Leadership development trends and challenges in the twenty-first century: rethinking the priorities

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Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to understand challenges facing organizations in the twenty-first century and address these challenges through suggesting future leadership development based on relevant leadership theories, which would motivate and guide future research directions in a streamlined manner.

Design/methodology/approach – The present study adopted the exploratory literature review, using the integrative method, to review the theoretical and empirical literature on leadership development published since the 2000s, primarily focusing on research published in the *Journal of Management Development*.

Findings – The findings of the current review confirmed that leadership theories are the base for leadership development theories, particularly if the purpose is to address and overcome the current challenges facing organizations. The authors suggest that leadership theories and leadership development theories do not exist in isolation from one another, nor do they exist in isolation from challenges facing organizations.

Research limitations/implications – This review does not cover all studies before the 2000s nor other journals in the field of leadership.

Originality/value – Given that most organizations are suffering from one or more of the following issues: sexual scandals, unethical behaviors, individualism, crises and a low level of performance or productivity, the development of particular leadership skills has become a priority. This study is one of few studies guiding both future leadership development research directions and leadership development initiatives.

Keywords Challenges, Trends, Leadership development, Twenty-first century, Priority

Paper type General review

Introduction

Leadership development has attracted considerable attention from eminent leadership scholars and practitioners not only as one of the most interesting fields, but also as a field that has effective contributions to advance leadership research and discover empirical, developmental implications associated with that advance. The emergence of this considerable attention began with the early publications of the *Journal of Management Development* (*JMD*) in the 1980s that provided a scientific research base based on empirical evidence in multiple settings and contexts. This gave the current review an opportunity to understand the importance of leadership theories for leadership development. The purpose of this paper is to review some of these works, identify challenges facing today's organizations and highlight the link between leadership theories and leadership development theories by suggesting an appropriate theory of leadership for leadership development in order to overcome particular challenges. It is known that, in recent times, wars, natural disasters and political upheavals in many countries or corporate unethical practices such as financial corruption, sexual harassment and many other scandals have all created fear and uncertainty among internal or/and external stakeholders (e.g. Boyd, 2012; Northouse, 2018; Offermann and Malamut, 2002; Pearce *et al.*, 2008; Sartor and Beamish, 2019). This, therefore, reinforces the importance of the present study.

We divide the review into several sections. First, we begin with identifying the major challenges facing organizations in the twenty-first century based on a comprehensive review of the leadership development literature. Second, we review leadership theories that can be used for leadership development. These theories and approaches are: traits approach, skills approach, leader–member exchange (LMX) theory, transformational leadership, servant leadership, authentic leadership, ethical leadership, team leadership and self-leadership. Third, we review the leading leadership development methods and activities in the field, and we highlight some places that are still relatively immature in each leadership development method or activity, which are replete with opportunities for researchers and theorists. Fourth, we discuss future leadership development research through our emphasis on the link between leadership theories and leadership development theories. Fifth, this review is not without some limitations that are addressed with a conclusion of the current review.

Method
The effectiveness of general leadership development programs targeting people at various levels of the organizational structure and the economic feasibility of designing, transferring or/and implementing these programs have become a prominent concern in non-profit, for-profit and public sectors. The purpose of the present study is to understand challenges facing organizations and address these challenges through suggesting specific leadership development programs based on relevant leadership theories, which would motivate and guide future research directions in a streamlined manner.

The present study adopted the exploratory literature review, using the integrative method, to review the theoretical and empirical literature on leadership development published since the 2000s, primarily focusing on research published in the *JMD*. The review was divided into four stages. The first stage included review of empirical research studies published in the *JMD* on the traditional and contemporary leadership theories and approaches that recommended leader or leadership development, relying on relevant leadership theories. In this stage, we identified all studies that explored or/and investigated the leadership theories and approaches used in the present study (traits approach, skills approach, LMX theory, transformational leadership, servant leadership, authentic leadership, ethical leadership, team leadership and self-leadership). In addition to leadership theories, we identified all studies that focused on leadership development using particular theory or approach. This was followed by listing the selected studies in a table based on their contents, findings and sources. This table helped us process the data faster in the next stages. The second stage included review of studies on the methods and activities used for leader and leadership development. In this stage, we repeated the same process in the first stage. We reviewed studies that addressed well-recognized leadership development methods and activities in the literature (360-degree feedback, executive coaching, job assignments, action learning, job rotation, networking and mentoring). This was followed by listing the selected studies on leadership development methods and activities based on their contents, findings and sources. Similar to the previous two stages, this helped us understand the purposes of these methods. The third stage included review of studies on the prominent challenges facing organizations since the 2000s. In this stage, we listed the prominent challenges in a table based on the following details: the current problems (or challenges), a brief summary of these problems (or challenges) and the suggested theory/approach to address this particular problem. However, the last column was left empty until a later stage. In the fourth stage, we identified a set of leadership theories for use in leadership development to overcome challenges facing today's organizations. Selecting relevant leadership theories in the fourth stage relied on the purpose of each theory and how it works, using Northouse's book *Leadership: Theory and Practice*. In this stage, we added the suggested theory/approach to the empty column that addresses a particular problem in

Table I. Given that we argue in the present study that leadership theory is a base for leadership development theory, this required reviewing literature studies on leadership theory prior to the year 2000 that are still in use in contemporary leadership development literature and practice.

Insights into challenges facing organizations in the twenty-first century
Challenges of the environmental context have a broad impact on organizational effectiveness and leadership process. Although there are differences between challenges facing leadership development (Megheirkouni, 2018b) and challenges facing individuals, tasks or/and organizations to complete the required objectives (Megheirkouni, 2016c), we argue, in the current study, that there might be other factors that form the major challenges facing organizations in the twenty-first century. Comprehensive reviews of challenges facing organizations in the twenty-first century in the field of leadership development have been provided by previous studies such as Antwi and Analoui (2008), Fitzsimons (2009), Gilpin-Jackson and Bushe (2007), Khoury and McNally (2016), Megheirkouni (2016c, 2018b), Sekerka *et al.* (2014), Vasconcelos (2015), Zekos (2004), Kaushik *et al.* (2014), Everton *et al.* (2007), Petrie (2014), Davies (2016), Ahmed (2005), Qureshi *et al.* (2013), Fossland (2013), Ramboarison-Lalao *et al.* (2012), Kakabadse and Kakabadse (2007), Park (2012) and Kibria *et al.* (2013). According to these reviews and empirical research, the major challenges facing organizations that have been explored and investigated in the literature include: lack of leadership skills, racism, corruption, lack of training funding, individualized leadership, sexual harassment, employee theft, incivility, violence, financial and economic crises, demographic changes due to immigration, and labor and mind migration. These challenges can be categorized into five groups: skills needs; unethical behaviors; individual leadership; training cost; and crises and disasters (Table I).

