

Authentic Leadership, Employee Wellbeing and Employee Creativity: The Mediating Role of Knowledge Sharing

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Abstract

The role of authentic leadership has been stressed in the management literature. We have examined how an authentic leader can influence employee well-being, creativity and knowledge sharing in the context of Pakistan. The results derived from a sample of 200 project managers suggest that authentic leadership plays a significant role in creating a culture of knowledge sharing and creativity. Moreover, leaders are also concerned about the well-being of employees. In addition, authentic leaders through knowledge sharing influence employee creativity. The study recommends that managers should adopt an authentic leadership style as it creates a culture of knowledge sharing and give autonomy to workers. Moreover, authentic leaders are open to new ideas and welcome personal and organizational criticism. This helps employees to relieve their job-related stress which positively influences employee attitude and gives the firm a competitive edge.

Keywords: *Authentic leadership, knowledge sharing, employee well-being, employee creativity.*

Introduction

Authentic leadership has significantly helped in enhancing organizational performance (Ilies et al., 2005). The authentic leadership concept is a combination of leadership, ethics

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and positive organizational behavior (Gardner et al., 2005). Employee creativity is also vital for employee commitment and enhancing job-related outcomes (De-Stobbeleir, Ashford, & Buyens, 2011). Authentic leaders have “self-awareness, ethical perception, stable processing of information and interpersonal transparency” (Walumba, Wu, & Orwa, 2008). They also encourage self-development of followers (Walumba, Wu, & Orwa, 2008). Social interaction both within and outside organizations help in generating a pool of ideas that an organization can use for solving organizational related problems and developing innovative products (Hislop, 2013). Authentic leaders create an environment where individuals can exchange their ideas with others and are permitted to criticize the organizational environment. This environment promotes creativity and an awareness of the importance of knowledge sharing. Moreover, leaders are considered role models and mentors of employees (Von-Krogh, 2012). Therefore, it is expected that authentic leaders will participate in employees’ progress and development. Furthermore, leaders are concerned about employees’ wellbeing with a strong inclination to sacrifice their personal goals over organizational goals (Kernis, 2003; Gardner & Schermerhorn, 2004). This attitude of the leader has several implications. For example, it will enhance employees’ attitude towards work. Subordinates will be more receptive to the suggestions of leaders and may reciprocate positively (Hislop, 2013). In view of the aforementioned discussion, we have developed a conceptual framework that examines how authentic leadership influences employee wellbeing, knowledge sharing, and employee’s creativity. The study also examines the mediating effect of knowledge sharing.

Literature Review

Authentic leaders make fundamental changes in an organization by creating an environment where employees’ participation in the knowledge management process increases (Ilies et al., 2005). A well-structured knowledge management system is beneficial for organizations, employees and leaders. A conducive knowledge management structure positively influences an employee’s well-being (Gardner & Schermerhorn, 2004).

A leader commands respect from employees by being fair to them and encourages them to share knowledge with each other (Davenport, De-Long, & Beers, 1998). An authentic leader does not maintain the status quo and criticizes the prevailing organizational policies in order to bring positive change (Teece, 1998). Thus, an authentic leader allows employees to take initiatives and participate in the management process by completely transforming the organization to become more efficient and competitive (Earl, 2001). Gold, Malhotra, and Segars (2001) stress that employees’ participation and knowledge sharing depends on how satisfied they are and the extent to which the organization trusts them (Marwick, 2001). However, employees’ satisfaction depends on factors such as personal achievement and admiration for the organization (Teece, 1998). Therefore, leaders in an organization will be

effective if they have the capacity to understand people, organizational process and systems (Darroch, 2005). Thus, it can be inferred that employees' satisfaction level and confidence are important facets of the knowledge management cycle (Alavi & Leidner, 2001).

Authentic leaders make the knowledge management cycle stronger and develop social capital in which all the employees are fully aware of their roles in the organization (Atwater & Carmeli, 2009). Social interactions within and outside the organization generate a bulk of information which may not be implemented. Therefore, it is the job of a leader to use the collected ideas and implement only those which are practical and relevant to the prevailing situation.

