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Value-Based Organisational Leadership: A Literature Review

E. A. G. Sumanasiri^{1*}

¹*Department of Commerce, Faculty of Management Studies and Commerce, University of Sri Jayewardenepura, Nugegoda, Sri Lanka.*

Author's contribution

The sole author designed, analysed, interpreted and prepared the manuscript.

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ABSTRACT

This review of literature explores the literature on the concept of organisational leadership which is dedicated to the leader's commitment to ensuring the common good. A hundred and eighty four articles were identified that focused on six main types of leadership, namely, transformational leadership, ethical leadership, spiritual leadership, responsible leadership, servant leadership and authentic leadership. These approaches to leadership focus on difference aspects of organisational leadership, on its ethicality, morality, spirituality and sustainability. Effort has been also made to identify how a leader uses these values to influence his/her followers and the current challenges faced by each type of leader discussed. This paper further explores the contemporary leadership issues under each approach. Overall, it was found that over the years, organisational leadership studies that focused on the common good were complex and emerging and that this subject has attracted the attention of many leadership researchers. However, there are still areas coming under these diverse leadership approaches which should be continuously researched. Therefore, the paper concludes with possible avenues for future research in this field.

Keywords: Value-based leadership; transformational leadership; ethical leadership; spiritual leadership, responsible leadership; servant leadership; authentic leadership.

*Corresponding author: E-mail: ayoma@sjp.ac.lk;

1. INTRODUCTION

The role of organisational leadership has been widely accepted as the leader's vision, promoting cohesiveness and inspiring employees, all of which have been confirmed as essential aspects of leadership that improve organisational performance. However, the growing global environmental, social and geo political challenges are urging organizations to network with diverse stakeholders including governments, local communities, and customers in order to play more dynamic roles as global citizens [1,2]. To address this issue, leadership researchers have examined organisational leadership under diverse approaches such as charismatic leadership, transactional leadership, transformational leadership and contingency-based leadership. However, over the years, a crisis in leadership has seen unethical practices taking place in modern work places, and therefore, organisations have sought alternative ways to address these issues of distrust, lack of morality, and workplace incivility [3]. To address this gap in leadership, the concepts of charismatic and transformational leadership emerged in the leadership literature [4]. However, leadership practitioners and scholars began to notice the importance of having strong leadership values which are moral and ethical for ensuring organisational survival. This made the value-based leadership (VBL) concept popular among scholars and practitioners.

Therefore, VBL has been introduced to address these issues emerging around the concept of leadership [5].

2. DEFINING VALUE-BASED LEADERSHIP

The concept of VBL was introduced and explored further as traditional leadership theories such as those describing charismatic and transformational leadership do not account for the dimensions of ethicality and morality in leaders [5,6,7,8]. VBL is popularly identified in the literature as a leadership philosophy that brings an ethical and moral foundation to leadership [9,10,11], that impacts the organisation, its customers, its suppliers and its shareholders, and that does not focus on personal gains (p. 7) [12].

The work of Burns [13] comparing transactional and transformational leadership provided a clear understanding of the definitions of the two concepts. Bass & Avolio [4] highlighted the

ability of transformational leadership to achieve greater organizational performance through transforming employees to achieve organizational outcomes. The moral values of leaders which are employed for improving organisational performance are often highlighted in the literature. The concept of transformational leadership is well established in the literature, where Bass [14] explains how the moral values of leaders come into play when transforming their employees to achieve organisational goals. Extensive work by scholars [15,16] on charismatic leadership also contributed to the further evolution of VBL. Meanwhile, the work of Bass [17] highlighted some danger of transactional leaders to the organization. The development of the leadership questionnaire (MLQ) [18] was a positive influence on the development of VBL. In addition, the work of Avolio, Waldman & Yammarino [19] in the identification of the 4 I's of transformational leadership also contributed towards the further development of VBL. Research work by Lowe, Kroeck & Sivasubramaniam [20] also confirmed that transformational leadership helps to improve organizational performance through motivating employees.

