The mediating role of scientific optimism in the relationship between authentic leadership and job engagement of English language teachers

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Abstract

In order to increase the efficiency and productivity of employees and organizations industrial and organizational psychologists have identified and examined the important psychological structures affecting the effectiveness of organizations and to achieve this goal the variables of job enthusiasm, authentic leadership and scientific optimism have always been considered.The purpose of this study is to investigate the mediator role of the scientific optimism in relationship between authentic leadership andteachers' job engagement. The study is an applied descriptive correlational one in which he statistical population consisted of all English language teachers in the city of Sanandaj from among which 190 individuals were selected as samples based on Morgan Table and using a random stratified method. They responded to three questionnaires of authentic leadership, academic optimism, and job engagement. The results were analyzed using structural equation modeling method. Findings indicated that that authentic leadership has a direct effect on scientific optimism, scientific optimism has a direct effect on job enthusiasm, and authentic leadership has a direct effect on scientific optimism. furthermore, authenticleadership through scientific optimism has an indirect effect on job engagement and the hypothetical model of the research showed a good fit. Therefore, it can be said that authentic leadership and academic optimism are important variables that are closely related to job engagement in teachers.

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Introduction

Nowadays organizations are an important part of people's lives and individuals spend most of their time to have a better situation in all aspects. During the long hours that people work in organizations, thinking about the quality of spending time directly affects the way they interact with their families and also the members of the society. If those who are employed work enthusiastically and have a passion both to their jobs and organizations, not only does it contribute to obtaining the predetermined goals of the organization, but it also is a motivator to have a more cheerful society (Mirzadarani, 2013). In order to increase efficiency and productivity, industrial and organizational psychologists have identified and studied important psychological constructs affecting the effectiveness of organizations.

One of the important psychological constructs that plays a prominent role in increasing the effectiveness of the is job enthusiasm. In recent years, attention to individual and the organizational job engagement as a psychological component in organizations has led to many discussions and studies (Karimi, Mardani, 2020). Job passion is a concept that has a positive and direct relationship with positive outcomes such as organizational commitment, strengthening civic behaviors and job enthusiasm, and a negative relationship with the intention of leaving the job (ZandKarimi, Parvaresh, and Ghadampour 2020). Hallberg and Schaufeli (2005) consider job engagement as a positive psychological concept known as an indicator of well-being and psychological health in the workplace.

Job passion is a stable and positive work-related mental state that is characterized by three components: enthusiasm, dedication and attraction. (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). To work enthusiastically with high energy levels is described as mental flexibility, a desire to invest and resilience to face difficult problems. Work attraction refers to individual's deep focus on work and desire not to leave work, no attention to amount of time at work and forgetting everything around. Dedication is characterized by a meaningful understanding of work, having a

sense of passion and pride in doing work, and a sense of being challenged (Bakker, Leiter, 2010).

According to Bakker and Demerouti's (2008) Model of job enthusiasm, some job and personal resources in the workplace create job engagement in employees and consequently job engagement leads to positive consequences in the workplace. According to Bakker, Leiter (2010), enthusiastic employees are fully absorbed in their job and do their job well. Enthusiastic employees are creative and initiative in their jobs react to actions and their self-efficacy increases, thus help the organization to achieve its goals (Lorens, Bakker, Schaufeli, Salanova, 2007).

Therefore, job engagement as a desirable resource may lead to a positive cycle of resources and thus positive effects on health (Hobfoll, and Shirom, 2001) that results in the proper performance of assigned job tasks or higher behaviors. Therefore, identifying the influencing factors are very important.

Teymouri, (2018) in his research has pointed to the role of scientific optimism in job enthusiasm. Scientific optimism is a construct that includes psychological, emotional and behavioral dimensions created as a result of the interaction between a sense of collective efficiency, trust and academic emphasis as a part of school organizational health (Hoy, Tarte r& Hoy, 2006). Teachers 'scientific optimism is a hidden construct that consists of the concepts of self-efficacy, teacher trust in students and teachers' focus on creating a positive and challenging scientific environment for students (Asgari& Fotoot, 2013) and has cognitive, emotional and behavioral aspects (Fahy, Wu &,Hoy,2010). The teacher's sense of self-efficacy refers to the teacher's judgment of his or her ability to achieve desired outcomes and engage students in the lesson (Rezaaveisi, 2018).