Authentic Leadership and Employee Creativity

Creativity promotes novelty and usefulness due to which employees become more effective and efficient. Thus, the aim of creativity is not restricted to producing a number of ideas but to convert them into marketable products and assist employees to solve the job-related problems in an effective manner (Morrison & Phelps, 1999). Authentic leadership is an important facet of leadership and it is being used by researchers for several decades (Avolio et al., 2004). Muceldili, Turan, and Erbil (2013) argue that authentic leaders should help employees to enhance the job involvement that enables them to deal with novel ideas and other job complexities which enhances organizational performance (Gardner et al., 2005). Gold, Malhotra, and Segars (2001) argue that employees expect that an authentic leader provides moral support, is impartial, shares his ideas and participates actively in the development of employees.

Leaders in an organization enhance employees' optimism and confidence so that they actively participate in the knowledge management system by sharing their ideas. In this process, they learn to be innovative and creative (Rego, Sousa, Marques, & Cunha, 2012). Moreover, leaders should act as a true "architect of knowledge" (Crawford, 2005). Leaders should be a mentor and facilitator in the dynamic process of sharing knowledge and stimulating employee creativity (Senge, 1997). An authentic leader's creativity motivates employees to think beyond the conventional job practices. Moreover, due to creative and innovative environment organizations develop a competitive edge (Rego, Sousa, Marques, & Cunha, 2012).

It has also been documented that creativity stimulated by leaders in an organization enhances organizational performance, employees' motivation and employees' attitude towards work (VanMeter, Chonko, Grisaffe & Goad, 2016). Leaders give proper feedback to employees and empower them to think independently which enhances their creativity. Many studies have endorsed that leaders enhance "employees' mental security and stimulate

built-in motivation which makes them extra original” (Muceldili, Turan, & Erbil, 2013). Many employees due to their rigid attitude do not adopt creative ideas but authentic leaders use social interaction to inspire and motivate such employees (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Valentine, Godkin, Fleischman, and Kidwell (2011) suggest that authentic leaders are more effective, have a transparent association with subordinates and give autonomy to workers (Gagné & Deci, 2005).

H1: Authentic leadership and employee creativity are positively associated.

Authentic Leadership and Knowledge Sharing

Kernis (2003) suggests that authentic leaders should provide a positive working environment for enhancing employee creativity. Moreover, authentic leaders are fair with all employees and their suggestions are unbiased which contribute towards the knowledge sharing culture (Peterson & Peterson, 2012). Similarly, many studies document that the relationship between leaders and employees promote a culture of knowledge sharing (Valentine et al., 2011).

Knowledge management enhances organizational performance. Leaders in an organization are expected to implement the knowledge management process which is inclusive of knowledge sharing internalization and applying knowledge (Alavi & Leidner, 2001). Bartlett and Ghoshal (2002) argue that leaders can promote a knowledge sharing culture by delegating responsibilities and promoting skills (Singh, 2008). Thus, a knowledge-sharing culture stimulates a dynamic environment of learning and sharing organizational knowledge. Moreover, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) also stress that leadership is a process where authentic leaders inspire, motivate, approve new ideas and appreciate individuals' diversified opinions. Authentic leaders through professional interaction and sharing the goals of knowledge management with employees can transform the corporate culture of an organization (Singh, 2008). Crawford (2005) stresses that a leader can act as a teacher, mentor, and facilitator. An effective leader overcomes challenges through optimizing the interaction process and promoting an environment that encourages employees' self-development and self-confidence (Crawford 2005).

H2: Authentic leadership and knowledge sharing are positively associated.

Authentic Leadership and Employee Well-Being

Authentic leadership has been defined as “a pattern of behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and positive ethical climate to foster greater self-awareness, balanced processing of information and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development” (Tiwana,

2000).

