The Effect of Authentic Leadership on Employee Work outcome in Public Hospitals of Peshawar: Mediating Role of Employee Empowerment

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A B S T R A C T

This study aimed to investigate the effect of authentic leadership on work outcomes with mediating role of empowerment. Data was collected from healthcare sector of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Peshawar with a sample size of two hundred and ten medical professionals in four hospitals of district Peshawar. Purposive sampling technique was used to select the sample respondents. The results of the study revealed that authentic leadership has positive and significant effect on work outcomes such as organizational citizenship behavior, employee performance and job satisfaction. Mediation results show that Empowerment partially mediates the relationship of authentic leadership with organizational citizenship behavior and job satisfaction while full mediation support was found with employee performance. This study addresses that authentic leadership and its interplay with empowerment predicts important outcomes in new cultural setting.

INTRODUCTION

Authentic leadership has emerged as an alternative concept and perspective to other forms of leadership since it has been noted that other leadership frameworks are insufficient to create and develop future leaders (Cooper, Scandura, & Schriesheim, 2005). Increasing corporate scandals and unethical practices at workplace have called for special attention towards value based /authentic leadership (Leroy, Anseel, Gardner & Sels, 2015). In recent literature, authentic leadership has gained a reputation of being a fundamental element for effective leadership (Wong & Laschinger, 2013) and is a point of departure from transactional and transformational leadership (Luthans, Norman, & Hughes, 2006). "Authentic leaders are those who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others' values/moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character" (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004, p. 4). While authenticity is "the

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unobstructed operation of one's true, or core, self in one's daily enterprise" (Kernis, 2003, p. 13). The attributes of authentic person are that he/she will be honest, high on level of integrity and will have high ethical standards that play a profound role in building trust between the leader and the follower (Wong, Spence Laschinger, & Cummings, 2010). The feeling that leaders are dependable, honest and participative creates a healthier work environment where followers respond positively to their work as they are better engaged and become committed to their work (Wong & Cummings, 2009; Wong et al., 2010). Another significant feature of authentic leadership is that it creates opportunities for their employees to develop their skills and give them more freedom in performing their tasks which ultimately creates a better and quality social exchange between the leader and the follower (Ilies, Morgeson, & Nahrgang, 2005). Thus, authentic leadership provides an alternative view of leader follower relationship that is based on social exchange and not on economic exchange that offers a narrow view of this relationship.

Authentic leadership has gained attention of researchers and scholars. In recent years, the development of authentic leadership has been a dominant factor in the field of human resource. It has been linked with the performance of individuals, team and organization as a whole (Leroy, et al., 2015; Pope, 2018). For instance, Pope (2018) found that authentic leadership has a significant relationship with coworkers' satisfaction as well as general job satisfaction but not related with task satisfaction or leader satisfaction. Because of such conflicting findings with earlier studies, Pope (2018) is of the view that other intervening mechanism such as employee empowerment must be investigated in order to better understand the role of authentic leadership. Similarly many other work performance variables such as the organization citizenship behavior is an area which has been linked with different leadership styles but not studied in context of authentic leadership (Pope, 2018). In fact the predominant strength of authentic leadership has been that it leads to intrinsic motivation (Wong et al., 2010; Ilies et al., 2005) that have positive implications for leader-follower relationship and hence improved work performance. In addition, how authentic leaders influence the employee engagement through greater employee empowerment is a recent call by researchers (Pope, 2018; Malik, Dhar, & Handa, 2016; Semedo, Coelho & Ribeiro, 2017). It is also paramount to mention that most of the authentic leadership studies have been conducted in corporate settings and less is known about authentic leadership in public organizations – specifically in the healthcare (Malik et al., 2016; Wong et al., 2010). Hence this study is primarily interested in knowing how authentic leadership influence the work performance of employees including their OCB behavior as well as how greater employee empowerment as a result of authentic leadership influence the authentic leadership and employee various performance outcomes. In fact, both researchers and practitioners have predominantly paying greater attention to employee empowerment as it enables employees to positively affect their performance (Liden, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2000). However, the role of authentic leadership has been least studied with employee empowerment. Semedo et al. (2017) while investigating the association between authentic leadership, employee happiness and employee creativity recommend that further investigation should be carried out to explore this relationship with the inclusion of other mediators and moderators. As earlier stated, authentic leaders believe in transparency, merit and justice as well as understand the values and feelings of coworkers, thus it is more likely that authentic leaders will empower subordinates which in turn will affect their performance. More specifically, this study aims to study whether authentic leadership leads to greater employee empowerment and if such empowerment leads to greater employees' work outcome in the health care sector of Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (KP).

