

The relationships between authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement and turnover intention within the South African work context

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COMMENTS

The following should be noted before reading this research article:

- The editorial style of this mini-dissertation followed the guidelines as specified by the *South African Journal of Industrial Psychology* (SAJIP). For the referencing style used, this mini-dissertation implemented the format as prescribed by the Publication Manual (7th ed.) of the American Psychological Association (APA). These implementations are in accordance with the policy of the Programme in Industrial and Organisational Psychology of North-West University (Potchefstroom) to make use of the APA referencing style in all scientific documents as from January 1999.
- This mini-dissertation is submitted in the form of a research article.
- Chapter 1 is a revised version of the submitted and approved research proposal due to minor technical updates and editorial corrections.
- Each chapter within this mini-dissertation contains its own reference list relating to the sources used in that specific chapter.

DECLARATION

I, **Michelle van den Berg**, hereby confirm that this mini-dissertation titled ‘The relationships between authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement and turnover intention within the South African work context’ is my own work. The authors hereby declare that the views and opinions expressed in this mini-dissertation, are those of the authors and relevant literature references as cited in this research study.

I furthermore declare that the contents of this research study have not and will not be submitted to any other tertiary institution with the purpose of obtaining another qualification.

Michelle van den Berg

November 2022

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS AND DECLARATIONS

This research has been designed and conducted by two researchers representing North-West University (Potchefstroom Campus). The researchers' roles and contributions made to this study are indicated in the table below:

Ms M van den Berg	MCom Industrial Psychology student; compiling the literature review; conducting the research process; interpreting the research findings and data; and writing the research proposal and mini-dissertation.
Prof LT de Beer	Supervisor; conceptualiser; statistician; and critical reviewer of the total research study.

The authors hereby declare and confirm their role in this research study. It is declared that the authors made use of the appropriate format in the submission of this mini-dissertation as stipulated by North-West University. The authors hereby confirm that the contents of this research study, and any adjusted versions, may be used and published by the supervisor in peer-reviewed academic journals and/or presented at an academic conference(s).

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DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITOR



5 November 2022

I Ms Cecilia van der Walt hereby declare that I took care of the **editing** of the **mini-dissertation** of **Ms Michelle van den Berg** titled *The relationships between authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement and turnover intention within the South African work context*, as well as the translation of the summary thereof.

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SUMMARY

Title: The relationships between authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement and turnover intention within the South African work context

Keywords: Authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement, turnover intention, leadership, work disengagement, employee turnover, job demands-resources model.

Leadership and its impact on organisations have always been a popular and interesting topic among researchers. In recent years, the focus on what makes an organisation successful has shifted from focusing solely on profit, to what an organisation's purpose beyond profit should be. At the centre of this new focus stands employees and how organisations can maintain their workforce and capitalise on them to become more profitable and build a sustainable future. With an increasing problem in leadership within South Africa, where inconsistency tends to exist between a leader's words and actions, this study aimed to further explore the authentic leadership style and its positive impacts. According to previously conducted research, an authentic leader (that is truthful, genuine and places strong emphasis on their own values and the enacted values of the organisation) is likely to contribute to a workforce that can personally identify with the organisation and feel more engaged and driven to achieve the organisational objectives, which results in them being less likely to leave their current organisation.

Thus, the general objective of this study was to investigate the relationships between authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement and turnover intention within the South African work context. Adopting a quantitative, cross-sectional research design, the research data were collected using an online questionnaire distributed to 414 participants within the South African work context. These participants were selected by applying a non-probability, purposive sampling method by means of which the participants were specifically selected in accordance with their fulfilment of the pre-determined research criteria so as to ensure their positive contribution to the research data. The research sample consisted of a population that was diverse regarding their age, gender, ethnicity, educational background, tenure and level of work. In addition, to test the hypotheses formulated, this study explored the relationships between the variables by implementing a latent variable and structural equation model. This was accomplished by testing the goodness-of-fit between the measurement

models, determining the Cronbach's alpha coefficients to evaluate the reliability coefficients between variables and calculate the regression paths with a view to determine the relationship type between the variables.

This study made use of a self-reporting questionnaire to explore an employee's perception of their leaders and how this relates to their own organisational identification and work engagement. According to the results of this study, a significant positive relationship was observed between authentic leadership and both organisational identification and work engagement. In addition, organisational identification also indicated a positive relationship to work engagement. The results also indicated a positive indirect relationship between authentic leadership and work engagement, through organisational identification as a mediating variable. This indicates that the presence of a leadership style that is authentic in nature will lead to an increase in how employees identify themselves within the organisation and to higher levels of engagement.

When considering the impact of these variables on an employees' intention to leave their current organisation, authentic leadership and work engagement indicated a negative relationship with turnover intention. However, despite indicating a negative relationship, the results showed that organisational identification is likely to have no direct effect on turnover intention after indicating a relationship that is considered not meaningful. In addition to this, the results also indicated no indirect relationship between authentic leadership and turnover intention through organisational identification as a mediating variable. This indicates that even when an employee personally identifies with their organisation, it does not necessarily mean that they are any less likely to leave their current employment.

However, the results did indicate an indirect effect from authentic leadership on turnover intention; through organisational identification and work engagement; thus indicating that although an employee's identity in relation to their organisation may not impact their decision to leave their organisation directly, its presence is likely to make employees feel more engaged by becoming personally invested in achieving the organisational objective, resulting in them being more likely to stay with the organisation for as long as they place personal emphasis on achieving the equally valued objectives.

To conclude this study, the researcher made use of the study findings to draw conclusions, highlight limitations, and make recommendations for future research and practice.

OPSOMMING

Titel: *The relationships between authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement and turnover intention within the South African work context*
(Die verhoudings tussen outentieke leierskap, organisasie-identifikasie, werkverbintenis en voorneme om te bedank binne die Suid-Afrikaanse werkkonteks)

Slutelterme: *Authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement, turnover intention, leadership, work disengagement, employee turnover, job demands-resources model.*
Outentieke leierskap, organisasie-identifikasie, werkverbintenis, voorneme om te bedank, leierskap, werk-onbetrokkenheid, werknemer-omkeer, “job demands-resources model”.

Leierskap en die impak daarvan op organisasies was nog altyd ‘n gewilde en interessante onderwerp onder navorsers. In die laaste jare het die fokus op dit wat ‘n organisasie sukses laat behaal, verskuif van ‘n uitsluitlike fokus op wins, na wat ‘n organisasie se doel verby wins moet wees. Wat sentraal tot hierdie nuwe fokus staan, is werknemers en hoe organisasies hul werkmag kan behou en op hulle kan kapitaliseer om meer winsgewend te wees en ‘n volhoubare toekoms te bou. Te midde van ‘n toenemende probleem in leierskap in Suid-Afrika, waar inkonsekwentheid geneig is om voor te kom tussen ‘n leier se woorde en optrede, was hierdie studie daarop gemik om die outentieke leierskap-styl en die positiewe impak daarvan verder te verken. Volgens vroeëre navorsing sal dit hoogs waarskynlik wees dat ‘n outentieke leier (wat waarheidsgetrou en opreg is en hul eie waardes en dié verorden waardes van die organisasie sterk benadruk) tot ‘n werkmag kan bydra wat hulle persoonlik met die organisasie kan vereenselwig en meer betrokke en gedrewe kan voel om die organisasie se doelwitte te bereik. Dit lei dan daartoe dat hulle minder geneig sal wees om hul huidige organisasie te verlaat

Die oorkoepelende doel van hierdie studie was dus om binne die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks die verhoudings tussen outentieke leierskap, organisasie-identifikasie, werkbetrokkenheid en omkeer-voorneme te verken. Aan die hand van ‘n kwantitatiewe, deursnee navorsingsontwerp is navorsingsdata ingesamel deurdat ‘n aanlyn-vraelys aan 414 deelnemers binne die Suid-Afrikaanse werkkonteks gestuur is. Hierdie deelnemers is geselekteer deur ‘n nie-waarskynlikheid, doelbewuste steekproefnemingsmetode toe te pas aan die hand waarvan die deelnemers spesifiek geselekteer is ooreenkomstig hul voldoening aan die voorafbepaalde

navorsingskriteria om hul positiewe bydrae tot die navorsingsdata te verseker. Die navorsingsteekproef het bestaan uit 'n populasie wat divers was ten opsigte van hul ouderdom, geslag, etnisiteit, opvoedkundige agtergrond, dienstyd en werkvlak. Hierbenewens, om die hipoteses wat geformuleer is te toets, het hierdie studie die verhoudings tussen die veranderlikes verken deur 'n latente veranderlike en strukturele vergelykings-model te implementeer. Dit is bereik deur die pasgehalte-toets tussen die meetmodelle te toets en daardeur die Cronbach-alpha koëffisiënte te bepaal om die betroubaarheidskoëffisiënte tussen verranderlikes te evalueer en die regressie-baan te bereken met die oog daarop om die verhoudingstipe tussen die veranderlikes vas te stel.

