT congruence on perceived leader authenticity, was robustly supported by our results across all models examined (1a, 1b and 1c).

In addition, although not the primary focus of our investigation, our analysis revealed a consistent pattern: for each DTT, perceptions of authenticity were

consistently higher when both leader and follower exhibited low levels of the respective trait. This finding reinforces the negative impact of DTT on the concept of authenticity.

There was one more intriguing finding that was thought to be significant to discuss in relation to Hypothesis 1: followers scoring high for DTT perceive leaders that score low for DTT as highly authentic. Such followers may strategically assess relationships, considering leaders with low DTT to be more predictable and, consequently, more authentic, according to Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 2017).

## 2. Discussion of the findings regarding Hypothesis 2

Despite its significance in many organizational contexts, power-distance did just emerge as a significant moderator in this analysis for the hypothesis 2a. This suggests that while power-distance might influence perceptions of leadership, it's not necessarily a dominant factor in this context. However, it's still worth digging deeper into how this relationship plays out.

Perceived authenticity, our dependent variable, and power-distance, our moderator, clearly show a positive significant correlation (see **Table 2**): as power-distance increases, perceived leader authenticity also tends to increase. However, when we look at power-distance's function as a moderator of the previously studied interaction, we find that power-distance does not seem to significantly change the strength or direction of the relationship between Dark Triad congruence and perceived leader authenticity, except for congruence of leader-follower narcissism.

Our research indicates that in a situation of leader-follower narcissistic traits congruence, individuals from high power-distance cultures may view their

leaders as more authentic than those from low power-distance cultures. Notably, this variation across power-distance levels was significant exclusively for narcissistic traits. This could be attributed to the acceptance or expectation of narcissistic behaviours as components of leadership qualities, particularly in high power-distance societies where hierarchical structures are prevalent. In contrast, the more aggressive and manipulative behaviours typical of Machiavellian or psychopathic individuals might be less tolerated in both high and low power-distance cultures, as they can undermine trust and social cohesion within organizational settings.

### 3. Theoretical Contributions and Implications

This study makes several contributions. First, the study extends the limited research on the integration of Dark Triad Traits within leadership contexts, specifically examining their impact on perceived leader authenticity. Our research is among the first to consider congruence of DTT between leaders and followers as a predictor of whether individuals perceive their leaders as more authentic. Besides that, it also enriches the current literature on leader-follower dynamics and gives support to the application of the similarity-attraction paradigm in leadership studies.

Second, assessing the mediating role of power-distance within the cultural context provides important insights into cross-cultural leadership literature. Our finding that power-distance distinctly influences perceptions of authenticity in the context of narcissistic traits, but not for the other DTT, adds depth the understanding of how cultural factors shape leadership perceptions.

Additionally, these findings support the notion that authenticity and authentic leadership are not universally defined but rather shaped by cultural and contextual factors.

The study's outcomes highlight the potential benefits of integrating cultural dimensions and trait congruence into the development of leadership programmes. Furthermore, training should focus on understanding and managing the impacts of DTT in leader-follower interactions to enhance perceived authenticity and effectiveness. Moreover, when selecting or promoting leaders, organizations can benefit from looking beyond individual traits to also consider how those traits align with those of their teams. This approaches can strengthen organizational dynamics and foster a more cohesive work environment.

#### 4. Limitations and Future Research

Several limitations of this study should be acknowledged. Although we aimed to include non-Western cultures that have often been overlooked in previous research, our sample may still not capture the full diversity of global cultural contexts. Therefore, it is essential to exercise caution when generalizing our findings and applying them across different cultural settings. Each culture brings its unique nuances, and further research is needed to explore these dynamics more comprehensively.

Regarding our data collection method, a potential limitation lies in our reliance on followers' self-assessment of their perceptions of their leaders. This self-reported data can be subject to biases, which may affect the accuracy of our findings. To strengthen future research, it would be beneficial to incorporate objective performance metrics or 360-degree feedback. Doing so would allow for

a more comprehensive validation of the insights gained from self-reports and help to get a clear picture of leader-follower dynamics.

