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Article

Does authentic leadership influences performance of individuals in presence of trust and leader member exchange: an evidence from health care sector

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Does authentic leadership influences performance of individuals in presence of trust and leader member exchange: an evidence from health care sector

Hafiz Ghufran Ali Khan¹, Muhammad Anwar Khan¹, Muhammad Iftikhar Ali², Sultan Salem^{3*}, Sobia Rashid⁴ and Hafsah Zahur⁴

Abstract: Authentic leadership is attracting the researcher's interest since last decade. For the first time, this research examines the employee-centered aspect of authentic leadership, trust, leader member exchange (LMX) and individual performance with sequential mediation approach. Data were collected from 320 employees working in hospitals/health sector of Pakistan. Findings of the current study confirm significant and positive effect of the authentic leadership with individual performance connected both directly and indirectly through mediating effect of trust and LMX. Further, it is also revealed that authentic leadership creates trustworthy environment among the followers that enhances employee LMX and subsequently improves their job performance. This research delivers novel results of the sequential mediating effects of constructs from one aspect and from other aspect it has integrated four important variables in one model. Theoretical and practical implications along with future recommendations are presented at the end too.

Subjects: Sociology & Social Policy; Work & Organizational Psychology; Public Health Policy and Practice

Keywords: Authentic Leadership; Trust; LMX; individual performance; leadership style; Health sector

1. Introduction

Various scholars believe that authentic leadership (AL) has the potential to improve the individual performance because authentic leaders have the positive psychological attributes (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Ribeiro et al. (2018) viewed that AL can foster subordinate's performance and as evident by most recent research studies the key role of leadership styles in the individual positive work-related outcomes (Daraba et al., 2021; Lee et al., 2020), Duarte et al. (2021) and Semedo et al. (2016) support their argument by verifying its effectiveness in the individual performance. Similarly, in the organizational behavior research, AL has emerged as a hot topic during the last decade (Cao et al., 2020; Duarte et al., 2021; Farid et al., 2020). Luthans and Avolio (2003, p. 243) defined AL is the "positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organizational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviors on the part of leaders and associates, [thereby] fostering positive self-development". AL style provides a new ethical model while focusing on principles, morals and maintaining balance in their words and actions that decrease common leader's issues including egoism and abusive behaviors (Aboramadan et al., 2021; Costas & Taheri, 2012; Mubarak & Noor, 2018). Therefore, authentic leaders encourage and promote workplace trust within followers (Farid

et al., 2020; Wang & Hsieh, 2013; Zhang et al., 2021) and leader member exchange (LMX; Jung et al., 2021; Wang et al., 2014), and the individual performance could increase significantly. AL promotes individual job engagement (Bamford et al., 2013), affective commitment (Ribeiro et al., 2020) and job satisfaction (Wirawan et al., 2020). Individual performance offers significant advantages to organizations in terms of sustainable growth as well as competitive edge in the industry. Therefore, scholars and practitioners have made great attempt to know the antecedents of individual performance (Buil et al., 2019), and a part from the various antecedents investigated in the literature, plethora of research studies have been recognized the importance of supervisory behavior in the individual performance (Buil et al., 2019; Duarte et al., 2021; Kusumah et al., 2021). In human-service oriented sectors, such as health sector, the role of leadership has been recognized as an important factor for organizational success (Alilyyani et al., 2018), as the leaders effect their follower's behaviors, emotions and attitudes (Avolio et al., 2004), and the way they facilitate their clients (Wallace et al., 2013).