Skills needs
As noted earlier, skills development is used a means to overcome internal and external challenges influencing today's organizations. Although the skills approach has become essential for effective leaders in a superior-performance organization, it is still complex, controversial and subject to a variety of interpretations in leadership practices (Collins *et al.*, 2000). Given that skills approach is described as being stratified by organizational level or a complex of multiple roles, Mumford *et al.* (2007) not only used the term "strata-plex" to describe leadership skill requirements, but they emphasized the importance of the "leadership skills strataplex" that covers all aspects of an organization's environment. Previous empirical research supports this argument and emphasizes that effective leaders must have all the skills that enable them to understand and lead the organization (Megheirkouni *et al.*, 2018). Yet, one of the current challenges facing most organizations is a lack of multi-skilled leaders. One possible solution to this problem is that organizations recruit multi-skilled leaders or develop multi-skilled leaders through horizontal and vertical job rotation that enable leaders to fill different positions.

Unethical behaviors
In recent times, financial corruption, prejudice, employment discrimination, racism and sexual harassments at corporate at national and international levels have led people to rethink current practices such as moral policies, safety, equality and diversity in the workplace. Given that these practices have become visible in many instances, people have increasingly become skeptical of leaders who adopt unethical behaviors (Northouse, 2018). Due to these unethical practices, most organizations and policy-makers show a growing interest in the development and promotion of ethical leadership in organizations through

Content	Findings	Source
Trait approach	1. Emotional intelligence can be deliberately developed	Groves *et al.* (2008), Karp (2012)
	2. The particular characteristics and qualities of the "self" determine the leader's comprehension of themself as a human entity, and is a leader's gateway to self-confidence and self-esteem. Leaders therefore need to cultivate an understanding of self by engaging in formative processes which are related to their ability to learn from defining situations, thus raising awareness of points of convergence in a leader's career	
	3. The ideal self is composed of three major components: an image of a desired future; hope (and its constituents, self-efficacy and optimism); and a comprehensive sense of one's core identity (past strengths, traits, and other enduring dispositions)	Boyatzis and Akrivou (2006)
	4. Characteristics identified as important for successful CEOs were a humanistic approach, achievement orientation, a positive outlook, a sense of integrity, inclusiveness, and learning and self-awareness	Wood and Vilkinas (2007)
	5. Emotional competencies and personality traits are valuable predictors of job performance. In addition, competencies seem to be more powerful predictors of performance than global personality traits	Guillén Ramo *et al.* (2009)
	6. The relationship of the Big Five personality factors (extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, emotional stability and intellect/openness to experience) with positive outcomes is affected by contextual factors	Arora and Rangnekar (2016), Robie *et al.* (2005), Myszkowski *et al.* (2015)
Skills approach	1. Participants of leadership skills development program reported higher levels of leadership self-efficacy and had better health compared to a year earlier	Holmberg *et al.* (2016)
	2. Higher levels of leadership competence are associated with better perceived acceptance as a manager by superiors, but not by subordinates, better interaction with both subordinates and superiors, and with higher job satisfaction	Rappe and Zwick (2007)
	3. Nine skills groups relevant to effective leadership in an uncertain environment include strategic thinking, business skills, communication, understanding the whole, ability to change, teamwork, self-awareness, decision making/problem solving and adaptability	Megheirkouni (2016b)
	4. Emotional, social and cognitive intelligence competencies predict effectiveness in professional, management, and leadership roles in many sectors of society. In addition, these competencies can be developed in adults	Boyatzis (2008)
	5. The effective business consultant should possess functional knowledge as well as knowledge of an industry, communication and analytical skills, creativity, strategic and tactical leadership abilities,	Banai and Tulimieri (2013)

(*continued*)

Table I.
Leadership theory as
a base for leadership
development theory

Content	Findings	Source
	and a set of personality traits that includes emotional stability, intellect, integrity, and openness and agreeableness	
LMX theory	1. Delegation and participation were significant mediating variables of the relationship between LMX and job performance	Choy *et al.* (2016)
	2. When leaders exercise: individualized consideration, compassion, a motivation to serve, humility, and integrative thinking for the greater good, it creates social relations with followers	Pearse (2017)
Transformational leadership	1. Managers in an intervention designed to increase self-efficacy for transformational leadership results showed significantly greater transformational leadership self-efficacy and higher transformational leadership scores than the control group managers at post-test	Fitzgerald and Schutte (2010)
	2. When embracing and practicing a transformational teaching and learning ideology, the managers would be better equipped with managerial and transformational leadership abilities	Keevy and Perumal (2014)
	3. After a year-long training program, contingent reward and transformational leadership behaviors increased significantly, as did objectively measured productivity and job satisfaction	Brown and May (2012)
	4. Transformational leadership is the focus of leadership development initiatives. In order to attain desirable instructional outcomes, leadership development instructors should also be trained in a version of transformational leadership tailored to an instructional setting	Pounder (2003)
Servant leadership	1. The development of servant leadership skills has become essential in leadership development programs in order to enhance the effectiveness of leaders and increase satisfaction and performance of followers	Ebrahimi Mehrabani and Azmi Mohamad (2015), Megheirkouni (2018a, b, c)
	2. The tendency for servant behaviors is widely affected by national cultures	
Authentic leadership	1. Authentic leadership is closely tied to the commitment of others which characterizes the leader's moral responsibility and shows how the ethic of care fits with other ethical perspectives in enabling leaders to serve others	Atwijuka and Caldwell (2017)
	2. Authenticity is perceived as one of the main foundations for inspiring followers and implementing a shared vision	Bonau (2017)
	3. Authentic assessments play an essential role in attaining some of the competencies identified in the HRM graduate competency	Thurab-Nkhosi *et al.* (2018)
Team leadership	1. Leadership actions particularly important to cross-functional teams and the development of trust are offered as influential in creating a team climate for trust in cross-functional teams	Simsarian Webber (2002)
	2. The influence of leadership behaviors on the transformation process is associated with creation of an effective and high performing team	Sheard and Kakabadse (2004)

(*continued*)

Table I.

