ORIGINAL RESEARCH

Authentic Leadership, Employee Work Engagement, Trust in the Leader, and Workplace Well-Being: A Moderated Mediation Model

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Purpose: This study proposes a model based on social contagion theory to evaluate the impacts of authentic leadership on employee work engagement (WE) and trust in the leader (TL), integrating the mediating effect of TL and the moderating effect of workplace well-being (WW). Authentic leadership is disaggregated into its subscales: relational transparency (RT), internalized moral perspective (IMP), balanced processing (BP), and self-awareness (SA).

Methods: Dubai hotel employees completed 476 surveys. Applying the bootstrapping technique, SmartPLS 4 software was utilized to test the hypotheses in a mediation model.

Results: The findings indicate (1) that three subscales of authentic leadership (RT, IMP, and BP) positively impact WE; (2) that RT, IMP, and SA positively impact TL; (3) that TL positively impacts WE; (4) that TL mediates the relationship between RT, IMP, SA, and WE; (5) and that WW moderates the relationship between RT, BP, and WE.

Conclusion: Authentic leadership and its subscales are proven to be an excellent tool for achieving employee WE and TL. TL is crucial for effective hotel operation, as it impacts employee WE and acts as a mediator between three subscales of authentic leadership and WE. WW moderates the relationship between two authentic leadership subscales and WE but does not interact in the relationship between TL and WE. Both researchers and hotel managers can benefit from these new findings, which also provide a foundation on which to build future investigations.

Keywords: positive leadership, hotels, hospitality management, human resources management, PLS-SEM

Introduction

The hotel industry is situated in a dynamic organizational environment where leaders must foster a supportive, people-centered culture in which everyone feels positive energy and is driven. Accordingly, authentic leadership has come to the fore as a method for enhancing organizational productivity. Authentic leaders show integrity, fairness, and ethics, and they share information openly with their followers.[1] Within the context of positive organizational studies, techniques and concepts such as employee well-being, job satisfaction, and commitment, among others, have been examined extensively.[2]

Avolio et al posited that authentic leadership is a process that emerges from positive psychological capacities, with self-awareness and self-regulation as the primary pillars.[3] Based on this proposal, Walumbwa developed the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ), which measures four subscales: relational transparency (RT), the degree to which leaders show themselves as they are; internalized moral perspective (IMP), which is behaving in accordance with moral and ethical standards; balanced processing (BP), or, requesting points of view prior to making decisions; and self-awareness (SA), the leader's level of self-awareness.[4] This new approach to leadership has attracted the attention of the scientific community because of its beneficial impact on organizational settings and the availability of a proven measurement instrument.[1,5–8]

Employee work engagement (WE) is the positive affective state of completeness during labor.[9] Authentic leaders motivate employees by stimulating positive emotions. A study by Megeirhi et al used social contagion theory to prove that when followers perceive a leader to be ethical and trustworthy, the tendency to negative behaviors is reduced.[10] The perception enables workers within the service sector to develop self-worth, and they reciprocate by displaying positive behaviors such as WE.[10]

A study by Pastor Álvarez et al pointed out that authentic leadership promotes WE by helping employees build on their strengths while recognizing their talents.[9] Hsieh and Wang examined the connection between management-perceived authentic leadership and work commitment.[11] The results of their study concur with previous findings that authentic managers inspire workers by practicing openness and ethical values.[9]

Paredes et al investigated the influence of leadership authenticity on WE, and noted that authentic leaders create confidence among the team, thus motivating them to engage with their work.[12] Authentic leaders are open and express their valid opinions and thoughts, which creates a positive relationship with their followers.

Trust in the leader (TL) is crucial for increasing staff productivity and fostering a healthy work environment. In the hospitality industry in particular, happy workers means happy consumers.[13] A 2019 study by Qiu et al to determine the effects of authentic leadership on TL in the hospitality industry in China found a strong positive link between these two variables; authentic managers understand their own strengths and weaknesses, and they openly share their thoughts, feelings, and values with their followers.[14]

Authentic leaders also demonstrate strong ethical values and integrity, and they show concern for the well-being of others, thereby creating leader–follower trust.[15] Leadership authenticity enhances employees' trust because authentic leaders demonstrate consistency in their actions and beliefs.

Previous research on the relationship between TL and WE concentrated on the leader–follower exchange theory. When a manager provides support and emotional attachment to their followers, trust develops, and the employees feel a moral obligation to engage in their work.[16] A 2019 study by Book et al analyzed the impact of TL on employee loyalty in the hospitality sector specifically. Their investigation revealed that confidence in the leadership provides a sense of security and a desire to reciprocate by displaying positive behaviors.[17] Therefore, a trustworthy leader will have a positive impact on employees' attitudes, leading to job commitment.

By building a culture of trust, integrity, and respect, managers will create a climate that fosters collaboration, positive thinking, and energy.[18] The findings of Bellamkonda et al on the positive relationship between trust and WE are consistent with this point.[19] When people have high levels of TL, they are more likely to demonstrate positive work behaviors. Trust mediates the association between supervisor support and employee positive energy and engagement. Without trust, employees lose morale and become withdrawn from their jobs, leading to low engagement.

Growing workplace diversity is a vital issue for most organizations given the differences in employees' needs and motivational factors. Sigaeva et al studied the significance of authentic leadership and trust in the leader on WE among employees from so-called Generation Z, regarded as the most psychologically unstable group in the workplace and as therefore requiring special attention.[20] Within the hospitality sector, a leader can enhance this group's work engagement by establishing adequate support and trust. Leadership style contributes significantly to workplace trust and engagement. Authentic managers are concerned for the well-being of their followers and demonstrate the highest levels of integrity, transparency, and self-awareness.[20] As a result, they earn the trust of their followers, which leads to greater employee engagement and output.

Authentic leadership is associated with higher-order constructs, entailing moral values and integrity, features that correlate positively with emotional happiness and lead to motivation and WE.[21] Rahimnia and Sharifirad used the attachment insecurity theory to investigate the contribution of authentic leadership on well-being and job engagement. They concluded that workplace well-being (WW) relates to a "pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the job experience" (p.364).[22] Their evidence suggests that authentic leadership, rooted in the positive aspects of leading an organization, can result in improved well-being and better WE.[22] Under authentic leaders, WW increases, with job satisfaction as the outcome.

Employees in the so-called millennial generation currently dominate many hospitality industry job roles, requiring the management to put specific emphasis on the WW of this group of workers. According to He et al the social and historical

context that millennials share predisposes them to be concerned about work–life balance, career progress, and overall well-being.[23] Leadership practices that take account of the needs of this category of employees will help increase job satisfaction and WE.

This study focuses on how authentic leadership subscales (RT, IMP, BP, and SA) impact on WE and TL within the hotel industry. It also examines the role of TL in influencing employees' WE, and of WW in moderating the relationship between the variables under study. Matira and Awolusi studied organizations within the United Arab Emirates (UAE) hospitality sector and discovered that authenticity in leadership increases fairness, honesty, and transparency, which enables followers to acquire the positive energy needed in their work.[24] When employees perceive fairness and sincerity in how the leader treats them, they develop a positive attitude that makes them engaged in their work.[25] Similar results were found in a study by Koon and Ho who noted that authentic leaders show concern for the well-being of their followers, thus creating enthusiasm and positively impacting WE.[26] Impartial sharing of information, transparency, and concern for the well-being of employees are traits associated with authentic leaders that result in higher motivation.[27] This is especially crucial in the hospitality industry, where employee conduct influences customer satisfaction directly.[28]

Although previous studies have consistently found that authentic leadership increases WE, there remains a gap in the academic research in relation to specific subscales of authentic leadership and their impact on WE, their relation to TL, and how WW moderates the relationship between these variables. This study provides a deeper understanding of these matters in the context of the hotel sector, and helps to fulfill the aforementioned research gap.

In consideration of the prior analysis, the following research questions (RQ) will be investigated:

RQ1. Do authentic leadership subscales significantly influence WE and TL?

RQ2. Does TL significantly influence WE?

RQ3. Does TL mediate the relationship between authentic leadership subscales and WE?