This study addresses the lack of comprehensive and proper empirical research model in the extant literature linking the mediators, and dependent variables (e.g individual performance) of AL style (Duarte et al., 2021). In-fact, no empirical research work has yet studied the important links between AL and individual performance through mediating effect of trust and LMX. Therefore, this study has become an early empirical attempt to fill prior gaps by integrating all these four important variables in a single research framework in the sequence of AL (Independent), trust and LMX (mediators as well as sequential mediators) and individual performance (dependent) constructs. Previous researchers argued that lack of trust among employees affects their performance (Brown et al., 2015; Hansen et al., 2002). Trust among employees is the fundamental way to promote positive and healthy working environment in the organization, and it is the belief, sense of positive expectations, and rely on other working partners (Mollering, 2006; S.L; Robinson, 1996; Zhang et al., 2021). AL who creates appealing, supportive and positive atmosphere at the workplace (Avolio & Gardner, 2005), and enhance feeling of trust among employees (Hsieh & Wang, 2015; Wang & Hsieh, 2013; Zhang et al., 2021). Gambetta (1988) viewed it as group member belief that "another member will perform an action that is beneficial or at least not detrimental ... to consider engaging in some form of cooperation with him". Despite of trust, LMX is proposed as a second prerequisite of AL and individual performance (Duarte et al., 2021). LMX views to the quality associations between leaders and their subordinates (Gholipour Soleimani & Einolahzadeh, 2017; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Tziner et al., 2020), that build through embedded exchange processes between leader and their subordinates (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Wayne et al., 2002). AL promotes a high degree of LMX because it emphasizes flexible, supportive and relationship-oriented worker's behavior (Joo, 2012; Jung et al., 2021). Understanding LMX's basic features, we assume that quality of LMX can seriously affect the linkages between authentic leaders and individual performance. Various researchers noted that quality of LMX effect both individual and organization performance (Joo, 2012; Siddique et al., 2020; Stewart & Johnson, 2009; Tziner et al., 2020). Hence, we assume LMX as an important mediator in linkages between AL and individual performance. Further it is also safe to assume that trust and LMX facilitate the linkages between AL and individual performance.

The study contributes in various aspects to the literature. First, it adds to the extant knowledge of social exchange theory by investigating the theorized till unexplored association among AL, trust, LMX and individual performance. Second, our research study shows that trust and LMX mediates the linkages between AL and individual performance. Third, research work adds to the extant knowledge relating to individual performance because it identifies the positive energy and feeling of employees originating from trust and LMX in the presence of AL that renders individuals to show better performance.

2. Structure of the study

The research study at hand has the structure which includes abstract of the study followed by the key terms used in this research, detailed introduction of different study variables used in this research, detailed and recent review of the literature, research methodology used for this study followed by analysis of the data collected from 320 employees working in the health sector of Pakistan and in the last section researchers have described the study results as conclusion and strength & limitations of the study followed by the proposed directions for future research in the same or relevant areas.

