

## Negotiating Integrity and Self-Identity: Transforming Authentic Leadership Through OBE-Based Reflective Learning in Educational Management Students

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**Abstract:** This study aims to explore the process of identity transformation and psychological dynamics of college students in leadership development through a Reflective Outcomes-Based Education (OBE) intervention. Using a qualitative research design, the study involved 11 participants who provided in-depth data through a structured reflection instrument. Results indicate that authentic leadership development is triggered by two main interrelated processes. First, an intense value negotiation dynamic emerges, in which participants grapple with the balance between personal ego and collective interests to build integrity through transparency and acceptance of their own vulnerability. Second, this process culminates in significant self-transformation, marked by the deconstruction of old understandings and the reconstruction of identity from a people-pleasing mentality to a principled leadership one. The study concludes that the reflective intervention within the OBE framework not only increases self-awareness but also builds resilience to external pressures through stronger self-mastery.

**Keywords:** Authentic Leadership; Outcomes-Based Education; Value Negotiation; Self-Transformation; Qualitative Research.

### INTRODUCTION

The growth of educational institutions is highly dependent on the quality of their leaders (Hasim & Hasanah, 2020; Kurniawan & Hasanah, 2021). In the context of modern educational leadership (Lipscombe et al., 2025), a leader's ability no longer depends solely on managerial or administrative skills, but demands authenticity rooted in moral integrity, deep self-awareness, and data-driven decision-making (Hirayama et al., 2023). To be able to meet the expectations of the community, an education leader is expected to be able to harmonize personal values, speeches, and real actions in the field in order to create a healthy organizational culture, where the vision of education is not just a slogan, but a life practice that is felt by every school citizen. However, the reality on the ground shows that the journey to authentic leadership is often

fraught with ethical dilemmas, external pressures, and inner conflicts that force a leader to negotiate his identity (Meeuwissen et al., 2022).

The results of a preliminary study at the beginning of the 2024 school year on 17 education leaders who underwent further studies in education management in UAD Yogyakarta, revealed that there is a sharp tension between academic professionalism and the culture of "ajrih" (Sarwono, 2023) and "ewuh pakewuh" (Rahim & Mutaqqin, 2023), that is rooted in the school environment (Fitrah et al., 2020). This tension reached its peak during the school's accreditation momentum, where leaders were caught in a chronic ethical dilemma. Field data shows that the integrity of leaders is tested through pressure to present reports that are formal, in order to pursue administrative status. On the one hand, there is a professional demand to conduct honest self-evaluations, but on the other hand, there is a psychological burden to maintain the image of the institution and a sense of "unpleasantness" if it reveals internal failures. This condition is exacerbated by a work environment with a lack of moral example, so honesty in the accreditation process is often considered a threat to the collective reputation. As a result, the objectivity of decisions is often clouded by relational burdens and a chronic culture of hesitation, making transparency perceived as a threat to reputation and good relationships (Maduro et al., 2018).

This condition is exacerbated when leaders are in a work environment with a supervisor who lacks moral example, thus creating space for ambiguous ethical standards where honesty is seen as a threat to the corporate reputation (Maduro et al., 2018). In this stressful situation (Crum et al., 2013), educational leaders are required to go beyond just administrative professionalism to authentic leadership (Born et al., 2025). This requires moral courage to maintain the value of intrinsic honesty as a compass of action, even if it means dealing with social risks or organizational resistance from parties who have long been lulled into their comfort zones (Kiknadze & Leary, 2021).

In addition to external challenges, the formation of leadership identity is also colored by internal (psychological) struggles. Many novice leaders are trapped in perfectionism that actually hinders team performance, feeling that they have to do everything themselves because they lack trust in others (Otto et al., 2021). This awareness of self-limitations often only arises after burnout or failure in delegating tasks.

These complex situations require leaders to go beyond mere administrative professionalism to authentic leadership, which requires moral courage to maintain the value of intrinsic honesty as a compass for action (Giannella et al., 2022). From the perspective of Ethical Stewardship (Lawal, 2025), this courage is manifested through concrete steps to present reality as it is

(radical transparency) in the face of service inspections, even if it exposes the vulnerability of the organization.

