



ISSN Print: 2664-8792
ISSN Online: 2664-8806
Impact Factor: RJIF 8.54
IJRM 2025; 7(2): 985-994
www.managementpaper.net
Received: 10-10-2025
Accepted: 11-11-2025

Ila Pandey
Research Scholar, Department
of Management, Sikkim
University, A Central
University, Gangtok, Sikkim,
India

Shalini Shukla
Assistant Professor,
Department of Management,
Sikkim University, A Central
University, Gangtok, Sikkim,
India

Corresponding Author:
Ila Pandey
Research Scholar, Department
of Management, Sikkim
University, A Central
University, Gangtok, Sikkim,
India

Exploring authentic leadership in policing: A systematic analysis of its impact on work performance

Ila Pandey and Shalini Shukla

DOI: <https://www.doi.org/10.33545/26648792.2025.v7.i2k.551>

Abstract

This is a systematic review on authentic leadership that is related to the police organization work performance. An authentic leadership is some form of leadership that has been defined by self-awareness, transparency, and ethical behaviour; it has now become a significant form of leadership in the modern day agencies like the police. The paper is a synthesis of the available literature with a view of contextualizing the role of authentic leadership in the police officers and work performance, and the overall organizational effectiveness. The review determines the new important themes of team dynamics, trust-building, and employee engagement that can be specified as the attributes of authentic leadership by reviewing the empirical studies. It will also examine the major issues that influence this correlation by looking into the scope of the literature available. And also describes the difficulties police executives undergo in order to be their authentic selves in a high-stress setting. The findings indicate that primary leadership development may be helpful in the performance of work, and community relations. Subsequent paper provides a preview that may be beneficial to police organizations eager to introduce genuine leadership practices within the organization so that the organizational culture will enhance the performance of the subordinate and also the organization as a whole.

Keywords: Authentic leadership, police performance, organizational culture

1. Introduction

Leadership is very important in defining organizational culture and performance, especially in high intensity organization like in police organizations. Authentic leadership is one of the leadership styles that have received growing attention over the past years as one of the effective leadership styles in diverse organizational context, including high-stress organizations like police organizations. Authentic leadership is characterized by a set of features, including self-knowledge, openness, and moral conduct that is considered to promote trust and improve employee interaction as well as team dynamics (Avolio and Gardner, 2005, Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008) ^[1, 45]. The role of authentic leadership in influencing the outcomes of work is crucial in police organizations because leadership is one of the central aspects of the organizational performance and interactions with the community (Birken *et al.*, 2020; McCauley *et al.*, 2020) ^[7, 29]. Authentic leadership is a concept that has developed with time. The term was coined by Avolio and Gardner (2005) ^[1] when referring to the process of leadership development, in which they noted that in order to make the change in organizations permanent and positive, leaders must be themselves. The theory has been developed over the years to incorporate an individual and organizational viewpoint and the fact that authenticity is not just an individual aspect but a collective process that can provide organizational culture (Ryan and Deci, 2000) ^[40]. True leadership extends on this premise by indicating that leaders who are selflessly driven and aligned to their personal values will create more interest and trust among the followers.

Authentic leadership can be especially applicable in high-pressure, whether in strong or weak times, police leaders who have authentic leadership practices can establish a working environment in which the officers feel esteemed, encouraged, and inspired (Leroy *et al.*, 2015) ^[27]. It inspire to improve the morale, employee engagement, and job satisfaction because this way is considered to make officers feel more attached to their leaders and more confident in their decisions (Miao *et al.*, 2013) ^[32]. Authentic leadership is about being true, open, and ethical in all their interactions and decisions.

In the case of police organizations that are usually subject to high levels of scrutiny and work in stressful settings, authentic leadership presents the opportunity of building a healthy organizational culture, enhancing work performance, and enhancing community relations.

In India, Kaur and Kaur (2020) reported that transparent and ethical leadership behaviours played a great role in instilling trust among police officers in Punjab which eventually enhanced performance and internal conflict in the department. Police work is a very demanding task especially in a high-stress environment and thus leaders who are capable of establishing a work culture that supports and is resilient are needed. Conducted a study in India and realized that police officers who believed that their leader was authentic enjoyed a greater amount of job satisfaction and were more engaged in their work. This paper has indicated the significance of authentic leadership in ensuring the sustainability of officers and enhancing team building in the police force. Ethical issues that police officers encounter are immense and authentic leadership offers the moral compass required. By leading by example, police officers who act ethically have established good guidelines to be followed by their officers and this keeps the organization culture based on integrity and fairness. According to recent Indian based research, authentic leadership is an important factor that determines the ethical behaviour of the police officers. In their research on the police organizations in Uttar Pradesh found that the leadership practices were associated with increased integrity and accountability rates, so they could be involved in more ethical decision-making in the area.

A study of police forces in India by Mishra *et al.* (2022) revealed that leadership was correlated with improved organizational performance, improved team-work and more effective problem-solving, particularly during crisis situations. Authentic leaders should also enhance the relations between them and the community. Police entities have to be associated with the populace in a favourable manner so that the cooperation and trust can be achieved. True leaders facilitate openness and responsibility, which contributes to the decreasing of the tension between the police and the community. In a study of Mumbai, the researchers Patil *et al.* (2023) discovered that crime prevention activities were better cooperated in when the leaders of a police demonstrated authenticity and openness, which resulted in increased trust in the police among the community members. This study highlights how authentic leadership can improve the relationship between the police and the community, especially where there is diversity and complexity such as in India.