Hierdie studie het gebruik gemaak van 'n self-rapporterende vraelys om 'n werknemer se persepsie van hul leiers te verken en hoe dit verband hou met hul eie organisasie-identifisering en werkbetrokkenheid. Ooreenkomstig die resultate van hierdie studie is 'n noemenswaardig positiewe verhouding waargeneem tussen outentieke leierskap en beide organisasie-identifisering en werkbetrokkenheid. Hierbenewens het organisasie-identifikasie ook 'n positiewe verhouding met werkbetrokkenheid aangedui. Die resultate het ook 'n positiewe indirekte verhouding aangedui tussen outentieke leierskap en werkbetrokkenheid, deur organisasie-identifikasie as 'n mediërende veranderlike. Dit het aanduiding gegee dat die teenwoordigheid van 'n leierskapstyl wat outentiek van aard is, tot 'n toenane lei in die wyse waarop werknemers hulle binne die organisasie identifiseer, asook tot hoër vlakke van betrokkenheid.

Wanneer die impak van hierdie veranderlikes op 'n werknemer se voorneme om hul huidige organisasie te verlaat in oorweging gebring word, is aangedui dat outentieke leierskap en werkbetrokkenheid negatief verhouding hou met omkeervoorneme. Ten spyte van die negatiewe verhouding wat die resultate aangedui het, het dit egter getoon dat organisasie-identifikasie moontlik geen direkte effek op omkeer-voorneme sal hê nie, nadat 'n verhouding wat as betekenisloos beskou word, aangedui is. Hierbenewens het die resultate ook geen indirekte verhouding tussen outentieke leierskap en omkeer-voorneme deur organisasie-identifikasie as 'n mediërende veranderlike aangedui nie. Dit dui daarop dat, selfs wanneer 'n werknemer persoonlik met hul organisasie identifiseer, dit nie noodwendig beteken dat hulle minder geneig sal wees om hul huidige werk te laat vaar nie.

Die resultate het egter wel 'n indirekte effek van outentieke leierskap op omkeer-voorneme aangedui, deur organisasie-identifikasie en werkbetrokkenheid, wat dus aandui dat alhoewel 'n werknemer se identiteit in verhouding tot hul organisasie dalk nie 'n direkte impak het op hul besluit om die organisasie te verlaat nie, is dit waarskynlik dat die teenwoordigheid daarvan die werknemer meer betrokke kan voel deur persoonlik geïnteresseer te raak by die bereiking van die organisasie se doelstelling, wat dus aandui dat alhoewel 'n werknemer se identiteit rakende hul organisasie moontlik nie 'n direkte impak het op hul besluit om hul organisasie te verlaat nie. Die resultate het egter 'n indirekte effek van outentieke leierskap op omkeer-voorneme aangedui, deur organisasie-identifikasie en werkbetrokkenheid, wat dus aandui dat alhoewel 'n werknemer se identiteit met betrekking tot hul organisasie dalk nie 'n direkte impak het op hul besluit om die organisasie te verlaat nie, die teenwoordigheid daarvan werknemers moontlik meer betrokke kan laat voel deur persoonlik betrokke te raak by die bereiking van die organisasie se doelwitte, wat daartoe kan lei dat hulle meer geneig sal wees om by die organisasie aan te bly, so lank hulle die bereiking van die gelykgewardeerde doelwitte persoonlik vooropstel.

Ter afsluiting van hierdie studie het die navorser die bevindinge van die studie benut om gevolgtrekkings te maak, beperkings uit te lig en aanbevelings te maak vir toekomstige navorsing en praktyk.

CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Leadership remains an important area of research due to the increased number of corporate scandals and unethical behaviour of business leaders in various parts of the world (Megheirkouni & Mejheirkouni, 2020; Hassan & Ahmed, 2011). For an organisation to succeed, the presence of a good leader is essential for building trusting relationships, for acting consistently, and for motivating employees through words and actions (Al Khajeh, 2018; Grobler et al., 2011). Indicating a focus on organisational challenges, Avolio and Gardner (2005) has long since stated that the world of work might benefit from a renewed focus on the contributions of a genuine leadership style, that is authentic in nature without any hidden intent. This is supported by Al Khajeh (2018) who indicated that the leadership style of an organisation still has a considerable impact on its performance and influences the organisation's culture. Al Khajeh (2018) further emphasised that quality leadership is essential for an organisation to achieve its mission and vision, all while coping with external environmental changes.

As the current circumstances in which organisations find themselves are shifting, be it due to the fourth industrial revolution or the global Covid-19 pandemic, it is important for leadership to not only shift with the needs of these circumstances but also shift along with the needs of the organisation and its employees (Stoller, 2020; De Bruin et al., 2017). According to Stoller (2020) the Covid-19 pandemic has forced leaders to become more proactive; to clarify the governance for the crises at hand; to act quickly; and communicate effectively; all while remaining both realistic and optimistic about the future. Hence it is important to prepare an organisation for leadership challenges by re-evaluating popular methodology regarding the definition of leadership and how such research may contribute to the advancement in leadership developments (Megheirkouni & Mejheirkouni, 2020; Pearce & Manz, 2005). Leadership has always been and will always be linked to the core existence of an organisation and its success in the industry (Van Vugt & Ronay, 2014). To this day, leadership has drawn the attention of scholars and practitioners as being one of the most interesting fields of study (Megheirkouni & Mejheirkouni, 2020).

1.1. Problem Statement

Previous research studies conducted on leadership indicate a period during which leadership was viewed with scepticism. However, for years the focus has been shifting towards the importance of the leadership role, the challenges faced by organisations in the 21st century and how it contributes to the success of an organisation (Megheirkouni & Mejheirkouni, 2020; Koech & Namusonge, 2012). Organisational performance can therefore be describe as a complex and multidimensional phenomenon in business literature where focus is placed on the actual outputs of the organisation, measured against the intended outputs, goals and objects; in order to determine its level of profit (financial performance), market share (stakeholder return) and product quality (product/service performance) in relation to other organisations in the same industry (Al Khajeh, 2018; Obiwuru et al., 2011). Thus, it reflects the level of productivity among organisational members' revenue, profit, growth, development, and organisational expansion (Obiwuru et al., 2011). However, Seland and Theron (2021) emphasised that organisational performance can also be influenced by other constructs such as production and efficiency, core people processes, work-unit climate, employee satisfaction, adaptability, capacity, and future growth. For the purpose of this study, the focus will be placed on the quality of the leadership within an organisation and its impact on the overall organisational performance (Danişman et al., 2015). Although it may not be the only factor that has an influence on the performance of an organisation, Danişman et al. (2015) stated that leadership relating to employee performance and participation is important for organisational development.

A greater sense of strategic direction and motivation due to effective goal setting, will contribute towards the overall organisational effectiveness (Van Lill et al., 2020). Thus, a leader's function might be to motivate individuals to set aside selfish goals in order to achieve collective effectiveness (Hogan & Sherman, 2020). Leadership can therefore be conceptualised as the process in which an organisation attempts to influence employees to direct their efforts towards the achievement of organisational objectives (Grobler et al., 2011). However, various leadership styles may rely on different techniques for influencing subordinates towards reaching organisational goals and ultimately impact the ways in which employees may perceive their 'leaders'. The requirement to shift towards a more bottom-up instead of top-down leadership style has gained more attention in recent years (Van Beers et al., 2022). This may

be due to the increase in the level of competitiveness among organisations and the global environment causing organisations to seek better ways in which to compete and drive a higher level of performance using leadership (Al Khajeh, 2018; Pearce and Manz, 2005). In recent years, authentic leadership has become the focus of research in South Africa (Stander et al., 2015).

Hassan and Ahmed (2011) indicated that for leadership to be effective and successful within an organisation, it should be authentic in nature; thus, demonstrating the importance for leaders to have a well-established relationship with their subordinates. Various studies have indicated a positive relationship between authentic leadership and other factors, including job satisfaction, work engagement, favourable organisational behaviour, and innovation (Wang & Hsieh, 2013). Employees reporting to a supervisor, that has a more authentic approach in leadership style, is more likely to experience work engagement and feel as though they have an identity within the organisation. This is due to human nature of sharing learned behaviours and values; indicating that when an employee interacts with a leader that displays the same personality characteristics, values, goals or interest; the employee is likely to feel more at ease and engaged with the leader due to their better understand and acceptance of those who are similar to themselves. Hassan and Ahmed (2011) stated that employees are more likely to contribute to the organisation's success when they consider their immediate superiors and top management able to facilitate growth and productivity within the organisation by making competent decisions.