The cross-sectional nature of our study presents certain limitations, as it captures perceptions at a single point in time. A longitudinal approach could offer more robust insights into how perceptions of authenticity evolve over time, especially in the context of changing leader-follower dynamics. This would be particularly relevant for understanding the impact of Dark Triad Traits in this interaction, where initial impressions may not always align with reality.

## 5. Conclusion

This dissertation exposes a powerful interaction between perceived leader authenticity and leader-follower congruence in DTT. The findings reveal that, especially in high power-distance cultures, congruence in narcissistic traits can surprisingly enhance perceptions of a leader's authenticity. Notably, when not considering power-distance as a moderating factor, congruence in each of the DTT – narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy – appears to reinforce positive perceptions of leader authenticity. This challenges our conventional views of these traits, reminding us that shared traits and cultural context play a crucial role in shaping perceptions of leadership.

This research, while limited by its reliance on self-reported data and cross-sectional design, offers valuable insights for both scholars and organizations. Ultimately, this work aims to contribute to a deeper understanding of authenticity in leadership, prompting further exploration of ethical and effective leadership across cultures.



## References

- Avolio, B. J., & Gardner, W. L. (2005). Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership. *Leadership Quarterly*, *16*(3), 315–338. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.001>
- Babiak, P., & Hare, R. D. (2006). *Snakes in Suits: When Psychopaths Go to Work*. HarperCollins.
- Bjugstad, K. (2006). A fresh look at followership: a model for matching followership and leadership styles. *Journal of Behavioural and Applied Management*, *7*(3), 304–318.
- Blau, P. M. (2017). *Exchange and Power in Social Life*. Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203792643>
- Bligh, M. C., & Schyns, B. (2007). The romance lives on: Contemporary issues surrounding the romance of leadership. In *Leadership* (Vol. 3, Issue 3, pp. 343–360). <https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715007079316>
- Braun, S. (2017). Leader narcissism and outcomes in organizations: A review at multiple levels of analysis and implications for future research. In *Frontiers in Psychology* (Vol. 8, Issue MAY). Frontiers Research Foundation. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00773>
- Byrne, D. (1971). *The attraction paradigm*. Academic Press.
- Čerňe, M., Jaklič, M., & Škerlavaj, M. (2013). Authentic leadership, creativity, and innovation: A multilevel perspective. *Leadership*, *9*(1), 63–85. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715012455130>
- Curran, P. G., & Hauser, K. A. (2019). I'm paid biweekly, just not by leprechauns: Evaluating valid-but-incorrect response rates to attention check items. *Journal of Research in Personality*, *82*, 103849. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jrp.2019.103849>

- Dhingra, K., & Boduszek, D. (2013). Psychopathy and criminal behaviour: A psychosocial research perspective. In *Journal of Criminal Psychology* (Vol. 3, Issue 2, pp. 83–107). <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCP-06-2013-0014>
- Dulebohn, J. H., Bommer, W. H., Liden, R. C., Brouer, R. L., & Ferris, G. R. (2012). A Meta-Analysis of Antecedents and Consequences of Leader-Member Exchange: Integrating the Past With an Eye Toward the Future. *Journal of Management*, 38(6), 1715–1759. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206311415280>
- Ehrhart, M. G., & Klein, K. J. (2001). Predicting follower's preferences for charismatic leadership: the influence of follower values and personality. *Leadership Quarterly*, 12, 153–179.
- Engle, E. M., & Lord, R. G. (1997). IMPLICIT THEORIES, SELF-SCHEMAS, AND LEADER-MEMBER EXCHANGE. *Academy of Management Journal*, 40(4), 988–1010. <https://doi.org/10.2307/256956>
- Erickson, R. J. (1995). The Importance of Authenticity for Self and Society. *Symbolic Interaction*, 18(2), 121–144. <https://doi.org/10.1525/si.1995.18.2.121>
- Fatfouta, R. (2019). Facets of narcissism and leadership: A tale of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde? *Human Resource Management Review*, 29(4). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.hrmr.2018.10.002>
- Felfe, J., & Schyns, B. (2010). Followers' personality and the perception of transformational leadership: Further evidence for the similarity hypothesis. *British Journal of Management*, 21(2), 393–410. <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-8551.2009.00649.x>
- Furnham, A., Richards, S. C., & Paulhus, D. L. (2013). The Dark Triad of Personality: A 10Year Review. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 7(3), 199–216. <https://doi.org/10.1111/spc3.12018>
- Gardner, W. L., & Avolio, B. J. (1998). The Charismatic Relationship: A Dramaturgical Perspective. *The Academy of Management Review*, 23(1), 32. <https://doi.org/10.2307/259098>

