



Authentic Leadership's Environmental Impact: Empowering Employee Engagement and Sustainability

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ABSTRACT

Organisational issues, wrongdoings of employees and a sense of security are integral issues that need to be addressed. Leaders of the corporate world must understand how to make an environment where employees can feel friendly and inform the managers about wrongdoings. The aim of study is to explore the impact of authentic leadership, Psychological safety on whistle-blowing with mediating mechanism of collectivism. Data were obtained from 380 respondents from the telecommunication sector of Pakistan. Results show that the significant relations between variables and collectivism partially mediate between relationships. The study has some limitations that need to be avoided by future researchers. Leaders can use the study by applying the results to improve organisational performance.

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1. Introduction

Rightly, it is an era of intense competition in organisations where every employee strives to excel even through the means that can damage the organisation Octadyla, Abdurrahman, Pramita, and Rusdi (2023). Researchers mentioned that about 75% of organisational employees are involved in harming the organisation, like property damage, sabotage or violating the laws (Huda & Wulandari, 2023). Hence, this issue has its root (Ahmed, 2023). Therefore, the kind of unlawful activities induces whistle-blowing (Irawanto & Novianti, 2020), which helps control the tricks of smashing up the property or values of organisation. Researchers have seen that the whistle-blowers report one-third of the wrongdoings (Gupta & Bhal, 2021). Likewise, many individuals feel this is a responsibility to report to the management about the destruction done by other employees (Bhal & Dadhich, 2011; Qi, Chaudhary, Yao, Mirza, & Khalid, 2022). Somewhat, organisations give confidence to the whistle-blowers to protect the organisational interests. Similarly, whistle-blowers are seen as heroes in some organisations that help shield them from fraud, theft, and immoral or illegal actions (S.-m. Liu, Liao, & Wei, 2015); on the other hand, some organisations consider themselves traitors. The present discourse posits that rectifying wrongdoing is a managerial authority rather than an individual responsibility (Al-Olimat, 2020).

The activeness of whistle-blowers is related to authentic leadership (Anugerah, Abdillah, & Anita, 2019). The management tries to build a positive leadership style in the organisation to provide an environment of subjectivity to employees. Authentic leadership is associated with gaining individuals' confidence and positive behaviour (Sulistiyowati, 2019). Further, researchers have claimed that authentic leadership enhances the pro-social behavior of employees (Anugerah et al., 2019). In the same way, authentic leaders observe and scrutinise the individual's behaviour to guard against damages (Neider and Schriesheim 2011). One crucial factor of authentic leaders is that they are emotionally intelligent i.e. they are aware of their credence and how it affects others (M. W. J. Khan, Ismail, Ahmed, & Ali, 2020). Leaders explicitly share their ideas and beliefs with their workers, increasing employees' trust (Mirza, Younus, Hasan, Yousaf,

& Hafeez, 2023). Positive and authentic leaders develop benchmarks to be followed by all individuals equally (Gardner, Karam, Alvesson, & Einola, 2021).

Psychological safety is essential for individuals working in an organisation where tasks are done in groups or where the society is collectivist. Psychological safety is related to trust, where the individuals feel safe while working in a group (Novitasari, Siswanto, Purwanto, & Fahmi, 2020). It refers to a working environment where individuals feel secure in expressing their beliefs and feeling without the fear of losing trust (Purwanto, Asbari, Hartuti, Setiana, & Fahmi, 2021; Yang, Murad, Mirza, Chaudhary, & Saeed, 2022; Yu, Mirza, Chaudhary, Arshad, & Wu, 2022). Likewise, leaders must ensure the culture of shared values of employees so they can articulate the matters and they have not been afraid of getting fired from the job. When leaders treat their followers with trust and admiration, cooperation and openness develop among them (Alvesson & Einola, 2019; Shami, Rasool, Syed, Mirza, & Ali, 2021). In a society where people are collectivist, they prefer to work in groups, protect the rights of others, and make sure to help them in their work (Wang, 2022). Collectivists avoid mentioning their colleagues for doing false actions to keep their relations safe and sound (Duarte, Ribeiro, Semedo, & Gomes, 2021). Likewise, people in collectivist culture avoid whistle-blowing (Gardner et al., 2021). The group is an identity for individuals here (Hofstede, 1980, 2011). Collectivists feel that satisfaction comes after fulfilling their social responsibilities well.