3. Authentic leadership and individual performance

Walumbwa et al. (2008) have defined AL 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 subordinates, fostering positive self-development”. The key attributes of authentic leaders involve leading their subordinates fairly rather than unreal or unfair ways are the key attributes of authentic leaders (Gardner & Carlson, 2015). The four important dimensions of authentic leaders are “self-awareness”, “balanced information processing”, “relational transparency” and “internalized moral” (Walumbwa et al., 2008). In a recent study of Gardner et al. (2021), the authors provide an important insight about these four dimensions. First self-awareness by the perspectives of managers and subordinates towards their targets, values and motives it offers them insight that may support them to articulate their objectives in a way that may appeal and resonate others. Second, the information with balance processing aspects enables managers and subordinates to actively hear to each other’s point of view in a non-defensive way. Thus enhancing the prospects for accomplishing common ground. Third, relational transparency attributes enable open exchange of ideas and thus raise the appreciation of both leaders and subordinates for the viewpoint of another party. Fourth, the internalized moral aspect includes basic values like justice and respect for other that creates non-conflict environment for leaders and subordinates. In addition to this, authentic leaders offer positive mental behaviors including ethics, optimism, confidence, hopefulness, transparency, future oriented and prioritizing its subordinate’s development (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Cao et al., 2020; Gardner et al., 2021; Ribeiro et al., 2018; Zheng et al., 2021). Authentic leaders develop over time through experience in which the manager build genuine and transparent linkages with their followers and improve their self-awareness as a manager (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). AL has known for its positive psychological attributes since from its origin (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008) and have an important impact on followers positive work outcomes (Cao et al., 2020; Duarte et al., 2021; Hadian Nasab & Afshari, 2019). As endorsed by recent meta-analysis conducted by Zhang et al. (2021) there are various positive consequences of AL including followers work engagement, psychological empowerment, commitment and thriving. In addition to this existing literature of AL offers wide range of evidences regarding its favorable impacts on followers work related performance including job satisfaction and task performance (Munyon et al., 2021), job performance and creativity (Saeed et al., 2018; Yikilmaz, & Surucu, 2021; Wong & Laschinger, 2013). Authentic leader’s attitudes and behaviors are strongly found on ethical principles, supportive, values and belief that improve follower’s performance (Cao et al., 2020; Duarte et al., 2021; S. I. Khattak et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2021). Similarly, (Blau, 1964) social exchange theory demonstrated, followers who shows higher obligation to their managers are possibly to receive the positive and respectable treatment from their managers in the form of improved effort that is probable to translate into greater level of work performance (Wang et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2021). Subordinates under the authentic leaders feel itself more autonomy and shows more self-efficiency in their work that enhance their performance (Walumbwa et al., 2008; Zhang et al., 2021). Hence it may be safe to propose the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis H₁: AL may positively affect the individual performance.

Mediating role of trust

Trust is viewed as the worker’s assumption, belief and expectations about their organization and leader that they will treat them equitably and respectably (Carmeli & Spreitzer, 2009). Trust is viewed as “when one party has confidence in the exchange partner’s reliability and integrity” (Morgan & Hunt, 1994, p. 23) or “as the willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the actions of

another party” (p. 712). When followers experience safe and confidentiality atmosphere their level of trust is high that make them more vulnerable (Cox, 2012). In a social environment, trust is a social and psychological variable that is used to know the nature and quality of association between two actors (Andersen et al., 2020; Chalker & Loosemore, 2016; J. Khan et al., 2022). In the extant literature various dimensions of trust have been discussed in several perspectives (Lyons & Mehta, 1997) including effective-cognitive based trust (McAllister, 1995) and situational and dispositional based trust (Butler, 1991). Trust can be classified into three levels including (weak, semi strong and strong; Barney & Hansen, 1994). Prior research studies noted various important attributes of trust including transparency, opens, reliability, integrity, dependability, congruency, ability/competence, communication, benevolence and consistency (Koohang et al., 2017; Paliszkievicz et al., 2015).

Keeping in mind the significance of social exchange theory in leadership literature (Blau, 1964), current study applies social exchange theory to view the exchange process between leader and subordinate and their effects on individual performance. As suggested by Cropanzano and Mitchell (2005) that social exchange theory has been recognized as a vital conceptual model being employed to view worker’s behaviors and attitudes in the working atmosphere. Social exchange theory postulates that workers build exchange linkages based on their prior experience with other workers (Blau, 1964; Farid et al., 2021; Shore et al., 2004). In line with the norms of mutual relation (Gouldner, 1960; Levinson, 1965), workers frequently repay other workers in the similar way as they receive; either it is bad or good (Mitchell & Ambrose, 2007). It seems evident from social exchange theory that trust is a key factor in the linkages between two actors (M. N. Khattak et al., 2020). The social exchange model can be applied to understand the effect of AL on individual performance. Engagement of the follower in decision-making process and consistency in both (word and action) are the important attributes of authentic leaders that make them more trustable to their subordinates (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Zhang et al., 2021). Hence, authentic leaders promote subordinates’ positive feedback and promote healthy working environment (Wang et al., 2014). Further, authentic leaders can increase dignity, trust, respect and integrity among subordinates (Bamford et al., 2013), and followers respond by delivering more efforts and performance (Zhang et al., 2021). Previous research highlighted the prerequisite role of trust along-with AL and followers positive work outcomes including engagement and commitment (Bandura & Kavussanu, 2018; Hsieh & Wang, 2015; Wang & Hsieh, 2013). Thus, gaining the subordinates trust is another important component of effective leaders that is a key element of social exchange theory (Blau, 1964) and also an important factor for subordinates works effectiveness (Hsieh & Wang, 2015). Therefore, current study purposes that nexus between AL & individual performance can mediate by trust. Hence, we set the following hypothesis: -

Hypothesis H₂: The nexus between AL and individual performance can significantly be mediated by trust.

