

The Link between Authentic Leadership and Affective Commitment to Change: Teacher Psychological Capital as a Mediating Role in East Hararghe, Oromia, Ethiopia

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to examine the link between authentic leadership practices and teachers' affective commitment to change, with psychological capital serving as a mediator. A quantitative research approach was used. The study employed a descriptive survey design to achieve this objective. Out of a total population of 1386 teachers in 22 schools, a sample size of 302 teachers was chosen through systematic random sampling. Questionnaires were employed as data collection tools. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, which included percentages, means, tables, pie charts, and correlations. The results showed that teachers perceived school leaders as exhibiting a moderate level of authentic leadership. The findings also indicated that the authentic leadership practices of secondary school leaders had a strong and positive connection with teachers' emotional commitment to change. Additionally, a statistically significant link was found between authentic leadership practices and teachers' affective commitment to change. Teachers' psychological capital acts as a key mediator in the link between authentic leadership practices and teachers' emotional commitment to change. In conclusion, the study shows a positive link between authentic leadership and teachers' emotional commitment to change in secondary schools, with psychological capital playing a key role. It was recommended that authentic leadership practices be integrated into the evaluation and professional development of school leaders to promote ongoing improvement. Educational policies should focus on developing these skills among secondary school leaders, emphasizing self-awareness and emotional regulation, while also boosting teachers' psychological capital to strengthen their commitment to change.

Key words: Authentic Leadership, Affective Commitment, Commitment To Change, Psychological Capital

INTRODUCTION

Leadership is a concept that is frequently discussed and studied. It is generally defined as the process of guiding and organizing people. Since the early 20th century, leadership has been examined from various perspectives, including power and authority, innate traits, group dynamics, interactions with group members, and the balance between relationship-oriented and task-oriented approaches (Karada and Öztekin, 2018). Additionally, leadership styles have been explored in terms of being authoritative or democratic, as well as measures of effectiveness (Rodriguez et al., 2017; Wahidmurni, 2017). Authentic leadership is a process characterized by positive psychological competencies, transparency, openness, trust, meaningful goals, and the development of followers. Studies have shown that authentic leadership fosters self-consciousness and self-awareness (Gardner et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008; Xu et al., 2017).

There is a growing need for and interest in authentic leadership within society and academic study. Research

has shown that authentic leadership promotes positive psychological capacities and ethical climate, enhancing self-awareness, moral perspectives, information processing, and relational transparency, thereby encouraging positive self-development among leaders and organizations (Shahzad et al., 2021; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Previous research has shown that organizations require authentic leaders to be effective and achieve long-term success.

Authentic leaders, recognized for their honesty, integrity, and unwavering commitment to their core values, play a crucial role in fostering a positive organizational culture. This, in turn, leads to numerous benefits, including increased employee dedication, higher job satisfaction, and a stronger commitment to the organization (Opatokun et al., 2013; Beddoes-Jones and Swailes, 2015; Duarte et al., 2021; Shifare et al., 2021).

Duarte et al. (2021) argue that employees' identification with and emotional attachment to their leaders enhances their affective commitment to the organization.

For example, by providing relational transparency, behaving honestly, a adopting a balanced information processing system, authentic leaders cultivate higher-quality relationships with their followers, who reciprocate with stronger affective commitment.

Authentic leadership acts as a vital resource in the workplace. Leaders who embody authenticity exhibit positive behaviors and can foster constructive work attitudes and actions (Avolio and Gardner, 2005), such as organizational commitment (Rego et al., 2012). In addition to authentic leadership, psychological capital emerges as another crucial positive resource for individuals within organizations. This aspect of employees empowers them to demonstrate hope, self-efficacy, resilience, and optimism (Luthans et al., 2007; Xu et al., 2017).

Affective commitment has been strongly correlated with authentic leadership (Semedo et al., 2019; Ribeiro et al., 2020). For instance, authentic leaders develop stronger relationships with their followers, and by providing relational transparency, acting honestly, and adopting a balanced information processing system, they earn a higher affective commitment. Research in this domain is limited, resulting in a knowledge gap; literature addressing the practice of authentic leadership (ALP), the mediating role of Teacher Psychological Capital (TPC), and their relationship with teachers' Affective Commitment (TAC) is scarce, particularly in secondary education.

A research gap exists regarding the mediating role of TPC in ALP and TAC. Some other literature sources discuss topics related to authentic leadership practices, but not the same subject. The related themes they attempted to address include job satisfaction, complexity, proactive behavior, empowerment, characteristics, roles, and impacts (Langlois, 2011; Leroy et al., 2015; Xu et al., 2017; Söderlund and Wennerholm, 2021).

A study conducted in Taiwan by Feng-i (2016) entitled 'School Principals' Authentic Leadership and Teachers' Psychological Capital: Teachers' Perspectives' revealed that teachers perceived their principals' authentic leadership as moderate and that the principals' practice of authentic leadership was influenced by culture. Moreover, the principals' authentic leadership was found to be positively and significantly associated with teachers' psychological capital (hope, resiliency, optimism, and self-efficacy). This research does not include the affective commitment of teachers, which is covered by the current study.

