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Design and Test of the Genuine Leadership Outcomes Model in a Military Unit

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ABSTRACT

The present research was carried out with the aim of designing and testing a model of genuine leadership outcomes, where genuine leadership construct was selected as an antecedent variable; the constructs of organizational citizenship behavior, psychological well-being, and job aspiration as outcome variables and ethical and trust atmosphere constructs as mediation variables. For this purpose, 200 personnel of a military unit were selected by simple random sampling. The instruments of this study were including questionnaires of genuine leadership, ethical work atmosphere, organizational trust, organizational citizenship behavior, psychological well-being, and job aspiration. The data were analyzed through structural equation modeling (SEM) and intermediate analysis. Modeling analyzes supported the structural equations considering the proposed model with the data. The results indicated a direct positive effect of genuine leadership on ethical job environment, organizational trust, organizational citizenship behaviors, and job aspiration, a direct positive effect of ethical work environment on organizational citizenship behavior and job aspiration, a direct positive effect of organizational trust on organizational citizenship behavior and job aspiration, and an indirect positive effect of genuine leadership on organizational citizenship behavior and job aspiration through the ethical work environment and organizational trust. Based on the findings of this study, it can be concluded that organization administrators should pay special attention to identify, evaluate, and promote authentic leadership in their organizations. Therefore, it is suggested that the organizations should recruit authentic leaders, and should encourage, support, and develop this type of leadership in order to increase the productivity of the organizational performance.

KEYWORDS: *Genuine Leadership, Ethical Work Environment, Organizational Confidence, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Psychological Well-Being, Job Aspiration*

INTRODUCTION

In an era when corporates' corruption and scandals are common [1, 2], institutional shareholders define success in terms that are broader than the objective financial indicators. Modern society demands that in addition to making a profit, leaders should maintain high levels of integrity, ethical

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behavior, and fairness [3].

Organizational leaders need to know how actions and leadership traits fulfill the society's expectations, how these actions and leadership traits are perceived by subordinates, how they affect organizational consequences, and what the boundary conditions that affect the leadership.

In response to the demands of the changing needs of society and organizational leaders, researchers initiated studying authentic leadership, which is a type of leadership based on integrity and ethical behavior that is open and transparent to all shareholders [3-4-5].

Over the past few decades, economical, geopolitical, and technological growth has made great demands among a big group of leaders for maintaining transparency, being aware of the values, and guiding organizations through an ethical perspective [6]. To be effective and successful in a long term, the leadership of the organization should be authentic [7]. Chester Barnard was the first researcher, who studied authenticity in management and organizational studies. By the time, he considered a leader's authenticity as administrative quality criteria. In recent years, due to a major change in positive psychology, there is a renewed interest in the mentioned theme [8].

In an effort to define authentic leadership based on other types of leadership, such as transformational one, and a number of recent definitions, Avolio et al. [4] defined it as a pattern of leaders' transparent and ethical behaviors, which encourages sharing of information needed for decision-making, while it accepts the followers' [9].

