

# Authentic Leadership and Organizational Outcomes: An Integrated Conceptual Framework of Ethical Influence, Psychological Empowerment, and Trust

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**Abstract:** Amid a rising tide of unethical organizational behavior and declining employee confidence in management's integrity, Authentic Leadership (AL) is now being studied as a theoretical construct that could support ethically driven leadership focused on employees' identities. Although scholars are increasingly interested in this area, there remains a significant lack of understanding of how AL leads to positive organizational outcomes. This conceptual paper proposes a new comprehensive framework that links AL which includes characteristics such as self-awareness, relationship transparency, balanced processing, and internalization of a moral perspective with four organizational outcome measures (employee job satisfaction, employee work engagement, employee Organizational Citizenship Behaviour [OCB], and employee well-being), and links both to two mediation variables: psychological empowerment (PE) and Trust In Leadership (TL). Further, the proposed framework introduces organizational culture and employee personality as theoretically motivated moderator variables. Based on theories including Self-Determination Theory, Social Learning Theory, Positive Psychology, and Person-Environment Fit Theory, this model offers six formally stated propositions and responds to recent calls for process-based authentic leadership theorizing.

**Keywords:** *Authentic leadership; psychological empowerment; trust in leadership; organisational outcomes; organisational culture; ethical climate; employee well-being; moral courage.*

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

In an era defined by corporate ethical failures, erosion of institutional trust, and intensifying scrutiny of leadership conduct, organizations face mounting pressure to cultivate leaders who are not only effective but morally grounded and transparent. In the context of ethical behavior in organizations, as well as individual organizational identity and organizational performance, Avolio and Gardner (2005) and Walumbwa et al. (2008) have identified AL as an extremely powerful theoretical model with great urgency for addressing the connections among ethics, identity, and organizational success. Authentic leadership differs from Transformational Leadership Theory or Transactional Leadership Theory in its focus on the leader's internal psychological state, that is, high levels of self-awareness, adherence to high ethical standards, and a relationship-oriented approach toward followers.

Although researchers are increasingly interested in understanding how Authentic Leadership influences positive Organizational Outcomes, the mechanisms by which this occurs have been largely unexplored. Gardner et al. (2011) conducted a systematic review of the literature and noted that one of the most consistent gaps in Authentic Leadership research was an insufficient exploration of the mediating factors in this relationship. Recent research has also reiterated these findings; specifically, Dadich et al. (2024) conducted a 20-year review of research published in the Journal of Management & Organization and found it necessary for future research to use experimental design and/or process-oriented methodology, and Almutairi (2025) conducted a concept analysis published in the Journal of Advanced Nursing and confirmed that while many antecedent factors to Authentic Leadership are well-established and understood, the consequences of Authentic Leadership (employee well-being, performance, positive work environment) are not.

This paper addresses the gap in conceptual models of authentic leadership effects on organizational outcomes by developing a model of how psychological empowerment and trust in leaders function as two key mediating variables linking authentic leadership to four individual-level outcomes: job satisfaction, work engagement, OCB, and overall employee well-being. Additionally, this paper includes organizational culture and employee personality moderating variables based on theoretical assumptions. This paper makes three main contributions: (1) development of a theoretically grounded multilevel model that integrates the motivation perspective, relationship perspective, and context perspective; (2) formulation of six propositions that can be tested empirically and provide direction for research; and (3) providing organizations with practical advice for creating cultures of ethical leadership.

## 2. THE ETHICAL IMPERATIVE FOR AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

It is impossible to separate contemporary authenticity from the broader ethical crisis experienced over the past few decades. A series of corporate scandals, government scandals, and many examples of unethical behaviour by organizational leaders have collectively created distrust among employees and the public for all those who lead organizations (Brown & Treviño, 2006). In addition, research from 2020 to 2025 on psychological safety and ethical leadership by Dong et al. (2025) supports the idea that trust, fairness, and

psychological safety are increased when either ethical or authentic forms of leadership are present; however, each of these increases is directly related to increasing engagement, creativity, and innovation in an organization. Therefore, there are very large organizational costs associated with inauthentic leadership.

