

Mediating effects of occupational self-efficacy on the relationship of authentic leadership and job engagement

Business Analyst
Journal

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Received 16 February 2023
Revised 7 August 2023
18 August 2023
11 September 2023
18 October 2023
3 January 2024
12 July 2024
Accepted 23 July 2024

Abstract

Purpose – (1) This research aims to identify the relationship between authentic leadership (AL) and job engagement (JE) perceived by university teachers and (2) to investigate the relationship between AL and JE by the mediation of occupational self-efficacy (OSE).

Design/methodology/approach – This research is descriptive in nature, and thus, a quantitative research method is used to find the impact of AL on employee work engagement and the mediating role of employee trust and OSE. In this research, convenience sampling technique was used, a type of non-probability sampling method where the sample is taken from a group of people who are easily accessible. The sample chosen for this research comprised of 95 employees working at different universities in Bangladesh. Primary and secondary data collection methods are being used in this research. The data are collected from primary sources through questionnaires with close-ended questions.

Findings – The findings of this study support the previous studies Hassan and Ahmed (2011) indicate that the authentic behavior of leaders promotes healthy work environment that fosters the trust level of employees. When leaders are authentic, genuine and honest toward their employees and maintain transparency in an organization, it influences and motivates employees' work engagement. Furthermore, the results are supported by Hsieh and Wang's (2015) research, which found that the relational transparency behavior exhibited by authentic leaders influences employees' self-efficacy (SE). When a leader openly shares ideas, opinions and clearly states what is expected from them, it will increase employees' OSE and makes them more willing to get themselves engaged.

Research limitations/implications – The limitations of this study were the shortage of time constraints, due to which a quantitative method was adopted to gather the data. The sample size was comprised of 95 respondents and does not represent the entire population of Bangladesh. To analyze the data, we have used the convenience sampling technique, which does not cover every sector of Bangladesh. Moreover, employees were reluctant to provide accurate data. This study is based on the perspective of university teachers only and does not explore AL from supervisors' perspectives. Further research is required to explore this relationship from the perspective of both supervisor and employee. The sample size should be increased to cover the other regions of Bangladesh in order to represent the population. Cultural variables may also be included for future research purposes to examine the relationship between AL and work engagement because the culture of an organization determines the leadership style of a leader.

Practical implications – Despite the recent attention from government universities to develop the performance of public sector teaching staff, scientific public management research is developing unfortunately restricted (Osborne, 2016). Moreover, the findings of this study depict the importance to understand the constructions like leaders' authenticity that lead to the promotion of confidence in their employees and, as such, an increase in their JE and performance. In managerial implication, this study has provided useful information



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Business Analyst Journal
Vol. 45 No. 1, 2024
pp. 41-59
Emerald Publishing Limited
e-ISSN: 2754-6721
p-ISSN: 0973-211X
DOI 10.1108/BAJ-02-2023-0043

to the management of the private and public sectors. With this information, the management will be able to know how to increase the engagement and commitment of employees. This research will help academic professionals in public and private sector universities to know how AL style positively influences employees' engagement.

Originality/value – This is an original work with practical value.

Keywords SEM, Authentic leadership, Job engagement, Occupational self-efficacy, Organizational behavior

Paper type Research paper

1. Introduction

Throughout history, leadership has been known to produce remarkable effects on human life. Nowadays, individuals and employees are the main focus of organizations. Organizations tend to keep their employees happy and motivated because they have realized the need that employees are their main assets. Loyal and faithful employees can give the organizations a competitive edge over others. According to [Meskelis and Whittington's \(2020\)](#) research, authentic leadership (AL) increases followers' hope, trust and positive emotions, resulting in improved work engagement. AL is being advocated to address the trust deficit created by the required modifications to the organization's leadership decisions. AL emphasizes building relationships on honest and ethical foundations; it mostly depends on the leader's legitimacy ([Gardner, Coglisier, Davis, & Dickens, 2011](#)). Authentic leaders are reliable and moderate, and their leadership fosters personal growth ([George & Bill, 2003](#)). AL is a newly developed construct and has played an important role in growing theoretical and empirical research ([Gardner *et al.*, 2011](#)). Work engagement is described as employees' persistent, positive and affective cognitive state of fulfillment ([Schaufeli, Martinez, Pinto, Salanova & Bakker, 2002](#)). Research has revealed that engaged employees are highly energetic and self-efficacious ([Bakker, 2009](#)). In terms of obligation, acknowledgment and achievement, engaged employees can develop their own constructive responses due to having an optimistic approach and activity level.

