



Role of Authentic Leadership in Post COVID 19 Era: A Study Examining Moderating Role of Procedural Justice and Emotional Demands

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ABSTRACT

Organizational survival, growth, and sustainability depend on employees' positive attitudes and behavior toward the organizations and jobs. Factors such as authentic leadership style and procedural justice can affect procedural justice and emotional exhaustion. There are many studies on authentic leadership, but a few have examined the moderating effect of procedural justice and emotional demand. Thus we have developed and empirically tested a conceptual framework that, besides direct, mediating, and moderating relationships, also has a mediating-moderating relationship. COVID 19 has adversely effected the banking industry of Pakistan. To assess the influence of authentic leadership on employees' wellbeing, we collected the data post COVID 19. We have focused on the banking sector of Karachi, as it is highly competitive with a high turnover intention. Pre-recruited enumerators distributed 450 non-randomly and received 415 questionnaires with a response rate of 92%, appropriate for a study of this magnitude post COVID 19 period. The study found that authentic leadership passively affects employee empowerment, reduces emotional exhaustion, and positively affects procedural justice. The results do not support the association between procedural justice and emotional exhaustion. At the same time, we found the procedural justice moderates authentic leadership and employee empowerment. The study also validated the moderating role of emotional exhaustion. But we could not find support on the mediating role of perceived justice on authentic leadership and emotional exhaustion.



Introduction

The current business environment has become highly competitive. Thus, in post COVID 19 era, firms' survival and growth highly depend on the employees' creativity, motivation, and leaders (Koseoglu, Liu, & Shalley, 2017). Firms with the capacity and capability to effectively utilize employees' potential have sustainable growth. On the other hand, firms that cannot harvest the potential of the employees may not survive. The leaders of an organization play an important role in utilizing employees' potential and achieving organizational goals (Alvesson & Einola, 2019).

Given the importance of leadership, researchers have extensively researched different aspects of authentic leadership and found it affects organizational and work-related outcomes (Alilyyani, Wong & Cummings, 2018). Authentic leadership nurtures self-awareness and self-development in the employees. By empowering employees, authentic leaders stimulate positive behavior in the employees. Psychological empowerment enhances employees' engagement, sense of control, and self-actualizations. All these factors significantly contribute to organizational performance (Purwanto et al., 2021)

Due to the complex and uncertain environment, organizations had to be flexible for survival and sustainable growth. Similarly, Alvesson and Einola (2019) believe that traditional and conventional management practices are counterproductive, there is a need to focus on non-conventional management practices and leadership styles. Developing countries like Pakistan have top-down hierarchical structures due to which employees do not consider themselves a part of the organization. The culture in most organizations in developing countries does not encourage employees to participate and share their opinions. These factors significantly contribute towards low productivity and motivation. Thus the firms must focus on psychological empowerment to cater to the challenges of the uncertain environment. Authentic leadership thus is necessary for the growth of an organization. Apart from employee empowerment, authentic leaders reduce work-related stress such as burnout and emotional stress, significantly affecting procedural justice and emotional demand. Most past studies have examined the effect of authentic leadership on employee empowerment, emotional exhaustion, and emotional demand (Mubarak, & Noor, 2018; Marič, Miglič & Jordan, 2017; Lee, Cho, Baek, Pillai, & Oh, 2019). An insignificant number of studies have examined the moderating role of procedural justice on employee empowerment (Emuwa, 2013). And the moderating effect of emotional demand on emotional exhaustion (Kampa, Rigotti & Otto, 2017).

Theoretical Grounding and Conceptual Framework

Gardner et al. (2005) proposed a model of authentic leadership and follower development. The model defines authenticity as "being true to oneself" and owning the experience related to values, thoughts, emotions, and beliefs. The model postulates that authentic leaders based on self-awareness, self-regulation inspire and motivate others to follow them (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

