Relationship between Authentic Leadership and Psychological Empowerment: The Mediating Role of Organizational Commitment

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Abstract: The main objective of the study is to explore the interdependency of leadership and employees' emotions in the education sector of Pakistan. The study is investigating a relationship between "authentic leadership" and "psychological empowerment" with a mediating role of "organizational commitment" of the private sector university teachers in KP, Pakistan.Data were collected from two hundred and seventy nine (N=279) teachers serving in private universities of KP, Pakistan. SPSS and Amos were used to analyze the data and reach the findings.The results showed a significant positive relationship among "authentic leadership", "organizational commitment" and "psychological empowerment" of the teachers working in the private university of KP, similar to the studies of Shapira-Lishchinsky & Tsemach, 2014; Joo, & Jo, 2017; Yousaf & Hadi, 2020). Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) confirmed a significant impact of "authentic leadership"of the universities on the "psychological empowerment" and "organizational commitment" of the teachers. The direct impact of "organizational commitment" on "psychological empowerment" was also investigated and confirmed by using CFA. Furthermore, "organizational commitment" partially mediates the relationship between "authentic leadership" and the "psychological empowerment" of the teachers. The findings of the study recommends high degree of "authentic leadership"in the educational sector to enhance the commitment and empowerment feelings of the teachers for improving quality education in the universities.

Keywords: "authentic leadership"; organizational commitment; "psychological empowerment"

Introduction

"Authentic leadership" plays a vital role in changing the behavior of employees for enhancing their performance. Leadership behavior encourages confident moral work environment and optimistic achievements in the organization. "Authentic leadership" ensures firmness providing a detailed value

system and vision for employees in a raging work environment (Yousaf & Hadi, 2020). Studies revealed that "authentic leadership" is linked with and trigger employees positive behaviour and attitudes including sense of empowerment and "organizational commitment" (Shapira-Lishchinsky &Tsemach, 2014; Joo, & Jo, 2017). In the Pakistani context, the educational sector badly need tremendous contributions from its key players i.e the teachers. The employees' commitment with having a feel of empowerment is the need of the time to excel in the education sector specifically in the developing countries like Pakistan. Therefore, in the current study, it is aimed to investigate the level of relationship among the vital variables related to the employees including empowerment and commitment with "authentic leadership" in the private sector universities of KP, Pakistan. The findings will help policy makers and authorities to come up with policies to improve in the areas where shortcomings exist. This study will also add to the managerial issue recently found in the universities of Pakistan.

Literature Review

The study revolves around the three main variables including "authentic leadership", the "psychological empowerment" and the organizational commitment.

"Authentic leadership"

Authentic means "the behavior that displays and encourages positive mental dimensions and a principled climate that cultivates self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency" (Walumbwa et. al., 2008). "authentic leadership" is defined as "the shape of behavior draws from psychological capacities and positive organizational ethics that resulted in more self-awareness, internalized moral, balanced information processing, and transparency of the relationships between the leader and the employees" (Walumbwa et. al., 2008). The four dimensions of "authentic leadership" are "self-awareness", "balanced processing", "rational transparency" and "internalized moral perspective". Rational transparency means that every decision is made after discussion with employees keeping in view the rules and regulations of the organization. Nothing is concealed from the subordinates. Self-awareness is the awareness of leaders about goals, values of organization as well the feelings of subordinates that affect their performance. Balanced processing refers to the situation created for decision making after collecting all valuable information in order to avoid any biasness. Internalized moral perspective means that every decision taken by the leader should be in accordance with the existing moral standards so as not to hurt the feelings of any employee.

"Psychological Empowerment"

"Psychological Empowerment" is the degree of authority and power given to subordinates to work freely and complete the assigned tasks without any pressure from leader. The four dimensions of "Psychological Empowerment" are "meaning, competence, self-determination and impact". Meaning means that how much importance an employee gives to the task assigned to him. Competence is the ability and proficiency required by an employee to complete his objectives. Self-determination is the amount of motivation of the employee towards his job. It enables an employee to work openly without any coercion and accomplish his tasks in an autonomous manner.