Employee engagement is considered as an important human resource (HR) variable for the majority of organizations. Engaged employees make additional effort, learn more and faster and are more creative. In addition, they are the organization's ambassadors. Furthermore, engagement is a good predictor of customer satisfaction, personnel retention, productivity and profitability. Engagement takes committed and motivated employees to the next level. Engaged employees concentrate on the goals of any organization, and as a result, the organization gets the expected outcome from them. Furthermore, empirical data from various studies established the link between AL and work engagement. For example, employees' perception of AL positively affects their perception of work engagement ([Arokiasamy, Rizaldy, & Qiu, 2022](#)).

Self-efficacy (SE) initiates personal achievements as well as the motivation and well-being of employees. It is based on peoples' beliefs rather than what is objectively true. Organizational scholars treat it as a motivational trait ([Judge & Bono, 2001](#)). The integration of the success and failures of an individual's experiences becomes a source of confidence in them ([Chen, Gully, & Eden, 2001](#); [Shelton, 1990](#)). SE has the potential to foster one's behavior in erratic conditions by changing individuals' expectations ([Ashforth & Saks, 2000](#)). Employees with high SE become resilient, confident that they can meet challenges and more committed and engaged in their work.

Contemporary studies are now focusing on employee engagement ([Mone & London, 2018](#)), which is described as valuable behavior of employees that shows their commitment ([Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004](#)). Numerous researchers have made significant efforts to establish the alignment between employee engagement and leadership styles ([Breevaart, Hetland, Demerouti, Olsen, & Espevik, 2014](#)). Recent findings argue the role of an ethical leadership

style on employees' performance (Bonner, Greenbaum, & Mayer, 2016; Mo & Sh, 2015). However, enough attention has still not been given to the intervening mechanism that exists between AL and employee engagement. The gap in understanding which leadership style changes employee engagement needs to be bridged (Carasco-Saul, Kim, & Ki, 2014). Moreover, little research exists on the direct link between authentic leaders' attributes and followers' engagement at the workplace as well as on the underlying mechanism that facilitates this link (Brown & Mitchell, 2015; Xu & Thomas, 2011).

Despite these associations, there has been relatively little empirical research examining the relationships between AL and employee engagement with the mediating effect of occupational self-efficacy (OSE) in Bangladesh. This research gap has induced the researchers to undertake the current study. The study's main research objective concerns the discussion of AL and employees' job engagement (JE) as measured by university teachers and the mediation of occupational effecting.

For achieving the research objective, the current study sets the following objectives:

- (1) To identify the relationship between AL and JE perceived by the university teachers and
- (2) To investigate the relationship between AL and JE by mediating OSE.

2. Literature review

2.1 Authentic leadership

Luthans and Avolio (2003) defined AL as a "process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, fostering positive self-development." Genuine leaders who work for the common good may unite their subordinates (Khan, Ahmed, & Khan, 2021). The work of Luthans and Avolio (2003) leads toward the development of the AL construct, which has been so far tested in a variety of contexts and has also been criticized for different reasons, such as its redundancy with other leadership constructs like transformational leadership by Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber (2009), Banks, Rogelberg, Woznyj, Landis, and Rupp (2016), Chiaburu, Oh, Berry, Li, and Gardner (2011) and Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, and Peterson (2008), have provided a detailed definition of AL as the behavior of the leaders, which emanates from positive organizational behavior with major focus on ethical climate.

Authenticity originates from Greek philosophy, has an imperative place in theoretical writings and refers to "thine own self be true" (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005). The authors described that AL comprises four inter-related factors: self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing and internalized moral perspective (Bakari, Hunjra, & Niazi, 2017).

2.1.1 Self-awareness. Self-awareness is a person's ability to be aware of and accept his/her own "motives, feelings, desires and self-relevant cognitions." According to Walumbwa *et al.* (2008), authentic leaders are aware of their strengths and weaknesses. They know themselves accurately, their working context and how it adds meaning to their behavior. They also know about the perceptions of others about them and their level of awareness of self, morality and values (Avolio *et al.*, 2004). AL is "being yourself" and understanding your passions and motivations (George, 2003).

2.1.2 Relational transparency. Relational transparency refers to how transparently and truly the leaders communicate with others; it is the exposure of one's own real and genuine self in contrast to an inaccurate, biased and fake self (Gardner *et al.*, 2011). By demonstrating their true self, leaders can easily gain the trust of their followers and enhance their

commitment to the organization and leadership (Gardner *et al.*, 2011; Kernis, 2009). Relationally transparent leaders do not hide anything but rather say exactly what they mean to say; realize their mistakes if committed; invite others' comments and criticism on their own decisions, actions and personality; propagate truth and possess harmony in their emotions and feelings (Bakari *et al.*, 2017).

