| **The Mediating Role of Organizational Commitment in the Effect of Authentic Leadership on Employee Performance**

Otantik Liderliğin Çalışan Performansına Etkisinde Örgütsel Bağlılığın Aracı Rolü

Video Link: https://youtu.be/AcAB5u2oOXg | |

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Öz

Günümüzün rekabet ortamında örgütlerin sürdürülebilir rekabet avantajının elde edilmesinde çalışanların bireysel performansları önemli belirleyici bir unsur olarak kabul edilir. Bu nedenle yöneticiler, çalışanlarının performanslarını artırma cabasındadır. Araştırmacılar tarafından çalışan performansının öncüllerini tespit etmeye yönelik birçok araştırma yapılmıştır. Yapılan araştırmalarda liderlik en dikkat çeken araştırmalardır. Literatür, liderin çalışan performansını olumlu yönde etkilediğini görüşünü desteklemektedir. Literatürde farklı liderlik tarzlarının çalışan performansı üzerinde etkili olduğu belgelenmiş olmakla birlikte otantik liderliğe yönelik araştırmalar sınırlı seviyededir. Bu nedenle literatürde otantik liderin çalışan performansı üzerindeki etkisini belirmeye yönelik araştırmalar ihtiyaç duyulmaktadır. Otantik lider, çalışanlarını örgütsel hedefler ve çıkarlarla özdeşleştirerek beklentilerin ötesinde performans göstermeye motive eden bir liderlik yaklaşımdır. Ayrıca otantik lider, çalışan performansını etkilemenin yanı sıra çalışanlarda örgütsel bağlılığın oluşmasında da önemli rol oynar. Bu akıl yürütmeden hareketle araştırmada; otantik lider, çalışan performansı ve örgütsel bağlılığı içeren kavramsal bir model önerilmiştir. Önerilen modelin test edilmesi için İstanbul'daki konfeksiyon fabrikası çalışanlarından 317 anket verisi elde edilmiştir. Elde edilen anket verileri SSPS-24 ve AMOS-18 programı yardımıyla analiz edilmiştir. Analiz sonuçları, otantik liderin çalışan performansını ve örgütsel bağlılığı olumlu yönde etkilediği göstermiştir. Bu bulgulara ilave olarak otantik liderin çalışan performansına etkisinde örgütsel bağlılığın aracı rolünün olduğu tespit edilmiştir. Örgütsel bağlılığın aracı rolünü keşfetmek, otantik liderlik ve çalışan performansı arasındaki ilişkinin daha fazla açıklığa kavuşturulmasına yönelik olumlu bir adımdır. Araştırma bulguları literatüre katkı sağlamanın yanı sıra araştırmacıların ve uygulayıcıların ilgisini çekecek sonuçlara sahiptir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Otantik Liderlik, Çalışan Performansı, Örgütsel Bağlılık, Örgütsel Davranış, Aracı Değişken.

The Mediating Role of Organizational Commitment in the Effect of Authentic Leadership on Employee Performance

Abstract

In today's competitive environment, employees' individual performances are considered to be an important determining factor in achieving sustainable competitive advantage of organizations. Therefore, managers are in the interest of increasing the performance of their employees. Many studies have been conducted by researchers to identify the

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antecedents of employee performance. In the researches, leadership is the most remarkable research topic. The literature supports the view that the leader positively affects employee performance. Although it has been documented in the literature that different leadership styles are effective on employee performance, research on authentic leadership is limited. For this reason, studies are needed in the literature to determine the effect of the authentic leader on employee performance. An authentic leader is a leadership approach that motivates employees to perform beyond expectations by identifying them with organizational goals and interests. Also, the authentic leader plays an important role in the formation of organizational commitment in employees as well as affecting employee performance. Based on this reasoning in the research; A conceptual model including the authentic leader, employee performance, and organizational commitment is proposed. To test the proposed model, 317 survey data were obtained from the garment manufacturing employees in Istanbul. The survey data were analyzed with the help of SSPS-24 and AMOS-18 software. The results of the analysis showed that the authentic leadership positively affected employee performance and organizational commitment. In addition to these findings, it was determined that organizational commitment has a mediating role in the effect of the authentic leader on employee performance. In addition to contributing to the literature, the research findings have results that will attract the attention of researchers and practitioners.

Keywords: Authentic Leadership, Employee Performance, Organizational Commitment, Organizational Behavior, Mediator Variable.