"Organizational commitment"

"Organizational commitment" means "the employee's feelings of obligation to stay with the organization: feelings resulting from the internalization of normative pressures exerted on an individual prior to entry or following entry" (Allen, Meyer, 1990). The three dimensions of "organizational commitment" are affective commitment, continuous commitment and normative commitment. Affective commitment means strong emotional attachment to organization because the employees love to be a part of organization and have strong emotions to work for the organization. Continuous commitment means attachment to organization because they fear to lose the benefits attached with their job due to termination or retirement. Normative commitment means attachment to organization due to a sense of obligation.

"Authentic leadership", the "psychological empowerment" and "organizational commitment"

A lot of literature is available on the relationship between "authentic leadership" and "psychological empowerment" (Avolio et al., 2004; Joo and Jo, 2017; Xu and Yang, 2018; Zhang et al., 2018). "authentic leadership" also affects "organizational commitment" positively (Bento & Ribeiro, 2013; Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002; Leroy, Palanski, & Simons, 2012; Valsania et al., 2012; Walumbwa et. al., 2008). There is also a link empirically found between "organizational commitment" and "psychological empowerment" (Chan, 2003; Choong, Wong & Lau, 2011). There is no study, to the best of our knowledge that has linked the mediating effect of "organizational commitment" between "authentic leadership" and "psychological empowerment". Empirical evidences confirmed that there exist a relationship between "authentic leadership" and "organizational commitment" (Bento & Ribeiro, 2013; Harter, Schmidt & Hayes, 2002; Leroy, Palanski, & Simons, 2012; Valsania et al., 2012; Walumbwa et. al., 2008).Many study found a positive relationship between "authentic leadership" and "psychological empowerment" (Avolio et al., 2004; Joo and Jo, 2017; Xu and Yang, 2018; Zhang et al., 2018). A few studies have tested a relationship between "organizational commitment" and "psychological empowerment" (Chan, 2003; Choong, Wong & Lau, 2011). Based on the review of the available literature , following hypotheses are developed:

H_1: "authentic leadership" and the "psychological empowerment"of the private university teachers in KP, Pakistan are positively related.

H_2: "authentic leadership" and the "organizational commitment" of the private university teachers in KP, Pakistan are positively related.

H_3: "organizational commitment" and "psychological empowerment"of the private university teachers in KP, Pakistan are positively related.

H_4: "organizational commitment" of the private university teachers in KP, Pakistan mediates the relationship between "authentic leadership" and "psychological empowerment".

Methodology

This casual study is quantitative in nature to investigate the role of "authentic leadership" in link with "psychological empowerment" and "organizational commitment" of the teachers working in private sector universities of KP, Pakistan. A sample size of N=279 was selected using a random sampling technique.

Data collection Procedure

Data were collected from the faculty members of private universities of KP, Pakistan. Three hundred and fifty (350) questionnaires were physically handed over to the employees of private universities of KP, Pakistan. After two reminders, only 290 filled questionnaires were returned within 40 days. Only eleven

questionnaires were found to be incomplete and they were not included for research purpose. Two hundred and thirty nine (239) male and forty five (45) female faculty members participated in this study.

Measurement

1. *"authentic leadership" Inventory*

"Authentic leadership" Inventory (Neider and Schrieshei, 2011) often abbreviated as ALI was employed to collect data from faculty of private sector universities of KP, Pakistan. This inventory has four dimensions which are balanced processing containing 4 items, rational transparency containing 4 items, internalized moral perspective containing 4 items and self-awareness containing 4 items. A total of 16 items were used to measure "authentic leadership". For measuring purpose, a 5 point likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to Strongly Agree" was employed.

2. *"Psychological Empowerment" Questionnaire*

The "Psychological Empowerment" questionnaire often abbreviated as PEQ adapted from Spreitzer (1995) was used to measure "psychological empowerment". This questionnaire has four dimensions which are Competence containing 3 items, Meaning containing 3 items, Impact containing 3 items and self-determination containing 3 items. A total of 12 items were used to measure "psychological empowerment". For measuring purpose, a 7 point Likert scale ranging from "Very Strongly Disagree" to Very Strongly Agree" was employed.