Traditional leadership theories, Transformational Leadership Theory, and Transactional Leadership Theory, which are largely based on the effects of leaders on their employees' performance and motivation, have placed little emphasis on the ethical aspects of leadership (Bass & Avolio, 2004). On the other hand, Authentic Leadership places ethical considerations at the core of what constitutes 'good' or 'effective' leadership. An important review article published in the *Academy of Management Annals* (Lemoine et al., 2019) positioned Authentic Leadership's moral content within the Virtue Ethics Tradition and asserted that Authentic Leaders' development of self-awareness and moral courage align with two of the essential features of Virtue Ethics—a distinction that separates Authentic Leadership from Deontological Ethical Leadership and Consequentialist Servant Leadership. Most recently, Almutairi (2025) conducted a concept analysis, adding caring, shared decision-making, and moral/ethical courage to the four dimensions originally associated with Authentic Leadership, providing a more comprehensive conceptualization directly related to the ethical outcomes this theory has been designed to address.

These findings support the claim that this area of focus is well-suited for examining authentic leadership. The actions of authentic leaders generate an ethical climate through their consistent demonstration of values-based behaviours, and those demonstrations influence follower perceptions and behaviour at both the individual level and organizational level (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Lee and Cho (2026) examined perceived authentic leadership among nurses and found that it increased moral courage through the mediation of psychological safety, demonstrating how authentic leadership influences ethical decision-making in professional environments. Additionally, Mhatre et al. (2026) identified how followers are influenced by authentic leader signals regarding their ethical orientation, even when they are geographically distant from their leaders, expanding the applicability of the concept to non-traditional or non-co-located work environments.

### **3. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND**

#### **3.1. *The Concept of Authentic Leadership***

Authentic leadership is an approach to leading based on psychological authenticity, the degree to which a leader has knowledge of his or herself, values, and behaviours, and they are aligned and consistent across all settings (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). The four elements of the construct include: (a) self-awareness—the leader's awareness of his or her strengths and limitations and how his or her actions affect other people; (b) relational transparency—the act of openly expressing one's genuine thoughts and feelings with no intention of creating a facade for others; (c) balanced processing—objective consideration of available data prior to making decisions that may reflect alternative views beyond the leader's own perspective; and (d) internalized moral perspective—a self-governance system based on internally determined ethics versus externally imposed pressures and social norms (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Almutairi's (2025) concept analysis included a search of eight major databases and utilised Walker and Avant's model to identify three additional key aspects—caring, shared decision-making, and moral/ethical courage—that are fundamental to authentic leadership, demonstrating the ongoing development of the authentic leadership construct within current research literature.

Theoretical roots of Authentic Leadership are diverse. The construct draws on positive psychology to describe the relationship between an individual's psychological capital as both a process and a product of effective leadership development (Jang, 2022; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Additionally, social learning theory describes the transmission of values and ethical behaviour among employees by authentic leaders via role modelling and observable learning processes (Bandura, 1977). Furthermore, self-determination theory has been used as a theoretical framework to explain how authentic leaders create an environment that satisfies followers' three basic psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Ryan & Deci, 2000). This theoretical framework has been increasingly utilized in studies of authentic leadership over the past twenty years (Khattak et al., 2022; Uluturk et al., 2025). Lastly, signalling theory, as referenced by Mhatre et al. (2026) and explored in the 20-year review by Dadich et al. (2024), describes how authentic leaders signal to others that they have genuine intentions and value through behavioural cues when direct observation is limited or difficult.

#### **3.2. *Psychological Empowerment as a Mediating Mechanism***

Authentic leadership is an approach to leading based on psychological authenticity, the degree to which a leader has knowledge of Psychological empowerment is a motivational construct that reflects employees' active self-determined orientation toward their work roles (Spreitzer, 1995; Thomas & Velthouse, 1990) and includes four cognitive dimensions: meaning (alignment between requirements of the job and the employee's values), competence (employee's efficacy with regard to performance of tasks), self-determination (perceived autonomy by the employee to initiate and regulate actions), and impact (degree to which the employee can influence outcomes). A meta-analysis by Llorente-Alonso et al. (2024) comprising 127 studies confirmed that psychological empowerment is among the most robust positive predictors of job satisfaction, work engagement, and organizational citizenship behaviors across diverse organizational and cultural contexts, providing strong empirical support for its role as a mediator. Further, a quasi-experimental study conducted by Dirik and Seren Interpolar (2024) found significant increases in nurse empowerment following authentic leadership development programs, offering rare causal evidence for the AL → PE pathway.

