Well, there are LDAP servers and the LDAP protocol. Combined, it's a data store, or a database. It's not relational, but it's just a place to store data, and it's optimized to be efficient at reads more than writes. It doesn't support transactions.

Now, it happens to be very popular for storing credentials, but that's by no means its only purpose, and not its original purpose.

LDAP is not just for user validation, any task that has the following properties might be a good use case for LDAP:

1. You need to locate ONE piece of data many times and you want it fast
2. You don’t care about the logic and relations between different data
3. You don’t update, add, or delete the data very often
4. The size of each data entry is small
5. You don’t mind having all these small pieces of data at a centralized place