The implementation of Ethical Stewardship is the key to transformation so that the organization does not just "look good" cosmetically, but actually becomes the best substantially. Through this perspective, leaders act as custodians who prioritize radical transparency (Rizki Riswanda et al., 2023), including in managerial and financial reporting (Biehl et al., 2024; Luo & Yu, 2024), as a form of accountability to the public (Fan, 2025; Koliba, 2025). The courage to dissect reality as it is, despite revealing various flaws, is precisely the first step to accurately diagnose problems and make continuous quality improvements. This consistency between personal values and real actions will ultimately maintain the dignity of educational leadership, build institutional trust, and lead institutions to true excellence. However, this kind of integrity does not just appear. This requires an educational design that is able to measure moral competence in real terms, not just theoretical. This shows that authentic leadership is not an innate talent, but rather a process of "becoming" that requires constant reflection. In the context of this capacity building, the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) approach implemented in higher education plays a crucial role as a bridge that connects academic idealism with behavioral competence in the field (Rao, 2020). OBE no longer focuses learning on material input, but rather on students' ability to demonstrate integrity that is in line with universal virtue values in the development of leadership competencies .

In the context of this research, the positive values of the universe are presented as a relevant moral foundation to strengthen the leadership character of the student. Through the reflective research process integrated in OBE, budding leaders are encouraged to move beyond the technical-managerial paradigm towards the understanding that leadership is about bringing to life values, taste, and genuine relationships. Awareness of values such as the concepts of honesty and responsibility helps them realize that acknowledging their limitations (humility) is not a weakness, but rather an entrance to building authentic team trust. Therefore, this study explores how novice leaders negotiate integrity in the midst of real challenges, and how reflective research-based OBE learning interventions shape mature leadership identities (Beatty, 2014).

This study positions the quality of student leadership as a result of a dialectic between life experience (Dewey, 2022; Eldeeb, 2013; Ruiz-Rosillo et al., 2019) and educational intervention through OBE learning on campus (Spady, 1994), where moral values are internalized not as dogmatism, but as an ethical framework that strengthens the authenticity of leaders in a stressful work environment (Yang, 2020). Accordingly, the study is guided by the following research questions: (1) What are the dynamics of participants' lived experiences

in negotiating their values, integrity, and leadership identity when facing ethical dilemmas and external pressures? (2) How do Outcome-Based Education (OBE)-based learning and reflective inquiry contribute to the reconstruction of leadership understanding and the development of authentic leadership among participants?

## **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The design of this study uses a qualitative approach with phenomenological methods (Batzoglou, 2024). This approach was chosen because it aims to understand the essence of the lived experience of the participants in negotiating their values and integrity as educational leaders. The main focus is to capture the internal dynamics and transformation of views that occur during the learning process based on outcome-based education (OBE) and reflective research.

The participants in this study were 11 students from the Master's Program in Education Management who were enrolled in the Authentic Leadership Research course during the 2024/2025 academic year. Participants were selected using a purposive sampling technique based on the following criteria: 1) graduate students who had fully attended all authentic leadership lectures; 2) individuals who held intermediate-level leadership roles in their respective institutions, such as principals, vice principals, heads of departments, student association chairs, or team coordinators, and had practical leadership experience within their organizational settings; and 3) individuals who were willing to share their personal experiences honestly and narratively throughout the research process.

Data were collected through a documentation study of participants' daily reflection sheets and Final Semester Examination (UAS) responses, which were designed as self-reflective inquiry instruments within the course. The instrument consisted of five open-ended questions requiring participants to: 1) explain the core leadership values they believe in; 2) describe the process of developing self-awareness regarding their strengths and limitations; 3) recount real-life situations in which their integrity was tested by challenging circumstances; 4) reflect on experiences of being honest, open, and non-manipulative, as well as the impacts of those experiences; and 5) evaluate their personal transformation before and after participating in OBE-based reflective learning. The data collection guidelines explicitly required responses to be honest, narrative, and in-depth, while prohibiting the use of artificial intelligence tools, thereby supporting the authenticity and originality of participants' lived experiences.

The data were analyzed using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), which seeks to understand how individuals interpret and make sense of their lived experiences. Through an iterative process of reading, coding, interpretation, and theme development, the researchers explored the meaning of participants attributed to their experiences of authentic leadership development. The analysis followed five stages.

**Data Immersion.** The researchers engaged in repeated reading and re-reading of participants' reflective narratives to develop a deep and holistic understanding of their lived experiences. Particular attention was given to descriptions of ethical dilemmas, leadership challenges, self-awareness, integrity-related experiences, and transformative learning processes. This stage enabled the researchers to become closely familiar with the data before moving to more interpretative levels of analysis.