Empowerment is an approach to enhancing work performance that Walumbwa et al. (2007) suggested as a way for authentic leaders to positively influence employee performance. A serial mediation model study completed by Uluturk et al. (2025) demonstrated that psychological empowerment is an important mediator between authentic leadership and work engagement in the public sector of Turkey. In addition, Khattak et al. (2022) found similar sequences of authentic leadership, psychological empowerment, and job engagement in software development project teams from different Asian countries. These results are consistent with the proposed mediating process described in the current framework.

### 3.3. *Trust in Leadership as a Mediating Mechanism*

Trust in leadership refers to followers' willingness to be vulnerable toward their leaders, as a function of positive beliefs about their intentions and behaviors (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Trust is a critical component of successful leader-follower relationships; it facilitates cooperative behavior, reduces the psychological cost of monitoring and vigilant behaviors, and allows followers to invest in discretionary behaviors without concern for exploitation. Kleyhans et al. (2022) conducted a study in a high-organizational-uncertainty environment and found that trust in leadership significantly mediated the relationship between authentic leadership and employee flourishing. More recently, Lee and Cho (2026) demonstrated that psychological safety, which is conceptually close to trust, also mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and moral courage among hospital nurses, providing evidence of the ethical and relational impact of authentic leadership.

Research has distinguished between cognitive-based and affect-based trust; cognitive-based trust arises when an employee perceives a manager's competence or reliability, whereas affect-based trust is developed through employees' perception of genuine concern for them as people. McAllister (1995) stated that authentic leaders should create both types of trust. By processing information in a balanced way and understanding themselves, they can build perceptions of competence. Through their relational transparency and internal sense of morality, they can foster perceptions of care. Dong et al. (2025) conducted a systematic literature review on ethical leadership and psychological safety and concluded that leaders who demonstrated courage and integrity in their decision-making and behavior established moral guidelines that subliminally influenced how employees behaved and made decisions. This is the same dynamic proposed in the current framework through trust-building mechanisms.

## 4. THE PROPOSED CONCEPTUAL MODEL

Building upon the established theoretical basis, this paper offers a theoretically grounded conceptual model that illustrates how authentic leadership will be associated with four organizational outcomes—employee job satisfaction, work engagement, OCB, and overall employee wellbeing—as a result of its impact on psychological empowerment and employees' perception of their leader's reliability or dependability (trust in leadership).

The model focuses on a process-oriented view of leadership effectiveness, as described in DeRue and Myers (2014); that is, it is based on the premise that to understand leadership, we must identify both what leaders do and how, and under what conditions, those behaviors are translated into outcomes. Thus, the model aligns with the major frontier in Authentic Leadership research, as identified in the 20-year review by Dadich et al. (2024), namely, process-sensitive experimental multilevel inquiry. As such, the model addresses the call to specify mediating and moderating mechanisms and goes beyond a simple input-output account to create a theoretically complete and practically actionable framework.

An important assumption of this model is that the impact of authentic leadership is fundamentally mediated by a relational and motivational pathway. The relational aspects include creating an environment or context for followers, empowering them, and developing trust—thus motivating followers to put forth effort into both their work and the organization. This relational and motivational design is consistent with Lemoine et al.'s (2019) integrative review, positioning authentic leadership within the virtue ethics tradition; therefore, the moral character of the leader will have positive cascading effects on followers' psychological states and behaviors.

## 5. THE MODEL PROPOSITION

### 5.1. *Authentic Leadership and Psychological Empowerment*

Authentic leaders, through relational transparency and balanced processing, demonstrate genuine interest in follower contributions; further, this communicates that followers are valued for their competencies. As Deci and Ryan (2000) indicated, these behaviors meet followers' needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness—the essential conditions for psychological empowerment.

Jang (2022) showed that authentic leadership is associated with followers' psychological capital, which serves as the foundation for developing empowerment. Khattak et al. (2022) empirically supported the sequential relationship among authentic leadership, psychological empowerment, and job engagement. Uluturk et al. (2025) demonstrated that psychological empowerment represents a serial mediator between authentic leadership and work engagement. A quasi-experimental study conducted by Dirik and Seren Intepeler (2024) found that participants who attended an authentic leadership training program experienced statistically significant increases in nurse empowerment scores over 6 months, providing causal-level support for the pathway from authentic leadership to psychological empowerment and evidence for the developmental plasticity of this relationship.

