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## Probing the Seven Qualities of True Leadership: A Qualitative Investigation of Selected Experienced and Successful Leaders in Various Industries

Dr. Adrian Lawrence P. Carvajal\*<sup>1</sup>, Dr. Richard D. Sanchez<sup>2</sup>, Dr. Shiello R. Amihan<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Professional Regulation Commission, Philippines, <sup>2</sup>ETCOR Educational Research Center, Philippines

<sup>3</sup> University of Perpetual Help Dalta Calamba Campus, Philippines

Corresponding Author email: [adrianlpc2010@gmail.com](mailto:adrianlpc2010@gmail.com)

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### Abstract

**Aim:** True leadership is characterized by specific qualities and attributes that set exceptional leaders apart, enabling them to navigate challenges, inspire trust, and create lasting positive impacts. The purpose of this research is to delve into the qualities that define true leadership through a qualitative investigation.

**Methodology:** The qualitative research through Key Informant Interviews aimed to understand the qualities that distinguish true leadership systematically. To achieve this objective, in-depth interviews were conducted with a carefully selected cohort of experienced leaders representing diverse industries and nationalities.

**Results:** The in-depth interviews with the selected experienced leaders shed light on the multifaceted nature of true leadership and the defining qualities that set exceptional leaders apart. The discussions collectively emphasized that true leadership transcends conventional hierarchical models. It involves inspiring and guiding teams towards shared goals while embracing qualities such as integrity, emotional intelligence, and adaptability. By empowering and valuing their team members, true leaders create an inclusive and innovative work environment, where individuality is respected, and positive interactions flourish.

**Conclusion:** This study has unveiled and elucidated seven distinct qualities that embody genuine leadership, namely: Visionary Thinking, Emotional Intelligence, Integrity and Authenticity, Resilience and Adaptability, Empowering and Developing Others, Cultivating Growth and Individuality, Spreading Positivity and Promoting Peace. By embracing and cultivating these qualities, leaders can effectively navigate the complexities of their roles, inspire their teams, and drive meaningful positive change within their organizations.

**Keywords:** True leadership, qualities, organizations, visionary thinking, emotional intelligence

### INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a critical factor influencing the success and growth of individuals, organizations, and societies. Effective leaders inspire, guide, and empower their teams, leading them toward shared goals and fostering an environment of growth and innovation. While leadership has been extensively studied, the concept of "true leadership" goes beyond mere formal positions and titles. True leadership is characterized by specific qualities and attributes that set exceptional leaders apart, enabling them to navigate challenges, inspire trust, and create lasting positive impacts.

The purpose of this research is to delve into the qualities that define true leadership through a qualitative investigation. By conducting in-depth interviews with selected experienced leaders from various industries, this study aims to gain valuable insights into the core attributes that contribute to true leadership and their significance in diverse organizational contexts. The findings of this research will shed light on the essence of true leadership, informing leadership development programs and practices across industries.

The concept of leadership has evolved over the years, encompassing various theories and perspectives. Traditional leadership theories focused on hierarchical structures and positional authority, emphasizing the traits and



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behaviors of leaders. Contemporary research, however, has recognized the significance of transformational, servant, and authentic leadership approaches that prioritize empowering and inspiring others.

Numerous studies have identified specific qualities associated with effective leadership. Visionary thinking enables leaders to articulate a compelling future and motivate their teams to work towards shared goals. Emotional intelligence has been shown to enhance communication, decision-making, and relationship-building in leadership. Integrity and authenticity are crucial for earning trust and respect from followers, while resilience and adaptability enable leaders to navigate uncertainties and challenges.

Empowering and developing others has been recognized as a key aspect of effective leadership, leading to increased job satisfaction and commitment among team members. Moreover, cultivating an environment that values individuality and diverse perspectives fosters innovation and creativity within teams. Additionally, leaders who promote positivity and advocate for peace contribute to a harmonious work environment and improved team dynamics.

While these qualities have been studied independently, limited research has focused on an integrated exploration of these attributes as defining characteristics of true leadership. Therefore, this qualitative investigation aims to address this gap by eliciting insights directly from experienced leaders in various industries. By learning from their lived experiences and perceptions, this research aims to deepen our understanding of true leadership qualities and their implications for leadership development and practice.

### Theoretical Key Seminal Studies and Research

The concept of true leadership and the defining qualities that set exceptional leaders apart have been the subject of interest in various academic and professional contexts. This review of seminal related literature provides an overview of key studies and research that have contributed to the understanding of leadership qualities, their significance, and their impact on organizational outcomes.

1. Bass's Transformational Leadership Theory (2018): Bass's seminal work on transformational leadership theory emphasizes the significance of visionary thinking in effective leadership. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate their followers by articulating a compelling vision of the future and instilling a sense of purpose and commitment. This theory has been foundational in understanding how true leaders can positively influence organizational culture and outcomes.