Authentic leaders by virtue of the position they hold in an organization have a direct association with employees' (Marwick, 2001). Darroch (2005) and Teece (1998) argue that authentic leaders are honest and treat employees fairly which positively influences employees' well-being. Many researchers have concluded that the behavior of an authentic leader positively affects both hedonic (subjective influence) and eudaimonic (psychological) wellbeing of employees (Earl, 2001; Tiwana, 2000). Authentic leaders are honest and understand what is best for employees. Moreover, authentic leaders serve as role models for employees and make positive contributions in reducing job anxiety (Earl, 2001). These aspects positively influence the hedonic well-being of employees (Gold, Malhotra, & Segars, 2001). Davenport, De-Long, and Beers (1998) stress that authentic leaders promote a stress-free environment in an organization which makes employees feel comfortable. The sense of accomplishment has a positive effect on employees' hedonic well-being. Moreover, authentic leaders sacrifice their personal goals to achieve organizational goals. This sacrifice element inspires and motivates employees to reciprocate positively (Gold, Malhotra, & Segars, 2001). The self-determination theory postulates that authentic leaders promote a culture that helps employees to relieve depressive symptoms and emotional stress.

H3: Authentic leadership and employee well-being are positively associated.

Authentic Leadership, Knowledge Sharing, and Employee Creativity

An important antecedent to organizational development is knowledge sharing. Thus, it is vital for leaders to promote an environment that enables employees to cooperate and exchange knowledge with each other without any fear. These aspects create an environment of learning and sharing within an organization (Bartlett & Ghoshal, 2002). Singh (2008) argues that leaders must inspire and motivate employees to enhance their social and professional interaction within the organization. The knowledge-sharing culture of an organization makes it more efficient and effective than competitors.

Similarly, Crawford (2005) stresses that leaders should act as a true "architect of knowledge", participate in the development of employees, provide both tangible and intangible support, delegate autonomy and celebrate their success. Thus, an authentic leader encourages employees to question and criticize the operational aspects of the organization. This promotes a knowledge management culture where both leaders and subordinates benefit (Gardner et al., 2005). However, it has been found that antecedents such as trust, loyalty and employee job satisfaction are important aspects for developing a sustainable knowledge management system. It has also been reported that knowledge sharing enhances employees' self-awareness and self-development (Avolio et al., 2004).

The component model of knowledge assumes that sharing knowledge is a significant predictor of creativity (Amabile, 1988). Thus, employees' social interaction generates knowledge that helps tackle organizational problems and converts ideas into innovative practices (Rego, Sousa, Marques, & Cunha, 2012). Moreover, a highly interactive environment in a firm enhances employees' learning-process and creative skills (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Similarly, many researchers believe that employees may generate novel and creative ideas if they have access to diverse information and opportunities to interact with experts (Gagné & Deci, 2005; Morrison & Phelps, 1999).

H4: Knowledge sharing mediates the association between authentic leadership and employee creativity.

Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of the study is presented in Figure 1.