Significance of the Study

This study is aimed to address the research gap identified by various researchers (e.g. Malik et al., 2016; Semedo et al., 2017; Pope, 2018). Recent findings of Pope (2018) highlights that authentic leadership

has significant relationship with certain types of employee satisfaction but not with dimensions of satisfaction and that future studies should study the intervening mechanism. Similarly how the authentic leaders inculcate the organization citizenship behavior among employee through greater employee empowerment is also a recent call by researchers (Pope, 2018). Similarly, Semedo, Coelho and Ribeiro (2017) while studying the mediating effect of employee happiness on the association between authentic leadership and creativity stressed on further exploration of authentic leadership and performance relationship by taking into account other mediators and moderators. In addition, the existing research on authentic leadership has predominantly studied this phenomenon in the corporate setting and little is known about the role of authentic leadership in public sectors. Thus the study not only aids to the existing body of research on authentic leadership and employee work performance but also explore it in a multidisciplinary setting which will further expand the validity of authentic leadership theory.

LITERATURE REVIEW
Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership refers to the individual's capacity (psychological) in the context of organizational resulting in higher awareness (self) and behaviour (positive self-regulated). This type of leader holds positive emotions, confidence, transparency, optimism, and high moral ground (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Hence, "authentic leaders are not fake in their leadership; they are not leading for position, or other incentives; they are original, and their actions are based on principles and sincerity" (Shamir & Eilam, 2005, p. 408). Such leaders gain the commitment of their followers through trust and not by compulsion. They influence and motivate their followers through their behaviour and assist them to improve and succeed. It is difficult to suggest whether a person is authentic or not; hence, it is more appropriate to describe a person's authenticity in terms of a range, that is, more or less authentic (Gardner et al., 2011).

Authentic leadership is considered to have four key components that has led to the conceptualization of several related theories: awareness (self), unbiased/balanced processing, (authentic) action, and transparency (relational) (Kernis, 2003; Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Gardner et al., 2011). Self-awareness refers to a process through which a person understands his or her unique talents, feelings, values, motives, desires and beliefs (Avolio & Gardner, 2005) through which a leader is being enabled to assess how followers perceive their leader and the way their attitudes are being influenced by the leader (Kernis, 2003). Unbiased/balanced processing is about accepting the positive and negative attributes of others without biasness. Moreover, leaders are able to gain access to information in a justified manner (Avolio et al., 2004; Gardner et al., 2005; Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Thus, with the positive moral perspective, and ethical standards, a leader is able to get desirable results. (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). Authentic action is based on honesty and integrity, values and needs instead of pleasing others to gain rewards or to avoid punishments (Gardner et al., 2011). Relational transparency deals with the ability of a leader to present his authentic self to others and share information. It demonstrates honesty and confidence in leaders' relationships with employees. It values truthfulness and openness in the leader and followers relations (Kernis, 2003; Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Gardner et al., 2011). Thus, the existence of these components makes a leader 'authentic' since they abide by their moral and ethical standards. In authentic leadership theory, the above-mentioned components promote trust, loyalty and respect among followers since high ethical standards are fostered (Wong & Cummings,

2009).

Authentic Leadership and Employee Performance Outcome

As stated earlier, authentic leadership due to its inner qualities of trust and authenticity results into numerous positive outcomes. These include follower satisfaction, organizational commitment, organization citizenship behavior, employment and task engagement (Llies, Morgeson & Nahrgang, 2005), followers trust in him and workplace and individual well-being (Walumbwa, Hartnell & Oke, 2010; Avolio, 2005). However, besides being generally related with other forms of leadership, organization citizenship behavior, job satisfaction and employee performance are the most cited and particularly associated outcomes of authentic leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2010).

