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When Organisational Leadership Embraces Authenticity: An Inquiry into the Resulting Effects on Staff Commitment

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Abstract
The purpose of this paper was twofold; first was to find out what factors underlie leadership authenticity, and second was to explain the resulting effect of authenticity behaviours on the commitment of staff within public hospitals which are typical service organisations. The paper shows that Leaders' Authenticity can be operationally studied in terms of integrity, Humility and Servant-hood behaviours of leadership. The study also reveals that after controlling for other salient leadership behaviours, a unit increase in the leaders' authenticity behaviour, accounts for a 0.295 change in staff commitment. The study generates implications for practice and furtherance of research.
Keywords: leadership authenticity, integrity, Humility, Servant-hood, commitment

Introduction

With the ever increasing levels of graft around the globe (Tanzi, 1998; Vian et. al., 2017), peoples' actions seem to be driven by many selfish motives. This trend is swaying many individuals from embracing authentic actions to embracing corrupt tendencies seemingly based on the question; 'what is in it for me?' (Rispel, deJager, & Fonn, 2016). Following from the above, once the decision by organisational employees is based on the question, 'what is in it for me from this particular client am serving', then the image of the organisation may be dented and its competiveness consequently tarnished in the long-term (Tanzi 1998; Lutwama *et al*., 2012). A case in point is in some public hospitals in East Africa were, the tendencies by hospital cadres to offer services based on the perceived individualistic short term benefits, has drastically caused the quality of services to decline (Lutwama *et al*., 2012; Rijckeghem & Weder 1997; Njuki & Moronge 2016). Most clients now perceive that services offered by public hospitals are getting worse and this calls for immediate interventions. There are cases were patients have lost lives simply because they could not receive services as they did not have immediate kickbacks to give to hospital staff (Among, 2011).

When organisational leadership embraces authentic behaviours as part of their day to day practices (Ling *et al.,* 2016; Coetzer *et. al.,* 2017), employees may be inspired to follow suit and also act alike. Authenticity thus gives hope that organisational actors can be more concerned about pursuing the overt interests of the wider organisational stakeholders rather than fronting selfish individualistic interests (Rubel & Kee, 2015; Nangoli et al., 2016). Organisational leaders are at the forefront of driving transformations in behaviours among organisational actors as they often have the required power, and are privy to sensitive information that is not easily accessible to others (Sendjaya 2015; Salancik & Pfeffer, 2016). Under such conditions leadership, runs a risk of misusing its influence by pursuing selfish and corrupt individualistic targets in disregard of the overtly laid down organisational ambitions. The world scene has experienced cases like the Enron saga that awakened the world to the danger that lack of authenticity can create.

While authorities have tried to design and implement measures that curb the corruption tendencies among organisational staff in hospitals, the vice has persisted (Gaitonde et al 2016; Njuki & Moronge 2016; Mawa 2012). This implies that interventions that can help to cub the vice are still highly needed. The ever increasing pressure on national economic resources however means that economic solutions like enhancing the salary of health workers can only partially contribute to solving the problem (Rijckeghem & Weder 1997; Vian et al 2017). This means that non-financial solutions like leadership behaviour, ought to be examined and integrated in the overall solution for addressing the challenge of low commitment among employees (Domingo 2015; Kim 2015). While other scholars have attempted to study the consequences of leaders' authenticity, none of them has examined its effect on the commitment of employees in public hospitals within Uganda. This study covers the above gap from a positivistic approach. The remaining sections of this paper provide, a review of empirical literature on Leaders' Authenticity and Employee Commitment, methodology of the study, presentation and interpretation of study findings, Discussion of findings, conclusion, Contribution of the study to Practice and knowledge and Suggested areas for research.

Theoretical underpinning of the study

This study uses the Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) by Bandura (1986; 1999), to explain the effect of leaders' authenticity on employee commitment. SCT holds that learning occurs in a social context with a dynamic and reciprocal interaction of the person, environment, and behaviour. SCT utilises part or all of its inherent six

constructs to explain and to predict changes in behaviour. These six constructs include reciprocal Determinism, behavioural Capability, observational Learning, reinforcements, expectations and self-efficacy (Bandura 1986; Jiang et al., 2016). Premised on the above theoretical assumptions, this study advances that employee behaviour in terms of the level of commitment to the organisation, changes with changes in the leaders behaviours. That's is, were organisational leaders work in service of others, uphold integrity and humility, then their followers will be propelled to learn and reciprocate the behaviours modelled by the leader. In an effort to ensure that they reciprocate the good acts of the leadership, employees enhance their level of commitment to supporting management in implementing the overtly set goals of the organisation. Particularly, SCT supports the argument that integrity and relational transparency of leadership enables followers to develop reciprocal trusting relationship with the leader which then enhances their level of affective commitment.

