

A Comprehensive Review of Authentic Leadership Previous Study: Challenge, Strategies and Practices

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Abstract

Authentic leadership is considered a crucial factor for achieving success in various fields in the 21st century. Extensive literature indicates that the theory of authentic leadership has a positive impact on multiple aspects of organizations, such as organizational trust, commitment, identification, and citizenship behavior (Shie & Chang, 2022; Xu et al., 2023). In order to gain a deeper and more detailed understanding of authentic leadership, this article will proceed to analyse and compare previous studies in greater depth, identify the challenges, strategies and practices of authentic leadership. In conclusion, the article posits that the leadership strategies of authentic leaders are based on four core dimensions: self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing and internalised moral perspective. Authentic leadership enables organisations to achieve high performance in four key areas: employee job satisfaction, employee creativity, employee trust in the organisation and organisational culture.

Keywords: Authentic Leadership, Leadership Strategy, Leadership Theory, Self-Awareness, Relational Transparency, Balanced Processing, Internalized Moral Perspective, Leadership Challenge, Authentic Leader

Introduction

Leadership has a profound impact on the future of society and its cultivation within organizations is an important objective to pursue and acknowledge (Day et al., 2021). The examination of leadership has gained significant attention from scholars in the field of organizational and management sciences as it is believed to have a crucial role in shaping social policy and contributing to the development of other theories (Elkhwesky et al., 2022). Authentic leadership is considered a crucial factor for achieving success in various fields in the 21st century. Extensive literature indicates that the theory of authentic leadership has a positive impact on multiple aspects of organizations, such as organizational trust,

commitment, identification, and citizenship behavior (Shie & Chang, 2022; Xu et al., 2023). In the context of educational organizations, the importance of authentic leadership is manifested in its positive influence on improving the school climate. Through authentic leadership, teachers' organizational learning capabilities, empowerment, organizational citizenship behavior, and reduction of teacher burnout can all be enhanced (Barth & Tsemach, 2021). The study of authentic leadership among managers can provide positive pointers for the efficient management of different enterprises and institutions. Furthermore, an effective leadership strategy can directly assist in the improvement of leaders' own strengths. From this perspective, the study of authentic leadership is of great practical significance. Consequently, authentic leadership has become a topic of great interest to researchers, who have conducted extensive studies from various perspectives.

Previous Study on Authentic Leadership Challenges

There is a wide range of scholarly perspectives regarding the research direction on authentic leadership, which is recognized as an emerging style of leadership. Some scholars contend that studying authentic leadership entails examining the authentic leaders themselves, individuals who actively balance various influences emanating from both within and outside the organization, thereby progressively fostering self-awareness. Conversely, another group of scholars holds the opposing view, advocating for a bifurcated approach to the study of authentic leadership. This entails, on one hand, a detailed analysis of leader characteristics and, on the other, an in-depth exploration of the process by which authentic leadership influences followers (Zhang et al., 2021).

Some researchers have argued that the concept of "authentic leadership" is inherently ambiguous and ideological, making it difficult to study rigorously. Firstly, leaders who emphasise self-awareness do not necessarily have a strong moral compass, and secondly, there is often a tension between an individual's work role and their authentic personality. A leader's behaviour at work can be influenced by multiple interests and cannot be based entirely on ethical and authentic personal values. Therefore, the authentic leader may be an idealised concept. In many research data, the desired leader characteristics mentioned by followers may be difficult to realise in reality (Alvesson & Einola, 2019).

In addition, there is widespread skepticism regarding the practical value of authentic leadership. At its core, authentic leadership is built on genuine values. However, when there are discrepancies in values between leaders and followers within an organization, these differences can potentially threaten the effective implementation of authentic leadership. Simultaneously, in real-life scenarios, conflicts of interest and contradictions exist among individuals, as well as within organizations and various other domains. Therefore, emphasizing transparency, sincerity, and openness in relationships may be viewed as an idealized aspiration (Gardner et al., 2021).

On the other hand, the leader's personality traits are significant factors that influence the development of authentic leadership. Research has indicated a close relationship between an individual's personality and their chosen leadership style. For instance, characteristics such as balanced decision-making, establishing transparent relationships, and displaying authentic behavior are distinctive features that set authentic leaders apart from

other styles of leadership. Therefore, in the study of organizational leadership, it is crucial to conduct a thorough analysis of the leader's personality traits. This perspective not only enhances our understanding of leadership but also offers valuable guidance to organizations in the selection and development of authentic leaders (Shahzad & Hashmi, 2021). It is evident that the study of authentic leadership often entails interdisciplinary research, necessitating a synthesis of theories from both management and psychology for a comprehensive analysis.

As authentic leadership is an emerging research theory, its origins can be traced back to Western countries. Currently, the influence of this theory in other parts of the world is still to be further explored. However, it is important to note that the specific manifestations of authentic leadership may vary in different societies due to cultural differences. For instance, implementing authentic leadership implies that leaders empower their followers. In Western societies, this empowerment may manifest by assigning employees specific positions or responsibilities associated with their roles; however, in Asian cultures, followers may perceive this empowerment when leaders demonstrate trust in them (Imam et al., 2020). In other words, theoretical studies on authentic leadership need to consider the impact of different regional cultural contexts and adapt and adjust accordingly.