RQ4. Does WW moderate the relationship between authentic leadership subscales and WE and the relationship between TL and WE?

This study shows that RT, IMP, and BP significantly impact WE and that RT, IMP, and SA significantly impact TL. TL significantly impacts WE. TL mediates the RT, IMP, BP, and WE relationship. The existence of TL partially explains this positive relationship in the cases of RT and IMP, and fully explains it in the case of SA. WW is vital for the performance motivation of employees, and indeed this study finds that WW moderates the relationship between RT, SA, and WE. However, WW does not moderate IMP and BP, nor the relationship between TL and WE. These results provide hotel managers who want to achieve WE within their teams with a valid instrument for developing authentic leadership, particularly in terms of showing themselves as they are, sharing their thoughts and emotions (RT), autoregulating their behavior in accordance with their values (IMP), analyzing relevant information prior to making a decision, and seeking the perspectives of others (BP). In addition, this study provides hotel managers with information regarding TL, WW, and WE.

Literature Review and Hypotheses
Social Contagion Theory

The majority of research on positive leadership focuses on transformative, ethical, charismatic, and altruistic leadership. Authentic leadership is a particularly attractive style of positive leadership with demonstrated performance effects and untapped potential. Six theories predominate in research on the leadership variables of WE, TL, and WW: leader–follower exchange theory, attachment insecurity theory, social exchange theory, self-enhancement theory, social contract theory, and social contagion theory. This study takes an approach based on the theory of social contagion, which states that when employees consider their leader to be optimistic, resilient, real, dependable, ethical, and consistent over time, a contagion effect arises, reducing the likelihood of negative behaviors and attitudes.[3,29] On this view, leaders are well placed to spread shared ideals to other employees; employees are ultimately encouraged to exhibit positive behaviors, have a sense of self-worth, and feel required to reciprocate.[30]

Authentic Leadership and Work Engagement

Leadership style remains essential for creating a positive work environment and motivating employees, and research has focused on the role of authentic leadership in employee WE within an organization. Pastor Álvarez et al (p.414) referred to "authentic leadership as an action that motivates the team and builds positive mental abilities and a moral situation" where everyone aims to perform beyond expectations. A leader who exercises an authentic style has "self-awareness, fair processing of information" and remains transparent in the relationship with their followers. WE relates to the "positive affective state of wholeness in the work setting"; in a workplace where employees are engaged, there are high levels of energy, enthusiasm, motivation, and inspiration.[9] Drawing on social exchange theory, Hsieh and Wang found that employees develop a sense of connectedness and engagement with their work to reciprocate the supervisor for positive relationships and trust.[11] Therefore, authentic leadership has a positive impact on employees' behavior and attitude toward their work.

A study by Ciftci and Erkanli showed that authentic leaders provide supportive interpersonal relations and freedom from bias, thereby enhancing the psychological security of their employees. Using a sample of 395 participants to study the effect of authentic style on employee job commitment within the hospitality industry, they found a strong positive correlation between the two variables.[31] Similar results were obtained in a study conducted in the petroleum industry to examine how authentic leadership influences positive energy. Zaabi et al analyzed the major elements of authenticity, including RT, IMP, BP, and SA. SA involves a manager's ability to understand their own abilities and weaknesses and the way these actions affect subordinates. RT occurs when a leader openly shares information and positive emotions with their subordinates, thus increasing their psychological security and work engagement.[32] Du et al also studied the role of IMP on employees' engagement, again in the context of the hospitality industry. Their research revealed that authentic leaders enhance employee engagement through self-regulation guided by internal moral values, which creates a fair and transparent organizational climate.[33] Wirawan et al agreed that authentic leaders positively impact the attitudes and behaviors of the staff because they practice BP, which enables them to make objective decisions.[34]

In their 2020 study of the influence of leadership authenticity on WE in the Malaysian hospitality industry, Singh et al found a strong positive relationship. They also found evidence of a desire on the part of subordinates to reciprocate authenticity by trusting the leader and immersing themselves in their work to obtain better results.[35] Recent work therefore supports the earlier conclusions of Alok and Israel that authentic leadership entails demonstrating integrity and trust, maintaining consistent performance, and helping followers to reach their full potential. In such an environment, employees become motivated, positive, and enthusiastic about their jobs.[36] Authentic leadership is, therefore, a multidimensional construct that enhances WE through SA, ethical values, objective decisions, and transparency.

These considerations lead to the following hypotheses:

H1a: RT has a significant relationship with WE.
H1b: IMP has a significant relationship with WE.
H1c: BP has a significant relationship with WE.
H1d: SA has a significant relationship with WE.

Authentic Leadership and Trust in the Leader

TL is essential for enhancing employee productivity and creating a positive work culture. Leadership style plays a significant role in determining whether followers will develop trust in their leader. Hassan and Ahmed examined the link between trust and authentic leadership and found a strong positive correlation. The behavior of an authentic leader is genuine, ethical, verifiable, and consistent, and wins employees' trust.[37] Thus, the authentic leadership dimensions of RT and IMP increase subordinates' trust in their leader. Similarly, Agote et al concluded that authentic leaders are more likely to win their employees' trust because they show consistency in their actions. Transparency is the core element of authenticity, and it is central to developing trust between a leader and their followers.[38] Authentic leaders also have values that are founded on moral principles, credibility, and integrity, and they strive to promote mutual trust within the

organization.[14] Therefore, when leaders make decisions that are consistent, ethical, and fair, their subordinates will trust in their future actions.

Lee et al noted that the critical determinants of respect are the leader's behavior and actions toward their subordinates. Authentic leaders win the trust of their followers because they demonstrate support for their juniors in the form of fairness, openness, and consistency.[39] A 2009 study by Wong and Cummings corroborated these findings in the healthcare sector, noting that authentic leadership enhances employee trust because it involves positive actions such as respect, fairness, and support. They concluded that organizational support, fair procedures, and integrity are the central elements of authenticity that enable leaders to gain the trust of their followers.[40] Recent research by Kleynhans et al further supports the correlation between these two variables, noting that a leader's behaviors and actions directly impact their followers' decision to trust them. Using social exchange theory, they characterized trust as tolerance of uncertainty by way of reciprocation for particular actions; in other words, followers reward their leader's cooperation, support, fairness, and open communication by trusting them.[41] Jiang and Luo also discovered that the decision by followers to trust their leader is based on their assessment of the leader's trustworthiness during their interactions.[15]

IMP reflects the extent to which leaders set high ethical standards through their behaviors. Rego et al found that authentic leaders build trust with their followers by showing consistent actions based on moral principles and values.[42] Integrity remains a crucial element in winning employees' trust, alongside the ability to uphold moral values.[43] Authentic leaders act as role models, leading by example and displaying appropriate behaviors during their interactions with their subordinates. They earn trust because of their genuineness and because they lead ethically while maintaining integrity.[42] Farid et al distinguished two types of trust: cognitive-based and affective-based. Affective trust arises from social exchanges between a leader and their followers based on concern, mutual obligation, and care.[44] According to Xiong et al followers trust their leaders when they demonstrate positive behaviors, including integrity, transparency, openness, and consistency. Therefore, authentic leaders build trust with their subordinates because of their moral values and integrity.[45]

Chen and Sriphon examined the impact of authentic leadership on follower trust in the Malaysian service sector leader. They found that authentic leadership characteristics and actions are essential if a leader is to influence and gain subordinates' trust. Their approach is based on social exchange theory, according to which workers feel the need to repay their leader for their positive actions.[46] The 2021 study of Kleynhans et al provides further support for the conclusion that authentic leaders inspire employees and develop emotional attachment by creating a workplace that is ethical, fair, and positive.[47] These leaders act with a deep sense of their personal values, and with a desire to establish integrity and earn the trust and respect of their subordinates.[48] Therefore, authentic leadership has a positive impact on the development of trust through the portrayal of positive actions that call for reciprocity from followers.

These considerations lead to the following hypotheses:

H2a: RT has a significant relationship with TL.
H2b: IMP has a significant relationship with TL.
H2c: BP has a significant relationship with TL.
H2d: SA has a significant relationship with TL.