Many began to accept the change in the organizational environment and the leader's role in adapting to these changes. Leaders who are willing to change with environmental change are identified as keys to sustaining organizational performance. Notably, Hersey, Blanchard & Johnson [21] reported the benefits of flexible leadership over static leadership. In a changing organizational context, leadership scholars began to explain the advantages of having charismatic leaders in an organization, rather than non-charismatic ones [22]. There was a certain amount of confusion in the leadership literature where transformational and charismatic leadership were sometimes seen as similar. Addressing this problem, Yukl [23] clarified the issue by explaining that the two concepts were not similar but overlapping. In a period where trust, ethics and morals inherent in organizational leadership is in question, Bass and Steidlmerier [10] pointed out that a leader's ethical, moral and authentic leadership behaviors are important for him/her to become a transformational leader. Supporting this, the work of Carless, Wearing and Mann [24] develops a Global Transformational Leadership scale, pushing for the evolution of transformational leadership in the organizational leadership literature. In the process of examining effective leadership in the

complex and competitive organizational environment, Osborn, Hunt & Jauch [25] identified the importance of the context or the situation in achieving effective leadership.

The unethical and immoral behaviors of organizational leaders that have led to massive corporate scandals in the 20th century have made leadership researchers search for a new dimension of leadership. This led [11,26,27] to the introduction of authentic leadership and ethical leadership [28,29,30]. By this time, there were several leadership theories in the leadership literature, causing a certain amount of confusion among scholars. The complexity in the leadership literature [31,32,33,34] revealed an urgent need to clarify the diversely defined types of leadership to better understand what constitutes leadership in an organizational context.

Rapidly changing organisational contexts required leaders to think of new ways to sustain their organisations. To this end, organisational leaders should embrace VBL as it ensures long term survival of the organisation and is relatively easy to implement practically in the corporate culture in a way that would ensure sustainable results [12]. Literature confirms that research on VBL includes shared leadership [35], spiritual leadership [36], stewardship [37], servant leadership [38,39,40], authentic leadership [6,26,27,41], connective leadership [42], self-sacrificial leadership [43], ethical leadership [29,30,44,45], and transformational leadership [5]. These VBL theories are able to change the way people perceive what constitutes good leadership for today's organisations and to create leaders who are more effective. Value based leaders build strong organisations through simply motivating their employees to achieve organisational goals and values that in return, create long term value to their shareholders [46]. However, most of the above VBL theories lack a strong theoretical background and a framework to validate them as theories [47], although most literature relating to transformational, ethical and authentic leadership have identified these as forms of VBL [48].

This article examined diverse works of literature relating to the emerging issues of VBL theories that focus on leadership efforts to ensure the common good. To conduct the literature review, online data bases were used. A list of key words was used to search each leadership dimension that related to the common good. Words like ethical, morality, authentic, servant, and spirituality were keyed into the system to arrive at

possible research works on organisational leadership. Out of the one hundred and eighty four research studies, a hundred and twenty eight articles were ultimately selected to complete this literature review. The literature search was conducted under the six leadership dimensions 1) Transformational leadership, 2) Ethical leadership, 3) Spiritual leadership, 4) Responsible leadership, 5) Servant leadership, and 6) Authentic leadership.

2.1 Research Purpose

The main aims of this study were to provide a greater understanding of VBL theories and to categorize the current research studies under each VBL theory;

This literature review aims to address three research questions in relation to each VBL theory.

- 1) How is each VBL theory identified in this literature review defined within the leadership literature?
- 2) What are the main characteristics of each VBL theory?
- 3) How is each VBL theory identified in this study empirically examined?
- 4) What are the future research directions for VBL theories?