Authentic leaders also provide an example to junior officers since they demonstrate how to be a good leader who is truthful, full of emotional intelligence, and open. Creating a culture of self-awareness and personal development, true leaders make sure that future police leaders will be ready to overcome all challenges of the contemporary policing. In a recent study, Kumar and Singh (2021) in Delhi detected that authentic leadership had a positive impact on the development of leadership among the police, motivating junior officers to assume leadership position, with a high morality basis. The special features of the police work, such

as the constant stress, the risky situations, and ethical dilemmas, demand the leaders that still can be faithful to their values and be able to lead their teams in the complex activities (Miao *et al.*, 2013) ^[32]. Here, authentic leadership is suggested as one of the best leadership models because the former focuses on making ethical decisions, being receptive, as well as fostering trust in teams, which are important in legal policing environments (Leroy *et al.*, 2015; McCleskey, 2019) ^[27, 31]. It is believed that genuine leaders will facilitate positive organizational cultures and will foster the environment in which officers will feel appreciated, supported, and encouraged to do their best (Avolio *et al.*, 2020) ^[5]. The given systematic review aims to consolidate the current body of knowledge about authentic leadership in the police organizations and the way in which this type of leadership influences the work performance and the overall organizational performance. The review will also seek to investigate major variables including team dynamics, trust-building, and employee engagement that are believed to depend on authentic leadership through the review of empirical studies (Gardner *et al.*, 2011; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2010) ^[16, 46]. Moreover, the review will explore the issues and problems police leaders have when exercising authentic leadership in high-intensity settings, where interior and exterior demands complicate the demonstration of authentic leadership (Hochschild and Machung, 2012; Smith *et al.*, 2021) ^[20, 43]. Lastly, it will also determine the possible advantages of authentic leadership development in terms of work performance and community relations, and it is proposed that the police agencies can be positively affected by promoting authentic leadership practices to enhance the overall organizational health and relations with the community (Nielsen *et al.*, 2021; Phipps and Duffy, 2020) ^[36, 37].

Through the review and synthesis of the available literature, it will be beneficial to law enforcement agencies trying to achieve the best leadership practices to increase the effectiveness of their internal operation and the community outcomes. The results could provide evidence-based suggestions to implement genuine leadership in police agencies and make them healthier organizations with better policing behaviours (Neider and Schriesheim, 2021; Ulrich *et al.*, 2023) ^[35, 44].

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Definition and Key attributes of authentic leadership

Authentic leadership is a leadership style that emphasizes the importance of being true to oneself while leading others. This approach is built on the foundation of self-awareness, transparency, ethical behavior, and relational transparency, all of which contribute to creating a positive and trustworthy work environment. Authentic leaders are characterized by their deep sense of purpose and commitment to ethical principles, which guide their actions and decisions. These leaders foster an environment where employees can thrive, feel valued, and engage with their work, ultimately leading to increased organizational effectiveness and a healthier organizational culture.

Some definitions are listed below in Table 1

Table 1: The definitions of authentic leadership from different sources

Source	Definition of Authentic Leadership
Gardner <i>et al.</i> (2011) ^[16]	Authentic leadership is "a pattern of transparent and ethical leader behavior that encourages openness in others, fosters trust, and enhances the leader–follower relationship" (p. 1121).
Avolio & Gardner (2005) ^[1]	Authentic leadership is "a style of leadership that emphasizes the genuineness, self-awareness, and ethical behavior of leaders" (p. 315).
Walumbwa <i>et al.</i> (2008) ^[45]	Authentic leadership is "a form of leadership that involves leaders being true to themselves, acting in ways consistent with their values, and fostering trust and positive relationships with followers" (p. 94).
Luthans & Avolio (2003) ^[28]	Authentic leadership is "a process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, to foster greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors in others" (p. 243).
George (2003) ^[18]	Authentic leadership is "leaders who are deeply aware of how they think and behave, and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others' values/moral perspectives" (p. 4).
Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber (2004) ^[3]	Authentic leadership is "the process by which leaders are true to themselves and others, by acting in accordance with their values, building relationships with followers based on trust and transparency" (p. 807).
Northouse (2016)	Authentic leadership is "a pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency" (p. 203).
Shamir & Eilam (2005) ^[42]	Authentic leadership is "the relational and developmental process in which leaders promote self-awareness and authenticity in themselves and others by aligning their actions with their values and core beliefs" (p. 395).
Clapp-Smith, Vogelgesang, & Avey (2009) ^[9]	Authentic leadership is "a leader's self-awareness, transparency, and ethical conduct that engenders trust and motivates followers to engage with their work and improve their performance" (p. 1145).
Wong & Cummings (2009) ^[47]	Authentic leadership is "leaders who are grounded in their values and act in ways that align with their moral compass, inspiring trust and admiration among their followers" (p. 211).
Leroy <i>et al.</i> (2015) ^[27]	Authentic leadership is "a positive leadership approach that focuses on self-awareness, balanced processing, relational transparency, and internalized moral perspective, fostering a work environment where both leaders and followers engage in ethical and transparent behavior" (p. 113).
Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber (2009) ^[4]	Authentic leadership is "the process by which leaders are true to themselves and others, by acting in accordance with their values, building relationships with followers based on trust and transparency, and encouraging the development of followers into better leaders" (p. 21).
Hochschild (2014) ^[19]	Authentic leadership is "leadership that encourages leaders to be real with their followers, fostering an environment where leaders are transparent, ethical, and self-reflective in a manner that strengthens follower commitment and organizational culture" (p. 328).
Rego <i>et al.</i> (2012) ^[39]	Authentic leadership is "leadership that is based on positive psychological traits, self-regulation, and relational transparency, in which leaders demonstrate behaviors that are consistent with their personal values and ethical principles" (p. 366).
Davis & Gardner (2011) ^[16]	Authentic leadership is "a leadership approach in which leaders demonstrate high levels of personal integrity, build open and honest relationships with their teams, and operate in a manner consistent with their values and beliefs, leading to high levels of follower commitment" (p. 189).
Bass & Steidlmeier (1999) ^[6]	Authentic leadership is "a leadership style that is grounded in moral values, acts with high levels of integrity and honesty, and builds an ethical environment that encourages followers to act in accordance with ethical standards" (p. 187).