- Gardner, W. L., Avolio, B. J., Luthans, F., May, D. R., & Walumbwa, F. (2005). "Can you see the real me?" A self-based model of authentic leader and follower development. *Leadership Quarterly*, 16(3), 343–372. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.003>
- Gardner, W. L., Cogliser, C. C., Davis, K. M., & Dickens, M. P. (2011). Authentic leadership: A review of the literature and research agenda. In *Leadership Quarterly* (Vol. 22, Issue 6, pp. 1120–1145). <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2011.09.007>
- George, B. (2003). *Authentic Leadership: Rediscovering the Secrets to Creating Lasting Value*. Jossey-Bass.
- George, B., & Sims, P. (2007). *True North: Discover your Authentic Leadership*. Jossey-Bass.
- Goffee, R., & Jones, G. (2005, December). Managing Authenticity: The paradox of great leadership. *Harvard Business Review*, 86–94.
- Goldberg, L. R. (1990). An alternative "description of personality": The Big-Five factor structure. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 59(6), 1216–1229. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.59.6.1216>
- Grijalva, E., & Harms, P. D. (2014). Narcissism: An integrative synthesis and dominance complementarity model. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 28(2), 108–127. <https://doi.org/10.5465/amp.2012.0048>
- Grijalva, E., Harms, P. D., Newman, D. A., Gaddis, B. H., & Fraley, R. C. (2015). Narcissism and Leadership: A Meta-Analytic Review of Linear and Nonlinear Relationships. *Personnel Psychology*, 68(1), 1–47. <https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12072>
- Gudykunst, W. B., & Ting-Toomey, S. (1988). *Culture and interpersonal communication*. Sage.
- Hall, E. T. (1976). *Beyond Culture*. Doubleday.

- Hare, R. D. (2006). Psychopathy: A Clinical and Forensic Overview. *Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, 29(3), 709–724.  
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.psc.2006.04.007>
- Hare, R. D., & Neumann, C. S. (2008). Psychopathy as a Clinical and Empirical Construct. *Annual Review of Clinical Psychology*, 4(1), 217–246.  
<https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.clinpsy.3.022806.091452>
- Harvey, P., Martinko, M., & Gardner, W. (2006). Promoting Authentic Behavior in Organizations: An Attributional Perspective. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 12(3), 1–11.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/107179190601200301>
- Hater, J. J., & Bass, B. M. (1988). Superiors' Evaluations and Subordinates' Perceptions of Transformational and Transactional Leadership. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 73(4), 695–702. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.73.4.695>
- Henrich, J., Heine, S. J., & Norenzayan, A. (2010). The weirdest people in the world? *Behavioral and Brain Sciences*, 33(2–3), 61–83.  
<https://doi.org/10.1017/S0140525X0999152X>
- Hofstede, G. (1980). Culture and Organizations. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, 10(4), 15–41.
- Hofstede, Geert., Hofstede, G. Jan., & Minkov, Michael. (2010). *Cultures and organizations. Software of the mind : intercultural cooperation and its importance for survival*. McGraw-Hill.
- Hofstede Insights. (2023, October 16). *Country Comparison Tool*.  
<https://www.hofstede-insights.com/country-comparison-tool>
- House, R. J., Hanges M.J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P. W., & Gupta, V. (2004). Culture, Leadership, and Organizations: The GLOBE Study of 62 Societies. In *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* (Issue 1). Sage Publications.  
<https://digitalcommons.andrews.edu/jacl/vol1/iss1/6>