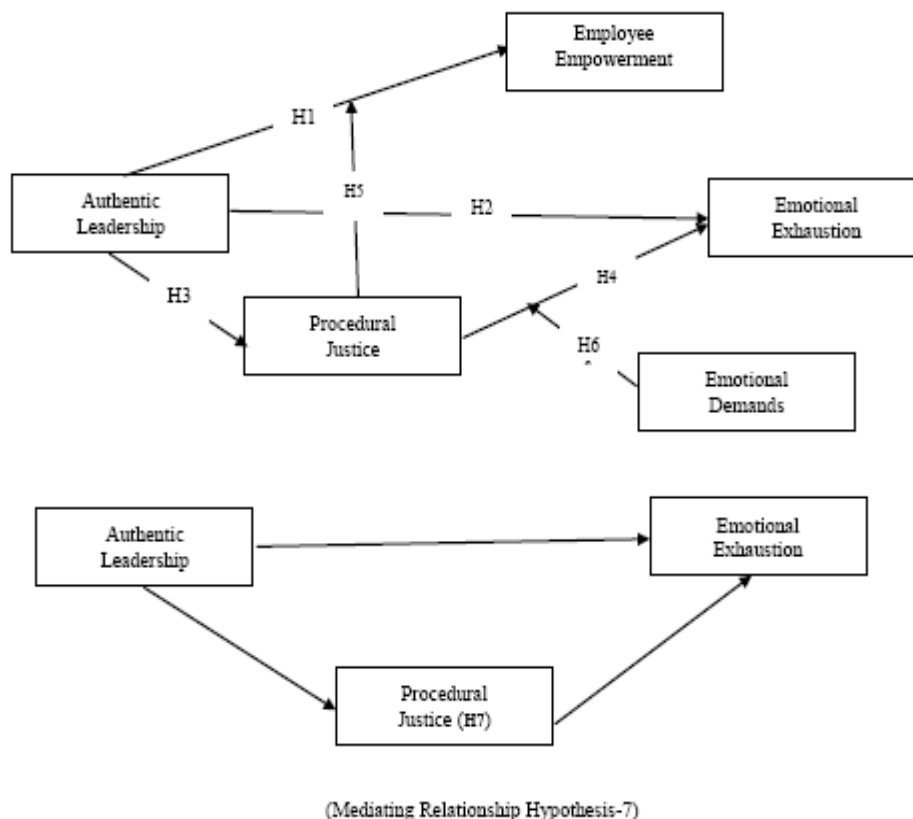
A self-awareness in leaders means they know what is important for them and the organization (Kluichnikov, 2011). At the same time, self-regulation promotes transparency and consistency in attitudes and behaviors. Gardner et al. (2005) assert authentic leadership styles and positive leadership styles are highly aligned. Positive leadership activates a set of cognitions, values, and self-regulatory plans. Also, a positive leader has a high inclination to take inputs and feedbacks from the follower, which enhances the self-concepts of both the leaders and followers (Hannah et al., 2009).

The meaning of authenticity relates to being true to one's self. Authentic leaders have high self-awareness, self-belief, and confidence. Authentic leaders' perception is that they have high moral and ethical values and are reliable and trustworthy (Fields, 2007). Authentic leaders know the gaps in their existing and internalized standards. Therefore they always make efforts to improve themselves (Kluichnikov, 2011). The self-regulation process enhances the moral strength of authentic leaders, which helps them cope with external and undue pressures (Hannah et al., 2009). Gardner et al. (2011) assert four critical aspects of ethical leadership: "balance processing, internalized moral perspective, relational transparency, and self-awareness." Balance processing, also known as unbiased processing, enables a leader to collect all the information, including contrary, before making decisions.

Consequently, such decisions have rationality and objectivity (Walumbwa et al., 2010). Internalized morality refers to the actions based on morality and high standards and not under external pressures (i.e., peers, society, organizations, top management) (Walumbwa et al., 2010). Relational transparency enables leaders to share true motives, while self-awareness enables leaders to self-judge themselves based on their mental states, perceptions, and images (Yammarino et al., 2008). An authentic leader possesses all these traits.

Given the above discussions and aims of the study, we have proposed a framework containing five constructs (i.e., authentic leadership, empowerment, emotional exhaustion, procedural justice, emotional demands) and seven hypotheses, including four direct, one moderating, and one moderating- mediating hypotheses. The study has depicted the conceptual framework in Figure 1 and theoretical support for the relationships in the following sections.

Figure-1 Conceptual Framework



Authentic Leadership and Empowerment (H1)

Hahm (2018) believes that authentic leaders' followers have a high perception of psychological empowerment, significantly affecting their sense of ownership towards the organization (Kim, & Han, 2019). Authentic leaders are concerned about employees' development and welfare. Thus, authentic leaders enhance employee self-esteem and self-actualization through social interaction, counseling, and psychological empowerment (Mubarak, & Noor, 2018). Such employees are highly motivated and contribute towards organizational development. Similarly, Hahm (2017) asserts that authentic leaders help employees to discover their talents, which is a strong driver for self-actualization and autonomy, leading to increased organizational performance and sustainable growth of the firms. (Kim & Han, 2019). Authentic leadership promotes talents by motivating employees to align their self-goals with work-related roles. All these factors, directly and indirectly, promote empowerment. Many past studies based on empirical evidence have concluded that authentic leaders develop a conducive environment in an organization that allows them to give their feedbacks freely (Mubarak, & Noor, 2018).