Trust in the Leader and Work Engagement

Previous studies on the link between TL and WE focused on aspects of leader–follower exchange theory. Håvold et al studied the role of TL in WE among healthcare workers and discovered that believing in the manager's actions increases engagement and efficiency. Trust is a component of job security and psychological security, which are critical drivers for motivation, engagement, and job satisfaction; trust results in a motivated and energized workforce ready to commit to their job and perform better.[49] Prastio et al agreed that trust promotes confidence among the followers, making them engage more fully in their work. These outcomes arise from a social exchange form of relationship, where subordinates demonstrate positive work behaviors to repay their manager for fairness and integrity.[50] In a 2017 study, Basit examined the trust–engagement link using social exchange theory and Kahn's engagement model, and noted that employee WE emerges as a reaction to the psychological safety that followers obtain from working under a trustworthy manager. At the

same time, WE occurs as a form of reciprocity, in that employees feel obligated to act in certain ways while working with a leader they can trust.[51] Therefore, psychological security and a sense of obligation help to explain the increased work engagement of employees when they trust their supervisor. However, there is a gap in the literature here; despite job engagement being a component of satisfaction, few studies have examined its relationship with trust.

Ugwu et al studied the trust–engagement connection using social exchange theory and obtained results similar to those of previous researchers. According to social exchange theory, followers will repay their leader's positive work behaviors with engagement and trust. This arrangement occurs when the trust and relationship between the leader and the subordinate are based on social exchange principles.[52] A study by Agarwal agreed that WE arises from social exchange as repayment for support, loyalty, and empowerment.[53] Likewise, in 2012, Li et al introduced leader–member exchange theory in a study of the connection between trust and WE in the hospitality industry in China. They found that a high-quality association between employees and their supervisor attracts trust, respect, and mutual concern, resulting in a feeling of obligation.[16]

The practice of ethical values of integrity, openness, fairness, and care is a core characteristic of a trustworthy leader. A study by Engelbrecht et al found that a follower experiencing an increase in trust toward their supervisor also experienced an increase in WE. An increase in trust means an exchange of care, emotional support, fairness, and integrity, which creates a climate that enhances the positive energy required to accomplish work tasks.[54] Similar conclusions were reached by Xu et al who noted that winning the trust of subordinates is one of the most effective ways for a leader to enhance WE.[55]

These considerations lead to the next hypothesis:

H3: TL has a significant relationship with WE.

Authentic Leadership, Trust in the Leader, and Work Engagement

Previous studies on the link between trust in the leader and work engagement focused on the aspects of leader–follower exchange theory. In 2015, Stander et al studied the connection between authenticity in leadership, leader trust, and engagement in the healthcare sector. They found that authentic leadership is a crucial predictor of leadership trust and work engagement among nurses. When authentic leaders trust their followers, they are more likely to have a positive impact on morale, and this leads to greater work engagement. Leadership authenticity directly affects psychological capital, contributing to improved work-related outcomes.[56] Wei et al also studied the role of leader trust in work engagement. They found that employees are more likely to remain committed to their work when their supervisor demonstrates transparency and authenticity. Applying self-enhancement theory, they concluded that authentic leadership contributes to positive cognition among followers, leading to work engagement.[57] Therefore, trust in leadership, authenticity in leadership, and work engagement are interdependent concepts, resulting in better work performance and commitment. Gaining employees' trust is essential for a leader to have a positive impact on work engagement; companies require a supportive and positive work environment to motivate employees and enhance productivity, and authentic leadership is strongly linked to trust in the leader and to work engagement.[58] Therefore, work engagement is influenced by the leader's perceived trustworthiness and authenticity.

Authentic leaders will win the trust of the followers, which leads to greater work engagement and higher productivity, as demonstrated by Safwat et al who noted that trust in authentic leaders is a crucial driver of workplace engagement. Their study of the role of authentic leaders in trust and work engagement among hospitality workers in Egypt found a strong positive correlation between the variables, indicating that when leaders are seen as authentic, the employees feel psychologically empowered and have better work engagement.[59] These findings are consistent with those of Hidayat who established that leadership authenticity is a source of intrinsic motivation and results in trust and job commitment. Authentic leaders positively impact the psychological well-being of their followers, making them more engaged in and dedicated to their work.[60] Therefore, leader trust is a component of authentic leadership and can have a positive impact on job satisfaction.

These considerations lead to the following hypotheses:
H4a: TL mediates the relationship between RT and WE.

H4b: TL mediates the relationship between IMP and WE.

H4c: TL mediates the relationship between BP and WE.

H4d: TL mediates the relationship between SA and WE.

Workplace Well-Being, Authentic Leadership, and Work Engagement

Workplace well-being remains vital for any organization because it impacts morale and productivity. Adil and Kamal defined affective well-being as a positive feeling of workers toward their jobs and a sense of emotional stability. They found that self-awareness and fairness on the part of the leader (authentic leadership dimensions) result in improved workplace well-being and a feeling of purpose. The balanced processing dimension associated with authentic leaders can lead to personal growth, while relational transparency establishes positive relationships within the workplace, leading to improved well-being. Their study concluded that workplace well-being is a product of authentic leadership and a predictor of job engagement.[61] Nelson et al studied the role of authentic leadership within the healthcare sector and found that it results in enhanced well-being, better work engagement, and higher retention rates for nurses.[21]

Leadership authenticity is a relationship-focused style that prioritizes honesty, consistency, integrity, and self-awareness. Authentic leaders build trust with their followers, and this enables them to positively impact well-being.[62] Workplace well-being is positively linked to working engagement because it entails a stable emotional state and motivation. A recent study by Bannay and Hadi produced similar findings. They noted that authentic leaders provide their followers with a personal experience of happiness, which leads to work engagement. Authentic leaders develop an emotional attachment with their subordinates, resulting in a positive psychological state and well-being.[63]

Employees who work under an authentic leader are happy and engaged in their work. They remain motivated and have a feeling of purpose because they know the manager cares for their well-being and interests.[64] Moreover, authentic leadership is strongly linked to having fun at work, which stimulates people to perform tasks in innovative ways.[65] Fun at work occurs in response to the positive psychology and motivation that subordinates obtain from working under an ethical, consistent, and fair leader who is concerned about their interests. Therefore, authentic leadership has a positive association with workplace well-being and engagement.

These considerations lead to the following hypotheses:

H5a: The impact of RT on WE varies depending on WW.

H5b: The impact of IMP on WE varies depending on WW.

H5c: The impact of BP on WE varies depending on WW.

H5d: The impact of SA on WE varies depending on WW.

Workplace Well-Being, Trust in the Leader, and Work Engagement

Most organizations are moving toward implementing sustainable HRM, which emphasizes the needs and well-being of employees. According to Jaskeviciute et al sustainable human resource management (HRM) establishes a positive work environment and trust in the leader, leading to overall satisfaction and well-being. Core leadership elements such as fairness, honesty, and integrity remain critical in winning workers' trust and building a positive work setting.[66] Previous studies on the association between employee well-being and organizational trust have focused on social contract theory.[67] Leaders who are fair and honest and share information openly with their followers will attract trust, resulting in positive psychological feelings. A leader's ability to put their subordinates' interests ahead of their own is a key contributor to well-being and work engagement.[67] Sarwar et al studied the influence of ethical leadership on WE and WW in the Pakistan hospitality industry. Their investigation showed that ethical leaders are concerned with the well-being of their followers, and that this concern leads to a feeling of satisfaction with the job environment.[68] Therefore, WW is a predictor of TL and commitment at work. Consistent with these results, Ponting's examination of the role of leadership practices on WW within the service sector concluded that creating a people-centric culture can help boost WW and WE. Great leaders not only focus on results but are people-centric and show concern for the interests and needs of their followers.[69] The key assumption is that happy employees will be more engaged and committed to their tasks, leading to higher productivity.

Employees are increasingly concerned about their working conditions and work environment. A study by Rasool et al revealed that toxic working conditions where employees' safety and security are threatened can lower morale, compromise well-being, and result in job dissatisfaction. Toxicity in the work setting relates to harassment, unfairness, bullying, and discrimination. Leaders unable to create a safe and conducive workplace will lose their followers' trust, and loss of trust leads to low WE.[70] Similar results were found in a study by De-la-Calle-Durán and Rodríguez-Sánchez, who showed that maintaining WW can increase WE. Leaders who show concern for the needs of their subordinates establish a workforce that benefits from positive feelings and work-related mental stability.[71] The outcome is employees who are more dedicated to and better satisfied with their jobs.

