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Servant and Authentic Leadership and Employee Outcomes: Exploring the Roles of Organizational Trust and Job Autonomy

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ABSTRACT

The study examines the influence of servant and authentic leadership styles on employee commitment and satisfaction, highlighting the mediating role of psychological empowerment and the moderating effect of perceived organizational support. As leadership continues to shape organizational outcomes, this research contributes to the growing body of knowledge by exploring how leadership grounded in service and authenticity influences employee attitudes in the Pakistan's higher education context. Data was collected through structured questionnaires from a sample of 1,069 employees across public and private organizations and analyzed using structural equation modelling (SEM) via SmartPLS 3.2.8. The results confirmed that both servant and authentic leadership have a significant and positive impact on employee commitment and satisfaction. The study further confirmed that psychological empowerment significantly mediates the relationship between both leadership styles and employee outcomes, highlighting the importance of empowering employees in translating leadership into positive organizational behavior. Perceived organizational support was found to moderate these relationships, enhancing the effects of leadership when support levels were high. These findings provide valuable insights for leadership development programs and organizational policy, suggesting that cultivating leadership styles centered on ethical behavior, empowerment, and organizational support can substantially enhance workforce commitment and satisfaction.

Keywords: Servant Leadership, Authentic Leadership, Psychological Empowerment, Perceived Organizational Support, Employee Commitment, Employee Satisfaction, Pakistan
JEL Classifications: D23, J28, M12

1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership styles are fundamental to institutional culture, organizational commitment and effectiveness in the higher education sector (Wang et al., 2022). Leadership, while inherently challenging across the higher education landscape, is even more so during this time of rapid growth in university enrollment, with changing expectations from students and increasing competition

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driven by globalization. Servant and authentic leadership are two values-based, people-centred leadership styles that have risen to prominence in higher education (Dahleez et al., 2022). However, servant leadership differs from authentic leadership in that it is other-centred (focused on meeting the needs of followers). In contrast, authentic leadership is centred around self-awareness, transparency, and acting consistently with core values (Dami et al., 2022). Servant leadership is frequently praised for its focus on humility, empathy and service to followers. Servant leadership offers a practical approach to enhancing organizational culture in Pakistan's higher education context by prioritizing the welfare and development of employees, which may have implications for employee commitment and satisfaction (Hasan et al., 2022). Considering the collectivist character of Pakistani culture, such a leadership style resonates well with societal values and has the potential to counter the bureaucratic rigidity that often plagues public institutions, particularly those influenced by the private sector (Kasalak et al., 2022).

Realistic Leadership is also pivotal in resolving the leadership crisis that many academic institutions in Pakistan are facing. Authentic leaders are self-aware and genuine, upholding high ethical standards to earn the respect and trust of their employees. Authentic leadership enhances job satisfaction in the higher education sector of Pakistan, as employees are more inclined towards leaders who engage in processes and outcomes that align with their words (Sarwar et al., 2023). In the current political and economic context of Pakistan, maintaining credibility and integrity at universities is crucial, making this leadership style especially appropriate (Abbas et al., 2023). Organizational trust is one of the primary challenges facing Pakistani higher education leadership. Factors, including political meddling, resource insufficiency, and a lack of consistent policies, often foster a context of faithlessness in institutions. These issues can lead to employee disengagement, dissatisfaction with work, and high rates of turnover, which adversely affect the performance of schools (Shah et al., 2023). Servant leadership and authentic leadership can alleviate these problems by fostering a supportive and transparent organizational culture, which in turn facilitates trust (Liu et al., 2022). Job autonomy is another key element that has a moderating role in determining the influence of leadership on employee outcomes. Job autonomy is a crucial aspect of faculty member roles in higher education, enabling some independence in engaging in research and curriculum development beyond formal job descriptions (Niemczyk & Rónay, 2023). However, as hierarchical structures and administrative controls in many Pakistani universities inhibit autonomy, tensions arise between employees and top leadership. The servant and authentic leadership styles adopted by leaders may enhance job independence through employee empowerment, decentralization of decision-making, and motivation to take on more ownership of institutional goals (Ahmed et al., 2023).

Authentic leadership, which, in essence, promotes values like honesty, ethics, and congruence in example behaviour, is also advanced in a high job autonomy context. For instance, faculty members with autonomy in their research and teaching methods feel more connected to their work, leading to a deeper commitment to their institution's mission and goals (Hinduja et al., 2023). Moreover, job autonomy is crucial in alleviating the effects of work-related stress and burnout, which are often experienced in academic institutions with clear hierarchical structures or bureaucracy. In the academic sector, for instance, employees are constantly faced with rigid work schedules and deadlines, which require a significant amount of effort and adherence to due process. Thus, they need to be allowed some degree of freedom in addressing their work-related obligations. Studies have shown that when leaders practising servant leadership or authentic leadership allow job autonomy, stress levels among employees decrease, and resilience increases as they control when and how much of their time and responsibilities they wish to dedicate to work (Sadiq et al., 2025; Ali et al., 2025). This support and autonomy ratio enables employees to manage their working hours, complementing their well-being and thereby increasing job satisfaction levels while minimizing the chances of an individual quitting their job.