The studies showed that positive and authentic leaders give confidence and trust to the individuals to report their wrongdoings to the leaders. In the past, psychological safety was used to mediate between authentic leadership and whistle-blowing. In this study, psychological safety is taken as a predictor of whistleblowing and collectivist culture is taken as a mediator between authentic leadership, psychological safety and internal whistle-blowing, which was a missing part of the previous study. The Research Questions are;

- How does authentic leadership influence internal whistle blowing?
- To what extent psychological safety impacts internal whistle blowing?
- Does collectivist culture mediate the association in authentic leadership, psychological safety, and internal whistle-blowing?

The Research Objectives are to identify the impact of authentic leadership on internal whistleblowing, to verify the influence of psychological safety on internal whistleblowing and to observe the mediation of collectivist culture.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Whistle Blowing

Whistle-blowing is described as "the revelation by organisation members (previous or existing) of criminal, dissipated or unlawful attempt under oppress of their employers, to persons or organisations that may be capable of provoking action" (Vian, Agnew, & McInnes, 2022). According to the diverse matter, whistle-blowing is separated into external whistle-blowing (thumping the whistle to the authorities or the communal external of the organisation) and internal whistle-blowing (blowing the whistle to persons and executive indoor of an organisation) (Anvari, Wenzel, Woodyatt, & Haslam, 2019). According to the planned behaviour theory, organisations support and encourage their employees morally. Then employees are motivated to perform their duties honestly and reveal the wrongdoing to upper-level management. In this way, the organisation takes action against unlawful activities and maintains a good reputation in the external environment. External whistle-blowing may mutilate organisational impressions, while internal whistle-blowing can give a chance to change immoral practices (Dungan, Young, & Waytz, 2019).

Even though whistle-blowing employing in-house channels reduces the amount of bullying in an organisation (in contrast with external reporting, which menace public inspection or legal interference (Quayle, 2021), whistle-blowing within an organisation is not often appreciated. Instead, whistle-blower reports of illegal behaviour are frequently masked or unnoticed (J. Khan et al., 2022).

2.2. Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership describe as leaders who are “assertive, expectant, buoyant, resilient, translucent, moral/fair, future-oriented, and give precedence to rising associates to be leaders” (Gardner et al., 2021). Authentic leadership may encourage followers’ moral behaviours (Zheng, Liu, Liao, Qin, & Ni, 2022). Authentic leadership is expected to participate in an affirmative function in shaping organisational behaviours and employee work attitudes (e.g., organisational commitment) (Asghar, Barbera, Rasool, Seitamaa-Hakkarainen, & Mohelská, 2022). According to the theory of planned behaviours, when leaders encourage their followers and support their moral behaviour, followers do their tasks with keen interest.

Authentic leadership has four primary dimensions: self-awareness, balanced processing, relational transparency, and internalised moral perspective (J. K. Chen & Sripson, 2022a; Winton, Whittington, & Meskelis, 2022). For authentic leaders, self-awareness is defined as the extent to which leaders are attentive to their power, flaws, and motive, as well as how employees appreciate their leadership. Balanced processing means craving attitude that even argues with leaders’ ability. Relational transparency refers to revealing oneself, such as freely articulating and distributing opinions, assessments, and information. Internalised moral perspective shows leaders’ behaviours are more precisely conducted by their internal moral standards and values than by external forces such as organisational sleaze or peer bullying (J. K. Chen & Sripson, 2022b).

H₁: There is a positive association between authentic leadership and whistle-blowing.

2.3. Collectivism

Collectivism refers to being oriented toward the members of an in-group and not seeking out-group benefits (Lu, Jin, & English, 2021). In collectivistic cultures, there is no emphasis on self-centred behaviour or giving attention to own capabilities; instead, there is more emphasis on shared ideas and standards to maintain the group relationship (Rajkumar, 2021). Collectivism has many values, faiths, and concerns (Higuera-Castillo, Liébana-Cabanillas, Muñoz-Leiva, & Molinillo, 2019). Collectivism has two dimensions. One is horizontal collectivism, which depends on mutual relationships, self-construal, norms and in-group goals (Gong, Zhu, Gürel, & Xie, 2021). Here, individuals work collectively and prefer inequality. All the members are equal, and they can count on each other.

The second dimension is vertical collectivism which emphasises hierarchical structure. Awareness of the position of individuals is always there, but people can sacrifice their interests for others if required at any stage and is authorised by that person's position (Yan, Zhang, Akhtar, & Liang, 2023). Different dimensions can have different cultural impacts e.g. societies having large movements of people tend to be individualistic, and those societies with stable family standards have collectivism. Similarly, people's values as collectivists serve as a hindrance in the way of whistles blowing. In past studies, collectivism has been discussed with many other variables, but its use as a mediator between psychological safety, authentic leadership and whistle-blowing is missing.