A conducive social interaction in an organization helps in improving the work process and the development of innovative products. Improved work processes give a competitive edge to firms. A sense of purpose to deliver high-quality service is a hallmark of authentic leaders, which employees also adopt (Hahm, 2017). Consequently, it positively affects their motivational level and attitude towards work. Authentic leaders' decisions are transparent and unbiased, due to which followers trust the leaders and employee performance increase (Doherty & Hunter Revell, (2020)). Past studies have documented that psychological empowerment significantly depends on followers' trust (Kim, & Han, 2019).

H1: Authentic leadership stimulates empowerment

Authentic Leadership and Emotional Exhaustion (H2)

Many past studies have examined the outcome of autogenetic leadership, and they found it significantly affects "followers trust, satisfaction" (Kampa, Rigotti & Otto, 2017). At the same time, a few studies found that authentic leadership has negative consequences (Lee, Chiang, & Kuo, 2019). Job-related stress and leadership styles significantly affect emotional exhaustion. For example, studies have documented that a conducive environment and authentic leadership styles negatively affect emotional exhaustion (Wong et al., 2020). Authentic leaders have a high awareness of their qualities and weaknesses. They have high moral standards, and they guide others with their actions. All these factors significantly contribute to reducing work-related stress, including emotional exhaustion. Many employees adopt different coping strategies, including deep surfacing, which also reduces emotional exhaustion (Na & Park, 2019).

H2: Authentic leadership reduces emotional exhaustion.

Authentic Leadership-Procedural Justice (H3)

Many past studies have extended leader Fairness Theory for explaining the association between authentic leadership and procedural justice. The theory assumes that employees' behavior significantly depends on behavior leadership style (Kampa, Rigotti, & Otto, 2017). Authentic leaders ensure justice, fairness while distrusting organizational resources. They also expect fairness and justice from the employees while carrying out their assigned duties and interacting with other employees (Goestjahjanti et al., 2020). Arasli, Arici and, Çakmakçoğlu, 2019). believes that moral accountability is an essential aspect of organizational justice. It motivates employees to follow basic moral values while dealing with the employees and other stakeholders of the company

(Nübold, Van-Quaquebeke, & Hülshager, 2020). Divya and Suganthi (2018) argue that ethical leaders have high moral values and can recognize and successfully address ethical issues. Extant literature has documented that authentic leaders' decisions do not deviate from norms of organizational values (Kampa, Rigotti & Otto, 2017). Morality is the core trait of authentic leadership, stimulating a conducive environment of trust and ownership. Exchange relationship is a critical aspect for the smooth operation of an organization. It significantly depends on organizational justice and authentic leadership (Goestjahjanti et al., 2020). Employees' perception of trust and justice depends on the leaders' fair, unbiased, and transparent treatment. Because of their high integrity, moral standards, and integrity, ethical leaders become role models to the employees.

H3: Authentic leadership and procedural justice are positively associated.

Procedural Justice and Emotional Exhaustion (H4)

Extant literature documents a positive association between procedural justice and employee wellbeing (Noh, Jang & Choi, 2019). Schuh, Zheng, Xin, & Fernandez, and. (2019), based on empirical evidence, concluded that distributive justice and procedural justice individually and collectively affect emotional exhaustion (Shahid et al., 2018). Other studies have also validated this association by connecting low procured justice with high emotional exhaustion (Soenen, Eib, & Torrès, 2019). Lack of control and indecisive decision-making promotes stress and adversely affect employee wellbeing. While extending the group value model (6), studies concluded that employees in an organization are concerned about their social status. They also expect that employees who interact with each other may also keep this aspect in mind. These status-based social interactions enhance self-actualization and self-esteem in the employees.

H4: Procedural justice reduces emotional exhaustion.

Procedural Justice as Moderator (H5)

A procedural justice climate refers to a fair and just environment for its employees (Noerchoidah, & Harjanti, 2019). Many researchers believe that procedural justice is an individual-level phenomenon based on self-interest, implying that anything that benefits all is fair. Gardner et al.'s (2005) structural theory of organization gives theoretical support on the association between authentic leadership, followership, and organizational climate. A procedural justice perception depends on morals and ethical judgment, consistency in rewarding resources, and providing equal opportunities for all employees. A weakness in any of these aspects may adversely affect employees' perception of procedural justice. The three important dimensions of authentic leadership are moral perspective, relational transparency, and self-awareness believes. Researchers believe that all these dimensions individually and collectively contribute to enhancing or reducing the association between authentic leadership and procedural justice (Emuwa, 2013; Gardner et al., 2011). Researchers also believe that procedural justice as a whole moderates the association between authentic leadership and followers outcomes (Emuwa, 2013)

H5: Procedural justice moderates authentic leadership and emotional exhaustion.

