Degree of practicing authentic leadership among public school leaders from the teachers' viewpoint

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Abstract

This study aimed to determine the degree of practicing authentic leadership among public-school leaders from teachers' viewpoint while also revealing whether statistically significant differences exist between the respondents' means of the degree of authentic leadership practice due to number of years of service, specialization, and/or scholastic stage. A descriptive-analytical approach was adopted. The study population consisted of teachers. A stratified random sample of 351 female teachers was chosen. The questionnaire used consisted of four main axes that included the four authentic leadership elements: self-awareness, relational transparency, the internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing. The results indicated a high degree of the practice of the four dimensions of authentic leadership among the leaders as well as the presence of statistically significant differences between teachers' mean responses about the degree of authentic leadership practice among the leaders of public-schools due to the number of years of service in favor of the teachers whose years of service ranged between 5 and 10 years as well as academic level in favor of intermediate school teachers. The researchers also offer several recommendations.

Keywords: Authentic leadership; school principals; practice leadership;

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1. Introduction

Effective leadership in all life activities is considered a basis for development; therefore, specialists have been interested in studying leadership styles to determine the most effective ones. Contemporary educational leadership has undergone rapid and growing changes and ethical challenges (Al-Khatib & Al-Khatib, 2015), which led to the need to create a new style of leadership in line with the changes and ethical challenges that enhance the quality of performance for the current turbulent work environment (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). In response to these ethical challenges and the spread of corruption in the world, authentic leadership emerged (Alvesson & Einola, 2019).

Educational leadership has gone through many challenges that have been reflected in the educational environment in general and on educational leaders in particular, and their impact on workers in the contemporary educational field appeared, as mentioned by Al-Khatib and Al-Khatib (2015) and Al-Suwaidi (1997). These variables are often imposed by reality, whether intentionally or unintentionally, depending on the environment. It may be negative influences that affect contemporary educational leadership, such as the exploitation of the leadership position to exchange benefits at the expense of the educational leader's values in the absence of an educational role model (Al-Khatib & Al-Khatib, 2015; Al-Suwaidi, 1997). Thus, it has become clear to researchers examining management types in the 21st century that authentic leadership is one of the most appropriate types of leadership to meet current challenges with high effectiveness and to deal positively with changes, pressures, and modern technologies (Covelli & Mason, 2017). Authentic leaders have self-awareness and adhere to their values and ethical foundations as reflected in their actions, especially in crises, stress, and growing competitions (Duignan, 2014).

Based on previous data and studies, it is evident that authentic leadership needs to embrace educational leadership to raise the level of values and be steadfast in them while taking advantage of the variables and employing them optimally. In response to this, the research problem crystallizes the degree of authentic leadership practice among public-school leaders in Al-Khobar city from the teachers' point of view by addressing the following questions:

1. What is the degree of authentic leadership practice among public-school leaders in Al-Khobar city from the teachers' point of view?
2. Are there statistically significant differences (at $\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the means of responses of the study sample of teachers about the degree of authentic leadership practice among public-school leaders in Al-Khobar city due to specific variables (i.e., number of years of service and educational stage)?

1.1. Study Significance

The importance of the research is evident as it is one of the new and rarely examined topics and keeps pace with modern trends in educational administration, as some researchers have made it a theory of the 21st century. As authentic leadership has become the focus of attention of researchers, it is hoped that this research will draw the attention of officials in the Ministry of Education to authentic leadership and attract leaders who fulfill the dimensions of authentic leadership.

2. Theoretical Framework

In the past, leadership was considered to involve traditional and short-sighted practices that were restricted by the organizational context. Today, requirements and changes called for leadership based

on values and knowledge, keeping pace with developments and accommodating in an integrated way the legitimate needs of individuals, groups, organizations, societies, and cultures rather than focusing only on organizational perspectives. Thus, authentic leadership emerged as a result of self-knowledge, participation, and support of others while also keeping abreast of developments, which leads to the synergy among all elements of leadership work (Begley, 2001, 2006).

Definitions of the concept of authentic leadership have varied in literature and studies. Henderson and Hoy (1982) defined authentic leadership as a leadership style that is determined according to the extent of a leader's influence and their subordinates' perceptions and judgment of them to prove acceptance of organizational and personal responsibility for actions, results, and mistakes following higher values, thereby achieving clarity with subordinates by highlighting the leader. Begley (2001) defined authentic leadership from the educational administration perspective as the application of effective practices at the professional level with high ethical foundations as well as the ability to apply self-awareness to achieve the elements of educational management. It is leadership based on knowledge, values, and ethics that is implemented by the leader professionally. Meanwhile, Walumbwa et al. (2008) defined authentic leadership as a pattern of leaders' behavior that relies on positive psychological abilities and a positive moral climate. These capabilities are enhanced by self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, and balanced information processing in addition to transparency on the part of leaders who work with followers and promote self-development.