These considerations lead to the final hypothesis:

H6: The impact of TL on WE varies depending on WW.

Figure 1 illustrates the conceptual framework of this study.

Materials and Methods
Sample and Data Collection
Between October 1, 2022 and November 30, 2022, information was gathered from 25 hotels in Dubai, UAE. The hotels' ratings ranged from four to five stars, with some catering exclusively to business travelers and others operating as full-fledged resorts. In each case, the hotel general manager (GM) was contacted to explain the research objectives, including employee and hotel confidentiality, and to obtain approval.

Four designated research assistants coordinated with the GM and human resources (HR) manager of each hotel to distribute 600 questionnaires among the heads of department and assistants that deal daily with the GMs and identify them as their managers/leaders. At the sample hotels, the average number of heads of departments and assistants ranged between 18 and 27. The GMs and HR managers facilitated communication and approval. Participants received verbal and written explanations of the goal of the study and were informed that participation was voluntary. They were reassured that information they provided could not be used to identify them and that they could withdraw from the study at any time. After registration, the paper surveys were destroyed and the data were stored in a secure location offline. No incentive was offered to those who completed the survey.

Of the 600 questionnaires, 476 valid samples were returned, giving a response rate of 79%. The sample consisted of employees who worked for the hotel directly, for an outsourced company providing temporary services (for example, casual staff in entertainment, housekeeping, and restaurant roles), or for an external company conducting business in the hotel.
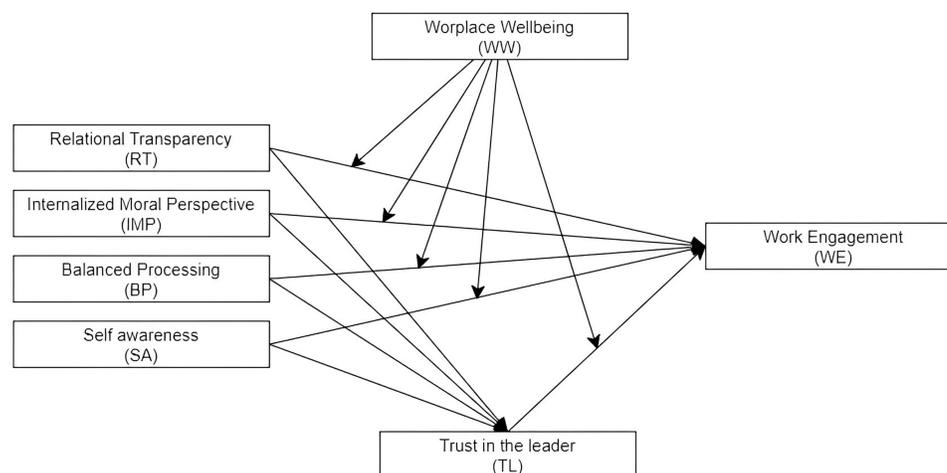

Figure 1 Theoretical model.

Table 1 Demographics

Category	Subcategory	Frequency	%
Gender	Male	288	60.50
	Female	188	39.50
Age	18–28 years old	60	12.61
	26–35 years old	154	32.65
	36–45 years old	169	35.50
	>45 years old	93	19.54
Contractual relationship	Permanent	293	61.55
	Outsourced	183	38.45
Experience (years)	<1	73	15.34
	1–3	134	28.15
	4–6	139	29.20
	>6	130	27.31
Education	Primary school	163	34.24
	High school	155	32.56
	University or above	158	33.19

Table 2 Measurement Model Results

Construct	Item	Loading	t-Statistic	VIF	CA	rho_A	CR	AVE
Relational transparency (RT)					0.854	0.864	0.895	0.632
Accurate communication skills	RT1	0.783	25.759	1.801				
Admitting mistakes honestly	RT2	0.808	29.950	1.994				
Communicating smoothly with members	RT3	0.850	41.684	2.222				
Having honest conversations regarding difficult facts	RT4	0.818	34.570	1.846				
Being honest in expressing facts	RT5	0.707	16.499	1.483				
Internalized moral perspective (IMP)					0.816	0.826	0.878	0.644
Acting according to one's feelings	IMP1	0.721	19.891	1.501				
Making decisions based on one's core values	IMP2	0.831	38.040	1.836				
Respecting the core values of members	IMP3	0.837	31.568	1.984				
Applying regulations and the code of ethics strictly	IMP4	0.817	37.314	1.781				
Balanced processing (BP)					0.850	0.855	0.909	0.770
Respecting dissenting opinions	BP1	0.858	45.143	1.931				
Making decisions after reviewing relevant data thoroughly	BP2	0.869	45.435	2.073				
Listening to diverse opinions	BP3	0.904	80.812	2.353				
Self-awareness (SA)					0.879	0.882	0.917	0.734
Seeking feedback to improve interactions	SA1	0.845	43.930	2.160				
Being aware of the reputation of one's abilities	SA2	0.880	63.708	2.459				
Knowing when it is time to reevaluate positions on important issues	SA3	0.876	57.721	2.549				
Being aware of the influence one's behavior has on others	SA4	0.825	36.697	1.884				
Work engagement (WE)					0.849	0.859	0.893	0.625
Feeling strong and vigorous at work	WE2	0.779	24.067	1.765				
Feeling like going to work when getting up in the morning	WE3	0.746	21.183	1.778				
Feeling enthusiastic about the job	WE4	0.871	68.638	2.572				
Feeling inspired by the job	WE5	0.822	27.787	2.129				
Getting carried away when working	WE9	0.726	22.126	1.573				

(Continued)

Table 2 (Continued).

Construct	Item	Loading	t-Statistic	VIF	CA	rho_A	CR	AVE
Trust in the leader (TL)					0.826	0.841	0.873	0.535
Feeling confident that the leader treats people fairly	TL1	0.679	17.579	1.418				
The leader never tries to cheat workers	TL2	0.620	15.253	1.329				
The leader is trustworthy	TL3	0.812	30.681	2.270				
Feeling strong loyalty toward the leader	TL4	0.767	24.613	2.107				
Supporting the leader in almost any emergency	TL5	0.788	27.194	2.158				
Being loyal to the leader	TL6	0.705	23.541	1.309				
Workplace well-being (WW)					0.865	2.315	0.865	0.621
Daily work activities give purpose	WW1	0.971	3.885	1.817				
Work boosts the sense of self-worth	WW2	0.691	2.830	2.011				
The hotel company treats staff well	WW3	0.719	3.061	2.291				
The manager treats staff well	WW4	0.738	3.255	2.364				

Abbreviations: VIF, variance inflation factors; CA, Cronbach's alpha; CR, composite reliability; AVE, average variance extracted.

The questionnaire consisted of five sociodemographic profile questions (see Table 1) and 36 items evaluating the subscales of authentic leadership (RT, IMP, BP, and SA), WE, TL, and WW and scored from 1 to 5 on a Likert scale (see Table 2). A panel of specialists consisting of five university professors based in Europe and the UAE and two professionals in the hospitality industry reviewed and approved the questionnaire. The number of expert opinions gathered for this study thus significantly exceeds the minimum of two needed to validate the measuring scale.[72] The experts examined the text for grammatical errors and considered how the original context and intended audience of the questions would be viewed by respondents. In addition, 50 UAE-based Bachelor of Business Management students participated in a pilot study to ensure the questionnaire's readability. The hospitality experts helped the university academics to understand the composition of hotel employees in the UAE, and the academics helped the hotel professionals to ensure a rigorous process in the creation of the questionnaire, which employed constructs validated in prior research. The panel suggested modest changes to the wording of the questionnaire and recommended that all the original items be retained.

SmartPLS 4 software was used to analyze the suggested model and carry out the associated hypothesis testing, which was satisfactory for the quantity of respondents (N = 476).