- Janićijević, N. (2019). The Impact of National Culture on Leadership. *Economic Themes*, 57(2), 127–144. <https://doi.org/10.2478/ethemes-2019-0008>
- Jonason, P. K., & Webster, G. D. (2010). The dirty dozen: a concise measure of the dark triad. *Psychological Assessment*, 22(2), 420–432.
- Jones, D. N., & Paulhus, D. L. (2009). Machiavellianism. In M. R. Leary & R. H. Hoyle (Eds.), *Individual Differences in Social Behaviour* (pp. 93–108). Guilford.
- Keller, T. (1999). Images of the familiar: Individual differences and Implicit Leadership Theories. *Leadership Quarterly*, 10(4), 589–607.
- Kernis, M. H. (2003). Toward a Conceptualization of Optimal Self-Esteem. *Psychological Inquiry*, 14(1), 1–26.
- Kernis, M. H., & Goldman, B. M. (2006). A multicomponent conceptualization of authenticity: Theory and research. In M. P. Zanna (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 38, pp. 283–357). Academic Press.
- Lok, P., & Crawford, J. (2004). The effect of organisational culture and leadership style on job satisfaction and organisational commitment: A cross-national comparison. *Journal of Management Development*, 23(4), 321–338. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02621710410529785>
- Lord, R. G., & Maher, K. J. (1993). *Leadership and Information Processing: Linking Perceptions and Performance*. Routledge.
- Luthans, F., & Avolio, B. J. (2003). Authentic Leadership Development. In *Positive Organizational Scholarship* (pp. 243–258).
- Meindl, J. R. (1995). The romance of leadership as a follower-centric theory: A social constructionist approach. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 6(3), 329–341. [https://doi.org/10.1016/1048-9843\(95\)90012-8](https://doi.org/10.1016/1048-9843(95)90012-8)
- Palan, S., & Schitter, C. (2018). Prolific.ac—A subject pool for online experiments. *Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Finance*, 17, 22–27. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jbef.2017.12.004>

- Paulhus, D. L., & Williams, K. M. (2002). The Dark Triad of personality: Narcissism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathy. *Journal of Research in Personality*, 36(6), 556–563. [www.academicpress.com](http://www.academicpress.com)
- Rosenthal, S. A., & Pittinsky, T. L. (2006). Narcissistic leadership. *Leadership Quarterly*, 17(6), 617–633. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2006.10.005>
- Ryan, R. M., & Deci, E. L. (2003). On assimilating identities to the self: A self-determination theory perspective on internalization and integrity within cultures. *American Psychological Association*.
- Schmid, E. A., Knipfer, K., & Peus, C. V. (2021). Narcissistic Leaders—Promise or Peril? The Patterns of Narcissistic Leaders' Behaviors and Their Relation to Team Performance. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.660452>
- Schyns, B., & Sanders, K. (2007). In the eyes of the beholder: Personality and the perception of leadership. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 37(10), 2345–2363. <https://doi.org/10.1111/J.1559-1816.2007.00261.X>
- Stanislavski, C. (1996). *An actor prepares*. Eyre Methuen.
- Stelmokiene, A., & Endriulaitiene, A. (2015). Transformational leadership in perception of subordinates personality traits and social identification as predictors. *Baltic Journal of Management*, 10(3), 331–344. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BJM-05-2014-0084>
- Taylor, S. S., & Ladkin, D. (2010). Enacting the “true self”: Towards a theory of embodied authentic leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 21(1), 64–74. [https://www.academia.edu/16374993/Ladkin\\_D\\_and\\_Taylor\\_S\\_S\\_2010\\_Enacting\\_the\\_true\\_self\\_Towards\\_a\\_theory\\_of\\_embodied\\_authentic\\_leadership\\_Leadership\\_Quarterly\\_Vol\\_21\\_pp\\_64\\_74](https://www.academia.edu/16374993/Ladkin_D_and_Taylor_S_S_2010_Enacting_the_true_self_Towards_a_theory_of_embodied_authentic_leadership_Leadership_Quarterly_Vol_21_pp_64_74)
- Triandis, H. C. (1995). *Individualism & collectivism*. Westview Press.
- Walumbwa, F. O., Avolio, B. J., Gardner, W. L., Wernsing, T. S., & Peterson, S. J. (2008). Authentic leadership: Development and validation of a theory-based

measure. *Journal of Management*, 34(1), 89–126.  
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206307308913>

Wilson, D. S., Near, D., & Miller, R. R. (1996). Machiavellianism: A synthesis of the evolutionary and psychological literatures. *Psychological Bulletin*, 119(2), 285–299. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.119.2.285>

# Annexes

## Anex 1. Survey