2.1 Authentic Leadership Theory

The origins of the concept of authenticity go back to Greek philosophy (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). It has been attributed to the Greek philosopher Socrates, who mentioned it when saying "I know you," followed by William Shakespeare about 2000 years later when he said "To thine own self be true" (Covelli & Mason, 2017). The theory emerged in its modern sense during the past 80 years (Erickson, 1995). Chester Barnard was the first to refer to authenticity in management and organizational literature in 1938, and Luthans and Avolio were the first to define and use the term authentic leadership, after which researchers continued to study it (Kliuchnikov, 2011).

The authentic leadership theory is associated with positive psychology, particularly with the concept of positive psychology and self-fulfillment (Braun & Peus, 2018). Authentic leadership is an extension of transformational and ethical leadership theories (Luthans et al., 2003). It is a form of positive leadership needed in the modern era to keep pace with accelerating changes, intense rivalries, and ethical challenges. The implications of the emergence of this theory are the expansion of corruption in the world and the need to develop styles of leadership. The authentic leadership theory developed values and ethics to enhance transparency for leaders of organizations in their dealings with subordinates (Luthans et al., 2003). Because the theory of authentic leadership is newly applied and was generated by researchers who recognized its importance at this stage, especially in the modern era. Thus, it was called the modern leadership theory. Some believe that it is still the subject of study and research and in the process of maturing very soon (Covelli & Mason, 2017).

Authentic leadership theory is based on self-awareness, which is the most essential element of its construction. Researchers have agreed that self-awareness is the starting point of authentic leadership theory (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Avolio and Gardner (2005) emphasized that authentic leadership theory is based on investment in positive psychological capital, a positive organizational climate, the leader's self-awareness, and the leader's adherence to values, ethical standards, honesty, and integrity. But researchers have disagreed about their perspective on authentic leadership theory, as expressed by Luthans et al. (2003). Within the positive organizational behavior and positive psychology literature, its

associated traits include hope, flexibility, and optimism. Some researchers agreed on four basic elements of the theory: self-awareness, subjective transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective. Balanced processing refers to an objective analysis and acceptance of positive and negative views of the relevant data before making decisions. Internalized moral perspective refers to being guided by internal ethical standards, which are used to regulate one's behavior—that is, to act based on preferences and values and the real needs of a person instead of only to satisfy others, obtain rewards, or avoid penalties. Subjective transparency refers to the presentation of one's authentic self through the explicit sharing of information and feelings in an appropriate manner with the nature of situations. This means achieving and appreciating honesty and openness in one's relationships. Finally, self-awareness refers to a clear understanding of a person's strengths and weaknesses and his/her perception of the world around him/her. This means knowing and trusting an individual's thoughts, feelings, motivations, and values (Kernis, 2003).

2.2 Dimensions of Authentic Leadership

Recent literature has stated that authentic leadership has several primary dimensions (Avolio et al., 2004; George, 2018; Sinclair, 2010). Walumbwa et al. (2008) and others developed a model of authentic leadership that initially consisted of five basic elements: self-awareness, transparency, internal organization (i.e., authentic behavior), balanced information processing, and a positive ethical perspective. The researchers then combined internal organization and authentic behavior in the internalized moral perspective to match the previous two elements in the concept, as both express the compatibility of the leader's behavior with internal values and standards from the perspective of the theory of freedom of will and self-determination (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The internalized moral perspective of a leader involves consistency between internal values and leadership practices and behaviors. The following points provide an explanation of the four dimensions in the model:

- Self-awareness: Self-awareness means the clarity and consensus of the leader concerning his/her basic values, identity, emotions, motives, and goals. Through self-awareness, leaders build understanding and a sense of self that provides a stable anchor for their decisions and actions (Gardner et al., 2005), which is the leader's deep perception of self-awareness and inner feelings, including knowing the extent of the leader's influence on others and how others perceive him/her (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Self-awareness refers to a leader's understanding of the world around him/her because this understanding affects the way the leader perceives him-/herself. It also indicates the leader's understanding and strengthening of his/her strengths, knowledge of his/her weaknesses, and the treatment and improvement of them on an ongoing basis. The leader's knowledge of him-/herself and his/her internal values results in the formation of a solid internal foundation from which his/her actions, behaviors, and decisions emerge (Kernis, 2003).

- Relational Transparency: Relational transparency is leaders' clarity in expressing themselves to subordinates and their practice of behaviors that enhance trust, such as sharing information openly and exchanging positive thoughts and feelings in their dealings with subordinates, resulting in

openness and honesty in leaders' relationships with subordinates (Kernis, 2003; Peus et al., 2012; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

- Balanced Processing: This is the objective analysis of data and the understanding of others' points of view before making a decision (i.e., impartiality), which includes understanding, analyzing, and benefiting from opposing views before making a decision (Peus et al., 2012; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

- Internal Moral Perspective: This refers to the standards, positive values, and internal morals that guide leaders in their behaviors, actions, and decisions. With their steadfastness, especially when facing crises and external pressures, leaders make decisions and demonstrate behaviors consistent with their internal values and ethics (Peus et al., 2012; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Based on the foregoing, Walumbwa et al. (2008) concluded that the implementation of authentic leadership according to the model depends on achieving the four dimensions—namely, self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and an internalized moral perspective in an equal and consistent manner among them.