Emotional Demand as a Moderator

Employees working in service sectors deal and interact with the customers, which requires emotional demand. For example, while selling financial products, employees in the financial sector display positive emotions for achieving organizational goals. Thus such employees are more vulnerable to emotional exhaustion (Zapf, 2002). Researchers believe that an organization cannot

eliminate emotional demand (Grandey et al., 2012) stress that the climate of authenticity may enhance burnout in the profession like banks and restaurants, suggesting authenticity is necessary when emotional demand is high. The current study examines whether emotional demand increases or decreases the association between procedural justice and emotional exhaustion (Naumann & Bennett, 2000). Uncertain management theory explains how procedural justice relates to such emotional demands. It also highlights the role of procedural justice in uncertain situations. Jobs with high emotional demand often put employees in emotionally demanding positions or suffer from other health-related issues (Kampa, Rigotti, & Otto, 2017; Grandey et al. 2012)). Gardner (2005) believes that emotional demand makes interaction and communication with clients less predictable. Thus uncertainty management theory suggests that elevated justice may bring more certainty in dealing with customers and employees. At the same time, low emotional demand makes the job more predictable, reduces uncertainty, and reduces considering or obtain justice information (Saira. 2019). Given these theoretical arguments, we argue that emotional demands moderates procedural justice and emotional exhaustion

H6: Emotional demand moderates procedural justice and emotional exhaustion.

Procedural Justice as Mediator (H7)

Procedural justice, an essential determinant of an organizational setup, relates to impartiality in the decision-making process. Management makes decisions for the smooth operation of organizations. Some decisions can be employee-friendly, while others could be unfavorable to employees. Nevertheless, both favorable and unfavorable decisions affect employees' attitudes and behavior. (Laschinger, Wong, & Grau, 2012) believe that leadership literature has barely discussed procedural justice, despite its importance in the relationship of employers and employees (Laschinger, Wong & Grau (2013)). Past literature has emphasized that procedural justice is "systematic fairness," which is irrelevant to authentic leadership. Kampa, Rigotti, and Otto (2017) believe this is a huge gap in the literature. Thus we argue that authentic leaders play a significant role in reducing work-related strain through procedural justice. The current study argues that authentic leadership directly and through procedural justice affect emotional exhaustion. Fairness Heuristic Theory assumes that many employees in an organization believe that someone in authority would exploit them. Thus the employees need to know whether their supervisor is trustworthy or not (Van-Knippenberg, et. 2007). Due to the non-availability of the required information, employees judge based on procedural justice (Cropanzano, Byrne, Bobocel & Rupp, 2001). Thus employees believe that the leaders who display and exhibit fairness and distributing awards and resources are trustworthy and would support them in reducing work-related strain.

H7: Procedural justice mediates authentic leadership and emotional exhaustion.

Methodology

The firms have realized that it may not be possible to motivate employees based on traditional tools in the prevailing competition in the post COVID 19 era. Therefore many organizations are focusing on positive leadership styles to reduce work-related stress. Given its importance, the study has examined the impact of authentic leadership on employee empowerment, employee exhaustion, and procedural justice—the impact of procedural justice on emotional exhaustion. And the moderating role of procedural justice and the mediating-moderating role of emotional demand.

Population and Sample Size

The study has focused on the local private banks of Karachi to identify the influence of authentic leadership post COVID 19. We have selected private commercial banks because this sector has

become highly competitive, employees worked from home and due to excessive job-related stress, employee turnover has increased significantly. The minimum sample size for the study is 387, which we have calculated based on a 95% confidence level and 5% margin of error. The study has recruited six enumerators who collected the data from the target banks by using pre-developed questionnaires. The enumerators distributed 450 questionnaires and received 417. The sampling technique used in the study is convenience, as a sample frame for the banks' employees is not available (Bell, Bryman & Harley, 2018).

Respondents Profile

The respondents' profile is as follows. Of the 417 employees, 67% are males, and 33% are females. The age strata show that 33% of employees are 18 to 28 years. 20% in the age bracket of 28 to 38 years. Another 20% in the age group of 38 to 48 years. And the rest, 10%, are in the age bracket of 48 plus years. We found that 40% of the respondents are married, and 60% are single. We also found that 40% of the respondents belong to a non-management cadre, 24% are grade 3 officers, 23 % are grade two officers, and 10% are grade 1 officers. In terms of experience, we found 35% of employees have experience of up to 5 years, 40% have 5-10 years, 20% have 10 to 15 years, and 15% of employees have experience of at least 15 years.