Authentic leadership is based on the concept of authenticity, which refers to the conditions in which people express themselves in accordance with their own values, beliefs and sublime human nature, and insist on their beliefs and values under different conditions and pressures. In fact, authentic leadership theories try to train leaders, who show their true selves to their followers, and behave based on their internal realities, while they are away from any hypocrisy [10].
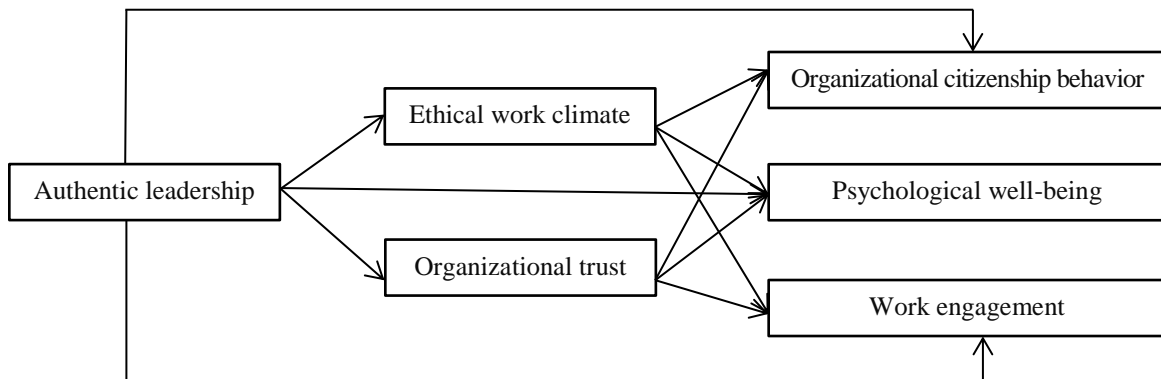
Authentic leadership is a model of leadership behavior, which creates and develops positive mental capacity as well as a positive ethical work climate in order to further develop the following four characteristics. Self-awareness, as the first characteristic, refers to the leader's perception, insight and worldviews, and the way the world's sense-making processes affect how he considers himself and other staff. Furthermore, self-awareness indicates the perception of one's strengths and weaknesses. Eventually, this perception and insight can result in the staffs' conception of the reliability and appropriateness of their leader's decision-making. Transparency in relationships, as the second characteristic, is the result of the favorable and trusting relationships between the leader and his staff. Transparency and fairness in the distribution of information and the proper self-expression improve the staffs' trust in a leader and minimize the inappropriate interactions. Balanced processing of information, as the third characteristic, indicates that before making organizational decisions, authentic leaders process, and analyze reliable information in an objective and non-biased way. Accordingly, they determine the organizational objectives and responsibilities and facilitate their interaction with the staff. An internalized ethical perspective, as the fourth characteristic, is a form of integrated and internalized ethical self-regulation. Classification and integration of this type of self-regulation are done through the organization's standards and values. Finally, the results of this self-regulation will be apparent in the organization's decision making, proper and fair treatment of the staff, and ethical standards and values [3].

An authentic leader with clear and honorable moral values becomes an attractive example for employees, sets up a firm quality of ethical behaviors, and keeping employees responsible for achieving these good manners [11]. Indeed authentic chief transforms his or her employees by the erection of trust foundation. To do this, authentic leaders should always act with their ethical principles. Authentic leaders are also greatly paying attention to ethical rules and are straightforwardly connected to trust and clearness [12]. According to this explanation, ethical work climate and organizational trust were selected as mediators in this research. These two variables seem like outcomes of the authentic leadership.

Based on the studies conducted in recent years on this type of leadership, numerous consequences such as ethical work climate [13-14], organizational trust [15-16], organizational citizenship behavior [15-17], psychological well-being [18], and work engagement [19] have been identified.

Considering the literature reviewed, the present study will explore some of the most important consequences of an organization's authentic leadership, such as organizational citizenship behavior, psychological well-being, and work engagement with the mediation of ethical work climate and organizational trust. The proposed design of the study has been presented in Figure 1 as below:

Fig 1. The proposed design of some authentic leadership consequences in the present study

MATERIALS AND METHODS

Population, sample and sampling method:

The population of the study consisted of a military unit's personnel in 2015. Among them, 220 personnel were randomly selected to participate in the study. When the data collection instrument was distributed among them, 200 questionnaires were gathered. All the participants were male, the mean of their age was 34, and the mean of their work experience was 15.

Data collection instruments:

In this section of the study, the data collection instruments were presented.

Authentic leadership inventory:

To estimate authentic leadership, Neider and Schriesheim's [20] authentic leadership inventory (ALI) was used. This Inventory had 14 items on a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The reliability was estimated using Cronbach's alpha coefficients by Men [21] was 0.87. In the context of the present study, the reliability was determined via Cronbach's alpha and split-half coefficients were 0.850 and 0.821, respectively, and the validity was 0.701 (P < 0.000).

Ethical Climate Scale:

Schwepker's [22] ethical climate scale (ECS) was used to estimate work ethical climate. This scale consisted of 7 items on a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Schwepker [22] reported the reliability coefficient of 0.86. In the present study, the reliability of the ethical climate scale was estimated using Cronbach's alpha and split-half coefficients were 0.891 and 0.751, respectively, and the validity was 0.701 (P > 0.000).

Organizational trust inventory:

Moorman, Deshpand, and Zaltman [23] organizational trust inventory was used to determine organizational trust. This inventory consisted of 5 items on a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Moorman et al. [23] reported the reliability coefficient through Cronbach's alpha as 0.85. In the current study, the reliability of organizational trust inventory was estimated through Cronbach's alpha and split-half coefficients were 0.783 and 0.707, respectively, and the validity was 0.700 (P < 0.000).