Measures

The authentic leadership subscales RT, IMP, BP, and SA were measured on a 16-item scale first used by Walumbwa et al[4] The values of Cronbach's alpha (a measure of reliability) for the subscales were 0.854, 0.816, 0.850, and 0.879, respectively. TL was assessed using a 6-item scale adapted from Podsakoff et al[73] The Cronbach's alpha value for this scale was 0.826. WE was measured using a 9-item scale based on the scale proposed by Schaufeli and Bakker[74] The Cronbach's alpha value for this scale was 0.849. The 4-item scale used to measure WW was developed from Parker and Hyett's 2011 study.[75] The Cronbach's alpha value for this scale was 0.865. Detailed information for each construct is given in Table 2.

Common Method Variance

A self-survey questionnaire was used in this study to collect data on the independent, mediator, moderator, and dependent components. Common method bias (CMB) may occur in behavioral studies if data on endogenous and exogenous variables are collected at the same time.[76,77] This kind of collection reinforces a relationship between the measured variables and raises the possibility of CMB impacting the results.[78] Therefore, to evaluate the risk of CMB, the current study used Harman's single factor, which specifies that the overall variance should be lower than 50%. The overall variance was 30.619%, which excludes any widespread bias. A comprehensive SmartPLS collinearity assessment test was also conducted, a method agreed by numerous social scientists to be precise and appropriate.[79–81] For the model

proposed in this study, all variance inflation factor (VIF) values were below the cut-off of 5, indicating that collinearity issues are unlikely.

Results

This study used structural equation modeling (SEM) to analyze the data. The validity and reliability of the measuring model and the links between the latent components of the structural model were studied simultaneously.[82] The research objective necessitated the use of partial least squares SEM (PLS-SEM) rather than multiple regression analysis or covariance-based SEM, since the research model exhibits a very complex structural correlation with several direct mediating and moderating interactions.[83,84] Accordingly, PLS-SEM was adopted for four main reasons. First, it is an effective tool for research projects with an emphasis on predictions.[82,83] The theoretical model used in this study is designed to predict and explain variance in the primary target constructs (TL and WE). Second, PLS-SEM takes into account complex structural relationships such as those found in the research model.[84] Third, PLS-SEM calculates measurement error and evaluates mediating effects appropriately.[85] Finally, PLS-SEM is the most popular data analysis technique in behavioral and strategic management studies.[86–89] On the basis of these considerations, SmartPLS version 4 was used to analyze the data on the PLS-SEM approach.

Measurement Model Evaluation

Several tests can be used to evaluate a measurement model in terms of individual item reliability, convergent validity, internal consistency, and discriminant validity. Here, the factor loadings varied from 0.620 to 0.971, all of which are higher than the baseline value of 0.60, as shown in Table 2 and Figure 2. To measure internal consistency reliability, both Cronbach's alpha (Cα) and composite reliability (CR) were computed.[83] Research has shown that CR is a better criterion than Cα.[90] Cα and CR values for all latent variables (LVs) in Table 2 were greater than 0.70, which indicates that the
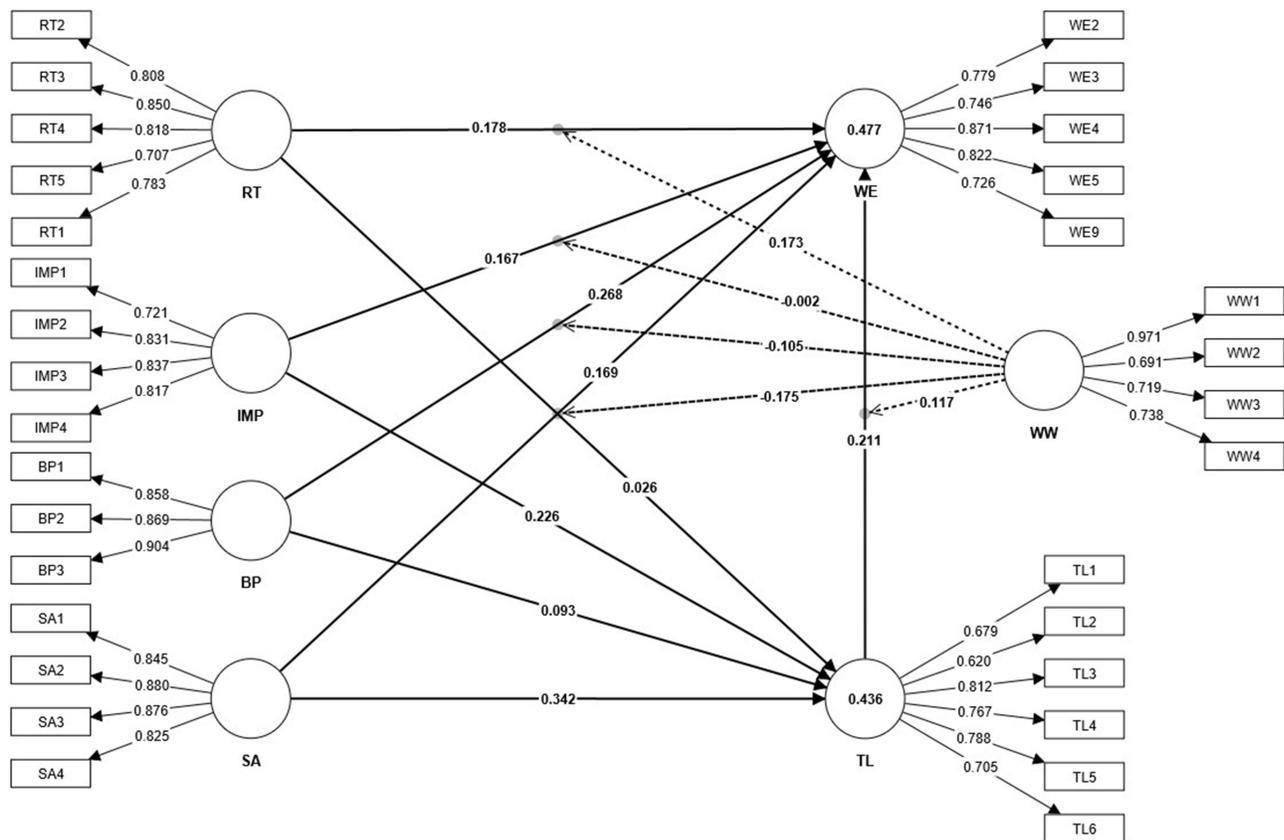

Figure 2 Measurement model.

measurement model is internally consistent and reliable. It was also necessary to establish both convergent and discriminant validity for the variable validity of the observed reflective variables. Convergence validity reflects how well variable items measure the same variable. In accordance with the literature, convergent validity in this study was assessed using average variance extracted (AVE), and all latent constructs should have an AVE value no less than 0.50.[82] As shown in Table 2, all the constructs in this study had AVE values above that threshold.

The degree to which one construct differs statistically from another is known as discriminant validity. Three approaches were used to verify the discriminant validity of the proposed model, namely the Fornell–Larcker criterion, heterotrait–monotrait (HTMT) ratios, and cross-loadings.[82] Table 3 shows that discriminant validity in accordance with the Fornell–Larcker criterion was achieved, since the highest value of the association of measures in each column is the maximum.[82,91] However, Henseler et al suggested a fresh approach to discriminant validity, noting that although the Fornell–Larcker criterion is effective for evaluating discriminant validity, it cannot detect a lack of discriminant validity.[92] Accordingly, this study also assessed discriminant validity using HTMT ratios, applying the standard criterion that the HTMT values of all variables be less than 0.85.[82] Table 3 shows that the HTMT values for all the measures in this study were less than 0.85, which indicates that all the variables have discriminant validity. Cross-loadings were then used to confirm discriminant validity, and all of the data satisfied the requirement of having a loading greater than 0.6 on the respective construct but low on the other constructs. Table 4 displays the cross-loadings for the latent constructs.