Introduction

Employees are seen as the valuable resources of an organization, and the success of the organization increases in direct proportion to the performance of its employees. Therefore, in today's competitive environment, organizations rely more on the individual performances of their employees in obtaining sustainable competitive advantage. Employee performance is the result of an employee's thought and energy for the job they do and results in organizational performance (Erniwati el al., 2020: p. 10). From this point of view, increasing employee performance and indirectly increasing organizational performance is an important topic of discussion in the literature (Hassan & Hatmaker, 2015: p. 1129). With the understanding of the importance of employee performance for organizations, researchers and practitioners have increased their research to identify the antecedents of employee performance. Despite the accumulated empirical literature, many researchers emphasize that more research is needed to improve employee performance (Patiar & Wang, 2016: p. 6; Holten et al., 2018: p. 147; Pan & Lin, 2015: p. 971).

The accumulated empirical literature documents that the leader plays an important role in influencing the performance of employees (Buil et al., 2019: p. 67). The main reason is that the leader has a significant influence on the attitudes and behaviors of the employees, depending on the position they are in (Terglav et al., 2016: p. 2). Although it is documented that different leadership styles are effective on employee performance, research on authentic leadership is limited (Ribeiro et al., 2018a: p. 216).

An authentic leader is defined as a leadership behavior model that creates positive psychological abilities and a positive moral atmosphere within the organization (Nasab & Afshari, 2019: p. 549; Walumbwa et al., 2008: p. 90). An authentic leader is a leadership approach that motivates employees to perform beyond expectations by identifying them with organizational goals and interests. Authentic leaders typically exhibit four different behaviors: "relational transparency, self-awareness, internalized morality, and balanced processing". In this respect, the authentic leader differs from other leadership styles.

For the creation and development of an effective organization, an authentic leader not only affects employee performance, but also plays an critical role in the identification of employees with organizational goals and values, and ultimately in the formation of organizational commitment (Ribeiro et al., 2020: p. 192). Although there are few studies linking authentic leadership with organizational commitment (Gatling et al., 2016: p. 189), recent studies show that the authentic leader can affect organizational commitment (Laraib & Hashmi, 2018: p. 141; Nasab & Afshari, 2019: p. 551).

Ribeiro et al. (2018a: p. 218) states that despite conceptual studies on authentic leadership, empirical studies are still not sufficient. Similarly, although there are many studies on the effect of different leadership styles (transformative, operational, etc.) on employees' attitudes and behaviors, there are limited studies on the effect of an authentic leader on employee attitudes and behaviors (Ribeiro et al., 2018a: p. 216). Therefore, the main purpose of the research is to contribute towards bridging the research gap in the literature for authentic leadership.

The economic and political crisis in Turkey as well as all over the world caused the recession and a decrease in the performance of the employees. Especially in such crisis environments, it has been observed that authentic leaders exhibited an effective leadership approach and inspired employees with extra effort (Ribeiro et al., 2018a: p. 216). The findings of the study extend the authentic leadership literature by providing a theoretical framework that can explain the relationship of authentic leadership with organizational commitment and employee performance. Also, the findings of the research provide valuable and useful insights for practitioners.

Literature

Authentic Leadership and Employee Performance

Today's developments require leaders to be transparent in their relationships with their employees and to guide their organizations from a moral perspective (Wei et al., 2018: p. 763). For this reason, interest continues to increase in research on authentic leadership that focuses on leaders acting according to moral beliefs and values (Gardner et al., 2011: p. 1120).

An authentic leader promotes a positive psychological environment in the workplace by demonstrating ethical and conscious work behavior (Batra, 2020: p. 79). The most important feature that distinguishes authentic leadership from other leadership styles is that the authentic leader has "self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized morality". (1) Self-Awareness represents the leader's degree of understanding of the versatile nature of himself and his awareness of how others see him. (2) Relational Transparency refers to the leader's ability to present their feelings and

thoughts to their employees. (3) Balanced processing refers to the leader's ability to objectively analyze all information and be open to all kinds of opinions that may come from his followers. (4) Internalized Moral Approach means that the leader strongly applies the moral standards determined for his/her own behavior in her/his actions and behaviors. Walumbwa et al. (2008: p. 95) developed a four-factor model of "relational transparency, self-awareness, internalized moral, and balanced processing" understanding to measure authentic leadership. However, many researchers have argued that the quadratic factor structure is the most appropriate model for the factor structure of authentic leadership and that the four factors are not completely different structures (Batra, 2020: p. 81; Xiong et al., 2016: p. 832). As a result of reviewing the recent literature on authentic leadership, researchers evaluated authentic leadership definitions in a holistic perpective and developed authentic leadership as a high-level factor. Empirical studies on the subject have also documented that a single-factor core structure is formed from the relationships between the four dimensions of the authentic leader (Nasab & Afshari, 2019: p. 552; Ribeiro et al., 2018a: p. 218). This structure of the authentic leader is similar to the formation of a single core structure from the four-dimensional structure of positive psychological capital. For this reason, authentic leadership has been examined as a one-dimensional core structure in the research.