This study narrows its focus on the influence of servant and authentic leadership and employee commitment and satisfaction in higher education in Pakistan. It discusses organizational trust as a mediating variable and job autonomy as a moderating variable in the context of employee outcomes. The present study attempts to offer a new perspective on the role of leadership styles in enhancing effectiveness metrics of the employees, namely engagement, commitment, and satisfaction in Pakistan, considering the specific dynamics characterized by social and cultural domains, i.e., the presence of rigid internal hierarchies, resource constraints, or political influence outside organizations (Kasalak et al., 2022). Servant leadership and authentic leadership approaches are being adopted in Pakistan's educational sector. It is known that servant leadership is an approach based on caring and providing support, helping people grow and develop, which is crucial for effective teamwork. Authentic leadership is all about being transparent, ethical and adhering to core principles. It engenders confidence in a workforce that may otherwise feel reluctant in a typical top-down academic environment. The reason for combining these leadership styles is to explore how a sense of belonging, trust, and employee commitment —vital to the health and efficiency of the institution — can be cultivated through the application of such leadership styles (Ortiz-Gómez et al., 2022).

Following are the research questions of the study, i.e.,

RQ1: How do servant and authentic leadership effectiveness contribute to employee commitment and job satisfaction?

RQ2: What is the effect of job autonomy on the relationship between servant leadership, authentic leadership and employee satisfaction and commitment?

RQ3: How does organizational trust mediate the relationship between authentic and servant leadership on employee commitment and satisfaction?

The study has the following research objectives i.e.,

I. To analyze the impact of authentic leadership on employee commitment and satisfaction

II. To examine the moderating role of job autonomy on the relationship between servant and authentic leadership on employee commitment and satisfaction

III. To assess the mediating effect of organizational trust on the relationship between authentic and servant leadership on employee commitment and satisfaction.

This research is both timely and relevant, considering the growing focus on transformative leadership in Pakistan's higher education sector. The challenges of limited resources, faculty retention, and external interference necessitate leadership that can build trust, promote autonomy, and boost engagement. Servant and authentic leadership styles offer promising solutions by prioritizing these essential elements.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Employee commitment is a significant factor in organizational success and often has the most substantial impact on leadership styles and organizational behaviours. Servant leadership, as noted by Ahmed et al. (2023), prioritizes the needs of employees and fosters their professional development. This kind of leadership fosters a nurturing environment in which employees can dedicate themselves to their roles, especially in collectivist cultures like Pakistan. Such empathy and development foster a sense of belonging among those under servant leadership, and consequently, their institutional commitment has increased (Van Dierendonck et al., 2026). Consequently, another form of transformative leadership is important in enhancing internal commitment among employees: authentic leadership. Authentic leaders, by being transparent and upholding ethical integrity, establish credibility, which in turn fosters the emotional bond that employees feel towards the organization (Aboramadan et al., 2022). Authentic leaders lead by example and ensure that their actions align with what they claim as their values. This, in turn, translates to increased trust and loyalty among employees (Aboramadan et al., 2021). The ethical workplace culture thus created is foundational in boosting employee morale and commitment in high-hierarchical and challenging environments, such as those found in higher education in Pakistan.

Clarifying dialogue is equally indispensable in strengthening an employee's commitment to effective leadership. Authentic leaders, as noted by Uluturk et al. (2025), communicate effectively, being transparent, focused, and consistent about the organization's goals and expectations, thereby minimizing uncertainty that may further hinder the performance and engagement of the workforce. Transparent communication nurtures trust and empowers the employee by involving them in some of the decisions made (Gehrau et al., 2024). Such important engagement is vital in an academic institution, as it usually allows an employee to be clear on their tasks, which are mostly quite complex and multiple. Quite directly related to employee engagement, this construct is linked to commitment. Engaged employees are more emotionally invested in their jobs and translate this into a greater commitment to the organization. Engagement has been shown to be facilitated by leadership styles, in particular, transformational and empathetic leadership, which creates an inclusive and supportive environment-- transformational leadership supports a clear vision that employees internalize the mission of the institution (Wang et al., 2022), and empathetic leadership can lead to adaptability and innovative behaviors through trust and support, thus further reinforcing the alignment of employees with the organization goals (Ma et al., 2024) of the institution. This results in enhanced commitment and makes them integral contributors to institutional success.

Trust in the organization is a central theme that links the impact of both servant and authentic leadership to employee commitment. According to Zhou et al. (2022), servant leadership promotes trust through its inherent virtue of empathic support and fosters employee growth. When leaders create a safe environment within which employees feel valued and cared for, trust is established, and consequently, loyalty and commitment to the organization increase. Employees are willing to reciprocate with increased commitment because the trust they have received has led to their sense of security and appreciation towards the organization. Authentic leadership also develops trust through consistent ethical behaviours and accident-proof communication. González-Cánovas et al. (2024) state that employees perceive authentic leaders as reliable because they act in accordance with their core values, thereby creating a resonating foundation for deeper trust that underlies relationships within the organization. Trust will not only enhance commitment but also collaboration and innovation, as employees tend to have confidence in the leaders' intentions and capabilities.

The function of trust as a mediator becomes all the more important in a context where the presence of hierarchical constraints appears to be reinforced by the limited resources prevalent in Pakistani higher education institutions. Vogel et al. (2023) argue that such trust renders bureaucratic barriers less harmful, facilitating mutual communication and cooperation between leadership and employees. Such environments are likely to be positively impacted by servant leadership, which fosters a climate of inclusion and respect for differences, whereas authentic leadership can further fortify ethical standards within these environments. It reduces work-induced stress and improves psychological safety, the two primary factors that contribute to employee engagement. Trust enables employees to speak up about their concerns or suggestions without fear; thus, it lays the ground for an organizational culture in which their issues are taken seriously. This idea enhances commitment by strengthening employees' sense of belonging to the institution's mission and purpose. Mao et al. (2023) also emphasized that trust enhances the relationship that employees maintain with their organizations, thereby making them more resilient to external pressures and challenges.