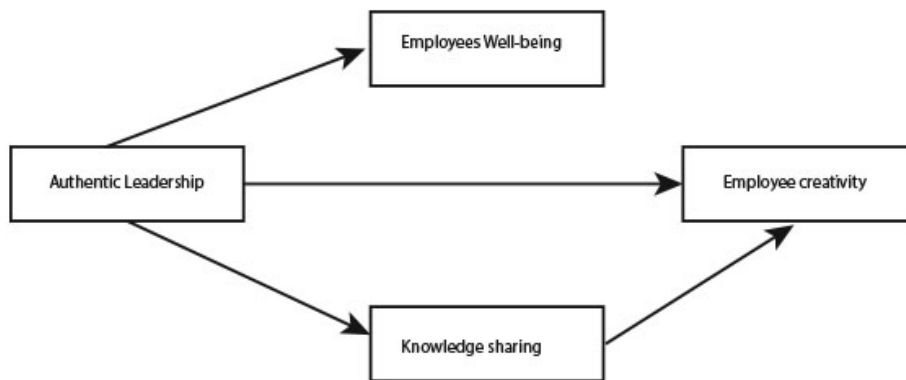


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework

Methodology

The study used data collected from employees working in various organizations through questionnaires. The questionnaire was distributed both in hard copy and electronic form. The snowball sampling method was used. The research population includes project managers and relevant staff who possess managerial responsibility in a certain project. A sample of 200 project managers was identified from the population to acquire the data. The authentic leadership variable was adopted from Gardner et al. (2005). Knowledge sharing was measured using the questionnaire developed by Wasko and Faraj (2005), employee well-being was measured by the questionnaire developed by VanMeter, Chonko, Grisaffe, & Goad (2016) and Morrison & Phelps (1999) while employee creativity was measured by the questionnaire developed by Mittal and Dhar (2015). The items in the questionnaire follow

the five-point Likert scale which ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The analysis was carried out using IBM-SPSS version 20 and the results were used to test the hypothesis developed by the researcher.

Data Analysis

Reliability Analysis

Table 1 presents the Cronbach's alpha values of the variables. The Cronbach's alpha was used to ascertain the reliability of the constructs.

Table 1: Reliability Analysis

Variables	Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Authentic Leadership	9	0.730
Knowledge Sharing	4	0.784
Employee Creativity	10	0.879
Employees Well-being	10	0.896

Table 1 suggests that the values of Cronbach's alpha for authentic leadership is 0.730, knowledge sharing is 0.784, employee creativity is 0.879 and employee well-being is 0.896. All the Cronbach's alpha values are greater than 0.70 therefore we may assume that the variables are reliable and internally consistent.

Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics of the research variables.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistics

Variables	Mean	Std.Dev.	Skewness	Kurtosis
Authentic Leadership	3.40	0.719	0.607	3.964
Knowledge Sharing	3.87	0.798	1.391	2.223
Employee Creativity	4.00	0.750	0.960	0.987
Employees Well-being	3.86	0.867	0.930	0.446

Table 2 shows the descriptive statistics of the four variables. The mean values of the variables range from 2.06 to 2.23. Moreover, the standard deviation ranges from 0.719 to 0.867. The skewness and kurtosis values suggest that the variables are approximately symmetrical and normally distributed.

Correlations Analysis

Table 3 presents the results of the correlations analysis.

Table 3: Correlations Analysis

Variables	AL	KS	EW	EC
Authentic Leadership		1		
Knowledge Sharing	0.667**	1		
Employee Well-being	0.662**	0.736**	1	
Employee Creativity	0.559**	0.612**	0.841**	1

** indicates statistical significance at the 5% level.

Table 3 presents the association between the research variables. The correlation between authentic leadership and knowledge sharing is 0.667 which implies that there is a positive and significant association. The correlation between authentic leadership and employee well-being is 0.662 which indicates a positive and significant association. Similarly, the correlation between authentic leadership and knowledge sharing is 0.559 which suggests that there is a positive and significant association. Moreover, the positive and significant correlations between all the variable combinations imply that the variables are associated with one another.

Regression Results

Table 4 presents the regression results for empirically validating the hypothesized relationships.

Table 4: Regression Results (Direct Effects)

Hypothesis	IV	DV	R ²	F	B	T	P(sig)	Status
H1	AL	EC	0.044	10.58	0.101	3.253	0.001	Accepted
H2	AL	KS	0.205	58.627	0.571	7.657	0.000	Accepted
H3	AL	WB	0.101	25.571	0.271	5.057	0.000	Accepted

***P≤0.001, **P≤0.01, *P≤0.05, μP≤0.10

Authentic Leadership and Employee Creativity

Table 4 shows that the value of R² is 0.044. R² is the coefficient of determination which indicates the goodness of fit of the regression model. The value of R² suggests that 4.4% of the variation in employee creativity is explained by authentic leadership. The F-statistic is 10.584 which indicates that the overall model is statistically significant. The value of the

Beta coefficient is 0.101 which indicates that a 1 unit change in authentic leadership causes a 0.101 unit change in employee creativity. Moreover, the t-statistic suggests that authentic leadership has a significant influence on employee creativity. Therefore, the first hypothesis (H1) is accepted.