**Proposition 1:** *Authentic leadership is positively related to follower psychological empowerment, such that leaders higher in self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and an internalized moral perspective will foster greater psychological empowerment among their followers.*

## 5.2. Authentic Leadership and Trust in Leadership

A substantial body of research has established that employees perceive and experience trust with their organizational leadership as an outcome of behavior on the part of those leaders which is consistent, open, and ethical (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002), and it is this consistency, transparency, and ethics-based leadership that is especially conducive to the development of trusting relationships at work (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). The results of a systematic review published by Dong et al. (2025) demonstrate how both authenticity and ethics-based leadership are associated with enhanced levels of employee engagement via two mediating mechanisms, psychological safety and trust, and further note how these same mechanisms have been linked to the demonstration of both moral courage and integrity by leaders. González-Cánovas et al. (2024) demonstrated that trust mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and affective commitment within a multi-organizational context. Kleynhans et al. (2022) also showed that trust represents a significant mediator in the relationship between authentic leadership and employee flourishing. Lin et al. (2026) found that leader-follower congruence in authentic leadership was positively related to employee participation, reinforcing the notion that authentic leadership's influence is relational and depends on the development of trusting relationships.

**Proposition 2:** *Authentic leadership is positively related to follower trust in leadership, such that followers of authentic leaders will report significantly greater levels of trust in their leader compared to followers of less authentic leaders.*

## 5.3. Psychological Empowerment and Organizational Outcomes

Employees who are empowered by their workplace find meaning in their jobs; they have faith in their ability to complete tasks; they see themselves as autonomous; and they can see how their work makes a real impact. A meta-analysis by Llorente-Alonso et al. (2024), synthesizing evidence across 127 studies representing many types of occupations and cultures, confirmed that psychological empowerment is an important positive predictor of job satisfaction, work engagement, organizational citizenship behaviour, and employee wellness—establishing strong empirical support for the mediation process identified above. Furthermore, Zhang et al. (2022) confirmed the positive relationships between authentic leadership and psychological empowerment, job satisfaction, work engagement, and organizational trust, all of which occur via the mediation process proposed in the present theoretical model. Additionally, Srimongkolkul et al. (2025) empirically demonstrated that authentic leadership builds employee resiliency through cognitive and affective pathways, showing that the empowering resources associated with these pathways were critical and thereby expanding the number of positive well-being outcomes associated with this mechanism.

**Proposition 3:** *Psychological empowerment mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational outcomes, including (a) job satisfaction, (b) work engagement, (c) organizational citizenship behavior, and (d) employee well-being.*

## 5.4. Trust in Leadership and Organizational Outcomes

When followers believe in their leaders, they are motivated to contribute more to their jobs, comply better with the organization's directions, and are inclined to perform acts of altruism at their own discretion (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Kleynhans et al. (2022) found that trust fully mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and employee flourishing among those experiencing job precariousness. Similarly, González-Cánovas et al. (2024) found that trust is a complete mediator in the relationship between authentic leadership and affective commitment. Dong et al. (2025) conducted a meta-analysis of research on ethical leadership, psychological safety, and engagement, synthesizing evidence supporting the view that psychological safety, a construct closely related to leader trust, is the predominant mechanism explaining how moral leadership produces behavioral and emotional forms of engagement. Lee and Cho (2026) extended this pathway and showed that authentic leadership → psychological safety → moral courage and documented how

employees' behavioral ethical outcomes can result from trust produced by an authentic leader. Finally, Schaubroeck and Yu (2025) found that authentic leadership and psychological safety together reduce defensive decision-making among employees, thereby illustrating how the trust created by an authentic leader generates both attitudinal and behavioral outcomes.

***Proposition 4:** Trust in leadership mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational outcomes, including (a) job satisfaction, (b) work engagement, (c) organizational citizenship behavior, and (d) employee well-being.*

## 5.5. The Moderating Role of Organizational Culture

Organizational culture shapes the norms, values, and expectations that govern leader-follower interactions. A review by Ruiz-Palomino and Martínez-Cañas (2023) found that ethical organizational culture consistently amplifies the positive effects of ethical and authentic leadership on employee OCB and well-being through person-organization fit mechanisms. In cultures that emphasize transparency, ethical conduct, and participative decision-making, authentic leadership is recognized, valued, and reciprocated. Conversely, in hierarchical or politically charged cultures, authentic leadership behaviors may be misinterpreted, attenuating their positive effects. A systematic review of psychological safety and ethical leadership by Dong et al. (2025) confirmed that the organizational moral climate dimension of culture is a key boundary condition that moderates the strength of the authentic leadership → trust → engagement pathway. Lemoine et al.'s (2019) integrative review similarly noted that virtue ethics-based leadership, including authentic leadership, is most effective when it resonates with the broader organizational moral climate.