In Pakistan, prevailing scholarly work on higher education leadership has mainly considered traditional ones: transformational and transactional leadership. Some room remains for research on servant leadership and authentic leadership in this space, while the two people-oriented leadership styles have been researched independently to some extent (Abbas et al., 2023). Their interaction in creating employee commitment and satisfaction is another matter altogether, which has rarely been investigated. Citing the rapid changes occurring in higher education in Pakistan, it is crucial to identify the joint effects of these leadership styles on employees in creating an enabling work environment. Organizational trust

has been extensively researched as a direct outcome of leadership styles, whereas the mediating role of trust between leadership styles and employee outcomes has received scant investigation (Mao et al., 2023). This is particularly crucial in organizations such as higher education institutions, where faculty and staff need a transparent and supportive environment to remain engaged and committed. Investigating trust as a mediator may reveal significant insights into how leadership styles contribute to fostering a culture that promotes trust, employee commitment, and satisfaction.

Job autonomy is one factor often credited as vital for employee motivation; however, its role in moderating the impact of leadership styles on employee outcomes has not been thoroughly studied. Higher education faculty require some level of autonomy to participate meaningfully in research, curriculum development, and teaching methods. However, regrettably, bureaucratic structures in Pakistani universities often diminish such autonomy, leading to dissatisfaction and discontent (Pan et al., 2024). By examining job autonomy as a moderator, this study aims to clarify how different leadership styles affect faculty commitment and satisfaction under varying levels of autonomy, thereby addressing an important research gap.

This research makes a significant contribution by combining servant leadership, authentic leadership, organizational trust, and job autonomy into a comprehensive framework. Whereas other studies have primarily examined these variables in isolation, this study is the only one to consider their interdependent relationships in an academic setting, specifically in the context of higher education in Pakistan. By closing these gaps, the research achieves a comprehensive understanding of how these two styles of leadership impact faculty members' commitment and satisfaction, given the urgent need for a leadership model that explicitly addresses the needs of academic institutions. On the other hand, the given study provides some contextualized insights into the effectiveness of leadership in Pakistan's higher education, which is significantly hindered by bureaucratic challenges, political influence, and restricted institutional autonomy, all of which have a substantial impact on employee motivation and engagement. A plethora of leadership studies have been conducted within corporate grounds, but higher education institutions operate under different structural and cultural constraints (Jiang et al., 2023). From this standpoint, analyzing servant and authentic leadership would enrich our understanding of how these two approaches can be adopted to develop a trust-based, empowering, and committed workforce in our universities.

Based on the literature review, the following are the research hypotheses of the study, i.e.,

- H_1: Servant leadership and authentic leadership positively influence employee commitment
- H_2: Employee satisfaction and leadership communication effectiveness have a positive influence on employee commitment
- H_3: The relationship between servant leadership and authentic leadership is moderated by job autonomy, strengthening their impact on employee commitment
- H_4: Organizational trust mediates the relationship between servant leadership and authentic leadership, influencing employee commitment.

3. METHODOLOGY AND RESEARCH FRAMEWORK

3.1. Population of the Study

The population studied consists of faculty members of universities, administrative bodies operating within academic institutional frameworks, and regulatory agencies affecting leadership decisions. These joined memberships represent a wide array of leadership viewpoints within higher education in Pakistan. Faculty members give input regarding the effects of leadership on job satisfaction and commitment, while the administrative bodies and regulatory agencies give some engagement toward the effectiveness of leadership and institutional governance.

3.2. Sample of the Study

The sampling is done separately from the population of the study and consists of areas within faculty members, administrators, and all other staff that are associated with the different universities of Pakistan, i.e., NUST, BUITEMS, NCBA and E, LUMS, IBA, UET Lahore, Quaid-e-Azam University, University of Peshawar, and University of Balochistan. Sample selection included structured questionnaires distributed among the selected participants.

3.3. Sampling Technique

Probability stratified sampling is the main technique employed in this study for ensuring that all sub-groups of the population have reasonably existed within the sample. This sampling technique is suitable especially in cases where the population has different sub-groups or strata with different properties concerning research needs. Stratification divides the population into homogeneous sub-groups before the sampling, thereby improving the precision of the sample, reducing the bias of sampling, and enabling meaningful comparisons between different categories. Stratified sampling is carried out in two broad steps. The first involves splitting up the population into exclusive strata according to specific features or criteria. For this study, the strata identified were faculty members, administrators, and policy-makers. The functionality of these makes them roles heterogeneous in dealing with the inquiry viewpoint and contribution towards the subject of the study in consideration.