3. *"Organizational Commitment Scale"*

The "organizational commitment" scale often abbreviated as OCS adapted from Meyer and Allen (1991) was used to measure organizational commitment. This questionnaire has three dimensions which are continuous commitment containing 6 items, affective commitment containing 6 items, and normative commitment containing 6 items. A total of 18 items were used to measure organizational commitment. For measuring purpose, a 5 point likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" to "Strongly Agree" was employed.

Table 1

Details of the instruments used in the Study

Variables and Instrument	No. of Items	Source
"authentic leadership" Inventory (ALI)	16	Neider and Schrieshei, 2011
"psychological empowerment" Questionnaire (PEQ)	12	Spreitzer (1995)
"organizational commitment" scale OCS	18	Meyer and Allen (1991)

For the analysis of collected data, a mix of statistical methods was employed including Pearson Correlation analysis and mediation analysis.

Results and Discussion

Correlation

The correlation between "authentic leadership", "organizational commitment" and "psychological empowerment" is calculated from the collected data.

Table 2

Pearson Correlation Analysis of the Study   *(Sample N= 279)*

		"authentic leadership"	Organizational Commitment	"psychological empowerment"
"authentic leadership"	"r"	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
"organizational commitment"	"r"	0.382**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000		
"psychological empowerment"	"r"	0. 791**	0.501**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.000	0.000	

Correlation is Significant at 0.01level, (2-tailed)

As shown in table 2, the Pearson correlation value (r=0.382, p=0.000) between "authentic leadership"and "organizational commitment" explains a positively significant relationship. This explains the significance of having "authentic leadership" to increase the teachers commitment in the private universities of KP, Pakistan similar as studied by Ausar, Kang, & Kim, 2016. The correlation value (r=0.791, p= 0.000) between "authentic leadership"and "psychological empowerment"shows significantly positive and strong relationship. This implies that "authentic leadership" can ensure the "psychological empowerment" of the teachers as revealed by Wong, & Laschinger, 2013.

Similarly the correlation value (r=0.501, p=0.000) between "organizational commitment" and "psychological empowerment"explains the significantly positive relationship. The findings expose positively significant relationship with each other similar to the studies of Choong, Wong, & Lau, 2011.The increase in one will bring positive change in other and vice versa.

Therefore, the findings are accepting the following hypotheses:

H₁: "authentic leadership" and the "psychological empowerment" of the private university teachers in KP, Pakistan are positively related.

H₂: "authentic leadership" and the "organizational commitment" of the private university teachers in KP, Pakistan are positively related.

H₃: "organizational commitment" and "psychological empowerment" of the private university teachers in KP, Pakistan are positively related.

Mediation Analysis

1. *Direct Path from "authentic leadership" and "psychological empowerment"*

To test the mediating effect, it is compulsory for an independent variable to significantly affect the dependent variable Baron and Kenny (1986). The independent variable i.e., "authentic leadership" has