The authentic leader takes the opinions of the employees and analyzes all information objectively before making a decision. The authentic leader clearly shares the decisions being taken regarding the activities of the organization with his/her employees and uses the decision-making process to strengthen them. This way, employees can understand the rationale behind management decisions. This behavior of the authentic leader increases self-efficacy in employees and makes them tend to do their jobs better (Ribeiro et al., 2018a: p. 217). In addition, the authentic leader is more confident in the abilities of their employees and focuses on the skills and strengths of employees at all stages of management. Employees who are aware that the leader trusts them are likely to respond to the leader's trust by performing more (Ribeiro et al., 2018a: p. 217). Also, in terms of behavioral classifications of leadership, it has been revealed empirically that authentic leadership has a significant effect on job performance when it is considered as people-oriented leadership behavior that prioritizes the needs and expectations of employees and takes a close interest in the development of employees (Çekmecelioğlu & Yıkılmaz, 2019: p. 732). As a result, the authentic leader developing high levels of positive emotions, optimism, and hope, among employees leads to positive job-related results and increases their performance (Azanza et al., 2018: p. 930; Nasab & Afshari, 2019: p. 550). Studies have documented that the authentic leader positively affects employee performance (Nasab & Afshari, 2019: p. 550; Ribeiro et al., 2018a: p. 224; Wei et al., 2018: p. 765). Thus,

Hypothesis 1: Authentic leader positively affects employee performance.

Authentic Leadership and Organizational Commitment

Organizational commitment is defined as the creation of a sense of belonging to the employee's organization (Sürücü & Maslakçı, 2018: p. 51) and is associated with employees' positive behaviors (Dalmış & Yaşin, 2018: p. 195; Rukh et al., 2018: p. 249). An employee who is affiliated with his/her organization tends to willingly make a high level

of effort to achieve organizational goals and contribute to the success of the organization. The conservation of resources theory also regards employees with high commitment as an important resource for organizations. The theory states that employees with high organizational commitment are stable and productive employees who benefit the organization (Yan et al., 2019: p. 1306). Previous research findings that support the literature document that employees with high organizational commitment tend to do their jobs better and make extra efforts for the success of the organization. With the understanding of the importance of organizational commitment, leaders make an effort to increase the organizational commitment of their employees to ensure organizational success.

The authentic leader establishes a better quality relationship with his/her employees and transparently shows his/her commitment to the organization in these relationships. In this respect, the authentic leader acts as a role model for his/her employees. Also, the authentic leader's transparency in relationships, his/her balanced processing of information, and internalized moral understanding increase the trust of the employees in their leader and thus in the organization. When considered in the context of social change theory, the employees will show more commitment to their organization in response to these positive approaches they have seen from their leaders. Authentic leadership is rooted in positive psychology and plays an important role in reinforcing employees' positive attitudes towards work (Avolio & Gardner, 2005: p. 316). Nasab and Afshari (2019: p. 548) state that organizations managed by authentic leaders will create an organizational culture that ensures positive communication between the leader and employees and an emotional organizational atmosphere. Considering that the authentic leader promotes the positive emotional and cognitive development of his/her followers, employees' self-compassion perceptions and self-esteem will also increase. Based on this approach, it can be said that authentic leadership is related to the organizational commitment of employees (Leroy et al., 2012: 260). Existing literature shows that the higher the level of authentic leadership perceived by employees, the stronger the organizational commitment of the employees (Ribeiro et al., 2018a: 218). In studies that support the literature, it is documented that the authentic leader positively affects organizational commitment (Batra, 2020: p. 81; Gatling et al., 2016: p. 191; Ribeiro et al., 2020: p. 196). Thus,

Hypothesis 2: Authentic leader positively affects employees' organizational commitment.