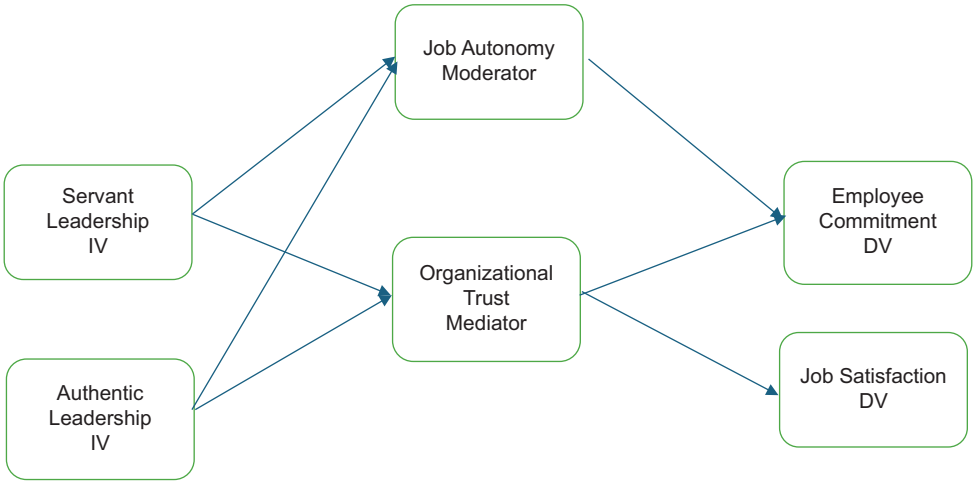
3.4. Data Collection

A quantitative survey approach, which utilized a structured questionnaire as the primary data collection instrument, was adopted. The questionnaire incorporates items measuring leadership styles, job satisfaction, employee commitment, organizational trust, and job autonomy. Besides, pilot testing was done to enhance the validity and reliability of the research instruments before embarking on a complete data collection exercise.

3.5. List of Variables, Sample Questions, and Measurement Scale

Table 1 shows the list of variables and items scale for ready reference.

Figure 1: Research framework



Source: Author's work

Table 1: Variables and item's scale

S. No.	Variable	References	Items
1	Servant leadership scale	Liden et al. (2008)	My leader puts my needs above his/her own.
2	Authentic leadership scale	Walumbwa et al. (2008)	My leader says exactly what he or she means.
3	Organizational trust scale	Mayer and Davis (1999)	I have complete trust in my organization's leadership.
4	Job autonomy scale	Breaugh (1985)	I have the freedom to decide how to accomplish my work.
5	Employee commitment scale	Meyer and Allen (1991)	I feel emotionally attached to this organization.
6	Job satisfaction scale	Spector (1997)	I feel fairly compensated for my work.

3.6. Demographic Survey

The demographic section of the questionnaire collects data on age, gender, education level, work experience, and job designation to understand variations in responses based on background characteristics.

3.7. Data Analysis

Structural equation modelling (SEM) is an advanced statistical technique for analyzing complex relationships among multiple variables. In contrast to the direct effect examination that is the hallmark of conventional regression analysis, SEM accommodates direct effects, indirect effects, and total effects within a model. Consequently, SEM becomes a highly useful tool in the realms of social science, business research, and psychology, where theoretical models are often characterized by complex interconnections among constructs. SEM gives a comprehensive insight into how different variables interact by simultaneously modelling multiple relationships.

3.8. Research Framework

The research framework illustrates the relationships between the study's key variables. It demonstrates how servant and authentic leadership influence employee commitment and satisfaction through the mediating effect of organizational trust and the moderating role of job autonomy (Figure 1).

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Demographic information reveals the characteristics of the respondents, namely age, sex, qualifications, and experience.

Table 2: Demographic profile of respondents

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Age		
1825	359	33.58
26-30	67	6.27
31-35	207	19.36
36-40	151	14.13
40+	285	26.66
Gender		
Male	695	65.01
Female	374	34.99
Qualification		
Graduate	361	33.77
Postgraduate	345	32.27
PhD	363	33.96
Experience (years)		
<1	249	23.29
5-January	205	19.18
10-June	177	16.56
15-November	110	10.29
15+	328	30.68

Source: Author's survey

The demographic distribution presented in Table 2 is vital to the understanding of the sample diversity.

The data provides a thorough demographic and professional picture of the subject population, revealing many highlights or trends. One trend reflected in the gender composition is that of a male dominance: men constitute 65.01% of the sample, while only 34.99% of the persons are female-maybe a reflection of structural or cultural dynamics drawing men into certain sectors more than females. In the age distribution, the largest group falls

within the 18-25 bracket (33.58%) indicating the population is rather young and may, in fact, consist of students, recent graduates, or those entering a profession. This may be due to recent campaigns for recruitment or outreach of the institutions toward the younger generation. The very interesting fact is the second-largest age group is that of those 40 and above (26.66%), implying the dual presence of fresh entrants and seasoned individuals, maybe encompassed in leadership or advisory roles. In terms of educational qualifications, there is a highly educated population, with a distribution that is just too close to being equal among graduates (33.77%), postgraduates (32.27%), and PhD holders (33.96%). Being in the slightly highest above means that perhaps the employment area is one in which knowledge is being very intensively applied, maybe academia or research. From experience, the very experienced group (15 years+) constitutes 30.68%, reflecting that very strong backing of senior professionals. On the contrary, a sizable portion of 23.29% possesses <1 year of experience, indicating the presence of many newcomers or recent hires. Such a dichotomy of experience may signal an atmosphere that is balancing itself between tradition and innovation, where the experience among them nurtures and transfers institutional knowledge while the newly introduced personnel represent fresh views and flexibility.

This section shows descriptive statistics of the variables considered in the study, with an insight into their central tendency and dispersion (Table 3).

Job satisfaction has the highest level of 4.30, indicating that employees report a greater degree of satisfaction with their jobs. Next is authentic leadership (M = 4.25) and Job Autonomy (M = 4.20), suggesting respondents view their leaders as authentic and experience a fair degree of autonomy in their work. Organizational trust and servant leadership mean evaluation score with 4.15 and 4.12, respectively, while employee commitment with the lowest mean of 4.10 still indicates a generally positive but comparatively weak attitude toward this construction. With respect to variability, the standard deviation scores range between 1.02 and 1.10, indicating moderate dispersion in responses. The standard deviation of employee commitment is highest (1.10), showing those levels of commitment from the employees varied more noticeably than the other variables. On the contrary, servant leadership showed the least variability (SD = 1.02), suggesting that there was a greater consensus amongst participants in rating this dimension of their leaders. In conclusion, it follows from the data that employees tend to rate all the measured constructions favorably, albeit with some variation in strength and consistency of these assessments. This could mean a relatively healthy organizational climate with opportunities for improvements in targeted areas, especially enhancing employee commitment and reducing variation among perceptions.