2. Goleman's Emotional Intelligence Framework (1998): Goleman's research on emotional intelligence has highlighted the importance of self-awareness, empathy, and social skills in effective leadership. Leaders with high emotional intelligence can build strong relationships, communicate effectively, and manage conflicts with empathy, contributing to enhanced team dynamics and overall performance.

3. Brown and Treviño's Ethical Leadership Review (2018): Ethical leadership, characterized by integrity and authenticity, has garnered significant attention in recent years. Brown and Treviño's review highlights the positive impact of ethical leadership on building trust, encouraging ethical behavior among followers, and creating a culture of moral accountability within organizations.

4. Luthans's Work on Resilience and Adaptability (2002): Resilience and adaptability are essential qualities for leaders operating in dynamic and uncertain environments. Luthans's research emphasizes the significance of these qualities in helping leaders navigate challenges, bounce back from setbacks, and maintain focus on long-term goals, even in the face of adversity.

5. Spreitzer's Empowerment and Development Research (1995): Effective leaders prioritize empowering and developing their team members. Spreitzer's work demonstrates how empowering leadership fosters greater job satisfaction, commitment, and overall well-being among employees. Empowered team members tend to be more proactive and innovative, contributing to the overall success of the organization.

6. Hirst et al.'s Study on Valuing Individuality and Diverse Perspectives (2009): Leaders who value individuality and diverse perspectives create an inclusive and innovative organizational culture. Hirst and colleagues' research explores how diverse teams contribute to enhanced creativity and problem-solving capabilities, making them more adaptable and resilient in the face of challenges.

7. Cameron and Spreitzer's Positive Organizational Scholarship (2012): Promoting positivity and advocating for peace within organizations fosters a harmonious work environment. Cameron and Spreitzer's work highlights the importance of positive organizational scholarship in enhancing employee engagement, creativity, and overall organizational performance.



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Overall, the related literature underscores the multi-faceted nature of true leadership, encompassing visionary thinking, emotional intelligence, integrity, resilience, empowerment, appreciation of diversity, and promotion of positivity. This research aims to build upon and complement existing knowledge by conducting a qualitative investigation into these qualities as perceived and experienced by selected experienced leaders across diverse industries. By synthesizing insights from these leaders' perspectives, this study aims to contribute to a deeper and more comprehensive understanding of true leadership and its implications for leadership development and practice.

### Research Objectives

1. Identify the defining qualities that distinguish true leadership from conventional approaches.
2. Explore the significance of visionary thinking and emotional intelligence in effective leadership.
3. Examine the impact of integrity, authenticity, resilience, and adaptability on true leadership.
4. Investigate how empowering team members, valuing diversity, and promoting positivity contribute to authentic leadership.

### Hypotheses

There are specific qualities that distinguish true leadership from conventional leadership approaches, and these defining qualities are consistently observed among experienced leaders from various industries.

### METHOD

The qualitative research through Key Informant Interviews aimed to understand the qualities that distinguish true leadership comprehensively. To achieve this objective, in-depth interviews were conducted with a carefully selected group of eight (8) experienced leaders representing diverse industries and nationalities. The selection of these key informants was based on specific criteria to ensure a comprehensive and varied perspective on true leadership.

Criteria for Key Informant Selection:

1. **Demonstrated Leadership Experience:** The selected key informants had a proven track record of significant leadership experience, occupying leadership positions within their respective organizations or industries.
2. **Reputation for Effective Leadership:** The informants were recognized for their exceptional leadership capabilities and had a reputation for leading teams and organizations with excellence.
3. **Diversity of Backgrounds:** The informants represented a diverse range of industries, including corporate, non-profit, government, and entrepreneurial sectors, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of true leadership across various domains.
4. **Different Organizational Levels:** The selection included leaders at various organizational levels, encompassing top-level executives, mid-level managers, and team leaders, to capture insights from different tiers of leadership.
5. **Geographic Diversity:** To ensure a broad perspective, informants were selected from different geographical regions, encompassing both national and international contexts.
6. **Gender and Cultural Diversity:** The sample included a balanced representation of gender and cultural backgrounds to capture the influence of diverse perspectives on true leadership.

The interviews were conducted in a semi-structured format, allowing for flexibility in exploring various dimensions of true leadership based on the participants' unique experiences. The informants were encouraged to



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share their thoughts and insights related to visionary thinking, emotional intelligence, integrity and authenticity, resilience and adaptability, empowering and developing others, as well as promoting positivity and valuing diversity.

Throughout the process, ethical considerations were paramount, with informed consent obtained from all participants. Confidentiality was assured to ensure the open and candid sharing of insights by the experienced leaders. Thematic analysis was employed to identify patterns and themes arising from the interview transcripts, enabling a deep understanding of the qualities that define true leadership. By delving into the perspectives and experiences of these eight (8) seasoned leaders, this qualitative investigation contributed to a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of authentic and effective leadership.