In the Ethiopian context, Shifare et al. (2021) conducted research titled "The Impact of Authentic Leadership on Employees' Organizational Citizenship Behavior in Ethiopian public service." This study confirmed that authentic leadership behavior of leaders influenced employees' corporate citizenship behavior via self-awareness, information sharing, ethical behaviors, positive relationships with subordinates, mutual understanding, and transparency.

Other researchers have investigated that there is a positive and significant relationship between employee training, authentic leadership, and employee performance (Semedo et al., 2018). However, these studies did not directly address

the problem under study. This suggests the importance of this study, which examines ALP as an independent variable, TAC as a dependent variable, and TPC as a mediating variable, all considered in current studies in government secondary schools.

Therefore, there is a knowledge gap regarding the status, practices, and strength of the link between ALP and teacher TAC, with TPC as a mediating factor. Thus, the current researcher felt that this problem was worth investigating, and the study aimed to fill in the gaps in knowledge and practice by examining the relationship among these three variables. The study addressed four basic research questions.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study were:

1. To what extent do secondary school leaders practice authentic leadership as perceived by teachers in secondary schools within the East Hararghe Zone of Oromia Regional State (EHZORS)?
2. Is there any significant relationship between authentic leadership practices and Teachers' affective commitment to change?
3. Does teachers' psychological capital play a significant mediating role in the relationship between school leaders' authentic leadership practices and teachers' affective commitment to change?

Hypotheses

The following hypotheses were tested:

- H1: Secondary school leaders in the EHZORS demonstrate a measurable level of authentic leadership practices as perceived by their teachers.
- H2: There is a significant positive relationship between secondary school leaders' authentic leadership practices and teachers' affective commitment to change.
- H3: Teachers' psychological capital plays significant mediating role in the relationship between school leaders' authentic leadership practices and teachers' affective commitment to change.

Operational Definition of Key Terms

Affective commitment

Is the mind-set that binds an individual employees to provide support for the change based on a belief in its inherent benefits (desire to remain). Based on this, the researchers conceptualized affective commitment as the emotional attachment and belongingness of teachers to respective secondary schools.

Authentic leadership

Defined as 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 (Avolio & Walumbwa, 2014).

Commitment to change

Defined as a force (mind-set) that binds an individual to a course of action deemed necessary for the successful implementation of a change initiative (Herscovitch and Meyer, 2002). Accordingly, the researchers defined commitment to change as personal commitment of school teachers to adopt new educational policies, or methodologies, believing that they are crucial for improving students outcomes and professional development.

Psychological capital (PsyCap)

Refers to an individual's positive psychological state characterized by confidence, optimism, hope and resilience, which helps them overcome challenges and maintain a positive outlook on success (Luthans et al., 2007). Accordingly, for this study researchers conceptualized PsyCap as a teacher positive psychological state of development that comprises four positive psychological capitals: self-efficacy, optimism, hope and resilience.

Concept of Authenticity

Authenticity, a subject that has garnered significant attention in multiple fields lately, originates from the ancient Greek concept of "knowing oneself." It is known that the concept's roots are in the Greek word "authentic," which means "having all the power" (Karada and Öztekin, 2018, p. 43). It can be applied to organizational settings depending on an individual's experiences, convictions, and facts. Additionally, the concept of authenticity has various implications, such as reflecting on one's lifestyle, expressing true emotions, and taking moral responsibility for one's principles (Kernis and Goldman, 2006; Lemoine et al., 2019).

Kernis & Goldman (2006) define authenticity as four elements: awareness, impartial processing, behavior, and relational orientation. This concept serves as a theoretical foundation for authentic leadership. Organizations can foster authenticity by embracing uncertainties, learning from mistakes, and acknowledging their responsibilities, leading to transparency, accountability, and trust, fostering meaningful connections both internally and externally, according to Gardner et al. (2011).

Theories of Leadership

The focus on value-based leadership (VBL) behavior started to appear in literature at the height of several corporate crises at the beginning of the current millennium. The challenge of how to provide values such as being moral, responsible, serving others, and being authentic is important in management and is addressed by this VBL, which combines authentic, ethical, and servant leadership. These leadership styles are frequently referred to as emerging leadership forms (Lemoine et al., 2019).

The definitions of all three VBL forms specifically mention the impact of the leaders on the larger organization. As an illustration, leaders who practice authentic leadership must understand their moral obligation to the organization, followers, customers, and stakeholders.