2.1.3 Balanced processing. Balanced processing, as the name suggests, is concerned with the leaders' behavior, characterized by their ability to process true and relevant information objectively before inferring any conclusion during decision-making (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008). This is related to transparent decision-making based on the objective analysis of data, incorporating views from all relevant quarters, inviting and welcoming opposite thoughts that may challenge their long-rooted beliefs, being impartial while processing information and avoiding exaggeration and distortion of facts (Gardner *et al.*, 2005; Kernis, 2009). Balanced processing results in the integrity of decision-making, followers' sense of supportiveness of their leaders and followers' psychological capital (IsIlies, Morgeson & Nahrgang, 2005).

2.1.4 Internalized moral perspective. To be aware of one's own personal and core values and the ability to foster these values in followers is called internalized moral perspective (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). It is a kind of self-regulation in which behavior is adjusted to carry out equitable and fair decision-making based on the high standard of ethical conduct. These decisions reflect values propagated by leaders' practices and proposed by leaders and the core values of organizations, groups and society (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Authentic leaders through an internalized moral perspective identify and analyze core ethical issues and feel responsible to deal with issues following a well-established ethical manner. It is the lens through which authentic leaders recognize ethical dilemmas, evaluate options, and take action authentically (Bakari *et al.*, 2017).

2.2 Employee job engagement

Employee engagement is described in HR literature as the enthusiasm employees feel regarding their work. Engagement is the degree to which employees are passionate about and devote themselves to their work. Engaged employees go the extra mile to contribute to the success of your organization. In addition, they are an organization's ambassadors. Furthermore, engagement is a good predictor of customer satisfaction, personnel retention, productivity and profitability. They feel that they can contribute to the organization's success and that all their abilities are being utilized. To provide insight into employee commitment and engagement within an organization, we categorize employees into four types: engaged and committed, engaged, committed and neither engaged nor committed. The four types differ in the following way:

- (1) Engaged and committed employees are engaged in their work and committed to the organization. Employees love their work and the company they work for.
- (2) Engaged employees are engaged in their work but not committed to the organization.
- (3) Committed employees are committed to the organization, but not engaged in their work.
- (4) Employees who are neither engaged nor committed are neither engaged in their work nor committed to the organization.

2.3 Occupational self-efficacy

SE is defined as the confidence an individual has in her or his ability to cope with difficult tasks or problems or, as Bandura (1977) formulated it, the belief in one's ability to successfully

fulfill a task. SE is a personality trait that promotes innovation. Individuals with higher SE are more inclined to take on more difficult tasks that require innovative thinking. SE influences how people feel, think and behave and what motivates them (Bandura, 1994). SE also relates to work performance (Ryerson, 2008). The concept of OSE addresses this point and deals with SE as a domain-specific assessment. It refers to the competence that a person feels concerning the ability to successfully fulfill the tasks involved in their job.

Empirical literature reveals that AL is related to different outcomes such as job satisfaction (Onorato & Zhu, 2015), structural empowerment (Laschinger, Borgogni, Consiglio, & Read, 2015), psychological empowerment (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Tsemac, 2014), personal identification and trust (Fox, Gong, & Atttoh, 2015; Wong, Laschinger & Cummings, 2010), organizational justice (García-Guiu, Molero, & Moriano, 2015), work engagement (Giallonardo, Wong & Iwasiw, 2010), work climate, psychological well-being, creativity and innovativeness (Müceldili, Turan, & Erdil, 2013). Despite the popularity of AL in positive organizational theory, very few studies have investigated the role of AL in the context of employee's JE; such a need has been felt by authors, and this study fills the gap.

2.4 Development of research hypothesis

2.4.1 Authentic leadership and job engagement. Authentic leaders not only empower their followers but also enhance their engagement in their work. JE is a work-related psychological state of mind, positive in nature and an indicator of employee well-being, which includes three dimensions: vigor, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002). Vigor is operationalized as the degree of effort and energy an employee is willing to put into his or her work (Ahmad & Gao, 2018). Dedication is operationalized as the importance an employee attaches to his or her work (Ahmad & Gao, 2018). Absorption is described and operationalized as being fully immersed in or concentrated on one's work, to such a degree that an individual may enter a state of "flow" (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Ahmad & Gao, 2018). Authentic leaders influence their followers' work attitudes (i.e. engagement) by utilizing identification and eliciting hope, trust and positive emotions. In other words, subordinates become more engaged in their work because they identify with the leader and the collective (i.e. team), they are more hopeful, they trust their leader and they experience more positive emotions (Avolio *et al.*, 2004). Empirical evidence supports the positive relationship between authentic leaders and job engagement (Hsieh & Wang, 2015; Scheepers & Elstob, 2016).