5. Mediating role of LMX

Leader member exchange clarifies the interpersonal linkages and exchange between leaders and subordinates, a typically unwritten understanding that occurs in working environment (Tziner et al., 2020; Wayne et al., 2002). LMX, generally viewed as overall connection quality between a followers and leaders (Buengeler et al., 2021). It is commonly undertaken and accepted that LMX linkages occur from a series of exchanges and interactions (Dienesch & Liden, 1986; Siddique et al., 2020). These exchanges and interactions are established through social exchange theory that suggests that the exchange established when one actor displays something valuable and interesting to the other actor i.e creation of social exchange association (Blau, 1964; Gouldner, 1960). Similarly, LMX is based on the exchange resources, support and efforts between followers and leaders (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Wayne et al., 2002). The exchange will be high if one actor displays something positive and valuable (Dienesch & Liden, 1986). Bauer and Green (1996) argued that LMX occurs in the three stages. Role taking is the first stage, where leader finds talent, motivation, abilities and characteristics. Second, in

the role making stage leaders determine the role of followers. In the final stage, reciprocal understanding establishes between followers and leaders. Hence, high quality association offers in a form of obligation on the side of the subordinates to respond with a higher degree of effort and positive work result (Echebiri and Amundsen, 2021; Tziner et al., 2020).

Authentic leader tries to offer positive organization atmosphere that supports follower's performance by providing support role in the stressful movement, and developing transparent and fair interaction. Further, authentic leaders can develop long-term communication with their follower's that comprises loyalty and trust (Yıkılmaz & Sürücü, 2021). Hence, this loyalty, sincerity-based interaction and trust comes when authentic leader develops positive influence through LMX with their followers (Niu et al., 2018). Leaders trust on their employees and expects assistance whenever required, and employees trust on their leaders for encouragement, career investment and support (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). This LMX attributes developed by the communication between the manager and follower enables the follower to obtain the autonomy and guidance needed for the self-sufficiency (Liao et al., 2018). Follow up the extent research knowledge, it is assumed that AL builds a higher quality LMX with the followers that can significantly influence individual performance. Validating this idea, extent literature also shows that the impact of AL on individual work outcomes are most of the time indirectly mediated by LMX (Hsiung, 2012; Jung et al., 2021; Yıkılmaz & Sürücü, 2021). For instance, research studies underscored that LMX significantly mediates the relationship between AL and individual creativity and employee voice behavior (Hsiung, 2012; Yıkılmaz & Sürücü, 2021), and employee innovative work behavior (Jung et al., 2021). Hence, with the prevailing research work, current study assume that individual performance can be improved through AL in the presence of LMX. Therefore, we postulate the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis H₃: LMX significantly mediates the linkages between AL and individual performance.