Scale and Measures

The study has adopted the scales and measures from earlier studies. The questionnaire has two parts. Part one relates to demographics, and it has five items based on a nominal scale. And the second part has five latent variables and 53 indicators variables. We have collected the respondent options on 5 points Likert Scale: five suggesting "high agreement, and one low agreement. A summary showing sources, indicator variables, number of items, and factors are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Scale and Measures

Constructs	Sources	Items	Reliability
Authentic Leadership	Northouse (1999)	16	0.830 to 0.787
Employee empowerment.	(ajalingam, et.al. (2015)	17	0.796 to 0.790
Emotional Exhaustion	Schaufeli, et.al (2001)	08	0.840 to 0.867
Emotional Demand	Aiello & Tesi,(2017)	06	0.817 to 0.838
Procedural Justice	Colquitt, (2001).	07	0.873. to 0.874

Statistical Analysis

The study has Smart PLS version 3.22 for statistical analysis as it allows researchers to use both primary and secondary data on it. CBM-SEM requires a sample size of at least 400, whereas Smarts PLS requires a small sample size. For CB-SEM, the normality of the data is essential, but there is no such requirement in Smart PLS. Smart PLS generates R^2 values that allow researchers to infer a significant relationship between constructs and model and model's predictive power (Hair, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2013; Hair, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2011).

Descriptive Statistic

The study has carried out a descriptive analysis to examine the univariate and internal consistency of the constructs on the data set collected from the local banks' employees. The summary of the results is illustrated in Table 2.

Table 2: Descriptive Statistic

	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	Std. Dev	Skewness	Kurtosis
Authentic Leadership	0.716	3.850	1.630	1.830	2.190
Emotional Demand	0.737	3.880	1.370	2.150	1.770
Emotional Exhaustion	0.802	3.960	1.060	1.780	2.340
Employee Empowerment	0.897	4.010	0.970	1.030	1.350
Procedural Justice	0.843	3.980	2.180	1.820	1.420

The results show that Cronbach's alpha values range from 0.716 to 0.897. The lowest Cronbach's Alpha value is for authentic leadership (Means= 3.850, SD=1.630, $\alpha=0.807$) and the highest for employee empowerment (Means= 4.010, SD=0.970, $\alpha=0.897$). Thus we have inferred that the constructs used in the study have acceptable internal consistency (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2009).

Convergent and Discriminant Validity

The study has assessed convergent validity based on composite values and average variance extracted. We have also used Fornell & Larcker's (1981) criteria for discriminant validity. The study has depicted the summary of results in Table 3

Table 3: Convergent Validity and Discriminant Validity

	Composite Reliability	AVE	AL	ED	EE	E.EMP	PJ
Authentic Leadership	0.820	0.535	0.731				
Emotional Demand	0.809	0.680	-0.435	0.825			
Emotional Exhaustion	0.870	0.628	-0.544	0.641	0.792		
Employee Empowerment	0.821	0.662	0.564	-0.563	-0.631	0.813	
Procedural Justice	0.895	0.680	0.373	-0.274	-0.251	0.355	0.825

The results show that all the composite validity values range from 0.809 to 0.895, and AVE values are greater than 0.50, suggesting the constructs on the present data-set fulfills the requirement so convergent validity. The results also show that the square root of AVE range from 0.713 to 0.825, which are greater than Pearson Correlation values, suggesting the constructs are unique and distinct (Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, & Tatham, 2009).

Discriminant Validity (HTMT Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT))

The HTMT is comparatively more stringent than Fornell & Larcker's (1981); therefore, we have reconfirmed discriminant validity through HTMT. The results are summarized in Table 4

Table 4: Discriminant HTMT Criterion

Constructs	AL	ED	EE	E.EMP	PJ
Authentic Leadership					
Emotional Demand	0.682				
Emotional Exhaustion	0.683	0.925			
Employee Empowerment	0.657	0.808	0.738		
Procedural Justice	0.475	0.404	0.31	0.401	

The results show that the HTMT values are greater than 0.85 suggesting that latent variables fulfill the requirement of discriminant validity. That is, they are all unique and distinct (Ramayah et al., 2017).

Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA)

We have used CFA to examine the theoretical association between the constructs and their indicators variables. We have presented the summary of results in Table 5

Table 5: Confirmatory Factor Analysis

	Authentic Leadership	Emotional Demand	Emotional Exhaustion	Employee Empowerment	Procedural Justice
AL1	0.752				
AL2	0.748				
AL3	0.806				
AL6	0.768				
AL8	0.778				
AL10	0.832				
AL12	0.717				
AL13	0.707				
AL14	0.814				
AL15	0.805				
ED1		0.877			
ED2		0.768			
ED3		0.760			
ED4		0.765			
ED6		0.826			
EEX1			0.689		
EEX2			0.733		
EEX3			0.884		
EEX6			0.848		
EEX7			0.768		
EEM3				0.720	
EEM4				0.822	
EEM6				0.832	
EEM7				0.838	
EEM9				0.847	
EEM10				0.709	
EEM11				0.744	
EEM12				0.845	
EEM13				0.853	
EEM14				0.866	
EEM16				0.885	
PJ1					0.811
PJ2					0.836

PJ3	0.856
PJ4	0.795
PJ5	0.883

Note: The Table does not contain items that we dropped due to low loadings.