Organizational citizenship behavior inventory:

A 16-item inventory was applied to estimate organizational citizenship behavior. The inventory was a modified version of Smith et al. [24] which was adapted from Organ and Konovsky [25]. This inventory was based on a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In this study, the reliability of organizational citizenship behavior inventory was calculated using Cronbach's alpha and split-half coefficients were 0.904 and 0.887, respectively, and the validity was 0.801 (P < 0.000).

Psychological well-being inventory:

Ryff's psychological well-being inventory was used to estimate psychological well-being. This inventory consisted of 18 items and was a short form of Ryff's [26] 120-item inventory. This inventory was designed on a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). Ryff reported the reliability of this 18-item inventory equal to 0.81, which is as much as the one reported in the 120-item inventory. In the present study, the reliability of psychological well-being inventory was evaluated via Cronbach's alpha and split-half coefficients were 0.818 and 0.896, respectively, and the validity was 0.736 (P < 0.000).

Work engagement inventory:

This inventory which was made by Schaufeli consisted of 17 items on a five-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) [27]. Taghipour [28] reported the Cronbach's alpha and split-half coefficients equal to 0.90 and 0.84, respectively. In the present study, the reliability of work engagement inventory was assessed through Cronbach's alpha and split-half coefficients were 0.925 and 0.851, respectively, and the validity was 0.769 (P < 0.000).

Data analysis procedures:

Statistics were used to analyze the data, descriptive, and inferential. Descriptive statistics included mean and standard deviation, and the inferential statistics included Pearson Product Moment correlation, Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), and Bootstrap. SPSS and AMOS-21 software were used to analyze data.

RESULTS

The study's descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients have been presented in Table 1. As Table 1 shows, all correlations were significant at the significance level of .05, except the correlation between psychological well-being and job engagement. The correlation analyses provided insight into the bivariate relationships. Structural Equation Modeling was used to concurrently test the presumed relationships.

The main model fit was assessed before examining the structural coefficients. The initial model fit was assessed based on the presented fitness indexes. Although the values of some fitness indexes- such as chi-square (χ^2), adjusted chi-square (χ^2/df), goodness of fit index (GFI), adjusted goodness of fit index (AGFI), normalized fit index (NFI), comparative fit index (CFI), incremental fit index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) showed an acceptable fit of the proposed model to the data, root mean squared error index (RMSEA) showed that the model needs to be improved. The standardized coefficients of paths in the proposed model have been shown in Table 2.

Table 1. Descriptive statistics and correlation coefficients (** P < .01 and * P< .05)

	Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6
1	Work engagement	46.26	9.46	-					
2	Psychological well-being	21.37	5.52	0.135	-				
3	Organizational citizenship behavior	15.05	3.66	0.409**	0.214**	-			
4	Organizational trust	56.56	9.66	0.404**	0.178*	0.449**	-		
5	Ethical work climate	60.51	8.14	0.474**	0.171*	0.466**	0.461**	-	
6	Authentic leadership	57.49	12.63	0.414**	0.153*	0.461**	0.340**	0.530**	-

Table 2. Structural model, paths, and standard coefficients in the study's proposed model

Path	β	Sig.
Authentic leadership → Ethical work climate	0.530	0.000
Authentic leadership → Organizational trust	0.340	0.000
Authentic leadership → Organizational citizenship behavior	0.266	0.000
Authentic leadership → Psychological well-being	0.072	0.403
Authentic leadership → Work engagement	0.201	0.007
Ethical work climate → Organizational citizenship behavior	0.208	0.003
Ethical work climate → Psychological well-being	0.080	0.329
Ethical work climate → Work engagement	0.276	0.000
Organizational trust → Organizational citizenship behavior	0.276	0.000
Organizational trust → Psychological well-being	0.117	0.114
Organizational trust → Work engagement	0.215	0.000

As Table 2 shows, path coefficients of authentic leadership to psychological well-being, ethical work climate to psychological well-being, and organizational trust to psychological well-being were not significant (P> 0.05). However, the correlation coefficient of two variables in the path (P<0.05) was significant. The significant correlation coefficients among these variables indicated the correct choice of variables based on the reviewed literature. Therefore, hypothesis four, seven, and ten were not supported.