Authentic Leadership and Organization Citizenship Behavior

Citizenship behavior can be explained as the acts and voluntary activities of employees which leads to a more efficient and effective performance by the organizations (Organ, 1988). Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, and Bachrach (2000) also justify this phenomenon since ethical behavior of authentic leaders will eventually influence the effectiveness and efficiency of employees in organizations. Hence, leaders who are more ethical and take fair decisions will be perceived as caring by the followers (Brown & Treviño, 2006) and will increase OCB (Banks, McCauley, Gardner, & Guler, 2016). This means that subordinates of such leaders put additional efforts to perform their job in return to this high-quality relationship with authentic leaders (Ilies et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2007).

Authentic Leadership, Job Satisfaction and Employee Performance

Authentic leadership (AL) has been associated with employee performance (EP) and job satisfaction (JS) of employees (Jensen & Luthans, 2006; Walumbwa et al., 2008). It creates high Stampsquality relationships with the followers (Avolio et al., 2004). Job satisfaction refers to, 'the extent to which employees like their jobs" (Stamps 1997, p. 13). Several studies has found a positive relationship between AL and JS (see for example; Walumba et al., 2008; Wong & Laschinger, 2012). On the other hand, JS has been associated with EP which refers to the behaviors (on-the-job) of employees for achieving desirable outcomes (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002). Whereas, Performance refers to the combination of quantity, quality, and relevance of output, which exist as a part of job (Mathis & Jackson., 2009). Empirical evidence suggests that leaders who are aware of their ethical and moral values and who act upon their moral beliefs are more likely to produce elevated levels of performance (Walumbwa et al., 2007). Further, the reliance over social exchange in authentic leadership helps to foster job satisfaction and employee performance.

Authentic Leadership and Employee Performance Outcome: Mediating Role of Empowerment

Research shows that authentic leadership helps in empowering leader-follower relationships (Laschinger, Wong, & Grau, 2013; Wong & Laschinger, 2013). Relational transparency – component of authentic leadership promotes employee's empowerment which leads to standardized performance (Wong & Laschinger, 2013). It has been found that merely structuring tasks are insufficient for improving performance, rather empowering teams and giving them authority and responsibility helps to accomplish tasks more efficient and effective (Maynard, Mathieu, Marsh, & Ruddy, 2007). Research evidences that employees take more responsibility in their jobs when they feel empowered as compared to financial incentives (Laschinger, 2008). Recent research shows that sense of empowerment among employees mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and employee creativity (Mubarak &