Content	Findings	Source
	3. The prevalent perceptions of leadership development and the constructs that affect leadership development in an organization suggest that leadership development involves multiple and coordinated actions	Dalakoura (2010)
Ethical leadership	1. Three conditions are necessary for developing an ethical corporate culture: 1) chief exclusives are ultimately responsible for the ethicality of their organizations; 2) formal training programs are essential to impart the required knowledge; 3) formal methods are necessary to facilitate the reporting of any behavior of organizational members that is deemed to be unethical or illegal	Small (2006)
	2. What managers report learning in a leadership development program, and the goals they set and achieve, are very much in line with theory on avoiding ethical failure in leadership roles. Leadership development supports ethical action by providing participants with opportunities for rich and comprehensive feedback, enhancement of self-awareness, time to reflect on personal and professional relationships, and improved understanding of the nature of strategic processes	Van Velsor and Ascalon (2008)
	3. Greater understanding of self-efficacy and self-awareness is important for individual growth and can enable ethical leaders to empower themselves, their colleagues, and the organization in which they work	Caldwell and Hayes (2016)
Self-leadership	1. A post-short-training program (6 months) in self-management skills has a significant improvement in the learning of efficacious beliefs and skills across cultures	Pattni and Soutar (2009)
	2. Designing more effective leadership development programs is related to learning about and understanding how behavior, an individual's internal processes, and external forces influence each other (reciprocal determinism). By understanding these factors any organization can develop clearly defined profiles of potential leaders	Ross (2014)

Table I.

making systemic changes, involving policies and laws to address such a gap. The present study suggests that ethical leadership development programs can be used to develop ethical behaviors of leaders. In addition, adopting a zero tolerance policy toward unethical practices would encourage operational and senior managers to avoid these practices for their promotion and put more pressure on those in the top management for adherence to high ethical standards.

Individual leadership

One reason that increases the demand for collective leadership is complex and dynamic environments. Most organizations require collective efforts to cope effectively with such challenges. The rationale for this demand is that individual leadership often fails to fulfill the anticipated outcomes in a complex environment that require responses to complex problems. Several studies suggest that collective leadership enhances team effectiveness and provides an understanding of causal relationships in positive outcomes (Carson *et al.*, 2017; Hiller *et al.*, 2006; Scott *et al.*, 2018). Although empirical studies confirm the effectiveness of collective leadership, individual leadership remains a more frequent choice for many organizations. The shift from individual leadership to shared leadership must not remain only as a theoretical recommendation, but it must also be more widely applied.

Training cost

The cost of leadership development programs, including the costs to design and develop the program, materials provided to participants, for the facilitator and of the facilities (Hannum *et al.*, 2007), forces small businesses or organizations with limited financial resources to choose the cheapest ways to develop their people or to choose alternatives. Some organizations are willing to pay these costs for leadership and management training because they recognize that the expense is an investment that is expected to yield a return (Giber *et al.*, 2009). Either way, organizations often find themselves under increasing pressure to allocate more financial resources for training certain people or/and not waste funds on unnecessary training for people who do not need it. From a practical standpoint, there are sound business and motivational reasons that encourage today's corporate facilitation of self-learning and self-development (McCollum, 1999), particularly as leaders, managers, supervisors and other organization members rightly have an idea of their own weaknesses and required needs (Megheirkouni, 2016a).

Crises and disasters

The current concerns of many organizations and countries about their standards of leadership training are not new. It is known that organizations and countries invest in HRD and develop leaders who are able to help effectively overcome present challenges and improve outcomes in turbulent times. In light of this, authentic leadership development programs become relevant and are urgently needed for desirable outcome (Avolio and Gardner, 2005, 2017; George, 2003). In addition, the unique stressors facing today's organizations throughout the world today call for leaders and managers to lead and manage in ways that serve the greater good of the organization. For-profit, public and even non-profit sectors are addressing challenges surrounding their work through an increasing demand for volunteer labor to limit costs and benefit from the professional experience of certain people (Handy and Srinivasan, 2005). More specifically, volunteer leaders, managers or supervisors reflect the willing for those people to serve others and their organizations for the common good (e.g. Schneider and George, 2011). We suggest that an increasingly servant leadership development strategy is urgently required in financial crises and turbulent times.

Leadership development theory in practice

The field of leadership development has promoted its practice by examining a set of questions including, but is not limited to: How to be an effective leader? How do people learn leadership skills? What are the contents of leadership development programs? How does leadership development occur? and How to transfer leadership development? (McCauley *et al.*, 2010). As noted earlier, there is no a specific theory on leadership development, but the field of leadership development is a mirror of a specific leadership theory or approach. In addition, learning theories offer a rationale for extending the application of leadership development (Megheirkouni, 2016b), using a set of situated leadership development methods and activities (Day, 2001). For example, Megheirkouni (2016a) argues that the leadership development process represents the period that extends from the time an organization identifies its weaknesses to the time it adopts and implements a specific leadership development program that helps leaders or managers overcome these weaknesses.

Leadership theory as a base for leadership development theory

It is argued that the debate on leadership theory over the last 70 years indicates that there is a widespread misperception of the field of leadership. This is because leader and leadership development need to be understood as a complex set of processes. Specifically, Day *et al.* (2014) point out "that if that the field could just identify and agree on the 'correct' leadership theory then the development piece would inevitably follow. It turns out that this is not so simple" (p. 64). However, practical applications of leadership development programs and the attention paid by scholars, experts and designers of traditional and contemporary leadership theories and approaches confirm that although developing individual leaders and developing effective leadership processes have been relevant, two major factors – the stages of the development of leadership theory (Jones, 2011), and the perceived needs for leadership and contextual factors (Storey, 2016), leader, and leadership development – are also subject to particular needs of organizations and countries.