Drawing on person-environment fit theory (Kristof-Brown et al., 2005), the alignment between authentic leadership values and organizational cultural values is argued to be a critical boundary condition of authentic leadership effectiveness. Ethical organizational cultures do not simply coexist with authentic leadership; they amplify it, creating a virtuous cycle in which authentic leader behavior reinforces cultural values, which, in turn, enhance followers' receptivity to authentic leadership.

***Proposition 5:** Organizational culture moderates the relationship between authentic leadership and its mediators (psychological empowerment and trust in leadership), such that the positive relationships are stronger in cultures characterized by ethical values, transparency, and participative norms.*

## 5.6. The Moderating Role of Employee Personality

Individual personality traits are theoretically relevant to authentic leadership effectiveness. Employees high in openness to experience are more receptive to leaders who encourage self-reflection and intellectual engagement. Those high in agreeableness may respond especially positively to the relational warmth and transparency characteristic of authentic leaders. Employees with higher emotional stability are better equipped to translate the empowering and trust-building inputs of authentic leadership into sustained engagement and well-being, while those high in conscientiousness may respond most strongly to the ethical clarity provided by authentic leaders (Judge & Bono, 2000). Almutairi's (2025) concept analysis identified positive psychological capacities as a key antecedent of authentic leadership responsiveness, suggesting that follower-side psychological resources closely linked to personality shape the strength of employees' responses to authentic leader behaviors. Sinha's (2025) critical analysis further highlighted that follower identity and value systems significantly moderate the attribution of authenticity to leaders, with personality-linked value orientations shaping whether leader behaviors are perceived as genuinely authentic or performative.

***Proposition 6:** Employee personality moderates the relationship between authentic leadership and its mediators, such that employees higher in openness to experience, agreeableness, and emotional stability will show stronger positive responses to authentic leadership behaviors, resulting in stronger mediated relationships with organizational outcomes.*

## 6. DISCUSSION

### 6.1. Theoretical Contributions

This paper contributes to the theoretical foundations of authentic leadership by examining two important concepts associated with ethical leadership: psychological empowerment and trust in leadership. By examining these two concepts together as mediators between authentic leadership and employee performance and well-being, this paper addresses an ongoing concern discussed by

Gardner et al. (2011), which was also recently validated by Almutairi's (2025) concept analysis, and the 20-year review by Dadich et al. (2024), which continues to identify trust as one of the most significant gaps in research concerning ethical leadership. The results from recent empirical studies (González-Cánovas et al., 2024; Kleynhans et al., 2022; Lee & Cho, 2026; Uluturk et al., 2025) support the use of psychological empowerment and trust in leadership as mediating variables connecting authentic leadership and positive organizational outcomes, while they demonstrate that none of the previously published conceptual papers has examined both of these relationships using a single boundary condition-based framework.

Secondly, by explicitly linking to the contextual moderators, organizational culture, and employees' personality characteristics, the current study responds to Liden and Antonakis's (2009) call for researchers to provide more context-specific or boundary-conditioned theoretical work on leadership. The inclusion of ethical culture as a moderator is also new; previous studies have shown that although many authentic leadership models have established consistent positive relationships with employee outcomes, they rarely include culturally based variables as moderating variables (Ruiz-Palomino & Martínez-Cañas, 2023). Additionally, Sinha's (2025) critique of existing theories underscored the need for contextual and individual-level moderators to develop more socially and contextually embedded theories of authentic leadership.

Thirdly, the model brings together recent conceptual developments—Almutairi's (2025) updated list of attributes (caring, ethical/moral courage, shared decision-making), Lemoine et al.'s (2019) virtue ethics foundation for authentic leadership, and Mhatre et al.'s (2026) signaling theory approach—to provide an integrated theoretical base which will enable the development of a new, more refined second generation of empirical testing and practical application of authentic leadership theories.

## 6.2. Practical Implications

The proposed framework has significant implications for how organizations support their leaders. Practitioners need to invest in developing programs that foster an individual's awareness of themselves, as well as relational transparency and ethical thought. Research conducted by Dirik and Seren Intepeler (2024) used a quasi-experimental design to investigate whether a six-month authentic leadership program for head nurses would increase both leader authenticity (as measured by the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire) and follower empowerment (as measured by the Psychological Empowerment Scale). Their findings showed a statistically significant increase in both areas for at least six months after completion of the program, thereby demonstrating the potential for structured programs to produce measurable organizational benefits. Therefore, it is possible to suggest that programs that use elements such as reflection, ethics-based dialogue, and value clarification will be more successful than competency-based training alone.