In verifying reliability and sufficiency of the data collection, Cronbach's Alpha and celebrity tests using KMO are used. A higher Cronbach's Alpha (>0.7) confirms internal consistency, while a high KMO value (>0.8) indicates sufficient sampling for factor analysis (Table 4).

Measurement model validation involved confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) thereby establishing the model fitness statistics shown in Table 5 as evidence for the model's adequacy.

The fit indices of the proposed measurement model with respect to the observed data were determined through confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), whose results are laid out in Table 6. The RMSEA of 0.05 suggests good fit because RMSEA values below 0.06 are indicative of good approximation of the model to the data. The comparative fit index (CFI) value of 0.95 is taken to indicate an excellent model fit since values generally above either 0.90 or 0.95 are taken as acceptable or very good, respectively. Similarly, the Tucker-Lewis index (TLI) at 0.94 points to a very strong fit since TLI values above 0.90 suggest an acceptable model fit. Lastly, the R-squared value at 0.85 means the model explains 85% of the variance in the observed data, showing its high predictive power. In conclusion, all these indices confirm that the measurement model fits the data well and is valid for further analysis.

Table 3: Descriptive statistics

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation
Servant leadership	4.12	1.02
Authentic leadership	4.25	1.05
Employee commitment	4.1	1.1
Job satisfaction	4.3	1.08
Organizational trust	4.15	1.07
Job autonomy	4.2	1.04

Source: Author's survey

Table 4: Reliability analysis (Cronbach's Alpha and KMO test)

Constructs	Cronbach's alpha	KMO value
Servant leadership	0.91	0.96
Authentic leadership	0.92	0.95
Employee commitment	0.93	0.97
Job satisfaction	0.94	0.98
Organizational trust	0.95	0.97
Job autonomy	0.93	0.96

Source: Author's survey

Table 5: CFA model fit indices

Fit index	Value
Root mean square error (RMSEA)	0.05
Comparative fit index (CFI)	0.95
Tucker-lewis index (TLI)	0.94
R-squared	0.85

Source: Author's survey

Table 6: Direct effects of leadership on employee commitment and satisfaction

Pathway	Standardized estimate	P-value
Servant leadership → Employee commitment	0.412	0.000
Authentic leadership → Employee commitment	0.380	0.001
Servant leadership → Employee satisfaction	0.428	0.000
Authentic leadership → Employee satisfaction	0.355	0.002

Source: Author's survey

In this first phase, SEM analysis has modeled the direct impact of servant leadership and authentic leadership on employee commitment and satisfaction. The results from standardized estimates and significance levels are noted in Table 6.

The research findings really underscore the important role played by leadership styles in shaping organizational outcomes pertaining especially to employee commitment and job satisfaction. The data indicates, with low P-values and strong standardized estimates, that servant leadership and authentic leadership have a strong and positive effect on key organizational outcomes. The strongest effect among the four pathways examined was servant leadership and employee satisfaction, with a standardized estimate of 0.428 and P = 0.000. Servant leadership addresses employees' needs, cultivates their growth, and promotes their well-being; this leadership approach is accompanied by selfless service as evidenced by high employee satisfaction in performing their roles. Such empowering marks of leadership entail empathy, active listening, and emotional support, coupled with sincerity in helping employees prosper in their careers. Employees end up feeling that their leaders genuinely care for them not just as workers, but also as human beings; this helps develop a positively sickly psychological climate under which job satisfaction flourishes. Such satisfaction normally results from tangible rewards, but even from the moral and emotional fulfillment entailed in being treated well, with dignity, compassion, and humanity.

Besides that, servant leadership established a very strong positive association with employee commitment, with a standardized estimate value of 0.412, P = 0.000; it makes the dual contribution obvious. In this sense, commitment is the emotional bond one has towards the organization and the loyalty one exhibits with an enthusiasm to go the extra mile, stay longer, or give more. This kind of emotional investment is often built in environments where leaders show humility, serve their teams, and lead with the heart and not by authority. This leadership style encouraged employees to dedicate their resources as meaningful and indeed worthy of putting in their continued effort and allegiance. Authentic Leadership proved to be slightly less influential; however, it also yielded considerable positive outcomes: the pathway between authentic leadership and employee commitment was measured at 0.380 (P = 0.001), indicating that when leaders are honest, self-aware, consistent, and ethically grounded, employees are likely to develop that deep sense of trust among one another. This trust is critical in organizational life as it promotes psychological safety, open communication, and follows one's leaders. Authentic leaders who are true to their values, transparent in their decisions, and fair in their treatment inspire employees to mirror that authenticity in their roles, creating a legacy of long-term commitment.

In addition, authentic leadership has a positive effect on Employee Satisfaction with a standardized estimate of 0.355 (P = 0.002). This leads to the conclusion that when leadership embodies authentic behaviors such as transparency, relational openness, ethical decision-making, and integrity, this makes for one of the work environments where employees feel relatively happy or emotionally secure. Employees who perceive their leaders as authentic describe a situation where their personal values align with the organizational culture, making the overall work experience an enriching and fulfilling one. In today's sometimes tumultuous and highly pressured environment, leadership has become invaluable, where employees look for leaders who are not only capable but also humane, ethical, and consistent.