This is well illustrated by two studies by Megheirkouni (2016a, b) who points out that developing individual leaders and developing effective leadership processes are the same all over the world because they rely on the same principles of leadership theory, but with some differences in terms of the content, purposes and implementations that fit each organization or country. Therefore, it may be said that developing effective individual leaders and developing effective leadership processes must occur through principles of leadership theory. In light of this, we argue that leadership development practices are based on theoretical bases stemming from principles of leadership theory that extend from early approaches to contemporary ones (Table II).

Traits approach

This approach, of interest to scholars throughout the twentieth century, refers to personality traits that are associated with individuals' perceptions of leadership. This is also called Great Man theories. This approach focuses on the qualities and characteristics possessed by leaders. According to this approach, individuals can be born with certain personality traits that distinguish leaders from non-leaders (Northouse, 2018). This assumes that leadership traits are perceived as innate and are not changeable. However, this contradicts the well-known saying that it is not impossible for successful leadership trait to be learned. Given that it is difficult to list all leadership traits that have been explored or/and investigated in previous studies, we address in this study only relevant studies on the five major leadership traits (intelligence, self-confidence, determination, integrity and sociability), the five-factor personality model and emotional intelligence adopted by Northouse (2018) (Table I). A comprehensive review of studies since 2000 has revealed that although trait approach was one of the first systematic attempts to study leadership in the

Content	Findings	Source
Action learning	1. Different knowledge management practices have different roles regarding the phase of the action learning process they are involved in	Rolland (2006)
	2. Various interpersonal dynamics existing within the action learning sets have the ability to influence individual satisfaction and the overall effectiveness of the set	Yeadon-Lee (2013)
	3. Action learning can be used for developing a set of skills, including: business skills, conflict management, decision making, problem solving and communication. It can be used for a specific purpose or/and multiple purposes	Megheirkouni (2016a)
360-degree feedback	1. 360-degree feedback helps evaluate the transfer of expatriate training and the development of expatriates on the job	Luthans and Farner (2002)
	2. The feedback exercise is perceived as an opportunity for individuals to improve capabilities and pursue learning goals over time. In addition, support received by participants in undertaking the feedback activity as part of a program of development contributes to the positive response	Drew (2009)
	3. Effective management development feedback is affected by the characteristics of recipients, who reported being more receptive to feedback from someone of a similar ethnic group	Ryan *et al.* (2000)
Job rotation	1. Job rotation is one of the methodologies that have the most diversified application. Importantly, high-potential development takes up more time and offers a wider scope of activities than is the case for other methodologies	Vloeberghs *et al.* (2005)
	2. The readiness of executives to adopt roles as a mechanism for rotating leadership in a group or an organization tends to enable the rotation of leadership within that group or organization, which in turn facilitates development of the group	Sheard *et al.* (2009)
Networking	1. Organizational networks play an essential role in the career development of female managers	Linehan (2001)
	2. Challenges facing global human resource development arise from 1) the boundary activities of network centrality, and 2) building and maintaining optimal trust	Fenwick and De Cieri (2004)
	3. A leader's role-based perspective can provide structure to the task accomplishment networks within groups executives form when discharging their leadership responsibilities	Sheard and Kakabadse (2007)
Executive coaching	1. Relationship processes of rapport, trust and commitment positively predicted coaching program outcomes, including client and coach reactions, behavioral change, and coaching program results	Boyce *et al.* (2010)
	2. There are key differences in the issues faced by coaching managers and by internal/external coaches. Furthermore, the development of a supportive coaching culture should not be underestimated in facilitating managers to apply their coaching skills on a daily basis, which is an important issue for organizations to tackle	McCarthy and Milner (2013)
	3. Leader training to coach employees must be tailored to the managerial context instead of a generic coaching training	Milner *et al.* (2018)

Table II.
Leadership
development methods
and activities

early twentieth century, it is still the focus of researchers over the last two decades
(e.g. Akers, 2018; Bai and Roberts, 2011; Brendel *et al.*, 2016; Collins and Cooke, 2013; Gentry
et al., 2007; Hopkins *et al.*, 2015; Johnson *et al.*, 2008; Williams, 2008).

Although Northouse (2018) argues that the traits approach was criticized because of its
"subjective determinations of the most important leadership traits," developing particular
leadership competencies can be determined by identifying leadership needs that differ
based on the environment in which an organization operates. Furthermore, leadership traits

research is still alive and advances a curvilinear relationship between leader's attributes and leadership outcomes. In light of this, the research on dark and bright traits represents an example of such relationship (Judge and Long, 2012). This justifies the need of further studies examining leadership traits for better understanding of positive or negative outcomes across all sectors and cultures (e.g. Judge *et al.*, 2006, 2008; Kiazad *et al.*, 2010; Kaiser *et al.*, 2015; Paulhus, 2014; Schyns, 2015). That implies that trait approach will remain the focus of some leadership development programs that help participants learn successful leadership traits. This was the reason for choosing leadership traits in the present study.

Skills approach
This approach focuses on skills and abilities that can be learned and developed for effective leadership. Researchers in the field of leadership have investigated leadership skills over the last 70 years. This has led to a large number of models and frameworks that suggest a set of skills for effective leadership. One of the oldest articles was by Katz (1955), who suggested effective leadership needs three types of skills: first, technical skills refer to knowledge about a particular type of work. Leaders may have competencies in a specialized area or the ability to use an appropriate tool or technique to accomplish a particular work; second, human skills refer to the abilities that enable a leader to work effectively with their people (subordinates, peers and superiors) in order to accomplish the required goals in the organization; and third, conceptual skills refer to the ability to work with ideas and concepts that help create a vision and strategic plans for an organization.

The reasons for choosing skills approach in the present study were manifold and multiplying. Primarily, business world is today described by the age of knowledge work. Knowledge work relies on the contributions of skilled professionals. Knowledge managers or leaders can withhold their intellectual capital and they can take it with them if they choose to leave (Pearce, 2007). In addition, research on skills approach contributed to our understanding of leadership effectiveness through developing sort kinds of skills (Fowler, 2018; McCallum and O'Connell, 2009; Megheirkouni *et al.*, 2018; Riggio and Reichard, 2008). Although skills approach was criticized by its weakness in predictive value and despite of interest to scholars throughout the twentieth century (Northouse, 2018), it is still the focus of many researchers and scholars in the twenty-first century, given the increasing interest in leadership skills development to address challenges influencing both leaders and organizations (e.g. Burke and Collins, 2004; Canals, 2014; Ebrahimi Mehrabani and Azmi Mohamad, 2015; Dai *et al.*, 2011; Gordon and Gordon, 2017; Hennekam, 2015; McKenna, 2004), and its role in predicting positive outcomes (Megheirkouni, 2016a, b). This also suggests that skills approach is still the focus of researchers and experts in the field of leadership development for better outcomes.