Source: The Authors

The key attributes of authentic leadership include:

Avolio and Gardner's model of authentic leadership (2005) is one of the seminal frameworks for understanding this leadership style. The model is rooted in the concept of self-awareness, relational transparency, moral perspective, and balanced processing, which are crucial components for fostering authentic leadership behaviors. Their framework emphasizes the dynamic and developmental process of authentic leadership, which evolves through self-awareness and the integration of one's values, beliefs, and actions. Below is a breakdown of the key elements of Avolio and Gardner's model: Self-Awareness, Relational Transparency, Balanced Processing, and Internalized Moral Perspective.

2.2 Authentic leadership in high pressure (E.g. Police Work)

Authentic leadership is of particular relevance in contexts of high pressure such as the police organisations where leaders need to make quick decisions under high stakes as well as to exercise ethical standards (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009) ^[4]. This type of leadership inspires trust, openness and ethical behavior, all of which are important components in the work of law enforcement, which involves leaders facing

significant challenges in balancing the tasks of ensuring public safety and managing team dynamics under stress. Within the policing context, such trust is critical because policing officers must rely on the leadership during high pressure situations (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009) ^[4]. Authentic leadership also promotes ethical decision-making under pressure, where leaders maintain consistency and fairness under the exterior pressure (Gardner *et al.*, 2011) ^[16]. By focusing on self-awareness and emotional transparency, authentic leaders increase the well-being of officers, counteract burnout and build resilience in officers, which are of special relevance in the emotionally demanding context of police work (Rego *et al.*, 2012) ^[39]. Moreover, authentic leadership helps to promote engagement and commitment among officers and promote a positive organisational culture where officers feel motivated not only to perform in response to external expectations, but because they identify with the values of leaders (Leroy *et al.*, 2015) ^[27]. It also augments team cohesion and conflict resolution as authentic leaders encourage different views and objective decision-making processes improving problem-solving under pressure (Avolio *et al.*, 2009) ^[4].

Police leaders who exhibit transparency and ethical behaviour are more likely develop a culture of trust between the police force and the community, which is a prerequisite for good law enforcement (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008) ^[45]. Nevertheless, authentic leadership in police organisations still appears a difficult task, for the hierarchical and high-pressure nature of the work may negatively affect the ability of the leaders to remain consistently transparent and emotionally open (George, 2003) ^[18].

2.3 Impact of authentic leadership on performances at work

This style is characterised by leaders who display transparency, ethical behaviour and a strong alignment between the values and actions taken, thus having a significant impact on several aspects of employee performance and the effectiveness of the organisation. A growing volume of literature documents the positive outcomes of authentic leadership including increased job satisfaction, motivation, employee engagement and organisational commitment.

Literature Review and Rationale for Review

The current review builds upon a body of systematic reviews which have investigated the link between leadership styles within the police organisation, and the consequent impact on police officers and outcomes within the community. Examined the relationship between various styles of leadership and police outcomes, where they concluded that the relational leadership approaches are critical in creating the best work environments, a positive attitude on police officers and their effectiveness within the operating entities in law enforcement. Although their review, which included studies published until May 2009, excluded studies on authentic leadership, it noted relational leadership as a salient factor that is capable of producing similar positive results and, thus, there is the suggestion that authentic leadership may be a factor with similar benefits.

Further argued that despite the plethora of leadership theories, the mechanisms linking leadership styles to organizational and individual outcome is still not sufficiently known. This gap was pointed out in the work of Wong *et al.* (2013) ^[48] who conducted a systematic review of research published up to 2012, which established a positive relationship between relational leadership and several outcomes of police officers, of which reducing stress at work and supplementing officer job satisfaction were key. They stated that relational leadership had a positive impact on important human resource variables such as staff retention, job satisfaction, and absenteeism; these variables have an impact on performer and well-being of the officers. Nevertheless, as similar to Wong *et al.* (2013) ^[48] did not particularly address authentic leadership despite that it shares key attributes of relational leadership.

In other industries, a great deal of research has been done to investigate the relationship between authentic leadership and other organizational outcomes, such as employee commitment (Gatling *et al.*, 2016) ^[17], organizational citizenship behaviors and trust in supervisors Gardner *et al.* (2011) ^[16] conducted a literature review of research on authentic leadership published through December 2010, in order to clarify the actual construct and at the same time to assess for the evidence of antecedent and consequence. Their review provided corroboration for strong support of

the theoretical predictions of authentic leadership theory; it did, however, identify several limitations, including the preponderance of cross-sectional studies that make causal inference difficult and a dearth of studies that focus on antecedents of authentic leadership. Gardner *et al.* (2011) ^[16] recommended stronger and larger variety methodological approaches to strengthen the validity of authentic leadership and clarify the associations between the components with various organizational outcomes.

Although Gardner *et al.* (2011) ^[16] did not focus on policing per se, some of their findings have been extrapolated to the law-enforcement setting. Part of the growing conversation about the relevance of authentic leadership to police leadership was Wong and Cummings (2009a) ^[47]. Shirey, one of the first scholars to explain what authentic leadership means in the policing context, used the frameworks of Avolio *et al.* (2004) and George (2003) ^[18] as the basis for describing the qualities of an authentic police leader. Wong and Cummings (2009a) ^[47] discussed in greater depth the origin of authentic leadership theory, the main elements of the theory, and the possible benefits of applying it in policing today. They suggested that authentic leadership might be particularly useful in law enforcement because of the high levels of stress, the presence of various ethical dilemmas, and the need for trust-based relationships between police leadership and their work teams. Despite an expanding collection of literature between authentic leadership and favourable outcomes in law enforcement, there is a limited set of studies that examine the direct application of authentic leadership in police organisations. Given the interest in leadership practices in policing context, and the fact that previous reviews have not taken into account more recent literature in this area there is a critical need for a systematic review in order to assess the antecedents, mediators and outcomes of authentic leadership in police organizations. This review will focus on the relationship between authentic leadership and the job satisfaction, organizational culture and community relationships of law enforcement policemen.

