Does Authentic Leadership Mediate the Relationship between Personality Traits and Work Engagement?

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Abstract

The current study aims at investigating the mediating impact of authentic leadership on the relationship between personality traits and work engagement. Data were obtained from 354 teachers working at government institutions in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. In order to test the relationship among authentic leadership, personality traits and work engagement, structure equation medaling was used through SPSS and Amos. The results showed a significant relationship of personality traits with authentic leadership and work engagement among teachers of government colleges working in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. Authentic leadership also showed a significant relationship with work engagement. Structure equation modeling showed a partial mediation of authentic leadership in the relationship between personality traits and work engagement.

Keywords: *Personality Traits; Authentic Leadership; Work Engagement; College; Teachers; Pakistan.*

Introduction

There has been an increasing interest in investigating the connection between personality triats (PT) and a concept called work engagement (WE) in recent years (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). It is important to get a comprehensive understanding of the factors that contribute to individuals' engagement with their job, both in practical and theoretical terms. This understanding is crucial for enhancing employee well-being and organisational success (Robertson & Cooper, 2010). An emerging method to investigate the factors that contribute to WE involves analysing the variations in PT exhibited by highly engaged versus less engaged employees. However, there appears to be a lack of comprehensive knowledge regarding a diverse range of traits, particularly the influence of trait emotional intelligence (Petrides & Furnham, 2003).

According to Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, and Peterson (2008), authentic leadership (AL) is "a pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development". Our understanding of AL, based on the definition by Walumbwa et al.

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(2008), encompasses "self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalised moral attitudes". Self-awareness pertains to an individual's perspective on the world and how such belief systems influence their perception of themselves. Relational transparency refers to the inclination to exhibit genuineness and authenticity when interacting with others. Balanced processing refers to the inclination to make judgements based on evidence, where leaders thoroughly analyse all pertinent information before arriving at a conclusion. Internalised moral viewpoints encompass self-regulatory mechanisms that are both internal and integrative. This concept of AL is expansive and all-encompassing in comparison to other somewhat divergent perspectives on AL. Authentic leaders possess certain qualities that set them apart from other types of leaders. Authentic leaders exemplify traits such as "balanced processing, relational transparency, and authentic behaviour" (Walumbwa et al., 2008). None of these attributes are the primary emphasis in any other type of positive leadership style, such as the behavioural theory of charismatic leadership, self-concept-based theory of charismatic leadership, servant leadership, and spiritual leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Therefore, investigating personality as a precursor to AL is a distinct theoretical inquiry. An organisation can benefit from exploring the correlation between personality and AL by using it to identify, train, and develop leaders who possess authenticity.

Personality refers to a collection of distinct characteristics that constantly distinguish individuals from one another in their cognitive processes, emotional experiences, and behaviours (Ones, 2005). Its five dimensions are" Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, openness to experience and Neuroticism" Extraversion refers to the inclination to engage in social interactions, display assertiveness, and have an optimistic outlook (Bligh, 2009). Extraverts are those that possess a high degree of talkativeness, optimism, and energy (Costa & McCrae, 1992). According to Ashton, Lee, and Paunonen (2002), some studies characterise them as enthusiastic, sociable, and want attention. According to Bligh (2009), extraversion is the most powerful indicator of AL. Agreeableness include qualities such as trustworthy, nurturing, conforming, and accepting (Bligh, 2009). Individuals that score high on agreeableness exhibit traits such as kindness, gentleness, trustworthiness, honesty, altruism, and warmth (McCrae & Costa, 1987). Agreeableness refers to the personality characteristic that "deals with the motives for maintaining positive relations with others", as described by Jensen-Campbell and Graziano (2001). Conscientiousness is "A dimension that contrasts scrupulous, well-organized, and diligent people with lax, disorganized, and lackadaisical individuals" (Costa & McCrae, 1992). Conscientious persons are characterised as cautious, dependable, systematic, pragmatic, ambitious, just, and cultured (McCrae & Costa, 1987). Individuals with a high level of conscientiousness adhere to transactional contracts due to their integrity (Hogan, Curphy, & Hogan, 1994). Individuals with a high level of openness to experience exhibit traits such as originality, creativity, complexity, and analytical thinking (McCrae & Costa, 1987). Exhibiting authenticity and expressing one's true self to others results in a state of relational transparency. Neuroticism refers to a personality attribute characterised by a cognitive style that tends to be negative and an emphasis on self-perceptions that are unfavourable (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). Individuals with high levels of neuroticism exhibit traits such as nervousness, worry, emotional sensitivity, vulnerability, anxiety, hostility, and depression (Bligh, 2009). Neurotic persons exhibit symptoms of anxiety, moodiness, and stress (McCrae & Costa, 1987). Individuals exhibiting elevated levels of neuroticism often encounter heightened negative feelings, such as worry and anger, compared to individuals with lower neuroticism scores.

Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, and Bakker (2002) provided a definition of WE as a state of mind in the workplace that is positive, rewarding, and characterised by vigour, devotion, and absorption. Schaufeli et al. (2006) defined as WE as "a fulfilling work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication and absorption". The authors highlighted that involvement is not a temporary and limited condition, but rather a "long-

lasting and all-encompassing emotional and cognitive state that is not directed towards any specific object, event, individual, or behaviour" (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Dedication may be defined as a state of "being strongly involved in one's work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, pride, inspiration, and challenge" (González-Romá, Schaufeli, Bakker, & Lloret, 2006; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Absorption is defined as a state of "being fully concentrated, and deeply engrossed in one's work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work" (Schaufeli et al., 2002). In their study, Schaufeli et al. (2002) provided a definition of engagement as "as positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption". They emphasised that engagement is not a temporary and distinct condition, but rather, it is a "more persistent and pervasive affective-cognitive state this not focused on any particular object, event, individual, or behavior" (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Vigour is described as possessing a high level of energy, mental toughness, and unwavering determination while facing challenges in the workplace (González-Romá et al., 2006; Schaufeli et al., 2002). Determined individuals are willing to exert a significant amount of effort in their task and persist resolutely in the face of challenges.

Zaidi, Wajid, Zaidi, Zaidi, and Zaidi (2013) obtained data from a total of 399 instructors, consisting of 237 males and 161 females, who were employed at public sector universities in Lahore. The researchers employed the Big Five Inventory (BFI) to assess different facets of personality, including "extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness to experience". The Utrecht WE Scale (UWES) was employed as the measuring tool for assessing WE. This instrument has three subscales, namely "vigour, devotion, and absorption". The study revealed a positive correlation between "extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience" and WE. There was a negative correlation between neuroticism and WE. The results of the multiple regression analysis indicate that the personality qualities of "extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience" have a significant impact on WE.

In their study, Hau and Bing (2018) investigated the correlation between the Big Five PT and WE among academic staff employed at private institutions in Perak, Malaysia. The indicated characteristics encompassed "extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness, neuroticism, and openness to experience". This study employed a quantitative approach and utilised a survey method to gather data. The sample consisted of 102 participants who were academic staff members from certain private institutions in Perak. The biographical questionnaire, Neuroticism Extraversion Openness Five-Factor Inventory 3 (NEO-FFI-3), and Utrecht job Engagement Scales (UWES) were used to evaluate demographic data, Big Five PT, and WE, respectively. The implementation of Partial Least Squares (PLS) and structural equation modelling (SEM) was conceived and carried out. According to the findings, "agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience" had notable and favourable impacts on WE.