3. METHODOLOGY

To address the above research questions, the researcher reviewed previous studies addressing value based leadership. It was evident that over the years there has been a considerable growth in the academic literature on VBL. The literature search was limited to peer-reviewed academic journals and to peer-reviewed and scholarly journals from online databases. To address the research questions of the study, various keywords were used to search for the identified literature sources. Papers having at least one of these keywords either in their title, abstract, list of keywords or full text were selected to compile the literature review. From the initial search results, a list of 184 papers was extracted. These papers were then manually examined and used to summarise and explain each of the value based leadership types identified in this paper.

4. REVIEW OF FINDINGS

Through the systematic analysis of the relevant literature, six value based leadership theories were identified, and these are explained below.

4.1 Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is the starting point at which leadership theories began to focus on the importance of incorporating moral and ethical aspects into leadership behaviour [10,13,14,17, 18,19]. Moreover, transformational leadership has been the foundation for the emergence and development of all the VBL theories developed so far. Examining the concept of transformational leadership further, Bass and Steidlmerier [10] pointed out that for a leader to become transformational, he/she must be moral, ethical and authentic in his/her leadership behaviour. Transformational leaders are innovative and lead by example to ensure the effectiveness of their leadership.

When leaders lack the ability to transmit their ethical, moral and authentic visions to their followers and so transform them, they fail in their leadership roles and become so-called pseudo-transformational leaders. To become effective transformational leaders, leaders need to “provide their followers with challenges and meaning for engaging in shared goals and undertakings” (p 188) [10]. Employee training and development has been recommended in the transformational leadership literature to communicate these shared goals and values to followers [14].

Burns' [13] work differentiating transactional leadership from transformational leadership is noteworthy in the literature as his work recognized the importance of motivating and empowering followers through inspiring moral and ethical values in the followers [24]. Here it was found that transformational leadership is more effective in leading organizations than transactional leadership. The later work of Bass [14,17] aims to further develop transformational leadership theory, where he [17] explains how an organization could improve its performance through transformational leadership primarily by motivating followers.

Reviewing the literature, Brown and Trevino [30] revealed that transformational and ethical leadership theories are similar since both concepts encompass concern for others (altruism), ethical decision making, integrity and role modelling. The two are different in that ethical leaders emphasise ethical standards while moral management is mostly transactional in nature. Further, transactional leaders emphasize vision, values and intellectual

stimulation [30]. The next section discusses the popular VBL theory, ethical leadership.

4.2 Ethical Leadership

The ethical and moral perspective of leadership have attracted much attention from contemporary researchers and practitioners who study organisational leadership [21,49,50]. Central to ethical leadership research are three main approaches, namely, ethics within the individual leader, ethical leaders influencing followers and challenges with implementing ethics in organisations. In certain instances, ethical leadership has been identified as the outward display of transformational leadership [51]. At the end of the transformational process, the leaders becomes moral, where they raise both their levels of human conduct and ethical aspirations and that of their followers. Here, both leaders and followers are ultimately transformed [13]. Yukl [52] defined an ethical leader as one who promotes honesty, and mirrors his or her values and beliefs in his/her actions. In this way, these model behaviours, or so-called ethical and credible leadership behaviours, become very attractive and draw the attention of followers [53].

Brown, Trevino and Harrison [29] defined ethical leadership as that which is concerned with “the demonstration of normatively appropriate conduct through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, and the promotion of such conduct to followers through two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making” (p.120). “Ethical leaders demonstrate virtues such as imagination, compassion, empathy and discernment” [55]. King [56] identified eight common ethical values shared by leaders, namely, honesty, loyalty, dedication to purpose, benevolence, social justice, strength of character, humility and patience. Martinez-Saenz [57] advanced four paradigms to describe an ethical leader, namely, that he/she is altruistic, autonomous, legalist and communitarian. Manz and Sims [58] identified four shared strategic values of a successful leader namely, that he/she has to act with integrity, to be fair, to have fun and to be socially responsible.