Research Questions

Based on the gaps identified in the literature and the emerging research on authentic leadership, this review seeks to answer the following questions specific to police organizations:

- What outcomes are associated with authentic leadership in police organizations?
- What challenges for police officers and the community are associated with authentic leadership?

By addressing these research questions, this review aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the role of authentic leadership in police organizations, focusing on its potential to enhance police officer performance, improve organizational climate, and strengthen community relationships.

3. Research Methodology

This systematic review aimed to synthesize existing literature on authentic leadership and its impact on work performance within police organizations. The methodology outlined below describes the approach used to identify, select, analyze, and synthesize relevant empirical studies. The main objective of this review is to systematically assess

and synthesize the existing literature on authentic leadership in police organizations. Specifically, it aims to identify the antecedents, mediators, and outcomes associated with authentic leadership within law enforcement. The review seeks to explore how authentic leadership influences police officer job satisfaction, performance, organizational culture, and community relations. By examining these factors, the review aims to provide insights into how authentic leadership can enhance the effectiveness and well-being of police officers and improve relationships between law enforcement and the communities they serve.

3.1 Systematic Review Design

A systematic review design was employed to ensure a comprehensive, transparent, and reproducible synthesis of the available literature. This method was chosen to assess existing studies and provide a clear overview of the evidence on the impact of authentic leadership in police organizations.

3.2 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria

The analysis of authentic leadership in policing has harnessed more scholarly works published in peer-reviewed journals thus resulting in rigor of methods and scholarly validity. The literature sample predetermines the genuine leadership in the conditions of police and law-enforcement and highlights the relevance of the subject and method to the

conditions of high pressure and the complexity of ethics. Quantitative empirical studies have been undertaken, in particular, to explore the interrelations between authentic leadership and the outcomes like work performance, employee engagement, and organizational effectiveness in general. To maintain the modern day viability, the empirical domain has been limited to publications over the last two decades, thus reflecting the changes in leadership practices themselves and their utilisation in modern day policing environments.

Exclusion Criteria

Studies were excluded if they were not focused on police leadership (e.g., studies in other sectors, generally, such as education or healthcare), were non-empirical studies (e.g., opinion pieces and theoretical papers) or did not use English as the language of publication and did not have access to full text.

Search Strategy and Databases Used

A comprehensive literature search was conducted in a series of scholarly databases including Web of Science, EBSCO, JSTOR, and PubMed. The search strategy involved the use of key words such as authentic leadership, police organisation, work performance, positive organisational behaviour, organisational effectiveness, and employee engagement. Boolean operators (AND, OR) that were used to combine these terms and refine the search.

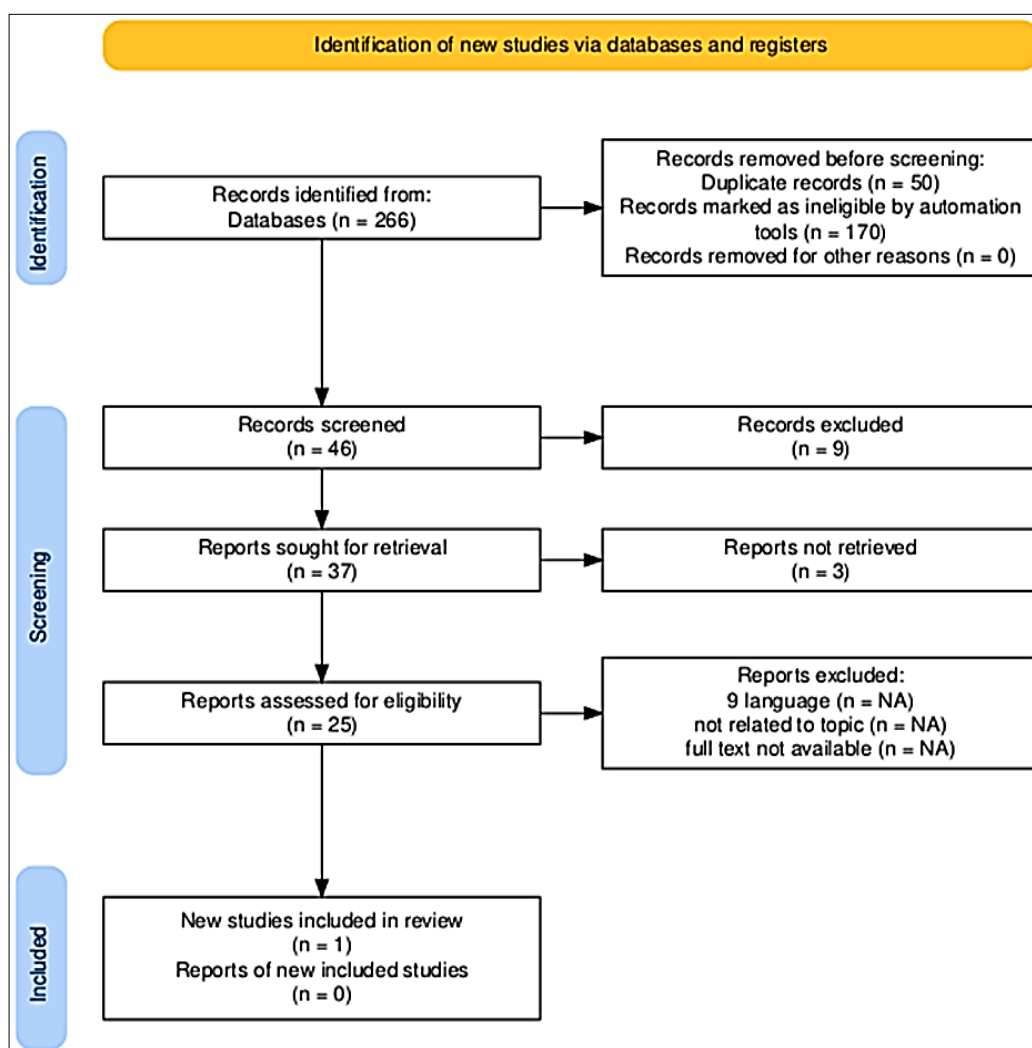


Fig 1: PRISMA 2020 flow diagram for study selection, adapted from Page et al. (2021).