Organizational Commitment and Employee Performance

Employee performance is the qualitative and quantitative result of the work that an employee achieves while performing the duties and responsibilities assigned to him/her (Arifina et al., 2019: p. 108). In other words, employee performance is considered as a measure of an employee's success in performing a job. As the performance of employees increases organizational performance, each employee in the organization is expected to make a positive contribution to the organization through good performance (Femi, 2013: p. 92). With the understanding that employee performance is an important factor in obtaining the sustainable competitive advantage of organizations, researchers attached importance to determining the factors affecting employee performance. The researches show that job satisfaction (Pancasila et al., 2020: p. 389), organizational culture (Eddy & Gorda, 2016: p. 200) personality traits (Nasyroh & Wikansari 2017: p. 13), and

organizational commitment (Arifina et al., 2019: p. 108; Nurtjahjono, 2020: p. 6; Yan et al., 2019: p. 1310) positively affects employee performance. Organizational commitment attracts more attention than other factors in studies on the antecedents of employee performance. Because organizational commitment also positively affects employees' attitudes and behaviors, such as desire to stay in the organization, and rate of going to work, as well as affecting employee performance (Sürücü & Maslakçı, 2018: p. 60).

Organizational commitment means the employee's identification and psychological attachment with the organization. Sürücü and Maslakçı (2018: p. 65) state that the indicators of organizational commitment are the employee's identification of organizational values, being proud of the organization, and a great willingness to strive for organizational success. When the indicators of organizational commitment are evaluated; employees with high organizational commitment will show extra-role behaviors for the success of the organization, while employees with low organizational commitment will only perform the jobs in their job descriptions (Kaplan & Kaplan, 2018: p. 46). Delić et al. (2017: p. 446) state that employees with high organizational commitment tend to achieve better performance. Past research findings show that employees with high organizational commitment tend to be more willing and productive while fulfilling their duties in a way that positively affects organizational performance (Yan et al., 2019: 1308). In fact, this is expected because performance is linked to employee behavior (Ahmad et al., 2019: 948) and organizational commitment positively affects employees' attitudes and behaviors. In this regard, García-Almeida et al. (2015: 155) state that organizational commitment is a phenomenon that positively affects employees' behavior and therefore has important effects on increasing employee performance. Thus,

Hypothesis 3: Organizational commitment affects employee performance positively.

Organizational Commitment as a Mediator

The authentic leader constantly emphasizes openness, honesty, and respect by sharing his/her feelings and thoughts in the relationships with his/her employees. Thus, the authentic leader can easily develop mutual trust and respect through transparent interaction with their employees. This mutual trust and respect enables employees to develop strong ties with their organization. Chen et al. (2013: p. 909) argue that a sense of commitment will be created in organizations with relationships characterized by trust and respect. Employees with high organizational commitment will try to improve their task performance as they are closely linked with their sense of self (Chen et al., 2013: p. 911).

Authentic leaders play an critical role in creating a supportive organizational environment within the organization thanks to their unique behavior (Batra, 2020: p. 80). Perceived organizational support theory states that when employees feel that they receive support from their organizations, their organizational commitment will increase. Also, in this supportive environment created by the authentic leader, the positive expectations of the employees towards their organizations will increase and as the expectations increase, the employees will try to increase their performance by giving more importance to their jobs (Yagil & Medler-Liraz, 2014: p. 172). Indeed, this reasoning is consistent with empirical studies that show positive relationships between authentic

leaders, organizational commitment, and employee performance (Nasab & Afshari, 2019: p. 551; Ribeiro et al., 2018a: p. 225).

Based on the above discussion, it is assessed that authentic leaders will increase followers' organizational commitment, which in turn will increase employee performance. Consistent with the evaluation made, in recent studies, Ribeiro et al. (2018a: p. 219) determined that the authentic leader had a mediating role in the effect of emotional commitment on job performance, Wei et al. (2018: p. 770) document the mediating role of job commitment in the effect of the authentic leader on task performance. Thus,

Hypothesis 4: Organizational commitment has a mediating role in the effect of authentic leader on employee performance.