**Initial Coding.** Meaningful statements and significant phrases relevant to the research questions were identified and coded. The coding process focused on participants' interpretations of integrity, leadership identity, self-awareness, and responses to organizational pressures. The examples of initial coding are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. The Example of Initial Coding Process

<b>Relevant Statement (Original Quote)</b>	<b>Initial Code</b>
"... During the discussion session in class, I felt really sarcastic and slapped because for the past few months I have been the role of the Student Organization Chair, but sometimes I only care about my own goals... (P3, lines 7-10)"	Self-Awareness
"When I was giving a presentation, at that moment, my mind started to be filled with the question: 'What if I say the wrong thing? If they judge me as lacking leadership competence, what will happen?'" .... (p4, lines 11-13)	Social Anxiety
"... when faced with the pressures of a demanding job, I sometimes feel very scared and anxious without me fully understanding why... I became unfocused and ended up blank" (P7, lines 12-14)	Fear
"... In various situations, I try to be honest, but sometimes it's hard to do so because being honest in terms of course I don't think it necessarily results in positive things... (P8, lines 9-11)"	Honesty

"... Sometimes I'm faced with a choice, honest or not, ..... It turns out that being honest and transparent with what we have makes me feel better than pretending to be perfect... (P9, Lines 11-13)	Transparency
"The condition to be an authentic leader is to make decisions even if they do not please all parties and are more prepared to be disliked by others. It's a bitter choice but a must." (P10, lines 23-25)	Decisiveness)
"... Being a leader is not only about the ability to manage others but about the ability to lead yourself first. That's what I've been struggling to do... (P11, lines 9-13)."	Self-Mastery
"I thought before that an authentic leader is an honest leader... But after listening to the lecture presentation... I understand that an authentic leader is a leader who is able to know who he is..."	Concept Shift

Development of Emergent Themes. Related codes were clustered into broader categories representing shared meanings across participants' experiences. The purpose of this stage was to identify how participants understood and reconstructed their leadership values and identities through reflective learning experiences.

Table 2. Example of Development of Emergent Themes Related to the Negotiation of Values, Integrity, and Leadership Identity process

<b>Representative Codes</b>	<b>Emergent Theme</b>	<b>Phenomenological Meaning</b>
Selfishness, Self-Awareness	Negotiating Self-Interest and Collective Responsibility	Participants became aware of the tension between personal desires and collective obligations in leadership practice.
Social Anxiety, Fear	Living with External Pressure and Fear of Evaluation	Participants experienced anxiety, self-doubt, and concern about how others judged their leadership performance.
Honesty, Transparency	Experiencing Integrity Through Openness and	Participants understood integrity as the willingness to be honest, transparent, and

	Vulnerability	authentic despite potential personal risks.
Decisiveness, Self-Mastery	Becoming a Principled Leader	Participants reconstructed their leadership identity by prioritizing values and principles over approval from others.

Cross-Case Interpretation. Themes were compared across participants to identify convergences and variations in their meaning-making processes, enabling the researchers to understand how participants negotiated ethical challenges, developed self-awareness, and interpreted leadership authenticity within the context of their lived experiences.

Phenomenological Interpretation. The final stage involved interpreting the themes in relation to Authentic Leadership Theory and Outcome-Based Education (OBE). The interpretation focused on revealing the essence of participants' lived experiences and explaining how reflective OBE-based learning contributed to the reconstruction of leadership values, integrity, and authentic leadership identity.

The trustworthiness of the data in this study was established using the criteria proposed by Lincoln and Guba, namely credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (S. Kumar et al., 2025). Credibility was ensured through in-depth reflective interviews, prolonged engagement with the data, and source triangulation involving participants from diverse educational leadership backgrounds, including teachers, vice-principals, and principals. In addition, member checking was conducted by allowing participants to review and confirm the accuracy of the interpretations derived from their reflections and narratives.