After removing non-significant paths (authentic leadership to psychological well-being, ethical work climate to psychological well-being, and organizational trust to psychological well-

being), the root mean squared error index (RMSEA) showed that the model needed to be improved as well.

The next step to improve the proposed model was correlating the path errors (i.e., ethical work climate and organizational trust).

According to Shabruk, one can expect that when there is a common cause (which is not included in the model) for two variables, their impairment (error) is covariate [29]. Table 3 shows the fitness indexes of the proposed model, the revised model, and the final model.

As Table 3 shows, the final model was well fitted. Figure 2 shows the proposed model with the standardized coefficients of the paths.

Table 3. Proposed model fitting based on fitness indices

Fitness indexes	χ2	df	χ2/df	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI	IFI	TLI	RMSEA
The proposed model	32.994	4	8.248	0.950	0.738	0.884	0.892	0.987	0.595	0.191
The revised model	42.214	7	6.031	0.935	0.804	0.851	0.869	0.873	0.719	0.195
The final model	15.874	6	2.646	0.975	0.911	0.944	0.963	0.964	0.908	0.091
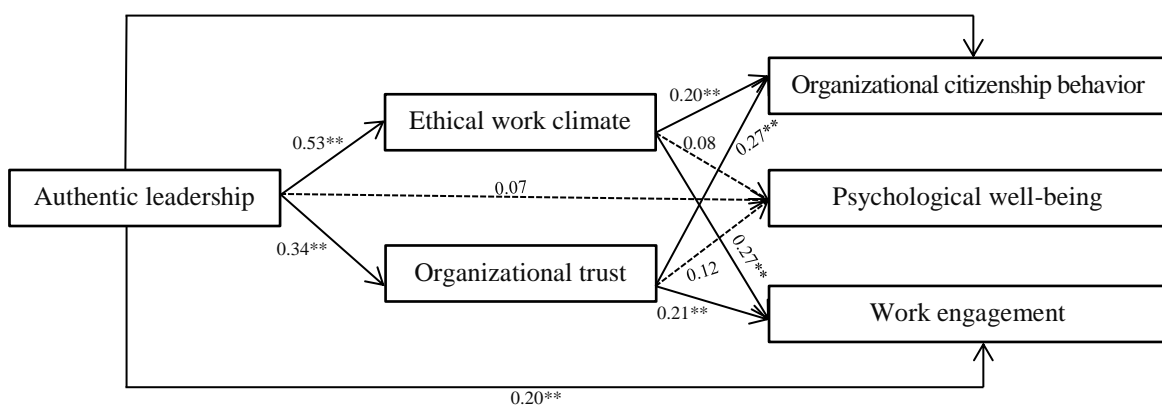
Fig 2. Proposed model with the standardized coefficients of the paths
(*P<.01 and **P<001)

As it is shown in Figure 2, the coefficients of the direct paths of authentic leadership, ethical work climate, and organizational trust to psychological well-being were not significant.

One of the assumptions underlying the proposed model was that there were indirect pathways, which were investigated using the bootstrap method. The results of the bootstrap for indirect paths of the present study's proposed model can be seen in Table 4.

Table 4. the results of the bootstrap for indirect paths of the present study's proposed model

Paths	Values	Boot	Bias	Sig.	0.95 confidence interval	
					Lower limit	Upper limit
Authentic leadership → Ethical work climate → Organizational citizenship behavior	0.1671	0.1675	0.0004	0.0001	0.0708	0.2851
Authentic leadership → Ethical work climate → Psychological well-being	0.0571	0.0558	-0.0013	0.1329	-0.0238	0.1591
Authentic leadership → Ethical work climate → Work engagement	0.2505	0.2476	-0.0029	0.0001	0.1398	0.3971
Authentic leadership → Organizational trust → Organizational citizenship behavior	0.1149	0.1159	0.0010	0.0002	0.0452	0.2238
Authentic leadership → Organizational trust → Psychological well-being	0.0415	0.0418	.0003	0.0722	-0.0031	0.1014
Authentic leadership → Organizational trust → Work engagement	0.1352	0.1338	-0.0014	0.0007	0.0745	0.2559

As the above table shows, the lower and the upper limits of the indirect relationship of 2 and 5 were not significant in variables, therefore, the ethical work climate and organizational trust did not play the roles of mediator in the relationship between authentic leadership and psychological well-being. In addition, bootstrap test results showed that indirect relationships of 1, 3, 4, and 6 were significant at the significance levels of P ≤ 0.0001, P-0.0001, P-0.0002, and P-0.0007, respectively. Accordingly, the variables of ethical work climate and organizational trust played the role of mediators in the relationship of authentic leadership with organizational citizenship behavior and job engagement.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The main objective of the present study was to examine the consequences of authentic leadership; so this study was to investigate the effect of authentic leadership on organizational citizenship behavior, psychological well-being and job engagement, both directly and indirectly through the mediation of ethical work climate and organizational trust. Although no studies examined all the relationships, which were investigated in this study, concurrently, most of the results of this study are consistent with those of the previous studies.