2.1 Importance of Authentic Leadership in Contemporary Educational Institutions

Educational institutions have an important pioneering and developmental role through which they seek to develop intellectual and behavioral skills and enhance citizenship for all. School leadership is one of the most important factors affecting school improvement (Quraishi & Aziz, 2018). Stoten (2014) stated that the need for authentic leadership in educational institutions has become more urgent than ever before due to the need to face the challenges that the world is going through today. According to an opinion poll conducted with a group of teachers, they had greater concerns due to the decline of values in educational institutions and their fear that the teaching profession may turn into a profession without values.

As Bezzina and Bufalino (2019) stated, there is a need for authentic leadership in educational institutions to understand the needs of both teachers and students, move them forward, stay abreast of developments, and resist the challenges facing the world today. Sinclair (2010) emphasized the increasing need for authentic leaders who have integrity and who deal with honesty and courage through their moral values to meet the needs of students in educational institutions. In the same context, Begley (2001, 2006) asserted that authentic leadership is a means of developing educational leadership because it is based on effective moral leadership.

The need for authentic leadership in educational institutions stems from its effectiveness in schools (Quraishi & Aziz, 2018). Since its inception, authentic leadership has attracted the attention of many researchers who seek to include the noble values and ethics in leadership, such as integrity and transparency, to form effective environments (Begley & Stefkovich, 2007).

The main challenge facing educational leadership is the need for ethical standards and lofty values as well as employing them in leading educational institutions and making the necessary decisions. This challenge requires the adoption of authenticity in leadership, honesty in achieving the vision based on values and optimal ethics, the building of lasting relationships, and the application of leadership skills in educational institutions, especially in institutions characterized by pressures and challenges. This leads to a greater increase in the need for authentic leadership based on hope and trust and translates the vision into daily work practices (Duignan, 2014). Authentic educational leaders must have moral ideals and original values, especially in changing work environments and dealing with pressures so that they can achieve the desired goals through their persistence on principles, values, and ethics while serving

as an example to others (Duignan, 2014). Authentic leadership in educational institutions is known as a type of class leadership based on effective practices at the professional level, linked to high ethical foundations, which reflects awareness in educational administration. It is based on knowledge and values and goes beyond the usual practices in the usual procedural context of organizational management to become a real type of educational management and leadership. It is creatively characterized by hope, openness to opinion, and consideration of social conditions (Begley, 2001). The original educational leaders employed collective positive energy in forming a bright, attractive, and productive educational environment and developing it to achieve high results so that the students' outputs are of high quality from the reality of fertile soil in their imaginations and minds. The educational leader raises the child to enhance the value of education and effective learning, supporting and developing it on an ongoing basis (Duignan, 2014).

Educational institutions are constantly seeking ways to effectively maintain and educate their students. Authentic leadership helps subordinates become empowered and grow innovative behaviors among all by providing the appropriate environment to empower subordinates and promote innovation (Guajardo, 2019). Guajardo (2019) mentioned that authentic leadership enhances the participation of subordinates in solving problems and making decisions, which leads to increasing their loyalty to the organization, achieving the vision, and improving work performance and development. Authentic leadership also contributes to the improvement and prosperity of the school environment. When subordinates feel that school leaders have high morals and internal values, it is reflected in their confidence in the leaders and the continuity of their support in their march. Authentic leadership also intensifies the confidence of the subordinates in the leaders' performance of their administrative and technical tasks and work.

Bird et al. (2012) agreed on the importance of the authentic leadership of educational leaders in fostering trust, participation, and thus the continued survival of teachers in their schools. Sinclair (2010) also showed that school principals' application of the authentic leadership dimensions contributed to achieving job satisfaction among faculty members. Authentic leadership is an important factor in promoting positive teacher cultures and, thus, improving student achievement (Fan & Chang, 2019).

3. Research Model

This research was applied in the first semester of the 2020–2021 academic year. A descriptive survey method was used, which is defined as "a method in the study that deals with events, phenomena, and practices that are available for study and measurement as they are without the researcher's intervention and the researcher can interact, describe and analyze them" (Al-Agha & Alostath, 1999, p. 83).

3.1 Participants

The research population consisted of all the teachers of girls' public-schools in Al-Khobar city, who numbered 4,096 teachers. A stratified random sample was selected from the research population of 351 female teachers distributed among the educational stages as determined by Krejcie and Morgan (1970), where the number of female teachers in the primary stage was 153 teachers (43.65%), 75 in the intermediate stage (21.41%), and 123 in the secondary stage (34.94%).