Organisations such as Enron collapsed simply because of the unethical behaviour of its managers [59]. Understanding the ethical environment of a business is useful in leading, and this reflects in corporate policies, codes of conduct, financial affairs, environmental concerns, human resources, organisational

reputation, relationships and the leader's personal moral frame [60]. The main concept of ethical leadership centres around the ethicality of a leader's personal conduct when decision-making by engaging in various relationships with others, and this conduct stems from his/her honesty, integrity, setting of ethical standards and communications [50]. Ethical leaders have to deal with conflicts and the contradictory views with their followers and direct their followers towards the right path [61]. Because ethical leaders use rewards and discipline to hold followers accountable for their conduct, Brown and Trevino [30] pointed out that ethical leadership has transactional leadership characteristics. In certain instances, it has been confirmed that employees are sceptical about the existence of ethics within their business environments [51,62]. This made early leadership scholars such as Greenleaf [38] emphasize the importance of ethical leadership in his work on servant leadership. "Service to followers is the primary responsibility of leaders and the essence of ethical leadership" (p 20).

Ethical leadership has been researched using three classical leadership theories [63], namely, servant leadership, authentic leadership [64] and transformational leadership [13]. A review of the literature on ethical leadership confirmed that ethical leadership is an ambiguous construct that includes various constituents [63]. The work of Brown et al., [29] contained a more formal construct development and validation process and introduced a ten-item instrument (Ethical Leadership Scale – ELS) to measure perceptions of ethical leadership.

Three approaches to define ethical leadership have been identified by Sandel [65], namely; utilitarianism, libertarianism and Hant's Ethical theory. Social learning theory [53,54] is also used to explain the antecedents and outcomes of ethical leadership [30]. Social learning theory claims that organisational members understand what ethical and unethical behaviours in their work environment are and learn how other members are rewarded or punished based on their own behaviour [30]. Ethical leadership has been studied using the impact of knowledge on personal ethical development [66]; values within an ethical leader's life [67]; ethical maturity [68], crisis of trust between leaders and followers [69, 70]; and the ethical leader's role from a spiritual perspective [71]. Understanding the challenges facing an ethical leader, Walton [72] identified forty-five traps based on three categories,

namely, primary, defensive and personality. Often, there are ethical failures in leaders due mostly to ignorance rather than to selfish behaviours [73]. Therefore, future research should focus on developing models to address the issues in implementing ethics in organisations [63].

4.3 Spiritual Leadership

Spiritual leadership is not a new concept in the leadership literature but is well established [74]. It is often identified as another complex leadership domain [75,76,77] that has been popularised in recent scholarly work on leadership [78]. Spirituality was first introduced to the organisational context by Fairholm [79]; however, Fry [36] was the first to link spirituality to the concept of leadership in the literature. Oh and Wang [74] pointed out that one group of researchers claimed that spiritual leadership was different from having religious values [36,80,81, 82,83] while another group considered spiritual leadership values to be a part of religious values [84,85,86,87].

It has been argued that spiritual leadership is essential for transforming organisations into learning organisations [88]. Reviewing the transformational leadership literature, Brown and Trevino [30] stated that spiritual leadership has some similarities with transformational leadership in that both concepts are concerned about others (altruism), have integrity as a key characteristic and involve role modelling. They differentiated the two leadership concepts by stating that ethical leaders emphasise moral management whereas spiritual leaders emphasise visioning, hope/faith and work as vocation. Scholars such as Duchon & Plowman [89]; Fairholm [79]; Fairholm and Gronau [90]; Fry [36]; Fry and Nisiewicz [88]; Guillory [91]; Korac-Kakabadse, Kouzmin, and Kakabadse [92]; Reave [83]; and Sendjaya [93] have defined spiritual leadership in their research. Fry [36] defined spiritual leadership as "the values, attitudes, and behaviours necessary to intrinsically motivate self and others so that they have a sense of spiritual survival through calling and membership" (p. 694-695). Fry [36] posited the four fundamental factors of a human, namely; i) Body (Physical) ii) Mind (logical and rational thought) iii) Heart (emotions and feelings) and iv) Spirit. The website of the International Institute for Spiritual Leadership states that spiritual leadership 'involves intrinsically motivating and inspiring workers through hope/faith in a vision of