Jiatong, Wang, Alam, Murad, Gul, and Gill's (2022) findings showed that authentic leaders significantly influence employees' commitment and engagement to an organization, suggesting the higher the leaders' authenticity, the more the followers develop a positive attitude toward their work. Leaders who are seen as transparent, acting according to their values, develop trusting relationships with their employees, contributing to positive employee work outcomes such as work engagement (Jiatong *et al.*, 2022). Wirawan, Jufri, and Sama (2020) found that work engagement leads to increased job satisfaction and performance, promoting positive behaviors such as job involvement, motivation, effort and even a lower rate of absenteeism. Additionally, JE has showed to be related to positive outcomes, helping to reach organizational goals (Wirawan *et al.*, 2020). A more recent study from Wirawan *et al.* (2020) supported the premise that AL directly impacts job satisfaction, significantly affecting JE. These research studies are relevant as they support the suggestion of a possible impact of AL on employees' JE. Based on the discussion above, the following hypothesis was formulated:

H1. AL is positively related to JE.

2.4.2 Authentic leadership and occupational self-efficacy. The growing attention AL has been attracting is attributed to its capacity to tap employees' positive attitudes towards everyday assignments at the workplace (Neubert, Carlson, Kacmar, & Roberts, 2009). The extent of influence that leadership creates on the attitudes and behaviors of employees is not limited to the managerial aspect; nevertheless, it also has ethical implications (Li, Xu, Tu, & Lu, 2014). Dirks and Ferrin (2002) consider the stature of a leader as the bearing of a powerful position that can affect employees' work attitudes and behavior in mainly, but not limited to, two domains. First, the authentic attitude of a leader who is honest, credible and gives autonomy and opportunities to workers makes employees feel indebted to reciprocate the respect, care and support with positive attitudes related to the job. Second, fairness in job evaluations, performance and promotions creates optimism and commitment in employees (Kouzes & Posner, 2002), making them more efficient. In line with the above reasoning, for the current study, we predicted that AL and ethical conduct are positively related to the OSE of employees.

H2. AL is positively related to employees' OSE.

2.4.3 Occupational self-efficacy and job engagement. Authentic leaders promote a healthy work environment to encourage the concepts of self-awareness and self-development. When an employee perceives the authentic behavior of the leader, it positively influences their attitudes and results in high self-confidence, trust and increased work engagement.

H3. SE is positively related to employees' JE.

2.4.4 Self-efficacy as a mediator between authentic leadership and employee engagement. Team or group performance, self-/group efficacy and working commitment have been significantly affected by the AL in many organizations, and sometimes links between AL and collective eligibility, team activities, committed performance and engagement showed a significant mediated role in the different organizations (Emuwa & Fields, 2017). SE has an effect on both AL and JE; for this, SE has been used as a mediating variable in this study. Bandura (2001) argued that SE significantly influences employees' choices, efforts and consistency. Likewise, Stajkovic (2006) envisaged that high confidence in one's capabilities sets forth the feeling that one can achieve the goals, enabling oneself to perform the pertinent actions. Therefore, SE leads to changes in the personal initiatives of individuals. The spirit of SE among employees converts actions into positive initiatives without significant delay. Furthermore, challenging goals set by employees with SE give them the confidence to be successful workers (Bandura & Locke, 2003). Multiple studies have supported the influence created by SE on employees' behaviors (Bandura & Locke, 2003). However, Walumbwa, Christensen, and Hailey (2011) proposed that SE may mediate between AL–employee performance relationships. He grounded the social learning theory (SLT) of Bandura and Locke (2003) to argue the reasons for ethical leadership's effects on performance through SE. Therefore, as Walumbwa *et al.* (2011) proposed, the current study also predicts the mediation effect of OSE between AL and employee engagement relationship.

H4. SE mediates the relationship between AL and employee JE.

2.5 Conceptual framework

Bandura (2001) explained that human behavior and personality are influenced by three factors: behavior, cognition and environment. After describing the relationships between the four constructs that support this study, it is presumed that the perception of AL influences JE through OSE. Authentic leaders influence the engagement of employees in the job; hence, the relationship can be mediated by SE. Addressing the research hypotheses, the conceptual model of the research is presented in Figure 1.

3. Data analysis and methodology

3.1 Method

This research is descriptive; thus, a quantitative research method is used to find the impact of AL on employee work engagement and the mediating role of employee trust and OSE. In this research, the convenience sampling technique was used, a type of non-probability sampling method where the sample is taken from a group of people who are easily accessible. The sample for this research comprised 95 teachers working in different universities in Bangladesh. The data are collected through questionnaires with close-ended questions.