Previous Study on Authentic Leadership Strategies

Based on the four key dimensions of authentic leadership, self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing and internalised moral perspective, authentic leaders employ a variety of specific leadership strategies that can be expected to make a positive difference in school organisations.

Kulophas & Hallinger (2019), conducted an authentic leadership behavioural study of primary school principals in Thailand. The study used a case study method to collect and analyse information from local principals who practised authentic leadership, and ultimately summarised the effective strategies principals used in their management work. The study revealed that based on the theoretical principles of relational transparency and balanced processing in the process of promoting school change, principals employ building trust, treating others as equals, and focusing on communication as leadership strategies. In the process of facilitating school change, principals explain the content and purpose of a new school policy to a wide range of people, consult with teachers and parents, and solicit their views, which led to increased teacher engagement and recognition of the principal.

In addition, authentic principals who emphasise internalised moral perspective will utilise value transmission as a leadership strategy to promote school development. According to a study conducted by Keane et al (2020), in South Australia on the relationship between authentic leadership of principals and the implementation of science and technology in schools, there is a direct relationship between the values of principals and the success of the implementation of science and technology programmes. Principals who exercise authentic leadership share with teachers a vision of the positive impact that science and technology can have on school development; they motivate teachers to learn about the use of technology in the classroom; and they help to remove barriers to innovative learning by supporting teachers in developing internal communication and learning.

Moreover, based on the dimension of self-awareness in authentic leadership theory, authentic principals also focus on sustainability and increasing integrity as effective leadership strategies. A study by Ismail et al. (2023) on the challenges and strategies of principals' authentic leadership practices indicated that principals use several strategies related to authentic leadership in creating a positive school climate. In addition to building relationships with teachers, listening to their subordinates, and accepting criticism and suggestions, authentic school leaders believe in the need for integrity and are committed to building the trust of teachers and other staff in the school by being consistent in what they say and do. Secondly, the principal is committed to the professional growth and development of everyone in the organisation by providing opportunities to attend seminars, conferences and training programmes.

Previous Study on Authentic Leadership Practices

In practical terms, nearly all organizations are dedicated to achieving sustainable development, a goal heavily contingent on the genuine leadership of their managers (Corriveau, 2020). Authentic leadership is perceived as an amalgamation of positive mental aptitude and a conducive organizational environment that fosters the growth of self-awareness and self-adjustments in behavior among both leaders and followers (Duarte et al., 2021). This form of leadership not only cultivates a rapport between leaders and followers but also acts as a conduit for shaping high-quality communication relationships within the organization. The leaders' ethical values can be effectively conveyed to followers through positive management strategies, fostering an organizational atmosphere characterized by openness, transparency, trust, and equity. In turn, followers respond positively by exhibiting heightened levels of work engagement and displaying behaviors indicative of good organizational citizenship (Chen & Sriphon, 2022). In summary, authentic leadership, propelled by positive psychological competencies, exerts a profound influence on individual behaviors within the organization, ultimately propelling sustainable organizational development.

In examining the practices of authentic leadership on employee job satisfaction, numerous researchers have reported positive conclusions. Jang & Chen (2022) conducted study analyzing 485 employees in South Korea. The research revealed that authentic leadership can reduce employee feelings of exclusion in the workplace and elevate their subjective well-being. Specifically, when employees perceive authenticity in their leaders and have their needs met, they experience a heightened sense of organizational belonging, ultimately leading to increased happiness in the workplace. Moreover, Lindsay & Mathieson (2022) conducted a similar study on leadership in the United States involving 259 clinical nursing professionals. The finding showed that authentic leadership indeed has a positive impact on employee job satisfaction. Additionally, employee dedication and proactive engagement were found to be positively correlated with perceptions of leader authenticity.

In addition, numerous studies have delved into the influence of authentic leadership on employees' innovation capabilities. Duarte et al. (2021) conducted a study in Portugal, demonstrating that authentic leadership positively affects employees' performance. The research employed a quantitative questionnaire with a diverse employee sample from various organizations. The finding of the study showed that employees exhibited higher job

performance when their organization's direct supervisors embraced a more authentic leadership style. Furthermore, the study revealed that authentic leadership impacts employees' job performance through two pivotal mediating factors: employees' affective commitment and personal creativity. Based on these findings, the authors concluded that authentic leaders can embody moral values in their behavior and interactions, fostering a positive and supportive work environment. These conditions stimulate employee creativity, consequently enhancing overall performance.