Transferability was supported through thick description of the research context, participants' characteristics, and educational settings to enable readers to determine the applicability of the findings in other contexts. Dependability was maintained through systematic documentation of the research procedures, data collection processes, and analytical steps to ensure consistency and transparency throughout the study. Confirmability was strengthened by maintaining an audit trail and ensuring that interpretations and findings were grounded in participants' lived experiences rather than researcher assumptions or bias.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This section presents the results of thematic analysis from the life experience narratives of nine participants who are pursuing further studies in the

Master of Education Management study program in Indonesia. These findings not only capture managerial phenomena, but uncover the layers of emotions, inner struggles, and dialectical processes of the participants in redefining their leadership identities. Through the process of deep data immersion, it was found that the workspace is not just a place to carry out administrative tasks, but an arena of "ethical battles" where personal values sometimes clash with sociocultural realities and institutional demands. From the results of data analysis, two themes were found, namely Dynamics of value negotiation; and theme two Is transformation through OBE reflective research.

**Topic 1. The dynamics of participants' lived experiences in negotiating their values, integrity, and leadership identity when facing ethical dilemmas and external pressures.**

Based on the results of data analysis, it is known that novice leaders experience an in-depth internal negotiation process when faced with situations that test their values in leadership. Novice leaders are often faced with a struggle between the values for personal interests and the sociocultural values of the institutions in which they operate, which are sometimes not in line. The Theme Dynamics of Value Negotiation is a central process that involves internal struggle and external adaptation. This phenomenon is divided into 4 main subthemes as follows:

***Emergent Theme 1.1 Negotiating Self-Interest and Collective Responsibility***

This subtheme highlights that in the process of carrying out their duties as organizational leaders, participants feel that sometimes there is an internal conflict between individual desires and group needs. There are two key elements in this dimension, namely selfishness and self-awareness. The participants stated that there is sometimes an urge to put their own interests first when dealing with the work of a leader. This contradiction is consciously realized by the participants as a bad selfish condition, however, in the conscious state they also do it because there is an impulse to be happy and to win on their own. The explicit statements of P1, P4, and P9 state the same thing that during the learning process, they experience deep contemplation that triggers an inner upheaval between the idealism of leadership and the reality of their behavior. This process forced the participants to revisit their personal integrity, realizing that a leader's effectiveness is measured not only by the achievement of the task, but also by the ability to conquer the ego for the collective good.

The second thing that sometimes arises when participants have a discussion in class about their life experiences when receiving external pressure at work, the participants admit to being slapped, and there is a self-awareness

that they have often done things that are not appropriate as a leader. Discussion sessions not only serve as a means of exchanging information, but also become a space for deep reflection that forces participants to recognize the limitations of their ego and its impact on the interests of the organization.

This finding is supported by the statement of one of the participants who felt an emotional shock which he termed feeling "sarcastic and slapped" when he realized the misalignment between his role as a leader and his actions on the ground. Participants realized that during their time in office, they tended to be trapped in the fulfillment of personal goals rather than collective interests. This is reflected in the following quote:

"... During the discussion session in class, I felt really sarcastic and slapped because for the past few months I have been the head of the student organization, but sometimes I only care about my own goals..." (P3, lines 7-10)

The above data shows that the interaction in learning successfully stimulates participants' self-awareness to dismantle the self-defense mechanism that has been covering their egoistic aspects. This process proves that self-awareness is not just an acknowledgment of identity, but a reflective ability to acknowledge the existence of previously unconscious egoism. It is this awareness that becomes the catalyst in the dynamics of value negotiation; a transitional phase in which the individual consciously shifts the focus from personal ego gratification to collective responsibility. Thus, strengthening self-awareness plays a crucial role in enabling individuals to recognize their ego limits and understand their impact on the common good.

### ***Emergent Theme 1. 2. Resilience to External Pressures and Fear of Judgment***

The results show that the dynamics of value negotiation also include individual efforts in building mental **resilience** to environmental demands. Participants revealed that they have often been shackled by external expectations that trigger psychological barriers, especially in the form of social anxiety and fear. The learning process in the classroom emerges as a space that reveals how much influence other people's views have on their decision-making. Through reflection in discussion sessions, participants realized that fear of judgment often causes them to ignore personal values in order to "look good" or "safe" in the eyes of the environment.