Review of Empirical Literature

Review of empirical literature on Leaders' Authenticity and Employee Commitment

Leaders' Authenticity addresses the kind of person the leader really is (Emuwa 2013; Claar, Jackson, & TenHaken, 2014). Authentic leaders are believed to be genuine, reliable, transparent, trustworthy and of high moral character (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Claar, Jackson, & TenHaken, 2014). Other scholars who have attempted to study authentic leadership include; Peus et al. (2012) who studied it as self-knowledge and self-consistency, Walumbwa et al. (2008) studied authentic leadership in terms of self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing and internalized moral perspective. This study however uses the approach by Page and Wong (2000) that studies leaders 'authenticity in terms of integrity, Humility and Servant-hood. This approach broadly represents the other frames besides its simplicity. The study defines employee commitment as the employee's emotional attachment, identification with, and involvement in a particular organization (Allen and Meyer 1991; Meyer & Allen, 1997; Sokoll 2013).

Past studies indicate that there is a positive relationship between authentic leadership and Employee commitment (see e.g., Van Dierendonck & Nuijten, 2011; Wang et al., 2014). Some of these studies show that leaders inspire followers to higher levels of authenticity through the power of their moral examples (Gardner et al., 2005). In line with the arguments of Van Dierendonck and Nuijten (2011), Leader's Authenticity is associated with the expression of one's true self that is consistent with inner thoughts and feelings whether privately or publicly. It is such inner thoughts and feelings of leaders, which when put into practice, provide a model example for employee to emulate. Thus it can be argued that commitment of employees may reduce or increase based on the level of influence that the authenticity behaviours of the leaders have had on employees.

Secondly, following the attribute of transparency, once leaders are transparent in their dealings with the employees and the organisation, this will propel employees to increase their believability in the leader and will expound their efforts to ensure that work is done to the satisfaction of their leader. Blondeau and Blondeau (2015) have also advanced that holding transparent discussions with employees builds their trust in the leader and thus raises their level of commitment to achieving goals. A study by Avolio and Gardner (2005) by comparison, indicates that lack of transparency among leaders diversely affects the commitment of employees.

Also, authentic leadership cultivates conducive workplace attitudes and behaviours (Gardner et al., 2011) which enhance affective and continuance commitment. Given that authentic leadership is concerned with cultivating a servant's attitude, focusing on the leader's values, credibility and motive (Page& Wong, 2000), it major focus remains on individuals ethics and morality (Weischer et al., 2013). These qualities encourage relational transparency which enables the followers to develop reciprocal trusting relationship with the leader (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Over time, employees can ably be able to appreciate the level of integrity, Humility and servant-hood potential of their leadership and this will reflect in the level of the desire and willingness of the subordinates to identify with and get involved with the leader (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Generally, authentic leadership has been demonstrated to drive follower affective organizational commitment too (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Similarly, behavioural integrity has been demonstrated to drive follower performance and organizational citizenship behaviours through perceived trust in and satisfaction with the leader, and thus impacted on follower affective commitment (Page & wong, 2000). Leaders who display characters of authentic leadership have more effective personal identification with followers because they give more respect to their followers and ever willing to develop more openness and accountability in relationship with their followers (Walumbwa et al., 2010). The above leadership attributes propel their followers to get more committed to performing the roles due to them in the organisation by virtual of not wanting to let down their leader.

Methodology of the study

This study uses the positivism research approach (Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill, 2007). It used quantitative data that was collected using questionnaires and responses were collected on a likert scale with five verbal anchors as follows; 1 – "Strongly disagree", 2 – "Disagree", 3 – "I am not sure", 4 – "Agree", and 5 – "Strongly agree". The

research adopted an explanatory Causal research approach (Neuman, 2011). The independent variable of this study, leaders' authenticity, was correlated and regressed against employee commitment which was the dependent variable of the study. Based on time categorisation, the study assumed a Cross-sectional design. When executing explanatory research, cross-sectional design is sufficient to help one understand what has happened or been happening (Neuman 2011).

Data was collected from employees of public hospitals in Uganda. These public health institutions were at the time facing acute low levels of staff commitment and there was urgent need to craft non-financial means of enhancing their commitment. A representative sample of 576 respondents was identified for use in the study. The unit of analysis was the individual employees some of whom were leaders or had ever served as leaders and others had never served in leadership positions. This enabled researcher to collect views that were accommodating aggregated experiences of leadership and followership. The independent variable was measured using the authenticity component of the tool developed by Page and Wong (2000). This was abridged to fit the unique features of this particular study. The tool was tested for validity and reliability. Leaders' authenticity had a cronbach alpha of 0.889 and employee commitment had a cronbach alpha of 0.883. All of them were thus above the threshold value of 0.7, below which, the measures would not be reliable enough (Saunders et al., 2007). Also only items with CVI of 0.8, 0.9, or 1.0, where retained in the questionnaire while those that scored I-CVI below 0.8 were deleted.