Leader–member exchange theory
LMX theory focuses on the interactions between leaders and followers. The dyadic relationship between leaders and followers conceptualizes leadership as a process (Northouse, 2018). Unlike the prominent leadership theories and approaches, the main idea of LMX theory is based on how the quality of this theory leads to positive outcomes (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). It is noted that although research on LMX theory has focused since the 2000s on investigating new ways of integrating this theory with other approaches, theories, constructs and processes, such as psychological contract (Caldwell and Hasan, 2016; Kasekende, 2017), transformational leadership theory and organizational commitment (Keskes *et al.*, 2018), and social exchange (Pearse, 2017), it is still used as a predictor of work outcomes (Biswas, 2016; Choy *et al.*, 2016; Erks *et al.*, 2017; Sumner-Armstrong *et al.*, 2008). This contradicts Erdogan and Bauer's (2014) claim that the evolution of LMX theory can be divided into four stages: In the 1970s stage, the Vertical Dyad Linkage Theory was

introduced in the mid-1970s; in the 1980s stage, the focus was switched to LMX with the first empirical tests of the LMX construct; in the 1990s stage, LMX theory was used as predictor of positive outcomes; and from 2000 till now, LMX theory is being investigated through its integration with other theories and variables and as a mediator or a moderator.

Therefore, very little research has explored or investigated LMX theory through its integration with other contemporary leadership approaches such as authentic leadership, servant leadership, ethical leadership, self-leadership and responsible leadership (see e.g. Chiniara and Bentein, 2018; Tumasjan *et al.*, 2011). As a result, we suggest that LMX theory will remain one of the current and future trends hoped in leadership development activities through integrating its components with other leadership theories or approaches in training sessions. This was the reason for choosing LMX theory in the present study.

Transformational leadership
This is one of the top researched topics in the field of leadership over the last five decades. Bass (1985) and Bass and Riggio (2006) conceptualized transformational leadership within a full Range Model which includes three styles: transactional leadership includes three behaviors: contingent reward, management by exception (active) and management by exception (passive); transformational leadership includes four styles: idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration; and laissez-faire leadership behaviors. Research on transformational leadership theory is perceived as one of the few leadership theories well researched in the areas of leadership, organizational studies and human resources management. Research on transformational leadership has investigated its link with personality (Brown and Reilly, 2009; Hautala, 2006), positive outcomes, such as organizational performance (Masa'deh *et al.*, 2016; Williams *et al.*, 2018), personal epistemology and beliefs (Tickle *et al.*, 2005), follower self-esteem (Munir Sidani, 2007), teamwork improvement (Akhavan Tabassi *et al.*, 2014), follower performance and satisfaction (Bacha, 2014), organizational and leadership effectiveness (Erkutlu, 2008; Yahaya and Ebrahim, 2016), and exploring exploitation in an organization (Baškarada *et al.*, 2016). Transformational leadership is also investigated as a predictor of other leadership theories, such as LMX (Keskes *et al.*, 2018).

Although transformational leadership has been of interest to leadership scholars and researchers for more than 50 years, it is still the most researched theory in the field of leadership and it is perceived as highly effective. One reason of its importance may be that addressing the needs of today's leaders facing increasing challenges and dynamic environments via this kind of leadership exceeds the positive outcomes of traditional management development programs (e.g. Collins and Holton, 2004; Dvir *et al.*, 2002; Lanaj *et al.*, 2016; Towler, 2003). This importance justifies our use of transformational leadership in this study.

Servant leadership
Servant leadership, which was coined by Robert Greenleaf (1970), emphasizes that leaders put followers first, empower them and help them develop their personal capacities. For better understanding of servant leadership, Spears (2002) identifies ten characteristics in Greenleaf's writings which are fundamental to the development of this approach. These characteristics are: listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people and building community. Although research on servant leadership has focused on leader behaviors, it is also focusing on examining its potential outcomes, such as climates for inclusion (Gotsis and Grimani, 2016), attitudes (Beekun, 2012) and social exchange perspective (Pearse, 2017). However, servant leadership is still under development because the outcomes of its integration with other leadership theories such as transformational leadership, responsible leadership,

ethical leadership, authentic leadership or the characteristics of servant leaders are still not well known.

More importantly, the world is increasingly witnessing natural disasters, wars, financial and economic crises, etc. No doubt, such factors increase the need for servant behaviors in people (both leaders and followers) in today's organizations. In other words, fundamental tasks await: scholars who need to examine the current contemporary conceptual underpinnings of servant leadership in an effort to build a contemporary theory about it and practically examined all settings, and leadership experts and consultants of current leadership development programs who need to focus on servant leadership skills in all contexts. Previous research revealed that the importance of servant leadership programs lies in encouraging both selflessness and willingness to serve others (see e.g. Carter and Baghurst, 2014; Spears, 2002). In light of this, we argue that servant leadership programs have also the same importance in unstable or uncertain environments such as wars zones. This was the key reason for choosing servant leadership in the present study.

Authentic leadership
Authentic leadership, which focuses on whether a leader is really as they present themselves, is perceived as one of the newest approaches of leadership. According to Northouse (2018), this approach can be understood from three points of view: the intrapersonal perspective, which focuses on the leader, incorporates the leader's self-concept, self-regulation and self-knowledge; the interpersonal process, which emerges authentic leadership as relational, shows the interactions between leaders and followers as a reciprocal process; and the developmental perspective which shows authentic behaviors as something that can be developed and learned over time. Like the previous theories and approaches, leadership research investigated this approach as a positive predictor, such as leadership effectiveness (Galanou and Farrag, 2015) or moral leadership (Swierczek and Jousse, 2014).