Authentic Leadership

Another emerging leadership is authentic leadership, which has gained ground due to the general loss of trust in leaders around the world (Avolio et al., 2004) and, in particular, as a result of financial scandals. In reaction, there has been a call to adopt value-based leadership (Gardner et al., 2011). For structural reasons, faith-based entities carry out their activities according to the values of their charism, and, consequently, this leadership is possibly one of the most appropriate leadership styles to achieve the organization's mission. Authentic leadership does not follow the traditional top-down perspective of strategic human resources management but dynamically considers the relationship between followers and leaders, who co-create a sense and perception of authenticity through their interactions (Gill and Caza, 2018).

Authentic leadership emerges from a process of legitimation, wherein followers' perceptions of a leader's authenticity are influenced by moral judgments that align with the value systems of both the leader and the followers. The leader's sincerity alone does not constitute leadership unless it is embraced by a follower who grants legitimacy (Sidani and Rowe, 2018). This study examined the link between leaders' authentic leadership practices (as teachers perceived their practices) as well as teachers' affective commitment to change to understand the strength and direction of their relationship, as well as the further mediating role of teacher psychological capital.

Authentic leadership is positively related to, but empirically distinct from, ethical leadership. One major distinction between ethical and authentic leaders is that ethical leaders use a transactional form of leadership approach, whereas authentic leaders don't (Kalshoven et al., 2011). Because ethical leaders use punishment and reward mechanisms, which is unlike the authentic leadership approach.

Servant and authentic leadership also demonstrate considerable overlap. Similarly, servant and authentic leaders are positive, with several common, positive psychological traits (like psychological maturity, moral leaders, relationship leadership, or promoting leader-follower relationships) (Zhu, 2025). The main distinction between servant leadership and authentic leadership is that servant leaders transform followers to grow healthier, wiser, freer, and more autonomous by providing service and support, whereas authentic leaders focus on fostering the development of authenticity in followers through increased self-awareness, self-regulation, and positive modeling (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

Authentic Leadership Practices and Psychological Capital

According to Avolio and Walumbwa (2014), authentic leaders are those who treat their employees with respect and

follow their principles and beliefs while being fully conscious of how their followers see them. Greater self-awareness, internalized morality, balanced information processing, and openness in the interactions between the leader and followers are all cultivated by authentic leadership (Shamir and Eilam, 2005). As a result, Walumbwa et al. (2008) view four dimensions as being part of the multidimensional idea of authentic leadership.

The first component is self-awareness, which includes leaders' awareness of their own as well as their followers' strengths and limitations, as well as how their behavior affects others. Second, leaders' internal moral perspective refers to the ability to self-regulate behavior following their values and principles, despite pressure from other organizational or societal groups. The third dimension, balanced processing, relates to a leader's capacity to thoroughly consider pertinent facts before deciding, achieve organizational goals, and solicit input from others, even if it goes against their viewpoint. Lastly, relational transparency between leaders and followers relates to leaders being honest with others, being who they truly are, and fostering a culture of trust in the workplace.

Authentic leadership, according to Towler (2019), entails the following actions: Self-awareness: Reflecting on one's strengths, weaknesses, and values demonstrates self-awareness in a leader. Relational transparency: An authentic leader exhibits relational transparency when they freely communicate their own opinions with their followers but do not show their feelings. Since they invite alternative viewpoints and encourage the thoughts of subordinates, authentic leaders take a balanced approach. Genuine leaders have a high moral code in their interactions with others and their decision-making. Authentic leadership is a method of leadership in developing trust and generating encouragement from subordinates, Authentic leaders can increase individual and team performance (Xu et al., 2017).

The research findings highlight that authentic leadership significantly enhances psychological capital among employees, which in turn leads to improved performance. This connection illustrates how genuine and transparent leadership fosters an environment where individuals feel empowered and motivated, ultimately driving them to excel in their roles (Rego et al., 2012). Research by Jang (2022) showed that authentic leadership practices cultivate psychological capital among followers, promoting trust and positive emotions while enhancing confidence, optimism, hope, and resilience, which contribute to a more productive workplace.

Authentic Leadership Positivity

A good example of positive leadership that we use in leadership studies is authentic leadership (Alvesson and Einola, 2019). It is believed that great leadership will inspire followers and enhance individual commitment, team, and corporate effectiveness (Gardner et al., 2011). It is meant to result in numerous advantageous outcomes. Followers are expected to put up more effort, practice work behavior, and display better attitudes. They are also thought to have higher levels of moral growth, well-being, pleasant emotions, motivation,

engagement, commitment, and satisfaction (Gill and Caza, 2018). These positive attitudes and feelings may motivate leaders to support the emotional and cognitive growth of their followers, leading to an increase in engagement. Authentic leaders also foster a fair and open environment at work by evaluating all pertinent facts with objectivity. Employees are encouraged to help others and are made more aware of the value of doing so in such a workplace (Walumbwa et al., 2011).