3.2 Data Collection Tools

The study tool was a questionnaire, which was developed based on Walumbwa et al.'s (2008) study and other relevant studies. It measured the four dimensions of authentic leadership: self-awareness,

relational transparency, balanced information processing, and ethical care in making decisions and relationships. The questionnaire was divided into two main parts. The first section identified the personal and demographic data of the respondent (the number of years of service for the school leader and the academic stage). The second section focused on the study dimensions in 36 items distributed into the four dimensions of authentic leadership. The first dimension, self-awareness, consisted of 10 items. The second dimension, relational transparency, consisted of 9 items. The third dimension, the internalized moral perspective, consisted of 9 items. The fourth dimension, balanced processing, consisted of 8 items.

The questionnaire was presented to a group of referees, represented by several faculty members in Saudi universities, workers in government institutions, and doctorate holders. The number of arbitrators was 21.

3.3 Internal Consistency of the Study Tool

Internal consistency means the extent to which each questionnaire item is consistent with the dimension to which it belongs. The internal consistency of the questionnaire was determined by calculating the correlation coefficients between each item of the dimension of the questionnaire and the total degree of the dimension itself. All probability values were less than the $\alpha \leq 0.05$ significance level, meaning that the correlation coefficients were significant. Thus, the items of all dimensions were considered valid for what they measured.

The construct validity is one of the measures of the validity of the study tool, which measures the extent to which the objectives that the tool wants to reach is achieved and shows the extent to which each field of study is related to the total of the items of the questionnaire. The calculations demonstrated that all the probability values were less than the 0.05 significance level, meaning that the correlation coefficients were statistically significant. The values of the correlation coefficient ranged between 0.935 and 0.955.

The Cronbach's alpha was used to measure the consistency of the study dimensions. The value of the Cronbach's alpha coefficient ranged between 0.940 and 0.973 for the four study dimensions, and the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for all items of the questionnaire was 0.986, which is a highly consistent coefficient.

4. Results

It is evident from the responses that the largest percentage in the study sample were teachers from schools of leaders whose years of service exceeded 10 years, who accounted for 47.86% of the study sample. The lowest percentage (23.26%) was teachers from schools of leaders with fewer than 5 years of service. Elementary school teachers accounted for 43.65% of the study sample while intermediate school teachers accounted for 21.41%.

The first main research question: What is the degree of authentic leadership practice among public-school leaders in Al-Khobar city from the teachers' point of view?

To answer the first main question, the items of the four dimensions of authentic leadership (i.e., self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing) were analyzed to determine whether the average degree of agreement among the individuals of the weighted study sample to the items of the four dimensions reached a higher degree than neutrality, as indicated in Tables 1, 2, 3, and 4.

1. Analysis of items for the first dimension of authentic leadership: self-awareness.

Table 1: Arithmetic Means, Relative Weight, and Standard Deviation of Responses to the Self-Awareness Items
(in descending order according to the arithmetic means)

#	Item	Arithmetic mean	Relative weight	SD	Chi-square	Level of sig	Result	Rank
1	A leader is consistent with his higher positive values, emotions, motivations, and goals.	3.46	86.5%	0.735	280.920	0.000	High degree of practice	2
2	Leader behaviors demonstrate his self-awareness and inner feelings.	3.36	84.0%	0.805	215.462	0.000	High degree of practice	4
3	The leader focuses on enhancing her strengths.	3.52	88.0%	0.748	333.365	0.000	High degree of practice	1
4	The leader takes care of addressing her weaknesses on an ongoing basis.	3.20	80.0%	1.007	162.014	0.000	Medium degree of practice	10
5	The leader's behavior and decisions are consistent with what she says.	3.30	82.5%	0.911	200.031	0.000	High degree of practice	7
6	The leader adjusts her decisions to fit the school's priorities in a way that does not interfere with her self-achievement.	3.34	83.5%	0.847	212.157	0.000	High degree of practice	6
7	A leader knows the degree of his influence on others.	3.40	85.0%	0.800	240.077	0.000	High degree of practice	3
8	The leader seeks feedback to develop his performance.	3.27	81.75%	0.943	185.467	0.000	High degree of practice	9
9	The leader improves her performance when she listens to the note as quickly as possible.	3.28	82.0%	0.961	202.151	0.000	High degree of practice	8
10	The leader understands the world around her and is constantly updated to develop herself.	3.35	83.75%	0.871	221.912	0.000	High degree of practice	5
All items of the dimension together		3.35	83.75%	0.698	646.484	0.000	0.000	

2. Analysis of items of the second dimension of authentic leadership: relational transparency.

Table 2: Arithmetic Means, Relative Weight, and Standard Deviation of Responses to the Relational Transparency Items (in descending order according to the arithmetic means)