significantly affected the dependent variable i.e., "psychological empowerment". So the 1st condition suggested is met in the sample data. Confirmatory factor analysis showed that direct path from "authentic leadership" to "psychological empowerment" fit the sample data very well. All values of different indices including GFI, CFI, RMESEA, RMR etc., are in the acceptable range as shown the table below. So H1: "authentic leadership" and "psychological empowerment" are positively related is accepted.
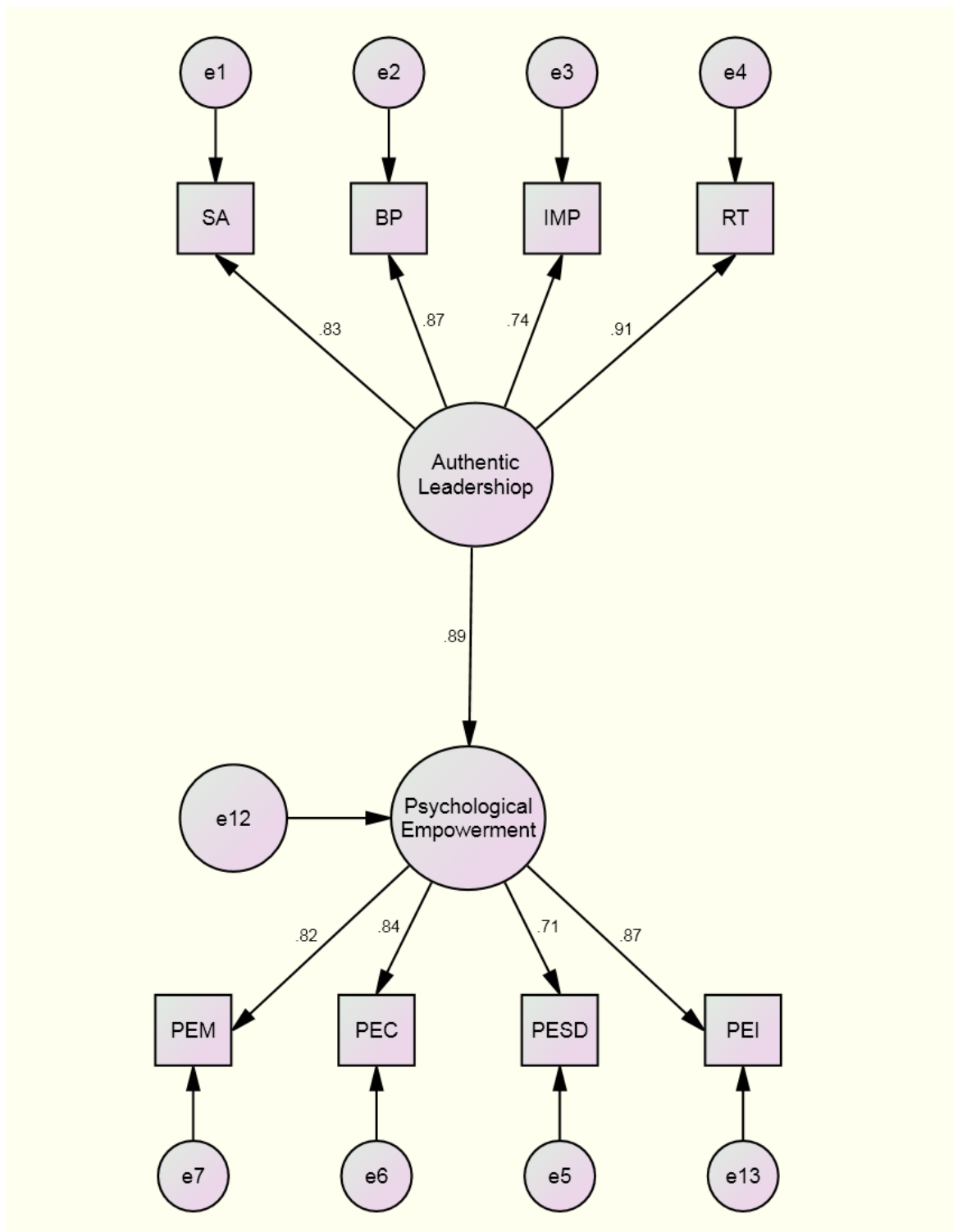
Fig 1.Explains Direct Path from "authentic leadership" and "psychological empowerment"

Table 3

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	17	565.902	19	.000	3.784
Saturated model	36	.000	0		
Independence model	8	2199.092	28	.000	78.539

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	.034	.929	.487	.385
Saturated model	.000	1.000		
Independence model	.291	.256	.044	.199

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.743	.621	.749	.629	.948
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.022	.299	.345	.000
Independence model	.528	.510	.547	.000