The Link Between Authentic Leadership and Commitment to Change

This study examines authentic leadership in light of Walumbwa et al. (2008) and examines the relationship between ALP and TAC and TPC as a mediator variable. There has been a boom in research aimed at improving the theory of authentic leadership since the construct of authentic leadership sparked intense scholarly interest. Authentic leadership correlates positively with followers' commitment to change, specifically affective and normative commitment. Authentic leaders cultivate trust and inspire followers, resulting in enhanced engagement and a greater readiness to accept organizational changes. Authentic leadership is positively linked to a commitment to change (Louis et al., 2010; Bakari et al., 2019; Hannah, 2022; Quintin, 2023).

Numerous studies emphasize how important followers' commitment to change and authentic leadership are in business settings. However, contemporary research has paid less attention to the investigation of the notions in the context of educational organizations. Some of the research conducted in an educational setting indicated that teacher commitment to change is closely associated with authentic leadership in education. A study conducted in higher education in the Philippines by (Roncesvalles and Gaerlan, 2021) showed that teachers are more likely to be inspired, involved, and dedicated to putting educational changes into practice and supporting them when school leaders demonstrate sincerity. This relationship results from the beneficial effects that authentic leadership has on organizational commitment, psychological empowerment, and trust, all of which are essential for change programs to be successful.

Affective Commitment of Teachers

Walumbwa et al. (2008) suggested that authentic leadership is characterized by a pattern of leadership behaviors that foster positive psychological competencies and an ethical work climate. Research has shown that authentic leadership is associated with a range of positive attitudes and behaviors, including creativity, organizational citizenship behaviors, affective commitment, work engagement, job satisfaction, job performance, and job resourcefulness (Rego et al., 2012; Duarte et al., 2021; Semedo et al., 2018).

According to Meyer et al. (2002), organizational commitment comprises three components: affective, continuance, and normative commitment. Affective commitment is the utmost needed for organizations because it reflects employees' positive emotional attachment to and identification with their organization.

Research indicates that employees' connections with their leaders can enhance their affective commitment. When leaders exhibit caring behaviors, it fosters emotional attachment and boosts employee loyalty (Mercurio, 2015). Authentic leaders, recognized for their transparency and honesty, can positively influence their followers' attitudes, promoting a greater emotional attachment (Braun et al., 2013; Rego et al., 2013; Semedo et al., 2019). This leads to higher-quality relationships and stronger affective commitment among employees.

In a school setting, the affective commitment of teachers, as defined by Burmansah et al. (2019), refers to the emotional attachment, identification, and involvement that teachers experience in their school or the teaching profession. This strong emotional bond is marked by loyalty and dedication, often evident in their enjoyment of work, sense of comfort and satisfaction, as well as their willingness to actively participate and contribute. Authentic leadership in education fosters a commitment to change among stakeholders by emphasizing transparency, self-awareness, and ethical behavior, thereby building trust and positive relationships essential for successful change implementation (Roncesvalles & Gaerlan, 2021).

Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework explains the significance of a topic and the appropriateness of the proposed methods, while a theoretical framework describes how the study relates to the development or testing of theory, identifying relevant theories, and how the research will contribute to the field. Various leadership theories provide insights into effective leadership, with the recent rise of authentic leadership highlighting the importance of self-aware and transparent leaders who build trust and inspire their followers (Northouse, 2013).

According to Walumbwa et al. (2008), the key components of authentic leadership are self-awareness, transparency, balanced processing, internalized moral perspective, and relational transparency. These components can lead to positive individual consequences, such as increased job satisfaction and motivation, as well as contribute to beneficial organizational outcomes, including improved performance and commitment. Authentic leadership is grounded in several theoretical frameworks, including social learning theory, transformational leadership theory, ethical leadership theory, and positive psychology. It presents a promising approach for fostering positive results at the individual, organizational, and societal levels. By understanding the essential components and theoretical foundations of authentic leadership, individuals and organizations can develop leaders who inspire trust, encourage collaboration, and achieve long-term success.

Based on Walumbwa et al. (2008), the researchers developed Figure 1 that illustrates the conceptual framework of authentic leadership.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Research Design

Research designs outline the procedures for studies, guiding decisions from overarching assumptions to specific methods

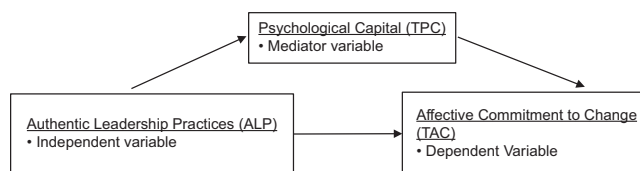


Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the study

of data collection and analysis (Creswell and Clark, 2018). Researchers must document their research perspectives (Yin, 2011), as philosophical questions are crucial to the research process (Inman, 2007, p. 76 as cited in Feyera, 2019).

This study utilized a descriptive survey design. Creswell and Clark (2018) explain that a survey design is a technique employed to quantitatively characterize the trends, attitudes, and views of a group by studying a sample. This methodology assists researchers in addressing descriptive inquiries, investigating the connections between variables, and forecasting how these connections might evolve. The researcher employed a descriptive survey design for this study, as it involved questions regarding predictive relationships between the variables (ALP, TPC, and TAC) over time.