H₂: Collectivism mediates the relationship of authentic leadership, psychological safety and whistle-blowing.

2.4. Psychological Safety

Psychological safety has been described as applying one’s feelings and observations without having the distress of facing the negative behaviours of in-group members (Torralba, Jose, & Byrne, 2020). Researchers have also defined it as a term where the members share ideas and values and feel safe in interpersonal relations while taking the initiative (O’donovan & Mcauliffe, 2020). Organisations having a culture of psychological safety make it easy for individuals to feel secure and change the thinking process of other people (L. Chen, Wadei, Bai, & Liu, 2020).

The culture of psychological safety does not mean that people have a close friendships or any other relationship; instead, it is an environment where people prefer productive decisions, avoid problems and focus on mutual interests (Fransen, McEwan, & Sarkar, 2020). In a working system with a high level of psychological safety, leaders emphasize equality and guarantee that no individual will face negative consequences. The belief of people that they have a high level of

psychological safety will make them act as collectivists in a group. Previously, many researchers have studied the impact of psychological safety on trust, ethical leadership, and learning (Fransen et al., 2020; X. Liu, Mao, Chiang, Guo, & Zhang, 2023). However, the question of its relation with collectivism is still unanswered, which is one of the objectives of this paper.

H3: Psychological safety associated with the whistleblowing

2.5. Authentic Leadership, Psychological Safety and whistleblowing

Authentic leaders contribute in shaping and re-building employee behaviours such as commitment, loyalty, organisation citizenship behaviour etc (Spiteri Paris, 2021; Zia, Younus, & Mirza, 2021). Authentic leadership tends to enhance the ethical values of the followers (Pulungan, Sari, Maharsi, & Hasudungan, 2021). Authentic leaders lead by example. These leaders set benchmarks for values, attitudes and beliefs (Gardner et al., 2021). Fair judgment of followers' opinions is the hallmark of authentic leadership, so the employees feel safe and free to express what they observe (Anugerah et al., 2019). Through balanced processing, leaders provide a path of transparent judgment, which can lead to positive whistle-blowing intentions (Anita, Abdillah, & Zakaria, 2021; Jiatong et al., 2021).

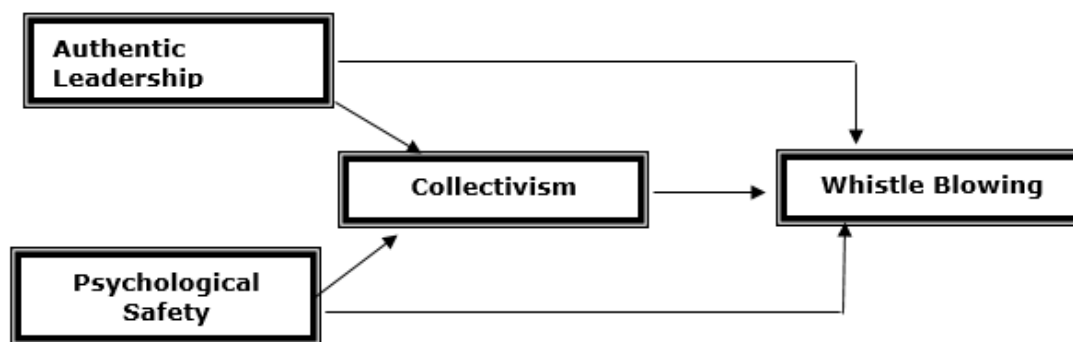
Psychology safety refers to the shared beliefs in a group. The sense of matching beliefs and interests makes employees feel free to report to their higher authority (Al-Olimat, 2020). Whistleblowers will not face negative relations with their colleagues if there is a high sense of psychological safety (Lestari & Mutmainah, 2022; Yu et al., 2022). Furthermore, studies suggest that the fear of revenge from others appears as a hindrance in the way of the whistle-blowing of wrongdoings (Cahyono, Ningrum, & Fitriya, 2022). Whistleblowers may be an observer or non-observer of events or wrongdoings. The observer can report the proper damage happening, and the non-observer will inform the management without any solid proof (Spiteri Paris, 2021). A high level of psychological safety gives a sense of security to employees that even non-observers talk about the wrongdoings. Due to the support of authentic leaders, employees feel secure and can report what they have not even witnessed (Emilisa, 2023).

Conversely, suppose the group members don't feel it right to report to the upper management. In that case, none of the employees will indulge in whistle-blowing even if they have authentic organisational leadership.