Mróz and Kaleta (2016) performed a study to investigate the potential correlation between PT and job engagement, as well as the degree of WE and big five PT among female employees in Himachal Pradesh. Data were gathered via a questionnaire from a sample of 150 female employees employed at three distinct Public sector banks, specifically the State Bank of India, Punjab National Bank, and UCO Bank, located in the state of Himachal Pradesh. The study's findings indicated a notable and favourable correlation between WE and the big five PT. The traits of "extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness" showed a strong positive correlation with WE and its specific components: "vigour, devotion, and absorption". On the other hand, neuroticism shown a negative correlation with WE and all three dimensions of it. The WE level was high in the public sector, whereas "extraversion, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness" were ordinary. However, the agreeableness attribute of personality was high.

Shahzad, Raja, and Hashmi (2021) investigated the predictive ability of the Big Five PT on an AL style. The researchers analysed data from 305 pairs of leaders and subordinates,

using many sources and time-lagged measurements. They investigated the relationship between the Big Five personality qualities "extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, openness to experience, and neuroticism" and AL. Leader personality was assessed using self-reports, whereas AL style was assessed using subordinate-reported data. Strong evidence was discovered in favour of the presented ideas. "Extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, and openness to experience" had a favourable correlation with the AL style, however neuroticism shown a negative correlation with it.

Komariah (2015) conducted a research to explore the predictability of personality characteristics on the AL in madrasah principals. The study also aimed to evaluate the relationship between the five elements of personality and the dimensions of AL. The participants in this study were the principals of madrasah aliyah in Tasikmalaya Regency. The researchers discovered that personality attributes had a key role in the development of AL. Furthermore, it was established that conscientiousness and openness to experience, two out of the five PT, were indicative of the AL aspects of a madrasah principal. The literature presented above proposes the following hypotheses:

H1: PT and WE in Teachers of Government Colleges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan (TGCKP) are positively related.

H2: PT and AL in TGCKP are positively related.

H3: AL and WE in TGCKP are positively related.

H4: AL mediates the relationship between PT and WE in TGCKP.

Research Methodology

Data Gathering

Data were obtained from 354 teachers working at government institutions in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. With help from classmates and coworkers, 450 questionnaires were sent to the teachers. 296 questionnaires were returned in less than two months, yielding an 83.61 percent return rate. Due to inadequate data, five questionnaires were not included in the study. This study's analysis involved the use of 291 questionnaires.

Measurement

Authentic Leadership

The AL Questionnaire, developed by Walumbwa et al. (2008), was utilised by the researchers to evaluate the overall level of AL as well as its components, which include "self-awareness, rational transparency, balanced processing, and internalised moral perspective." Every AL dimension consists of four questions. Examples of AL include "I can list my three greatest weaknesses" and "I can list my three greatest strengths" (self-awareness). "My actions reflect my core values" and "Other people know where I stand on controversial issues" (Internalized moral perspective). "I seek others' opinions before making up my own mind" and "I do not emphasize my own point of view at the expense of others" (Balanced Processing). "I openly share my feelings with others" and "I rarely present a "false" front to others" (Rational transparency). A five-point Likert scale, ranging from "1: strongly disagree" to "5: strongly agree," was used to collect responses to the questionnaire. The Cronbach's alpha for "self-awareness, rational transparency, balanced processing, and internalised moral perspective" was .85, .82, .89, and .81 respectively.

Work Engagement

The 9-item abbreviated version of the Utrecht WE Survey was used to measure WE (Bakker, Demerouti, & Verbeke, 2004). WE's dimensions are "vigour, dedication, and absorption." Examples of WE include "At my work, I feel bursting with energy" (Vigor).

"I am proud on the work that I do" (Dedication). "I am immersed in my work" (Absorption). A five-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting strongly disagree and 5 denoting strongly agree, was used to collect participants' answers. The reliability for "vigor, dedication, and absorption" is .86, .82, and .80 respectively.