The interest in authentic leadership as a topic has increased over the years due to the manner in which authentic leaders influence employees with a view to obtain organisational success (Avolio et al., 2004). According to Greek philosophy, authenticity can be conceptualised as 'To thine own self be true' (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 6; Luthans & Avolio, 2003, p. 242). If one is true to oneself, then an authentic individual is likely to display true characteristics, values, and motivations to others without any hidden intent. This indicates that the positive constructs of authenticity can be linked to other descriptive words such as 'genuine, reliable, trustworthy, real, and veritable'. Therefore Harter (2002) concluded that an individual who is authentic is both *owning* of their personal experiences (thoughts, emotions, or beliefs) and *acting* as their true self (expression of thoughts and beliefs) (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). This leads to the understanding that authentic leaders may be open and honest about their opinions and values in such a manner that it may provide beneficial contributions to subordinates and

their inputs into the organisation. Thus authentic leadership comprises: i) *self-awareness* (a leader's understanding of themselves, their mental state and perceived image); ii) *balanced processing of information* (a leader's ability to remain objective while considering and analysing all relevant facts); iii) *rational transparency* (the morals, values, and standards that drive a leader's actions); and iv) *internalised moral standards* (a leader's openness when expressing their true thoughts and motives) (Maximo et al., 2019; Alok & Israel, 2012; Neider & Schriesheim, 2011).

In positive psychology, Fredrickson's broaden-and-build model stipulated that positive emotions tend to be fleeting conditions, lasting only a few minutes. In addition, Wissing et al. (2014) concluded that a high frequency of positive emotions may prove to be important for building and sustaining wellbeing within the workplace. Subsequently, in the broaden-and-build model, authentic leadership, as a positive leadership style, may tend to open the employee's mind to new possibilities and expand their perceptual abilities; thus, facilitating a greater cognitive flexibility, openness towards the work environment and processes, and creating a greater sense of meaning and coherence among employees. Wissing et al. (2014) therefore concluded that positive emotions facilitated by authentic leadership may assist employees in building up intellectual, social, physical, and psychological resources. However, it is important to note that a focus on more positive emotions does not mean that the negative emotions are no longer present; thus, an authentic leader may in certain circumstances experience negative emotions and use these emotions in a manner that may prove to be beneficial; such as improved memory, improved judgement accuracy, reduced gullibility, and reduced stereotyping (Wissing et al., 2014; Forgas, 2013; Fredrickson, 2001).

With authentic leadership being viewed as an important resource for employees within the work environment, this study will apply the well-established job demands-resources model (JD-R model) to gain an understanding of the presence of leadership and how it may contribute to higher levels of workplace engagement among employees (Stander et al., 2015). According to Schaufeli (2015) the JD-R model assists in formulating hypotheses regarding the impact positive leadership styles may have on employee engagement. *Job resources* refer to the physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of the job that require sustained physical and psychological effort (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). According to Schreuder and Coetzee (2011), authentic leadership can be classified as a job resource due to its nature to; i) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological cost, ii) achieve work

goals in a functional manner, and iii) stimulate personal growth, learning and development. Leadership is therefore an example of a job resource at an interpersonal level where the focus is placed on social relations (e.g., supervision, co-worker support, team climate) (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). In addition, Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) pointed out that a direct relationship exists between job resources and work engagement, since job resources may lessen job demands and contribute to personal growth.

With supervisory support being seen as a job resource, Tims et al. (2013) argued that the increase in job resources may lead to an increase in work engagement. Thus, the presence of authentic leadership as a job resource is likely to lead to an increase in work engagement. This is supported by Schreuder and Coetzee's (2011) findings that work engagement is positively associated with job resources and can be related back to social support. Other studies have also found similar finding indicating that management influences employee job demands and resources, which can in turn indirectly impact employee engagement (Bakker et al., 2012). Thus, the more an authentic leader (job resources) is present and available to support their followers, the more likely employees are to feel engaged (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). Many studies regarding leadership have supported the JD-R model and its underlying processes that impact the employee engagement levels within organisations. Moreover, empirical evidence has established that, should the job resources be available to the employees, it can lead to an increase in the motivational and also energetic processes, suggesting that a lack of job resources can contribute to job strain. In other words, the presence of job resources can buffer job strain (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018). Robison (2008) contends that the following three elements may contribute to the increase in work engagement, namely: recognition, progress discussion, and relationship at work with one's leader.

Organisations in the 21st century require their employees to be energetic and dedicated, in other words engaged in their work (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018; Breevaart et al., 2012). Therefore, most studies use Schaufeli and Bakker's words to define work engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018; Breevaart et al., 2012; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Wang and Hsieh (2013) maintain that employees who receive supervisory support and are treated sincerely, are likely to experience an increase in their engagement at work. Authentic leaders are likely to aim at gaining the confidence of their employees by building honest and sincere relationships. Furthermore, Hassan and Ahmed (2011) stated that supervisory support in the form of

assistance, critical feedback, interest in professional and career advancement, and professional advice has been positively related to an increase in work engagement. Additionally, there has also been an increase in evidence linking work engagement to a range of important organisational outcomes such as high productivity, quality services and products, economic growth, good team morale, retention, and work ethics (Albrecht & Andreetta, 2011). Employees with an authentic supervisory relationship are likely to feel that they have the required support within their working environment that will ultimately result in work engagement (Stander et al., 2015).

Through recent findings it can be argued that an organisation plays a crucial role in employee engagement due to their legitimate power to influence work conditions (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018; Bakker et al., 2012). Thus Bakker et al. (2012) stated that job resources is an important driver for work engagement. This is due to the confirmation of recent studies stating that employee engagement can be increased by the presence of career growth opportunities, supportive colleague relationships, performance feedback and employee competency development opportunities. Within this study, authentic leadership is ultimately seen as a job resource due to the social support it provides their direct reports in order to enable them in overcoming the current job demands experienced. With this confirmation regarding the impact of job resources on employees' work engagement, it can be concluded that authentic leadership as a job resource will have a positive impact on the engagement levels experienced by employees. According to the JD-R model employees are likely to experience job satisfaction when their job resources outweigh their job demands. Thus, for an organisation to gain job satisfaction among its employees, the presence of the elements pertaining to authentic leadership is crucial. The Herzberg Theory indicates that when satisfaction increases the level of work engagement and sense of belonging among employees is also likely to increase (Kiley, 2011).

Within the Herzberg Theory, authentic leadership and organisational identification can be seen as motivational factors due to their nature to strive in challenging job roles, openness towards personal growth opportunities, searching for recognition, and feelings of achievement and belonging (Kiley, 2011). However, limited research has been done on how authentic leadership may contribute to building an organisational identity with employees and ultimately increase the work engagement levels within organisations. Most research focused on various contributions that authentic leadership may make to the organisation that include turnover

intention, bullying, change management and burnout. Therefore, when considering organisational identification, Apostel et al. (2018) emphasised the importance of including an element of organisational identification to act as a mediating factor between authentic leadership and work engagement, as a recommendation for future studies.

Pierce and Gardner (2004) indicated that organisational identification refers to the extent to which an individual believes themselves to be capable, worthy, and significant within a certain context. Thus, the concept 'organization-based self-esteem' (OBSE) was conceptualised by Pierce et al., indicating the degree to which an individual believes themselves to be a capable and worthy member of their organisation (Pierce & Gardner, 2004); thus, the view employees have of their identity within the organisation. Shamir and Kark (2004) observed a positive relationship between OBSE/organisational identification (e.g., work unit) ($r = 0.31$) and personal identification (e.g., having shared values with one's manager) ($r = 0.37$). These findings, supported by previous studies conducted on the experience of self-esteem in sports teams, have indicated a positive correlation between identification and collective self-esteem (Wann, 1994). Therefore, with the consideration of the relationship between organisational identification and work engagement among employees, it can be concluded that authentic leadership is also likely to have a direct and indirect impact on the turnover intention of an organisation's workforce, due to its positive association with work engagement which will indicate that the employees are less inclined to leave their current organisation Schreuder and Coetzee's (2011).