Population, Sample, and Sampling Techniques

This research focused on the 54 government secondary schools in the East Hararghe Zone, which have a student population of 61346, 2,415 teachers, and 364 supportive staff members as of 2024 in the Oromia Regional State. The quality of a research project hinges on appropriate methodology, instrumentation, and sampling strategy. Early sampling decisions are crucial for obtaining data from a smaller, representative group of the total population (Cohen, Manion, and Morrison, 2020). Cohen et al. also highlight that researchers often face difficulties in accessing the entire population due to costs and time limitations: "Sample size might also be constrained by cost in terms of time, money, stress, administrative support, the number of researchers, and resources" (Cohen et al., 2007, p. 102).

Cohen et al. (2007) suggested that larger samples enhance reliability and enable advanced statistical analysis, recommending a minimum of thirty cases. The researcher included 42% of the 54 government secondary schools in the sample, resulting in a total of 22 secondary schools selected from four clusters. A cluster sampling technique was employed due to the sparse distribution of schools across the districts (Aanaa), with some districts having only one secondary school while others have up to five. The sample size for teachers was determined using scientific methods, achieving a precision level of $\pm 5\%$ and a confidence level of 95% (Cohen et al., 2007). Proportionate stratified random sampling was used to select participants from 1,386 teachers, resulting in 302 teachers being chosen for the study.

Data Collection Tools

To collect quantitative data, we utilize questionnaires. The closed-ended questionnaires were the Likert scale adapted

from Walumbwa (2008) was used to assess Authentic Leadership Practices, while Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) measured teachers' Commitment to Change. Additionally, Luthans et al.(2007) were referenced to evaluate the Psychological Capital of teachers. The researchers obtained permission to use all the adopted data collection tools. Questionnaires were distributed to 302 teachers.

The first part of the questionnaire contains 16 items that are expected to measure authentic leadership practice, developed by Avolio et al. (2007) and operationalized and validated by Walumbwa et al. (2008). The second part of the questionnaire comprises 6 items to measure teacher affective commitment to change, which was initially developed by Allen and Meyer (1991) to measure commitment and tested by Herscovitch and Meyer (2002) in the context of employee commitment to organizational change. Allen and Meyer's (1992) three-component model (TCM) of employee commitment was validated in different contexts, including Ethiopia (Herscovitch and Meyer, 2002; Maqsood and Glenn, 2012; Agegnehu et al., 2022). The third part of the questionnaire (PCQ-12) comprises 12 items measuring teacher psychological capital, developed by Luthans et al. (2007).

In addition to the primary survey questions, there are demographic items asking respondents about their position (for leaders), age, marital status, education level, and school. This information helped researchers to understand the respondents' backgrounds. The researchers considered relevant ethical considerations such as explaining the objectives and significance of the study to obtain consent from selected respondents, encouraging them to participate voluntarily, and ensuring confidentiality by making sure that any information they provide is used primarily for the study.

Data Analysis

The study's design and research objectives were shaped by the appropriate statistical techniques (Creswell and Clark 2018). Data collected from closed-ended questions were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics. A preliminary descriptive analysis was conducted to clean the data, which was then entered into SPSS version 24. This process verified essential assumptions such as sample size adequacy, multicollinearity, linearity, normality, homoscedasticity, and outliers, which were necessary for subsequent analyses in AMOS.

During the Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) model fit, the researchers assessed various measurement model tests, including chi-square (χ^2), P-value, goodness of fit index (GFI), root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA), comparative fit index (CFI), and degrees of freedom (DF), all of which met required cutoff values. Descriptive statistics calculated mean scores for ALP (Administrative Leadership Practice), TPC (Teacher Psychological Capital), and TAC (Teacher Affective Commitment to Change), while percentages, tables, and pie charts were used to analyze the demographic characteristics of respondents.

RESULTS

Demographic Information of the Respondents

The demographic information collected from secondary school teachers included variables such as age, gender, marital status, work experience, and qualifications. This data was gathered to analyze the characteristics of respondents from the twenty-two secondary schools that participated in the study. The responses to these demographic variables were presented, analyzed, and interpreted. Out of 302 teachers, a total of 302 questionnaires were accurately completed and returned, representing a 100% response rate. All teachers also completed the questionnaire correctly.

As shown in Table 1, a significant gender disparity existed, with a much higher proportion of male school teachers (84.1%). The representation was dominated by men, even though the whole population of responders was chosen at random. This happened due to the significantly smaller number of women than men in the teaching profession.

Data on respondent ages indicated that 55.3% of school teachers are aged 31 to 35, while 29.8% are aged 26 to 30. Those aged 36 to 40 account for 10.9%, with minimal representation in the 20 to 25 (2.3%) and 41 and older (1.7%) brackets. Overall, the 31 to 35 age group is the most represented at 55.3%. This data indicates that a younger demographic is prevalent in teaching, reflecting standard career advancement in education.