3.2 Procedure

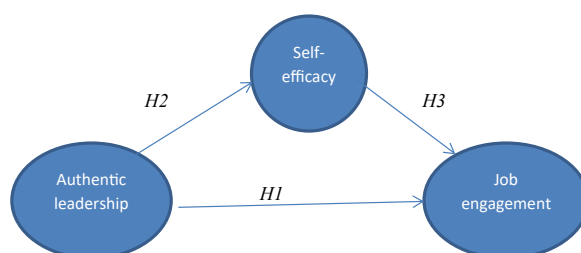
First of all, the authority of the organization was contacted for data collection. Printed questionnaires were handed out to the employees and their supervisors. The rating process for each questionnaire was explained. Employees were given a declaration about the confidentiality of their responses. In total, 100 questionnaires were disseminated in the organizations, of which 5 were discarded and 95 were used for analysis.

3.3 Survey instruments

A self-rated printed questionnaire was used to measure the teachers' AL, SE and JE. All the survey measures used in this study were measured on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). This study adopts the following measures to collect data from the participants.

3.3.1 Authentic leadership. To measure AL, the authentic leadership questionnaire (ALQ) developed by Walumbwa *et al.* (2011) was used for this study's survey. The ALQ questionnaire was measured through the 16 items that cover the four components of AL: self-awareness (e.g. "My leader knows when it is time to re-evaluate his or her position on important issues"; $\alpha = 0.88$), relational transparency (e.g. "My leader says exactly what he or she means"; $\alpha = 0.91$), internalized moral perspective (e.g. "My leader makes difficult decisions based on high standards of ethical conduct"; $\alpha = 0.89$) and balanced processing (e.g. "My leader listens carefully to different points of view before coming to conclusions"; $\alpha = 0.89$). The participants were asked to rate the responses on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from 5 (strongly agree) to 1 (strongly disagree). The ALQ was chosen due to its wide use in several research studies and its high reliability. In the present sample, a composite indicator was computed for each participant ($\alpha = 0.92$).

3.3.2 Job engagement. JE was measured through the Portuguese adaptation of the nine-item scale (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). After the Utrecht work engagement scale (UWES) (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002), the second measure of engagement is the 18-item job engagement scale (JES), developed by Rich, Lepine, and Crawford (2017). This scale is based on the landmark work of Kahn (2017), who defined engagement as harnessing employees' selves to their work



Source(s): Created by authors

Figure 1.
Conceptual model

roles by investing their physical, emotional and cognitive energies simultaneously and holistically. The set of items revealed very good reliability in the present sample ($\alpha = 0.96$), and therefore, a composite indicator was computed for each participant.

3.3.3 Occupational self-efficacy. The long version of the OSE scale developed by Schyns and Collani (2002) consisted of 20 items taken from four different scales: the general SE scale developed by Sherer *et al.* (1982), the generalized SE scale developed by Schwarzer (1994) and the hope scale developed by Snyder *et al.* (1991). The items were then adapted and reformulated for the work context. Employee OSE was measured using a short version of the scale (Rigotti, Mohr, & Gisela, 2008). In this research, we selected three items from this scale to explore the mediating role of OSE.

3.4 Data analysis

Gender, age and tenure are the control variables in this research and may impact employee work engagement (Walumbwa, Wang, Wang, Schaubroeck, & Avolio, 2010). As mentioned in Section 3.1, 95 teachers participated in this survey, of which male employees were 61 (64.5%) and female employees were 34 (35.5%). Most of the respondents belonged to the age groups of 25–35 years (47%), 36–45 years (29%) and 46–55 years (24%). In total, 30% have 1–3 years of experience, 28.5% have 3–6 years of experience, 22% have less than a year of experience, 10.5% have 6–9 years of experience and 9% have more than 10 years of experience.

3.5 Structural equation modeling

We have applied the structural equation model (SEM) to test the study hypotheses using Smart PLS software. Moreover, the indirect and direct effects of all the constructs were evaluated. The SEM is the foremost procedure used below with different regression models and methods (Baron & Kenny, 1986). It includes factor analysis and multivariate analysis. Moreover, the regression equation targets explaining each construct to assess the cause-and-effect relationship, while all the factors in the causal model could demonstrate their cause and effect at the exact time. To check all direct and indirect effects, a technique has been implemented, which is known as bootstrapping (Shrout & Bolger, 2002).

3.6 Measurement of the outer model

The goal of the measure of fit in the measurement model is to study the reliability and validity of the instrument for which convergent validity and discriminant validity were performed to that end:

3.6.1 Composite reliability. Reliability implies the stability of questionnaire outcomes. For a similar target population, at whatever point the questioner reutilizes the questionnaire, it will give a similar outcome. It demonstrates that the inside consistency and repeatability of the survey are high. This also incorporates the dependability and legitimacy of the exploration. The reliability of the measurement instruments was evaluated using composite reliability. All the values were above the normally used threshold value, i.e. 70. This is the accepted reliability value range. Table 1 shows the results of composite reliability.