The 'connection to the organisation or to senior management' has been identified by Robison (2008) as one of the top five predictors of turnover, indicating that, when employees do not feel a connection with their organisational mission, purpose, or leadership, they will be more likely to leave their current working environment in search of an organisation or managerial relationship where they may experience that desired connection. Hence organisational identification has been introduced to this study to act as a mediating factor between authentic leadership and turnover intention. Avolio and Gardner (2005) explained that because authentic leaders tend to focus on creating self-awareness within themselves, they may automatically contribute to the self-regulatory processes of followers. Therefore, followers may gain a deeper understanding of their values, identity, and emotions. When an employee has gained an understanding of their organisational identity, they are more likely to be accepting of various organisational factors and thus strive towards reaching the objectives of their organisation

(Inoue et al., 2022; Kim et al., 2018; Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Elving (2005) stated that building a collaborative organisational team is possible when employees are committed and engaged; a trust relationship with management exists; and the employees have gained a sense of organisational identification (Kim et al., 2018). Therefore, organisational identification is likely to contribute to work engagement by allowing employees to personally become involved in tasks and the decision-making process (Lee et al., 2020; Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

With a voice and an opportunity to contribute to and be recognised by the organisation, the employees may be less inclined to leave their current occupation. Overall, the presence of authentic leadership, and therein organisational identification, is likely to increase job engagement and ultimately result in a decrease in employee turnover intention. Long et al. (2012) indicated that employee turnover will always be an organisational concern regardless of business strategies, nature, size or even location. Laschinger and Fida (2014) drew attention to workplace factors that are likely to promote retention of professional employees through employee empowerment by optimising work performance within a supportive environment. Turnover intention can be defined as ‘an employee’s personal estimated probability that he or she intends to leave the organization permanently in the near future’ (Long et al., 2012, p. 576). Mello (2015) indicates that employees may leave their current organisation either on request of the organisation or on their own initiative. The employee may thus involuntarily be required to leave their current job at the demand of their employer or may leave in a voluntary manner. This may cause disruption within the organisation’s operational aspects, work team dynamics, and unit performance (Mello, 2015). Robinson (2008) stressed that organisations with moderate to strong engagement levels are less likely to experience a high rate of employee turnover than are organisations where employees do not receive recognition for their work and effort.

Laschinger and Fida (2014) stated that the primary studies of authentic leadership mainly focused on the positive outcomes within a set theory. However, they further stated that it may be beneficial to determine possible correlations between authentic leadership and negative work experiences (turnover intention) and their detrimental outcomes to determine its ‘protective effects’. This study thus aimed to fill this gap by including organisational identification within the relationships between authentic leadership, work engagement, and turnover intention, making the purpose of this study to investigate the relationship between

authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement and turnover intention within the South African work context.

1.2. Research Questions

- How are authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement and turnover intention conceptualised according to literature?
- What are the direct relationships between authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement and turnover intention?
- What are the indirect relationships between authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement and turnover intention?
- What recommendations can be made for future research and practice?

1.3. Expected Contribution of the Study

1.3.1. Contribution to the Organisation

McCleskey (2014) highlighted the importance of future studies to make connections between development and efficacy, organisations, and outcomes, and between leaders and followers. Hence this study sought to provide a clear indication of how an authentic leadership style may build an organisational culture from which employees are likely to gain an identity within their current organisation. The organisation will furthermore gain valuable insights into how to capitalise on a leadership style with multiple benefits, which focuses on building an honest and trustworthy relationship with their employees. This may assist in increasing the work engagement level and decreasing the employee turnover rate within an organisation, providing many fiscal benefits as well as supporting the improvement of the organisation and employees' psychological well-being. Overall, this research aimed to make an impact on management's view of more suitable leadership styles within the organisation and the importance thereof.

1.3.2. Contribution to the I/O Psychology literature

Stander et al. (2015) identified a need for future research to further explore authentic leadership as a job resource within the JD-R model. This study thus sought to contribute to literature

regarding authentic leadership as a job resource within the working environment and how this may impact the organisation positively; thus, enriching the literature regarding the impact an authentic leadership style may have on the JD-R model. Furthermore, a contribution is made by providing multisource data of leadership behaviour that may be measured in an objective manner due to variables such as turnover intention (Apostel et al., 2018). This study also researched authentic leadership that included organisational identification as a construct, including an element of identification as recommended by Apostel et al. (2018) to ‘shed light on the mediating mechanisms involved’. Overall, Industrial and Organisational Psychology profited from this study due to the insight provided regarding the relationship between authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement and how this may impact an employee’s turnover intention.

1.4. Research Objectives

The research objectives were divided into general objectives and specific objectives.

1.4.1. General Objectives

To investigate the relationships between authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement and turnover intention within the South African work context.

1.4.2. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of this research were:

- To conceptualise authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement and turnover intention according to the literature.
- To determine the direct relationships between authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement and turnover intention.
- To determine the indirect relationships between authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement and turnover intention.
- To make recommendations for future research and practice.

1.5. Research Hypotheses

- H1: Authentic leadership has a positive relationship with organisational identification.
- H2: Authentic leadership has a positive relationship with work engagement.
- H3: Organisational identification has a positive relationship with work engagement.
- H4: Authentic leadership has an indirect relationship with work engagement through organisational identification.
- H5: Authentic leadership has a negative relationship with turnover intention.
- H6: Organisational identification has a negative relationship with turnover intention.
- H7: Work engagement has a negative relationship with turnover intention.
- H8: Authentic leadership has an indirect relationship with turnover intention through organisational identification.

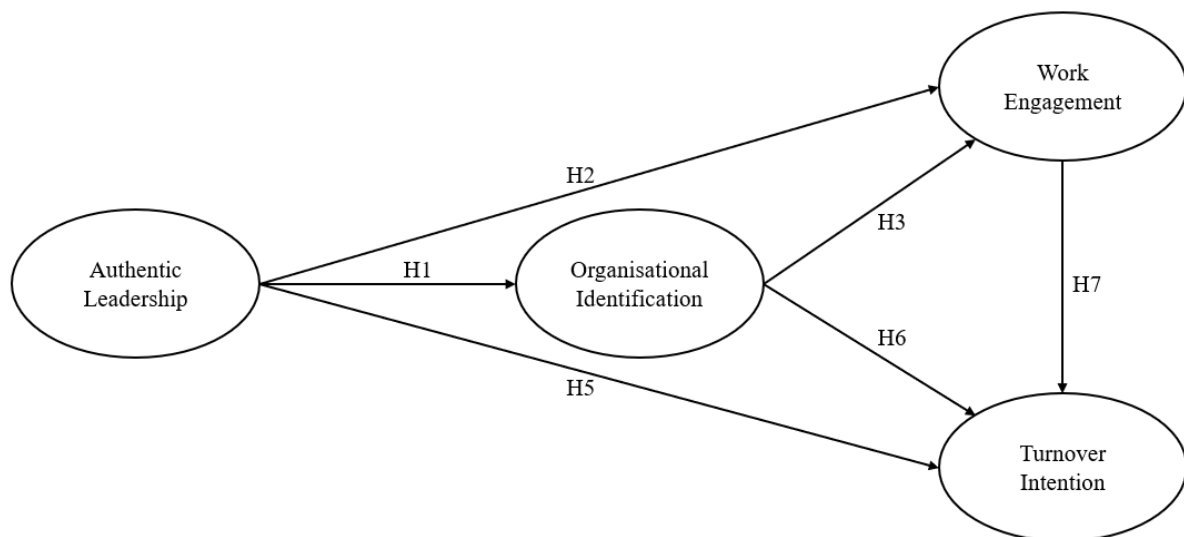


Figure 1: *The research model illustrating direct hypothetical relationships between variables*

1.6. Research Design

1.6.1. Research Approach

This study followed a quantitative research approach. Research studies of a quantitative nature form part of a conclusive research study which includes a large data sample and collection procedure that is of a structured nature (Struwig & Stead, 2013; Struwig & Stead, 2001).

Struwig and Stead (2013) further described a quantitative research study to be a method of research in which certain hypotheses concerning the causality of relationships in large data samples are tested. Furthermore, this study applied a cross-sectional research design to collect data from a convenient data sample to achieve the research objectives. Fouché et al. (2011) stated that this cross-sectional design is used to gain knowledge as to whether a certain problem exists within a diverse research sample group, at a specific point in time. A cross-sectional research study allowed the researcher to gain a broad base of knowledge on a specific subject, with a more reliable participation rate, while being more cost effective (Fouché et al., 2011; Levin, 2006).

1.7. Research Method

1.7.1. Literature Review

Within this research a thorough literature review regarding authentic leadership was conducted on organisational identification, work engagement and employee turnover intention. The researcher sought to obtain research articles relevant to this study using various search engines, namely Google Scholar, EbscoHost (databases include the Academic Search Premiere and Business Source Premier), Emerald Insight Journals and ResearchGate. Some of the journals that were referred to are: *Leadership Quarterly*, *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology (SAJIP)*, *Journal of Management*, *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, *International Journal of Human and Social Sciences*, *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *The Journal for Transdisciplinary Research in Southern Africa*, *Career Development International*, *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*, and *the Journal of Occupational Health Psychology*. In addition to the academic articles, other relevant sources (such as books) were also consulted to ensure that a comprehensive review of the literature was achieved. Keywords that were utilised during the literature search included authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement, turnover intention, leadership, work disengagement, employee turnover, work identity, job demands-resources model (JD-R model) and the South African workforce.