Method

Research Model

A conceptual model including the authentic leader, employee performance, and organizational commitment was proposed in the research. The research model created in line with the variables included in the study is presented in Figure 1.
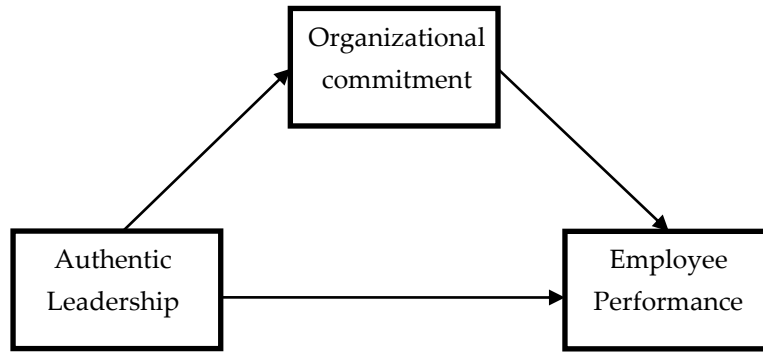

Figure 1. Research Model

Population and Sample

Garment workers constitute the population of the research. Since it is not possible to reach the whole population in terms of time and cost, it was aimed to meet with the managers of 20 randomly selected garment factories operating in Istanbul. Despite all efforts, managers of 8 factories could not be reached. 8 out of 12 factory managers who were interviewed by phone responded negatively to the appointment request. Interviews were made with 4 factory managers who responded positively to the appointment request and they were informed about the purpose of the research. 2 managers did not allow the research to be conducted in their factory. 2 factory managers permitted research on the condition that the findings obtained in the research were not shared with third parties, the name of the factory was not specified at any stage of the research, and that the survey application was carried out outside of working time.

Ethics committee approval was obtained from Leadership University (Kyrenia / TRNC) Ethics Committee (Ethics Committee Number: ALU-ETK-2021-01) to conduct the study. A team of 5 people was formed to collect data for the research. The data obtaining process continued for 3 days in each factory. The questionnaires were distributed in closed envelopes and collected back in closed envelopes to prevent bias in the participants selected by the convenience sampling method. 700 questionnaires were prepared for the research and 411 of the prepared questionnaires were distributed to the participants. 371 of the distributed questionnaires were returned. The obtained questionnaires were examined by the researcher and 54 questionnaires filled improperly were excluded from the research. Thus, the research was completed with 317 valid survey data.

181 of the participants are men and 134 of them are women. While 206 participants are married, 109 participants are single. 61 of the participants are primary school graduates, 104 are high school graduates, 82 are associate degree and 68 are university graduates. 135 participants are under 25 years old, 83 of them are in the age group of 26-30, 74 are in the age group of 31-40, and 23 are in the age group of 41 and over. Among the participants, 191 have been working for 5 years or less, 83 for 6-10 years, 27 for 11-15 years, 13 for 16 years or more.

Measurement Tools

In the study, a questionnaire consisting of 31 expressions including questions about the demographic characteristics of the participants was formed.

Demographic Characteristics: There are 5 questions to determine the participants' education level, marital status, age, gender, and current working duration in the workplace.

Authentic Leadership: A 16-item scale developed by Walumbwa et al. (2008) and adapted to Turkish by Tabak et al. (2012) was used in the research. Sample expressions belonging to 5-Likert type scale; "My leader accepts when he makes a mistake" and "My leader makes his decisions based on value judgments".

Employee Performance: A 4-item scale developed by Kirkman and Rosen (1999) was used to measure employee performance. This scale was adapted into Turkish by Çöl (2008).Sample expressions belonging to 5-Likert type scale; "I achieve my business goals exceedingly" and "I complete my tasks on time"

Organizational Commitment: A 6-item scale developed by Jaworski and Kohli (1993) and adapted to Turkish by Şeşen (2010) was used. Sample expressions belonging to the 5-point Likert type scale are "Generally speaking, I am proud to be here" and "I have a strong commitment to my workplace".

Findings

Firstly, a confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed for the variables included in the study and the research model with the help of the AMOS-18 program. Findings as a result of CFA are presented in Table 1.

Table 1. CFA Results

Variables	X²/Df	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI	RMSEA
Authentic Leadership	3,258	0,956	0,929	0,965	0,908	0,055
Employee Performance	4,076	0,944	0,972	0,986	0,982	0,064
Organizational Commitment	3,541	0,970	0,967	0,941	0,964	0,058
Research Model	3,052	0,920	0,894	0,940	0,959	0,052

Examining Table 1; it is seen that the variables and research model have good fit indices (Meydan & Şeşen, 2015). After determining the structural validity of the scales and the research model, analyzes were made for the reliability of the scales. The values as a result of the reliability analysis are presented in Table 2.