#	Item	Arithmetic mean	Relative weight	SD	Chi-square	Level of sig	Result	Rank
1	The leader expresses herself and her ideas clearly to others.	3.38	84.5%	0.816	231.530	0.000	High degree of practice	3
2	The leader is keen to build trust with teachers.	3.49	87.25%	0.824	335.758	0.000	High degree of practice	1
3	The leader builds her relationship with the teachers based on honesty.	3.43	85.75%	0.882	303.621	0.000	High degree of practice	2
4	The leader admits mistakes when they happen without hesitation.	3.16	79.0%	1.018	139.587	0.000	Medium degree of practice	9
5	The leader presents her opinion, albeit contrary to others, with kindness and an appropriate manner.	3.35	83.75%	0.901	233.672	0.000	High degree of practice	4
6	The leader exercises sincere feelings toward everyone, without exception.	3.35	83.75%	0.928	239.530	0.000	High degree of practice	4
7	The leader makes teachers feel comfortable and fair when dealing with her.	3.33	83.25%	0.982	250.858	0.000	High degree of practice	6
8	All the teachers express their sincere feelings toward the leader on her occasions.	3.29	82.25%	0.921	205.570	0.000	High degree of practice	8
9	The leader shares information openly with the teachers.	3.31	82.75%	0.906	204.499	0.000	High degree of practice	7
All items of the dimension together		3.34	83.5%	0.782	800.769	0.000	0.000	

3. Analysis of the items of the third dimension of authentic leadership: internalized moral perspective.

Table 3: Arithmetic Means, Relative Weight, and Standard Deviation of Responses to Internalized Moral Perspective (in descending order according to the arithmetic means).

#	Item	Arithmetic mean	Relative weight	SD	Chi-square	Level of sig	Result	Rank
1	The leader is guided by her high moral values in all her behaviors and actions.	3.51	87.75%	0.767	334.003	0.000	High degree of practice	1
2	The leader demonstrates honesty and integrity in dealing with all situations.	3.46	86.5%	0.837	314.265	0.000	High degree of practice	2

#	Item							
3	The leader acts with credibility in all circumstances and without regard for her gain.	3.37	84.25%	0.925	255.940	0.000	High degree of practice	6
4	A leader stands up to negative external pressures that may conflict with her high internal morals.	3.37	84.25%	0.835	230.162	0.000	High degree of practice	6
5	The leader creates a crisis management plan without compromising the higher positive values.	3.33	83.25%	0.891	216.875	0.000	High degree of practice	9
6	The leader's performance is often aligned with her values and systems in a balanced way.	3.42	85.5%	0.795	256.989	0.000	High degree of practice	4
7	The leader appreciates her positive beliefs and values and makes her rule her behavior.	3.43	85.75%	0.859	289.672	0.000	High degree of practice	3
8	The leader's actions match her words and set a role model.	3.35	83.75%	0.905	241.923	0.000	High degree of practice	8
9	A leader gives priority to positive values over anything when making a decision.	3.40	85.0%	0.848	251.154	0.000	High degree of practice	5
All items together		3.41	85.25%	0.760	1286.801	0.000	High degree of practice	

4. Analysis of items of the fourth dimension of authentic leadership: balanced processing.

Table 4: Arithmetic Means, Relative Weight, and Standard Deviation of Responses to Items of Balanced Processing (in descending order according to the arithmetic means)

#	Item	Arithmetic mean	Relative weight	SD	Chi-square	Level of sig	Result	Rank
1	The leader consults the concurring and the dissenting person simultaneously to improve performance.	3.30	82.5%	0.871	186.835	0.000	High degree of practice	1
2	The leader accepts the dissenting and concurring opinions and analyzes them scientifically.	3.18	79.5%	0.975	145.353	0.000	Medium degree of practice	8
3	The leader deals objectively in all her behaviors and when making decisions.	3.29	82.25%	0.932	195.245	0.000	High degree of practice	4
4	The leader is deliberate and reviews all the data before making a decision.	3.30	82.5%	0.929	205.501	0.000	High degree of practice	1

5	The leader considers dissenting viewpoints a healthy phenomenon in the educational institution.	3.25	81.25%	0.940	170.197	0.000	High degree of practice	5
6	A leader considers other perspectives, however important they are, and takes them into account before making a decision.	3.24	81.0%	0.990	178.880	0.000	Medium degree of practice	6
7	The leader objectively analyzes relevant data before making a decision, taking into account special circumstances and exceptions.	3.30	82.5%	0.917	201.536	0.000	High degree of practice	1
8	The leader encourages others to express opposing views.	3.24	81.0%	1.001	186.858	0.000	Medium degree of practice	6
All items of the dimension together		3.26	81.5%	0.867	918.017	0.000	High degree of practice	

Table 5 summarizes the degree of authentic leadership practice according to its dimensions (i.e., self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, balanced processing) among public-school leaders in Al-Khobar city from the teachers' point of view.