1.7.2. Research Participants

This survey applied a purposive sampling method to gather data. The researcher targeted participants that met the minimum inclusion criteria, were easily reachable and willing to participate in the study. The researcher made use of their own judgement to select participants most suited for this study. Özdemir et al. (2011) refers to this non-probability sampling as freeform sampling method that targets participants that are readily available to the researcher. However, to ensure that the research participants identified were still in line with the overall objective of this study, the following criteria were set: i) the participants had to be employed by an organisation that operates within the South African workforce (participant employed with a multinational organisation must operate within the South African office of their organisation). This study focused on the general population and did not focus on a specific economic sector. However, it did exclude participants from medical facilities and educational institutions; ii) the participants had to have a current or previously established upward reporting line whereby they are required to interact with another employee in a leadership position; iii) they had to be at least 18 years of age; iv) had to at least have Grade 10 level English proficiency so as to enable them to answer the online survey which was presented in English (UK) only; v) have access to a digital device and a stable internet connection; and vi) be willing to participate in this survey honestly and of their own free will. Only the responses of participants that met the criteria were included in the data analysis of this study. The sample objective was to gather approximately 300 ($n \geq 300$) completed surveys. The size of a research sample was determined by the optimum number necessary to enable valid conclusions to be drawn concerning the population (Marshall, 1996).

1.7.3. Measuring Instruments

For purposes of this study, various measuring instruments were used, being the following:

Biographical characteristics:

The biographical questionnaire contained selected questions regarding the participants' age, gender, ethnicity, highest level of education, and tenure within their current organisation. However, due to the anonymous nature of this research study, no information that could identify the participants (e.g., name, surname, identification number) was required or used within this questionnaire. The purpose of this questionnaire was to gain relevant information

that could assist in describing the population of this study and has not been used to compare different biographical groups. Obtaining demographic data of the research participants allowed the researcher to ensure that the population group is a true portrayal of the diversity within South Africa through a fair demographic distribution (fair balance in age, gender, ethnicity, levels of education included in data sample). Furthermore, this will also allow future studies to easily replicate the population group to ensure consistency, should they wish to cross-reference the results.

Authentic leadership:

This study used the Authentic Leadership Inventory (ALI) that contains 14 items with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (Neider & Schriesheim, 2011). The scale focused on four dimensions of authentic leadership, namely self-awareness, balanced processing, relational transparency, and internalised moral perspective (Coxen et al., 2016). Example items included: 'My leader shows consistency between his/her beliefs and actions' and 'My leader encourages others to voice opposing points of view'. The ALI scale is a good measure of authentic leadership with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging between 0.74 and 0.85 (Neider & Schriesheim, 2011) and has also been proven to be reliable within the South African context ($\alpha = 0.93$; Stander et al., 2015).

Organisational identification:

To measure organisational identification, this study used the Organisational Identification (OID) scale developed by Mael and Tetrick in 1992. The OID consists of 6 items and is rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In a South African study recently conducted by Ndjama and Joubert (2020), the following items were included: 'When someone criticises my institution, it feels like a personal insult'; 'I am very interested in what others think about my institution'; 'When I talk about my institution, I usually say 'we' rather than 'they''; 'This institution's successes are my successes'; 'When someone praises this institution, it feels like a personal compliment'; and 'If a story in the media criticises this institution, I would feel embarrassed.' For purposes of this study, the wording of the 6 items has been adjusted from institution to organisation and makes reference to 'my organisation' instead of 'this institution.' This adjustment was made to make the question items more applicable to the general South African workforce. Ndjama and Joubert (2020) furthermore found that during a pilot study of 30 participants, the OID scale was deemed reliable with a Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.86.

Work engagement:

The 9-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) was applied to assess work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2006). Louw and Steyn (2021) explain that the items of the UWES scale are grouped into three subscales that reflect the underlying dimensions of engagement: *Vigour (VI)* (3 items; ‘At my work, I feel bursting with energy’; ‘At my job, I feel strong and vigorous’; and ‘I am enthusiastic about my job’); *Dedication (DE)* (3 items; ‘My job inspires me’; ‘When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work’; and ‘I feel happy when I am working intensely’); and *Absorption (AB)* (3 items; ‘I am proud of the work that I do’; ‘I am immersed in my work’; and ‘I get carried away when I am working’). Schaufeli et al. (2006) developed the more convenient 9-item scale from the 17-item scale. This development was conducted across ten countries, including South Africa, and indicated Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for the 9-item scale that varied between 0.85 and 0.92 (Schaufeli et al., 2006). The UWES-9 is a self-reporting questionnaire that makes use of a 7-point frequency rating scale: 0 (never), 1 (a few times a year or less), 2 (once a month or less), 3 (a few times a month), 4 (once a week), 5 (a few times a week) to 6 (every day) (Louw & Steyn, 2021).

Turnover Intention:

This study applied the scale used by Sjöberg and Sverke for Turnover Intention. This scale consists of 3 items (‘I am actively looking for other jobs’; ‘I feel that I could leave my job’; and ‘If I was completely free to choose, I would leave my job’) measured on a 5-point Likert scale: 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) (Sjöberg & Sverke, 2000). This scale has been used in multiple South African studies and has been proven reliable with a Cronbach’s alpha coefficients ranging between 0.73 and 0.83 (van Rensburg et al., 2017; Pienaar et al., 2007).

1.7.4. Research Procedure

After having received approval from the Industrial Psychology and Human Resources Management Scientific Committee (IPSHRM SciCom) and thereafter the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC) of North-West University to conduct the proposed study, the researcher made use of a third party, Prolific, to assist with the data collection. The third party (Prolific) approached various participants that were purposively identified by the inclusion criteria indicated for the research participants, via an online invitation (e.g., email, SMS or advertised on social media such as Facebook or LinkedIn) to

complete the survey. The survey was accessible via a link that redirected the participant to the host platform (Prolific) on which the survey was created. Upon accessing the survey, the participants firstly received an instruction page that clarified the purpose of the survey, the anonymous nature of the survey, ethical clearance, and the instruction on how to complete the survey. The participants were also presented with the researcher's and/or Prolific representative's contact information with the view to support them with any additional uncertainties or technical difficulties they might have experienced. The participants were under no obligation to make use of the contact information provided to them and was thereby able to maintain their anonymity in this process. The contact information was therefore provided to the participants out of courtesy to address any concerns or questions they may have had. Any such interactions would then be kept strictly confidential by the third party (Prolific) and/or researcher/research supervisor. Thus participants, who contacted the third party (Prolific) and/or researcher/research supervisor, would have decided to make their identity known of their own free will.

Once the participants had indicated that they had understood the purpose of the survey, they could willingly proceed with filling in the questionnaire. They were then directed to the items of the various measurement tools used in this study. The participant could withdraw from the survey and cease completion of the survey at any point in time. Data gathering continued until an approximate data sample of $n \geq 300$ was achieved. After the collection of the data, the survey was closed to prevent further completion (standardisation of data). Prolific thereafter made the data available to the researcher/research supervisor in an Excel format where the data could be analysed statistically. The data shared by Prolific contained no personal data that could be used to identify the research participants; the researcher's only interest was in the data as gathered by the survey. Only the researcher and research supervisor had access to the data shared by Prolific, which was stored by the research supervisor on his password-protected computer (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2013). The password for this online platform contained 12 – 15 characters in length and included 2 special characters, 1 number, at least 1 uppercase character and at least 1 lower case character. Finally, the anonymous results were disseminated in the form of a master's mini-dissertation and potential publication(s) in a peer-reviewed scientific journal(s).

1.7.5. Statistical Analysis

This study used latent variable modelling to test the hypotheses. Latent variables are described as variables (constructs or factors) that cannot directly be observed or measured due to its intangible nature (Lomax & Schumacker, 2004). To depict the relationships among the observed variables, this research study made use of structural equation modelling (SEM). Here various types of models have been used, aiming at a quantitative test of a theoretical model hypothesised by a researcher (Lomax & Schumacker, 2004). The research measurement model was determined by applying confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Confirmatory factor analysis was conducted with Mplus 8.6 to confirm the validity of the scales being used in this study. This assisted in the consideration of the research model fit by the following indices: Comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Values for the CFI and TLI of 0.90 or above show adequate fit, whereas 0.08 and below is considered adequate for the RMSEA (Van de Schoot et al., 2012). However, should the sample data not support the theoretical model, then either the original model may be modified and retested, or other theoretical models need to be developed and tested (Lomax & Schumacker, 2004).