Personality Traits

The Big Five Inventory was utilised to measure five characteristics of PT (John & Srivastava, 1999). The "extraversion, agreeable, neuroticism, openness to experience, and conscientiousness" are the five qualities that make up the Big Five Inventory. Examples of PT include "I see myself as someone who is original, comes up with new ideas" and "I see myself as someone who is ingenious, a deep thinker" (Openness to experience). "I see myself as someone who is talkative" and "I see myself as someone who is full of energy" (extroversion). "I see myself as someone who is helpful and unselfish with others" and "I see myself as someone who has a forgiving nature" (agreeableness). "I see myself as someone who is depressed, blue" and "I see myself as someone who can be tense" (neuroticism). "I see myself as someone who does a thorough job" and "I see myself as someone who is a reliable worker" (conscientiousness). A five-point Likert scale, with 1 denoting strongly disagree and 5 denoting strongly agree, was used to collect participants' answers. The reliability for "extraversion, agreeable, neuroticism, openness to experience, and conscientiousness" is .92, .88, .84, .87 and .80 respectively.

Results

Table 1: Correlations among PT, AL and WE

	PT	AL	WE
PT	1	.375**	.111*
AL	.375**	1	.168**
WE	.111*	.168**	1

"**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed)".

"*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed)".

Table 1 shows the correlation among PT, AL and WE. The results as shown in table 1 revealed a significant relationship of PT with AL (r = .375**, p = 0.000) and WE (r = .130*, p = 0.000). AL also showed a significant positive relationship with WE (r = .168*, p = 0.000). Therefore, we accept:

H1: PT and WE in Teachers of Government Colleges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan (TGCKP) are positively related.

H2: PT and AL in TGCKP are positively related.

H3: AL and WE in TGCKP are positively related.

