

Effect of Psychological Empowerment on Authentic Leadership and Affective Commitment Relationship

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Abstract

This research enriches the knowledge of authentic leadership and responds to questions like; (a) How authentic leadership influences employees affective commitment? (b) How authentic leadership impact psychological empowerment? (c) How psychological empowerment influences affective commitment and does psychological empowerment mediates the association into authentic leadership and affective commitment? In order to comment on these study questions, a survey of 150 managerial level employees was sampled conveniently from Pakistan Telecommunication Company Limited (PTCL). 114 valid responses were analyzed via PROCESS macro. The findings of the research reveal that psychological empowerment mediates the association between authentic leadership and affective commitment. Indicating that, when an authentic leader makes employee psychological empowered, in turn, an employee's level of affective commitment will increase, this leads to fruitful outcomes. This research has practical implications for leaders, human resource managers, employees and policymakers. The study also suggested avenues for future research at the end.

Keywords: authentic leadership, psychological empowerment, affective commitment

Introduction

Enormous corporate scandals such as Enron and others linked with unscrupulous leaders forced the practitioners and researches (Avolio, Luthans, & Walumbwa, 2004; Gardner & Schermerhorn, 2004; George, 2003) to give attention on emerging leadership form which is Authentic Leadership (Balogun, Mahembe, & Allen-Ile, 2020). Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing and Peterson (2008) argue that authentic leadership implies a model of leadership behaviour that encourages optimistic ethical climate and optimistic intellectual capital in the organization. Authentic leadership offer stability by endorsing values and direction for employees in a

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turbulent work environment. Prior studies show that Authentic leadership is linked with numerous employees positive behaviour and attitudes, such as organizational commitment, work engagement, organizational citizenship behaviours, job satisfaction, job resourcefulness, creativity, and job performance (Anwar, Abid, & Waqas, 2020; Avolio et al., 2004; Mubarak & Noor, 2018; Rego, Vitória, Magalhães, Ribeiro, & e Cunha, 2013; Semedo, Coelho, & Ribeiro, 2016; Walumbwa, Wang, Wang, Schaubroeck, & Avolio, 2010; Yilmaz, 2020). Similarly, Ilies, Morgeson and Nahrgang, (2005) recommended that leaders having relational authenticity will try for trustful and open associations with their employees, and such inclination will have optimistic results. Moreover, empirical evidence on the association of authentic leadership with employee attitudes is scarce due to the novelty of construct (Ribeiro, Gomes, & Kurian, 2018). Therefore, the dearth of studies in the subcontinent has generated a need for researchers to measure the influence of authentic leadership traits and its influence on attitudinal outcomes of followers/employees (de Aquino & Robertson, 2018).

Earlier scholars have studied psychological empowerment as a mediator in leadership and employees outcome (attitudes/behaviours) relationship (Aryee & Chen, 2006; Avolio et al., 2004; Liden, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2000; Mubarak & Noor, 2018). Some other studies examined psychological empowerment relationship with organizational commitment, but the findings reveal that studies conducted in different settings have controversies. This might be due to the combined effect of organizational commitment that is affective, normative and continuous. Like for example, Moynihan and Pandey (2008) discover that psychological empowerment is negatively related to organizational commitment. Jomah (2017) find out that psychological empowerment is a predictor of organizational commitment.

In the Pakistani context, there is a dearth of researches which specifically examine the mediating role of psychological empowerment between the relationship of authentic leadership and organizational commitment. Examining these effects will contribute to the inconsistency results. Therefore, in the current study, only one aspect of organizational commitment-affective commitment has been

considered among others. This study will also add to the managerial issue recently found in PTCL since, PTCL has not achieved its target (PTCL, Annual Report, 2018). Similarly, Jan, Jalali, and Zaman, (2013) study revealed that before privatization PTCL was considered well organized and the most profitable company of the country but this trend changed after privatization. Moreover, Khan, Ullah, Shabir and Hussain (2018) found that poor utilization of employee's capability in PTCL is a major reason behind this trend.

Literature review

Authentic Leadership

The most broadly cited concept of authentic leadership is explained by Walumbwa et al. (2008) as “a pattern of leader behaviour 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”. (p., 94).