In line with Struwig and Stead (2013), correlations were used that are positive or negative, statistically significant (0.05 level or 0.01 level) and indicate the effect size of the correlation (small effect ($r \leq 0.29$), medium effect ($0.30 \leq r \leq 0.49$) or large effect ($r \geq 0.50$)). The correlation coefficient can vary from -1 – negative relation, 0 – no relationship to +1 – positive relationship (Struwig & Stead, 2013). Path analyses were done via Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to determine which independent variables predict the dependent variables (Civelek, 2018).

1.7.6. Ethical Considerations

All actions were based on ethical decision-making to address any ethical issues that could arise, in an appropriate manner. The researcher adhered to the seven ethical guidelines as provided by Bogdan and Biklen (1997):

- Avoiding all research sites where participants may have felt coerced to participate in the research by clearly indicating that the survey is of their own free will and that they are under no obligation to participate.

- Honouring the privacy of the participants by ensuring that the participants' identity and individual responses on the survey remained anonymous and were only looked at in a collective manner along with all other responses. The demographic data were not used to draw comparisons between various demographic groups.
- Due to the anonymous nature of this research study, no personal information was gathered that could have been used to determine the participants' identities. The only time a participant's identity could be made known is if they decided to reach out to the third party (Prolific) or researcher/research supervisor. Should the participants have decided to do so, they made their identity known of their own free will. Such interactions were then kept strictly confidential by the third party (Prolific) and/or researcher/research supervisor to protect the identity of the participant from becoming known by others.
- The researcher informed the participants of what was expected of them and what they could expect from the researcher and the research process. The purpose of the study was clearly defined, and participants were provided with the needed contact details of the researcher and research supervisor, should they have any questions they needed to be answered. The researcher and research supervisor were always open and honest in their communications with the participants.
- Participants were treated with respect and cooperation with them was sought throughout the research process, through effective communication.
- The collection of the research data only commenced once approval and permission had been obtained from the IPSHRM SciCom and EMS-REC to conduct the study.
- The researcher was truthful when writing and reporting on the findings by ensuring the necessary quality check with the research supervisor.

Ethical considerations are important to protect the rights of the participants. Thus, the researcher followed the Health Professions Council of South Africa's (HPCSA) guidelines to protect themselves and the participants. All participants partaking in this study were clearly and fully informed that by completing the survey they were willingly agreeing to accept the terms and conditions of the research study as indicated by the survey instructions. The survey instructions stated their rights and that the data obtained during the research would remain anonymous. Hence no personal data (other than age, gender, ethnicity, highest level of education and tenure) that could have been used to specifically identify the participant's

identity, was collected in accordance with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPI Act no. 4 of 2013). Given that the study recruited online, and did not ask for explicit identifying information, the possibility of relating any survey back to an individual would for practical purposes have not been possible. The study was non-discriminatory and unbiased. It was the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the participants understood what the study entailed and to clarify any uncertainties. Participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any stage. The research proceedings only commenced once the EMS-REC of North-West University had reviewed and approved the submitted research proposal.

1.8. Chapter Division

The chapters in this mini-dissertation are presented as follows:

Chapter 1: Introduction

Chapter 2: Research article

Chapter 3: Conclusions, limitations, and recommendations

1.9. Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the problem statement, research objectives and research hypotheses. Furthermore, an explanation of the research methods and its particulars were provided. It concluded with an indication of the chapters included in this study.

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CHAPTER 2
RESEARCH ARTICLE

The relationships between authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement and turnover intention within the South African work context

Abstract

Orientation: Leadership continues to play an important role in an employee's decision to remain with their current employer. This study sought to provide insights into the important job resource, namely leadership, by investigating the relationship between authentic leadership, work engagement, organisational identification, and turnover intention.

Research purpose: To investigate the relationships between authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement and turnover intention within the South African work context.

Motivation for the study: The research results can provide South African organisations with the much-needed insights into the impact the presence of an authentic leadership style can have on an employee's identification with the organisation - thereby bringing about that the workforce becomes more engaged in their work and less likely to leave their current organisation.

Research design, approach, and method: This study followed a quantitative, cross-sectional design by means of which 414 employees within the South African workforce were approached to complete an online self-report survey. Thereafter the research data and variable relationships were analysed by implementing latent variable-, and structural equation modelling.

Main findings: The results indicated that authentic leadership is positively related to organisational identification and work engagement alike, with organisational identification also being positively related to work engagement. The results also indicated a positive relationship between authentic leadership and work engagement through organisational identification as a mediating variable. Conversely, authentic leadership and work engagement also indicated a negative relationship to turnover intention. However, despite indicating a negative relationship, the results showed that organisational identification revealed no direct effect on turnover intention. Hence the results also indicated no indirect relationship between authentic leadership and turnover intention through organisational identification as a mediating variable. Nonetheless, the results did indicate a potential indirect effect from authentic leadership on turnover intention through organisational identification and work engagement.

Practical/Managerial Implications: The results indicated the importance of the presence of an authentic leader within organisations and how they contribute to an increase in an employee's identification with their organisation and their engagement in the interest of achieving the work objectives of the organisation, while such leaders retain employees in their current organisation.

Contribution/Value-add: This research expands on current literature by reporting on the insights gained during the investigation of the impact an authentic leadership style has on an employee's identification with their organisation, their work engagement, and their ultimate decisions to continue their employment with their current organisation. This study broadens the existing research on leadership by introducing organisational identification as a variable, on which limited research currently exists.

Keywords: Authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement, turnover intention, leadership, work disengagement, employee turnover, job demands-resources model (JD-R model).

Introduction

Leadership was once observed as an individual's ability to assess a situation, decide to face it head on, and inform their subordinates to follow them (Sinding & Waldstrøm, 2014). This leadership approach is unlikely to survive in today's ever-changing world, where organisations are adopting flexible ways of working (e.g., hybrid and working from home) and leaders are exposed to a higher level of ambiguity that comes with a virtual work environment. Leadership thus remains one of the most important factors to be taken into consideration when building a successful organisation. Lombardo and Eichinger (2014) pointed out that with a decrease in the availability of competent leaders within the past few years, the supply and demand problem concerning leadership is more important than ever before to address. Research has shown that leadership is considered one of the most competitive priorities for organisations (Safarzadeh et al., 2015). Hence, Grobler et al. (2011) hold that the presence of a good leader who focuses on building trustful relationships, and displays consistency between actions and words, motivates those around them. Authentic leadership is considered essential for an organisation to reach success; indicating that it is now more important than ever before for organisations to develop leaders who will provide their organisations with a strategic advantage that is deeply rooted in the core values of what it is that makes organisations successful. Sinding and Waldstrøm (2014) stated that 'successful organisational change is highly dependent on effective leadership throughout an organisation' (p. 567). Therefore, in recent years, organisations have placed more focus on the impact of successfully implemented leadership and how it contributes to the organisational growth and profitability (O'Toole, 2019).

Gary Burnison, CEO of Korn Ferry (an international consulting firm specialising in leadership) remarks:

'Today, we're seeing more change than we have in the past 10 years. As the world tilts on its axis, people are turning to leaders for help and hope, direction and decisions. After all, leadership is inspiring others to believe and enabling that belief to become reality' (Burnison, 2022, p. 8).

Many definitions have been created for the term *leadership* over the years; thus, creating complexity with how different societies may view leadership, with some focusing more on the personality and physical characteristics, while others focus on the pre-scribed behaviours laid

down for individuals within a leadership role (Sinding & Waldstrøm, 2014; Holtzhausen, 2011). Nonetheless, they all agreed that leadership involves the presence of social influence and the complex interaction between three components, namely *the leader* (the one who interacts with the follower and drives the achievement of group goals), *the followers* (the organised group or employees), and a *specific situation* (a given set of circumstances and environment, internal and external) (Sinding & Waldstrøm, 2014; Holtzhausen, 2011). Leadership can thus be conceptualised as the process during which an organisation's leadership attempts to socially influence employees to direct and guide their efforts through seeking voluntary participation of their subordinates in achieving the organisational objectives (Schriesheim et al., 1978, as cited by Sinding & Waldstrøm, 2014; Grobler et al., 2011; Holtzhausen, 2011). Sinding and Waldstrøm (2014) furthermore also cited House et al. (1997), who defined organisational leadership as an individual's ability to influence, motivate and enable others to contribute to the effectiveness and success of their current organisation. Hence leadership refers to an individual's ability to hold influence over others, whether in a formal position of power or informal influence by any employee on a daily basis, in order to motivate and enable them to make a more effective and successful contribution to their organisation, accomplishing the predetermined organisational objectives (Van Lill & Taylor, 2022). With leadership having such an impact on the workforce and how they are likely to approach certain circumstances, Nkuna and Sebola (2015) stated that an organisation's behaviour can be predicted by the type of leadership that currently prevails.