Noor, 2018). Similarly, empowerment is the arrangements in the work patterns which assist subordinates to achieve their targets in a more standardized way (Kanter, 1993). It should be noted that empowerment is more task motivational, and is evident in employees' competence, i.e. employee's belief whether they are effective or ineffective; the extent to which they can affect organizational outcomes; the value of organizational goals in accordance with the employee's set goals; and self-determination(Gardner et al., 2005). In the healthcare research on authentic leadership, it is determined that empowered staff has greater responsibility and authority, which is required in the healthcare service (Laschinger, 2008). Further, Walumbwa et al. (2010) have found that authentic leadership elicits levels of OCB through the mediating role of empowerment. It is the importance of employee empowerment that both practitioners and researchers are increasingly paying much attention to employees' empowerment (Liden, Wayne, & Sparrowe, 2000). Apart from this, anther significant feature of employee empowerment is the feeling of autonomy in decision making that ultimately affect the performance of employees (Meyerson & Kline, 2008). Recent finding of Mubarak and Noor (2018) also confirms that mediating effect of employee empowerment in authentic leadership and employee creativity. Hence, the significance of empowerment cannot be undermined and is achieved through authentic leadership style.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study assumes that authentic leadership has a direct effect on job outcome of employees. Further, this relationship is also mediated by empowerment. Figure 3.1 reflect the theoretical framework of the study consisting of authentic leadership as independent variable whereas job outcome consisting of OCB, EP and JS as dependent variables whereas empowerment was treated as a mediating variable.
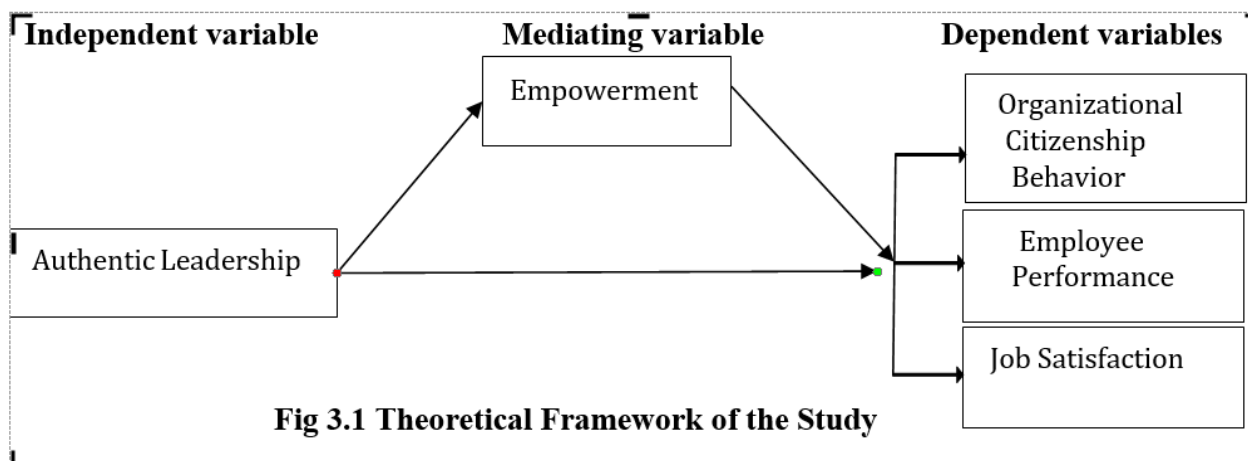
Independent variable	Mediating variable	Dependent variables
	Empowerment	Organizational Citizenship Behavior
Authentic Leadership		Employee Performance
		Job Satisfaction

Fig 3.1 Theoretical Framework of the Study

HYPOTHESES

Based on literature review, the following hypotheses are deduced.
H1: Authentic leadership has a significant positive effect on employee performance outcome.
  H1 (**a**) Authentic leadership significantly affects organizational citizenship behavior of employees.
  H1 (**b**) Authentic leadership significantly affects employees performance.
  H1 (**c**) Authentic leadership significantly affects employees' job satisfaction.
H2: Empowerment has a significant mediating effect on authentic leadership and employee performance relationship.

METHODOLOGY

Population and Sampling procedure

The population of this study consists of employees in healthcare sector of Peshawar. More particularly, four hospitals of district Peshawar were taken as sample of the study. The workforce of each of these hospitals consists of doctors who worked as both managerial and support staff. Within the population, a sample of 211 medical professionals was selected by suing purposive sampling technique.

Measurement Instrument

The data for this study was collected through a self-administered survey and already established measure was used to collect responses of research participants. Precisely, the authentic leadership was measured with 16 items on a five point likert scale adapted from Avolio et al.,(2004), employee empowerment was measured with 19 items using work effectiveness questionnaire II (CWEQ-II) adapted from Laschinger et al (2001). Job satisfaction was measured with 6 items adapted from Pond and Geyer (1991), employee performance with 8 items adapted from Robert, Irina, Elizabeth, and Laurens (2000) and organizational citizenship behavior with 16 items on a five point likert scale adapted from Lee and Allen (2002) respectively.

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

The descriptive analysis of the study reveals that out of total sample of 210, 61.4% were male compared to 38.6% female participants. Age wise composition of the sample shows that 21% respondents were belonging to age category of 20 and 25 years, 22.9% belonging to age category of 26-30 years, 23.8% to the age category of 31to 35 years, almost 18 % belonging to age bracket of 36-40 years and 14.3% were belonging to age category of 41-45 years respectively. The respondents' qualification revealed that only 23% were graduates whereas the remaining were either Master degree holders (47%) or MPhil or PhD degree holders (29.5%) respectively.

The experience of the research participants showed that 45.2% participants were having 1 to 5 years experience followed by 33.8% employees having 6 to 10 years experience, 17.1% employees having 11 to 15 years experience and 3.8% employees were having 16 to 20 years experience. The income wise distribution of the sample showed that 20.5% employees were earning below Rs 50,000 followed by 20.5% in the income bracket of Rs 50,000 to Rs 75,000, 13.8% were having income between Rs 75,000 to Rs 100,000 and 45.2% were having income above Rs 100,000 respectively.