The data also revealed that the majority of respondents are married, with 69.5% of teachers being married. The second largest group is single, with 24.2% of respondents being single. Regarding to education level of respondents, data showed that most teachers have 89.4% hold a Bachelor's degree, while 89.4% hold a Master's degree, making it the second largest percentage. Only 1.9% of teachers possess a Diploma, and there are no school leaders with a PhD.

Table 2 indicated that a small fraction of respondents, specifically 3% of teachers in selected secondary schools,

Table 1. Sex and marital status of the respondents

Variables	Response category	Respondent Categories	
		Teachers	
		N	%
Sex	Male	254	84.1
	Female	48	15.9
Age	20-25 years	7	2.3
	26-30	90	29.8
	31-35	167	55.3
	36 and 40	33	10.9
	41 and above	5	1.7
Marital status	Married	210	69.5
	Single	73	24.2
	Widow/ed	19	6.3
Education attained	Diploma	6	1.9
	BA/BSc/BED/	270	89.4
	MA/MSc/MED	26	8.6

have work experience ranging from 0 to 5 years. A larger proportion of teachers (35%) possess 6 to 10 years of experience. The majority of teachers (52%) are within the 11 to 15 years' experience category. Lastly, 10% of teachers have 16 or more years of work experience. Overall, the data indicated that most teachers had concentrated work experience in the 11 to 15-year range.

Descriptive Results

The first research question of this study investigated the authentic leadership practices of school leaders. It specifically examined self-awareness, moral perspectives, relational transparency, and a balanced approach, as reflected in assessment reports perceived by teachers. Table 3 presents data obtained from respondents regarding secondary school leaders' authentic leadership practices across four dimensions of ALP leadership practices.

The results presented in Table 3 indicate that the highest mean score is found in the BP category ($M = 3.951$, $SD = 0.173$). This suggests that teachers generally feel their leaders consider various perspectives before making decisions, analyze relevant data, and strive to avoid biased judgments. The relatively low standard deviation ($SD = 0.173$) indicated a high level of consistency in these perceptions among the teachers.

Both RT ($M = 2.344$) and SA ($M = 2.354$) show significantly moderate mean scores, indicating that teachers perceive their leaders as possessing moderate self-awareness and relational transparency. This suggests that teachers believe their leaders are somewhat aware of their strengths and weaknesses and view them as open, honest, and genuine in their interactions. However, IM ($M = 1.798$) has a significantly lower mean score, indicating that teachers perceive their leaders as having a lower internalized moral perspective. Specifically, this indicated that teachers may feel their leaders do not consistently act according to their core values or lack strong moral integrity convictions.

The Link between Authentic Leadership Practices and Teachers' Affective Commitment to Change

The second research question in this study explored the relationship between authentic leadership practices and teachers' affective commitment to change. To address this question, data were collected from 302 teachers, focusing on two variables: the independent variable of authentic leadership

practices (ALP) and the dependent variable of affective commitment to change (Table 4).

The study found a very strong positive relationship ($r = .987$, $P > .001$) between school leaders' authentic leadership practices (ALP) and teachers' affective commitment to change (TAC). As teachers perceive more authentic leadership behaviors from their leaders, their emotional attachment and willingness to support change initiatives also increase. This suggests that promoting authentic leadership can strengthen teachers' emotional connection to changes within the school.

Structural Equation Model Path Analysis Results

In this study, the researchers utilized three types of questionnaires: the authentic leadership questionnaire (ALQ), the latest version of the three-commitment model of organizational change, and the psychological capital questionnaire (PCQ-12). The reliability and validity test results were analyzed using SPSS software version 24. The findings indicated that the p-values for all items in the current study were above the acceptable threshold of > 0.05 . The results demonstrated that the items used in the study were valid.

In addition, the multicollinearity test of the independent variable ALP ($VIF = 1.00$) shows that the variance inflation factor value was less than the cutoff value of 10. Moreover, the reliability test (Table 5) results, measured by Cronbach's Alpha, demonstrated a high internal consistency among the items used in the three data collection tools. This confirmed that the items were dependable and precisely assessed the desired constructs in the study ($ALQ = .983$, $PCQ = .98$, $ACQ = .812$).