2. Direct Path from "authentic leadership" and "organizational commitment"

To test the mediating effect, it is compulsory for an independent variable to significantly affect the mediating variable (Baron and Kenny, 1986). The independent variable i.e., "authentic leadership" has significantly affected the mediating variable i.e., organizational commitment. So the 2nd condition suggested is met in the sample data. Confirmatory factor analysis showed that direct path from "authentic leadership" to "organizational commitment" fit the sample data very well. All values of different indices including GFI, CFI, RMESEA, RMR etc., are in the acceptable rage as shown the table below. So H2: "authentic leadership" and "organizational commitment" are positively related is accepted in the sample data.
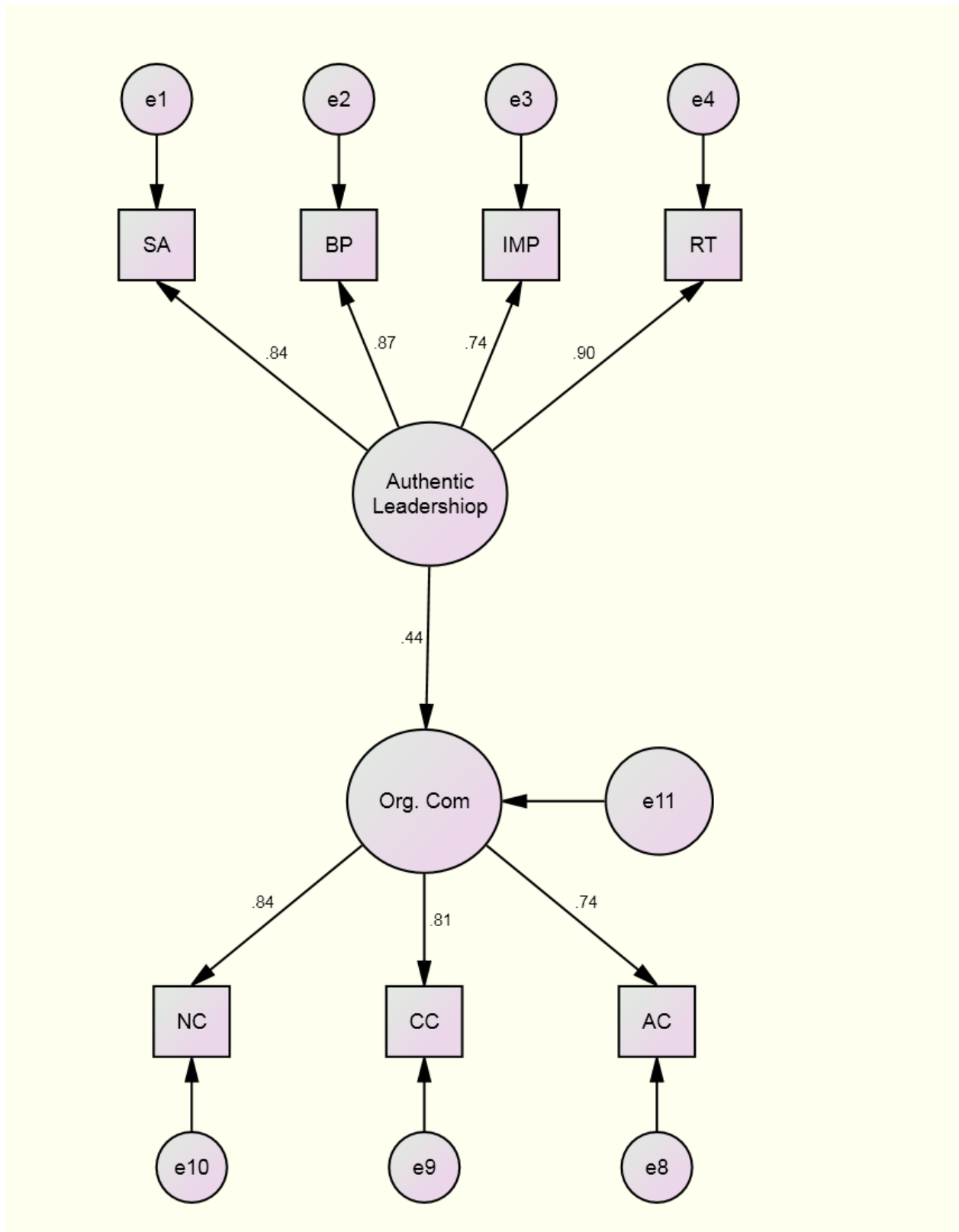
Fig 2. Explains Direct Path from "authentic leadership" and "organizational commitment"