Further insights delve into interesting implications and applications-the analysis establishes the statistical significance of leadership on employee attitudes and has value in terms of application to broader theoretical frameworks and existing empirical research. Leadership styles founded on ethical conduct, emotional intelligence, and employee development significantly advance organizational commitment and satisfaction. Such resolute convergence across different contexts and over different times suggests rather strongly to us that such leadership characteristics are what could be considered truly universal. Practically, this gives a signal to organizations that they need to rethink their leadership development programs sharply. Companies must invest in programs, mentorship initiatives, and performance review processes that recognize servant and authentic leadership styles. This simple act improves employee morale and retention and leads to a healthier and more productive organizational culture.

The consequences of these findings imply that they are rooted in profound reality as far as organizational success is concerned in the long term. Satisfied and committed employees are more likely to deliver at higher levels, be more actively engaged in teamwork, and actively involved in contributing to innovation within the organization. They are less likely to experience burnout and more likely to leave the organization. They are more likely to have a positive image of the company internally as well as externally. Hence, leadership should be seen as a relational and ethical responsibility rather than a vertical responsibility. Those organizations that nurture selfless, authentic, and emotionally attuned leaders create ripple effects that shed contemporary workforces in uplifting ways. As such, it is clear from the data that genuine leadership based on empathic and integrity values is not only morally right, but it is statistically proven to be effective. Such styles build the rock foundation upon which resilient, adaptive, and high-performing organizations are underway across changes in employee expectations and work dynamics. Ultimately, this research serves as an inspiring reminder- the way we lead determines how people feel. In turn, how people feel determines how they perform.

To assess the moderating role of job autonomy, interaction terms between leadership styles and job autonomy were included in the SEM analysis. Table 7 illustrates the effect of job autonomy in strengthening the relationship between leadership and employee outcomes.

The moderating analysis reveals a very deep and comprehensive insight into understanding how job autonomy not only strengthens the positive effect of leadership on employee outcomes, for example, commitment and job satisfaction, but also combs into the emerging interplay between leadership style, specifically that of servant leadership and authentic leadership, and the extent to which the employees' experience of freedom in their work roles. When leadership comes along with job autonomy, it shows that

the outcomes could be much more pronounced in their effects on employee attitudes. For example, job autonomy with servant leadership gives a strong standardized estimate of 0.310 (P = 0.001) for employee commitment and even a higher 0.325 (P = 0.002) for job satisfaction. This will further confirm that servant leadership, i.e., listening, empathy, stewardship, commitment to the growth of others, becomes even more effective when the employees themselves are given the space and freedom to operate independently within their roles. The psychological empowerment of autonomy works together with that moral and emotional support bound up in servant leadership in creating an empowering work environment that is also most satisfying.

The interaction between job autonomy and authentic leadership also underscores the need for autonomy in producing favorable effects linked to leadership. Authentic leaders possess qualities of self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing of information, and internalized moral perspective to thrive in organizational settings where employees are allowed freedom and not micromanaged. The analysis indicates that this interaction positively influences commitment to the organization (0.290, P = 0.003) and satisfaction with the job (0.280, P = 0.004). In such cases, employees internalize the authentic leader's values of honesty, integrity, and openness with work conditions that fit an autonomous work culture, thus becoming more likely to respond positively to authentic leaders. Employees believe that as far as they can control their tasks, they are in a better position to esteem and reciprocate the trust and transparency that authentic leader's model. This dynamic creates psychological safety, intrinsic motivation, and meaningful engagement, which are fundamental to forging stronger emotional bonds with the organization and consequently increased levels of job satisfaction.

Such findings empirically support self-determination theory, which maintains that autonomy is a crucial psychological need that has to be satisfied for effective motivation and optimum well-being (McAnally & Hagger, 2024). Among other benefits, meeting this need through leadership styles that support, rather than control, predispose employees to internalize organizational objectives, discretionary behavior, and high morale. The data also fit empowerment theory which assumes that giving employees autonomy will make them more purposeful and competent. Supportive leadership along with job autonomy thereby has a high-performance ecosystem of very productive employees, as well as those psychologically and emotionally dedicated to their work.

It is thus quite a far-reaching agenda for analysis in organizational strategy and human resource development. Good leadership is not sufficient; it has much to gain or lose in effectiveness depending on the structural and cultural environment in which it operates. The empowerment of employees to decide, innovate and take ownership of their roles is a complement to leadership, but it unlocks the whole potential of leadership. Organizations, therefore, striving to build long-term commitment and satisfaction of workers should invest not just in developing ethical, people-centered leaders but also in role design and workflows that maximize autonomy.

Table 7: Moderating effect of job autonomy

Pathway	Standardized estimate	P-value
Job Autonomy×Servant Leadership → Employee Commitment	0.311	0.001
Job Autonomy×Authentic Leadership → Employee Commitment	0.290	0.003
Job Autonomy×Servant Leadership → Employee Satisfaction	0.325	0.002
Job Autonomy×Authentic Leadership → Employee Satisfaction	0.281	0.004

These effects coincide with those found in similar studies (e.g., Kao et al., 2022), which stress the extreme relevance of job autonomy for workplace behavior and attitude. Such studies consistently report that autonomy typically aligns with improved motivational, creative, and low-burnout-high psychological-well-being correlates. When paired with authentic service-grounded leadership, job autonomy functions as a multiplier of positive outcomes. This translates into leadership development initiatives aligned with strategies for designing the organization to remove bureaucratic rigidity and build employee agency. Those who take the course should learn to empower and inspire trust in meaning delegation instead of the urge to micromanage.