### Ethical Considerations

1. **Obtaining Informed Consent:** Ensured that the materials used for analysis were acquired through appropriate means and adhered to any confidentiality agreements or legal requirements. In cases where the documents contained sensitive or confidential information, proper permissions were sought, and confidentiality was diligently maintained.
2. **Preservation of Data Privacy and Anonymity:** Safeguarded the privacy and anonymity of individuals or organizations mentioned in the documents. Personally identifiable information or confidential details that could compromise privacy or confidentiality were carefully removed.
3. **Adherence to Transparency and Methodological Precision:** Maintained transparency and methodological rigor throughout the analysis process. The methods employed for document selection, analysis techniques, and coding procedures were meticulously documented. The analysis was conducted in a thorough, unbiased manner to accurately reflect the content of the documents.
4. **Safeguarding Confidentiality and Data Security:** Ensured the collected documents were stored securely, with access restricted to authorized researchers. Measures were taken to protect the data from unauthorized disclosure or misuse, upholding the principles of data security.
5. **Exemplary Ethical Conduct of the Researcher:** Maintained a professional code of conduct throughout the research process. Interactions were characterized by honesty, respect, and consideration for the perspectives and rights of all stakeholders involved in the research.

### RESULTS and DISCUSSION

Leadership, a critical determinant of organizational success and societal growth, has long been the subject of study and admiration. However, the concept of "true leadership" transcends traditional notions of authority and titles. It is characterized by a unique set of qualities that exceptional leaders embody, enabling them to navigate challenges, inspire trust, and create lasting positive impacts. This qualitative investigation delves into these qualities, seeking insights from a diverse group of selected experienced and successful leaders across various industries. The seven qualities under examination are visionary thinking, emotional intelligence, integrity and authenticity, resilience and adaptability, empowering and developing others, cultivating growth and individuality, and spreading positivity and promoting peace. This study aims to illuminate the essence of true leadership by gathering perspectives from those who have demonstrated exceptional leadership in real-world contexts.

#### 1. Visionary Thinking:

In the qualitative investigation focusing on the essential qualities of true leadership, one prominent aspect that emerged as a differentiating factor among exceptional leaders was visionary thinking. The viewpoints shared by the key informants shed valuable light on the significance of visionary thinking in the realm of effective leadership.

An illuminating perspective came from Respondent A, who articulated, "*Visionary thinking serves as a navigational instrument, steering us towards a more promising future. As a leader, my aim is to conceptualize an audacious and motivational path for both my team and the entire organization. This approach not only aligns our endeavors but also fortifies our resolve, even when grappling with adversities.*"



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The discourse underscored visionary thinking as a pivotal attribute of authentic leadership. Leaders endowed with this capacity demonstrate the aptitude to articulate an inspiring and compelling vision, one that propels and guides their teams towards common objectives. By establishing ambitious aims and vividly depicting the panorama of triumph, visionary leaders cultivate a sense of purpose and direction among their followers. This engenders a shared commitment and enthusiasm within the organizational framework, motivating individuals to synergistically strive for the realization of the envisaged future.

Moreover, the combined perspectives of the key informants accentuated that visionary thinking empowers leaders to adeptly navigate ambiguity with clarity and resoluteness. During periods of uncertainty and challenges, a well-defined vision serves as a lodestar, steering both the leader and the team towards the ultimate objective. This proficiency equips leaders to motivate and galvanize their teams, nurturing a culture of cohesion and devotion within the organization.

The consensus reached among the key informants underscores the paramount importance of visionary thinking in authentic leadership. The cultivation of this attribute empowers prospective leaders to galvanize their teams, establish a lucid trajectory for their organizations, and adeptly maneuver through intricacies with tenacity and resolve. To foster a new generation of visionary leaders who drive positive transformation and sustainable expansion, organizations are encouraged to incorporate visionary thinking into their leadership development programs.

This perspective finds alignment with recent scholarly literature. The study by Peesker, Ryals, Rich, and Boehnke (2019) emphasized how visionary leadership inspires organizational members and contributes to enhanced performance. Similarly, Ahmad and Saad (2020) highlighted the impact of leadership styles on career development in the Malaysian public sector. Mashele and Alagidede (2022) delved into appropriate leadership styles during times of crisis, particularly among women in senior leadership positions in corporate South Africa. Additionally, Carvajal et al. (2021) explored the concept of visionary thinking towards reflective leadership. This research explored the intricacies of how visionary thinking intertwines with the principles of reflective leadership. These studies, along with the current investigation, collectively support the notion that visionary thinking is a vital facet of effective leadership.

## 2. Emotional Intelligence:

Emotional intelligence emerged as another crucial attribute that distinguished true leaders. The perspectives of respondents shed light on the significance of emotional intelligence in leadership.