Additionally, authentic leadership is perceived as an effective means to cope with corporate challenges, such as financial crisis (Anderberg and Morris, 2006). Given that the authentic leadership approach is still growing up, more research is needed to explore and examine ways of integrating authentic leadership approach with other approaches, theories, constructs and processes. Importantly, most formal leadership development initiatives go beyond their key purposes and focus on "talented" or "future" leaders, which is an explicit reference to authentic leadership. Although there is no research evidence support this link, Shamir and Eilam's (2005), who point out that authentic leaders often display genuine leadership, and are originals, not copies, emphasize a leader's career/training experiences and the meaning a leader attaches to those experiences as being critical to the development of the authentic leader. Therefore, we suggest that the essence of formal leadership development programs is to develop "real" leaders who can cope with all challenges surrounding their organizations, which is an enough reason for choosing authentic leadership in the present study.

Team leadership
Team leadership, which is a specific type of group composed of members who share goals, coordinates to accomplish these goals and is also perceived as one of the newest approaches in the field of leadership. Team members have specific roles with knowledge, skills or/and experience needed for any task (Levi, 2015). In an attempt to demonstrate the role of team leadership research in understanding team development process, Stubbs Koman and Wolff (2008) examined the relationships among team leader emotional intelligence competencies, team-level emotional intelligence and team performance, and found that team leader emotional intelligence is significantly related to the presence of emotionally competent group norms on the teams they lead, and that emotionally competent group norms are related to team performance. Research on team leadership addressed the relationship between this approach

and outcomes, such as team roles and team performance (Blenkinsop and Maddison, 2007), selecting and edifying for team leadership as a fundamental mechanism for enhancing overall organizational capacity for sustainability (Pearce *et al.*, 2013), the role of team leadership for maximizing creativity and innovation (Rose and Gordon, 2015), and organizational change and improvement (Harris, 2011).

However, more research on team leadership still needs to integrate this approach with other approaches, theories or constructs, given that developing collaborative leadership is perceived as one of current and future trends in the field of leadership development (Megheirkouni, 2018b). One of the key reasons increases the importance of team leadership development is that teamwork is perceived as a means for learning and knowledge sharing between team members. It is known that the changes in the environment of business world confirm that developing collaborative style of leadership has become more appropriate than some of the more traditional leadership styles (Canals, 2011). We, therefore, adopted team leadership in the present study.

Ethical leadership
This approach is concerned with the kinds of values and morals a leader finds appropriate. Ethics help understand who leaders are and what they do. It is all about the nature of leaders' behaviors, so to speak. According to Northouse (2018), ethical theories can be divided into two kinds: first, theories that focus on the duty and rules governing leaders' action, which include teleological approach that stresses answering the question "What is right", this is by looking at the outcomes; and second, theories that emphasize the consequences of leaders' actions, which include three approaches, namely, ethical egoism, utilitarianism and altruism. Research on theories focusing on the duty and rules governing leaders' actions revealed that ethical leadership has significant influence on customer relationship (Zheng *et al.*, 2011), and was recommended as means to overcome problems confronting business world (Keung Ip, 2011), service quality (Mardiana Yusuf, 2018), job satisfaction and organizational commitment (Okpara and Wynn, 2008), and effective leadership (Howard, 2010).

However, although the ethical leadership approach has rapidly attracted the attention of scholars and researchers in the fields of leadership, leadership development and ethical business, there is still more research to undertake to understand and investigate this approach and its integration with other theories and approaches effectively. The key reason for choosing ethical leadership in the present study is its role in creating and sustaining an ethical business culture. It is known that the attitude of top leadership is one the key factors in creating an ethical work environment because top leaders who fail or are not committed to maintaining an ethical work environment will rarely succeed in creating one (Miller and Jentz, 2017). We, therefore, suggest that ethical leadership is one of key components of current and future leadership development programs.

Self-leadership
This approach, which expanded upon the concept of self-management, refers to a comprehensive process of self-influence that involves behavioral and cognitive strategies. These strategies can help individuals address what they need to do and how/why they have to do it (Neck *et al.*, 2017). Self-leadership strategies are divided into three groups: behavior-forced strategies are used to heighten a leader's self-awareness to facilitate behaviors related to necessary; natural reward strategies refer to situations in which a leader is motivated or rewarded by inherently enjoyable aspects of the task; and constructive thought pattern strategies attempt to facilitate the formation of constructive, habitual thought patterns of thinking that can lead to positive outcomes. Research on self-leadership has focused on investigating its relationship with other leadership theories, such as transformational leadership

(Andressen *et al.*, 2012), traits approach and social cognitive theory (Neck and Houghton, 2006), and has been used as a predictor of work outcomes (Manz and Sims, 2001).

However, although the self-leadership approach first appeared in the 1980s in a practitioner-oriented book, it is perceived as one of the contemporary leadership theories and approaches that are still under development. Additionally, more research is required to explore its relationship with other theories, approaches, processes and constructs in different sectors in non-western contexts (Megheirkouni, 2018b, c). The reason for choosing self-leadership in the present study is the need for individuals (both leaders and followers) to take personal responsibility for their development. It is known that many national and international organizations downsize to reduce costs, utilize an outsourcing strategy, adopt competitive strategies, and satisfy internal and external stakeholders. This has been one critical reason why most today's organizations have lower commitment to leadership development activities at organizational level (Rothstein and Burke, 2010). Importantly, today's organizations are no longer willing to invest in long-term training to their people, but rather they are focusing on other short-term needs (Megheirkouni, 2016a, b) because these organizations believe that their people are better to know what training they want and how to do it, if they want to develop (Moses, 1997).

Leadership development methods and activities

Comprehensive reviews of leadership development methods and activities have been provided by previous studies (Conger, 1992; Cacioppe, 1998; Conger and Benjamin, 1999; Hartley and Hinksman, 2003; Hernez-Broome and Hughes, 2004), and leadership development methods and activities have also been derived from the extant research informed especially by reviews and meta-analyses (Collins, 2016; Collins and Holton, 2004; Day, 2001), and empirical research investigated leadership development methods (Megheirkouni, 2016a, b). According to these reviews, meta-analyses and empirical research, the major leadership development methods and activities that have been explored and investigated in the literature include 360-degree feedback, executive coaching, job assignments, action learning, job rotation, networking and mentoring (Table III).