The previous studies show that there are 4 elements of authentic leadership; (1) relational transparency; presents leader authenticity, their real thoughts and feelings to employees (Avolio et al., 2004; Shamir & Eilam, 2005); (2) self-awareness; it indicates that how much leader knows his/her weaknesses and strength (Balogun et al., 2020) and manifold nature of her/him and how other understand him/her and how (s)he influence other (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008); (3) Inner principled point of view; which signifies to what extent a leader is directed by values of inner ethical standards, and decision consistent and shows in activities with internalized morals (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008) (4) balanced processing refers to recognized those managers, who show such performance which guarantee that they are impartially examining the entire connected data prior to making any decision (Kotzé & Nel, 2019; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Authentic Leadership and Affective Commitment

Allen and Meyer (1990) describe affective commitment as a worker's wish to be identified enthusiastically with the name and association in the organization. Affectively committed employees want to stay and align its goals with the organizational goals. In decision making and in interaction with followers, authentic leaders are consistent and transparent. Thus, authentic leaders demonstrate affective commitment (Walumbwa et al., 2008; Walumbwa, Luthans, Avey, & Oke, 2011). As authentic leaders show more respect, trust and confidence between their followers, the followers also show more commitment and loyalty towards goals of the organization and they explain their motivation that they could be known by the names of their leaders and organization (Walumbwa et al., 2004). When employees feel leader as authentic, then the emotional bond between the leader and follower becomes strong (Ribeiro, Duarte, Filipe, & Torres de Oliveira, 2019; Ribeiro et al., 2018). Social exchange theory by Blau (1964) explains the same pattern of behaviour. Like when there are high-quality exchanges between leaders and followers, then employee reciprocate the high level of affective commitment. Thus, it is concluded that an authentic leader creates high-quality exchanges with their employees by behaving honestly, and by sharing information with followers; consequently, an employee's affective commitment increases (Balogun et al., 2020).

Authentic leadership is significantly positive related with affective commitment because authentic leaders exert beliefs, values and moral principles, in their behaviours which predict the affective commitment of worker (Alshammari, Almutairi, & Thuwaini, 2015; Johnson, 2019). Thus leader authenticity is significantly related to the emotional attachment and affective commitment of employees (Leroy, Palanski, & Simons, 2012; Rego et al., 2013). Researcher drive hypothesis from the discussion mentioned above.

H1: Authentic leadership has a significantly positive relationship with Affective commitment.

Authentic leadership and psychological empowerment

Progressively practitioners and researcher pay much attention upon empowerment since it has the ability to affect results positively which is advantageous for both employees and organization (Liden et al., 2000). Empowerment construct is reviewed as a powerful weapon to raise the efficacy of the organization. Given authority to employees for decision making is examined as empowerment (Randolph, 1995). Prior empowerment theories (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990) concept of empowerment is taken from Spreitzer (1995), and he described it as “intrinsic motivation” it has four dimensions: Self-determination, meaning, impact and competence. It is claimed that four characteristics are important to establish the full concept of psychological empowerment; In the absence of one dimension out of these four, an empowerment decline has observed. Hence employees who are psychological empowered feel internally motivated because (s)he recognizes the apparent worth of her/his work, (s)he knows that (s)he has the ability to perform that task, (s)he has control at day to day activities and (s)he has freedom to self-evaluate task performed by her/himself. All these magnitudes encourage him to feel more empowered.

Prior researches on the association into authentic leadership and psychological empowerment have emphasized on authentic leaders to maintain desirable performance and productive climates of his employees (Walumbwa et al., 2008). According to leader-member exchange, the role of leaders is significant by providing employees with experience of empowerment. Authentic leadership significantly impacts self-regulated behaviours and self-awareness of both follower and leader. Authentic leaders encourage self-development and personal growth of their employees (Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005). It is obtained from the previous study that employees who perform under the supervision of authentic leadership are more expected to be involved because an authentic leader can encourage employee's attitude and behaviour consequently his employees can be reasonable, apparent, decent and ethical while

performing the task (Giallonardo, Wong, & Iwasiw, 2010). By avoiding stress among group members, a leader can motivate work engagement by making shared special sense of “us”. These results recommend that authentic leadership means empower emerges as a sense of “us” shared between leader and employee (Steffens, Haslam, Kerschreiter, Schuh, & van Dick, 2014). Hence hypothesis could be derived:

H2: Authentic leadership is significantly related to the psychological empowerment of the employee.