6. Sequential mediating role of trust and LMX

Existing research hypothesizes that individual performance can be enhanced through AL in the presence of trust and LMX. As prior research noted that employees trust can be obtained through AL due to its positive attributes (Zhang et al., 2021), and trust can motivate employee to put more effort in their work (Duarte et al., 2021). When employees are experiencing greater level of trust at the working atmosphere (Farid et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2021) than they show higher level of work engagement, displays higher degree of organization commitment and feel more satisfaction in their job (Bamford et al., 2013; Carmeli & Spreitzer, 2009; M. N. Khattak et al., 2020) and positively contribute to their organizational success (Farid et al., 2020). Hence, it could be safe to postulate that employees trust may create LMX (Yıkılmaz & Sürücü, 2021). In addition, high quality LMX among employees may be significantly improve their psychological, attitudinal and behavioral aspects (Duarte et al., 2021; Jung et al., 2021; Tziner et al., 2020; Yıkılmaz & Sürücü, 2021). As various studies have noted a significant linkage between AL and worker trust (Wang & Hsieh, 2013; Zhang et al., 2021) and LMX (Wang et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2021), while other noted the importance of LMX in the subordinate's performance (Martin et al., 2016; Siddique et al., 2020; Yıkılmaz & Sürücü, 2021). As social exchange theory suggested that high quality LMX is based on mutual trust between employees that motivates workers to respond with desirable behavior and positive attitude (e.g., Andersen et al., 2020; Blau, 1964). Positive attributes of authentic leader including prioritizing, acknowledging, accommodating and integrating the needs of individual, team, organization and society make him different from other leadership style. Further, authentic leaders stand firm and displays high level of resistance to organization views and pressures when supporting and assisting subordinates to complete their targets autonomously (Begley, 2001). Thus, due to this supporting and assisting behaviors of authentic leaders' subordinates trust and high quality LMX can be accomplished (Duarte et al., 2021; Jung et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). So, trust and LMX can motivate subordinates to display desirable behavior and outcomes to the organization (Andersen et al., 2020; Wang et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2021).

Present research work follows the assumption approach that individual performance can be increased through authentic leaders in the presence of trust and LMX. The association between AL can be established and found through two intermediary elements such as trust and LMX. We assumed that AL positively promote trust among employees that makes high quality LMX between followers and leader, thus followers are frequently providing effort to encounter the challenges and achieve the common goals, hence delivering higher degree performance. Based on the above evidences and our assumptions, the concluding hypothesis is written as follow;

Hypothesis H₄: Trust and LMX are the sequential mediators in the linkages between AL and individual performance.

7. Key gaps and contributions of the study

A huge gap existed that no empirical research was conducted to examine the role of trust and LMX as a sequential mediation in the linkages between authentic leadership and individual performance. As far as the main contribution are concerned, current study proposed further understanding of the antecedents that affect hospital individual employee performance and to broaden the existing knowledge in this area. Hence, current research study has confirmed that authentic leadership has a significant effect on individual performance of hospital worker and this performance can be enhanced through AL in the presence of trust. Further, hospital individual performance can improve through AL in the presence of LMX and the final contribution of the study at hand was to investigate the individual performance through the AL in the combined effect (sequential mediation) of trust and LMX.

8. The conceptual model

Figure 1 presents the sequential mediation model showing the effect of AL on individual performance through the sequential mediation effect of trust and LMX (Duarte et al., 2021; Jung et al., 2021; Yikılmaz & Sürücü, 2021).

9. Methodology

9.1. Sample and procedures

This study employed quantitative research method and gathered data for proposed construct from hospitals professionals attached with different hospitals of Rawalpindi and Islamabad (major cities of) Pakistan. For the purpose of data collection adopted questionnaire were distributed among the professionals that had more than two years working experience in the hospitals. Simple cross sectional technique was applied to select the respondents from the overall population as it allows the researchers to collect data from a larger pool of subjects and easily becomes comparable for any differences among responses In total, 320 useable survey questionnaires were received out of 377, with response rate of 85 percent. The complete demographic details of participants are shown in Table 1.