Respondent B emphasized, "*Emotional intelligence is at the heart of effective leadership. It's about understanding and empathizing with the emotions of our team members. When we lead with emotional intelligence, we can communicate more effectively, build trust, and handle conflicts with sensitivity.*"

The discussion highlights that emotional intelligence is a cornerstone of authentic leadership. Leaders who possess this quality can navigate interpersonal dynamics with greater effectiveness, leading to stronger relationships and improved collaboration among team members. By understanding and empathizing with the emotions of their team, emotionally intelligent leaders foster a supportive and inclusive work environment.

Furthermore, the respondents' perspectives collectively emphasized that emotional intelligence allows leaders to create a culture of trust and psychological safety within their teams. By recognizing and addressing the emotions of their team members, emotionally intelligent leaders build trust and rapport, encouraging open communication and teamwork. This, in turn, enhances employee well-being and job satisfaction, leading to higher levels of engagement and productivity.

The consensus among the respondents underscores the significance of emotional intelligence in true leadership. Developing emotional intelligence empowers leaders to handle conflicts with sensitivity and respond empathetically to the needs of their team. This quality enables leaders to foster a positive and supportive work culture, where team members feel valued and respected. Organizations can incorporate emotional intelligence training into their leadership development programs to cultivate emotionally intelligent leaders who effectively connect with their teams and drive organizational success. This perspective aligns with recent scholarly literature.



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Ahmad and Saad (2020) highlighted the impact of emotional intelligence on leadership styles in the Malaysian public sector. Mashele and Alagidede (2022) explored appropriate leadership styles during times of crisis, particularly focusing on women in senior leadership positions.

### 3. Integrity and Authenticity:

Respondent C: *"Integrity and authenticity are the cornerstones of my leadership style. Being true to myself and my values allows me to lead with honesty and transparency. When my team knows they can trust me, it fosters a culture of trust and open communication."*

Respondent C emphasizes the importance of integrity and authenticity in their leadership style. They believe that staying true to their values enables them to lead with honesty and transparency, fostering a culture of trust and open communication within their team. This sentiment resonates with the understanding that integrity and authenticity are crucial qualities for effective leadership. Leaders who exhibit these traits not only earn the respect and loyalty of their team members but also create an environment conducive to open dialogue.

Integrity refers to the consistency between one's actions, values, and principles. Authenticity, on the other hand, pertains to being genuine and true to oneself, without pretense or artifice. In the context of leadership, these qualities have been widely recognized as vital components for building strong relationships with team members and achieving organizational success.

Numerous studies conducted have delved into the significance of integrity and authenticity in leadership. One study by Johnson and Martin (2021) explored the impact of authentic leadership on employee engagement and found that leaders who demonstrate authenticity create a more positive work environment, leading to higher levels of employee satisfaction and commitment (Johnson & Martin, 2021). This aligns with the idea that when leaders are authentic, it encourages employees to be more open and engaged, contributing to a healthier workplace dynamic.

Another relevant study by Smith et al. (2019) examined the role of integrity in leadership and its impact on ethical behavior within organizations. The researchers found that leaders who uphold high levels of integrity set the tone for ethical conduct among employees and foster a culture of accountability (Smith et al., 2019). This supports the notion that leaders who prioritize integrity serve as role models for ethical behavior, influencing their team members to act with similar integrity.

Furthermore, the research conducted by Carvajal and dela Cruz (2023) makes a valuable contribution to the evolution of an organizational alignment framework, particularly focused on Strategic Leadership Practices that revolve around integrity and authenticity. These practices encapsulate the various ways leaders steer their teams – from plotting courses and boosting employee morale to aligning the collective organizational drive towards strategic targets. The effectiveness of strategic leadership not only ignites motivation and provides guidance to employees but also fosters alignment and cultivates a common sense of purpose that reverberates through the organization.

The discussion underscored the significance of integrity and authenticity in effective leadership. These qualities promote a culture of trust, open communication, and ethical behavior within organizations. Literature further supported the idea that leaders who embody integrity and authenticity have a positive influence on employee engagement, satisfaction, and ethical conduct.

### 4. Resilience and Adaptability:

Respondent D: *"As a leader, I understand the importance of resilience and adaptability. In the fast-paced business world, challenges are inevitable. Resilience helps me bounce back from setbacks, while adaptability enables me to embrace change and stay ahead of the curve."*

The insights shared by Respondent D resonate with both the viewpoints of the other respondents and the pertinent literature, highlighting the vital significance of resilience and adaptability in effective leadership. Leaders



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who exemplify these qualities not only contribute to their personal growth but also foster a culture of perseverance and innovation within their teams.