Table 1.
The results of
composite reliability

Variables	Composite reliability
Authentic leadership	0.94
Job engagement	0.93
Occupational self-efficacy	0.87
Source(s): Created by authors	

3.6.2 Convergent validity. Convergent validity is the level of agreement between at least two measures of a similar construct. Convergent validity was assessed by inspection of variance mined for each factor (Fornell & Larcker, 1981). According to Fornell and Larcker (1981), if the variance extracted value is greater than 0.5, convergent validity is established, and the result is drawn that the loadings are good. The results of convergent validity are represented in Table 2 below.

3.6.3 Cronbach's alpha. To measure the reliability and consistency of the instrument, Cronbach's alpha was used in this study. The instrument is reliable, valid and consistent if the value of Cronbach's alpha is greater than 0.7 and the ideal value of Cronbach's alpha lies within the range of 0.7–1. As presented in Table 3 below, AL is an independent variable

	Carbrach's alpha	Rho_A	Composite reliability	AVE
AL	0.925	0.928	0.935	0.507
JE	0.920	0.922	0.931	0.511
OSE	0.826	0.838	0.878	0.591

Source(s): Created by authors

Table 2.
The results of
convergent validity

Constructs	Item loading
AL1	0.67
AL2	0.75
AL3	0.75
AL4	0.62
AL5	0.71
AL6	0.62
AL7	0.71
AL8	0.72
AL9	0.71
AL11	0.76
AL12	0.70
AL13	0.73
AL14	0.72
AL16	0.66
JE1	0.80
JE3	0.63
JE4	0.68
JE6	0.68
JE7	0.75
JE8	0.73
JE10	0.67
JE11	0.71
JE13	0.68
JE14	0.72
JE16	0.75
JE17	0.69
JE18	0.75
SE1	0.78
SE3	0.72
SE4	0.84
SE5	0.73
SE6	0.74

Source(s): Created by authors

Table 3.
Confirmatory factor
analysis (CFA) with the
loadings

consisting of 18 items, and the Cronbach’s alpha value is 0.92, indicating the reliability and internal consistency of items. The value of Cronbach’s alpha for the OSE, consisting of six items, is 0.86. The Cronbach’s alpha value for both mediating variables is greater than 0.7, reflecting reliability and consistency. Employee work engagement is a dependent variable with 11 items and a Cronbach’s alpha value of 0.92, which also reflects reliability.

3.6.4 *Average variance extracted (AVE).* As demonstrated in Table 2, the average variance for variables is 0.50, 0.51 and 0.59. As the value is greater than 0.5, it indicates the loading under these variables is good enough to support convergent validity.

3.6.5 *Factor loadings significant.* Table 3 shows the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with the loadings. Constructs with the loading of 0.5 are considered strong loading variables, whereas the constructs with the loading below 0.5 are considered less, which should be removed from the table. The loading values of all the constructs related to AL, OSE and employee work engagement are more than seven except very few constructs (AL1, AL4, AL6, AL16, JE3, JE4, JE6 and JE10), which are also above 0.5; thus, it supports strong loading values. Moreover, the *t*-values of all the constructs are more than 1.96, and *p*-values are less than 0.05 (more than 99% confidence).

3.6.6 *Discriminant validity.* Discriminant validity can be defined as any single construct that it differs from other constructs in the model. Discriminant validity results are satisfactory when the constructs have an AVE loading greater than 0.5, meaning that the construct took a minimum of 50% of the variance (Chin, 1998). All the values in Table 4 are more than 0.5, indicating that these elements have significant relationships in real which is satisfactory.

Discriminant validity of the measures was evaluated by examining the Fornell and Larcker criteria (Fornell & Larcker, 1981; Chin, 1998). For satisfactory discriminant validity, the square root of the AVE should be above the values of both horizontal and vertical correlations between constructs, and the loading value of an indicator on its construct should be higher than all of its cross loadings (Chin, 1998).

3.6.7 *Model fit measures.* The fitness of the model in the partial least squares-structural equation model (PLS-SEM) is defined by various measures such as standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), and the exact model fits like d_ ULS and d_ G, normed fit index (NFI) and χ^2 (Chi-square). The model fit measures consisting of the measured values of both saturated model and the estimated model are reported in Table 5. The saturated model assesses the correlation between all constructs. On the other hand, the estimated model considers model structure and is based on a total effect scheme.