Effect Size and Predictive Relevance

The effect size indicates the extent to which predictor factors explain the dependent construct.[93] Cohen classifies an f2 effect size of 0.02 to 0.15 as small, 0.15 to 0.35 as medium, and 0.35 or higher as major.[94] The variables in this study all had small to moderate f2 effect sizes, which demonstrates the model's robustness. The predictive relevance of the model was further evaluated using R2 and Q2. How effectively external factors explain endogenous factors is determined by the R2 coefficient. Table 5 reveals that exogenous constructs explain 43.6% of trust in the leader and 47.7% of work engagement. Cohen classified R2 values ranging from 0.02 to 0.13, from 0.13 to 0.26, and greater than 0.26 as weak, moderate, and strong, respectively.[94] Here, TL and WE fell into the strong category. In terms of cross-validated redundancy, both latent variables had Q2 values considerably greater than zero, which indicates that the model is significant.[82]

Table 3 Discriminant Validity

Construct	BP	IMP	RT	SA	TL	WE	WW
Heterotrait–Monotrait Ratio							
BP							
IMP	0.536						
RT	0.617	0.419					
SA	0.683	0.572	0.556				
TL	0.547	0.579	0.525	0.664			
WE	0.643	0.553	0.558	0.542	0.599		
WW	0.049	0.108	0.056	0.081	0.066	0.083	
Fornell–Larcker Criterion							
BP	0.877						
IMP	0.449	0.803					
RT	0.525	0.350	0.795				
SA	0.595	0.484	0.484	0.857			
TL	0.487	0.493	0.462	0.589	0.732		
WE	0.552	0.470	0.489	0.473	0.526	0.791	
WW	0.026	−0.008	0.059	−0.004	0.057	0.090	0.788

Table 4 Cross-Loadings

Item	BP	IMP	RT	SA	TL	WE	WW
BP1	0.858	0.354	0.487	0.479	0.397	0.479	0.026
BP2	0.869	0.426	0.397	0.508	0.420	0.454	−0.003
BP3	0.904	0.403	0.496	0.575	0.462	0.518	0.043
IMP1	0.307	0.721	0.283	0.377	0.343	0.281	0.018
IMP2	0.360	0.831	0.299	0.402	0.401	0.431	0.012
IMP3	0.357	0.837	0.253	0.408	0.391	0.374	0.001
IMP4	0.409	0.817	0.292	0.371	0.439	0.405	−0.050
RT1	0.421	0.298	0.783	0.345	0.381	0.319	0.045
RT2	0.440	0.211	0.808	0.396	0.330	0.361	0.022
RT3	0.424	0.283	0.850	0.402	0.359	0.474	0.063
RT4	0.414	0.316	0.818	0.420	0.430	0.445	0.038
RT5	0.393	0.277	0.707	0.355	0.329	0.318	0.069
SA1	0.465	0.420	0.367	0.845	0.490	0.356	0.031
SA2	0.594	0.440	0.468	0.880	0.562	0.423	−0.061
SA3	0.501	0.331	0.434	0.876	0.492	0.381	−0.022
SA4	0.470	0.463	0.384	0.825	0.467	0.454	0.044
TL1	0.395	0.372	0.310	0.429	0.679	0.325	−0.015
TL2	0.238	0.206	0.215	0.304	0.620	0.341	−0.032
TL3	0.341	0.382	0.394	0.445	0.812	0.333	0.029
TL4	0.247	0.358	0.279	0.354	0.767	0.330	0.050
TL5	0.272	0.358	0.312	0.411	0.788	0.296	0.030
TL6	0.525	0.420	0.437	0.547	0.705	0.576	0.131
WE2	0.442	0.457	0.408	0.365	0.414	0.779	0.043
WE3	0.333	0.299	0.264	0.291	0.407	0.746	0.144
WE4	0.489	0.329	0.464	0.431	0.466	0.871	0.122
WE5	0.492	0.384	0.437	0.387	0.408	0.822	−0.003
WE9	0.406	0.307	0.329	0.381	0.382	0.726	0.063
WW1	0.047	0.028	0.061	0.021	0.058	0.107	0.971
WW2	−0.017	−0.078	0.026	−0.060	0.033	0.008	0.691
WW3	−0.025	−0.094	0.037	−0.077	0.012	0.011	0.719
WW4	−0.034	−0.089	0.039	−0.051	0.041	0.029	0.738

Table 5 Effect Size, Coefficient of Determination, and Predictive Relevance

Exogenous Construct	F²		R²	SSO	SSE	Q² (=1−SSE/SSO)
	WE	**TL**	**Endogenous Construct**			
TL	0.047		0.436	2856.000	2252.496	0.211
WE			0.477	2380.000	1716.674	0.279
BP	0.074	0.008				
IMP	0.034	0.065				
RT	0.039	0.034				
SA	0.001	0.116				

Abbreviations: SSO, sum of squares of observations; SSE, sum of squares of prediction errors.

Structural Model

Bootstrapping and 5000 subsamples with replacements were used to determine the significance threshold.[82] The *p*-values and t-values were used for hypothesis testing. If *p* was less than 0.05 and the t-value greater than 1.96, and vice versa, the hypothesis was accepted.

Table 6 Direct and Moderating Effects

Hypothesis	Relationship			Path Coefficient	STDEV	BCI-LL, BCI-UL	t-Statistic	p-value	Conclusion
	IV	M	DV						
Direct Effect									
H1a	RT	→	WE	0.178	0.063	0.056, 0.299	2.841	0.005	Significant
H1b	IMP	→	WE	0.167	0.059	0.057, 0.281	2.829	0.005	Significant
H1c	BP	→	WE	0.268	0.068	0.133, 0.396	3.961	0.000	Significant
H1d	SA	→	WE	0.026	0.061	−0.096, 0.143	0.429	0.668	Insignificant
H2a	RT	→	TL	0.169	0.053	0.061, 0.271	3.184	0.001	Significant
H2b	IMP	→	TL	0.226	0.051	0.127, 0.328	4.419	0.000	Significant
H2c	BP	→	TL	0.093	0.061	−0.021, 0.218	1.531	0.126	Insignificant
H2d	SA	→	TL	0.342	0.058	0.227, 0.456	5.931	0.000	Significant
H3	TL	→	WE	0.211	0.060	0.094, 0.330	3.533	0.000	Significant
Moderating Effect									
H5a	WW × RT	→	WE	0.173	0.085	−0.037, 0.294	2.034	0.040	Significant
H5b	WW × IMP	→	WE	−0.002	0.061	−0.112, 0.131	0.033	0.974	Insignificant
H5c	WW × BP	→	WE	−0.105	0.082	−0.238, 0.097	1.292	0.197	Insignificant
H5d	WW × SA	→	WE	−0.175	0.087	−0.296, 0.085	2.001	0.041	Significant
H6	WW × TL	→	WE	0.117	0.063	−0.032, 0.216	1.866	0.062	Insignificant
Control Effect									
Gender		→	WE	0.037	0.092	−0.143, 0.218	0.444	0.686	Insignificant
Contractual relationship		→	WE	0.046	0.092	−0.134, 0.226	0.500	0.617	Insignificant
Experience		→	WE	−0.084	0.044	−0.171, 0.003	−1.888	0.060	Insignificant

Abbreviations: IV, independent variable; DV, dependent variable; STDEV, standard deviation; BCI, bias-corrected confidence interval.

First, the direct effect results (see Table 6) show that that RT, IMP, and BP are positively linked to WE (β = 0.178, t-value = 2.841, p = 0.005; β = 0.167, t-value = 2.829, p = 0.005; β = 0.268, t-value = 3.961, p = 0.000). This supports hypotheses H1a, H1b, and H1c. H1d is not supported, as the relationship of SA to WE was insignificant (β = 0.026, t-value = 0.429, p = 0.668).

Second, the direct effect results also demonstrate that that RT, IMP, and SA are positively linked to TL (β = 0.169, t-value = 3.184, p = 0.001; β = 0.226, t-value = 4.419, p = 0.000; β = 0.342, t-value = 5.931, p = 0.000). This supports hypotheses H2a, H2b, and H2d. H2c is not supported, as the relationship of BP to TL was insignificant (β = 0.093, t-value = 0.159, p = 0.126).

Third, the direct effect results also demonstrate that that TL is positively linked to WE (β = 0.211, t-value = 3.533, p = 0.000). This supports hypothesis H3.