Psychological Empowerment and Affective Commitment

The focus of the researcher in the extant study is an affective commitment rather than organizational commitment. Several empirical prior studies reveal that psychological empowerment has strong relationship with affective commitment (Chan, 2003; Choong, Wong, & Lau, 2011; Laschinger, Finegan, & Shamian, 2001). When the perception of psychological empowerment is high among employees, then their level of affective commitment is high in an organization. However, there is a lack of studies which specifically analyze the association of four cognition of psychological empowerment with affective commitment. Rawat (2011) in the Indian service industry analyze the association of psychological empowerment with workers organization commitment. She finds out that self-determination and meaning have a fragile significant association with affective commitment, competence, and impact are not significantly related to affective commitment. Psychological empowerment characteristics describe little variation in affective commitment.

Moreover, In prior studies, several researchers scrutinized the association between four characteristics of psychological empowerment and organizational commitment (Chen & Chen, 2008; Dee, Henkin, & Duemer, 2003; Nabila, 2008) and found a strong association of psychological empowerment with organizational commitment, thus as a dimension of organizational commitment it can be examined as linked to affective commitment (Choong et al., 2011). Extant knowledge on the association of psychological

empowerment with organizational commitment is inconsistent (Chen & Chen, 2008; Dee et al., 2003; Nabila, 2008). However, prior studies strongly recommended that this inconsistency might be due to the combined effect of organizational commitment. A prior study revealed that continuous commitment is not a beneficial attitude for the organization (Krishna, 2007). However, affective commitment is most beneficial for the organization. Therefore based on our understanding and logic, researchers propose that:

H3: Psychological empowerment is positively related to Affective commitment.

Psychological Empowerment as a Mediator

Besides to the researches that showed a positive relationship between authentic leadership and psychological empowerment (Mubarak & Noor, 2018; Zhu, May, & Avolio, 2004) it is assumed that when authentic leadership perception increases it will increase psychological empowerment. When identification, respect and trust is given by the leader to her/his followers, it direct followers to observe well emotional support which consequently relief them and gives freedom to express conflicting ideas, without any hesitation and takes risk to introduce unusual thoughts (Avolio et al., 2004; Edmondson, 1999; Walumbwa et al., 2010). Hence , making the employee more empowered and give him more respect and create an extraordinary relationship will increase their level in affective commitment. All these magnitudes encouraged him to feel more empowered. Hence, it can be derived that psychologically empowered employees show affective commitment towards the organization. The researcher hypothesizes from the above discussion:

H4: Psychological empowerment mediates the association between authentic leadership and affective commitment

Research Methodology

The methodological underpinning of this study is positivism and deductive. The study is explanatory and used mono quantitative method; data for the current study was collected through a self-

administered questionnaire by using a convenience sampling technique. Convenience sampling was used because the data was collected from managerial level employees who are handy and easily available for the desired data. Questionnaires were distributed among 150 managerial level employees in PTCL head office. For further analysis, 114 responses were used and the remaining 36 were discarded due to incomplete results. A cover letter was attached with each questionnaire which described the motive of research, in which anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed, in order to understand each variable correctly, the operationalized definition of each variable was also provided. The collected data for this study were analyzed through PROCESS macro.

Sources of Instrumentation

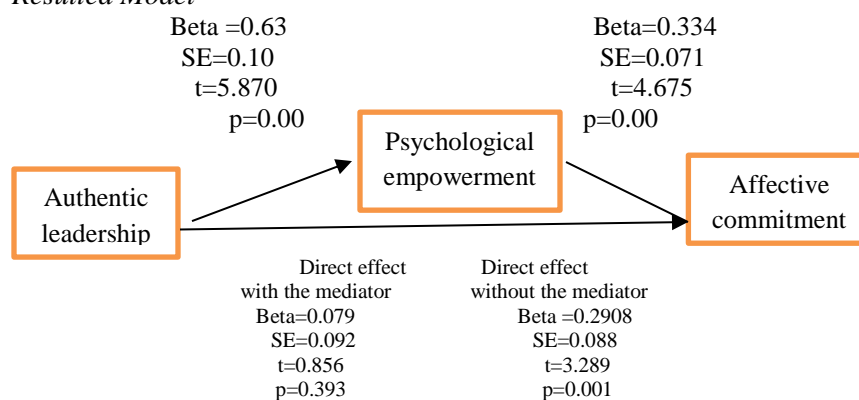
Authentic leadership 16 items questionnaire adopted from (Avolio, Gardner, & Walumbwa, 2007). Affective commitment 8 items scale were adopted from Allen and Meyer (1990). Moreover, Psychological empowerment 12 items scale were adopted from Spreitzer (1995).