The results show the factor loadings of all the indicator variables are greater than 0.60, suggesting a theoretical association between the constructs and their indicator variables (Hair, Ringle & Sarstedt, 2011).

Predictive Power of the Measurement Model

We have assessed the predictability of the endogenous model and measurement model based on R square and Q square values. All these values are greater than 0.10, suggesting adequate predictability (Citation). We have presented results in Table 6 and Measurement and Structural Model in Figure 2 and Figure 3, respectively.

Table 6: Predictive Power of the Measurement Model

	R Square	R Square Adjusted	Q² (=1-SSE/SSO)
Emotional Exhaustion	0.500	0.499	0.306
Employee Empowerment	0.375	0.373	0.242
Procedural justice	0.155	0.153	0.102

Figure 2: Measurement Model

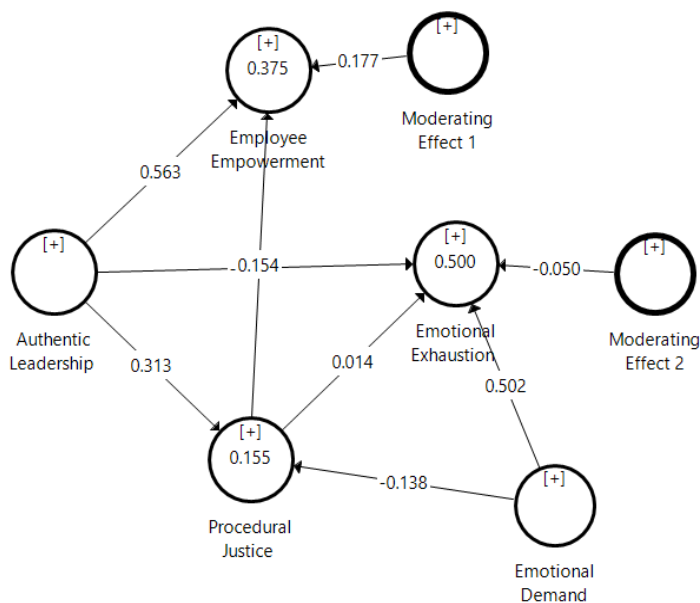
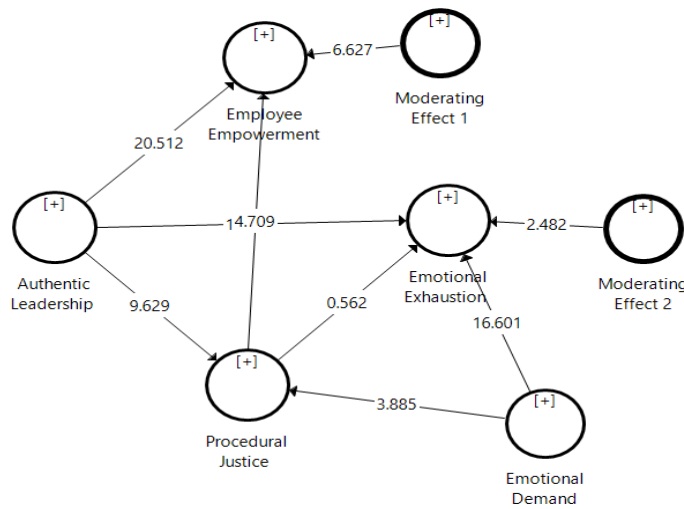


Figure 3: Structural Model



Hypothesis Results

We have developed a model that has four direct, two moderating, and one mediating hypotheses. We have presented the results in Table 7 and the structural model in Figure 3.

Table 7: Hypotheses Results s

	B	T Stat	P Values	Results
Authentic Leadership -> Employee Empowerment (H1)	0.563	21.079	0.000	Accepted
Authentic Leadership -> Emotional Exhaustion (H2)	-0.332	11.295	0.000	Accepted
Authentic Leadership -> Procedural justice (H3)	0.313	9.609	0.000	Accepted
Procedural justice -> Emotional Exhaustion (H4)	0.014	0.556	0.289	Accepted
Moderating Effect 1 -> Employee Empowerment (H5)	0.177	6.455	0.000	Accepted
Moderating Effect 2 -> Emotional Exhaustion (H6)	-0.050	2.530	0.006	Accepted
Aut. Leadership -> Per. Justice -> Emt. Exhaustion (H7)	0.004	0.543	0.294	Rejected

Our results support all the four direct hypotheses, two moderating hypotheses but could not find support on the mediating relationship of procedural justice.