Effective teachers, on the other hand, must be able to build a trust relationship with their parents and students, and a relationship based on trust includes benevolence, trustworthiness, competence, honesty and openness (Hoy, 2003). Scientific emphasis refers to teachers' beliefs about academic success and their focus on scientific activities, which can extend students'

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time for success and actively engage them in scientific activities (Woolfolk, 2007).

The construct of optimism is extracted over time and is based on humanistic psychology, positive psychology, theoretical foundations of social cognition and Bandura's self-efficacy and the concept of Seligman optimism (Gholami pour, Tohidi, Askarzade, 2019). All the researches in this field have examined this construct as one of the important features of the schools (Hoy, Tarter& Woolfolk Hoy, 2006). Scientific optimism has been suggested as one of the important characteristics of teachers (Hoy & Miskel, 2008) since an optimistic class emphasizes opportunities, happiness, altruism and trust (Zahed Bablan, Karimianpour, 2020).

An optimistic teacher focuses on the positive and qualitative aspects of students, the classroom, the school and the community (Pajares, 2001). The results show that scientific optimism by controlling students' backgrounds has a positive effect on their academic achievement (McGuigan & Hoy, 2006). A review of the literature shows that authentic leadership has an effect on teachers' optimism (Rastegar, Talebi, Nadi& Saif, 2017). Authentic leadership has been considered by researchers and experts as one of the new theories of leadership, which includes the four basic elements of self-awareness, internalized moral aspect, balanced processing and relationship transparency (Mazutis, Slawinski, 2007).

Walumbwa, Avolio Gardner, Wernsing & Peterson (2008) define authentic leadership as a model that explains both positive psychic abilities and a positive psychological atmosphere to foster greater self-awareness, inner moral vision and balanced processing, and communication transparency is established in some part of leaders' work with followers that leads to cultivating positive progress (Karimi, Mardani,2020). Authentic leadership promotes organizational culture and through designing new and correct methods in interaction with employees and all stakeholders, leads to proper social performance in the organization (Hadian Nasab, Ebrahimpour, Asil Noepasand,2018).

By establishing positive and open relationships, authentic leadership exposes its values, decisions, even weaknesses and mistakes to everyone resulting in positive consequences such as mutual trust, freedom of expression in presenting new ideas, and the effectiveness of the organization. Norman, Avolio & Luthans (2011), Hassan & Ahmad (2010) believe that a authentic leader through trusting employees can achieve favorable results in the organization.

There are relevant studies concerning research variables. Rastegar, Talebi, Nadi&Saif (2017) in their study entitled" the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational citizenship behavior of teachers with the mediating role of academic optimism" concluded that there is a relationship between authentic leadership and scientific optimism. SeyedNaghavi & Kaheh (2012) in their research entitled "the role of authentic leadership in improving the level of creativity and engagement in employees" concluded that there is a relationship between authentic leadership and engagement in employees. Yousefi, Abdi Pour & Gholami (2015) in their research entitled "authentic leadership style with job attachment of the staff of the General offices of Youth Sports in the western provinces of the country" concluded that there is a relationship between authentic leadership and job attachment.

Oh, Cho & Lim (2018) in their research entitled" authentic Leadership and job engagement with the mediating role of group values" concluded that there is a significant relationship between authentic leadership and job enthusiasm. Kulophas, Hallinger, Ruengtrakul &Wongwanich (2018) in their study entitled" the effect of authentic leadership on scientific optimism and job engagement of teachers" concluded that there is a significant relationship between authentic leadership with scientific optimism and job enthusiasm. Dar, Bukhari & Hamid (2016) in their study entitled "the relationship between authentic leadership, job engagement and job stress" concluded that there is a relationship between authentic leadership and job enthusiasm.

Srivastava & Dhar (2016) in their study entitled" authentic leadership and scientific optimism" concluded that there is a relationship between authentic leadership and scientific optimism. Hassan & Ahmed (2012) in their study entitled" authentic leadership, trust and job enthusiasm" concluded that there is a significant relationship between authentic leadership and job enthusiasm.

