The Role of Transparent Communication and Leadership in Employee Engagement

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Abstract
"Employees don't quit their jobs; they quit their bosses"!(Kiehne, 2017). A cheerful workplace draws in great people and turn, advances a culture of usefulness and responsibility – a distressing climate will most certainly destroy company culture. As an employee, it is important to feel the sense of confidence and assurance provided by your leader. Organizations and their employees have begun to recognize the importance of transparent communication and leadership in enterprises. This article presents how authentic leadership simultaneously affects the employee's engagement, performance, and transparent communication. Moreover, it will additionally propose how transparent communication has a concurrent effect on employee engagement (physical engagement, emotional engagement, and cognitive engagement)**.** To further elaborate, it will present the outcome of transparent communications based on the study providing empirical evidence in a sample of 210 employees of medium and large IT enterprises in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia. The findings indicate a strong link between transparent and employee communication in enterprises.
Keywords: Authentic Leadership, Transparent Communication, Employee Engagement, Physical Engagement, Emotional Engagement, Cognitive Engagement

Introduction
        A steppingstone of every successful enterprise is a good leader. However, in today's competitive market, "A good Leader" is not enough. Leaders play a crucial role in the overall enterprise performance. Employees are the pillar of every enterprise. Leaders need to go above and beyond to enhance employees and bring the company to its total and best ability. Only different kinds of leaders have been labelled as Authentic Leaders. In these terms, Authentic Leaders or Authentic Leadership will be presented as a driving force to guaranteed success. Authentic leadership is a modern leadership paradigm that stresses understanding his true self and goals-aligned behaviours. According to Bill George (George, 2006), Authentic leaders are motivated by a higher purpose and never lose focus of their key values. They lead from the heart, cultivate long-term relationships, and excel through self-discipline.
Thus, organizational productivity is determined by employees' efforts, attention and engagement. Employee and leaders' behaviours affect productivity; consequently, intelligent business leaders know that happy workers are productive workers and ultimately benefit their companies (Hadziahmetovic et al., 2022; Osborne & Hammoud, 2017; Sakic et al., 2019)

The main objectives of the study are to investigate the impact of Authentic leadership on employee engagement and transparent organizational communication. The study also analyzes the impact of transparent communication on employee engagement.

Moreover, the study was conducted in IT companies in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Serbia. As one of the fastest-growing sectors, these firms play a crucial part in contemporary economies.

Furthermore, the study investigates the employee engagement as an outcome (Jiang & Shen, 2020) by using the Authentic Leadership theory (Jiang & Luo, 2018; Puni & Hilton, 2020) and Transparent Communication (Jiang & Men, 2017; Rawlins, 2008) as two collaborative concepts. Research relies on broadening earlier studies that have been discussed recognizing the relationship between authentic leadership and transparent communication in employee engagement.

It is essential to feel your leader's sense of confidence and assurance as an employee. They are the ones who can bring the group together as a whole. Influential leaders will know their team members' strengths, weaknesses, and motivations. As a result, not everyone can be a leader. Only people with certain qualities and abilities can fill this role. When we work together in a team, or a broader sense as a society, the leader takes on the most critical part. The leader helps prioritize activities and direct people's thought processes in the right direction.

Literature Review and Hypothesis Development

Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership occurred from leadership ethics and positive organizational behaviour. "Authenticity" has its foundation in Greek philosophy meaning "to thine own self be true" (Puni & Hilton, 2020). In particular Authentic Leadership is characterized as: An illustration of leader behaviour that draws on and progresses both positive mental cutoff points and a positive moral climate, to develop more important care, a disguised moral perspective, changed information dealing with, and social straightforwardness in leaders working with employees, developing positive self-advancement (Jiang & Men, 2017). There is a general agreement on the four elements of authentic leadership such as self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing and relational transparency (Avolio et al., 2004; Luthans & Avolio, 2003).

Self-awareness represents a practice where the authentic leader is persistently aware of his or her distinctive talents, powers, core values, attitudes and wants (Puni & Hilton, 2020). An *internalized moral perspective* of the authentic leader involves setting internal standards, and assessing and resolving inconsistencies between these standards and results (Puni & Hilton, 2020). *Balanced processing* refers to a leader's capacity to examine information objectively and solicit feedback from other followers before making a decision, avoiding favouritism and being impartial (Puni & Hilton, 2020).

Relational transparency refers to the condition in which real leaders express themselves genuinely through openness and appropriate self-disclosure of values, emotions, objectives, and ambitions; hence, revealing information that increases follower trust in leaders is known as relational transparency (Puni & Hilton, 2020).