For data analysis, various statistical techniques were employed by using Smart PLS. In the domain of social sciences structural equation modeling (SEM) is suggested as a valuable multivariate testing method for causal modeling (Reisinger & Mavondo, 2007). Current research selected path analysis to test and find causal path. Through Smart PLS, both model path coefficients and fitness were analyzed with Maximum Likelihood Estimation (MLE) technique. Participants gave

Figure 1. Conceptual Framework

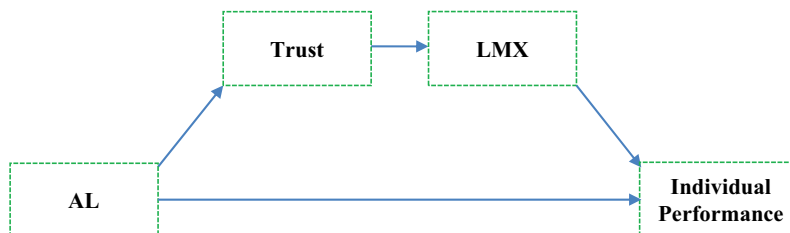


Table 1. Demographic Statistics

Demographics	Description	Frequency	Percentage
Gender	Male	178	56
	Female	142	44
Age	20-25	33	10
	26-30	49	15
	31-35	56	18
	36-40	69	22
	41-45	39	12
	46-50	43	13
	51 & above	31	10
Experience	1-5	73	23
	6-10	91	28
	11-15	64	20
	16-20	53	17
	Above 20	39	12
Qualification	Undergraduate	86	27
	Graduation	168	53
	Master & above	66	21

their degree of agreement with every item of questionnaire on five point Likert scale (1 = “Totally disagree” to 5 = “Totally agree”).

10. AL-Independent variable

Most of the researchers used scale operationalized by Walumbwa et al. (2008) for assessing respondent’s views regarding AL. Same scale was employed by current study to measure the AL attributes of hospital professionals. The scale has covered four key dimensions including “self-awareness”, “relations transparency”, “internalized moral perspective” and “balanced processing”. The scale is comprising 16 items with sample item “Seeks feedback to improve interactions with others”. Cronbach’s alpha of the construct scale was found 0.85 i.e. >0.7.

11. Trust-Mediating variable

A seven item scale operationalized by Koohang et al. (2017) was employed to assess the hospital professional trust at the workplace. The “compassion and empathy demonstrated by a leader, build trust among people” is the sample item. Cronbach’s alpha of the scale was 0.79 i.e. >0.7.

12. Leader member exchange-mediating variable

The second mediation construct LMX was measured through seven item scale (Graen & Uhl-Bien’s, 1995). Sample statement of the construct is “My leader understands my working difficulties and needs.”. Cronbach’s alpha of the scale was 0.90 i.e. > 0.7.

13. Individual performance-dependent variable

Finally, dependent construct was measured through Staples et al. (1999) scale. Sample statement is “I’m an efficient worker”. Scale shows 0.86 Cronbach’s alpha of scale.

14. Results

Structural and measurement models are the two important components of each model and structure model is already sought, where the quality and reliability of the structure model depend on the valid and trustable measurement model (M. M. Khan et al., 2021).

15. Measurement model

To check the capability of measurement model, reliability and validity of all proposed variable were checked. Reliability, measured with inter-item consistency was checked through composite reliability (CR) and Cronbach’s alpha (alpha). Table 2 shows that all the proposed variables had more than 0.7 CR and Alpha (Alaloul et al., 2020; Hair et al., 2019). Further, to evaluate the

Table 2. Reliability and validity

S#	Variables	Min. loading	Alpha	CR	AVE	HTMT ratio		
						1	2	3
1	AL	0.760	0.851	0.874	0.652			
2	Trust	0.709	0.795	0.818	0.541	0.603		
3	LMX	0.734	0.901	0.805	0.682	0.684	0.714	
4	IP	0.792	0.868	0.731	0.702	0.632	0.701	0.598

Table 3. Descriptive statistics

S#	Variables	M	SD	Correlation		
				1	2	3
1	AL	3.014	0.731			
2	Trust	3.415	0.724	0.609**		
3	LMX	3.243	0.774	0.645**	0.690**	
4	IP	3.041	0.784	0.703**	0.659**	0.713**

Notes: ** shows significant of correlation at the two tailed (0.01 levels)