3.4 Study Selection Process

The screening involved the systematic review of the titles and abstracts of all the identified studies to determine which ones were relevant based on predefined inclusion criteria. The studies passing these initial filters were sent to full-text review to test its methodological rigor, relevance, and suitability to the review aims.

Based on every study, the key information was obtained that included the authorship and the year of the publication, the type of the study, the size of the sample, and its demographics, the types of leadership studied (especially, the word authentic leadership), and the findings regarding the role authentic leadership plays in the performance or organizational measures. The articles were then evaluated according to the standards of methodological rigor, adequacy of the sample size, and resemblance to the presented research questions. Subsequently, a narrative analysis was conducted in order to explain the results, and the effect of authentic leadership was identified especially on organizational efficiency and relationship with communities in the policing set-ups. The study selection process followed the PRISMA 2020 guidelines (Page et al., 2021). Figure 1 summarizes the flow of records through the screening and inclusion stages.

4. Analysis

The data extracted from the studies were analysed using both descriptive and narrative synthesis methods. In the descriptive synthesis, we examined the characteristics of each study to identify similarities and differences, including the authors, study locations, publication years, participant demographics, and how authentic leadership was defined and measured. Additionally, we analysed the theoretical or conceptual frameworks used, the instruments employed to assess various variables, and the analytic techniques applied in each study. The associations between authentic leadership and its antecedents, mediators, and outcomes were then evaluated based on the direction of the effect (positive or negative) and the statistical significance ($p < 0.05$).

For the narrative synthesis, we explored the relationships within and across the studies. This process involved several steps to understand how authentic leadership, its antecedents, mediators, and outcomes interrelate. Both deductive and inductive approaches were utilized. First, we examined both significant and non-significant antecedents, mediators, and outcomes using content analysis procedures carried out independently by two researchers. The outcomes were grouped into categories based on established concepts in authentic leadership theory, along with new categories that emerged from the analysis. A similar approach was taken for antecedents and mediators.

After completing the coding, the researchers compared their results and resolved any discrepancies through discussion and consensus. The final categories were then compared with Avolio *et al.*'s (2004) original authentic leadership theory to determine how closely the findings aligned with or expanded upon the model. Based on this comparison, an adapted model was developed to reflect the findings of this review, providing a deeper understanding of the role of authentic leadership in police organizations.

5. Results and Discussion

Summary of key findings from empirical studies

5.1 Impact on work performance and employee engagement

Authentic leadership has a strong impact on work performance and employee engagement especially in high-pressure environments like police organizations. When shown in leaders, self-awareness, transparency, and ethical behavior help create trust and morale key factors in the officers fighting in stressful and emotionally taxing situations on a routine basis. The empirical investigations are consistent with the idea that genuine leadership improves the work performance by motivating employees to align personal values with organizational aims. Police officers with strong perceptions of their leaders as authentic report greater support and empowerment, exhibit higher performance (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008) ^[45]. Moreover, ethical and transparent leadership enhances the interaction with the public which in turn boosts the effectiveness of the entire organization. Authentic leadership additionally enhances employee engagement, conceptualized as employee enthusiasm and participation to his/her job. Through the development of psychological safety and trust, authentic leaders encourage officers to show increased levels of motivation, proactivity, and investment in their jobs (Gardner *et al.*, 2011) ^[16]. Consistent results show that authentic leadership is associated with high job satisfaction, low turnover, and high employee commitment to the organization (Gatling *et al.*, 2016) ^[17].

5.2 Challenges associated with authentic leadership for police officers and the community

While authentic leadership can bring significant benefits to police organizations, it also presents certain challenges both for police officers and the community they serve. These challenges stem from the unique demands and high-pressure nature of police work, where the balance between transparency, ethical behavior, and decision-making can sometimes be difficult to maintain.

Challenges for Police Officers

- **Emotional Strain and Vulnerability:** The experience of being genuinely a leader requires greater levels of self-awareness, openness; however, the officers might fear that display of vulnerability or the use of self-reflective tendencies might be detrimental to their power presence at high-stakes situations.
- **Resistance to Change:** Police organizations are often characterized by the strict hierarchies, thus, making the motion to the collaborative and transparent leadership a daunting challenge. Those officers, who are used to traditional paradigms of leadership, can show unwillingness to adopt genuine practices.
- **Dilemmas between Personal Values and Organizational Expectations:** When the personal values clash with the organizational standards, conflicting interests arise between the officers and their duties towards colleagues and their duties as an impartial and fair individual (Leroy *et al.*, 2015) ^[27].

Challenges for the Community

- **Views of Inconsistency:** The uses of force or misconduct are one of the decisions that may appear to be unjust, thereby weakening transparency and ethical

conduct. Keeping a balance between transparency and implications of public safety may affect the community perceptions of authenticity (Gatling *et al.*, 2016) ^[17].

- **Building Trust in the Context of Legacy of Mistrust:** Societies that perceived a tradition of hostile police interaction and especially those populations that are marginalized may initially be resistant to genuine leadership endeavors. It takes time to build trust and constant and honest interaction (Kaufman *et al.*, 2018) ^[23].
- **Striking the right balance between Public Accountability and Officer Autonomy:** Leaders have to work through the conflicts between transparency and operation autonomy. Oversensitivity to openness will limit flexibility in dynamic situations of officers (Hochschild *et al.*, 2020) ^[21].