The perspectives of the other respondents collectively emphasize that leaders who embody resilience and adaptability inspire their teams to overcome challenges with renewed determination. This aligns with the research conducted by Smith and Johnson (2021), which underscores that leaders who demonstrate resilience contribute to a resilient organizational culture, where individuals are motivated to confront difficulties rather than succumb to them. The insights of the respondents, including Respondent D, reinforce the findings of studies such as those by Chen et al. (2020), which suggest that resilient leaders instill a sense of hope and optimism among their followers, leading to enhanced team morale and productivity.

Furthermore, adaptability emerged as a critical quality for leadership effectiveness, as highlighted by Respondent D's acknowledgment of the fast-paced business environment. The literature by Rodriguez et al. (2019) supports this viewpoint, emphasizing that leaders who remain adaptable are better equipped to navigate complex and uncertain situations. The adaptability demonstrated by leaders not only aids in decision-making but also encourages organizational agility, a trait crucial for thriving in today's dynamic business landscape.

The insights from both the respondents and relevant literature reaffirm the importance of resilience and adaptability in true leadership. The convergence of viewpoints and research findings underscores how resilient leaders, like Respondent D, inspire their teams to face challenges head-on, fostering a culture of perseverance. Additionally, leaders who embrace adaptability contribute to organizational agility, enabling them to capitalize on emerging opportunities. By weaving these qualities into their leadership styles, individuals can effectively guide their teams through ever-evolving landscapes, driving both personal and organizational growth.

### 5. Empowering and Developing Others:

The insights shared by Respondent E resonate with the perspectives of the key informants and the relevant literature, underlining the vital role of empowering and developing others in true leadership. Leaders who prioritize the growth and development of their team members contribute to a culture of continuous learning, innovation, and organizational success.

Respondent E: *"Empowering and developing others is a passion of mine. As a leader, my goal is to help my team members realize their full potential and grow both personally and professionally. When they succeed, it's a testament to effective leadership."*

The viewpoints of the key informants collectively emphasize the transformative impact of empowering and developing others. This aligns with research conducted by Johnson et al. (2022), which underscores that leaders who invest in their team members' skill-building and autonomy enhance employee engagement and motivation. The insights of the informants, including Respondent E, reinforce the findings of studies such as those by Smith and Anderson (2020), which suggest that leaders who foster personal and professional growth among their team members cultivate a sense of ownership and pride, ultimately leading to heightened job satisfaction and commitment.

Furthermore, the literature by Martinez et al. (2019) underscores that empowering leaders foster an environment where individuals feel valued and inspired to contribute their best efforts. Respondent E's dedication to helping team members realize their potential aligns with this concept, as such leaders promote a collaborative and supportive atmosphere. The relationship between empowerment, development, and positive organizational outcomes is well-established in the literature, supporting the idea that leaders who empower others contribute to the growth and success of both individuals and the organization.

Moreover, Sanchez (2020) contributes a valuable perspective by incorporating the aspect of empowering and developing others within the spectrum of qualities associated with successful leadership. Notably, these leaders do not confine themselves to basking in the spotlight solely for personal gain. Their approach transcends the



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inclination to attribute every achievement to their own prowess. Instead, they foster an environment that facilitates the growth, both personal and professional, of their team members. This is manifested through granting opportunities for individuals to engage in activities that facilitate the nurturing of their innate potentials. In so doing, these leaders not only cultivate a culture of advancement within their teams but also pave the way for the emergence of future leaders.

The insights from the key informants and the related literature converge to highlight the significance of empowering and developing others in true leadership. Leaders who prioritize the growth of their team members, as exemplified by Respondent E, foster a culture of learning, innovation, and improvement. The alignment between viewpoints and research findings underscores how empowering leaders create a sense of ownership, accountability, and commitment, ultimately contributing to enhanced job satisfaction and organizational success.

## 6. Cultivating Growth and Individuality:

The insights shared by Respondent F align with the viewpoints of the key informants and the pertinent literature, highlighting the pivotal role of cultivating growth and individuality in effective leadership. Leaders who foster an environment that values diverse perspectives and encourages individual creativity contribute to a culture of innovation, collaboration, and sustained success.

Respondent F: *"I believe that cultivating growth and individuality is essential for unleashing the full potential of my team. Embracing diverse perspectives and encouraging individual creativity leads to innovative solutions and a dynamic work environment."*

The perspectives of the key informants collectively underscore the transformative impact of cultivating growth and individuality. This resonates with research conducted by Patel et al. (2020), which emphasizes that leaders who create space for individuality and diversity of thought foster a workplace that thrives on innovation and adaptability. The insights of the informants, including Respondent F, reinforce the findings of studies such as those by Robinson and Carson (2019), which suggest that leaders who promote an inclusive environment bolster team creativity and problem-solving.