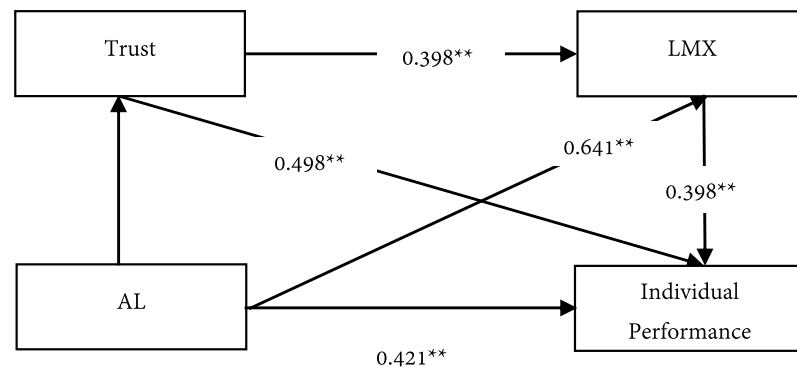
Table 4. Structural model

Association	Coefficient	SE	t-test	p-value
AL Individual performance	0.421	0.025	19.110	0.000
AL Trust Individual performance	0.498	0.034	22.004	0.000
AL LMX Individual performance	0.641	0.031	16.318	0.000
AL Trust LMX individual performance	0.398	0.029	7.254	0.000

variable constructs' convergent (CV) at each item level, each item loading was acquired. All the variables had shown more than 0.7 item loading (Hair et al., 2010). Where the analyzes of average variance extract (AVE) guided current study toward construct level CV that is more than 0.5 (Hair et al., 2019; Hair et al., 2010). In last, heterotrait-monotrait (HTMT) ratio was computed to check the discriminant validity. All pairs of construct had less than 0.85 ratio as indicated by Table 2 (Henseler et al., 2016). The correlation among variable and Mean, Standard Deviation (SD) values are showing significant result as depicted in Table 3.

Both direct and indirect linkages between the variables were tested through structural model as shown in Table 4. The first hypothesis, linking AL to individual performance, was accepted ($\beta = 0.421$; $p < 0.001$). The second hypothesis examining the linkages between AL and individual performance in the presence of trust was also noted to be significant ($\beta = 0.498$; $p < 0.001$). Similarly, the second mediator LMX was proposed in hypothesis 3 in the linkages between AL and individual performance was also accepted ($\beta = 0.641$; $p < 0.001$). Finally, the sequential mediating effect of trust and LMX in the linkages between AL and individual performance was considered in Hypothesis 4 ($\beta = 0.398$; $p < 0.001$; Figures 1 and Figure 2).

Figure 2. Structural model



16. Conclusion

The health sector inevitably needs performance of their workers in order to achieve higher level of service efficiency, in addition to this; individual performance particularly contributes to achieving customer satisfaction with the efficiently delivered services in the health sector. Current study proposed to further understand the antecedents that affect hospital individual performance and broaden the existing knowledge in this area. Current research study was conducted with the aim of four objectives and the first objective was to assess the significant impact of authentic leadership on hospital individual performance. Second and third objectives were set in line of social exchange theory that hospital individual performance can be enhanced through authentic leadership in the presence of trust (second objective) and hospital individual performance can improve through AL in the presence of LMX (third objective). Last objective was to investigate the individual performance through the AL in the combined effect (sequential mediation) of trust and LMX.