Model Fit Analysis Results

The findings presented in Table 6 reflect the results of the model fit analysis conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with AMOS (Analysis of Moment

Table 2. Teachers' work experiences

Value labels	Number of Teachers	
	F	%
0-5	18	3
6-10	97	35
11-15	157	52
16 and above years	30	10
Total	302	100

F=Frequency

Table 3. School leaders' authentic leadership practices as perceived by the teacher

ALP Dimensions	N	M	SD
Relational Transparency/RT	302	2.344	1.124
Internalized moral perspectives/IM	302	1.798	0.568
Balanced Process/BP	302	3.951	0.173
Self-awareness/SA	302	2.354	1.099
Total	302	2.607	0.473

M=mean, SD=Standard Deviation

Table 4. Correlation analysis result between ALP and TA

Correlations			
		1	2
Authentic Leadership Practices/ALP	N=302	1	.
Affective Commitment to Change/TAC		0.987**	1

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

Structures). The study revealed that all criteria for assessing model fit were thoroughly examined and met the acceptable threshold values, indicating a strong alignment between the proposed model and the observed data ($X^2 = 263$, $DF = 88$, $GFI = .650$, $RMSEA = .540$, $P = 3.00$, $CFI = 1.00$, $TLI = .992$). This suggests that the model is statistically robust and effectively captures the underlying relationships within the dataset.

Table 7 summarizes the results of the Structural Equation Model (SEM) analysis of the relationships among Authentic Leadership Practices (ALP), Teacher Psychological Capital (TPC), and Teacher Affective Commitment (TAC). The results of analysis confirmed that the model fits data well.

Authentic Leadership Practices (ALP) have a strong and direct positive impact on Teacher Psychological Capital (TPC) (standardized direct effect = .992). This suggests that as leaders embrace more authentic practices, teachers' psychological capital significantly improves. ALP directly and positively influences Teacher Affective Commitment (TAC) (standardized direct effect = .415). This reveals that authentic leadership fosters commitment directly, perhaps by creating a positive work environment, instilling trust, or promoting shared values.

ALP also indirectly and positively influences TAC through the mediation of TPC (standardized indirect effect = .572). This suggests that authentic leadership enhances teachers' psychological capital, which in turn leads to greater affective commitment. The indirect effect is even stronger than the direct effect, highlighting the crucial mediating role of TPC. Teacher Psychological Capital (TPC) has a strong and direct positive impact on Teacher Affective Commitment (TAC) (standardized direct effect = .577). This implies that teachers with higher psychological capital (e.g., increased self-efficacy, optimism, hope, and resilience) are more committed to their school.

As shown in Figure 2, the analysis strongly supports the idea that Authentic Leadership Practices significantly influence Teacher Affective Commitment, both directly and, more importantly, indirectly through the mediating role of Teacher Psychological Capital. Furthermore, Teacher Psychological Capital itself is a strong direct predictor of Teacher Affective Commitment. This provides valuable insights for educational leadership, suggesting that fostering authentic leadership can enhance teacher commitment by first strengthening their psychological resources.

Table 5. Reliability and validity results

Variable	Dimension/s	Cronbach's Alpha
Authentic leadership	Relational transparency	0.962
	Internalized moral perspectives	0.909
	Balanced processing	0.808
	Self-awareness	0.917
Psychological Capital	Self-efficacy	0.951
	Hope	0.904
	Resilience	0.950
	Optimism	0.986
Commitment to Change	Affective commitment	0.812

DISCUSSIONS

This study examined the relationship between authentic leadership and teachers' emotional commitment to change, with teacher psychological capital serving as a mediating factor in secondary schools. The findings revealed that, according to teachers, the average level of authentic leadership practices exhibited by school leaders is moderate. Furthermore, the analysis strongly supports the idea that authentic leadership practices significantly influence teachers' affective commitment, both directly and, more importantly, indirectly through the mediating role of teacher psychological capital.

This study consists of three explicit research hypotheses. The initial hypothesis (H1) aimed to assess the authentic leadership practices of secondary school leaders, as perceived by their teaching staff. This assessment aimed to

Table 6. Model fit indices summary

Model fitness criteria	X^2	P	CMIN/DF	CFI	GFI	RMSEA	TLI
Acceptable value		>0.05		>0.90	>0.90	>0.80	>0.90
Test results	231	0.074	77	1.00	0.650	0.502	0.992

X^2 = Chi-square, DF = Degree of freedom, CFI = Comparative fit index, GFI = Goodness of fit index, $RMSEA$ = Root mean standard error approximation, TLI = Trucker Lewis index

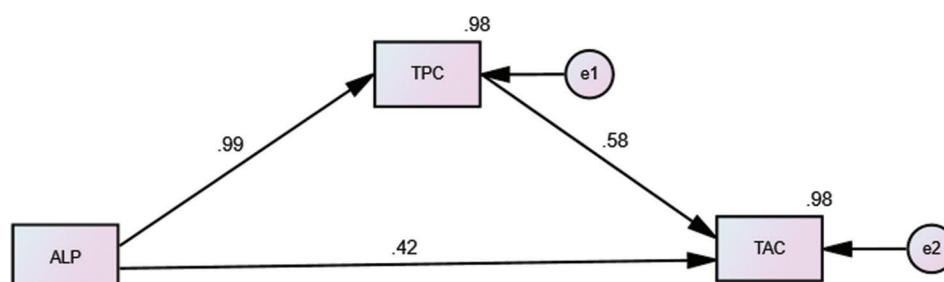


Figure 2. Structural equation modeling results

Table 7. Path analysis

Structural Path	Direct effect (standardized estimate)	Indirect effect (standardized estimate)	Total effect (standardized estimate)
ALP-----> TAC	0.406	0.572	0.987
ALP-----> TPC	0.987	0.000	0.992
TPC----->TAC	0.581	0.000	0.577

explore teachers' perceptions of self-awareness, balanced processing, internalized moral perspectives, and relational transparency in their leaders, offering valuable insights into the overall leadership dynamics within the school environment.