2.6. Mediation of Collectivism

Collectivism is a term which leads to in-group harmony, loyalty, shared beliefs, conformity and cooperation and acknowledging other's beliefs, values and attitudes (Hofstede, 2011). In general, past research indicates that collectivists indulge less in the process of whistle blowing. Different dimensions of collectivism may have different effects on whistle-blowing intentions. Horizontal-collectivism, to some extent, supports the reporting of wrongdoings. At the same time, the other dimension of collectivism, which is vertical collectivism, demands conformity of thoughts and decisions from all the members, hindering whistle blowing (S. Liu, Chu, Guo, & Liu, 2021).

Figure 1: Theoretical framework



Similarly, Singh, Sharma, Sengupta, and Goel (2023) hypothesized that organisational structure also impacts the internal whistle blowing. Vertical structural organisations discourage

the whistle-blowing, on the other hand, the horizontal structure of organisational collectivism encourages it. Though authentic leadership promotes internal whistle-blowing intentions, the relationship flips with the mediation of collectivism. Collectivist people strive to protect the group members so they do not speak out about the negative and false acts done by their coworkers. To safeguard the interests of other member employees, remain silent even if the damage can harm the organisational interest. Sometimes, the damage can be destructive, but people do not report it. Likewise, if psychological safety exists among people and the members have shared beliefs, it will positively impact collectivism.

3. Methodology

This research is conducted to determine the relationship between authentic leadership and whistle-blowing. Then it also checks the impact of psychological safety on whistle blowing. In both relationships, collectivist culture is taken as a mediator and previous researches support the study. Adapted questionnaire was designed for data collection and it consisted of two sections. First section based on demographic features of respondents, on the other hands the second section based on the questions regarding research variables in the study. Data were collected from the employees of telecommunication sector in Pakistan. 380 filled questionnaires were collected as the sample size was 380 respondents due to item on scale rule by Hair et al. (2010). The adapted questionnaire was designed by using the measures of the variables in previous studies.

3.1. Collectivism

Collectivism was evaluated by eight items scale developed by Triandis, Chan, Bhawuk, Iwao, and Sinha (1995). The scale is widely adopted to measure collectivism.

3.2. Whistle blowing

Whistleblowing scale having ten items developed by Park, Blenkinsopp, Oktem, and Omurgonulsen (2008) is used to measure the whistle blowing.

3.3. Authentic Leadership

Authentic Leadership Questionnaire Avolio, Luthans, and Walumbwa (2004) was used for this research with 16 questions.

3.4. Psychological safety

Four items from Edmondson (1999) psychological safety scale has been adopted to measure psychological safety.

3.5. Data Collection Method

According to the population of study, a population frame catalog was prepared from telecommunication sector from different websites along with the detail of their employees. With the cooperation of the general managers of the organisations, questionnaires were distributed among leaders and employees. 400 questionnaires were distributed and out of which 340 questionnaires were received.

3.6. Demographics

According to the proper filled and usable questionnaires, 150 questionnaires were used for further analysis from the sample size. In gender category, 62% respondents belong to male and rest of the 38% from the female gender. Most of the respondents were in the age group of 26-45 years and some have more than 45 years age. In telecommunication sector, employees have good academic background as more that 80% employees have bachelor or master degree and few have post graduate like MS or PhD. Most of the employees are in initial in their career as they have 1 to 5 years length of service and they are on contract or have some other category.

4. Data Analysis

Table 1 states that measurement of central tendency and it includes reliability, person correlation and descriptive statistics of constructs. Authentic Leadership and Collectivism carry the highest correlation, valued at 0.534, which depicts that Authentic Leadership and Collectivism are positively related to each other with a moderate standard deviation. All other variables, such as Psychological safety and whistle blowing, are also correlated. Results indicate that alpha values for all variables are under the acceptable range.

Table 1: Results

	Variables	Mean	SD	α	1	2	3	4
1	Authentic Leadership	3.76	.524	.71	--			
2	Psychological Safety	3.72	.370	.76	.326**	--		
3	Collectivism	3.50	.287	.77	.534**	.251**	--	
4	Whistle Blowing	3.89	.650	.73	.269**	.271**	-.247**	--

The fit indices model indicates the Goodness of fit and includes other values to identify that the model is appropriate to work on. Goodness of Fit Index (GFI) should be greater than 0.95, Adjusted Goodness of Fit > 0.8, CFI should be >0.95, and Root Mean Square Error of Approximation should be <0.5. Thus, the results value of our measurement model is GFI=0.968, AGFI=0.832, CFI=0.959, RMSEA=0.047. The model in the study is fit and under the threshold values.