service to key stakeholders and a corporate culture based on the values of altruistic love to produce a highly motivated, committed, and productive workforce' [94]. Spiritual organisational leaders often strive to change the inner-selves of their group members and their values, beliefs and attitudes, and transform organisations into better-performing entities [88]. They inspire employees to motivate themselves to achieve the organisational vision and organisational values through offering support, and appreciation and (mainly) through fostering a sense of belonging [36]. By doing so, spiritual leaders are able to create a positive work environment and help organisational sustainability through ensuring employee health and well-being [36,95]. Through reviewing the literature on spiritual leadership, Oh and Wang [74] confirmed that spiritual leaders share three key characteristics, namely 1) having higher levels of ethical values (such as integrity, honesty, caring and justice; ii) valuing interconnectedness with followers and peers through encouraging, engaging and guiding one another; and iii) motivating people to pursue organisational vision and mission, and meaningfulness at work.

Spiritual leadership has been often identified as a researchable area in leadership studies [96]. Most research [75,77,83,95,97,98] differentiates spiritual leadership from other forms of leadership such as transformational, servant and authentic leadership. Spiritual leadership has been studied in diverse industries, mostly in banking/financial services, health care industries, business, government and the higher educational sector, while it has also been utilized in industries such as retail services, religious organisations, manufacturing, hospitality, and the military [74]. It is noteworthy that most studies used spiritual leadership as a predictor of outcomes and Fry's [36] model is the one that has been most widely used in these studies [74]. Although there are large scale studies exploring spiritual leadership around the world [76,99], Oh and Wang [74], in their literature review, noted that there is a dearth of literature examining how spiritual leadership is actually practiced in organisations. Spiritual leadership has been researched using qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods but the majority of such studies are quantitative [74]. Fry, Vitucci and Cedillo's [95] Spiritual Leadership Questionnaire comprises 33 items and is a very popular instrument used to study spiritual leadership.

4.4 Responsible Leadership

Responsible leadership is still considered an evolving leadership theory [100]. It was first introduced in the 1990's following the work of Newman [101]. Responsible leadership rejected the concept of the 'great man' and perceived leaders to be those that find responsible solutions to complex, ambiguous and uncertain organisational challenges by incorporating diverse stakeholder interests, needs and demands into managerial decision making. The uncertain, unexpected and complex issues in businesses often require responsible leaders to link transactional and charismatic leadership qualities [102]. Responsible leadership is a multidisciplinary research area imbedded in the domains of ethical leadership, developmental psychology, psychoanalysis, stakeholder theory and systems theory [103]. It is popularly studied under ethics and corporate social responsibility [104]. Literature confirms that the concept of responsible leadership became less popular after the emergence of spiritual leadership [105].

Responsible leadership was defined by Pless [103] as 'maintaining strong social and moral relationships between leaders and followers based on a sense of justice, a sense of recognition, a sense of care, and a sense of accountability for a wide range of economic, ecological, social, political and human responsibilities, to achieve long-term success' (p.451). Pless and Maak [106] assert that "responsible and stakeholder leadership is not just inextricably linked but that responsible leadership provides a convincing perspective on how to connect leadership to stakeholder theory" (p 6). These claims of Maak and Pless [1,106] confirm that responsible leadership is about the role of the responsible leader which is mainly that of an influencer who strives to build a value based relationship with the diverse stakeholders of the organisation. Unlike other VBL theories, responsible leadership relies primarily on stakeholders' perceptions when it comes to moral decision making [106]. The scholarly works of Schraa-Liu and Trompenaars [107] and Waldman et al. [108] have highlighted integrity, teamwork, respect and professionalism as essential characteristics of a responsible leader. Responsible leadership is therefore centred around leadership skills and abilities that arise from the inner-self of the leader, mostly consisting of self-discipline and self-mastery (1;103).