Results

In this study, the researchers used SPSS (Statistical Packages for Social Sciences) for the computation of results. Psychological empowerment was taken as a mediator to check the association of authentic leadership with affective commitment, Preacher and Hayes (2008) mediation method was used to check psychological empowerment as mediator. The value of Alpha for all variables is above .68, which is in the acceptable range. In the result section where authentic leadership is predictor variable, and psychological empowerment is outcome variable, Value of Beta is 0.6328, and the significance value (p) is 0.00, That points out the association of authentic leadership with psychological empowerment is significant. When affective commitment is outcome variable, and authentic leadership and psychological empowerment are predictor variables, the coefficient value of authentic leadership-affective commitment path is 0.0795 with p value=0.3937, and psychological empowerment-affective commitment path is 0.3340 with p-value =

0.000. The insignificant p-value of authentic leadership-affective commitment (0.3937) indicates that; in the presence of mediator (Psychological empowerment) authentic leadership association with affective commitment is not significant. It also means that the direct effect of authentic leadership with the mediator is insignificant, signifying the presence of mediation. The path coefficient of direct effect without a mediator is 0.29 with a p-value of 0.001 and t statistics of 3.289. These findings confirmed the hypothesized relationships. For detail, see figure below.

Resulted Model



The indirect path (AL-PE-AC) is also statistically significant with (Lower limit confidence interval) LLCI=.0880 and (upper limit confidence interval) ULCI=.3781, there is no zero in between LLCI and ULCI values. It can be concluded that psychological empowerment mediates the association between authentic leadership and affective commitment. The strength of mediation can be obtained through variance accounted for (VAF) as recommended by Hair et al. (2014) and Hadi, Abdullah and Sentosa, (2016). Table 1 shows that 72.86% of authentic leadership affects affective commitment is explained through psychological empowerment. The value of VAF is 73% (nearby 80%); therefore, researcher assume it as full mediator. (For further details see Hadi et al., 2016).

Table 1 Mediation Result

Effects	Path	Path coefficient	Indirect effect	Std Dev	Total effect	VA F	t value	LL CI	ULCI
Direct without mediator	AL → AC	0.2908	Not applicable				3.289	.1156	.4660
Indirect with mediator	AL → AC	0.079	Not applicable		0.2903	73%	2.847	.0880	.3781
	AL → PE	0.632	0.2113	.0742					
	PE → AC	0.334							

Discussion

The key purpose of this research was to examine psychological empowerment as a mediator in the association between authentic leadership and affective commitment. This research has many significant findings. Results of previous studies reveal that authentic leadership and affective commitment are positively related (Ribeiro et al., 2018).

However, no study to the best of researchers' knowledge examined psychological empowerment as a mediator between authentic leadership and affective commitment relationship. The results in this study coincide with previous researches that authentic leadership has a positive, direct and robust association with affective commitment because authentic leaders exert beliefs, values and moral principles in their behaviours which influence the affective commitment of employees. As authentic leaders create high-quality exchanges with their followers, and they respond with higher commitment. When authentic leaders show respect, trust and confidence among employees, consequently, employees show more commitment and loyalty towards goals of the organization and they explain their motivation that the names could know them of their leaders and organization (Walumbwa et al., 2004). The results are consistent with the philosophy of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) by suggesting that when there are high-quality exchanges between the leader and follower then employee reciprocate with high affective commitment and there is a dyadic association between leader and follower. Since our first hypothesis accepted, which is authentic leadership has a significantly positive relationship with affective commitment.

Hypothesis 2 test indicate that authentic leadership has a positive relationship with psychological empowerment, which shows the influence of an authentic leader on a sense of empowerment in employees. Mubarak and Noor (2018) find out that authentic leadership has a vital association with empowerment; thus, our findings are confirming their results. In workplace sense of respect given to an employee by authentic leader make a strong association with them, and consequently, employees feel intrinsically motivated and feel more empowered.