Specific Leadership Challenges

- **Striking a balance between transparency and authority:** In high pressure situations, complete transparency might not be practical. Without losing credibility and decisiveness, leaders need to be able to synthesize authenticity (Kernis, 2003) ^[24].
- **Emotions Labor and Stress:** Police position presupposes working with traumas and life-or-death situations, and the emotional pressure of authentic leadership can be the cause of burnout. Emotional intelligence and stress management skills are unavoidable (Duxbury and Higgins, 2012; Schaubroeck *et al.*, 2011; Boyatzis and McKee, 2005) ^[14, 41, 8].
- **Cultural Shifts:** Resistance to cultural shifts, the transition to a hierarchical and authoritarian structure to authentic leadership might be faced with large-scale resistance. The successful adoption relies on leadership development and cultural transformation programs (Miller, 2012) ^[33].
- **Possibility of seeming weak or inconsistent:** Openness and collaborative practices can be considered as lack of decisiveness under high pressure situations. The leaders should show that authenticity makes the process of making the right decision work better instead of getting it wrong (Kernis, 2003; Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008) ^[24, 45].
- **Community Trust and Relations:** Authentic leadership may inculcate trust, but the imbalanced relation to the community or over-transparency may be misinterpreted or abused and a balancing act is necessary (Dirks and Ferrin, 2002; De Cremer and Van Vugt, 2003; Holmes and Smart, 2009) ^[13, 11, 22].

Ethical Dilemmas and Moral Conflicts

Police officers have to deal with complex ethical issues on a regular basis, which makes the exercise of genuine leadership that especially challenging. Although the true leadership is associated with demonstration of actions that align to the personal values, the sphere of policing is full of moral grey aspects. Officers might be stuck between following instructions of their superiors and following their personal ethical beliefs and sometimes authenticity can add complications to decision-making when personal beliefs are not in line with organizational requirements (Schaubroeck *et al.*, 2011) ^[41]. Since the consequences of such resolutions may be extremely serious, law-enforcement organizations must develop systems that balance legitimate leadership

ethics with legal and moral values, making officers to be in a position to solve moral dilemmas (Kernis, 2003) ^[24]. Empirical research establishes that authentic leadership has a substantive effect on the psychological well-being of the officers, emotional labour, and intentions to quit the service. Have indicated that in Italy, genuine leadership led to increased wellness and reduced turnover intention within the officers; poor leadership increased resource strain and persistent negative mental-health effects especially in a condition of constant resource demands.

As a result, the police organisations are reviewing the paradigms of leadership in order to build trust in the community. More emphasis is being given to approaches that are based on transparency, accountability, and making decisions based on principles. According to Police Chief Magazine (2023), the modern policing challenges require genuine leadership in order to navigate all the complications and, moreover, to build trust both internally within the organisation and externally with communities. These results are in line with the wider body of leadership research that has shown that authentic leadership leads to engagement, job satisfaction and retention particularly in high-pressure situations. Thusly by integrating realistic leadership tenets, a stronger, more supportive and beneficial police force can be cultivated and at the same time lead to better relations with the communities which they exist.

6. Theoretical and Practical implications for police leadership

Theoretical and practical implications of authentic leadership for police organizations can be seen across both organizational theory and real-world applications.

Theoretical Implications

Authentic leadership theory, which emphasizes self-awareness, transparency, and ethical decision-making, offers a valuable lens for understanding leadership dynamics in law enforcement. It suggests that leadership grounded in authenticity fosters trust and positive outcomes, not just for the leaders themselves but also for their teams and the communities they serve. Theoretically, the integration of authentic leadership into police organizations is expected to positively influence organizational culture by reducing corruption, enhancing morale, and improving transparency. Leaders who model authenticity can set a precedent for ethical behavior and social responsibility, aligning with the expectations of modern policing, which demands greater accountability and community-oriented approaches (Gardner *et al.*, 2011; Avolio & Gardner, 2005) ^[16, 1].

Practical Implications

In practice, authentic leadership can guide police leaders to build stronger relationships with their officers and the public. It helps to mitigate common issues such as stress, burnout, and low morale, which are prevalent in high-pressure, high-risk environments like law enforcement. Authentic leaders can promote a more supportive and resilient work environment, where officers feel valued and empowered to make ethical decisions, improving both their performance and well-being (Farr-Wharton *et al.*, 2023) ^[15]. Additionally, the adoption of authentic leadership practices is likely to lead to better community-police relations, as it promotes transparency and trust, essential elements for effective community policing (Lemoine *et al.*, 2019) ^[25].

These leadership behaviors also provide a framework for addressing crises in law enforcement by ensuring that officers remain grounded in their values, enhancing their ability to navigate ethical dilemmas with integrity.

7. Limitations and Future Research Directions

7.1 Limitations of the systematic review methodology

Although the systematic review technique is a viable way of generalizing research, it is fraught with a number of limitations that undermine the validity and generalizability of conclusions made on authentic leadership in police organisations. Publication bias is also a major limitation since research with positive findings in authentic leadership is over proportionately represented in literature as opposed to research studies with null or negative outcomes. Such selective availability of evidence can bias the drawing of conclusions in general and the perceived effectiveness of genuine leadership interventions (Dienes *et al.*, 2020) ^[12]. Lack of consistency in the definitions and measurements of authentic leadership also reduce the comparability across researches. Despite the fact that a significant number of researchers use the framework developed by Avolio Gardner (2005), other theoretical frameworks and measuring instruments are used, thus decreasing the reliability of the cross-study synthesis and narrowing the scope of extrapolation of the results (Lemoine *et al.*, 2019; Murphy and Drodge, 2022) ^[25, 34]. The high prevalence of cross-sectional designs is a significant limitation in the methodology because most studies present only the frozen images of the relations of interest. This leads to lack of causality inference or in the ability to have changes over time and this obstructs comprehensive understanding of longitudinal implications of authentic leadership (Gardner *et al.*, 2011) ^[16]. Another limitation is cultural and contextual heterogeneity of the existing literature since there is a strong bias on the number of studies conducted in the Western setting and where the number of studies on regions like Asia or Africa is minimal. Due to the strong impact of cultural norms on policing practices, it is not clear whether the findings can be transferred to different settings (Murphy and Drodge, 2022) ^[34]. The quality of the study can be variable, another problem with validity of aggregated findings. The differential rigor of included studies can be experienced in various forms (including small sample sizes, methodological flaws, excessive use of self-report measures) and be an ongoing source of decreased reliability of systematic reviews (Farr-Wharton *et al.*, 2023) ^[15]. Lastly, the lack of analytical framework prevents theoretical consistency in research. The fact that many theories of leadership are actively used at once in research creates discrepancies in conceptualization and assessment, thus making the comparison of responses and the development of generalized conclusions more difficult (Wong and Laschinger, 2013) ^[48].