These findings were reinforced by relevant statements from participants showing how participants began to identify such fears as barriers to principled leadership. Here is an overview of the relevant participant experiences:

"... Before participating in this discussion, I always felt anxious whenever I wanted to make a decision that was different from the wishes of the members. There is a fear that a leader will be labeled as a rigid or uncool leader. I just realized that all this time I have been 'driven' by fear of what people say, not by what is right for the organization..." (P-9, lines 23-26)

### ***Emergent Theme 1.3 Integrity Through Transparency and Acceptance of Vulnerability***

This subtheme highlights that in the process of reflective learning, participants experience intense value negotiations related to the meaning of integrity in their leadership. Integrity is no longer seen as a rigid attribute or an image of impeccable perfection, but rather as the result of the courage to be open and accept one's vulnerability. In the context of authentic leadership, this involves two key elements, namely honesty and transparency, where leaders seek to align internal awareness of their limitations with real actions on the ground.

Participants revealed that this value negotiation process arose when they were faced with fear of others' judgments of their competence. There is an inner struggle between the urge to cover up weaknesses in order to maintain authority, and the demand to appear authentically as it is. This is explicitly illustrated by P4's statement that he feels deep anxiety when it comes to appearing in public leadership:

"When I was giving a presentation, at that moment, my mind started to be filled with the question: 'What if I say the wrong thing? If they judge me as lacking leadership competence, what will happen?'" ... (P4, lines 11-13)

The concerns experienced by P4 suggest that relational transparency is often hampered by an ego that fears the label of incompetence. However, through reflection, participants realized that true integrity lies in the honesty to admit the doubt. The same thing was experienced by other participants when faced with situational pressures that demanded quick decision-making. This stress often triggers a crippling emotional response, as expressed by P7:

"... When faced with the pressures of a decision-demanding job, I sometimes feel very scared and anxious without fully understanding why... I became unfocused and ended up blank" (P7, lines 12-14)

The "blank" condition experienced by P7 is a crucial point in the negotiation of authentic leadership values. Instead of forcing oneself to appear perfect, this acceptance of vulnerability encourages the emergence of more honest transparency. These findings indicate that for the participants, building integrity means having the courage to open up the logical and emotional processes behind their actions, so that others can understand the decision-

making process in its entirety. Thus, transparency is not just the sharing of information, but a commitment to appear authentic with all its limitations.

***Emergent Theme 1.4 Identity Reconstruction: From "Pleasing Others" to "Principled Leadership"***

This subtheme highlights a profound process of value negotiation in which participants grapple to overhaul their old identities. So far, there has been a strong tendency in participants to become accommodating figures in order to maintain social harmony and validation. However, through reflective learning, there is an awareness that the desire to always "please others" often clashes with solid leadership principles. Within the framework of authentic leadership, this process is a transition to an Internalized Moral Perspective, where standards of action are shifted from external expectations to an internal moral compass.

This value negotiation reaches its peak when participants are faced with the demands of Decisiveness. There is a conflict between feeling unwell and having to take a firm position. The participants realized that to be an authentic leader, they had to be willing to sacrifice personal popularity for the integrity of decisions. P10 describes this crucial moment in the negotiation of values as an inevitable bitter choice: *"The requirement to be an authentic leader is to make decisions even if they do not please all parties and are more prepared to dislike others. It's a bitter choice but a must."* (P10, lines 23-25)

P10's statement suggests that participants are negotiating their fear of social rejection with moral responsibility as leaders. However, this negotiation does not stop at the act of exiting, but penetrates into the territory of **Self-Mastery**. Participants are aware of the contradictions over the years: they want to regulate others, but often fail to discipline themselves. This process of identity negotiation is recognized as a difficult internal struggle, as expressed by P11:

*"... Being a leader is not only about the ability to manage others but about the ability to lead yourself first. That's what I've been struggling to do..."* (P11, lines 9-13)

P11's perceived inability to lead oneself indicates that there has been a "value discount" in their leadership; They demand discipline from others without applying it consistently to themselves. This identity reconstruction ultimately forces participants to choose: remain a passive but comfortable figure, or transform into a principled leader who has complete control over himself.