The third finding of the study shows that psychological empowerment four characteristics are positively related to an affective commitment of the employee. Findings of the study are nuanced with the findings of the Rawat (2011). This might be due to the research context and the characteristics of the targeted population. Extant research shows that psychological empowerment is linked with affective commitment. Results coincide with the findings of prior researches, such as (Chan, 2003; Choong et al., 2011; Laschinger et al., 2001). Prior analysts also find out that

psychological empowerment is associated with an affective commitment. It is claimed that four characteristics are essential to establish a full concept of psychological empowerment; in the absence of single dimension out of these four an empowerment decline has observed (Thomas & Velthouse, 1990).

Forth finding of the research reveals that psychological empowerment as a mediator mediates between the relationship of authentic leadership and affective commitment. Based on our findings, it can be argued that psychologically empowered employees perform their responsibilities proactively, and that is why they are likely to be seen as effective. Effective employees view themselves as talented and competent to have an influence on their job and work environment in a meaningful way (Dewettinck, Singh, & Buyens, 2003). This gives the impression that employees who feel more empowered will show commitment to the organization. The finding of the research reveals that authentic leadership has a significant direct association with affective commitment and in the presence of mediator psychological empowerment this significant relationship becomes insignificant because when an authentic leader makes employees empowered consequently, its affective commitment will increase. This finding coincides with the LMX theory that when authentic leader establishes high-quality exchange means makes employees psychological empowered then they reciprocate in high affective commitment

Implications

This research contributes to the literature by empirically testing and validating psychological empowerment as a mediator between the association of authentic leadership and affective commitment. All hypotheses are supported by findings of the study indicating that authentic leadership impact affective commitment by taking psychological empowerment as mediator. The results of the study are significant because it contributes to fragmented literature on the subject. Research findings support literature, and results propose that authentic leader offer stability by promoting values and direction to employees in an unstable work environment and make employees

psychological empowered and consequently employee become affectively committed and do not want to quite an organization.

Findings from this study can be helpful for leaders, managers and organization that how psychological empowerment works as a mediator into authentic leadership and affective commitment relationship, as our results revealed affective commitment is linked with psychological empowerment. When a leader is perceived as authentic by the employee than their level of affective commitment increases and when an authentic leader makes employees psychological empowered then, consequently, their level of affective commitment increases. A leader must know his strength and weakness in order to utilize the employee's capabilities effectively. It also suggests that organization should focus on training of leader and manager so they can prepare themselves and equip the traits and skills of the authentic leader. This will help an organization to develop a positive work environment and to retain competent employees.

Conclusion

Organizations always exert effort to improve the productivity of employee by developing their employee's attitudes and behaviours. For this purpose, organizations improve and reorganize methods and processes for developing a better relationship with their employees (Moving from centralization towards decentralization). The study aimed to explore and examine the relationship between authentic leadership and affective commitment via taking psychological empowerment as mediator; research findings show that psychological empowerment works as a mediator between authentic leadership and affective commitment relationship if employees feel psychologically empowered. (s)he is more affectively committed towards the organization, and consequently, it increases the organizational performance. In brief, it is concluded that to produce a healthy association with followers; the administration needs to acknowledge leader's role, no doubt that styles of leadership play a vital role in effective utilization of employee's capabilities. Avolio and Garden (2005) have claimed that the integrity of a leader is critical for unstable/competitive workplace because by promoting values and clear directions for followers authentic leader offer stability. Follower

and organization's efficacy should be promoted through the behaviour of authentic leadership that also helps to restore trust in leaders and organization.

Limitations and Recommendations for future work

This study has certain limitations. The study was based on convenience sampling, which often takes less effort and time and is mostly less expensive; however, this method limits the generalizability of the results. Future studies can analyze the relationships among variables by using different sampling technique such as Random sampling technique. Addition of moderating effect(s) such as Employees or organizational dynamic capabilities will strengthen the explanatory power of existing research model. In this study researcher collected data from one company PTCL (Pakistan telecommunication company limited) due to time constraint, it was not possible to collect data from whole telecommunication sector thus opportunity remains to collect data from other telecommunication companies thereby widening the picture.

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