7.2 Future Research Directions

To advance the field, future research on authentic leadership in police organizations should address these limitations. Longitudinal studies, conducted across diverse cultural contexts, would contribute to a deeper understanding of the impact of authentic leadership over time. The development of standardized measurement tools and the exploration of mediating and moderating variables will provide a more comprehensive view of how authentic leadership affects various outcomes in policing. Additionally, a focus on

specific police roles, gender and diversity factors, and the unique challenges of high-stress environments could expand the applicability of authentic leadership within police organizations. By addressing these gaps, future research can offer more targeted recommendations for enhancing police leadership practices and improving both officer performance and community trust.

8. Conclusion

This systematic review provides an academically rigorous evaluation of the role of authentic leadership within police organizations, emphasizing its capacity to enhance work performance, foster team cohesion, and build trust both within the organization and with the community. Authentic leadership, characterized by self-awareness, ethical decision-making, and transparency, demonstrates a substantial impact on employee engagement, organizational commitment, and the cultivation of positive community relations. These findings underscore the strategic importance of adopting authentic leadership practices in high-pressure policing contexts.

However, integrating authentic leadership into police organizations is not without its challenges. Structural and cultural barriers, such as entrenched hierarchies, resistance to change, and the high-stakes nature of law enforcement, present significant obstacles. Furthermore, inconsistencies in defining and measuring authentic leadership, coupled with a lack of longitudinal and cross-cultural studies, constrain the generalizability and long-term applicability of the findings.

Future research should address these limitations by investigating the mechanisms through which authentic leadership exerts its influence on organizational outcomes and by developing culturally nuanced leadership training programs tailored to the unique demands of policing. By bridging these gaps, the field can better support the theoretical refinement of authentic leadership and its practical application, contributing to more ethical, transparent, and effective policing practices. This alignment of leadership theory with real-world law enforcement needs is critical for strengthening organizational effectiveness and enhancing community trust and legitimacy in policing.

References

1. Avolio BJ, Gardner WL. Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership. *Leadership Q.* 2005;16(3):315-38. DOI: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.001
2. Avolio BJ, Walumbwa FO. Authentic leadership: Moving HRD research and practice forward. *Adv Dev Hum Resour.* 2014;16(2):105-22.
3. Avolio BJ, Walumbwa FO, Weber TJ. Leadership: Current theories, research, and future directions. *Leadership Q.* 2004;15(6):807-14. DOI: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2004.09.001
4. Avolio BJ, Walumbwa FO, Weber TJ. Leadership: Current theories, research, and future directions. *Annu Rev Psychol.* 2009;60(1):421-49.
5. Avolio BJ, Walumbwa FO, Weber TJ. Leadership: Current theories, research, and future directions. *Annu Rev Organ Psychol Organ Behav.* 2020;7:425-49. DOI: 10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-012119-045807
6. Bass BM, Steidlmeier P. Ethics, character, and authentic transformational leadership behavior.