Organizational culture as a moderator emphasizes the systematic dimension of authentic leadership's effective impact. A literature review by Ruiz-Palomino and Martínez-Cañas (2023) indicates that both HR professionals and senior leaders must develop authentic leaders and foster a cultural environment that supports their success. This is particularly relevant for organizations using hybrid or remote work, where authentic leadership must be signaled through limited-bandwidth digital media; therefore, the intentional creation of culture is essential to preserve the trust-building mechanisms that make authentic leadership successful (Bánhidi & Kurucz, 2026).

For Human Resource Development (HRD) professionals, the individual differences component of the authentic leadership model will have several important implications for talent management and team composition. Organizations may find value in identifying the personality-leadership fit of their employees and providing developmental opportunities based on each employee's profile. The critical work of Sinha (2025) provides useful insight into how such development programs can be sensitively implemented within different cultural contexts, and specifically how follower identities are likely to vary significantly across cultures, particularly those in Non-Western countries, in which authenticity norms may be very dissimilar to those established by Western-centric research that currently dominates the academic literature.

## 7. LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

Study is limited to being a conceptual piece of work. To test each of the six propositions in the model, empirical evidence will be required. Therefore, longitudinal and experience-sampling designs are ideal for examining how and when authentic leadership influences empowerment and trust on a day-to-day basis as it evolves over time. This is consistent with the 20-year review by Dadich et al. (2024), which noted a need for more experimental designs to examine authentic leadership, a method used in studies such as Dirik and Seren Intepeler (2024). Therefore, in all cases where feasible, future studies evaluating the proposed propositions should use an experimental design.

Authentic Leadership was established primarily within a Western, individualist culture. As such, Sinha's (2025) critical analysis of authentic leadership in India under the neoliberal context provides a strong example that the meanings, enactments, and outcomes of authentic leadership are not culturally universal. Therefore, it is suggested that future studies be undertaken to assess the cross-cultural validity of the proposed framework. Especially in collectivist cultures, there will be significant differences in how trust, empowerment, and self-expression can occur. Dedzo et al. (2026) made a significant contribution to this field by exploring authentic

leadership experiences through life stories in West Africa, a qualitative approach that demonstrates the cultural diversity of authentic leadership experiences and points to potential comparative conceptual development.

Future research could also consider the possibility of curvilinear, paradoxical, or negative effects of authentic leadership. A critical interpretive analysis conducted on 45 empirical studies published in 2024 or 2025 identified long-standing methodological and conceptual flexibility issues associated with the construct of authentic leadership; most researchers treat it as a consistent leader trait even though there is growing evidence to support challenges to that assumption, and suggest the need for reconceptualizing authentic leadership as an attributive process by followers in their social environment. The study by Schaubroeck and Yu (2025) found that the conditional effect of authentic leadership and psychological safety on defensive decision-making varies depending on situational factors, suggesting that the boundary conditions of the model's pathways may be far more complex than the current theoretical framework allows.

## 8. CONCLUSION

Organizations that do not develop a strong foundation of ethical, authentic leadership are at greater risk of long-term degradation in trust, empowerment, and engagement, upon which organizational performance and individual well-being depend. The current study proposes an integrated theoretical model to provide a conceptual understanding of how authentic leadership influences organization-wide outcomes through employees' psychological empowerment and their trust in their leader, both of which are mediated by organizational culture and personality. The model provides a fuller explanation of how authentic leadership affects an organization in terms of its mediating and moderating factors, which is far beyond current theoretical contributions and provides an immediate response to the research agenda put forth by Almutairi (2025), Dadich et al. (2024), and Sinha (2025) for theoretically authentic, context-specific, and empirically testable frameworks.

The need for leaders who are authentic, self-aware, have integrity, care about others, and are transparent will be much greater than it has been before. These types of leaders can build psychologically safe environments in which organizations not only perform well but also operate in line with ethical principles. This research framework should provide a scientifically based, theoretically-grounded, and empirically testable model for researchers to use to develop a better understanding of what constitutes effective authentic leadership and how it can be fostered.

**DISCLOSURE STATEMENT:** *No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.*

**FUNDING:** *The author(s) received no financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.*

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