Table 4

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	15	15.479	13	.278	1.191
Saturated model	28	.000	0		
Independence model	7	1119.627	21	.000	53.316

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	.014	.984	.966	.457
Saturated model	.000	1.000		
Independence model	.235	.401	.202	.301

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.986	.978	.998	.996	.998
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.026	.000	.068	.790
Independence model	.434	.412	.456	.000

3. Direct Path from "organizational commitment" to "psychological empowerment"

To test the mediating effect, it is compulsory for a mediating variable to significantly affect the dependent variable (Baron and Kenny, 1986). The mediating variable i.e., "organizational commitment" has significantly affected the dependent variable i.e., "psychological empowerment". So the 3rd condition suggested is met in the sample data. Confirmatory factor analysis showed that direct path from "organizational commitment" to "authentic leadership" fit the sample data very well. All values of different indices including GFI, CFI, RMESEA, RMR etc., are in the acceptable rage as shown the table below. So H3: "organizational commitment" and "psychological empowerment" are positively related is accepted in the sample data.
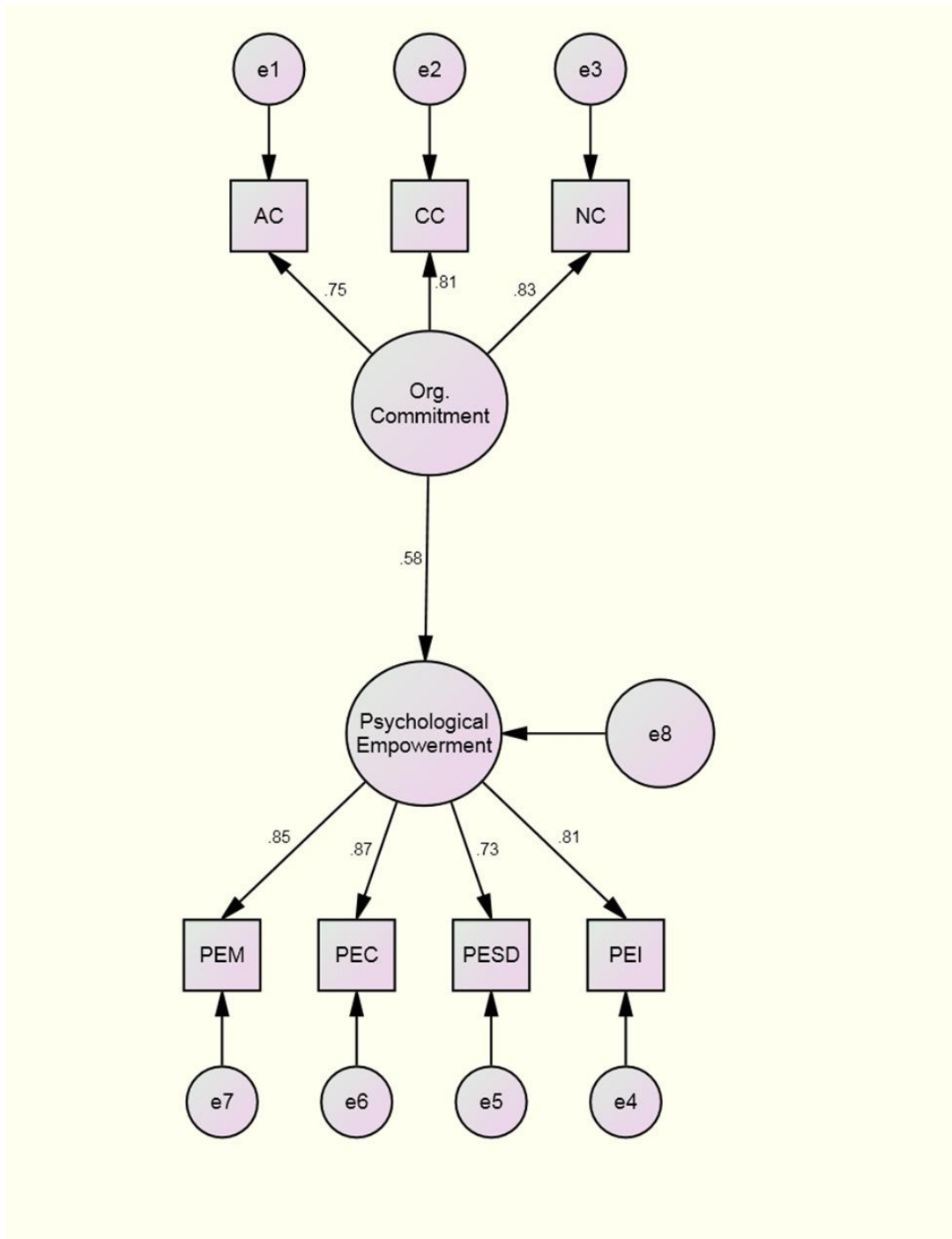
Fig 3. Explains Direct Path from "organizational commitment" and "psychological empowerment"