Table 4.
Discriminant validity
result

	1	2	3
AL	0.712		
JE	0.940	0.715	
SE	0.832	0.859	0.769
Source(s): Created by authors			

Table 5.
Model fit measures

	Saturated model	Estimated model
SRMR	0.113	0.113
d_ ULS	6.798	6.798
d_ G	n/a	n/a
.....		0.224
Source(s): Created by authors		

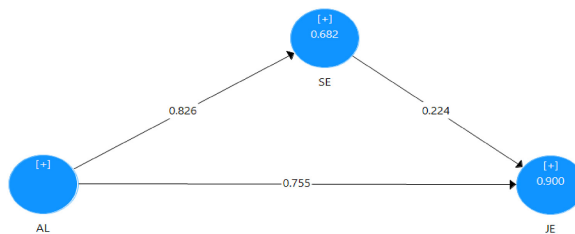
3.6.8 Hypothesis testing PLS algorithm. As illustrated in Figure 2, the path model built following the research questions indicates that all the paths in this model are significant. The path coefficients of AL to employees' JE, AL to OSE and OSE to employees' JE are 0.755, 0.826 and 0.224, respectively, indicating a significant relationship owing to the t -values greater than 1.96. The p -values are 0.000, which is less than 0.05, and based on the p -value, the alternative hypothesis has been supported.

The path coefficients of AL to work engagement is 0.755, which depicts a meaningful relationship and explains that variation caused in the dependent variable, i.e. 75.0% in employee work engagement is significant owing to the t -values greater than 1.96. The p -values are 0.000, less than 0.05, and based on the p -value, the alternative hypothesis has been supported. It is accepted that AL has a positive influence on JE.

The path coefficient of employee OSE to work engagement is 0.224, indicating a meaningful relationship and explaining that the variation caused in the dependent variable (i.e. 22.0% in employee work engagement) is significant owing to the t -values greater than 1.96. The p -values are 0.002, less than 0.05; based on the p -value, the alternative hypothesis has been supported. It is accepted that employee OSE has a positive influence on employee work engagement.

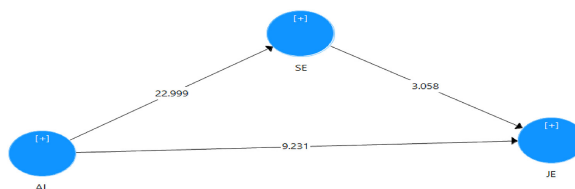
3.6.9 PLS bootstrapping. In PLS-SEM, bootstrapping is one of the key strides that give the constancy data of the factor guesstimate. Sub-tests are drawn everywhere from the first example including substitution (Hair, Matthews, Matthews, & Sarstedt, 2017). Bootstrapping provides information on the stability of the coefficient estimate. Many sub-samples are drawn from the original sample with replacements (Hair, Sarstedt, Matthews, & Ringle, 2016). Figure 3 represents the PLS-SEM bootstrapping.

After running the bootstrap routine, Smart PLS shows the t -values for structural model estimates derived from the bootstrapping procedure. The results of the path coefficients for all the hypotheses are shown in Table 6. The t -value greater than 1.96 ($p < 0.005$) shows that the affiliation is significant at 95% confidence level ($\alpha = 0.05$). Paths show whether the relationship between variables and latent measures is significant or not. To study the



Source(s): Created by authors

Figure 2.
The path model



Source(s): Created by authors

Figure 3.
PLS-SEM
bootstrapping

relationship among these variables, the bootstrapping method in Smart PLS was used, and the results will determine whether to accept/reject the proposed hypothesis.

3.6.10 Mediating role of occupational self-efficacy and job engagement:. The indirect effects of the bootstrapping test assess the mediating role of OSE in AL and work engagement. As shown in [Tables 7 and 8](#), the *t*-values indicate a significant relationship among the variables as the *t*-values is 3.2, which is greater than 1.96. The *p*-value is 0.001, which is less than 0.05; based on the *p*-value, the alternative hypothesis has been supported. Thus, it is proved that OSE mediates the relationship between AL and JE.

4. Discussion

The findings of this study support the previous studies by [Hassan and Ahmed \(2011\)](#), indicating that the authentic behavior of leaders promotes a healthy work environment that fosters the trust level of employees. AL increases followers' hope, trust and positive emotions, resulting in improved work engagement ([Winton, Whittington, & Meskelis, 2022](#)). Furthermore, the results are supported by [Hsieh and Wang's \(2015\)](#) research that the relational transparency behavior exhibited by authentic leaders influences employees' SE.