In general, teachers as one of the important elements in educational organizations and consequently in the process of teaching and learning to achieve the goals of education have an important mission and it is evident that such an important mission is achieved only if the necessary enthusiasm exist among them. Given the importance and positive consequences of engagement and lack of research in this field, identifying the factors affecting this phenomenon is very important. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship between authentic leadership and job engagement with the mediating role of scientific optimism. The following hypotheses were examined.

1. Authentic leadership has a direct effect on teachers' job enthusiasm.
2. Authentic leadership has a direct effect on teachers' scientific optimism
3. Scientific optimism has a direct effect on job enthusiasm
4. Authentic leadership through scientific optimism has an indirect effect on teachers' job enthusiasm.

Methodology

The study was an applied descriptive correlational one based on structural equation model. The statistical population included all English language teachers at the level of first and second secondary schools and English language teaching institutes in Sanandaj city in the academic year 2019-2020 from among which 190 English language teachers in schools and English language teaching institutes in Sanandaj were selected as sample (145 males and 45 female) using stratified random method. The criterion for entering the number of men and women in the research was teaching in high school and each

English language institute in the academic year 2019-2020. SPSS and LISREL software were used to analyze the data. In this study, three questionnaires were used to collect data:

A. Job Engagement Questionnaire: Schaufeli & Salanova's (2001) Job Engagement Questionnaire was used to collect data related to job engagement. It has 17 questions and in three dimensions of professional energy (ability) questions 1-6, self devotion questions 7-11 and absorption questions 12-17. It is graded based on a five-point Likert scale from strongly agree (1) to strongly agree (5). The content validity of the questionnaire has been approved by expert professors and the .95 index reliability of this questionnaire has been reported by askari, enayati, hyedari (2014). Also, the .89 index reliability of this questionnaire was estimated by calculating Cronbach's alpha.

B. Authentic Leadership Questionnaire: Walumbwa & Gardner, Avolio's (2007) 15 item questionnaire was used to assess authentic leadership in which four dimensions of self-awareness, balanced processing, ethics and relationship transparency based on a five-point Likert scale are measured. Its content validity has been approved by experts and .85 index reliability has been reported by, Rastegar, Talebi, Nadi and Seif (2017). The reliability of this questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha was also reports to be 0.78.

C. Scientific Optimism Questionnaire: To measure teachers' scientific optimism, moran, hoy, Hoy (2005) 30-item academic optimism questionnaire which has three dimensions of academic emphasis, collective effect and trust based on a five-point Likert scale was used. Its content validity has been approved by experts and .89 index of reliability has been reported by ZahedBabalan and Karimianpour (2020). The .78 reliability of this questionnaire was also calculated using Cronbach's alpha.

Findings

The sample of this study consisted of 190 English language teachers (145 male and 45 female) in public schools and English language teaching institutes in Sanandaj. The mean and

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standard deviation of authentic leadership, scientific optimism, and job engagement are seen in the following table:

Table 1. Mean and standard deviation for Authentic leadership, Scientific optimism, and Job enthusiasm

	Authentic leadership	Scientific optimism	Job engagement
Mean	56.22	105.6	62.32
SD	5.61	15.41	9.44

Pearson correlation coefficient test for correlation between the variables showed a positive and significant relationship seen in Table 2

Table 2. Pearson Correlations; Authentic leadership, Scientific optimism, and Job engagement

|		Scientific optimism	Job engagement
Authentic leadership	Pearson Correlation	0.43*	.48*
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00	.00
	N	190	190
Job engagement	Pearson Correlation	0.51*	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.00	
	`N	190	

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

As indicated in Table 2 there is a positive and significant relationship between authentic leadership with job engagement (r = 0.48, p≥0.01), between scientific optimism and job engagement(r = 0.51, p≥0.01) and between authentic leadership and scientific optimism (r = 0.43, p ≥ 0.01). The normality of the data was also assessed by evaluating skewness and kurtosis. The skewness and kurtosis of the variables were between the range of (+2 and -2) which is indicating the normality of the data.