Action learning

Action learning is perceived as a pragmatic term stemming from the humanistic view of the individual via experiential learning to address complex problems of the workplace (Megheirkouni, 2016b). Pedler (1997), in the third edition of his book, provided a comprehensive definition of action learning:

> Action learning couples the development of people in work organizations with action on their difficult problems. It is based on the premise that there is no learning without action and no sober and deliberate action without learning […] Action learning makes the task vehicle for learning and has three main components – people, who accept the responsibility for action on a particular task or issue; problems, or the tasks which are acted on; and the set of six or so colleagues who meet regularly to support and challenges each other to take action and to learn. (p. xxx)

Leadership development literature shows that although action learning includes a mix of phases, namely, problem selection, team members, reflective process, strategies, commitment to learning and facilitator (Marquardt, 2011), it is not necessary that individuals learn from all phases of the process. In other words, learning can occur at one or more of these phases. For example, Yeadon-Lee (2018) points out that Revans' concept of "learning by doing" can enhance an individual's insight through reflective vicarious learning or learning from the behavior of others. Others may learn through coaches who facilitate learning process by supporting team members focusing on aims, objectives, problems, processes and results (Revans, 2017). Most organizations today adopt action learning as an effective and cheap

Current challenges	Summary	Leadership development based on relevant leadership theory
Lack of skills	Developing skills is known as one of the leading leadership development approaches. Organizations today need to develop the leadership skills strataplex that best fit organization's needs and the challenges surrounding that organization	Skills approach
Unethical behaviors	Scandals, such as financial corruption, sexual harassment and racial discrimination, have widely topped the headlines of the press, social media and television since the 2000s, involving many celebrities, chief executives, managers and others in most fields. Organizations today need to invest in HRD to promote ethical values among their people	Ethical leadership
Individual leadership	Leadership is being too individually focused and is elitist in today's organizations, particularly, complexity and uncertainty surrounding today's organizations require a transition from the old paradigm in which leadership resided in a person or role, to a new one in which leadership is perceived as a collective process	Team leadership
Lack of leadership training funding	Practical experience confirmed that the millions of dollars invested in leadership training did not address all challenges surrounding organizations. In addition, the lack of training funding or/and the cost of leadership development programs today suggest the need for alternative means to help leaders deal with current challenges	Self-leadership and self-learning
Crises and disasters	Most organizations suffering from recession, lack of performance or productivity in a period of economic and financial crises and natural disasters need "real" leaders and leaders who put their followers' needs first. Accordingly, developing both servant and authentic leadership skills might be seen as a priority in a time of crises and disasters	Servant leadership and authentic leadership

Table III.
Challenges facing organizations in the twenty-first century

activity for leader development in the twenty-first century. However, no research has explored and investigated what skills the action learning process can develop, and how it is implemented in different contexts. For example, action learning facilitators may not possess the same experience across sectors, settings, cultures, etc.

360-degree feedback
The idea of the feedback method stems from collecting information about an individual behavior and the influence of such behavior from internal and external stakeholders. Day (2001) points out the importance of feedback as a developmental tool in leadership development programs. Megheirkouni (2016b) argues that multiple sources used for feedback method can lead to differences across such sources in terms of evaluating outcomes. Research on feedback method revealed that feedback was used for positive outcomes, such as performance (Greguras *et al.*, 2003; Smither *et al.*, 2004; Thomas, 2007), leadership behaviors and attitudes (Van Rensburg and Prideaux, 2006; Van Dierendonck *et al.*, 2007), change management (Jabri, 2004), and individual learning and development (Drew, 2009). It is noted that research on the effectiveness of 360-degree feedback method and how it is implemented for both developmental purposes and assessment are still not well explored, particularly, when the quality of multiple sources varies.

Job rotation

Job rotation is known as one of experiential learning activities. It is based on developing management employees, supervisors, managers and top leaders with leadership potential by assigning them to new roles inside or outside the organization (Charan *et al.*, 2010). Like many other leadership development methods and activities, job rotation is perceived as one of the essential parts of successful leadership development programs. Van der Sluis-den Dikken and Hoeksema (2001) compared between job rotation and other methods for effective leadership development. They concluded that the job, the work environment and the individual employee characteristics are all factors that contribute to the learning process. The interaction between these factors plays a role in career success of managers. Others went further and argued that job rotation can be used for developing leadership skills (e.g. Megheirkouni, 2016b). However, it is still unknown to what extent the outcome of job rotation is affected by the size of the functional sub-units or departments of the organization or other organizations, and how factors, such as diversity, experience, qualification, knowledge sharing culture of the people working in those sub-units or departments, can affect the successful application of job rotation if it is adopted for developmental purposes.

Networking

Networking is about developing social capital. A networking system is based on the idea of sharing information or services with others. For Day (2001), building individual networks is perceived as an effective means to address present leadership challenges, such as increasing managers' innovation and problem-solving capacities. Research on leadership networking is well discussed in the work of "leadership development methods and activities content, purposes, and implementation" by Megheirkouni (2016b), who found that networking is perceived as a cheap and effective method for many organizations and is used for developing teamwork and communication skills. Research on networking revealed that this method is not used for developmental purposes (Day, 2001), but for job outcomes, such as performance (Rubino *et al.*, 2017). Although there are many studies on the networking method in the field of leadership development (e.g. Chen *et al.*, 2006; Hassan *et al.*, 2017; Kodama, 2005; Lorange and Thomas, 2016; Pinto and Araújo, 2016), no research has explored or examined the quality of the networking and its influence on effective leadership development, given that networking involves the interaction of groups of employees, supervisors, managers and executives who do not have the same knowledge, experience or/ and qualifications.

Coaching

Coaching, which is an experiential and goal-focused form of one-one-one or/and group development process, can be short- or long-term activities used to develop leadership skills to improve performance and personal satisfaction (Day, 2001). The coaching method can target executives, middle managers, operational managers and supervisors. Barner and Higgins (2007) point out that coaches tend to focus on one of four prevailing coaching models: the clinical model, the behavioral model, the systems model and the social constructionist model, which shape the approaches that organization development practitioners take in directing coaching assessments and interventions. Much of the coaching literature reveals that research on coaching focuses on its outcome, such as the dynamic of the relationship between coach and client and effective coaching outcomes (Critchley, 2010; Visser, 2010); the relationship between both rapport and commitment and coaching effectiveness (Gan and Chong, 2015); the roles of the coach's enforcement of standards and the coach's empathy for the coaching practice (Ben Salem and Lakhal, 2018); the role of coaching in supporting and enhancing the quality of the

sensemaking activities of the individual (Du Toit, 2007); the role of the intensity of the coaching practice as a tacit evaluating tool for organizational functioning (Ben-Hador, 2016); the relationship between coachee characteristics and sustainable development and innovation (Bozer *et al.*, 2013); and the relationship between leadership coaching and constructive leadership behaviors (Anthony, 2017). In addition, coaching was conceptualized as an effective approach to leadership development (e.g. Ann and Carr, 2011; Bond and Seneque, 2012).