Discussion and Conclusion

Discussion

The study has examined the consequences of authentic leadership, the mediating-moderating effect of emotional demand, and the moderating effect of procedural justice post COVID 19 era based on the data collected from the banking sector of Pakistan. We have discussed the results and their relevance in the following sections.

The study found that authentic leadership has stimulated psychological empowerment among employees in the post COVID era. The results are consistent with earlier studies (Mubarak & Noor

2018; Kim & Han, 2019). Authentic leaders empower employees, due to which they develop a sense of ownership and increase their self-actualization. Employees' sense of ownership and self-esteem develop a positive attitude towards work and increase organizational performance (Doherty & Hunter Revell, 2020). Sustainable growth of employees and organizations depends on the alignment of employees' and employers' values. Realizing the importance of this alignment, authentic leaders try to reduce the conflict between employees and organizational values (Hahm 2017). This leader's efforts reduce conflict, decrease job-related stresses, and enhances employees' job-related performance. Psychological empowerment enhances employees' confidence, decision-making power and contributes to their development (Kim & Han, 2019).

We have validated the results of Kampa, Rigotti & Otto (2017) and Lee, Chiang, & Kuo (2019), who also found authentic leadership style and procedural justice are significantly associated. Authentic leaders have high moral and ethical values, and their decision-making process is unbiased, transparent, and fair, promoting a perception of procedural justice Wong et al., 2020). Such a positive perception of procedural justice enhances employees' intrinsic motivation. Intrinsically motivated employees have positive attitudes towards their jobs, and they also help and guide coworkers in achieving their goals (Na & Park, 2019). Because of their high integrity, moral standards, and integrity, ethical leaders command trust and respect of the employees (Arasli, Arici and, Çakmakoğlu, 2019). A mutual trust and respect relationship between leaders and employees increases organizational performance and sustainable growth.

We found procedural justice reduces emotional exhaustion, which is in line with earlier literature (Noh, Jang & Choi, 2019; Schuh, Zheng, Xin, & Fernandez & 2019). Shahid et al. (2018) assert that apart from other factors, lack of control and indecisiveness contribute to anxiety and emotional exhaustion and promote a negative perception of procedural justice. Involving employees in decision-making and sharing visions supports the organization's procedural justice system and reduces job-related stress (Soenen, Eib, & Torrès, 2019). An employee with less stress has objectivity and positivity, due to which they are in a better position to appreciate the process of giving rewards and resources to the employees. When employees believe that the organizational, procedural system is unbiased and transparent, their stress reduces. Employees also know that in such an organization, the management will hear and address their grievances fairly, due to which they are emotionally confident and do not suffer from adverse job-related emotional consequences (Soenen, Eib, & Torrès, 2019).

We have validated Emuwa's (2013) findings and found that procedural justice moderates authentic leadership and employee empowerment. Authentic leadership promotes employee empowerment. However, this association significantly depends on procedural justice in an organization. Employees' positive perception of procedural justice would enhance the association between authentic leadership and empowerment (Gardner et al.'s (2005). At the same time, negative perception towards the procedural justice would weaken the association between authentic leadership and employees empowerment (Gardner et al. 2011).

We found that emotional demand does not moderate procedural justice and emotional exhaustion. This finding is inconsistent with the finding of Kampa, Rigotti, and Otto (2017). Uncertain management theory suggests procedural justice significantly affects the direct and indirect associations between procedural justice and emotional demands. The theory also suggests that jobs that require high emotional demand put them in an emotionally demanding situation. And if they are not able to cope with it, they suffer from physical and psychological issues (Kampa, Rigotti, & Otto, 2017; Grandey et al., 2012).

We found that procedural justice mediates *authentic leadership and emotional exhaustion*. This finding is in line with the study of Kampa, Rigotti, and Otto (2017). //We believe that authentic leadership uses procedural justice to reduce work-related strain. Fairness Heuristic theory postulates that employees in an organization often are afraid of exploitation. However, if they believe that their leaders are trustworthy, they would not be scared of being exploited (Van-Knippenberg, et. 2007).

Conclusion

The study has examined the effect of authentic leadership on empowerment, procedural justice, and emotional exhaustion and the indirect effects of procedural justice and emotional demands in the banking sector post COVID 19. The study found that authentic leadership has empowered the employees after COVID 19, reduces emotional exhaustion, and promoted procedural justice. The study result does not support the association between procedural justice and emotional exhaustion. At the same time, we found the procedural justice moderates authentic leadership and employee empowerment. The study also validates the moderating role of emotional exhaustion. But we could not find support on the mediating role of perceived justice on authentic leadership and emotional exhaustion.