Before evaluating the structural model, fit indices for the measurement model were calculated. The measurement model correlates the detector variables with the latent variables. Evaluation of this model is done using confirmatory factor analysis. The fit indices of the measurement model presented in Table 1 show a very good fit of this model, so the detector variables have the necessary ability to operate the latent variables.

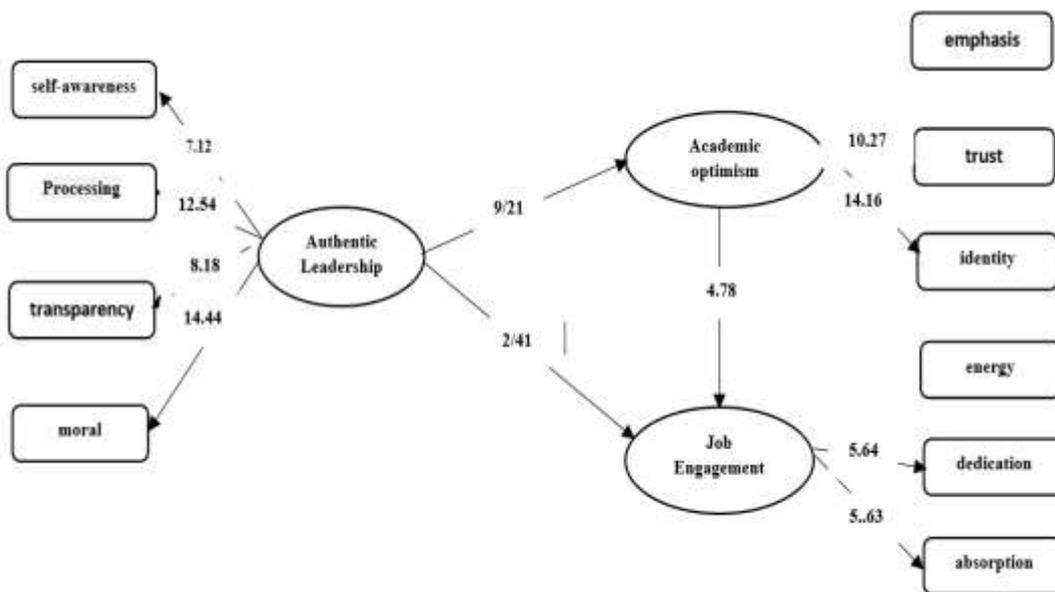**Table 3. Summary of statistical indicators of suitability of the research model**

(X^2)	(d)	X^2/df	(RMSEA)	(GFI)	(AGFI)	(CFI)	(NFI)
0.94	0.96	0.92	0.96	0.03	1.35	41	55.60

The output of LISREL software for
examining the relationships between
variables is presented in Figure 1.
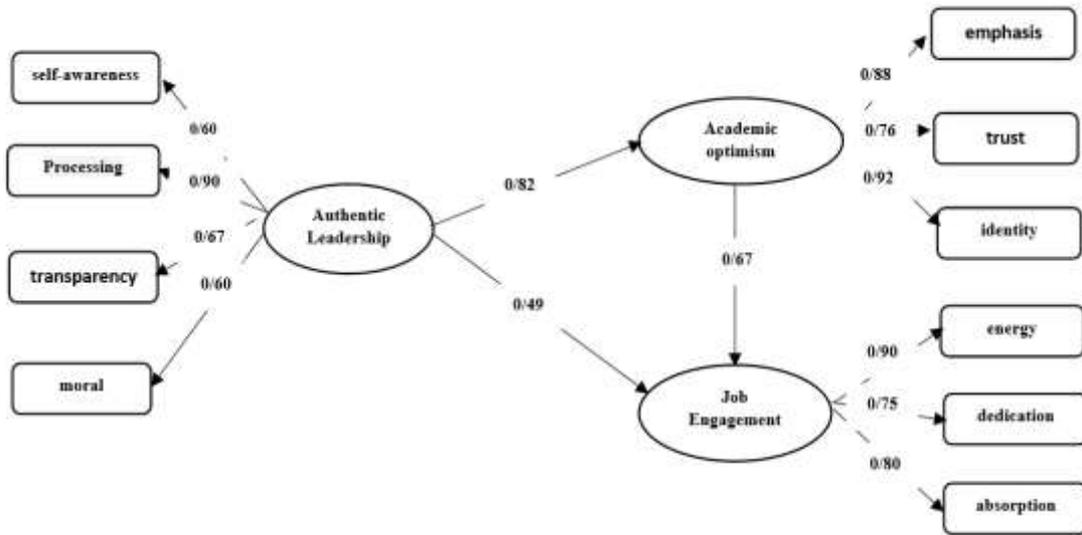
Chi-square = 55.60   df = 41   p-value = 0.286   RMSEA = 0.30