Tablo 2. The Results of the Validity and Reliability Analysis

Scales	Factor Loadings	Composite Reliability (Cr)	Croanbach Alfa (α)
Authentic Leadership	0,625 - 0.839	0,897	0,903
Employee Performance	0,720 - 0,811	0,849	0,861
Organizational Commitment	0,601 - 0,811	0,893	0,891

The findings obtained as a result of the analysis (Table 2) show that the Cronbach Alpha values (α) and composite reliability (Cr), which show the internal consistency of the scales, are 0.7 (Sürücü & Maşlakçı, 2020: p. 2714) and above, which is the lower threshold value suggested in the literature. In line with the obtained values, it can be said that the variables included in the study are reliable. Also, the factor loadings of the items in the scales are 0.5 and above. This finding shows that the items belonging to the variables in the study have good factor loadings (Sürücü & Maşlakçı, 2020: p. 2702).

Having checked the validity and reliability of the scales, correlation analysis was conducted to determine the relationship between variables. The distribution of the data is important in determining the statistical methods (Sürücü & Maslakçı, 2020: p. 2698). For this reason, the distribution of the data was determined before the correlation analysis was performed. Analyzes for the determination of skewness and kurtosis values showed that the values of the variables were between +1.5 and -1.5. In line with the obtained values, it was determined that the responses given to the variables included in the study were normally distributed (Hair et al., 2014).

Descriptive statistics results and correlation analysis results are presented below (Table 3).

Table 3. The Results of the Correlation Analysis

Variables	Mean	S.E.	1.	2.	3.
1. Authentic Leadership	3,251	1,035	1		

2. Organizational Commitment	4,214	0,921	0,555**	1	
3. Employee Performance	3,984	0,699	0,664**	0,517**	1

**p<0,01, n= 317

Correlation analysis results show that the authentic leadership has positive and significant correlation with organizational commitment (r = 0.555, p <0.01) and employee performance (r = 0.664, p <0.01), and organizational commitment has a positive and significant correlation with employee performance (r = 0.517, p <0.01). When the correlation coefficients between variables are examined, it is seen that there is a moderate relationship with authentic leadership, organizational commitment, and employee performance (Cohen, 1988).

To test the research hypotheses, Process Macro, which was developed by Hayes (2017) as an add-on to SPSS, was used (Model 4). The findings of the analyzes made with the number of 5000 bootsraping samples at 95% confidence interval in the analyzes performed are presented in Table 4.

Table 4. Bootstrap Results

Regression Path	Coeff	SH	LLCI	ULCI
AL → EP	0,2629	0,0208	0,2219	0,3039
AL → OC	0,3533	0,2610	0,3019	0,4046
OC → EP	0,1631	0,0328	0,0987	0,2274
Indirect Effect (AL → OC → EP)	0,0576	0,0156	0,0284	0,0902

AL: Authentic Leadership, OC: Organizational Commitment, EP: Employee Performance

Findings in Table 4 shows that authentic leadership has a significant and positive effect on employee performance (β= 0,2629, 95% CI= [0,2219, 0,3039], t=12,6153, p<0,05) and organizational commitment (β= 0,3533, 95% CI= [0,3019, 0,4046], t=13,5180, p<0,05). Also, organizational commitment significantly and positively affects employee performance (β= 0,1631, 95% CI= [0,0987, 0,2274], t=4,9778, p<0,05). H1, H2, and H3 were supported in line with the findings. Because the lower and upper confidence intervals (LLCI, ULCI) of regressions do not include the value of zero (0).

To determine the mediating role of organizational commitment in the effect of the authentic leader on employee performance, the indirect effect was examined and it was found that organizational commitment had a mediator role (β= 0,0576, SH =0,0156, 95% BCA CI = [0,0284, 0,0902]). In line with this finding, H4 was supported.

Discussion and Conclusion

Employee performance is considered to be the most important factor in determining the success or failure of an organization. For this reason, increasing employee performance is one of the main concerns of managers. Leadership style, especially increasing employee performance, is considered to be the most important issue in the field of management

(Semedo et al., 2016: p. 1039). Despite the growing interest in research on the relationship between leadership style and employee performance (Suhartanto et al., 2018: p. 130), there is little information available about the effect of authentic leaders on employee performance, although there is an indication that authentic leadership has positive effects on employee performance (Nasab & Afshari, 2019: p. 551). Also, due to the importance of employee performance for organizations, many researchers state that more research is needed to improve employee performance (Patiar & Wang, 2016: p. 6; Pan & Lin, 2015: p. 971; Holten et al., 2018: p. 147). While the research is an answer to these calls, it helps us to understand more deeply the antecedents of employee performance. The main findings of the study are presented below.