Authentic Leadership and Knowledge Sharing

Table 4 shows that the value of R^2 is 0.205. R^2 is the coefficient of determination which indicates the goodness of fit of the regression model. The value of R^2 suggests that 20.5% of the variation in knowledge sharing is explained by authentic leadership. The F-statistic is 58.62 which indicates that the overall model is statistically significant. The value of the Beta coefficient is 0.571 which indicates that a 1 unit change in authentic leadership causes a 0.571 unit change in knowledge sharing. Moreover, the t-statistic is significant. Therefore, the second hypothesis (H2) is accepted.

Authentic Leadership and Human Well-being

Table 4 shows that the value of R^2 is 0.101. R^2 is the coefficient of determination which indicates the goodness of fit of the regression model. The value of R^2 suggests that 10.1% of the variation in human well being is explained by authentic leadership. The F-statistic is 25.571 which indicates that the overall model is statistically significant. The value of the Beta coefficient is 0.271 which indicates that a 1 unit change in authentic leadership causes a 0.271 unit change in human wellbeing. Moreover, the t-statistic is significant. Therefore, the third hypothesis (H3) is accepted.

Authentic leadership, Knowledge Sharing and Employee Creativity

Table 5 presents the results of the mediation analysis using the Hayes (2013) approach. First, the total effect of IV on the DV is analyzed. Second, the direct effect of IV on DV was assessed. Third, the indirect effect of IV on DV was examined.

Table 5: Mediation Analysis (Indirect Effects)

	EFFECT	SE	T	P (Sig)	LLCI	ULCI
Total effect	0.423	0.061	6.58	0.000	0.296	0.5498
Direct Effect	0.1922	0.091	1.993	0.048	0.0014	0.3831
	EFFECT	SE			LLCI	ULCI
Indirect Effect	0.231	0.0837			0.0837	0.4207
	EFFECT	SE			LLCI	ULCI
	0.231	0.837			0.837	
	EFFECT	SE	Z	P(Sig)		
Sobel Test	0.231	0.0746	3.090	0.002		

The results suggest that the total effect of IV on DV is significant ($\beta = 0.42$, $P < 0.01$). Similarly, the direct effect of IV on DV is also significant ($\beta = 0.192$, $P < 0.05$). Moreover, the indirect effect of IV on DV is significant ($\beta = 0.231$, $p < 0.01$). The results of the Sobel test supports the indirect effect ($\beta = 0.231$, $Z = 3.09$, $P < 0.01$). The results indicate support for the hypothesis, i.e. knowledge sharing mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and employee creativity.

Discussion

The results suggest a significant association between authentic leadership and employee creativity. The finding is consistent with the previous literature (Amabile, 1988; Atwater & Carmeli, 2009). The results imply that organizations with a high quality of authentic leadership would stimulate employee creativity. Leaders that involve subordinates in decision-making enhance employee motivation and creativity. Authentic leadership also encourages critical thinking of employees and emotional intelligence (Zhou & George, 2001). Authentic leadership is also crucial for employee creativity and it also enables employees to perform more efficiently in the organization. Leadership gives proper feedback to the employees and empowers them to think independently due to which their inclination towards creativity and innovation increases significantly. Many studies have endorsed that leaders enhance employees' emotional intelligence due to which they are able to cope with the stress effectively (Muceldili, Turan, & Erbil, 2013; Deci, Koestner & Ryan, 1999; Hooff, & Weenen, 2004).

The results also suggest that authentic leadership and knowledge sharing are significantly associated. The finding is consistent with the previous literature (White & Korrapati, 2007). Authentic leaders stimulate employees' positive emotions by assuming the role of mentor (Peterson & Peterson, 2012). It is found that authentic leaders are important for knowledge sharing and enable employees to perform more creatively. Thus, authentic leaders encourage their employees to question and criticize the operational aspects of the organization. This promotes a culture in which both the leaders and subordinates benefit (Gardner et al., 2005). However, it has been found that antecedents such as trust, loyalty and job satisfaction are important aspects for developing a knowledge management system.