Table 5: Degree of Practicing the Four Dimensions of Authentic Leadership among Public-school Leaders from Teachers' Point of View

Dimensions	Arithmetic mean	Relative weight	SD	Chi-square	Level of sig	Result	Rank
Self-awareness	3.34	83.5%	0.782	646.484	0.000	High degree of practice	2
Relational transparency	3.34	83.5%	0.781	800.769	0.000	High degree of practice	2
Internalized moral perspective	3.41	85.25%	0760	1286.801	0.000	High degree of practice	1
Balanced processing	3.26	81.5%	0.868	918.017	0.000	High degree of practice	3
All dimensions of the study	3.34	83.5%	0.731	809.786	0.000	High degree of practice	

The second main study question: Are there statistically significant differences (at $\alpha \leq .05$) between the means of the research sample responses about the degree of authentic leadership practice among public-school leaders in Al-Khobar city due to specific variables (number of years of service and educational stage)? Two sub-questions stem from this main question.

First sub-question: Are there statistically significant differences at the $\alpha \leq 0.05$ level of significance between the means of teachers' responses about the degree of authentic leadership practice among public-school leaders in Al-Khobar city due to years of service?

To test the hypothesis, the Kruskal-Wallis test was applied. Tables 6 and 7 show the results for all study dimensions.

Table 6: Arithmetic Means of Responses according to Number of Years of Service in all Study Dimensions

Study dimensions	Groups	Number	Mean Rank
Self-awareness	Fewer than 5 years	82	167.91
	5–10 years	101	193.99
	More than 10 years	168	169.14
Relational transparency	Fewer than 5 years	82	168.65
	5–10 years	101	199.24
	More than 10 years	168	172.72
Internalized moral perspective	Fewer than 5 years	82	178.68
	5–10 years	101	194.90
	More than 10 years	168	163.33
Balanced processing	Fewer than 5 years	82	169.84
	5–10 years	101	198.82
	More than 10 years	168	165.29
All dimensions of the study	Fewer than 5 years	82	171.27
	5–10 years	101	196.84
	More than 10 years	168	165.78

Table 7: Results of Kruskal-Wallis Test for Number of Years of Service in All Study Dimensions

Dimensions	Kruskal-Wallis H	Degree of freedom df	Sig
Self-awareness	4.545	2	0.103
Relational transparency	7.706	2	0.021
Internalized moral perspective	6.517	2	0.038
Balanced processing	7.585	2	0.023
All dimensions of the study	6.175	2	0.046

Second sub-question: Are there statistically significant differences (at $\alpha \leq 0.05$) between the means of teachers' responses regarding the degree of authentic leadership practice among public-school leaders in Al-Khobar city due to the educational stage variable? To test the hypothesis, the Kruskal-Wallis test was applied. Tables 8 and 9 present the results for all study dimensions.

Table 8: Arithmetic Mean of Responses according to Educational Stage in All Study Dimensions

Study dimensions	Group	Number	Mean Rank
Self-awareness	Primary education	153	168.25
	Intermediate level	75	209.98
	Secondary level	123	164.91
Relational transparency	Primary education	153	173.01
	Intermediate level	75	207.86
	Secondary level	123	160.29
Internalized moral perspective	Primary education	153	173.80
	Intermediate level	75	196.17
	Secondary level	123	166.44
Balanced processing	Primary education	153	177.50
	Intermediate level	75	202.04
	Secondary level	123	158.25
All dimensions of the study	Primary education	153	172.83
	Intermediate level	75	208.80
	Secondary level	123	159.94

Table 9: Results of Kruskal-Wallis Test according to Educational Stage in All Study Dimensions

Dimensions	Kruskal-Wallis H	Degree of freedom df	Sig
Self-awareness	10.968	2	0.004
Relational transparency	10.779	2	0.005
Internalized moral perspective	4.354	2	0113
Balanced processing	9.101	2	0.011
All dimensions of the study	11.123	2	0.004

5. Discussion

Table 1 shows that the highest response was to the third item: "The leader focuses on enhancing her strengths" (arithmetic mean = 3.52; relative weight = 88%). Thus, a large percentage of the teacher respondents perceived the leaders' interest in enhancing their strengths in their professional lives to a high degree, which contributes to achieving a balance between their personal and professional lives alike.

They were less responsive to the fourth item: "The leader takes care of addressing her weaknesses continuously" (arithmetic mean = 3.20; relative weight = 80.0%). The reason for the relative decline in the fourth item may be due to human characteristics requiring that a person refrains from hearing weaknesses from others and may consider them as personal matters. In addition, the human soul repels weaknesses and may quickly bypass them instead of thinking about them.

In general, for all the items of the first dimension, there was a high degree of self-awareness practice as one of the dimensions of the authentic leadership of public-school leaders in Al-Khobar city from the teachers' point of view, with an arithmetic mean of 3.35 and a relative weight of 83.75%.

These results are consistent with Jaradat et al.'s (2020) results, which showed that the self-awareness element indicated high levels of practice; Feng's (2019) results showing the principal's adherence to the values stemming from his self-awareness and their compatibility with clear educational objectives in his leadership behaviors; and Bahzar's (2019) results showing that authentic leadership and its elements, including internal self-awareness, were practiced by principals and teachers in Islamic high schools.