The first finding of the research is that the authentic leader has a positive effect on employee performance. As stated by many researchers, the performance of employees is significantly affected by the leadership style adopted by the managers (Ribeiro et al., 2018b: p. 1597; Malik, 2018: p. 1248). An effective leader creates an organizational culture that will increase the productivity and performance of employees. Current research provides empirical evidence that the authentic leader also positively affects employee performance. Avolio and Gardner (2005: p. 332) state that the basis of authentic leadership is positive psychology. Positive leaders (like authentic leaders) motivate their employees to work better by transparently communicating organizational goals to their employees.The authentic leader also focuses on improving the skills of the employees, enabling them to perform at the highest level (Nasab & Afshari, 2019: p. 549). Finally, the authentic leader develops high levels of positive emotions, hope, and trust among employees, which leads to positive job-related results and increases employee performance (Azanza et al., 2018: p. 931).

The second finding of the study is that the authentic leader has a positive effect on organizational commitment. The authentic leader is transparent in the relationship s/he establishes, shares his/her decisions openly and honestly with his/her employees, and acts in a balanced way in sharing information. In this approach, an authentic leader not only shows transparency but also provides clarity to employees about the organization's process and goals. Also, relational transparency builds employees' trust in their leaders and reduces their anxiety in the face of uncertainties. Besides, the authentic leader has the ability to control the behaviors that may cause negative emotions in employees. With this feature, an authentic leader positively affects employees' attitudes and behaviors towards their organization. The authentic leader's close relationship with positive psychology not only influences employees' decisions and actions but also positively affects the well-being of employees. Considering the current behaviors of the authentic leader, it is expected to increase the organizational commitment of the employees. The findings of the research are in parallel with the previous research findings (Batra, 2020: p. 87; Ribeiro et al., 2020: p. 202).

In the research, it was found that organizational commitment affects employee performance positively. This finding of the study shows that organizational commitment is one of the important mechanisms to increase employee performance. Employees who are identified with their organization, adhere more closely to the organization's values and goals, and make more effort to achieve the organization's goals. Employee performance, which is associated with organizational goals, develops as a result of

employees' commitment. This finding of the study seems reasonable in line with the current literature flow.

Finally, the research confirms the positive and significant effect of the authentic leader on employee performance through organizational commitment. Recent studies involving the mediating variables between authentic leadership and performance include psychological capital (Malik, 2018: p. 1250), emotional commitment (Ribeiro et al., 2018a: p. 225), intrinsic motivation (Laraib & Hashmi, 2018: p. 141), organizational citizenship behavior and creativity (Ribeiro et al., 2018b: p. 225) showed that the authentic leader could have a mediator role in the effect of employee performance. Identifying the mediating role of organizational commitment is a positive step towards further clarifying the relationship between authentic leadership and employee performance. The findings of the study show that if organizational managers show authentic leadership behavior, they will increase organizational commitment in their employees and thus improve their performance.

As a result, employees are considered to be the most valuable assets of an organization, and a leader greatly influences employees' behavior (Yıldız & Ekingen, 2020: p. 2917). To effectively manage the human resources in the organization and to ensure organizational success in this direction, it is recommended that the managers apply an authentic leadership style. Authentic leadership is a leadership style that has created a sense of well-being among employees and led to higher job performance in the last decade (Malik, 2018: p. 1251). In line with the findings of the research, it is recommended that managers who aim to increase the organizational commitment and indirectly performance of their employees should show authentic leadership behaviors.

Limitations

Some limitations should be taken into account when evaluating the research findings. First of all, the antecedent of employee performance (authentic leader) and mediator variable (organizational commitment) were examined with the data obtained from the participants working in the same sector. The possibility that the results of the same-sourced data may cause common method bias may be a limitation. The second limitation of the study is related to the generalizability of the findings. The population of the research was limited to those working in the garment factory. The current situation is not sufficient to generalize the research findings. In future studies, it is recommended to conduct a study with large samples with variables in addition to the variables (eg demographic variables) presented in the study. Also, studies to be carried out with data spread over time can provide important contributions to the literature to understand how authentic leadership affects employee performance.

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