Novitasari et al (2020), underscored the impact of authentic leadership on Islamic university lecturers, with a particular focus on its predictive role in teachers' innovative work behavior. The lecturers perceive a stronger authentic leadership from the school leaders, resulting in more pronounced innovative behavior. This is attributed to the perception that leaders' management strategies are open, transparent, and authentic, leading lecturers to believe that the leaders provide sustainable motivation for their subordinates. Such motivation directly drives the lecturers' enthusiasm. In essence, there exists a positive correlation between authentic leadership, psychological capital, and innovative work behavior (Novitasari et al., 2020; Purwanto et al., 2021). Additionally, in a study conducted in Spain, Domínguez-Escrig et al. (2022) suggested that organizational learning plays a vital mediating role in the process through which authentic leadership influences innovativeness. Authentic leaders offer more learning opportunities to organizational members, facilitating their self-development and ultimately fostering creativity within the organization.

Chen and Sriphon (2022) emphasized the pivotal role of authentic leadership in enhancing employees' trust in the organization and fostering high-quality internal social exchange relationships. This insight stems from their research on organizational leadership conducted in Thailand. The study utilized a quantitative analysis of an online questionnaire and involved 318 managers from diverse organizational backgrounds. The findings indicated a significant positive correlation between authentic leadership and social exchange relationships, as well as trust factors within the organization. Chen and Sriphon (2022), concluded that authentic leadership represents an exemplary leadership model, encouraging genuine and positive relationships between leaders and followers, while nurturing positive mental capacities across the organization. When employees perceive themselves to be in a fair, transparent, and supportive work environment, they are more likely to develop a deeper sense of emotional trust in both their manager and the organization. Consequently, they demonstrate a greater willingness to follow the leader and actively contribute to the organization. Simultaneously, organizations benefit from enhanced efficiency and productivity from their employees, facilitating the achievement of organizational development objectives. This dynamic encapsulates the essence of high-quality internal social exchange relationships (2020).

In examining the impact of authentic leadership on educational organizations, numerous researchers have presented their respective findings. A study conducted by Zhang et al. (2021) focused on the role of authentic leadership in school principals and demonstrated its positive influence on followers' vocal behavior. The study utilized a method of stratified random sampling, selecting 38 primary schools in China, with a total of 1010 teachers participating. The results of this study revealed that principals' authentic leadership exerted

both direct and indirect effects on the vocal behavior of teachers within the schools. Zhang et al. (2021) proposed that the four significant attributes of authentic leadership—self-awareness, unbiased processing, authentic behavior, and authentic relationships—played a supportive role in the behavior of principals. Those who practice authentic leadership maintain an open attitude, appreciating voices from various perspectives rather than suppressing them, and encourage the sharing of information within the organization. Concurrently, teachers, as followers, hold an attitude of trust and respect toward the authentic principal. Furthermore, in a study by Xu et al. (2023) regarding the relationship between leaders and employee behavior, the theory was corroborated. The study asserted that authentic leadership influences employees' vocal behavior by impacting factors such as psychological safety and psychological ownership, subsequently affecting their vocal behavior. In essence, authentic leadership operates by intervening in the psychological capital of followers.

Additionally, the study by Alazmi and Al-Mahdy (2020), underscored a positive correlation between authentic leadership and teachers' work engagement. Conducted with 333 teachers and principals from public primary schools in Kuwait, the study utilized a cross-sectional survey method. The findings revealed that the authentic leadership of principals influenced teachers' professional self-efficacy, ultimately affecting their work engagement. The researchers posited that authentic school leaders possess a clear understanding of their strengths and weaknesses, making them more inclined to listen to teachers before making decisions. They even encourage educators to propose innovative ideas and challenge conventional thinking. Furthermore, these leaders cultivate a positive work atmosphere, including transparent information sharing and encouraging honest interactions. These actions help teachers perceive a higher sense of accomplishment at work and reinforce their trust and support for their principals, subsequently boosting their work engagement. Meanwhile, Shie and Chang (2022), echoed similar sentiments in their study on school-teacher relationships. In schools where the principals implement authentic leadership strategies, teachers as followers demonstrate higher levels of organizational trust, organizational commitment, and citizenship behaviors. Moreover, these positive behaviors can enhance teachers' personal well-being.

Authentic leadership not only influences the behavioral performance of individuals within an organization but also has a positive impact on organizational culture. On one hand, authentic principals prioritize personal development and serve as role models of learning leaders, thus transforming the culture of learning within their schools. On the other hand, authentic leaders encourage teachers to actively participate in various learning practices, inspiring a culture of optimism within the academic domain (Kulophas, 2020). Conversely, when the values advocated by principals do not align with those practiced, teachers perceive a decline in their academic status and inadequate support for their academic work. Consequently, this discrepancy affects the overall quality of teaching and learning within the school (Srivastava & Dhar, 2019).

Conclusion

In summary, authentic leadership is specifically categorised into four core dimensions: self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing and internalised moral

perspective. By addressing a number of related factors, authentic leadership can ultimately lead to organisational sustainability. The first is employee job satisfaction, where individuals who are satisfied with their work environment are able to achieve a stronger sense of belonging to the organisation. The second is employee creativity, which has a direct impact on the continuation of their work. The third is organisational trust. Individuals in an organisation show more commitment when there is a positive trust relationship between followers and leaders. Fourth is organisational culture; authentic leaders need to value their own personal development and be positive role models for others.

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