Figure 1. Structural model for standard estimation coefficients

Chi-square = 55.60,   df = 41   p-value = 0.286   RMSEA = 0.30

Figure 2. Significant numbers of research variables

Table 4. Table of standard coefficients and significance level for pattern paths

Path		Direct effect	Indirect effect	T
From variable	To variable			
Authentic leadership	Job engagement	0.49	0.54	2.41
Scientific optimism	Job engagement	0.67	-	4.78
Authentic leadership	Scientific optimism	0.82	-	9.21

Based on Table 4, it can be said that the direct effect of authentic leadership on job engagement is significant with beta (0.49) and (t = 2.41). The direct effect of scientific optimism on job engagement is also significant with beta (0.67) and (4.78) t), and finally the direct effect of authentic leadership on scientific optimism is significant with beta (0.82) and (t = 9.21). To investigate the indirect effect of authentic leadership on job engagement with the mediating role of scientific optimism, the indirect effect coefficient (the product of the direct effect of authentic leadership on scientific optimism as a direct effect of scientific optimism on job enthusiasm) must be calculated. The indirect effect coefficient of authentic leadership on job engagement is 0.54, which indicates that the mediating role of scientific optimism in the relationship between authentic leadership and job engagement is significant.

Examination of the structural model of the research showed the following information:

a. the Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) was 0.03

b. the Comparative fitness index (CFI) was seen to be 0.96,

c. the goodness of fit index (GFI) came to be 0.96,

d. the Adjusted goodness of fit (AGFI) was 0.92,

e. the normalized fit index (NFI) was 0.94 and

f. the chi-square index on degree of freedom (X2 / df) was observed to be 1.35,

The above information indicated a good fit of the model summarized in Table 5.

Table 5. Summary of structural model of the research

X^2/df	(RMSEA)	(GFI)	(AGFI)	(CFI)	(NFI)
1.35	0.03	0.96	0.92	0.96	0.94

Discussion and conclusion

The aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between authentic leadership and job engagement with the mediating role of scientific optimism. The results of data analysis for the first hypothesis showed that true leadership has a positive and direct effect on job enthusiasm. This result is in line with previous research by Yousefi, Edipour & Gholami (2015); Rastegar, Talebi, Nadi & Seif (2017); Goudarzvand Chegini, Abdollahzadeh Lalehdashti & Rezaee

(2018); Oh, Cho, & Lim (2018) on the relationship between authentic leadership and job passion. Explaining the effect of authentic leadership on job enthusiasm, it can be said that authentic leadership style is depicted as a model of leadership behavior that has a positive psychological capacity, including a positive moral climate, fostering self-awareness, internalization, ethical perspective, balancing information processing, transparency with subordinates, nurturing and developing self-positivity.

These leaders show a higher leadership ability in various matters due to paying attention to the issues and personal interests of others more than their own interests, and his followers are attracted through the trust and admiration they feel from the leader. On the other hand, employees with high job engagement requires an atmosphere based on trust, ethics and social support from leaders and managers, which is achieved through the application of authentic leadership style components (Karimi, Mardani, 2020).