There is no country in the world in a better position than South Africa that understands the level of hope and positive contribution a great leader can make when thinking of the great Nelson Mandela, who became the first democratic president after years of facing extremely challenging circumstances (Nkuna & Sebola, 2015). However, in recent years, South Africa has arguably faced a significant decline in leadership, lacking a strong vision for the future and displaying little commitment to achieving the established objectives (Mashamaite & Raseala, 2019). Behavioural research has shown that there is no one best style of leadership and that the most effective leadership style will depend on the situation at hand (Sinding & Waldstrøm, 2014; Werner, 2011a); thus making it clear that leadership is an important factor that needs to be appropriate to ensure employee engagement, success, and growth within an organisation – especially during recent times after the COVID-19 pandemic with much uncertainty still observed among employees regarding the way forward within the work environment. Nkuna and Sebola (2015) furthermore indicated that, within South Africa, the actions of leaders do

not always match the promises made to their subordinates. Thus, with poor leadership plaguing the South African workforce, especially the state-owned enterprises (SOEs), it has become more important than ever before to understand the impact of a positive leadership style and how this can contribute to improving the organisational culture, profitability, and growth (Mashamaite & Raseala, 2019). The abovementioned situation amplifies the importance for this study to further explore the role of an authentic leader within the South African context and the important considerations and complexities that organisations should bear in mind when implementing a specific leadership style within practice.

For this reason, it is crucial to explore how leadership, as a job resource, contributes to building a workforce that is engaged and committed to achieving the organisational outcomes. This study therefore applied the well-established job demands-resources model (JD-R model) since its theoretical foundation adds to the understanding of how the presence of leadership will impact the engagement experienced by employees (Stander et al., 2015; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). According to Mello (2015) ‘every occupation has specific work characteristics associated with well-being’ (p. 250). These characteristics can therefore be divided into job demands and job resources. *Job demands* represent the physical, social, and organisational work aspects that may cause strain when they exceed the employee’s capabilities (Adil, 2019; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004), while *job resources* are conceptualised as the physical, psychological, social, or organisational aspects of a job that reduce the job demands, as well as the associated physiological and psychological costs. Job resources are furthermore considered to be functional in achieving work objectives and stimulating individual growth and development (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).

The levels of interpersonal and social relationships experienced between employees and organisations/colleagues (e.g., leadership and co-worker support, team climate) have been found to be job resources that are key to lessening the strains caused by job demands (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). For this study, emphasis has been placed on leadership and its role as a job resource that contributes to a more engaged workforce that feels one with their organisation and will therefore be less likely to leave their current employment (Tims et al., 2013). Thus, authentic leadership can be classified as a job resource due to its nature to; i) reduce job demands and the associated physiological and psychological cost, ii) achieve work goals in a functional manner, and iii) stimulate personal growth, learning and development. Leadership

is an example of a job resource at an interpersonal level where the focus is placed on social relations (e.g., supervision, co-worker support, team climate) (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011).

Hence, the general objective of the current study was to investigate the relationships between authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement and turnover intention within the South African work context. The motivation for this study was to explore how the presence of an authentic leader will contribute to the employee feeling that they can identify with their organisation, that they are of great value and to be making a contribution, which all in all leads to an increase in work engagement and a decrease in their likelihood of leaving their current organisation. Thus, increasing the research on leadership by including a variable of identification among employees, prior research done on these constructs appear to be limited. Apostel et al. (2018) indicates that future research will benefit from investigating how authentic leadership may contribute to building an organisational identity within employees and ultimately increase the work engagement levels within organisations. Since most recent studies have indicated a focus more inclined towards the various contributions authentic leadership may offer organisation with regards to turnover intention, bullying, change management and burnout; it is for this reason that Apostel et al. (2018) emphasised the importance of including organisational identification as a mediating factor between authentic leadership and work engagement.

The subsequent sections present and discuss the literature review relevant to authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement and turnover intention. These sections also address the methodologies and methods applied in this study. This is followed by the analyses of the research data and results discussion, with further elaboration available in the third and final section of the study.

Literature Review

Authentic Leadership

Many have asked the question, ‘what makes a good leader?’ Grobler et al. (2011) describe a successful leader as having to contain the ability to inspire others to reach beyond what they believe is their potential. This is achieved firstly by the leader’s acceptance of their

responsibilities, and thereafter influencing their followers by building trust, acting consistently, gaining buy-in towards their vision for the future, listening to those around them, motivating others through words and deeds, and ultimately placing the needs of others above their own (Grobler et al., 2011).

Previous research conducted regarding the effects of leadership on the employees' well-being and organisational outcome are based on leadership frameworks which mostly focused on either an individual or organisational level of analysis (Mazzetti & Schaufeli, 2022). It is for this reason that Mazzetti and Schaufeli (2022) emphasised the lack of such research that has been rooted in sound psychological theories regarding motivation. Therefore, this current study focused on the contribution that a positive leadership style can bring to support organisations in achieving their objectives through building an authentic leadership culture. Indicating that over the years authentic leadership has grown into a favourite topic among researchers who wish to explore more in depth its impact on organisational success (Avolio et al., 2004).

Greek philosophy conceptualised authenticity as: 'To thine own self be true' (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 6; Luthans & Avolio, 2003, p. 242), indicating that an authentic leader can be described as being genuine, reliable, trustworthy, veritable, and real. Described as both owning their personal experiences and acting as their true self, authentic leaders are to be perceived as open and honest in their opinions, seizing the opportunity to bring a valuable contribution to their subordinates and organisation (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Adigüzel et al. (2022) characterised authentic leaders as self-disciplined, hardworking, and open to feedback to discover their strengths and improve on their development areas. They strive to build strong interpersonal relationships and understand that being in a leadership position requires lifelong personal development (Adigüzel et al., 2022).

They typically do not have any hidden intentions and will share their values with others to create a motivational work environment. Authentic leadership therefore comprises i) *self-awareness* (a leader's understanding of themselves, their mental state and perceived image); ii) *balanced processing of information* (a leader remaining objective while considering and analysing all relevant facts); iii) *relational transparency* (the morals, values and standards that drive a leader's actions); and iv) *internalised moral standards* (the openness in leaders to express their true thoughts and motives) (Maximo et al., 2019; Alok & Israel, 2012; Neider & Schriesheim, 2011). An authentic leader can thus be defined as an individual who will live their

values and represent the values of their organisation; who develops a future in which others can invest personally and drive global trends that may contribute to organisational and employee growth; an individual who generates enthusiasm and a new sense of commitment to support followers in achieving their potential; while sharing their spirituality and working in a multi-cultural environment; and who displays empathy with the feelings, needs and demands of others (Bhindi & Duignan, 1997: as cited by Adigüzel et al., 2022).

To explain the impact of a positive leadership style, this study turned to the broaden-and-build model of positive emotions developed by Barbara Frederickson. This model indicates that positive emotions (e.g., joy, gratitude and contentment) tend to be fleeting conditions, but when experienced at high frequencies, they tend to build a far greater and sustainable sense of well-being (Wissing et al., 2014; Fredrickson, 2001). With more emphasis placed on the experience of negative emotions in the past, this new focus is likely to bring valuable knowledge as to how positive emotions can provide employees with essential resources and improve their well-being (Wissing et al., 2014; Fredrickson, 2001). However, it is important to note that by placing the focus on more positive emotions does not mean that the negative emotions are no longer present; thus, there may be certain circumstances in which even an authentic leader may use negative emotions in order to obtain an immediate result (e.g., disciplinary discussions) (Wissing et al., 2014; Fredrickson, 2001).

This model highlights two effects: Firstly, the *broadening effect*, referring to when an employee experiences positive emotion; thus, creating a stronger sense of awareness towards themselves and their environment, which leads to an increase in creativity and cognitive flexibility, and develops a greater sense of meaning and coherence (Wissing et al., 2014; Fredrickson, 2001). This further leads to the conclusion that the presence of an authentic leader will lead employees to not only feel positive emotions themselves, but also express those emotions towards others, which subsequently creates a positive experience, leading to employees being more likely to seek out new challenges and experiences, interact more with others, and support those in need. Thus, after broadening an employee's mindset, the positive emotions can lead to an improved performance within familiar or unfamiliar activities (Zhen et al., 2020). The second effect relates to the *building effect*. Here Fredrickson (1998, 2001; as cited by Wissing et al., 2014), indicated that the presence of positive emotions will not only broaden their mind, perceptual awareness, and creativity, but also provide employees with durable personal resources. Thus, an authentic leadership level will provide the employees with the needed intellectual, social,

and physical resources to maintain their ability to overcome difficult situations. Thus, viewed from a resource perspective, authentic leaders play a vital role in determining the potential values of an organisation and contribute to an increase in employee-participation, -satisfaction, -engagement, -performance, and -well-being (Adigüzel et al., 2022).