With this analysis, it is possible to conclude that the moderating role of job autonomy demonstrates a powerful truth: the complete value of servants and authentic leadership can only be realized when employees are granted the freedom to act responsibly and independently. In this sense, leadership becomes less about directing and more about enabling-it is less about control and more about empowerment. This combination of leadership with autonomy creates a work environment where employees feel valued, trusted, and intrinsically motivated, thus improving their levels of commitment and satisfaction towards the organization (Men et al., 2022).

To explore the mediating effect of organizational trust, SEM was run by including organizational trust as an intervening variable between leadership styles and employee outcomes. Table 8 details these mediation effects.

This presentation of the results demonstrates that there is a strong and statistically significant relationship between various leadership styles and organizational trust, with trust mediating

Table 8: Mediating role of organizational trust

Pathway	Standardized estimate	P-value
Servant Leadership → Organizational Trust	0.520	0.000
Authentic Leadership → Organizational Trust	0.481	0.000
Organizational Trust×Servant Leadership → Employee Commitment	0.510	0.000
Organizational Trust×Authentic Leadership → Employee Commitment	0.495	0.001
Organizational Trust×Servant Leadership → Employee Satisfaction	0.505	0.001
Organizational Trust×Authentic Leadership → Employee Satisfaction	0.49	0.002

Source: Author's survey

outcomes for employees, such as organizational commitment and satisfaction. The estimate standardized across the servant leadership to organizational trust path equals 0.520 (P = 0.000); thus, this presents as a significant effect. This leads to the inference that servant leaders, who put their followers' needs, growth, and well-being above everything else, cultivate an environment of trust in their organization to a very large extent. Their people-oriented approach generates psychological safety, openness, and collaboration: the very building blocks of organizational trust.

The pathway from authentic leadership to organizational trust also provides a significant effect with a standardized path estimate of 0.480 (P = 0.000). Authentic leaders are transparent, consistent, and maintain a strong moral compass and high self-awareness, thereby providing fertile ground for trust to grow. When employees experience feeling valued, respected, and understood under such leaders, these leaders exemplify honesty, and the ethical conduct needed for employees to share trust and loyalty in return. Both leadership styles significantly contribute to building organizational trust and can serve as effective approaches for organizations with an intent upon fortifying internal cohesion and sustaining employee engagement over time.

The mediating role of organizational trust in converting interventions initiated by leadership into meaningful employee outcomes appears to be corroborated by the significant interaction terms. For the interaction of organizational trust with servant leadership and employee commitment (standardized estimate = 0.510, P = 0.000) and with authentic leadership (0.495, P = 0.001), trust not only supports the efforts of leadership but increases their effect. Employees will commit themselves—feeling emotionally attached, identifying with the organization goals, and being willing to incur effort—when they trust their leaders as well as the environment of the organization.

Employee satisfaction also seems to follow the same pattern. The interaction of organizational trust with servant leadership gives a standardized estimate of 0.505 (P = 0.001); adjacent interaction with Authentic Leadership is slightly lower but still significant at the 0.005 threshold, measuring 0.490 (P = 0.002). These show trust as a channel through which servant or authentic leadership translates their properties into favorable emotional or psychological states of an employee. If employees trust their leaders to be supportive of others and possess sound morals, they will experience satisfaction, loyalty, and motivation to contribute to organizational effectiveness.

Over the passage of time, we have come to further conclude that organizational trust is a critical intervening mechanism linking leadership styles to important outcomes experienced by employees. Servant leadership promotes the trust-building environment as it serves others, and authentic leadership promotes trustworthiness through integrity and consistency. This trust enables the strong and consistent manifestation of indirect effects of leadership-as-bridging-construct on employee commitment and satisfaction.

These findings also corroborate the literature that treats trust as a prime factor in increasing employee engagement, organizational citizenship behavior, and decreasing intentions to leave (Rahal and Farmanesh, 2022; Baquero, 2023). Organizations maintaining trust are especially crucial in higher education, where knowledge work and interpersonal collaboration are key drivers for institutional success.

The structural equation modeling (SEM) results offer a richer understanding of the intricate interplay between leadership styles, job autonomy, organizational trust, and employee benefits. Both servant leadership and authentic leadership positively impact on employee commitment and satisfaction. However, these effects are much stronger in moderately high job autonomy contexts- that is, when employees can exercise discretion and autonomy in carrying out their work. This act of self-managing empowers employees, helps them become intrinsically motivated, and allows leadership interventions to ring true to them, especially when leaders assist self-management and promote participative decision-making.

Organizational trust is no different; it coexists with job autonomy and ethical leadership to achieve the best interest of employee outcomes. It further suggests that trust-oriented leadership is required in higher education institutions, where faculty and staff visibly invest their minds and hearts. This beautifully resonates with the recent leadership approaches like transformational, ethical, and servant leadership that underscore the role of supportive, empowering, and moral leadership in enhancing employee engagement, retention, and performance (Nordin et al., 2024).

Overall, the findings confirm that servant and authentic leadership create organizational trust, thereby mediating the leaders' positive effect on employee commitment and satisfaction. Service-oriented, authentic, and ethical leadership styles are key to creating a trustworthy organizational climate. Such a climate is conducive to employee well-being and productivity and is crucial to the long-term health and sustainability of the institution, particularly in a volatile and complex field like higher education.