Model: Indirect Path from PT to WE via AL
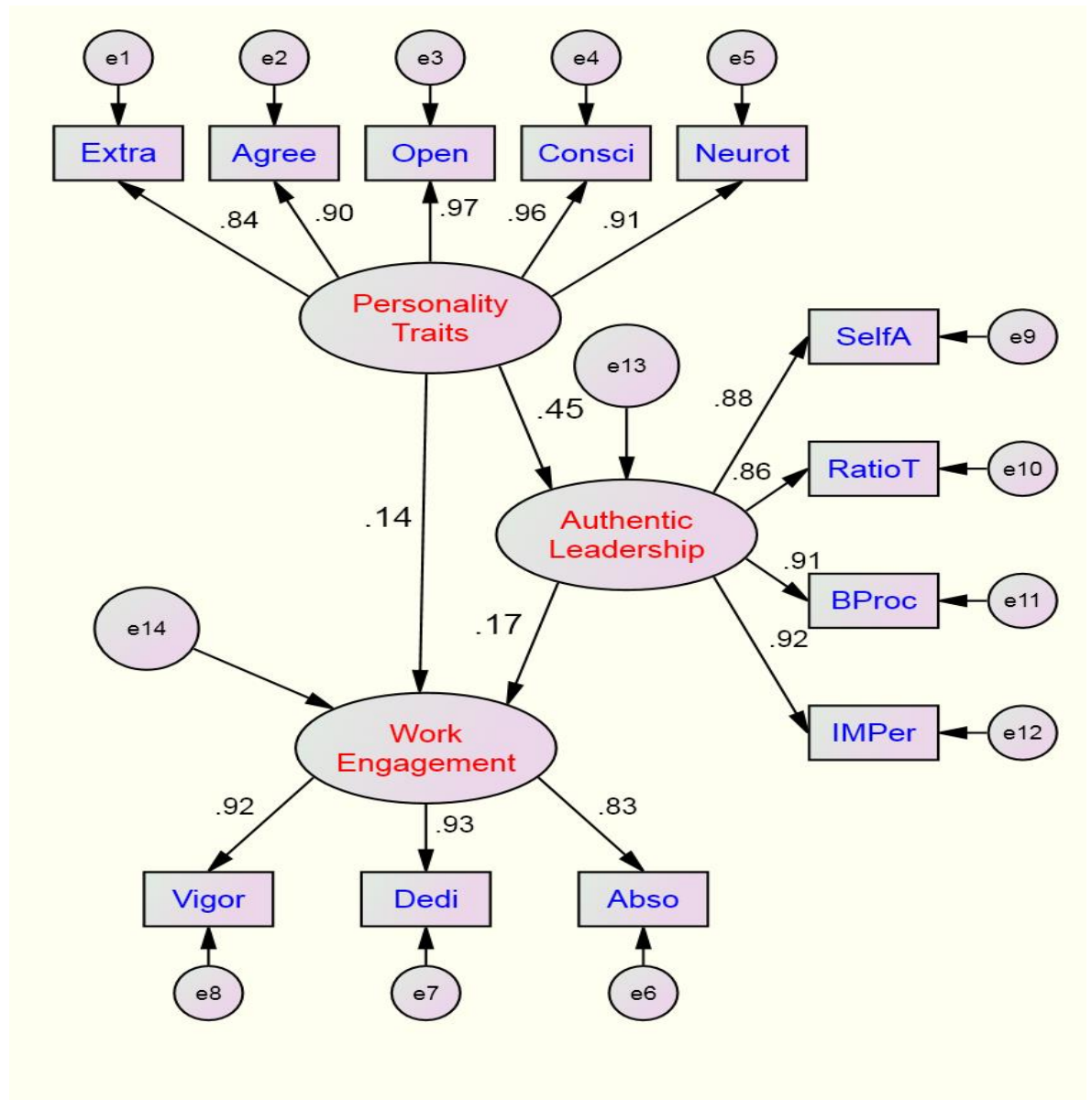
The three-factor model—AL, WE, and PT—was examined by using structural equation modelling in this study. The statistical indices CMIN = 128.301, DF = 51, P =.000, GFI = 0.945, CFI = 0.983, RMSEA =.065, and RMR =.057 all indicated that the model fit the data quite well. With a regression coefficient of.14, the study demonstrated PT's considerable impact on WE. Furthermore, PT was shown to have a significant impact on AL, as evidenced by a regression value of.45. Regression coefficient of.17 indicates that the AL significantly affects WE. All of the PT, WE, and AL regression coefficients fall within acceptable range. The impact of PT on WE was shown to be less after AL was included as a mediator; the coefficient dropped from 0.35 to 0.14. As a result, the following hypotheses are approved in this study:

H1: PT and WE in Teachers of Government Colleges in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan (TGCKP) are positively related.

H2: PT and AL in TGCKP are positively related.

H3: AL and WE in TGCKP are positively related.

H4: AL mediates the relationship between PT and WE in TGCKP.

Table 2: Values of Chi Square, DF, RMSEA, CFI, CMIN/DF, GFI, P, RMR and AGFI

	Chi Square/ CMIN	DF	RMSEA	CFI	CMIN/DF	GFI	P	RMR	AGFI
	128.301	51	.065	.983	2.516	.945	.000	.057	.916

The values of P, CMIN/Chi Square, RMR, CFI, AGFI, GFI, and RMSEA are displayed in the table. The values of CMIN = 128.301, DF = 51, P =.000, GFI = 0.945, CFI = 0.983, RMSEA =.065, and RMR =.057 are Acceptable. As a consequence, we accept the three-factor research model of PT, WE, and AL.

Conclusion

The current study aims at investigating the mediating impact of AL on the relationship between PT and WE. Data were obtained from 354 teachers working at government institutions in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. In order to test the relationship among AL, PT and WE, structure equation medaling was used through SPSS and Amos. The results showed a significant relationship of PT with AL and WE among teachers of government colleges working in Pakistan's Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province. AL also showed a significant relationship with WE. Structure equation modeling showed a partial mediation of AL in the relationship between PT and WE.

Acknowledgement

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