Today, leaders play an important role in employees' job enthusiasm, and among which authentic leaders have characteristics and behaviors that can have important effects on the level of engagement of individuals in the organization. Authentic leadership style is an important resource to guide employees. Finally, it can be said that the application of authentic leadership style in school and education gets teachers to be more interested in their jobs and, consequently, leads to values and beliefs in teachers that will increase their participation, activity and job enthusiasm. Authentic leaders also have a clear and transparent exchange of information, which can also help teachers' job enthusiasm (Moradi Moghadam, Jafari, Navigable, 2018). Therefore, it is suggested that school principals try to use the authentic leadership style in leading school affairs, be transparent in their communication with teachers and share all issues with their colleagues, increase teachers' self-awareness about their job by applying the authentic leadership style.

The results of data analysis to test the second hypothesis showed that scientific optimism has a positive and direct effect on teachers' job enthusiasm. This result is consistent with the results of Teymouri's (2018) study on the relationship between scientific optimism and job enthusiasm. In explaining the direct effect of academic optimism on job enthusiasm, we can refer to the role of components of this variable in teachers' job enthusiasm. These components create a kind of belief in individuals that helps them to understand the environment, opportunities, challenges of the environment and also helps them to choose the appropriate response when faced with obstacles.

In fact, when teachers are optimistic, they will trust their teaching abilities and parents to support the classroom, and this triple trust between student, teacher and parent reduces the amount of mutual cooperation, increases the feeling of well-being and provides them with encouragement and job engagement (Gargari, & Gholaami,, 2015). On the other hand, academic emphasis refers to the teacher's priority of educational work, which increases individual's sense of duty, goal seeking and pursuing individual goals, which in itself can lead to increased job enthusiasm.

In general, academic optimism can change the teacher's attitude towards school, class and students and make them more optimistic about the future, which can increase their job enthusiasm. Therefore, it is suggested that school principals trust teachers and expand it between the three angles of students, teachers and parents and increase teachers' desire of for their jobs. Also, teachers with high academic optimism are highly self-confident,

self efficient and go beyond the task of teaching and help students to grow more. It is suggested that by providing the ground for increasing teachers' confidence, self-efficacy and in general the academic optimism, the ground for increasing their job engagement should be provided so that they can work enthusiastically.

The results of data analysis to test the third hypothesis showed that authentic leadership has a positive and direct effect on scientific optimism. This result is in line with the results of Kulophas, Hallinger, Ruengtrakul & Wangwanich (2018) Srivastava & Dhar, (2016) on the relationship between authentic leadership and scientific optimism. Regarding the effect of authentic leadership style on teachers' academic optimism, it can be said that principals who are transparent in their affairs, state the facts well, trust their teachers, consult with them before taking action, have challenging views, encourage teachers' participation, create confidence and a sense of self-efficacy and teachers' academic emphasis make teachers work with high motive and beyond their duties and contribute to the development of the education system (Rastegar, Talebi, Nadi & Saif 2017).

Therefore, more self-aware administrators anticipate things well, support feedback to improve interaction with others and create teachers' academic optimism. On the other hand, teachers with academic optimism have a great engagement to work without any expectation. As a result, they have better expectations from students and lead schools to successful schools. Therefore, it is suggested that principals provide the ground for the growth of teachers 'scientific optimism by clarifying communications and providing the ground for teachers' growth, also increase their self-efficacy and optimism for success in their jobs by increasing the possibility and paving the way for their individual growth.

The results of data analysis to test the fourth hypothesis showed that the indirect effect of authentic leadership on job engagement with the mediating role of academic optimism is significant. This result can be determined by the direct effects of variables on each other and managers can increase the teachers' academic optimism and job engagement by the application of authentic leadership in organizations. It should be noted that this research has been done among English language teachers, thus, it is necessary to be cautious in generalizing the results and also a questionnaire used as a research tool that does not allow in-depth review of data.

Ethical considerations

During the implementation of this research and the preparation of the article, all national laws and principles of professional ethics related to the subject of research, including the rights of statistical community, organizations and institutions, as well as authors and writers have been observed. Adherence to the principles of research ethics in the present study was observed and consent forms were consciously completed by all statistical community.

Sponsorship

Conflict of interest

According to the authors of the present article, there was no conflict of interest. This article has not been previously published in any journal, whether domestic or foreign, and has been sent to the School Administration Quarterly for review and publication only.

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