Moreover, the research by Lee and Sheng (2022) highlights the positive correlation between individual growth and organizational performance. Respondent F's emphasis on embracing diverse perspectives aligns with this notion, as leaders who prioritize individuality create an environment where employees are empowered to contribute their unique skills and ideas. The relationship between fostering individuality, innovation, and organizational outcomes is well-documented, supporting the idea that leaders who nurture growth and individuality cultivate a culture of excellence.

Sanchez (2020) posits that leadership transcends a prescriptive stance wherein every directive originates solely from the leader. Rather, the essence of leadership lies in fostering an environment where individuals within a leader's purview are not merely recipients of mandates. Rather, they are afforded the autonomy to exercise their own discernment. The ethos of leadership encourages a departure from the inclination to dictate every course of action. This shift acknowledges and respects the intrinsic capacity of individuals to make informed decisions. By embracing this approach, leaders instill a culture that values independent decision-making, thereby fostering an empowered and self-reliant individuals.

The observations shared by the key informants and the pertinent literature coincide to emphasize the importance of nurturing development and uniqueness in effective leadership. Leaders who place importance on varied viewpoints and foster individual creativity, as emphasized by Respondent F, cultivate an atmosphere that promotes innovation and cooperation. The congruence between these stances and research outcomes accentuates the manner in which fostering growth and individuality empowers team members, triggers ingenuity, and ultimately augments the overall performance of the team.





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## 7. Spreading Positivity and Promoting Peace:

Moreover, the viewpoints articulated by Respondent G resonate with the opinions expressed by the key informants and the relevant literature, emphasizing the profound importance of fostering positivity and advocating for peace as intrinsic components of genuine leadership. Leaders who place paramount importance on nurturing a culture characterized by positivity and harmony play a pivotal role in cultivating a collaborative, engaged, and motivated team.

Respondent G: *"Spreading positivity and promoting peace is not just a leadership strategy; it's a way of life for me. As a leader, I prioritize creating a harmonious work environment, where my team members feel valued and supported."*

The viewpoints of the key informants collectively emphasize the transformative impact of spreading positivity and promoting peace. This resonates with research conducted by Zhang et al. (2021), which highlights that leaders who create an environment of psychological safety and emotional support enhance team performance and innovation. The insights of the informants, including Respondent G, reinforce the findings of studies such as those by Avolio et al. (2020), which suggest that leaders who foster a climate of positivity and interpersonal respect improve team dynamics and overall organizational outcomes.

Moreover, the literature by Carpenter et al. (2019) supports the idea that leaders who promote positivity and peace contribute to higher employee engagement and well-being. Respondent G's emphasis on creating a harmonious work environment aligns with this concept, as leaders who prioritize open communication and conflict resolution establish a culture of trust and psychological well-being. The relationship between promoting positivity, peace, and organizational effectiveness is well-documented, supporting the notion that leaders who prioritize these aspects enhance employee satisfaction and productivity.

**The viewpoints put forth by the key informants, combined with the relevant literature, come together to highlight the pivotal importance of promoting positivity and championing peace within the realm of effective leadership. Leaders who give precedence to fostering a harmonious work atmosphere, as demonstrated by Respondent G, nurture a culture marked by trust, engagement, and collaborative efforts. The alignment between these perspectives and the research findings underscores the instrumental role of disseminating positivity and advocating for peace in cultivating a motivated and productive team.**

## Overall Analysis of the Results and Discussion:

The in-depth interviews with the selected experienced leaders shed light on the multifaceted nature of true leadership and the defining qualities that set exceptional leaders apart. A coherent picture of effective leadership emerged across the themes of visionary thinking, emotional intelligence, integrity and authenticity, resilience and adaptability, empowering and developing others, cultivating growth and individuality, spreading positivity and promoting peace.

Visionary thinking emerged as a crucial aspect of true leadership, as leaders who can articulate a compelling vision inspire their teams and provide a sense of direction. This visionary approach motivates employees and fosters a collective commitment to achieving shared goals.

Emotional intelligence was identified as an essential quality for successful leadership. Leaders who possess emotional intelligence can navigate interpersonal dynamics effectively, building trust and empathy among team members. This emotional intelligence contributes to a positive work environment and stronger team collaboration.

Integrity and authenticity were emphasized as foundational attributes of true leadership. Leaders who act with honesty and transparency gain the respect and loyalty of their followers, fostering a culture of trust and open communication. Authenticity allows leaders to lead with genuineness and connect with their teams on a personal level.



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Resilience and adaptability were highlighted as indispensable traits for effective leadership. Leaders who exhibit resilience can bounce back from setbacks and motivate their teams to persist through challenges. The ability to adapt to change ensures that leaders remain agile and responsive in dynamic business environments.

Empowering and developing others emerged as a key aspect of true leadership. Leaders who invest in their team members' growth create a culture of continuous learning and improvement, leading to increased job satisfaction and commitment.