Table 2: Fit Indices for CFA Model:

Index of fit	Cmin/df	P	GFI	AGFI	CFI	RMSEA
Value	3.07	.08	.968	.832	.959	.047

Table 3

Items	Factor Loadings	AVE	CR
Whistle blowing		0.520	0.751
WB1	.798		
WB2	.744		
WB3	.882		
WB4	.765		
WB5	.782		
WB6	.834		
WB7	.843		
WB8	.878		
WB9	.723		
WB10	.869		
Authentic Leadership		0.678	0.834
AL1	.894		
AL2	.748		
AL3	.787		
AL4	.859		
AL5	.874		
AL6	.797		
AL7	.781		
AL8	.873		
AL9	.963		
AL10	.733		
AL12	.753		
AL13	.789		
AL14	.875		
AL15	.742		
AL16	.890		
Collectivism		0.607	0.913
C1	.863		
C2	.785		
C3	.742		
C4	.894		
C5	.973		
C6	.753		
C7	.732		
C8	.774		
Psychological Safety		0.674	0.862
PS1	.743		
PS2	.843		

PS3	.874
PS4	.729

Table 4: Index of fit of the model

Index of fit	Cmin/df	P	GFI	AGFI	NFI	CFI	RMR
Value	3.11	.06	.975	.801	.935	.961	.058

The table shows the fit indices of SEM. The first value proposed by the index of fit (df) =3.11 shows the model's fitness. Likewise, the GFI determines the variance in the model, which is 0.975, AGFI being 0.832 highlights a good fit, the NFI value determines the difference between two models and 0.935 values are good, the RMR value determines the difference between estimated variance and covariance from the observed value that is 0.058, CFI comparative fit index value 0.935 is considered well. Thus, the results determine that the data fit with the model.

Table 5: SEM Regression Weights

			Estimates	S.E.	C.R.	P
Whistle blowing	<---	Authentic Leadership	.452	.077	.05	.02
Whistle blowing	<---	Psychological Safety	.395	.083	1.1	.01
Collectivism	<---	Authentic Leadership	.313	.075	.25	.02
Collectivism	<---	Psychological Safety	.435	.087	.22	.03
Whistle blowing	<---	Collectivism	.236	.056	.31	.04

Table 5 indicates the regression weights and their level of significance for particular hypothesized models, mainly in H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, and H6. All the results are supported. According to the structural equation model, all the variables in relationships were found to have significant relations.

Table 6: SEM Path Analysis

Independent Variables	Effects	Consumer Purchase Intentions
Authentic Leadership	Direct Effect	.397*
	Indirect Effect	.318*
	Total Effect	0.467*
	Direct Effect	0.382*
Psychological Safety	Indirect Effect	0.313*
	Total Effect	0.458*

The table above represents the path analysis of the given variables and their relationships. The values of direct and indirect effects are given. The values of total effect are more significant and positive, showing that collectivism mediates significantly and partially, and our hypothesis regarding mediator is supported.

5. Discussion

This paper aims at finding the impact of authentic leadership and psychological safety on whistle-blowing through the mediation of collectivism. This was hypothesized that authentic leadership, collectivism and psychological safety significantly impact the whistle blowing. All the hypothesized were supported according to the results. Many previous researchers found a significant relationship between collectivism, self-efficacy, decision-making process and whistle-blowing (Sani, Salim, & Jaffar, 2022). Collectivism, to some extent, leads to internal whistle-blowing. Leaders create supportive leadership environments where employees feel comfortable working (Bourini, Jahmani, Mumtaz, & Al-Bourini, 2019). The sense of security enables people to work smoothly, and collectivism also impacts whistle-blowing (Farooq, Sanjrani, Vasty, & Neelam, 2022).

6. Conclusion and Implications

This study has important implications for the leaders and managers of the corporate world. The results will help the leaders shape a format of collaborative working. The feeling of protection, well-being and participation can lead employees to perform better and tell the leaders about the wrongdoings happening in the workplace (Heifetz & Laurie, 2001; Nayir & Herzig, 2012). According to the literature of planned behavior (theory), The study indicates how authentic leadership and a sense of security from other members can lead to whistle-blowing

and collectivism have also impacts on it. This study contributes to literature particularly on leadership, human resource management and cultural studies (Cassemetis & Wortley, 2013).

This study has few limitations which will hinder generalizing its findings. All the data were based upon a single city of Pakistan based on cross sectional survey. Data was collected through a questionnaire only. In future, other researchers can conduct the study in other cities, and data can be collected more than once to show the impact of the results. Interviews with leaders and employees can be conducted. Some other cultural perspectives, like individualism; superficial harmony etc. can be added for further research (Farh, Hackett, & Liang, 2007).

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