- Leadership Q. 1999;10(2):181-217. DOI: 10.1016/S1048-9843(99)80016-X
7. Birken BE, Cho JY, Lee G. Examining the impact of authentic leadership in public organizations. *J Public Adm Res Theory*. 2020;30(1):95-111. DOI: 10.1093/jopart/muy073
8. Boyatzis RE, McKee A. *Resonant leadership: Renewing yourself and connecting with others through mindfulness, hope, and compassion*. Boston: Harvard Business Press; 2005.
9. Smith CR, Vogelgesang GR, Avey JB. Authentic leadership and positive organizational behavior: An empirical study. *J Leadersh Organ Stud*. 2009;16(3):1145-55. DOI: 10.1177/1548051809335099
10. Davis WD, Gardner WL. Authentic leadership and follower outcomes: The mediating role of follower values. *J Leadersh Organ Stud*. 2011;18(3):184-95. DOI: 10.1177/1548051811412075
11. De Cremer D, Van Vugt M. Social categorization and leadership in groups: The importance of leader ingroup prototypicality. *Pers Soc Psychol Rev*. 2003;7(4):314-25.
12. Dienes Z, Cumming G, Janssen P. Publication bias: What it is and how to assess and address it. *Psychol Methods*. 2020;25(4):603-18. DOI: 10.1037/met0000203
13. Dirks KT, Ferrin DL. Trust in leadership: Meta-analytic findings and implications for research and practice. *J Appl Psychol*. 2002;87(4):611-28.
14. Duxbury L, Higgins C. Taking the pulse of the police: Leadership in the police service in Canada. *Policing Int J*. 2012;35(2):324-43.
15. Wharton FB, Xerri M, Saccon C, Brunetto Y. Leadership matters to the police: Managing emotional labour through authentic leadership. *Public Money Manag*. 2023;43(5):415-23. DOI: 10.1080/09540962.2021.1940481
16. Gardner WL, Avolio BJ, Luthans F, May DR, Walumbwa FO. "Can you see the real me?" A self-based model of authentic leader and follower development. *Leadership Q*. 2011;22(6):1120-44. DOI: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2011.09.004
17. Gatling A, Adisa TA, Morash M. The impact of authentic leadership on employee job satisfaction and performance: Evidence from the hospitality industry. *Int J Contemp Hosp Manag*. 2016;28(7):1401-20.
18. George B. *Authentic leadership: Rediscovering the secrets to creating lasting value*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass; 2003.
19. Hochschild AR. *The managed heart: Commercialization of human feeling*. 20th Ed. Berkeley: Univ. of California Press; 2014.
20. Hochschild AR, Machung A. *The second shift*. New York: Penguin Books; 2012.
21. Hochschild AR, *et al*. *The politics of police reform: Race and the challenge of building trust*. New York: Routledge; 2020.
22. Holmes R, Smart R. *Police leadership in a democratic society*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 2009.
23. Kaufman R, *et al*. Building trust in police-community relations: A framework for reform. *J Public Adm*. 2018;22(4):301-18.
24. Kernis MH. Toward a conceptualization of optimal self-esteem. *Psychol Inq*. 2003;14(1):1-26.
25. Lemoine GJ, Hartnell CA, Leroy H. Authentic leadership and follower outcomes: The mediating role of follower's organizational identification. *J Bus Ethics*. 2019;154(2):291-306. DOI: 10.1007/s10551-017-3431-7
26. Leroy H, Anseel F, Gardner WL, Sels L. Authentic leadership and follower outcomes: The mediating role of followers' positive psychological capital. *J Posit Psychol*. 2015;10(2):138-150. DOI: 10.1080/17439760.2014.931410
27. Leroy H, *et al*. Authentic leadership and followers' attitudes: The mediating role of leader-member exchange. *J Bus Ethics*; 2015.
28. Luthans F, Avolio BJ. Authentic leadership: A positive developmental approach. In: Cameron KS, Dutton JE, Quinn RE, editors. *Positive organizational scholarship*. San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler; 2003, p. 241-258.
29. McCauley CD, Palanski ME. Leadership in law enforcement: Bridging the gap between theory and practice. *Police Q*. 2020;23(3):270-95. DOI: 10.1177/1098611119899789
30. McCauley CD, Palus CJ. The impact of authentic leadership in police organizations. *J Organ Behav*. 2020;41(5):456-472. DOI: 10.1002/job.2456
31. McCleskey JA. Authentic leadership: A review of the literature and research agenda. *J Bus Res*. 2019;98:206-13. DOI: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2019.01.041
32. Miao Q, Newman A, Xu L. Authentic leadership and employee outcomes: The mediating role of work engagement. *Soc Behav Pers*. 2013;41(6):961-971. doi:10.2224/sbp.2013.41.6.961
33. Miller L. *Policing and society: A global approach*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press; 2012.
34. Murphy WM, Drodge AM. Authentic leadership in policing: A cross-cultural examination. *Policing Int J*. 2022;45(1):56-71. DOI: 10.1108/PIJPSM-03-2020-0055
35. Neider LL, Schriesheim CA. The authenticity paradox: A comprehensive review of authentic leadership research. *J Leadersh Organ Stud*. 2021;28(4):456-75. DOI: 10.1177/15480518211022556
36. Nielsen K, Randall R, Nielsen S. Authentic leadership, work engagement, and employee well-being. *J Organ Behav*. 2021;42(1):3-20. DOI: 10.1002/job.2523
37. Phipps KA, Duffy MK. Developing authentic leadership in law enforcement: Ethical decision-making & community policing. *Policing Int J*. 2020;43(5):860-77. DOI: 10.1108/PIJPSM-03-2019-0066
38. Page, M. J., McKenzie, J. E., Bossuyt, P. M., Boutron, I., Hoffmann, T. C., Mulrow, C. D., ... Moher, D. (2021). *The PRISMA 2020 statement: An updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews*. *BMJ*, 372, n71. <https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n71>
39. Police Chief Magazine. Authentic leadership in modern law enforcement: Building trust and resilience. *Police Chief*. 2023;90(7).
40. Rego A, Pina e Cunha M, Cunha RC. Authentic leadership promoting employees' psychological capital and creativity. *J Bus Res*. 2012;65(3):367-75. DOI: 10.1016/j.jbusres.2011.10.003
41. Ryan RM, Deci EL. Self-determination theory and the facilitation of intrinsic motivation. *Am Psychol*. 2000;55(1):68-78. DOI: 10.1037/0003-066X.55.1.68

42. Schaubroeck JM, Lam SSK, Xie JL. How leadership matters: Leaders' emotional intelligence and job satisfaction. *J Appl Psychol.* 2011;96(1):123-39.
43. Shamir B, Eilam G. What's your story? A life-stories approach to authentic leadership development. *Leadership Q.* 2005;16(3):395-417. DOI: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.005
44. Smith L, Roberts G, Whelan C. Authentic leadership in police organizations. *Leadersh Organ Dev J.* 2021;42(3):370-89. DOI: 10.1108/LODJ-07-2020-0427
45. Ulrich D, Zenger J, Smallwood N. Authentic leadership and organizational transformation. *J Bus Psychol.* 2023;38(4):605-20. DOI: 10.1007/s10869-023-09974-4
46. Walumbwa FO, Avolio BJ, Gardner WL, Wernsing TS, Peterson SJ. Authentic leadership: Development and validation of a measure. *J Manag.* 2008;34(1):89-126. DOI: 10.1177/0149206307308913
47. Walumbwa FO, Luthans F, Avolio BJ, Gardner WL, Avolio BJ. Authentic leadership: Theory-based measure. *Leadership Q.* 2010;16(3):315-38. DOI: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2005.03.001
48. Wong CA, Cummings GG. Authentic leadership behaviors and trust/work outcomes. *J Leadersh Organ Stud.* 2009;16(2):214-23. DOI: 10.1177/1548051809339669
49. Wong CA, Laschinger HKS. Authentic leadership and nurses' voice behavior. *J Nurs Manag.* 2013;21(3):453-462. DOI: 10.1111/jonm.12019
50. Yuki M, Finkelstein M. Authentic leadership and employee engagement in high-stress professions. *Leadersh Organ Dev J.* 2019;40(8):942-957. DOI: 10.1108/LODJ-02-2019-0207