This study highlights OSE as a mediator between AL and employee work engagement strengthens the relationship when the efficacy level is maintained. Past studies focused only on one variable – employee trust – that positively relates to AL and affects employees' work engagement ([Hassan & Ahmed, 2011](#); [Hsieh & Wang, 2015](#)). We strived to fill the research gap by examining the other factors that influence work engagement and examined the role of OSE in promoting the work engagement of employees and its relationship with AL. This study found a positive relationship among these variables and reports that when a leader

Table 6.
Path coefficient for all
the hypothesis

Hypothesis	Path coefficient	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Conclusion
AL-JE	0.75	9.23	0.000	Supported
AL-SE	0.82	22.99	0.000	Supported
SE-JE	0.22	3.05	0.002	Supported

Source(s): Created by authors

Table 7.
Mediating effect of SE

Hypothesis	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	Conclusion
AL-SE-JE	3.2	0.001	Supported

Source(s): Created by authors

Table 8.
Direct and indirect
effect

	Beta	SM	SD	<i>T</i> -value	<i>P</i> -value
<i>Direct effect</i>					
AL > JE	0.735	0.752	0.080	9.231	0.000
AL > SE	0.832	0.836	0.036	22.999	0.000
SE > JE	0.247	0.230	0.081	3.058	0.002
<i>Indirect effect</i>					
AL > SE > JE	0.205	0.191	0.064	3.203	0.001

Source(s): Created by authors

exhibits a behavior of self-awareness, it positively impacts employees. The leader's confidence in their employees that they will perform efficiently boosts their SE level.

Our research findings are supported by previous studies (Zhu and Avolio, 2006). This study also reveals the mediating effect of OSE between AL and employee engagement. Furthermore, the present study found a positive mediating influence of OSE on the relationship between AL and employee work engagement.

Finally, the study hypothesized the direct influence of AL and employee JE and found a significant relationship among these variables. The results are supported by previous studies by Walumbwa *et al.* (2010), which stated that the genuine, honest and authentic behavior of leaders inspires their employees. Authentic leaders communicate what is expected, share relevant information and ideas and maintain transparency in an organization by making fair decisions that result in increased work engagement.

This study is based on the perspective of social exchange theory of Balu (1964) and argues that AL's positive effect is based on employees' perceptions. The results are supported by the research conducted by Noraida and Abidin (2017) and Hsieh and Wang (2015).

5. Conclusion

This study investigated the effect of AL on OSE and work engagement. To confirm the reliability and consistency of measuring instruments, Cronbach's alpha was used. The correlation among the variables was measured by Spearman rank correlation, and the consistency of scale items was measured by composite reliability. A bootstrapping test was used to study the relationship, and the path coefficient of the path model determined the association among the variables. The results indicated a positive association among these variables and found a positive mediating effect of OSE between AL and employee JE. It found a strong and positive relationship among the variables. The impact of AL in developing OSE was significant. There is a direct and positive relationship between AL and JE.

5.1 Managerial implications:

Despite the recent attention from government universities to develop the performance of public sector teaching staff, scientific public management research is unfortunately restricted (Osborne, 2016). Moreover, the findings of this study depict the importance to understand the constructions like leaders' authenticity that lead to the promotion of confidence in their employees and as such an increase in their JE and performance. In managerial implication, this study has provided useful information to the management of the private and public sector. With this information, the management will be able to know how to increase the engagement and commitment of employees. This research will help academic professionals in public and private sector universities to know how AL style influences positively employees' engagement.

5.2 Theoretical implications:

Based on the results, the current study provides several theoretical implications. This study contributes to general organizational behavior studies by uncovering the relationship between AL and JE. This study examined the direct effects of AL and JE as well as the mediating effects of SE. Finally, it should be stated that the evidence presented in the research model obtained from the theoretical model helps us to infer that the perception of the AL components (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008) produces a positive and significant direct effect on the factors that describe work engagement vigor, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2002) and on the dimensions of motivation for work, protection and security needs, social and belonging needs, SE needs and self-actualization needs (Franco, Bennett, & Kanfer, 2002).

6. Limitations and future directions

One of the main limitations of this study was the shortage of time constraints, due to which a quantitative method was adopted to gather the data. The sample size comprises 95 respondents and does not represent the entire population of Bangladesh. To analyze the data, we have used the convenience sampling technique, which does not cover every sector of Bangladesh. Moreover, respondents were reluctant to provide accurate data. This study is based on the perspective of university teachers only and does not explore AL from supervisors' perspectives. As there are very few studies found with the mediating effect of OSE in the relationship between AL and JE, the findings of this study will help the organizational leaders and employees.

Further research is required to explore this relationship from the perspective of both supervisor and employee. The sample size should be increased to cover the other regions of Bangladesh to represent the population. Future research may also include cultural variables to examine the relationship between AL and work engagement because an organization's culture determines a leader's leadership style.

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