The literature often suggests that organisational sustainability is clearly linked with responsible leadership, because sustainability leadership and responsible leadership both prioritise issues such as corporate governance practices, ethical practices and economic objectives while responding via justice-based relationships towards non-core stakeholders of the organisation [109,110].

Responsible leadership has not yet been discussed extensively in the leadership literature both at a holistic or micro level to justify the claim that it is a fully developed theory [100]. Hence, further support is needed to develop this VBL theory in the future, especially that focusing on empirical research to explore responsible leadership in different business contexts. Three main challenges that responsible leaders face are conflicting stakeholder needs, personal and cultural values, and organisational pressure and structure [100]. Empirical research examining these challenges are scarce, so future studies on responsible leadership could focus on examining these practical issues and finding solutions. Further research should also focus on understanding how responsible leadership creates financial outcomes, employee outcomes, firm reputation and external stakeholder outcomes such as the social performance of the firm [100]. Studies examining how responsible leaders maintain relationships with their employees are limited [100], suggesting that future researchers need to explore this area. Moreover, research should also focus on how human resource training and development could be used to enhance responsible leadership behaviours in organisational leaders.

4.5 Servant Leadership

The concept of servant leadership was first introduced by Greenleaf in the 1970s [38]. Since then, different scholars such as Patterson [39] and Parolini, Patterson, & Winston [40] explicated the Servant Leadership theory. However, most studies published so far lack clarity and coherence regarding the servant leadership construct, thus restricting its theoretical development [111]. Servant leadership is often loosely defined [111] and therefore, servant leadership and leaders have been redefined as “an 1) other – oriented approach to leadership 2) manifested through one-on-one prioritising of followers’ individual needs and interests, 3) and outwards reorienting of their concern for self towards concern for others within the organisation and the larger

community” (p. 114). Ludema and Cox [112] have contended that servant leaders are those that provide leadership that focuses on the good of those who are being led and those whom the organisation serves (p. 875). Servant leaders strive to grow the organisational resources, financials and other resources that are entrusted to them through considering themselves as stewards of their organisations [113], whereby they consider both organisational performance and the personal development of their followers.

In the past, several researchers [111,114,115] have clearly differentiated servant leadership from other VBL theories. Servant leaders engage followers in multiple dimensions such as relational, ethical, emotional, and spiritual, encouraging them to become what they want to be. Thus, servant leadership generally emerges when leaders identify the needs, desires, interests and welfare of their followers above their own self-interest [116]. Hence, servant leadership is more concerned with followers’ psychological needs compared to transformational leadership that prioritises organisational goals over the psychological needs of its followers [117]. Notably, some studies [115,117,118,119] have confirmed servant leadership as being more explanatory in predicting follower outcomes than transformational leadership is. In a chaotic situation, servant leaders often behave with personal integrity to lead their followers to deal with obstacles while gaining the trust, respect and commitment of followers [116]. This inner conviction or higher call differentiates servant leadership from authentic leadership. Thus, Sendjaya [120] maintains that servant leaders focus on followers first and the organisation second.

Reviewing the literature on servant leadership [111], the current researcher categorised studies on servant leadership into three areas, namely; i) conceptual development of servant leadership focusing on the works of Greenleaf [38] and Spears [121] ii) developing measures of servant leadership and testing the relationship between servant leadership and outcomes via cross-sectional research and iii) the model development phase where more sophisticated research designs are utilised to move beyond simple relationships and outcomes.