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	15	21.896	13	.057	1.684
Saturated model	28	.000	0		
Independence model	7	1071.159	21	.000	51.008

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	.014	.978	.954	.454
Saturated model	.000	1.000		
Independence model	.220	.383	.177	.287

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.980	.967	.992	.986	.992
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

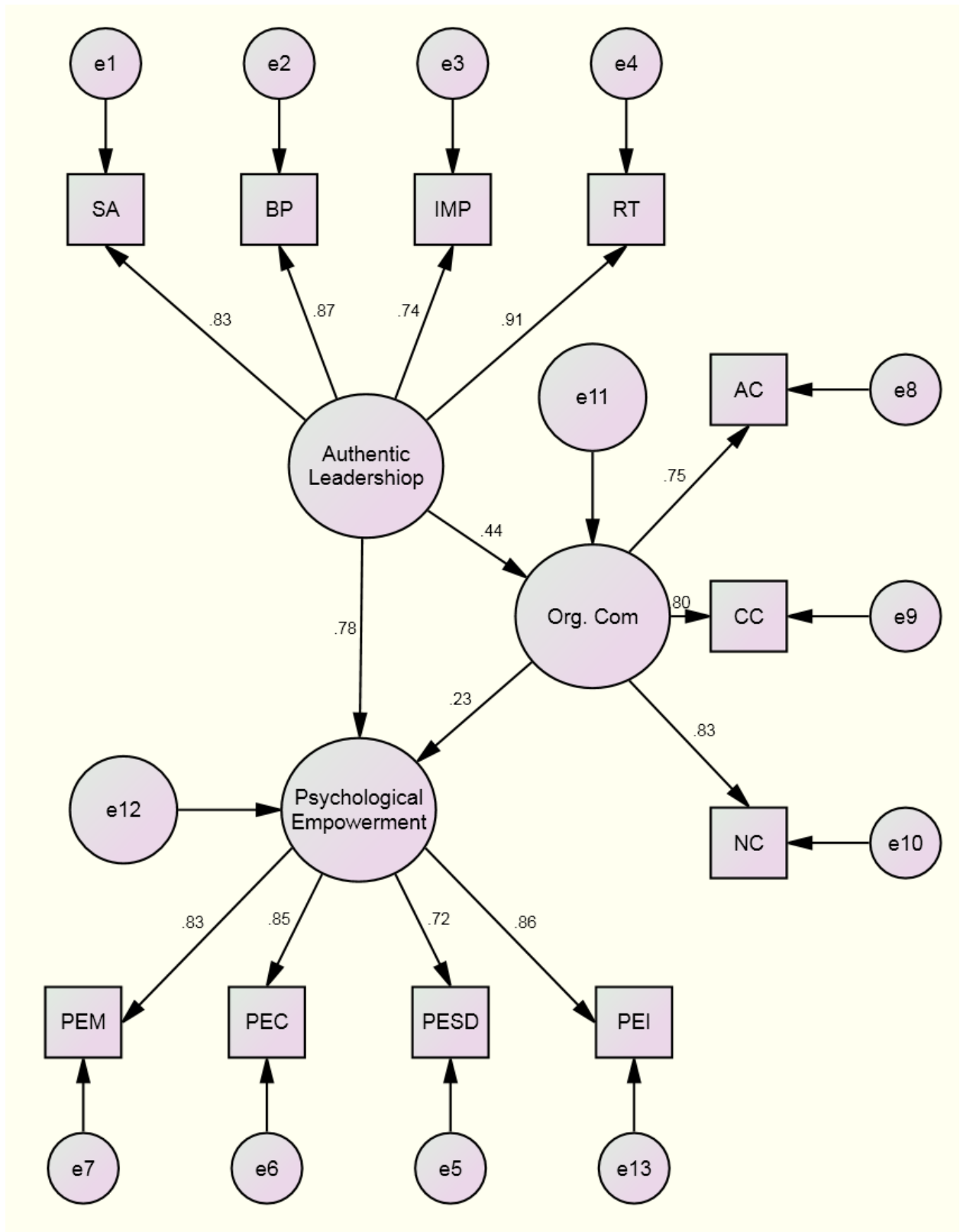| Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.050	.000	.085	.463
Independence model	.424	.403	.446	.000