The findings of this study supported the positive effect of authentic leadership on ethical work climate. These findings were consistent with those of Avolio, Griffith, Wernsing and Walumbwa [30], Walumbwa et al. [3], and Trevino, Butterfield and McCabe [31]. Authentic leaders support the organizational ethical values, reward the ethical interactions properly, and facilitate the ethical relationships with the staffs [31]. The consistency between words and actions of authentic leaders increase ethics and working relationships within an organization [32]. Authentic leaders not only are committed to the organization's ethical values which improve interpersonal exchanges, but also encourage staffs to adhere to these values and ethical principles [3-30].

The findings of the present study supported the positive effect of authentic leadership on organizational trust. This finding was consistent with those of Clapp-Smith et al. [6] and Ashja et al. [33]. According to Avolio et al. [30], the preliminary evidence indicated that authentic leadership affects the followers' attitudes and behaviors through trust. Mutual trust between two individuals is formed in a cyclical process; it is initiated by an individual's expectations about the behavior of the other. According to the followers' social exchange hypothesis, individuals consider their relationship with their leader beyond an economic contract based on trust, goodwill, and mutual understanding [33].

The findings of the study supported the positive effect of authentic leadership on organizational citizenship behavior. This finding was consistent with those of Avolio and Gardner [17] and Luthans, & Avolio [15]. Meta-analysis studies have shown that leadership behavior is positively correlated with organizational citizenship behavior (with the range of .9 to .35) [34]. This is particularly useful in the case of authentic leaders because they facilitate an open and fair work environment, which directly affects the attitudes, creation of high levels of job satisfaction, trust, commitment and readiness to act in other staffs' roles [15-17-35].

The findings of the present study did not support the effect of authentic leadership on psychological well-being. This finding was in line with that of Rog [36], but inconsistent with those of Theorell, Bernin, Nyberg, Oxenstierna, Romanowska and Westerlund [37], and Avolio et al. [4]. In this study, this relationship was non-significant because the structure of the tool measuring psychological well-being was too general, and involved some items irrelevant to the objectives of the present study, the determination of psychological well-being as a direct consequence of authentic leadership was improbable, the concept of psychological well-being was broad and all-encompassing, which included a variety of issues other than workplace. In the context of the present study, since all the direct and indirect relationships with psychological well-being were non-significant, there is a high probability that the results were due to the shortcomings of the measuring instrument.

The findings of the study supported the positive effects of authentic leadership on job engagement. This finding was in line with those of Avolio et al. [35] and Harter, Schmidt and Hayes [38]. Fatehi (cited in Maleki) argued that work engagement is more influenced by organizational issues than human resource deficiencies [39]. In their model, Avolio et al. [35] considered engagement as an important consequence of authentic leadership due to its effect on the followers.

The present study was supported the effects of ethical work climate on organizational citizenship behavior and job engagement. This finding was consistent with those of Shakerinia [40], Golparvar, Javadian, Mohammad and Alimardani [41], and Mulki, Jaramillo and Locander [42]. According to Greenberg [43] when individuals with high ethics believe that they do not work hard, they may feel guilty. Therefore, individuals with high professional ethics may do more citizenship behaviors, such as cleaning the workplace and voluntary act some tasks that are not part of their duties. Ethical climate contains a multidimensional structure which affects the attitudes and behaviors of the staffs. It seems that the more the staffs recognize the ethical climate of an organization, and the more individuals realize the values and ethical behavior of an organization, the better they perform, and the more responsibilities they undertake.