**Topic 2. Dvelopment of authentic leadership Through OBE & Reflective Research**

The results of the data analysis showed that the transformation of authentic leadership values that occurred in the participants occurred through several psychological intervention activities during the reflective OBE learning process, as shown in the following figure 2:

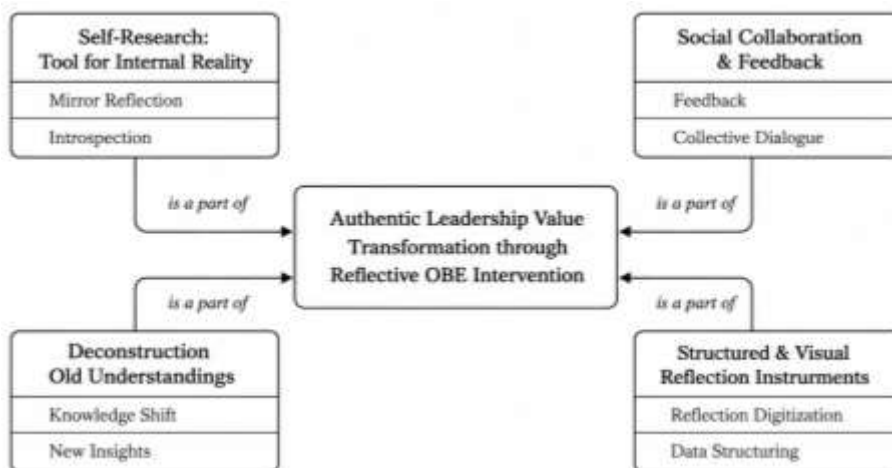


Figure 1. Development of authentic leadership Through OBE

### *Emergent Theme 1: Deconstructing Old Understandings*

This sub-theme highlights the initial phase in the transformation of participants, where there is a process of dismantling the concept of leadership that they have been believing in. Through reflective OBE interventions, participants do not just accumulate new information, but **deconstruct** old paradigms that tend to be rigid or based on ego domination. This process involves two key codes: new insight and knowledge shift. In this part, participants begin to grasp the essence of leadership that is different from simply "giving orders," which triggers awareness of their past misguided attitudes. In other side, there is a shift in understanding from textual knowledge to personally-internalized knowledge. This is one of the relevant statements of p3:

The most significant part of my experience during this research process was the transition from one meeting to the next, especially when presenting the discussions in Chapter 4 which were based on an in-depth set of data. In this section, we discuss principles on how to transform core leadership functions into real principles in practice. It was at that point that I started to really do deep reflection—not just about research, but about myself as a researcher and educator (P3, lines 67-72)

This phenomenon is clearly illustrated when the participants contemplate their selfish impulses. As revealed in the narrative of the findings, there is an inner struggle when the drive to "win on your own" clashes with a new knowledge of authentic leadership. This is reflected in the collective expressions of the participants who state that during the learning process, they experience deep contemplation that forces them to revisit the hidden motives behind their decisions as leaders.

### ***Emergent Theme 2: Self-Research as a Tool of Internal Realization through Introspection and Mirror Reflection***

Data analysis showed that participants experienced a process of deconstructing their previously held understandings of leadership. Before participating in the training, leadership was generally understood as the ability to direct, control, and ensure work progresses according to targets. However, during the reflection process, participants began to revisit these assumptions and discovered new meanings for leadership.

This finding was reflected in the emergence of the codes "new insight" and "knowledge shift." Participants expressed that the learning process helped them understand that leadership is not only related to the ability to influence others, but also the ability to understand the motives and values underlying each decision. This is evident in Participant X's statement:

At one of the meetings, I came to class in a very heavy emotional condition because I was facing various problems at work that I considered unfair. At that time, I kept thinking about my leadership's treatment of me until it was difficult to focus on other things. However, when following a discussion about authentic leadership and the importance of being a complete person, I began to reflect on the way I viewed the issue. I realized that my energy would be better spent learning, developing myself, and preparing myself to be a better leader in the future. The explanation of Pygmalion's theory also made me understand that the way we think will influence our behavior and responses to the situations we face. That experience made a big impression because it helped me see problems from a different and more constructive perspective (P3, lines 88-94)

This statement indicates a new awareness of the meaning of leadership that had not previously been a concern for participants. Participant Y also shared a similar experience when reflecting on decisions made during his leadership role. He stated:

The most significant experience for me during this OBE course, while conducting self-research from the first to the seventh meeting, was discussing

Chapter 4 of John Adair's book. In that section, we discussed how core leadership functions can be transformed into concrete skills in practice. Through these discussions, I began to truly realize many things about myself (P9, line 77-80).

In addition to generating new insights, the reflection process also led to a shift in understanding from conceptual knowledge to a more personal understanding. Participant Z explained that the learning process encouraged him to review the reasons behind various decisions he had made as a leader.