Fig 4. Indirect Path from "authentic leadership" to "psychological empowerment" through organizational commitment

4. Indirect Path from "authentic leadership" to psychological capital through organizational commitment

The 1st three conditions proposed by Baron and Kenny (1986) for testing the mediating effect between variables were satisfied in order to investigate the mediating role of "organizational commitment" between "authentic leadership" and "psychological empowerment". The results as shown the graph above revealed that "organizational commitment" partially mediated the relationship between "authentic leadership" and "psychological empowerment". All values of different indices including GFI, CFI, RMESEA, RMR etc., are in the acceptable rage as shown the table below. So H4: "organizational commitment" mediates the relationship between "authentic leadership" and "psychological empowerment" is accepted in the sample data.

Table 5

Model	NPAR	CMIN	DF	P	CMIN/DF
Default model	25	610.779	41	.000	4.897
Saturated model	66	.000	0		
Independence model	11	2658.550	55	.000	48.337

Model	RMR	GFI	AGFI	PGFI
Default model	.029	.890	.630	.478
Saturated model	.000	1.000		
Independence model	.250	.260	.112	.217

Model	NFI Delta1	RFI rho1	IFI Delta2	TLI rho2	CFI
Default model	.770	.692	.782	.706	.911
Saturated model	1.000		1.000		1.000
Independence model	.000	.000	.000	.000	.000

Model	RMSEA	LO 90	HI 90	PCLOSE
Default model	.044	.208	.239	.000
Independence model	.413	.399	.426	.000

Conclusion and Recommendation

The main objective of the study is to explore the interdependency of leadership and employees' emotions in the education sector of Pakistan. The study is investigating a relationship between "authentic leadership" and "psychological empowerment" with a mediating role of "organizational commitment" of the private sector university teachers in KP, Pakistan. Data were collected from two hundred and seventy nine (N=279) teachers serving in private universities of KP, Pakistan. SPSS and Amos were used for data analysis. The results showed a significant positive relationship among

"authentic leadership", "organizational commitment" and "psychological empowerment" similar to the studies of Shapira-Lishchinsky&Tsemach, 2014; Joo, & Jo, 2017; Yousaf&Hadi, 2020).. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) confirmed a significant impact of "authentic leadership" on "psychological empowerment" and organizational commitment. The direct impact of "organizational commitment" on "psychological empowerment" was also investigated and confirmed by using CFA. Furthermore, "organizational commitment" partially mediated the relationship between "authentic leadership" and "psychological empowerment". The management should pay special heed towards employees' commitment "authentic leadership"style so as to enhance "psychological empowerment" because both "authentic leadership" and "organizational commitment" affect "psychological empowerment" significantly. The findings of the study recommends high degree of "authentic leadership" in the educational sector to enhance the commitment and empowerment feelings of the teachers for improving quality education in the universities. The same study may be replicated by collecting data from other sectors such as public sector universities, private and public sector banks etc.

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