Others point out that professional quality characteristically varies with three primary types of coaching providers, namely, large conglomerates (often multinational), the solo market and the specialized coaching team or "boutique" (Ahern, 2005). Despite the growing practice of leadership coaching in the field of leadership development, it is still seen as one of the preferred topics for scholars and researchers since the 2000s. However, additional research is needed that goes beyond leadership coaching outcomes to understand, explore and examine the effect of institutional and cultural context, such as sector (for-profit, non-profit or public sector), international strategy (domestic firms, regional firms, international firms and multinational firms), organizational culture (racism, ethical values, corruption, wars, financial crises, technological infrastructure, etc.), on the approach to implementing leadership coaching.

Future leadership development research directions
As noted earlier, organizations today are undergoing many challenges affecting their people and business, or even to survive, including the lack of leadership skills, unethical behaviors, individual leadership, lack of training funding, and crises and disasters. Swensen *et al.* (2016) point out that organization culture and design are important foundations of leadership development. This is because leadership development cannot be separated from the context and culture of organizational design. This sheds light on the need to develop leaders to enable them to overcome challenges influencing their organizations, through focusing on particular leadership theories and approaches for designing leadership development initiatives. Megheirkouni (2016b) points out that the leadership development process reflects the period that extends from the time of identifying and assessing weaknesses and identifying the required skills to overcome weaknesses, to the time of implementing appropriate leadership development methods or/and activities to transfer these skills.

Likewise, Conger (1992) argues that building skills is the most common approach in leadership development. Based on this, there is an essential need for both more research and practical initiatives by scholars and experts on the theories that serve leaders to cope with challenges facing their organizations, particularly skills approach, servant leadership, authentic leadership, team leadership, ethical leadership and self-leadership. Importantly, leadership development programs need to link between the current challenges and the relevant leadership theories in order to develop appropriate leader skills. We conclude that leadership development occurs through developing skills that reflect organizational and leadership needs to overcome a particular problem. No doubt, the sources of these skills should be one or more leadership theories. One of the major problems in current leadership development programs is that most of today's organizations focus on developing business skills because these skills are mainly related to specific functional areas and organizational system (e.g. Connelly *et al.*, 2000; Zaccaro, 2001). In addition, business skills can determine the business' success or failure and without these skills, organizations are unable to operate. Accordingly, we recommend that future leadership development research should investigate the outcome of the suggested leadership theories (skills approach, servant leadership, authentic leadership, team leadership, ethical leadership and self-leadership) in leadership development programs.

Furthermore, we recommend experts and consultants design leadership development programs that serve multi-purposes to overcome current challenges, and enable leaders

tackling any similar future challenges. Although the responsibilities of HR managers and external coaches are different, as are their competencies and expertise, they need to work closely together. HR managers not only have to serve as in-house consultants to operational, middle and top managers, but they also have to identify and analyze internal and external challenges affecting their organizations because of their knowledge of their people and organizations, whereas external coaches, who are an invaluable resource for leadership development, serve as objective advisors on specific leadership matters, given their knowledge of leadership and leadership development theory. More specifically, HR managers need to work with external coaches to design short-term programs or present a complete external or/and in-house training package focusing on developing servant behaviors, ethical behaviors, authentic behaviors, self-leadership behaviors and team leadership skills. Moreover, recruitment departments need to specify leadership job descriptions to include the suggested leadership behaviors and skills.

For some organizations abandoning their HRD programs and focusing on self-development initiatives, we recommend these organizations to take part in guiding their employees and managers through brochures and catalogues or informal workshops to increase their attention to servant behaviors, ethical behaviors, authentic behaviors, self-leadership behaviors and team leadership skills within self-learning and development practices inside and outside of the organization. As screening of job applications is the early step in the selection process through which organizations seek to attract the best qualified candidates to fill job vacancies, we recommend organizations and their chief executives to set effective strategies of testing for the recommended skills for recruiting candidates with "leadership talent" because those people are likely to have the potential to show positive self-learning and development outcomes, and thus they may help their organizations cope effectively with contemporary business challenges. We also recommend leaders who intend to work globally to develop their servant, ethical, authentic behaviors, self-leadership and team leadership skills to cope effectively with current challenges surrounding today's organizations in developed and developing economies.

Limitations

Although the current study has provided a comprehensive review of the literature in the field of leadership and leadership development since the 2000s, there are studies published before that period in the *JMD* and other relevant journals that we have chosen not to review. The reason for this decision is that the literature on leadership and leadership development has progressed over the last two decades in terms of the number of studies on leadership and leadership development, as Day *et al.* (2014) said, "there are potential developmental implications associated with just about every published leadership article" (p. 80). In addition, the current study does not provide a review of leadership and leadership development research on methodological issues. The primary reason for this decision is that the methodological literature studies on all leadership theories and leadership development theories are not sufficiently developed or the findings of these theories from methodological perspectives are still unclear; particularly, many contemporary leadership theories or leadership development theories suffer a lack of valid instruments to measure these theories.

Conclusion

As noted by the well-known leadership development scholar David Day (2001), as people's understanding of leadership has matured, so must people's understanding of leadership development. Such a statement is consistent with our contention that despite the significant advances in research on both leadership and leadership development made since the 2000s in many specialized journals, including the *JMD*, the field is still replete with areas for advancing the literature on the link between leadership theories and leadership development theories in order to address or overcome challenges facing today's organizations, changing

over time. Future research needs to focus on the future leadership development needs via contemporary leadership theories if scholars want to: make significant advances in understanding future trends of leadership development, and use leadership development theories to overcome future challenges facing organizations.

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