Practical Implications

The study has several practical implications. For example, in this post COVID 19 era, the leaders can focus on authentic leadership characteristics to increase employees' empowerment and reduce emotional exhaustion, promoting positive attitudes towards the job. Due to COVID 19, employees suffered stress, anxiety and job insecurities. A talented and motivated pool of employees gives a firm a competitive edge and sustainable growth. We suggest that the leaders should discuss the strength and weaknesses of the employees. Such discussions build a transparent relationship between employees and the leader relationship. Authentic leaders promote procedural justice, which again suggests that firms should focus on the leaders to adopt this characteristic. When employees see that the firm's policies and processes align with procedural justice, it affects emotional exhaustion. Thus firms should promote a positive perception of procedural justice as it, directly and indirectly, affects emotional exhaustion.

Limitation and Future Research

We have used a cross-sectional approach. However, we recommend that future studies adopt a longitudinal approach as it will give more insight into the study's issues. The study has focused on the banking sector. Other studies can explore other service and non-service sectors. Cultural aspects significantly affect attitude and behavior, which was beyond the scope of the study. Future researchers can incorporate cultural aspects in their studies. Attitude and perception towards empowerment, procedural justice are not the same for all employees. These aspects significantly depend on the demographic factors, which we did not explore. Other researchers may explore the demographic factors in their studies. Factors such as organizational citizenship behavior and work-life balance, directly and indirectly, affect organizational consequences, which we did not consider but invite others to incorporate in their conception framework.

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Authentic Leadership (Northouse, 1999)
<i>Self Awareness</i>
AL1. I can list my three greatest weaknesses
AL2. I can list my three greatest strengths.
AL3. I seek feedback as a way of understanding who I really am as a person.
AL4. I accept the feelings I have about myself.
<i>Internalized Moral Perspective</i>
AL5.. My actions reflect my core values.
AL6. I do not allow group pressure to control me
AL7. Other people know where I stand on controversial issues
AL8. My morals guide what I do as a leader
<i>Balanced Processing</i>
AL9. I seek others' opinions before making up my own mind
AL10. I listen closely to the ideas of those who disagree with me

AL11. I do not emphasize my own point of view at the expense of others
AL12. I listen very carefully to the ideas of others before making decisions
Relational Transparencies
AL13. I openly share my feelings with others.
AL14. I let others know who I truly am as a person.
AL15. I rarely present a "false" front to others.
AL16. I admit my mistakes to others
Employee empowerment Rajalingam, Jauhar and Bashawir (2015).
Power
EE1.I am allowed to make decisions on my job undertakings
EE2.I have a lot of control over how I do my job.
EE3.I have the authority to make autonomous decisions in my job
EE4.I have opportunities to express my ideas.
EE5.Power-sharing increases my work autonomy
Knowledge
EE6.Knowledge sharing would improve work processes in the organization
EE7.Knowledge positively influences my performance because the more I know, the better I can perform.
EE8.I will perform better if I am trained on new skills related to my jobs undertaking
EE9.I intend to share my knowledge with other organizational members more frequently in the future
Information
EE10.I have access to the information we need to perform our job
EE11.I can easily store information which helps me work together in a team
EE12.I can easily share information that helps me to work together in a team
EE13.Information sharing is very important for positive team performance.
Rewards
EE14.I am satisfied with the rewards system that I receive.
EE15.I will receive a reward if I do something to improve my work.
EE16.My pay encourages me to improve the quality of my work
Emotional Exhaustin Schaufeli, Bakker, Hoogduin, Schaap, & Kladler, 2001
EEX1. I feel emotionally drained by my work.
EEX2 I feel used up by the end of the day.
EEX3. I feel fatigued when I have to get up in the morning to face another day on the job.
EEX 4. Working with people all day is really a strain for me.
EEX 5. I feel 'burned out' from my work.
EEX 6. I feel frustrated by my job.
EEX 7. I feel I'm working too hard in my job.
EEX 8. I feel like I'm at the end of my rope.
Emotional Demand Aiello, & Tesi (2017)
ED1.Is your work emotionally demanding?
ED2.In your work, are you confronted with things that personally touch you?
ED3. Do you face emotionally charged situations in your work?
ED4.In your work, do you deal with clients who incessantly complain, although you always do everything to help them
ED5. In your work, do you have to deal with demanding clients?
ED6.Do you have to deal with clients who do not treat you with the appropriate respect and

politeness?
Procedural Justice Colquitt (2001).
PJ1. Are you able to express your views during those procedures?
PJ 2. Can you influence the decisions arrived at by those procedures?
PJ 3. Are those procedures applied consistently?
PJ4. Are those procedures free of bias?
PJ5. Are those procedures based on accurate information?
PJ6. Are you able to appeal the decisions arrived at by those procedures?
PJ7. Do those procedures uphold ethical and moral standards?