The data was also subjected to the five preliminary tests (normality, Linearity, Homoscedasticity, Multicollinearity and the test of independence of errors) for performing certain advanced statistics and all of them passed the tests. Which implied that the inferential statistics could be performed on the data without the need for data transformation as an alternative to ensuring that the assumptions of multiple regression are observed (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Factor analysis was conducted to reveal the underlying factors that comprise the leaders' authenticity behaviours within public hospitals in Uganda. In establishing the effect of leaders' authenticity on employee commitment, the equation $Y= Y_1+ \beta_1X_1+\varepsilon_1$ was executed where; Y means employee commitment, Y_1 means the Y intercept, β_1 means the effect of slope coefficients denoting the influence of X_1 on Y. X_1 means leaders' authenticity and ε_1 means the error term in the measurement of Y using X_1. The magnitude of the interaction and direction, were on the value of beta and the sign of the integer associated with the beta value in terms of positive or negative, subject to the level of significance.

Presentation and interpretation of study findings

After data collection, data was cleaned before subjecting it to further analysis. The final analysis was based on 459 questionnaires. The study demographics showed that 42.7% of the respondents had ever served the organisation in leadership roles while 57.3% of the respondents were yet to hold a leadership position. As regards the gender of respondents, the findings shown in Table 4.3 below, reveal that 270 (58.8%) of the respondents were females compared to 189 (41.2%) males. This finding indicates that majority of employees in the public hospital organizations are female. It was worth controlling for effects of gender as having more female staff compared to the male staff in an organization, may affect commitment in terms managing unique job demands like night work schedules. Also, other components of leadership behaviour like task oriented behaviour, process oriented behaviour and follower oriented behaviour were controlled for so as to single out the effect of leaders' authenticity on the dependent variable. The findings that follow present the output of the factor analysis, correlation analysis and regression analysis together with the associated explanations.

Factor analysis for leader's authenticity

After executing Factor analysis on leader's authenticity, three underlying factors were extracted using principal component analysis method. The rotation method used was varimax with Kaiser Normalization and the findings are as seen in Table 1 below;

Table 1 Factor analysis for Leaders' authenticity

Questionnaire Item(s)	Leaders' Integrity	Servant-hood	Leaders' Humility
Our supervisor….			
Is genuine and trustworthy with people	0.589		
does not use manipulation or deception to achieve his/her goals	0.519		
believes that honesty is more important than profits and personal gains	0.666		
Cannot willingly compromise ethical principles in order to achieve success	0.736		
Often, works behind the scene and lets others take the credit			0.756
when criticized, does not take it personal but tries to learn from the criticism			0.68
is willing to learn from others below him/her in the organization			0.797
readily admits when he/she is wrong			0.697
Sacrifices personal benefits to meet the needs of employees		0.615	
Has a heart to serve others all the time		0.636	
Believes that leadership is more of a responsibility than a position		0.668	
serves others without regard to their gender, race, ethnicity, religion or position		0.706	
Total Initial Eigenvalues	**% of Variance**	**Cumulative %**	
2.725	22.705	22.705	
2.705	22.54	45.245	
1.999	16.658	61.902	
KMO and Bartlett's Test			
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy.	0.894		
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity Approx. Chi-Square	2236.15		
df	66		
Sig.	0.001		

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.
Source: *Survey Data (2018)*

The findings in Table 1 show that all the items used to measure leader's authenticity were presented in three salient operational factors, namely; 'leaders' Integrity', 'servanthood' and 'leaders' humility'. All the factors that were used to measure leader's authenticity significantly loaded on the above three operational factors and thus all were retained for analysis. The findings show that 'leaders' Integrity' accounts for 22.705% of the changes in leader authenticity, while 'servanthood' accounts for 22.54% of the changes in leader authenticity and 'leaders' humility' accounts for only 16.66% of the changes in leader authenticity. The results show that the sample used to arrive at the findings was adequate with Kaiser- Meyer- Olkin (KMO) of (0.894) which is greater than the threshold of (0.5). The findings are also significant as seen by the Bartlett's Test ($\chi 2$ (55) = 2224.588, p-value < 0.001). The results imply that leaders' Integrity accounts for most of the changes in leaders' authenticity and that taken together with 'servanthood' and 'leaders' humility', the three can be used to tell most of the significant changes in leaders' authenticity.

Correlation Analysis tests

The purpose of conducting correlation analysis was to measure the linear relationship between employee commitment and leaders' authenticity behaviours. As seen in table 2 below, findings show that the leader's authenticity has a positive and significant relationship with employee commitment (0.741, p-value < 0.001). This suggests that an increase in leader's authenticity behaviours is associated with a 74.1% chance of increasing employee commitment. This finding points to the fact that there is a possibility of a causal effect between leaders' authenticity, and employee commitment which can only be confirmed after running a regression analysis (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013; Hair et al., 2013).