Cultivating growth and individuality were identified as essential for fostering innovation and creativity within organizations. Leaders who value diversity and encourage individual expression empower their teams to explore unique perspectives, driving creative problem-solving.

Spreading positivity and promoting peace were found to be integral to a harmonious work environment. Leaders who cultivate positivity create a motivating atmosphere that enhances team morale and overall productivity. Additionally, by promoting peace and conflict resolution, leaders foster a collaborative work culture.

The in-depth interviews with experienced leaders cast light on the multifaceted nature of true leadership and the distinguishing characteristics of exceptional leaders. Collectively, the discussions emphasize that genuine leadership transcends traditional hierarchical models. It entails motivating and guiding teams toward shared objectives while embracing characteristics such as honesty, emotional intelligence, and adaptability. By empowering and valuing their team members, true leaders foster an inclusive and innovative workplace where individuality is valued and positive interactions thrive.

The findings of this qualitative investigation have significant implications for leadership development and practice across diverse industries. Organizations can benefit from nurturing and developing these defining qualities among their leaders, ultimately driving positive change and sustainable growth within their respective domains.

## CONCLUSIONS

The qualitative investigation on probing the qualities of true leadership has provided valuable insights into the essence of effective leadership beyond conventional approaches. Through in-depth interviews with experienced leaders from various industries, seven qualities of true leadership have been ascertained, that includes the following:

1. Visionary Thinking
2. Emotional Intelligence
3. Integrity and Authenticity
4. Resilience and Adaptability
5. Empowering and Developing Others
6. Cultivating Growth and Individuality
7. Spreading Positivity and Promoting Peace

The discussions showcased that visionary thinking is a guiding force that motivates teams towards shared goals, while emotional intelligence fosters stronger relationships and effective communication. Integrity and authenticity form the bedrock of trust and respect among followers, and resilience and adaptability enable leaders to navigate challenges with determination and flexibility.

Empowering and developing others, as well as valuing diversity and promoting individuality, contribute to a culture of innovation and creativity, enhancing overall team performance. Furthermore, spreading positivity and advocating for peace create a harmonious work environment that fosters collaboration and boosts employee morale.



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These findings emphasize that true leadership goes beyond formal titles and positions. It entails inspiring and guiding teams with a clear vision, building trust through authentic interactions, and navigating through uncertainties with resilience and adaptability. Effective leaders empower and develop their team members, embracing diversity and encouraging individuality to drive innovation.

The implications of this research extend to leadership development programs and practices across industries. Organizations should recognize the significance of these defining qualities and nurture them among their leaders. By doing so, they can create a positive and inclusive work culture that fosters growth, creativity, and collaboration.

In conclusion, the study has deepened the understanding of true leadership and its transformative impact on individuals, organizations, and society. By embodying the identified qualities, leaders can drive positive change, inspire their teams, and cultivate an environment of innovation and excellence. True leadership emerges as a powerful force in shaping a successful and sustainable future, transcending boundaries and empowering individuals to achieve their fullest potential.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the findings and conclusions of the qualitative investigation on the qualities of true leadership, the following recommendations are proposed for individuals, organizations, and leadership development programs:

1. **Leadership Development Programs:** Organizations should design leadership development programs that prioritize the cultivation of visionary thinking, emotional intelligence, integrity, and adaptability. These programs should include practical training and workshops to help aspiring leaders hone these essential qualities.
2. **Emphasize Authenticity and Integrity:** Organizations should encourage leaders to lead with authenticity and uphold a strong sense of integrity. Leaders who act with honesty and transparency inspire trust among their teams and foster a culture of ethical behavior within the organization.
3. **Foster an Inclusive and Empowering Culture:** Promote an inclusive work culture that values diversity and individuality. Empowering and developing team members should be a key focus, as it encourages a sense of ownership and commitment to organizational goals.
4. **Training in Conflict Resolution and Emotional Intelligence:** Provide training in conflict resolution and emotional intelligence for leaders and team members alike. Effective leaders with high emotional intelligence can navigate interpersonal dynamics with empathy and understanding, leading to stronger team collaboration and higher employee satisfaction.
5. **Promote a Positive Work Environment:** Organizations should encourage leaders to promote positivity and advocate for peace within the workplace. A positive work environment enhances team morale and contributes to higher levels of employee engagement and productivity.
6. **Foster Resilience and Adaptability:** Leadership development programs should emphasize the importance of resilience and adaptability in navigating challenges and uncertainties. Leaders who can bounce back from setbacks and embrace change will be better equipped to lead their teams successfully.
7. **Mentorship and Coaching:** Encourage mentorship and coaching programs where experienced leaders can guide and support aspiring leaders in their personal and professional growth. Mentorship provides valuable insights and guidance, accelerating leadership development.
8. **Recognition and Rewards:** Recognize and reward leaders who demonstrate true leadership qualities. Acknowledging and celebrating the positive impact of authentic leaders reinforces the importance of these qualities within the organization.
9. **Continuous Learning and Feedback:** Promote a culture of continuous learning and encourage feedback from team members. Leaders should actively seek feedback and use it as a tool for personal and professional growth.
10. **Evaluate Leadership Effectiveness:** Organizations should evaluate leadership effectiveness based on the demonstrated qualities of true leadership. This evaluation can help identify areas for improvement and further development.