Table 2 shows that the highest response was to the second item: "The leader is keen to build trust with teachers" (arithmetic mean = 3.49; relative weight = 87.25%). This statement shows the high degree of practice by public-school leaders in Al-Khobar city to build bridges of trust between them and their teachers, from the teachers' point of view.

The lowest response was to the fourth item: "The leader admits mistakes when they occur without hesitation" (arithmetic mean = 3.16; relative weight = 79.0%). It is clear from this statement that the school leader admits the mistakes that may occur within the work environment if it occurs, but to a degree that is the least among the items of the relational transparency element. This may be attributed to the fact that the leader deals with a high cultural environment of teachers who detect the leader's errors as soon as they occur. In addition, it is human nature to often delay the recognition of the error, which negatively affected the degree of this element.

In general, for all the items of the second dimension, there was a high degree of relational transparency as one of the dimensions of authentic leadership of public-school leaders in Al-Khobar city from the teachers' point of view, with a mean of 3.34 and a relative weight of 83.5%.

These results are consistent with those of Jaradat et al. (2020), which indicated that relational transparency showed high levels of practice, and Feng's (2019) results that the school principal demonstrated transparency in information in the work environment.

Table 3 shows that the highest response was to the first item: "The leader is guided by her high moral values in all her behaviors" (arithmetic mean = 3.51; relative weight = 87.75%). The extent to which the school leader enjoys high moral values, from the teachers' point of view, is reflected in her professional and functional behavior within the school.

The lowest response was to the fifth item: "The leader creates a crisis management plan without compromising the higher positive values" (arithmetic mean = 3.33; relative weight = 83.25%). This statement indicates the availability of a special plan. The school leader's crisis management is consistent with the highest positive values.

In general, for all items of the third dimension, there was a high degree of the practice of the moral perspective as one of the dimensions of authentic leadership among public-school leaders in Al-Khobar city from the teachers' point of view, with a mean of 3.41 and a relative weight of 85.25%.

These results are consistent with Feng's (2019) results showing the principal having positive ethics; Moreno's (2018) results that the principal's application of ethical behaviors led to meeting teachers' needs; and Bahzar's (2019) results that authentic leadership and its elements, including an internalized moral perspective, were practiced by principals and teachers in Islamic high schools. Meanwhile, the results of the current study differed from those of Jaradat et al. (2020), who demonstrated that the internalized moral perspective element occurred at a medium level of practice.

Table 4 shows that the highest response was to the first item, "The leader consults the concurring and the dissenting person simultaneously to improve performance," the fourth item, "The leader is deliberate and reviews all the data before making a decision," and the seventh item, "The leader objectively analyzes relevant data before making a decision, taking into account special circumstances

and exceptions" (arithmetic mean = 3.30; relative weight = 82.50%). Thus, a large percentage of the teacher respondents appreciated the wisdom and prudence of the school leader when making various decisions by examining all aspects and matters related to the decision before making it as well as analyzing various data objectively according to the surrounding circumstances.

The lowest response was to the second item: "The leader accepts the dissenting and concurring opinions and analyzes them scientifically" (arithmetic mean = 3.18; relative weight = 79.5%). This item clearly shows the extent to which the school leader enjoys wisdom in accepting all opinions, especially those that contradict her opinion, as well as analyzing and studying them professionally and scientifically and studying their suitability for the specific situation.

In general, for all items of the fourth dimension, there is a high degree of the practice of balanced processing as one of the dimensions of authentic leadership of public-school leaders in Al-Khobar city from teachers' point of view, with a mean of 3.26 and a relative weight of 81.5%. Such results are attributed to the level of awareness and perception of school leaders in Al-Khobar city due to the importance of justice and equality among all teachers and impartiality in opinions and decisions.

These results are consistent with the results of Bahzar (2019), who showed that authentic leadership and its elements, including balanced processing, were practiced by principals and teachers in Islamic high schools. However, the results of the current study differed from those of Jaradat et al. (2020), who showed that the balanced processing element indicated a moderate level of practice.

Table 5 shows that authentic leadership's four dimensions have been practiced to a high degree by public-school leaders from the point of view of teachers. The highest degree of practice was for the moral perspective dimension, with a mean of 3.41 and a relative weight of 85.25%, followed by self-awareness and relational transparency, with an arithmetic mean of 3.34 and relative weight of 83.5%, and balanced processing, with a mean of 3.26 and a relative weight of 81.5%.

These results differ from those of Plessis and Boshoff (2018), who found that the internalized moral perspective achieved the highest level. They also differed from Guajardo's (2019) results that the highest-ranked elements of authentic leadership were relational transparency, followed by the internalized moral perspective, self-awareness, and balanced processing. They also differed from Stoten's (2014) results, which indicated that college administrators' application of authentic leadership behaviors was lower compared to transactional leadership behavior (administrative or functional leadership), and Bahzar's (2019) results that high school principals apply authentic leadership with a high rate of self-awareness (86%), balanced processing (86%), and relational transparency (86%). In contrast, the same study showed that high school principals (masters) applied authentic leadership to a greater degree through balanced processing and relational transparency (93%).