The results also indicate that authentic leadership and human wellbeing are positively associated which is consistent with the previous literature (Walumba, Wu, & Orwa, 2008). Authentic leaders are honest and understand what is best for employees. Moreover, authentic leaders serve as role models for employees and make positive contributions in reducing job anxiety (Earl, 2001). These aspects positively influence the hedonic wellbeing of employees (Gold, Malhotra, & Segars, 2001). Davenport, De-Long, and Beers (1998) stress that authentic leaders promote a stress-free environment in an organization which

makes employees feel comfortable. The sense of accomplishment has a positive effect on employees' hedonic well-being. Moreover, authentic leaders sacrifice their personal goals to achieve organizational goals. This sacrifice element inspires and motivates employees to reciprocate positively (Gold, Malhotra, & Segars, 2001; Rotter, 1966).

The results indicate that knowledge sharing mediates the authentic leadership and employee creativity relationship. Therefore, we accept the fourth hypothesis and the finding corroborates the previous literature (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) also stress that leadership is a process where authentic leaders inspire, motivate, approve new ideas and appreciate individuals' diversified opinions. Authentic leaders through professional interaction and sharing the goals of knowledge management with employees can transform the corporate culture of an organization (Singh, 2008). Crawford (2005) stresses that a leader can act as a teacher, mentor, and facilitator.

Conclusion

The paper analyzes the mediating role of knowledge sharing on the relationship between authentic leadership and employee creativity in local organizations of Pakistan. The results derived from a sample of 200 project managers suggest that authentic leadership has a positive and significant effect on employee creativity, knowledge sharing and employee well-being. In addition, knowledge sharing mediates the authentic leadership and employee creativity relationship. Broadly, we argue that authentic leaders positively influence employee growth and organizational performance. Authentic leaders have a dynamic personality which enhances employee creativity through knowledge sharing. The performance of project managers may improve by adopting an authentic leadership style with a knowledge sharing attitude for enhancing the creativity of employees. In addition, project managers should also provide mentoring and counselling for motivating employees. Organizational performance can also be enhanced when managers expand their decision making skills and knowledge sharing attitude. There are several limitations of the study which may be addressed in future research. Due to time and resource constraints, the data was collected from a sample of project managers working at local organizations in Islamabad. The convenience sampling technique was used which creates a possibility for biases in the sample. Further research may extend the study by incorporating other variables that may mediate and/or moderate the association between authentic leadership and employee creativity based on a larger sample from different cities of Pakistan.

Annexure 1

Constructs and Items in the Questionnaire

Authentic Leadership

The actions that our leader takes are aligned with the organization values.

Our leader creates genuine interactive relationships with the employees.

Our team has trust on the leader.

We follow our leader as he/she is concerned for us.

Our leader would never violate company's values.

Our leader does not have double standards.

Our leader carefully listen to our ideas before making decisions.

We would never accuse our leader to be detached.

The relationship with our leader is based on trust.

Knowledge-Sharing

I spend a lot of time sharing knowledge with other members in the organization.

I actively share my knowledge with other members in the organization.

My discussion is focused on broad topics.

I respond to comments promptly.

Employee Creativity

I suggest new and innovative ideas to the team members.

I use novel ideas to improve performance.

I suggest new ways to increase quality and productivity.

I consider diverse information sources for new ideas.

I often ignore traditional practices to improve performance

I consider different options prior to taking a decision.

Hedonic Well-being

In most ways my life is close to my ideals.

The conditions of my life are excellent.

I am satisfied with my life.

So far I have achieved important milestones in my life.

I am satisfied with my life style.

Eudemonic Well-being

I have the competence to manage the environment.

I am satisfied with multiple aspects of my life.

I have goals in my life that have a clear direction.

I create suitable contacts for meeting my needs.

I have well defined aims and objective in my life.

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