At first, I was afraid to admit that I didn't understand the material because I was afraid of being blamed or perceived as not learning. However, when I was honest, my friend helped explain the material until I understood it. From that, I learned that being honest and open is better than pretending to understand (P10, lines 81-83).

Overall, the data shows that participants not only gained new knowledge about leadership but also reexamined their existing perspectives on the role of leadership.

### ***Emergent Theme 3: Social Collaboration and Feedback in Validating Authenticity***

The resulting subtheme 3 was social collaboration and feedback as a mechanism for validating authenticity. Findings indicate that authentic leadership transformation does not occur individually, but rather is shaped through social interactions that allow participants to gain validation, correction, and new perspectives on their leadership behavior. Participants recognized that their understanding of themselves needed to be confirmed through the perspectives of others to avoid being trapped by subjective assessments that could potentially lead to bias.

Participants revealed that feedback from peers and lecturers played a crucial role in helping them assess the alignment between their values and the actions displayed in their leadership practices. As one participant stated:

I feel that every discussion session in the authentic leadership research course always provides a surprise: understanding good and bad values, assertiveness toward oneself and others, is essential for becoming an authentic leader (P10, lines 84-87).

This feedback serves as a means of reflection, helping participants identify aspects of their behavior that had previously been overlooked and encouraging continuous self-improvement.

Furthermore, group discussions and collective dialogue provide a space for participants to exchange experiences and gain diverse perspectives on leadership practices. Through this process, participants can understand how their behavior and decisions are perceived by others and their impact on the surrounding social environment. As one participant stated, "*Well... discussions sometimes seem like people are fighting, but that's where we understand that how others perceive us isn't necessarily how we perceive ourselves.*" (P11, lines 88-89). This interaction encourages openness, reduces the tendency to maintain a self-image that doesn't align with reality, and strengthens awareness of the importance of consistency between values and actions.

These findings indicate that authentic leadership develops through a continuous process of social validation. Collective feedback and dialogue serve as mechanisms that help participants test, strengthen, and refine their leadership values. Thus, authentic leadership is not only the result of personal reflection but also a product of a social interaction process that allows for alignment between self-identity, values, and behaviors demonstrated in leadership practice.

#### ***Emergent Theme 4: The Need for Structured and Visual Reflection Instrumentation***

The resulting subtheme 4 is the need for structured and visual reflection instruments. The findings show that participants need media that is able to document and visualize their personal development while attending lectures. Participants expressed that the reflection process became more meaningful when the experiences, thoughts and changes they experienced could be recorded systematically and reviewed at different times. One participant stated:

*"When we were asked to write down our experiences and reflections after each lecture, I started to see a pattern within myself. At first I felt like my actions were correct, but after reading back my notes a few weeks earlier, I realized that many things had changed in the way I lead and interact with others."* (P1, lines 89-93).

Another participant stated:

*"If I only rely on memory, I often forget the process I have gone through. When all the reflections are collected and arranged sequentially, I can see my development from the beginning of college until now. From there I know what values are starting to change and what behavior needs to be improved."* (P4, lines 90-93).

Findings also showed that the use of digital media helped participants document the reflection process more flexibly and sustainably. Various forms of digital journals and electronic portfolios allow participants to store evidence of

personal development that can be accessed again at any time during the learning process. As stated by one participant:

*"A digital portfolio helps me see my learning journey more realistically. When I look back at the assignments, journals and reflections I have made, I can see that the way I think now is different compared to when I started college." (P7, lines 66-69)*

These findings show that structured reflection instruments supported by digital media play an important role in helping participants monitor personal development, identify changes in values, and visualize the process of authentic leadership transformation that they experience while attending lectures.

## **DISCUSSION**

This study shows that the internalization of authentic leadership values within the framework of reflective Outcome-Based Education (OBE) takes place through two interrelated mechanisms, namely (1) value negotiation at the intrapersonal and interpersonal levels, and (2) reflective transformation mediated by structured learning design. These findings expand the understanding of OBE, which has been positioned more as a framework for measuring achievement, into a pedagogical architecture that is able to facilitate identity transformation.