Fourth, to assess the mediating role of TL in the link between RT, IMP, BP, SA, and WE, this study used the bootstrap confidence intervals approach with 5000 repetitions, as suggested by Preacher and Hayes[95] Table 7 presents the mediation results. The results indicate that TL partially mediates the relationship between RT (β = 0.036, p < 0.05), IMP (β = 0.048, p < 0.01), and WE, does not significantly mediate the relationship between BP and WE (β = 0.020, p > 0.05), and fully mediates the relationship between SA and WE (β = 0.072, p < 0.01). Therefore, H4a, H4b, and H4d are supported, and H4c is rejected.

Fifth, hypotheses H5a to H5d proposed the moderating effect of WW in the relationships between RT, IMP, BP, SA, and WE, as shown in Table 6. The results show that WW positively moderates the relationship between RT and WE (β = 0.173, p < 0.05) and negatively moderates the relationship between SA and WE (β = −0.175, p < 0.05). WW does not moderate the relationship between IMP (β = −0.002, p > 0.05), BP (β = −0.105, p > 0.05), and WE. Thus, H5a and H5d are supported, and H5b and H5c are rejected.

Finally, the results show that WW does not significantly moderate the relationship between TL and WE (β = 0.117, p > 0.05). Therefore, H6 is rejected.

Table 6 and Table 7, and Figure 3 present the results for direct, mediating, and moderating effects.

Two of the five investigated moderation effects were significant, confirming hypotheses 5a and 5d. Figures 4 and 5 show the significance of the moderation effects of WW.

Table 7 Mediation Results

| Hypothesis	Statistical Path					Direct Effect			Indirect Effect			Total Effect			Conclusion
	IV		Med		DV	β	t-Statistic	p- value	B	t-Statistic	p-value	β	t-Statistic	p-value	
H4a	RT BCI-LL BCI-UL	→	TL	→	WE	0.178 0.056 0.299	2.841	0.005	0.036 0.009 0.073	2.147	0.032	0.213 0.090 0.339	3.324	0.001	Partial mediation
H4b	IMP BCI-LL BCI-UL	→	TL	→	WE	0.167 0.057 0.281	2.829	0.005	0.048 0.019 0.086	2.743	0.006	0.215 0.103 0.329	3.696	0.000	Partial mediation
H4c	BP BCI-LL BCI-UL	→	TL	→	WE	0.268 0.133 0.396	3.961	0.000	0.020 −0.004 0.054	1.300	0.194	0.098 −0.017 0.209	1.713	0.087	No mediation
H4d	SA BCI-LL BCI-UL	→	TL	→	WE	0.026 −0.096 0.143	0.429	0.668	0.072 0.030 0.123	3.040	0.002	0.287 0.153 0.416	4.248	0.000	Full mediation
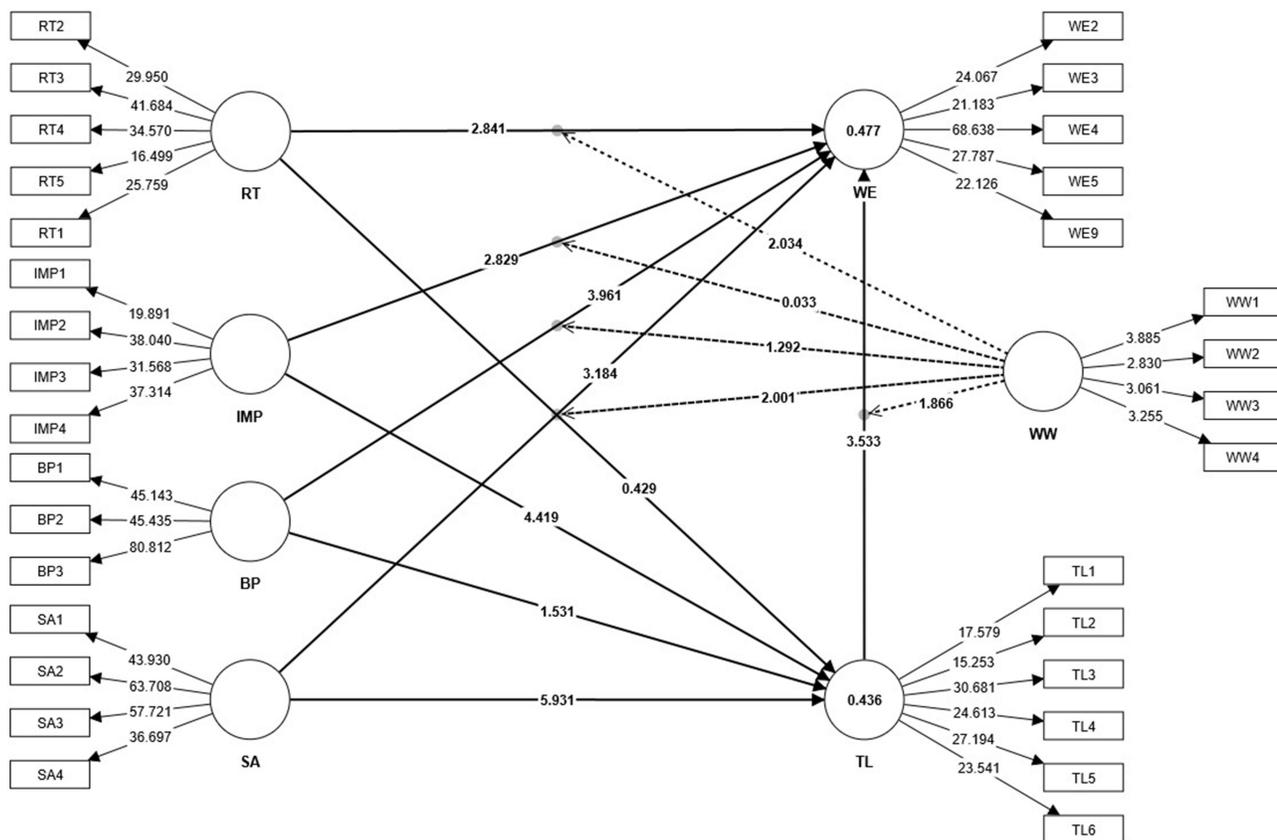
Figure 3 Structural model.
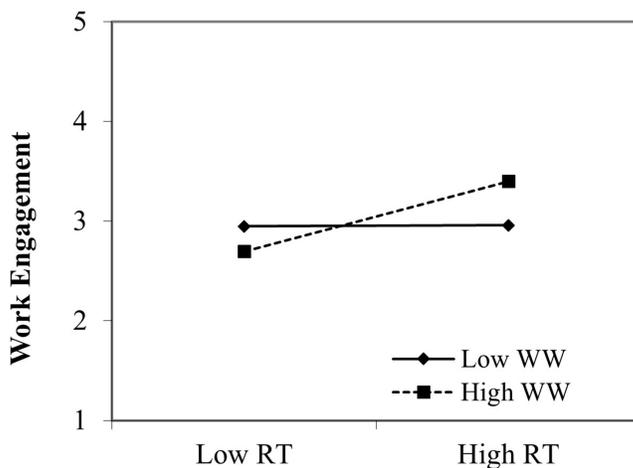
Figure 4 Effect of relational transparency and workplace well-being on work engagement.

Discussion and Conclusions

This study addresses four critical research questions: Do authentic leadership subscales significantly influence WE and TL? Does TL significantly influence WE? Does TL mediate the relationship between authentic leadership subscales and WE? Does WW moderate the relationship between authentic leadership subscales and WE and the relationship between TL and WE? Adopting an approach based on social contagion theory, this research aimed to deepen understanding of the effects of subscales of authentic leadership on hotel employees' WE and TL, the effects of TL on WE, the mediating role
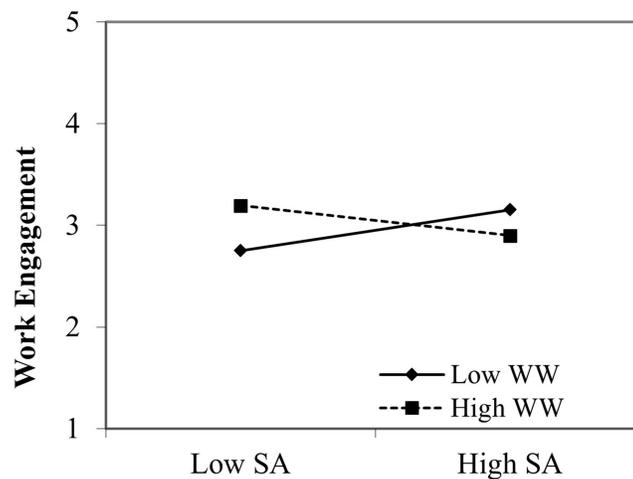
Figure 5 Effect of self-awareness and workplace well-being on work engagement.

of TL, and the moderating role of WW on all variables. It proposed a theoretical model with disaggregated authentic leadership subscales that illustrates their relationship, with practical implications for management.