Transparent Communication
According to Jiang & Men, (2017), Transparent organizational communication fosters employee engagement by promoting trust and confidence. Transparent organizational communication refers to a company's deliberate information dissemination and employees' active participation in information acquisition and dissemination in a truthful, substantial, and comprehensive manner and holding companies accountable for their business practices and policies (Jiang & Men, 2017). According to Rawlins (2008), transparent communication includes three factors: Participation, Accountability, and Substantiality.

Participation represents stakeholders' involvement in identifying the information needed to make appropriate judgments through involvement. Transparency will not meet stakeholders' expectations unless a business understands its information requirements (Rawlins, 2008).

Accountability holds organizations accountable for their behaviours and words (Rawlins, 2008).

Substantiality refers to substantial information that involves providing truthful, substantial, and valuable information to the relevant parties. Information disclosure needs to contain important completeness that emphasizes the needs of the receiver (Rawlins, 2008).

Employee Engagement
Employee engagement implies how employees express themselves in their role activities in the workplace (Jiang & Shen, 2020). According to Jiang & Shen (2020), engagement represents, people engaging and expressing themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally as a result of role performances. The cognitive part of worker commitment concerns employees' convictions about the organization, its leaders, and working conditions. The emotional angle affects how employees feel about each of those three variables, regardless of whether they have excellent or negative mentalities toward the association and its leaders. Finally, the physical part of employee commitment concerns the actual energies applied by people to achieve their jobs (Hadziahmetovic & Mujezinovic, 2021; Jiang & Shen, 2020).

In their study, Avolio and Gardner (2005) claim that for Authentic Leadership to occur in the workplace, leaders must act upon their true selves and strongly emerge in behaviours such as being honest with oneself than with others. Moreover, being sincere with others and behaving in a way that reflects one's values is also an attribute. Authentic leadership has been found to improve individuals' general leadership ability and employee engagement (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

(Edu-Valsania et al., 2016) in their research based on the experimental studies that have been carried out to date, are stressing out that Authentic Leadership has been positively related to a series of desirable results such as among others, job satisfaction, performance, and collaborators. Hence, in this article, they are promoting that the Authentic Leadership Mission is to serve aggregate interests. With that, Authentic Leaders will cultivate and shape their teammate's practices, for example, information-sharing practices – that help the organization and the group from an essential perspective (Valsania et al., 2016).

In accordance, (Edu-Valsania et al., 2016) research has shown that leaders' practices indicate interest in their partners' prosperity and practices, for example, reasonableness in direction and open correspondence are undoubtedly connected with employees' helpful practices and information sharing. This study shows transparent and honest communication is vital and valuable to all organizations. A study analysis conducted by Bamford et al (2013) examined

the theoretical proposition of authentic leadership from the managers (trust work, engagement, and work behaviours) among the employees (n=280). It has been stated that Authentic Leadership directly affected trust (b = 0.43, P < 0.00) while indirectly impacting work engagement. However, upon final results, it has indicated that Authentic Leadership has a simultaneous effect on employee engagement.

When it comes to transparent and open communication, studies that have been conducted by Eisenberger and Stinglhamber (2011) show that available two-way correspondence adds to glad workers, who are more effective in all parts of life (Eisenberger & Stinglhamber, 2011). From this study, we can conclude that transparency in leadership implies keeping workers on top of it, sharing the great and the awful, and inviting fair criticism from colleagues. There ought to be no upsetting amazements, no worries around vulnerability, and no indecisive conduct that might debilitate a leader's standing. Driving with transparency requires a readiness to be straightforward and open with workers, regardless of whether doing as such causes the leaders to feel reasonably helpless. When employees can see and assess all that a leader does, it's fundamental that the individual leads the association with respectability in consistent manners with their qualities. Consequently, employees will give their dependability and trust.

As an outcome of this research study based on a literature review, employee engagement was a positive fact. According to Mishra et al., (2014) employee engagement is a set of "feelings that are strong emotional bond to their employer, recommending it to others and committing time and effort to help the organization succeed" (Mishra et al., 2014) Moreover, a Gallup Management study (George, 2014) proposed that engaged employees "are deeply committed to their employer, leading to key improvements in business outcomes, including reductions in absenteeism, turnover, shrinkage, safety incidents, and product defects."

Furthermore, Caywood's study states that "leadership endeavours to draw in employees are significant in the early stages of the employees' career." Therefore, Caywood (*Caywood, C. (1997)*, n.d.) urged PR experts to foster authoritative drives that would connect with employees.