Future researchers willing to study servant leadership behaviours could use socially based theories such as the social exchange theory, the social learning theory and the social identity

theory to structure their studies [111]. Servant leadership research is presently prominent in the tourism and hospitality sector, healthcare sector, education sector, not for profit sector, youth sector, and the public sector, and there is potential for this concept to be used in other industries as well. The first scale to measure servant leadership was presented by Lytle, Horn and Mokwa [122] and there are now nearly 16 scales used to measure the construct, making this leadership theory more complex and needing more in-depth exploration. Future researchers could use the three most recommended servant leadership behavioural measures, namely those by Liden et al., [123]; Sendjaya et al., [124]; and van Dierendonck and Nuijten [125]. Endogenous bias, measurement errors and common method bias are still evident in servant leadership research, urging future researchers in the field to address these limitations [126]. Future studies need to use larger sample sizes as most studies on servant leadership are based on small samples [114].

4.6 Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership behaviours are identified as a part of transformational leadership [10]. However, recent reviews have confirmed that the two concepts are different but overlapping [127] as authentic leaders emphasize authenticity and self-awareness more than transformational leaders do [30]. Authentic and Transformational leadership theories are similar as both concepts are concerned about others (altruism), ethical decision making, integrity and role modelling [30]. Brown and Trevino [30] have pointed out that authentic leaders and ethical leaders are both socially motivated and have a considerate leadership style. Often, authentic leaders are confirmed to be more effective than non-authentic leaders [26].

Avolio, Luthans, & Walumbwa [41] defined authentic leaders as “those 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, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient and of high moral character” (p.4). Authentic leadership relates to the importance of the leader’s interpersonal-self as trustworthy and is able to develop a leader-follower relationship that is based on trust and integrity [5,11]. Authentic leaders “incorporate charismatic, transformational, integrity and/or

ethical leadership” but these constructs are distinct from each other [128, p 4].

The leader’s self-awareness and authentic self-regulation have commonly been identified as the main characteristics of authentic leadership [11]. However, self-awareness about what is right and wrong is not enough to create authentic leadership, and self-regulation in leaders and followers is necessary to establish authentic leadership and to achieve organisational goals [128].

Cooper, Scandura and Schriesheim [8] contend that any scholars who want to advance the authentic leadership theory via conceptual and empirical work need to first give careful consideration to four critical issues: ‘1) defining and measuring the construct; 2) determining the discriminant validity of the construct; 3) identifying relevant construct outcomes; and 4) ascertaining whether authentic leadership can be taught’ (p. 477).

5. CONCLUSION

VBL became prominent in leadership research as unethical, unsustainable and immoral actions of leaders continue to be reported around the world. The impact of these negative leadership behaviours is not only at the micro level creating adverse impacts on followers as well as on organisations, but also creates macro level influences, sometimes even causing economic collapse in countries. VBL prioritises and reflects strong values and improves the lives of organisational employees whilst enhancing the performance of the organisation. Because the VBL concept is significant to the socio – political and economic well-being of all countries, this review paper aims to expand the current understanding of this concept. In this context, expanding the knowledge related to VBL is vital for the development of leadership literature. To achieve this goal, this review of literature was based on the studies relevant to VBL. The review attempted to summarise the literature related to six VBL theories, namely, 1) Transformational leadership, 2) Ethical leadership, 3) Spiritual leadership, 4) Responsible leadership, 5) Servant leadership, and 6) Authentic leadership. To this end, one hundred and eighty four research papers were reviewed, using key terms that reflect each leadership theory mentioned above. Thus, the review was able to validate the idea that leaders with VBL behaviours support their organisation to enhance its performance whilst enriching the lives of their followers to a

greater extent, when compared to leaders without VBL behaviours. Further, this paper addresses the current understanding of each leadership dimension, the main characteristics of each type of leader, comparison between leadership theories, and future research directions. Future researchers could expand this literature review further by examining diverse VBL theories and developing a ranking of these theories to list the VBL leadership behaviours that are most important to an organisation. Future research also needs to focus on examining the context-specific nature of VBL theories.

COMPETING INTERESTS

Author has declared that no competing interests exist.

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