Reliability Analysis

Table 1 shows the reliability statistics of the study variables which are well above the threshold level. Though the standard value for Cronbach alpha varies from 0.70 to 0.90, however, the soft rule for social science accepts alpha value from above 0.60 (Hair et al., 2003).

Table 1. Reliability Statistics

Variables of the study	Cronbach alpha	No. of Items
Authentic Leadership (AL)	0.70	16

Employee Performance (EP)	0.68	8
Job Satisfaction (JS)	0.76	6
Empowerment	0.74	19
Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB)	0.74	16

Hypotheses Testing

This study hypothesized that authentic leadership will have a positive effect on employee performance outcome as well as employee empowerment will significantly mediate the relationship between employee performance and employee performance outcome. In order to analyze the direct as well as mediating hypotheses of the study, the Baron and Kenny (1986) approach was used.

Hypothesis one of the study assumed a direct relationship between authentic leadership and employee performance outcomes including organization citizenship behavior (OCB), employee performance (EP) and job satisfaction (JS). As reflected from table 2, there exists a significant positive relationship between AL and EP measures. The positive beta values for AL and OCB ($\beta = 0.85$, t>2; p <0.05), AL and EP ($\beta = 0.82$, t>2; p <0.05) and AL and JS ($\beta = 0.85$, t>2; p <0.05) confirm significant direct relationship between the respective variables. Hence, the hypothesis stating direct relationship between authentic leadership and employee performance outcomes is therefore supported.

Further, as per Baron and Kenny (1986) approach, the direct relationship between authentic leadership and mediating variable (AL-Empowerment; Model 2) was also found significant ($\beta = 0.73$, t>2; p <0.05), thus substantiating the second assumption of Baron and Kenny (1986) approach for possible mediation. To proceed further towards possibility of mediation effect, the third model in table 2 also examined the association between employee empowerment (mediating variable) and the employee performance outcomes (i.e., OCB, EP and JS). As revealed by the beta values for the respective relationships, the relationship between employee empowerment and OCB ($\beta = 0.70$, t>2; p <0.05), employee empowerment and EP (($\beta = 0.67$, t>2; p <0.05) and employee empowerment and JS ($\beta = 0.70$, t>2; p <0.05) substantiate the direct relationship between employee empowerment (being a mediating factor) and employee performance outcome. This also implies that there is greater possibility of employee empowerment mediating the relationship between AL and EP outcome.

The purpose of Step 1 to step 3 (Model 1 to Model 3) is to establish whether zero-order relationship among the variables exists or not. If there are significant relationships from Steps 1 through 3, analysis is proceeded to step 4 (Model 4) (Barons and Kenny, 1986). Hence, the relationship between AL and

work outcomes with empowerment as a mediator is tested. In step 4 (model 4), some form of mediation is supported if the effect of mediator (path b, figure 3.1) remains significant after controlling for X (independent variable). If X (independent variable) is no longer significant when mediating variable (M) is controlled, the finding supports full mediation. If X is still significant (i.e., both X and M both significantly predict Y), the finding supports partial mediation.

Table 2: Effect of Authentic Leadership on Work Outcomes: Mediating Role of Empowerment

Models	IV (X)	DV (Y)	R^2	β	t	p
Model (1)	AL	OCB	0.071	0.85	20.025	0.000
	AL	EP	0.63	0.82	16.46	0.000
	AL	JS	0.71	0.85	20.05	0.000
Model (2)	AL	Empowerment	0.57	0.73	14.51	0.000
Model (3)	Empowerment	OCB	0.47	0.70	11.97	0.000
	Empowerment	EP	0.40	0.67	10.41	0.000
	Empowerment	JS	0.47	0.708	11.97	0.000
Model (4)	**Empowerment AL**					
		OCB		0.762	11.84	0.000
		EP		0.750	9.89	0.000
		JS		0.762	12.36	0.000

(AL= Authentic Leadership, OCB= Organizational citizenship behavior, EP= Employee Performance, JS= Job Satisfaction)