A study conducted by Trahant (Trahant, 2009) discovered that even an employee's engagement begins high with an employee's underlying passage into the organization. This implies that inward correspondence leaders must be involved promptly with worker partners by arranging them to the organization, fostering their expert abilities, requesting criticism, and setting aside an effort to pay attention to their interests.

Previous research conducted by Therkelsen and Fiebich (2004) has observed that few authoritative correspondence rehearses upgrade worker correspondence and commitment. (Therkelsen & Fiebich, 2004) have also distinguished the significance of worker publics to the organization. They observed that the forefront leader was a key to employees' organizational commitment.

All these studies observed that employee engagement is a two-road direction, meaning in a respectful way for both leadership and the employees. That being said, according to Saks (2006) the point when employees see more prominent help from their bosses, the employees react.

Therefore, following Jiang & Luo (2018) present studies have suggested the authors hypothesize positive relationships between authentic leadership, transparent organizational communication, and employee engagement deduced from several underlying theories. Authentic leaders can strengthen the level of employee engagement in their organization.

Hence, the development of the hypothesis is based on the extensive research studies and current theories; thus, the hypotheses are:

H1: Authentic leadership is positively linked to transparent organizational communication.
H2: Authentic leadership is positively linked to employee engagement.
H2a: Authentic leadership is positively linked to physical engagement.
H2b: Authentic leadership is positively linked to emotional engagement.
H2c: Authentic leadership is positively linked to cognitive engagement.
H3: Transparent organizational communication is positively associated with employee engagement.
H3a: Transparent organizational communication is positively associated with physical engagement.
H3b: Transparent organizational communication is positively associated with emotional engagement.
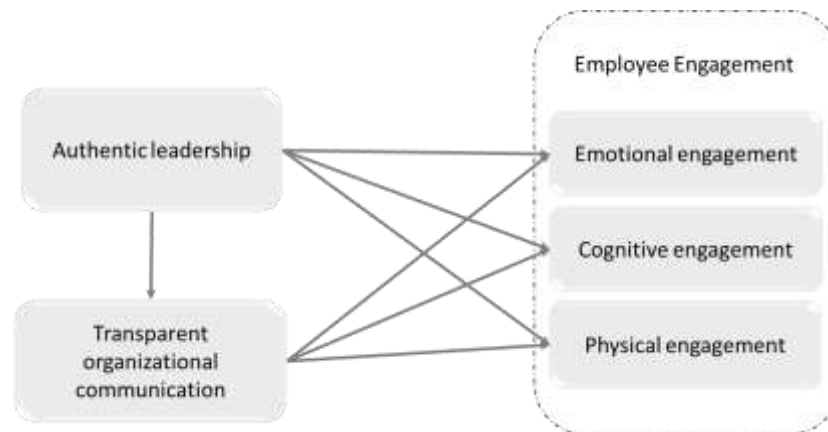*H3c: Transparent organizational communication is positively associated with cognitive engagement.*

Figure 1: Research Model

Methodology

Sample and Data Collection

The study's sample contained 210 employees of medium and large-sized businesses in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Serbia. Table 2 below summarizes the participant's demographic characteristics. We had 97 females (46.9%), while we had a total of 113 Males (53.1%), which had been employees across the different enterprises in Bosnia, Serbia, and Croatia. From the following respondent's 69 (32.9%) were from ages 20-25, 72 (34.3%) were from ages 26-31, 44 (21%) were from ages 32-40, and 25 (11.9%) were from ages 40+. The level of education presents the following: 25 (11.9%) respondents have A high School Diploma (GED), 115 (54.8%) respondents have a Bachelor's degree, and 68 (32.4%) respondents have a Master's Degree. Moreover, the level of work experience indicates that 86 (41%) respondents have 1-3 years of work experience, 56 (26.7%) respondents have 4-6 years of work experience, and 31 (14.8%) respondents have 7-10 years of work experience. In comparison, 37 (17.6%) have 10+ years of work experience.

All data were collected using Google Docs, and all responses were kept entirely confidential. The participants have been contacted through various sources (Internal Enterprise Microsoft Team Groups, external sources have been approached Via Linked in), which had been the prerequisite for taking involvement in the questionnaire. The questionnaire was written in English and translated into Bosnian. The University assessed the questionnaire translation and

determined it to be adequate. The questions were considered to be understandable and pertinent.