Tables 6 and 7 show the following:

- There are no statistically significant differences at the α ≤ .05 level of significance between the means of the teachers' responses about the degree of self-awareness practice as one dimension of authentic leadership of public-school leaders in Al-Khobar city due to number of years of service.

- There are statistically significant differences at the α ≤ 0.05 level of significance between the means of the teachers' responses about the degree of relational transparency as one of the dimensions of authentic leadership of public-school leaders in Al-Khobar city due to the number of years of service

in favor of leaders whose service ranges from 5 to 10 years, after referring to the arithmetic mean means table.

- There are statistically significant differences at the α ≤ 0.05 level of significance between the mean of teachers' responses about the degree of internalized moral perspective as one of the dimensions of authentic leadership of public-school leaders in Al-Khobar city due to the number of years of service in favor of leaders with 5 to 10 years of service, after referring to the table of arithmetic means.

- There are statistically significant differences at the α ≤ 0.05 level of significance between the mean of teachers' responses about the degree of balanced processing practice as one of the dimensions of authentic leadership of public-school leaders in Al-Khobar city due to the number of years of service in favor of leaders with 5 to 10 years of service, after referring to the table of arithmetic means.

In general, and for all the dimensions of the study, there are statistically significant differences at a significant level (α ≤ 0.05) between the means of teachers' responses about the degree of authentic leadership practice among public-school leaders in Al-Khobar city due to number of years of service in favor of leaders with 5 to 10 years of service, after referring to the table of arithmetic means. This result may be attributed to the fact that leaders with 5 to 10 years of service have a variety of experiences, giving them experience in the educational field in addition to their knowledge and closeness to teachers and students, which may positively affect their practice of the elements of authentic leadership. This result is consistent with the study of Al-Mansi (2019), who indicated the presence of fundamental differences between the attitudes of the workers toward the degree of authentic leadership practice according to years of service. However, the current study's results differ from those of Jaradat et al. (2020), who demonstrated that faculty members' levels of experience had no effect on their perceptions of authentic leadership practices. They also differed from those of Plessis and Boshoff (2018), whose results showed no statistically significant differences regarding the years of service in the organization and the practical experience of the study sample personnel of employees and the authentic leadership behaviors of leaders.

Tables 8 and 9 show the following:

- There are statistically significant differences (at α ≤ 0.05) between the means of teachers' responses regarding the degree of self-awareness practice as one of the dimensions of authentic leadership of public-school leaders in Al-Khobar city due to their educational stage in favor of the intermediate level, after referring to the arithmetic means table.

- There are statistically significant differences (at α ≤ 0.05) between the means of teachers' responses about the degree of the practice of relational transparency as one of the dimensions of authentic leadership of public-school leaders in Al-Khobar city due to their educational stage in favor of the intermediate level, after referring to the table of arithmetic means.

- There are no statistically significant differences (at α ≤ 0.05) between the means of teachers' responses regarding the degree of practicing the internalized moral perspective as one of the dimensions of authentic leadership of public-school leaders in Al-Khobar city due to the school stage variable.

- There are statistically significant differences (at α ≤ 0.05) between the means of teachers' responses about the degree of balanced processing practice as one of the dimensions of authentic leadership

of public-school leaders in Al-Khobar city due to their educational stage in favor of the intermediate level, after referring to the arithmetic means table.

In general, and for all the dimensions of the study, there are statistically significant differences (at α ≤ 0.05) between the mean of teachers' responses about the degree of authentic leadership practice among public-school leaders in Al-Khobar city due to their educational stage in favor of intermediate level school leaders, after referring to the table of arithmetic means. The reason for this may be due to the fact that the intermediate level school is often a stage free from parents' tension because the tertiary stage results in admission to universities in addition to the depth of the educational material relative to the intermediate level school. At the primary stage, parents closely follow their children, predominantly due to their young age. The primary stage also focuses on building personality and behavior and following the regulations instilled in students. In this crowd, some of the leaders' authentic leadership practices are absent. This result partly differs from that of Bahzar (2019), who found that authentic leadership was applied at a higher degree at the upper intermediate level (masters) than the secondary level in Islamic high schools in East Kalimantan, Indonesia.

6. Conclusions and recommendations

In light of the results of the research, and after returning to the discussion of the main focus of the study, several recommendations emerge. The Ministry of Education should pay attention to the authentic leadership style and work to ensure the continuity of practicing it practically among educational leaders while reducing administrative burdens and technical tasks. The authentic leadership style should be included in postgraduate courses in the educational leadership major.

The results of the research also indicate the importance of highlighting distinguished leaders in the application of authentic leadership and making them role models, including the elements of authentic leadership among educational supervisors, the visit form, and the evaluation of performance. On the other hand, it is necessary to include authentic leadership elements in the criteria by which school leaders are selected and to develop training programs for school leaders on how to manage crises and emergency conditions.

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