### **Value Negotiation and Authentic Leadership Development**

The theme of *Value Negotiation Dynamics* is in line with the framework of Authentic Leadership Theory (Hirayama et al., 2023)(Hirayama et al., 2023), which places self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relational transparency as the main dimensions of authentic leadership. The emergence of codes such as selfishness, self-awareness, fear of social judgment, honesty, and assertiveness show that authentic leadership develops through value tension, not through the accumulation of skills alone. The shift from an orientation of "pleasing people" to "principled leadership" reflects a process of deep moral internalization. In the perspective of Self-Determination Theory, this shift indicates a transition from external regulation to integrated regulation. Behavior is no longer driven by the need for social acceptance, but rather by consciously internalized values. Thus, authenticity is not just self-expression, but the result of integrating personal values with leadership actions. Further, the dimension of relational transparency appears in the courage to show vulnerability and be honest in social interactions. This confirms that authenticity is not an isolated individual condition, but rather a relational construct that is validated through social interaction.

### **Reflective Transformation as a Learning Mechanism**

The theme of *Transformation Through Reflection* can be understood through the perspective of Transformative Learning Theory (Eschenbacher & Fleming, 2020; Fleming, 2022). Conceptual shifts and the emergence of new insights indicate a perspective transformation, where old assumptions about leadership are reconstructed through critical reflection. The tension between personal values and social expectations serves as a *disorienting dilemma* that triggers deep reflection. In this context, reflection does not stop at cognitive awareness, but develops into a change in identity orientation.

When analyzed through Experiential Learning Theory (Handayani et al., 2024; Sidiq et al., 2023), the process that occurs follows a cycle of concrete experience (leadership interaction and practice), reflection (introspection and feedback), abstract conceptualization (reconstruction of the meaning of leadership), and active experimentation (more principled decision-making). The fact that this process takes place repeatedly shows that transformation is not a single event, but rather a continuous cycle of learning. The existence of collective dialogue and feedback reinforces Mezirow's argument that transformation requires rational discourse to validate new perspectives. Thus, individual reflection is reinforced by social validation, thus preventing claims of authenticity that are purely subjective.

### **OBE, Constructive Alignment, and Learning Management**

From a learning management perspective, these findings can be analyzed through Constructive Alignment theory. OBE emphasizes alignment between learning outcomes (Katawazai, 2021; J. A. Kumar, 2021), learning strategies, and assessments. This research shows that the principle of alignment can be extended to the realm of affective (Cook, 2020) and identity (Borlaug et al., 2023).

When learning outcomes explicitly include values such as integrity, self-awareness, and principled leadership, then learning strategies systematically integrate reflective, dialogical, and developmental assessment activities. Digitization of reflection and structuring of self-data shows that the process of internalizing values can be managed systemically, not just left as an implicit process (Bell & Stevenson, 2006). The implication is that OBE-based learning management needs to move from a performative evaluation paradigm to a developmental assessment paradigm (Cahyanto & Afifulloh, 2021). Assessment not only measures the final outcome, but monitors the process of value transformation longitudinally (Ge et al., 2019). In addition, the identified dynamics of social anxiety confirm the importance of creating *psychological safety* in the classroom (Newman et al., 2017). Without a psychologically safe environment, the process of critical reflection and relational transparency will be

hampered. Thus, lecturer instructional leadership is an important factor in facilitating the internalization of values

## **CONCLUSION**

This study concludes that the internalization of authentic leadership values within the framework of reflective Outcome-Based Education (OBE) occurs through two main mechanisms: value negotiation and structured reflective transformation. Authentic leadership does not emerge as a result of mastery of concepts alone, but rather through a process of value tension mediated by critical reflection, social dialogue, and developmental assessment that is aligned with learning outcomes.

The findings show that the dynamics between personal ego, social pressure, and moral commitment become a space for the formation of self-awareness and internal moral perspectives. This process is reinforced by reflective practices that are systematically designed in learning, allowing for a more in-depth reconstruction of the meaning of leadership and value integration. Thus, authenticity develops through pedagogical orchestration, not simply through individual maturity.

Theoretically, this study repositions OBE as a transformational pedagogical framework that is able to facilitate the formation of identity and values, not just the achievement of technical competence. The integration between learning outcome alignment, reflective activities, collective dialogue, and developmental evaluation shows that learning management has a strategic role in shaping principled and integrity leadership.

Implication of the result in is research is the higher education that adopts OBE needs to expand its outcome orientation to the affective and moral realms, as well as design a structured and sustainable system of reflection. With such an approach, OBE not only becomes an instrument of academic accountability, but also becomes a strategic medium in the development of authentic leadership that is relevant to contemporary professional and social demands.■

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