The findings of the study were supported the effect of organizational trust on organizational citizenship behavior and job engagement. This finding was consistent with those of Wat and Shaffer [44], Podsakoff et al. [45], Rousseau and McLean Parks [34], Clark and Payne [46] and Mayer and Gavin [47]. Organizational trust can improve the staffs through improving communication and collaboration between staffs and managers, and promoting the efficiency of the teams. Staffs believe that when they rely on their co-workers and managers, they feel a sense of ownership and commitment. Creating an environment with organizational trust has many positive implications for the organization. Research findings showed that trust improves communication, collaboration, and teamwork. Trust also leads to job satisfaction and organizational citizenship behaviors [48]. Personal integrity and self-awareness of the authentic leaders, along with an attempt to have honest relationships, create an unconditional trust among some of their followers. These increase the organizational self-concept followers' through identification of the staffs with the leader. Therefore, they affect work engagement.

Based on the findings of the indirect paths analysis, ethical work climate played the role of the

mediator in the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational citizenship behavior and job engagement. This finding was consistent with those of Handelman, Knapp and Gottlieb [38], Saks [49] and Wellin and Concelman [50]. In a positive organizational context, adopting and implementing a long-term orientation towards ethical behavior was needed. If the ethical and good behavior is required, it provides adequate resources for its application. In this case, the staffs perceive the organization's decision-making process as fair and non-biased. Or if there is injustice, they could at least have the right to protest to be ensured that leaders are aware of the injustice in the organization. This also helps the increase in the organization's leader's self-awareness. In such a positive organizational context, there is no need for formal rules for observing the rights of the staffs; individuals willingly (without supervision) respect the rules. This procedure provides the organizational citizenship behaviors. Walumbwa et al. [3] proposed an acceptable operational definition of authentic leadership as follows. "Leadership is a pattern of behavior that aims to further develop self-awareness, inner ethical points of view, the balanced processing of information and transparency in relationships. These achievements were the result of the expansion of ethical culture in the organizations. They can facilitate positive psychological capacities and thus improve job engagement among the staffs".

Based on the findings of the analysis of the indirect paths, organizational trust played the role of the mediator in the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational citizenship behavior and job engagement. This finding was consistent with those of Gardner and Schermerhorn [51], Luthans, & Avolio [15], Hughes [52] and Harter, et al [53]. Transparency and stability in the authentic leaders' relationships and internalized ethical perspectives lead to the staffs' unconditional trust on the leaders. This, in turn, causes the staffs' behaviors which are beyond their roles [4]. The relationship between trust and work engagement were mutually reinforcing. Trust leads to a wide variety of benefits for those who were involved in certain organizations. Directly or indirectly increased trust lead to positive work behaviors and attitudes such as the staffs' commitment and work engagement [7]. Luthans, & Avolio, [15], believe that interventions of authentic leadership are very effective in the determination of the staffs' identity, trust, hope and positive emotions. They provided a solid foundation for organizational performance. Consequently, it seems that authentic leadership affects the staffs' levels of work engagement.

In this study, all direct and indirect paths to psychological well-being were non-significant (according to the fourth hypothesis), which was inconsistent with the findings of a number of researchers. This relationship was non-significant because the structure of the tool measuring psychological well-being was too general, and involved some items irrelevant to the objectives of the present study. Since all the direct and indirect relationships with psychological well-being were non-significant, there was a high probability that the results were due to the shortcomings of the measuring instrument.

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

It is clear that conducting research, especially in the field of humanities, is associated with some limitations. This study is not an exception and contains some limitations. First, the design of the present study and the structural equation model used did not prove causality; longitudinal studies provide more opportunities to explore causality. Therefore, it is recommended that researchers conduct studies based on longitudinal design. Second, this study was conducted on the personnel of a military unit. So, a generalization of the results to other individuals and organizations should be done with caution (due to different working conditions and cultures). Hence, it is recommended that the study be replicated in other organizations to have a comprehensive perception of authentic leadership. Third, the data collection tools used in this study involved self-reported questionnaires which contained some limitations. Therefore, it is suggested that in addition to self-reported questionnaires, other data collection methods such as observation and surveys to be used. Finally, based on the results of this study, on the importance of authentic leadership in promoting ethical work climate, organizational trust, organizational citizenship behavior and job engagement, one can conclude that organization administrators should pay special attention to identify, evaluate, and promote authentic leadership in their organizations. Therefore, it is suggested that the organizations should recruit authentic leaders, and should encourage, support and develop this type of leadership in order to increase the productivity of the organizational performance.

DECLARATION OF CONFLICTING INTERESTS

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