The findings indicated that authentic leadership practices exhibited by school leaders were moderate. This suggests that while some leaders may demonstrate a genuine and transparent approach, there remains ample room for improvement in fostering a more impactful and inspiring approach that resonates deeply with teachers. The findings of this study confirmed the results of previous studies conducted (Pavlovic, 2015; and Xie et al, 2024).

The second research hypothesis (H2) of this study aimed to investigate whether a significant relationship exists between the authentic leadership practices demonstrated by secondary school leaders and the emotional commitment of teachers to embracing change. The study identified a very strong positive correlation ($r = .987$, $p < .001$) between school leaders' authentic leadership practices (ALP) and teachers' affective commitment to change (TAC) in secondary school. The result is supported by the previous study of Khan et al. (2022), which showed that the head's authentic leadership and the affective commitment of respective teachers are significantly correlated, and there is a positive impact of school heads on the organizational commitment of the respective teachers. Moreover, a study by Baker (2020) and Putu et al. (2025) supported this, showing a moderate relationship between authentic leadership practices and employees' affective commitment. However, a study conducted in the manufacturing industry by Quintin (2023) indicated a weak relationship between authentic leadership and affective commitment to change.

Finally, the third hypothesis (H3) examined whether teachers' psychological capital mediates the relationship between school leaders' authentic leadership practices and teachers' affective commitment to change. Teachers view the level of authentic leadership practices among school leaders as moderate. The finding indicated that authentic leadership practices significantly affect teachers' affective commitment, both directly and indirectly via teachers' psychological capital. The study result was affirmed by the study of Semedo et al. (2018) authentic leadership practices have a positive and significant effect on the affective commitment of employees, and a leader who acts authentically strengthens employee attachment.

CONCLUSIONS

The main purpose of this study was to investigate the link between authentic leadership practice and teachers' affective commitment to change, with teacher psychological capital (TPC) serving as a mediator. The study sought to address three fundamental questions: the first question confirmed that the selected secondary school leaders were practicing authentic leadership at a moderate level. Additionally, the results revealed that the scores on self-awareness, managing emotions, self-management, empathy, and social skills highlight an area that requires attention for improvement. The study also found that the level of authentic leadership practice (ALP) was strongly and positively correlated to teacher affective commitment to change (TAC) in secondary schools. There is a statistically significant relationship between the practice of authentic leadership (PAL) and teacher affective commitment to change (TAC).

The mediation analysis further indicated that teachers' psychological capital as a mediator significantly affects the relationship between authentic leadership practice and teacher affective commitment to change (TAC). From these findings, it can be concluded that secondary school leaders practicing authentic leadership were at a moderate level and required attention for enhancement. The practice of authentic leadership was strongly and positively correlated with teacher affective commitment to change. There is a statistically significant relationship between authentic leadership practices and teacher affective commitment to change. Teachers' psychological capital as a mediator has a significant effect on the relationship between authentic leadership practice and teacher affective commitment to change.

The district (Aanaa) education office and collaborating with zone are recommended to invest in authentic leadership development programs to enhance self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing, and relationship transparency in school leaders, fostering a culture of critical inquiry and trust. Secondary school management should foster and nurture teachers' psychological capital by providing opportunities for skill development, promoting a positive work environment, encouraging a growth mindset, and celebrating successes and setbacks to build optimism. Meanwhile, Secondary school management should nurture teachers' psychological capital through skill development, a positive work environment, and a growth mindset. This will enhance leaders' influence, boost teachers' commitment, and establish psychological capital.

While this study has demonstrated some strengths, it also has some limitations. Firstly, out of fifty-two government secondary schools, only twenty-two (approximately 42%) participated in this research, and private secondary schools were not included. This small sample size may impact the generalizability of the findings, despite the researcher's efforts to address other factors that could affect external validity.

Secondly, from a methodological perspective, the study utilized a descriptive survey design in which only quantitative data were collected. This approach does not allow for triangulation of data, which introduces additional limitations

that future research could address. The current study focused on descriptive survey design and included variables such as authentic leadership practices, teacher psychological capital, and affective commitment to change.

Future researchers may expand on this work by employing a mixed-methods research design, particularly a sequential explanatory approach. They could also incorporate different leadership styles and commitment types (including continuance and normative commitment) and include respondents from private schools.

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