The findings indicate, first, that three authentic leadership subscales, namely RT, IMP, and BP, have a positive impact on WE. Therefore, if hotel managers wish to influence WE, these are the areas that they should prioritize. Second, RT, IMP, and SA have a positive impact on TL. Therefore, if hotel managers wish to improve TL, they should focus on RT, IMP, and SA. The results suggest that this moral perspective, together with RT and SA, has the strongest influence on TL. Third, TL has a positive impact on WE. This finding indicates an opportunity for hotel managers to focus on improving TL, as this will impact positively on WE. Fourth, TL mediates the relationship between RT, IMP, SA, and WE, but not between BP and WE. In the case of RT and IMP, the effect on WE is partially explained by TL. In the case of SA, if TL is not present the effect between SA and WE would not exist; in other words, TL fully mediates this relationship. Fifth, WW moderates the relationship between RT, BP, and WE. At a certain level of WW there is an impact of RT on WE. Figure 3 shows an almost flat line at low values of WW (that is, no impact of RT on WW), whereas high levels of WW produce a positive relationship between RT and WE. Figure 4 shows that at high levels of WW, the greater the SA, the greater the WE. Conversely, at low levels of WW, the greater the SA, the lower the WE. Sixth, WW does not moderate the relationship between TL and WE. Although the importance of WW to any employee is not in doubt, in the sample analyzed WW did not participate in the relationship between TL and WE.

In hotel companies, where duties for employees are complicated and demand high levels of interdependence, cooperation, and information sharing,[96] TL is proven to be crucial for effective operation. Leadership plays a significant role in enhancing workplace trust and WE. Given the role of TL in work satisfaction, the connection between authentic management style and TL remains an important area for researchers. The connection link between TL and WE is also important because more satisfied employees are likely to improve productivity. Employers will therefore make it simpler for employees to succeed in their jobs if they take steps to improve WW and working conditions. The aforementioned conclusions are consistent with the social contagion theory.

Theoretical Contribution

This study builds on the findings of Baquero et al, who emphasized the importance of understanding authentic leadership subscales in the hotel business and how they impact employees.[1] The current study expands on the impact of authentic leadership subscales on workplace WE and TL and adds the insight that TL works as a partial mediator between three authentic leadership subscales and WE. WW is included as a moderator in a subset of the relationships between the variables listed above. The results have six main theoretical implications.

First, three of the four authentic leadership subscales are confirmed in the model as having direct, positive, and significant links to WE. Only SA was found to have no significant correlation with WE. In their research in a petroleum

company in the UAE, Zaabi et al identified SA and BP as the most influential elements of authentic leadership.[32] The present study agrees with their findings on BP but not on SA. The finding that SA is not significantly influential on WE also runs contrary to the conclusions of Gardner et al and Kernis who regarded SA as a fundamental part of authentic leadership.[97,98]

Second, three of the four authentic leadership subscales in the model were confirmed as having direct, positive, and significant links to TL. Only BP was found to have no significant impact and no correlation with TL. IMP was identified by Agote et al as the dimension that stands out from the others in terms of influencing TL and positive emotions.[38] Behavior of GMs based on their basic principles and congruence with their thoughts is very significant to employees, and it elicits favorable emotional responses. It is worth noting that it was the unethical behavior of today's leaders that necessitated a new, authentic, values-based leadership, ultimately giving rise to authentic leadership.[99]

Third, the direct link between TL and WE was confirmed as positive and significant. This finding is in line with Melhem and Al-Qudah's conclusion that trust should come both from the followers and from the leader.[100] Two-way trust and mutual respect create a feeling of empowerment and an obligation to remain committed to one's work. As Bakker and Leiter noted in their 2017 study, trust is one of the strategic methods that leaders can use to enhance WE.[18]

Fourth, TL was confirmed as fully or partially mediating the relationship between three of the four authentic leadership subscales and WE. Although previous research on authentic leadership has addressed the relationship between TL and WE, the current study provides a deeper understanding of this area.[56–60]

Fifth, WW was found to moderate the relation between two of the four authentic leadership subscales and WE. Du et al have recently studied the impact of authentic leadership on the WE and WW of frontline workers in a hospitality organization. Their findings indicate that through self-concordance and self-awareness, authentic leaders put their followers' well-being and interests ahead of their own and work to establish a positive relationship with their employees.[33] The present study builds on this by identifying which subscales of authentic leadership play a positive role in the relationship. It also finds that, despite the importance of WW to employees, WW did not moderate the relationship between TL and WE in this particular sample. This study thus sheds light on a question that has not been studied extensively, namely how WW functions as a moderator in the link between TL and WE.

Sixth, although the control variables were not the primary focus of the study, the results suggest that gender, contractual relationship, and years of experience have no correlation with WE, as these three independent factors had no influence on the dependent variable. This is consistent with the results of Baquero's study in the context of the hotel industry in the UAE.[101] It also reflects the fact that in the UAE the contractual relationship has few implications for employees, as a contract can be terminated at any time by the employer's payment of an end-of-service fee.

Managerial Implications

From a practical point of view, the outcomes of this study indicate that hotel sector executives must demonstrate their authentic selves (RT) and understand how this affects their followers in terms of WE. They must own their errors and encourage everyone, including themselves, to speak the truth. Ethics (in the form of IMP) are an essential factor, as the findings indicate that they help employees to feel empowered at work. Leaders who aim to be authentic should take time to understand the values and beliefs of their subordinates and ensure that job requirements align with those values and beliefs; doing this will increase employees' impression of job significance. In terms of BP, the findings show that it is crucial for decision-makers in the UAE hotel industry to perform exhaustive and objective investigations before drawing any conclusions. Prior to reaching a decision, they must carefully consider a variety of perspectives, even those that may threaten their own firmly held beliefs. In contrast, although SA is an integral feature of authentic leadership theory, it is not identified in the present study as a critical factor influencing WE among Dubai's hospitality workers. SA must be assumed or regarded as exogenous to what the workers understand as imperative in leadership.

In addition, to encourage engagement, HR policies should be designed to support GMs in their knowledge of leadership skills. HR managers must provide professional authentic leadership training programs for all levels of management. Job engagement can be measured by regular distribution of WE surveys to monitor employee engagement levels. Leaders must motivate, direct, and provide all the necessary assistance for their staff to be more productive and

inventive. In the hotel industry specifically, this entails creating a positive, people-centered culture that drives employees. To achieve these objectives, an organization should practice authentic leadership.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite its achievements, this study has limitations that could be addressed in future research. First, all 25 hotels in the sample are located in the same emirate. Future studies could usefully investigate hotels in different countries and regions. Second, this study was cross-sectional in design, and the questionnaire was administered in a two-month period. Longitudinal studies in which surveys are repeated at intervals would enhance the value of this research. Third, the model investigated the effect of TL as a mediator. It is recommended that future studies attempt to gain a deeper understanding by evaluating additional mediating effects, such as perception of leader hypocrisy.

Ethics Statement

Participants in our study were fully informed that we will be using their information for scholarly purposes. All of the people who took part were kept anonymous, and their information is securely stored. All participants gave their informed consent. The present research was conducted according to the guidelines of the Declaration of Helsinki and approved by the research program committee of the International University of La Rioja (IRB Approval No. UNIR-IRB/FEC/2022-09/17).

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Disclosure

The author reports no conflicts of interest in this work.

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