Table 2 Correlation Table

Variable	Employee Commitment	Leaders Process Orientation
Employee Commitment	1	0.741**
	0.000	0.000
Leaders Process Orientation	0.741**	1
	0.000	0.000

**** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).**
Source: Survey Data (2018)

Regression analysis tests

Regression testing was conducted with the aim of establishing the effect of leaders' authenticity on employee commitment. The findings in table 3 below, reveal that leaders' authenticity has a significant and positive effect on employee commitment with a beta value of 29.5% at a level of significance which is below the targeted threshold of 05% (0.295, $p < 0.001$). The results were controlled for the confounding effect of other key leadership behaviours including Leader's process orientation, Leaders' task-orientation behaviour and Leaders' follower-orientation. As further seen from table 3, multicollinearity was not a problem in this study as the VIF value was 4.63 which is less than the cut off of value ten above which multicollinearity would be deemed to exist. Also the tolerance level was 0.216 and it is below the threshold value of 1.0 above which multicollinearity would be deemed to exist (Stevens, 2002; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). The major implication of the above findings, is that, with each unit increase in leaders' authenticity, employee commitment increases by 0.295 units. It also shows that the modelled variables significantly explain 60.2% of the changes in the commitment of employees.

Table 3 Regression analysis test results

Coefficient estimates	B unstd	S.E	β std	t	Sig.	VIF	Tolerance
(Constant)	0.939	0.102		9.176	0.000		
Leaders Process Orientation	0.282	0.061	0.295	4.656	0.001	4.630	.216
Model Summary Statistics							
R		0.778					
R Square		0.606					
Adjusted R Square		0.602					
Std. Error of the Estimate		0.47020					
	Sig.	0.001					
a Dependent Variable: Employee Commitment							

Source: *Survey Data (2018)*

Discussion of results and conclusion

The results revealed that Leader's authenticity has a positive and significant effect on employee commitment (0.295, $p < 0.001$). The results suggest that leader's authenticity leads to increase in employee commitment through the cultivation of a servant's attitude, and embracing the leader's values, credibility, and altruism among the employees. Therefore, leaders who have a heart to serve others, and choose honesty at the expense of personal gains and profits, cause their followers to be more committed. The results also advance that followers are more committed when they perceive that their leader believes that leadership is more of a responsibility than a position and thus serves others without regard to their gender, race, ethnicity, religion or position. The findings also suggest that relational transparency enables the followers to develop reciprocal trusting relationship with the leader.

These results are in consonance with earlier studies that found out that authentic leaders ought to be genuine, reliable, transparent, and trustworthy and of high moral character (Claar, Jackson, & TenHaken, 2014; Emuwa, 2013). The findings are also in agreement with earlier studies of Avolio and Gardner (2005), to the effect that lack of transparency among leaders diversely affects the commitment of employees. The findings further support those of Walumbwa *et al.,* (2008), to the effect that relational transparency enables the followers to develop reciprocal trusting relationship with the leader and that Leaders who display characters of authentic leadership have more effective personal identification with followers.

The findings also suggested that relational transparency enables followers to develop reciprocal trusting relationship with the leader. This is in support of the arguments in Social cognitive theory (SCT) to the effect that a person's behaviour is dependent on his expectations and expectancies which are constructed from previous experience. Thus, an employee who trusts the leadership for its word and expects that that leadership will reciprocate positive efforts, is induced to enhance commitment to pursuing the overtly set organizational goals as recommended by the leader.

Contribution of the study to Practice and knowledge

The study encourages mangers in the organisation to be conscious about the way they behave as this has an impact on the commitment of their workforce. The study also suggests that organisations ought to place individuals with authentic behaviours in positions of leadership such that they increase their ability to instil authentic behaviours amongst the followership.

The study holds that the challenge of low levels of employee commitment in service organisations like hospitals, can be addressed through upholding authenticity amongst the leaders. This is because once the leaders are authentic in their actions, this induces a commensurate behaviour among their followers.

The study contributes to knowledge by bringing more contextual evidence to uphold the fact that leaders' authenticity is one of the vital dimensions of a leader's behaviour. It also contributes to literature the fact that leaders' authenticity affects commitment of employees. The study also clarifies leaders' authenticity is constructed from the behavioural components of integrity, servanthood spirit and humility.

Suggested areas for research

Given that many models for discussing the behaviour of leaders exist, future studies ought to conduct an aggregated study that shows the contribution of each behavioural orientation on the resulting commitment of employees. Such an approach offers leadership information regarding the kind of behaviours and the constitutive impact they have on overall leadership behaviours.

Future research should also investigate the direct effect of each of the three constructs of leaders' authenticity on organisational variables like employee commitment, resource distribution among others available.

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