Table 2

Sample Characteristics

Variable	Demographics	Number	Valid Percentage
Gender	Male	113	53.1%
	Female	97	46.9%
Age	20-25	69	32.9%
	26-31	72	34.3%
	32-40	44	21%
	40+	25	11.9%
Level of Education	High School Diploma (GED)	25	11.9%
	Bachelor's Degree	115	54.8%
	Master's Degree	68	32.4%
Work Experience	1-3 years	86	41%
	4-6 years	56	26.7%
	7-10 years	31	14.8%
	10+ years	37	17.6%

Instrumentation

Simple random sampling was utilized to lead the questionnaire to gather essential information for this study, focusing on employees in medium and large enterprises. Four classifications of inquiries were utilized: Demographics, Authentic Leadership, Transparent Communication, and Employee Engagement. Information was gathered through the poll utilizing a 7-point Likert scale, organizing items from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). To measure employee engagement as the dependent variable, we have used the adapted version of the 18-item engagement scale that (Rich et al., 2010) had developed. 6 items had been adopted for physical, emotional and cognitive engagement subsequently. Concerning Authentic Leadership as the independent variable, 14 questions from Neider & Schriesheim (2011) were used to measure the leadership behaviours that employees have perceived. Leading on Transparent Communication has been measured by the 18 survey items adopted by (Rawlins, 2008).

Results

Two hundred and ten (210) respondents completed the 51- item questionnaire, including demographic questions. Before conducting the analysis, the reverse questions in the research from the questionnaire had been reversed. To investigate the matrix of mean, standard deviation, and correlations, the data mean, standard deviation, and correlations between the variables have been addressed, as shown in Table 1. The table illustrates that there was a consistency of replies throughout the questionnaire based on the data.

Table 4

Mean, Standard Deviation, and Correlation between dependent variables (Emotional, Physical, and Cognitive Engagement)

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	1	2	3	4	5
Authenthic Leadership	5,74	0,93	1,00				
Transparent Communication	5,54	0,93	.841**	1,00			
Physical Engagement	6,09	0,99	.612**	.634**	1,00		
Emotional Engagement	6,05	1,00	.636**	.696**	.857**	1,00	
Congnitive Engagement	6,09	0,95	.668**	.693**	.880**	.906**	1,00

Note. N= 210 *Correlation is significant at p<.05 (2-tailed). **Correlation is significant at p<.01 (2-tailed).

Research has used a seven-point Likert- type scale of 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree) to measure all scale items in our questionnaire, we used "low (1.00–2.50)," "moderately low (2.51–3.99)," "neutral (4)," moderately high (4.01–5.49)," and "high (5.50–7.00)" as categories to evaluate the values of the variables. Results of the analysis have indicated that the participant's superiors exhibit high Authentic Leadership Behavior (M= 5.74, SD= 0.93). Participants have indicated that regarding transparent communication, the enterprise has provided a high amount of information (M= 5.54, SD= 0.93). Moreover, participants have indicated a high level of engagement, including physical engagement (M= 6.09, SD= 0.99), Emotional engagement (M= 6.05, SD= 1.00), and Cognitive engagement (M= 6.09, SD= 0.95). The proposed model was analyzed and interpreted in two stages: Cronbach's alpha and exploratory factor analysis were used to assess the validity of the scales in this study.

Table 5

Explanatory Factor Analysis and Reliability Statistics

Items	Factor Loading	Cronbach's Alpha
Authentic Leadership		.951
My leader appropriately describes how others perceive his or her abilities.	.768	
My leader demonstrates that he or she is aware of my talents and flaws.	.744	
My leader is very aware of the effect he or she has on others.	.713	
My leader expresses himself/herself clearly.	.707	
My leader is quite open about sharing information with others.	.809	
My leader communicates his or her ideas and thoughts to others.	.810	
My leader is consistent in his or her thoughts and behaviour.	.811	
My management makes decisions based on her core convictions.	.820	

My leader resists pressure to do things that go against his or her convictions.	.773	
My leaders' activities are guided by internal moral norms.	.843	
My leader requests suggestions that challenge his or her core beliefs.	.647	
Before coming to a decision, my leader thoroughly considers all points of view.	.842	
Before making a decision, my leader conducts an objective analysis of pertinent data.	.859	
My leader encourages individuals to express alternative viewpoints.	.819	
Transparent Communication		. 943
My company solicits employee feedback on the quality of its information.	.786	
Employees at my company are involved in identifying the information they require.	.828	
My company gives employees detailed information.	.853	
My company makes it simple for its employees to get the information they require.	.856	
Before making choices, my company consults with its employees.	.846	
My company takes the time to get to know its employees and learn what they require.	.832	
My company is open about information that could be detrimental to the company.	.077	
When my company makes a mistake, it freely admits it.	.779	
My company provides data that may be compared to industry benchmarks.	.720	
Employees at my company are free to criticize it.	.823	
My company gives information to its employees in a timely manner.	.847	
My company gives information to its employees that is useful.	.809	
My company gives information that can be compared to previous results.	.871	
My organization gives comprehensive information.	.833	
My company delivers information that is simple to comprehend for its personnel.	.834	
My company gives its employees reliable information.	.845	
My company provides accurate information.	.822	
My group gives opposing viewpoints on contentious matters.	.408	
Employee Engagement		.976
Physical Engagement		.948
I work very hard at my job.	0,850	
I put out the best effort in my work.	0,894	
I put a great deal of exertion into my work.	0,900	