As revealed by the analysis in model 4 (table 2), the authentic leadership with the inclusion of employee empowerment as mediator still has a significant effect on employee performance outcome variables, thus signifying partial mediation. More explicitly, the employee empowerment does not fully mediate the authentic leadership and employee performance relationship, rather partial mediation is supported. Hence, the hypothesis that employee's empowerment significantly mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and employee performance is partially supported.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The main objective of this study has been to find out the effect of AL on work/employee outcomes through mediating role of employee empowerment in the hospitals of Peshawar, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa. Authentic leadership has been positively related with organizational citizenship behaviour (Avolio et al., 2004) because employees show commitment and loyalty to the authentic leaders as these leaders are trustworthy and follow ethical and moral conduct. The findings of this study for authentic leadership with employee performance supports Gardner et al. (2011) and Avolio et al. (2004) who also found that authentic leadership positively enhances employee performance and job satisfaction. The study concluded that authentic leadership significantly and positively influences employee's citizenship behaviour, their performance and job satisfaction. Earlier research has also revealed that leader's willingness to show authenticity helps employees to improve their performance and satisfaction on the job which also depends on the degree of employees' empowerment (Walumbwa et al., 2010). More particularly, this study reveals that authentic leadership positively enhances employees' performance outcome in terms of organizational citizenship behaviour, employee job satisfaction and employ performance and that these measures are affected by employees' empowerment. As stated by Zhu, Avolio, Riggio and Sosik (2011) that followership is a fundamental part of authentic leadership due to which followers are expected to replicate his leader as a role model (Gardner at al., 2005) and consequently followers perceive authentic leader as an honest leader. Besides positive effects of authentic leadership for employee's job satisfaction (Gardner at al., 2005), its positive effects on

organization citizenship behaviour is also supported by Park and Seo (2016) who found a positive relationship between authentic leadership and organizational citizenship behaviour. Hence, in the light of this study findings as well as earlier findings, it can be inferred that authentic leadership in hospitals of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa plays a significantly positive role in motivating the medical and other supportive staff. Besides direct effect of authentic leadership on employee performance outcome, this study particularly found that there is a significant mediating effect of empowerment on relationship of authentic leadership with organizational citizenship behaviour, job satisfaction and employee performance. As substantiated by earlier researchers (Walumbwa et al., 2010), the greater role of authentic leadership in empowering employees also implies that authentic leadership with greater empowerment of followers in fact intrinsically motivate followers who are psychologically empowered and hence attached with his leader. This also implies that medical staff in hospitals in KP feels positive perception about their leadership. It also implies that leadership of medical institutions in KP provides due empowerment to its followers as a result of which they feel satisfied on their jobs as well as their performance has improved. Thus, we believe that the results of this study may be particularly helpful for medical practitioners in the health care sector to further improve their employees' job outcomes. It can also be used by policy makers and personnel of administrative staff for enhancing the working behaviour of their employees for effective operations of organization.

FUTURE RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

This study considered the effect of authentic leadership on three different employee performance outcomes. It is also possible that other follower's outcomes such as employees' withdrawal behaviours (e.g., turnover, tardiness and absenteeism) should be further explored to check the significance of authentic leadership on follower's attitude and behaviour. Further it is also possible that such relationship should be explored in comparison with other leadership styles in context of organization performance. There is also possibility to study other mediating and moderating factors affecting the authentic leadership and employee performance outcome. Thus, exploration of other factors mediating and moderating the authentic leadership and work outcomes relationship such as positive psychological capital may also be considered in future research. Testing the authentic leadership model in various industrial settings is also important in order to extend the generalizability of authentic leadership theory. Further, this research study is limited in scope to various private and public hospitals of Peshawar KPK. Hence, it is suggested that authentic leadership theory should be tested in multiple samples from other organizations as well. In future, even in the health sector, a longitudinal study may also be conducted particularly after the introduction of reforms in medical institutions by KP government. Lastly, there is a lot of confusion about change management in organization and suitable leadership style. Keeping in view the merits of authentic leadership, it is highly suggested that relationship of authentic leadership in the effective implementation of radical change in organizations may be investigated.

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