The results of hypothesis testing as derived from SEM analysis are all contained in Table 9. All the postulated hypotheses were supported; therefore, leadership styles, job autonomy, and organizational trust are significantly relevant predictors of employee commitment.

The results validated the hypothesized relationships, indicating that servant and authentic leadership significantly influence employee

Table 9: Hypothesis testing results

Hypotheses	Statement	Supported
H_1	Servant leadership and authentic leadership positively influence employee commitment.	Yes
H_2	Employee satisfaction and leadership communication effectiveness positively influence employee commitment.	Yes
H_3	The relationship between servant leadership and authentic leadership is moderated by job autonomy.	Yes
H_4	Organizational trust mediates the relationship between leadership and employee commitment.	Yes

commitment. In addition, the results identify job autonomy as a moderator and organizational trust as a mediator that enhance such relationships. These insights give a strong empirical underpinning to the understanding of how leadership behaviors ultimately influence organizational outcomes.

5. CONCLUSION AND POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

The research was undertaken to test the extent to which servant leadership and authentic leadership affect employee commitment and employee satisfaction in the public sector. The research assumed the place, based on relevance of leadership theory and literature on employee motivation, where it acknowledges that a leadership style is an important aspect of an employee's experience in the workplace and, consequently, determines the commitment and satisfaction of employees in their work. The major idea of the study was an examination of the direct effects (and those indirect mediated by psychological empowerment) of these leadership styles on commitments and satisfactions. A further aim was to place into context the interaction of perceived organizational support on these indirect effects. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used to test these relationships. According to the SEM analysis, a good testament is evidenced that servant leadership and authentic leadership have a positive and significant impact on commitment and satisfaction of employees:

- One interesting point is that servant leadership is more closely linked to employee commitment. Leaders who typically support an orientation to serve others encourage a deeper emotional connection with the organization
- On the other hand, authentic leadership being positively linked with commitment as well has a relatively stronger influence on employee satisfaction, implying that transparent and ethical behavior makes an enriched level of satisfaction in the working environment.

The mediating power of psychological empowerment has been tested through SEM analysis. The results speak of the fact that when employees feel empowered along those four psychological states of meaning, competence, self-determination, and impact, these leadership styles and leadership behaviors wielded upon them on commitment and satisfaction are strengthened. Ergo, psychological empowerment enables an important psychological bridge from leadership behavior toward employee outcomes.

Furthermore, the moderation role of perceived organizational support (POS) was investigated. The results have shown that POS moderates significantly the influence of leadership styles on employee outcomes. More detail-wise:

- At a higher level of POS, the servant and authentic leadership had their positive impact on employee commitment and satisfaction enhanced
- At a lower level of POS, these leadership styles still impact positively, but their influence has somewhat been scaled down.

The study has ultimately reconfirmed that public sector organizations can notably benefit from developing leadership styles based on service and authenticity with great contribution toward the promotion of employee commitment and satisfaction aided by empowerment initiatives and strong organizational support systems.

5.1. Policy Recommendations

Based on research findings, the following policy recommendations are made for public sector organizations that wish to enhance employee commitment and satisfaction:

I. Encouraging servant leadership behaviors
   - Training and development: Put in place training programs that accentuate empathy, listening, stewardship, and building communities. Managers should be trained to meet the needs of team members and in still a culture of service.
   - Performance evaluation criteria: Include servant leadership skills in the performance appraisal process for managers and supervisors.
   - Recognition for other-cantered behavior: Put in place a system of recognition for managers who demonstrate outstanding service toward their teams.

II. Encourage Authentic Leadership Practices
   - Leadership transparency: Establish a culture that allows open communication, honesty, and self-awareness. Leaders should be instructed to share their values and act in accordance with those values.
   - Ethical leadership standards: Determine codes of conduct that exemplify authenticity and integrity and ensure their application when assessing leadership.
   - Mentoring programs: Link new leaders to mentors who demonstrate authentic leadership styles so they may develop by example.

III. Encourage Psychological Empowerment
   - Decision making autonomy: Give employees more authority in decision making on matters about how they perform their job. Encourage initiative and discourage micromanagement.
   - Opportunities for skill development: Provide training that develops competence and confidence.

IV. Enhance Perceived Organizational Support
   - Employee wellness programs: Implement support programs that address employee needs for mental health, work-life balance, and family care.
   - Responsive management: Train leaders to listen and respond to employee concerns in order to enhance the feeling that the organization cares about its people.
   - Fairness and recognition: To the extent that organizational policies exist for their judgments, such policies must also recognize these employees from time to time.

V. Institutionalizing Supportive Organizational Culture
   - Strategic alignment: Align organizational goals with the objectives of employee development and satisfaction.
   - Consistent communication: Communications flowing from leadership should emphasize support, appreciation, and clarity of direction.
   - Feedback loops: Set up structures (surveys, town halls, etc.) whereby employees have an opportunity to present their views and receive worthwhile responses from the

leadership.

VI. Monitor and Evaluate Leadership Impact
- Employee satisfaction surveys: Measure perceptions of leadership empowerment and support among employees on a regular basis.
- Leadership audits: Conduct audits at intervals that ascertain the representation of leaders being servants and authentic leadership.
- Continuous improvement: Employ results in improving leadership programs that remain congruent with organizational goals.

Therefore, in an attempt at adopting the formulated policies, public sector organizations may pool the factors that work towards cultivating an interactive, committed, and satisfied workforce, which will end up enhancing the effectiveness of the organization.

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