I make every effort to excel at my job.	0,886	
I make every effort to complete my work.	0,900	
My work takes a lot of time and effort.	0,859	
In my work, I am enthusiastic.	0,831	
Emotional Engagement		.942
I feel energetic at my job.	0,894	
I am interested in my job.	0,899	
I am proud of my job.	0,870	
I feel positive about my job.	0,904	
I am excited about my job.	0,873	
At work, my thoughts are centered around my work.	0,849	
Cognitive Engagement		.945
I devote close attention to my work at work.	0,894	
At work, I pay close attention to what I'm doing.	0,856	
At work, I am wholly absorbed in my career.	0,904	
I concentrate on my work at work.	0,918	
I devote close attention to my work at work.	0,897	
When another staff is absent, I frequently assist them with their tasks.	0,842	

The factor loadings for all dependent and independent variables are considered acceptable (.70 or higher) based on the data in the tables above. The reliability test, as per the general guidelines, is as per the following: Dependent Variables: Physical Engagement (α = .948) - Excellent, Emotional Engagement (α = .942) – Excellent, Cognitive Engagement (α = .945) – Excellent

Independent Variables: Authentic Leadership (α = .951) – Excellent, Transparent Communication (α = .943) – Excellent. Before developing a basic linear model, it was needed to ascertain whether there would be sufficient evidence to substantiate a linear relationship. To see if there was a correlation between the variables, the hypotheses and sub-hypotheses were first assessed applying Pearson's r (Ashton et al., 2009).

Table 6
Regression Analysis (impact of Authentic Leadership)

Predictors				
	R2	β	t	p
Physical Engagement	0,34	0,612	11,149	< ,001
Emotional Engagement	0,4	0,636	11,895	< ,001
Cognitive Engagement	0,44	0,668	12,932	< ,001

Note. N = 210. p < .05

Table 7
Regression Analysis (Impact of ransparent communication)

Predictors				
	R2	β	t	p
Physical Engagement	0,4	0,634	11,81	< ,001
Emotional Engagement	0,48	0,696	13,977	< ,001
Cognitive Engagement	0,48	0,693	13,875	< ,001

Note. N = 210. p < .05

Discussion

The study's major purpose was to examine how authentic leadership has simultaneous effects on the employee's engagement, and transparent communication by using previous literature and studies to supplement the findings while comparing them to this research. All three hypotheses and sub-hypotheses are statistically significant (p <.005). The outcomes of all three analyses in this study jointly specified physical, cognitive, and emotional employee engagement as the outcome variable. Table 3 shows the results of the conducted factor analysis, which revealed solid loadings for all variables and sub-scales. As previously stated, as factor loadings increase, the variable of the factor becomes more explanatory. Cronbach's alpha, a test reliability indicator, showed that Physical Engagement (α = .948) - Excellent, Emotional Engagement (α = .942) – Excellent, Cognitive Engagement (α = .945) – Excellent Conclusion, Authentic Leadership (α = .951) – Excellent, Transparent Communication (α = .943) – Excellent

Research findings support the empirical economic evidence for media relations. Authentic leaders in people selection and human resource management must be identified, promoted, and educated, as well as perceived transparency in a system of digital and face-to-face leadership and communication techniques. If immediate superiors' actual leadership behaviour is not sufficient, employees' selfless, helpful behaviour toward accomplishing shared, common goals with their coworkers is insufficient to keep talent with the firm. The linking nodes are communication and employees' fulfilled state of involvement. Executives at all levels should receive communication training to practice transparency in interactions with employees, such as through individual meetings, social listening on the company's social media outlets, employee surveys, and other forms of communication.

Conclusion

The importance of personality in Authentic Leadership, particularly in terms of employee engagement and transparent communication, was revealed in this study. Employee engagement is increased as a result of effective, transparent communication and Authentic Leadership. To complete the management, professionals may find Employee Engagement appealing because they specify and characterize patterns of behaviour and activities within the company. As a result, understanding the interpretation of a leader's actions leads to Authentic Leadership. This study suggested a substantial relationship between Authentic leadership with employee engagement and transparent communication.

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