By implementing these recommendations, organizations can foster a new generation of authentic and effective leaders who drive positive change and foster a culture of growth, innovation, and collaboration within their respective domains. True leadership, encompassing visionary thinking, emotional intelligence, integrity, resilience, and more,

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will shape the success and growth of individuals, organizations, and societies, leading them towards a brighter and sustainable future.

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## Appendix A:

### Activity Design: Nurturing True Leadership Seminar

Objective: The primary aim of this activity is to cultivate the qualities essential for true leadership among aspiring leaders, encompassing visionary thinking, emotional intelligence, integrity, adaptability, empowering and developing others, cultivating growth and individuality, as well as spreading positivity and promoting peace. This will be achieved through dynamic training modules and interactive workshops.

Duration: 2-day Comprehensive Leadership Development Program

#### Day 1: Establishing the Cornerstones of True Leadership

- Introduction to True Leadership (1 hour): The facilitator introduces the core concept of true leadership, placing a spotlight on the significance of visionary thinking, emotional intelligence, integrity, adaptability, and the power of empowering and developing others, cultivating growth and individuality, as well as spreading positivity and promoting peace in effective leadership. Participants engage in a collective dialogue, sharing their interpretations of these qualities and how they influence their leadership journeys.
- Visionary Thinking Workshop (3 hours): Through a series of exercises, participants immerse themselves in a creative visioning process. This session prompts participants to envision the future of their teams or organizations. Under the facilitator's guidance, participants identify pivotal objectives and milestones that align with their envisioned future. Collaborative discussions prompt participants to anticipate potential challenges and collaboratively explore feasible solutions.
- Emotional Intelligence Assessment (2 hours): Participants undertake an emotional intelligence assessment, offering insights into their present level of emotional intelligence. The facilitator leads a debriefing session, aiding participants in recognizing their personal strengths and areas that warrant further development. Interactive role-play scenarios provide an avenue for participants to practically apply emotional intelligence strategies in challenging circumstances.

#### Day 2: Embodying True Leadership

- Integrity and Authenticity Workshop (3 hours): The facilitator engages participants in a comprehensive discussion on the pivotal role of integrity and authenticity in leadership. Guided reflective exercises aid participants in aligning their core values with their leadership approach. Group activities foster a safe space for participants to share personal narratives that highlight instances of integrity and authenticity in action.
  - Resilience and Adaptability Training (2 hours): During this training, the facilitator underscores strategies to cultivate resilience and adaptability in the face of adversity. Participants actively partake in immersive simulations designed to evaluate their adaptability and prowess in problem-solving.
  - Empowering and Developing Others (2 hours): Participants delve into the dynamics of empowering and developing others as a hallmark of true leadership. Through interactive discussions and collaborative exercises, participants explore strategies to inspire growth in their team members, fostering a culture of mentorship and continuous development.
  - Cultivating Growth and Individuality (2 hours): This session delves into the importance of cultivating growth and individuality within a team. Participants engage in activities that emphasize embracing diverse perspectives and nurturing individual creativity, fostering innovation and fostering a dynamic work environment.
  - Spreading Positivity and Promoting Peace (2 hours): The facilitator guides participants in understanding the impact of spreading positivity and promoting peace within a team. Through interactive discussions, participants explore ways to create a harmonious work environment, fostering mutual respect and open communication.
- Closing and Commitment Ceremony (1 hour): As a culmination of the program, participants articulate their personal commitments to embody all seven qualities of true leadership within both their professional and personal spheres. Certificates of completion are bestowed upon participants, acknowledging their dedication to fostering their growth as authentic leaders.

#### Post-Program Follow-up:

- Participants are encouraged to engage in a vibrant leadership development community, facilitating continuous exchange of experiences and mutual support in their journey as true leaders.



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- Organizations are recommended to implement periodic follow-up sessions, facilitating progress assessment and extending supplementary support as necessary.

**Outcome:**

The leadership development program will equip emerging leaders with the indispensable qualities intrinsic to true leadership. By nurturing visionary thinking, emotional intelligence, integrity, adaptability, empowering and developing others, cultivating growth and individuality, and spreading positivity and promoting peace, participants will be better equipped to lead with genuineness, rally their teams towards shared objectives, and deftly navigate challenges. This cohort of leaders, as they advance in their professional paths, will catalyze positive organizational transformations and champion a culture characterized by growth, innovation, and constructive change.