Finally, result of each objective confirmed the claim that AL is linked to individual performance. AL with its positive attributes including transparency, hopefulness, resilience, ethics, future oriented, optimism, and motive and encourage follower's performance (Jung et al., 2021; Niu et al., 2018; Wang et al., 2014; Zhang et al., 2021). The result of current study is in line with previous research that claims that AL as a key antecedent of individual performance (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009; Duarte et al., 2021; Ribeiro et al., 2018). In spite of direct linkages, existing study aims to test the individual performance through AL in the presence of trust (as a mediating construct). As predicated, linkages between AL and individual performance have positively mediated by trust, hence confirmed hypothesis 2. This also confirms the prior research claims that followers work related performance can enhance through AL in the presence of trust (Hsieh & Wang, 2015; Ribeiro et al., 2018; Wong & Cummings, 2009). As social exchange theory indicates that subordinate's behavior is relying on their immediate boss behavior, from this aspect, subordinates feel more satisfied in their job and shows more job engagement, when they have trust that their leaders treat them fairly then they reciprocate with more desirable behavior (Blau, 1964; Nachmias et al., 2021; Zhang et al., 2021). AL demonstrate high moral norms, favorable reputation, honesty and integrity enhances positive expectations among followers, increasing followers trust and willingness to help and cooperate their supervisors for the organization benefits (Avolio et al., 2004). Hence, when immediate bosses are authentic, followers shows trust easily to their leaders which improves their performance. Further, existing research study recognized that LMX enhance individual performance in a positive and significant way in the present of AL. The communication and interaction between leader and followers are cardinal in the performance of individual required to in the health sector. Prior research noted the important role of LMX in the linkages between AL and followers positive work outcomes (Jung et al., 2021; Shahid & Muchiri, 2019). Finally, existing research study established that trust and LMX have combined (sequential mediation) effect in the linkages between AL and individual performance.

17. Practical implications

Present research work results also offer various practical implications. First, current work confirmed that AL's significantly impact on individual performance. Therefore, the leaders of health sector should present their-self as a role model to encourage and promote the individual employee performance. Secondly, hospital leaders should promote trustable working environment in their organizations. There are various ways by which leaders can encourage trust and hence built positive linkages with followers, such as displaying authentic concern and using authentic and effective approach e.g., avoiding difficult language and by ensuring transparent communication (Elsbach & Eloffson, 2000; Hsieh & Wang, 2015; Walumbwa et al., 2008; Zhang et al., 2021). Third, organizations' leaders require to understand the significant importance of LMX for individual performance, therefore, organization must invest in such programs to facilitate the collaborative working environment in the organization and finally, health sector must acknowledge the significance of both trust and LMX in the organization to make more productive workforce.

18. Theoretical implications

This research contributes to the extant literature in various ways such as the current work draws on the social exchange theory to suggest trust and LMX as the appropriate single and combined exchange mechanisms and the study at hand has comprehensively examined how authentic leaders effect individual performance. As noted earlier, prior research about how AL effects individual performance has investigated the mechanisms either by suggesting only one mediator (Ling et al., 2017; Zhou & Yang, 2013) or suggesting the mediator from various perspectives but missing a comprehensive theoretical model to bind these various perspectives (Duarte et al., 2021; Hsiung, 2012). By drawing on the social exchange theory, current study suggests that trust and LMX as mediator as well as sequential mediation presents a more comprehensive framework of AL effects on individual performance. The results of the current study confirmed that leader's authenticity is significantly associated to individual performance through mediating effect of trust. Current research work noted that AL does affect follower work outcomes, although indirect (Duarte et al., 2021; Jung et al., 2021; Ribeiro et al., 2018). At the end, current study contributed a piece of document on the significance of trust and LMX in the linkages between AL and individual performance.

19. Limitations and future recommendations

Apart from valuable contribution of this study, various limitations should be counted when generalizing findings of current study. First, this research study adopted cross sectional research method that creates a chance of causality, thus, longitudinal research study should be employed to generalize the finding through future research studies. Secondly, current study is only limited to the healthcare sector, hence, other sectors and cultures could be focused to address this issue. Third, participant's characteristics such as their gender, experience and age is not tested as confounder that must be tested in future research work. Fourth, this research work tested only the variables of trust and LMX as mediator in the linkage between AL and individual performance, future research could consider job engagement, psychological safety, psychological empowerment and congruence etc. too. Finally, future study can check the moderating effect of ethic infrastructure, organization poulitces and organizational virtuousness in the linkages between AL and individual performance.

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