Organisational Identification

Organisational identification can be conceptualised as the perception of oneself or the self-categorising within a specific organisation (Inoue et al., 2022). Kim et al. (2018) also conceptualised organisational identification as the degree to which an employee is aware of how they identify themselves with their organisation, playing an important role to explain their own perception, attitudes, and behaviours; thus, referring to the way an individual may relate to another social group or category, to the point where they take on that identity as their own. Lee et al. (2020) further conceptualised organisational identification as the degree to which an individual's self-identity becomes intertwined with that of the organisation due to the overlaps between how they view their own identity and the identity of the organisation. Organisational identification can therefore be generalised as an employee's tendency to relate to the identity of their peers or organisation and to adopt that identity as their own.

Although identifying with and adopting another identity as one's own, it is important to evaluate the impact certain identities may have – either on an individual, group, or organisational level. Holtzhausen (2011) emphasised that it is of great importance for countries such as South Africa, with such a unique culture, to not try to implement a leadership style that will drive a European culture in an organisation. Where Europeans may tend to focus more on individual identity and accomplishments, the South African culture is more grounded in *Ubuntu*, a Southern Africa concept that means 'we are what we are through our interactions with others' (Holtzhausen, 2011). Different identities may be more suitable for certain cultures and circumstances than others.

Work Engagement

Work engagement is conceptualised as an employee's physical, cognitive, and emotional absorption in a task, with one becoming oblivious of time and external distractions, experiencing feelings of deep focus and harmony with others involved in the same task

(Werner, 2011b); thus, referring to an employee's allegiance to the organisation at which they are employed (Coetzee, 2014). SHL (2009, as cited by Coetzee, 2014; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011) also describe engagement as a psychological state in which employees find themselves when performing their job. However, an employee's engagement levels can fluctuate, indicating that an engaged employee is likely to be at their 'peak'-type state and may tend to experience engagement more often than employees who are less engaged (Coetzee, 2014; Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). Yet, work engagement has been indicated to be distinct from other constructs such as organisational commitment, job satisfaction and job involvement.

Most studies use Schaufeli and Bakker's (2004) words to define work engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state that is characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018; Breevaart et al., 2012). Schreuder and Coetzee (2011) describe these characteristics as: *Vigour*, referring to the high energy levels and mental resilience employees put in to overcome a difficult obstacle or accomplish a complex task; *Dedication* (efficacy), referring to the enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, openness towards challenges, pride etc – it is the emotional side of work engagement, when spending significant amounts of time doing something that is meaningful; and lastly, *Absorption*, referring to the cognitive aspect where the employees experience high levels of concentration in achieving the task at hand, causing one to be unaware of anything but achieving the goal.

When considering Maslow's hierarchy of needs, it becomes clear that although the social need to relate and interact with others is considered a lower-order need, the desire to achieve one's full potential (self-actualisation) is indicated as a higher need (Kiley, 2011a). Therefore, when an employee is presented with work that they find challenging, interesting, and one in which they enjoy participating, the organisation will be presenting the employee with intrinsic motivation that will contribute to an increase in their engagement levels (Kiley, 2011a). Hence Kiley (2011a) indicate that work engagement refers to more than simply involvement in work, but rather to the likelihood of employees to display a passionate drive towards achieving their goals.

A significant amount of evidence exists that supports the impact work engagement has on an organisation's performance (Coetzee, 2014). An engaged employee is likely to display physical involvement in their work and cognitive awareness and be emotionally vested in delivering on their specific job obligations and overall organisational objectives (Schreuder & Coetzee,

2011). Furthermore, Schreuder and Coetzee (2011) also indicated that job resources contribute to the reduction of job demands, thus referring to a positive association with work engagement. In addition, work engagement has also been positively related to social support from colleagues and superiors, performance feedback, coaching etc, indicating that the more job resources available to an employee, the more likely it is that the employee will experience higher levels of engagement (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). Bakker et al. (2012) mentioned that previous studies indicated that a manager's influence on an employee's job demands and resources, can in turn have an indirect impact on an employee's engagement levels. Thus, when considering the JD-R model and its underlying processes that impact the employee engagement levels within organisations, an increase in the motivational and energetic processes with the presence of job resources, can buffer the job strain (Bakker & Demerouti, 2018).

Turnover Intention

As retrieved from literature, there are many ways to conceptualise turnover intention, with the most common description used being 'an employee's desire to quit their current job at a certain point in time' (Tolksdorf et al., 2022). Long et al. (2012) also defined turnover intention as 'an employee's personal estimated probability that he or she intends to leave the organization permanently in the near future' (p. 576); thus, making it clear that turnover intention refers to the intent of the employee to purposefully terminate their employment within their current organisation within a planned timeframe.

Turnover intention can take on various forms; the first being *Involuntary turnover*, when employment is terminated at the organisations request (e.g., downsizing, poor performance etc.) (Mello, 2015; Coetzee, 2014). The second being *Functional turnover*, when an employee's decision to leave is welcomed by the organisation. This form tends to be less damaging since both parties wish to terminate the employment while it is still considered a loss in opportunity and unnecessary costs spent in the recruitment process (e.g., poor performance, failure to fit in with company culture etc.) (Mello, 2015; Coetzee, 2014). The final form being *Voluntary turnover*, when competent and capable employees leave their current organisation. This is often considered the costliest as it impacts the productivity and takes time to recruit and develop a suitable replacement (Coetzee, 2014).

Coetzee (2014) points out that a high level of turnover can indicate major complications for any organisation, and the root cause can originate from i) *internal* (e.g., ineffective recruitment processes, uncompetitive remuneration etc.), or ii) *external*, due to the talent war among competitive organisations. Even when organisations are fully committed to creating good work environments, employees may still end up resigning due to various reasons (Grobler et al., 2011). Hence it is more important than ever for organisations to explore ways of increasing their employees' engagement levels to ensure the retention of their talent.

The relationship between Authentic Leadership and Organisational Identification

Abdirahman and Wee (2021) stated that authentic leaders are likely to strive towards increasing the engagement levels in their followers by enhancing their identification with their leader and organisation. This is achieved through an authentic leader's tendency to be their true self, showing their followers that they are genuine, honest, reliable, and trustworthy (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Adıgüzel et al. (2022) found that positive characteristics in leaders can positively impact the way employees see themselves due to the supportive, encouraging, and motivational nature of their leaders.

A supportive environment can therefore make an organisation's identity look more attractive (Monzai et al., 2016; as cited by Adıgüzel et al., 2022). García-Guiu et al. (2014) believe that authentic leadership will have a positive relationship with organisational identifications due to the natural tendency of an authentic leadership type to build trust with others and in turn develop a stronger identification with their leader and organisation. Consequently, the following relationship was hypothesised:

Hypothesis 1: Authentic leadership has a positive relationship with organisational identification.

The relationship between Authentic Leadership and Work Engagement

Abdirahman and Wee (2021) maintain that it is likely that a positive relationship exists between authentic leadership and work engagement. This relationship is achieved by an authentic leader's ability to create a sense of commitment, satisfaction, and enthusiasm among

employees (Abdirahman & Wee, 2021). According to Schreuder and Coetzee (2011) there are three components to being authentically happy, namely pleasure, meaning, and engagement. Ciftci and Erkanli (2020) indicated that a leader who can create a trusting, fair, secure, and pressure-free climate, will likely create increased levels of engagement in their followers. Ciftci and Erkanli (2020) mention that previous studies have observed a positive relationship between authentic leadership and work engagement. However, authentic leaders do not only increase employees' work engagement level; they also contribute to creating a positive work climate that contains high levels of sacrifice and trust (Ciftci & Erkanli, 2020).

When considering this in the light of the JD-R model, it can be concluded that authentic leadership will have a positive relationship with work engagement (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). According to Schreuder and Coetzee (2011) authentic leadership (supervision) can be considered a job resource. As per the JD-R theory, a job resource will reduce job demand, drive the achievement of goals, and stimulate personal growth (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). In addition, the Herzberg two-factor model equally emphasised that the presence of a good relationship with one's leader will lead to an increase in job engagement and satisfaction (Kiley, 2011a; Kiley, 2011b). Hence the following hypothesis was tested:

Hypothesis 2: Authentic leadership has a positive relationship with work engagement.

The relationship between Organisational Identification and Work Engagement

By implementing the Social Identity Theory, it was determined that organisational identification can be linked to job satisfaction through enhanced engagement in the workplace. The Social Identity Theory indicates a strong bond between employee/organisation and what it is that motivates them (Guo et al., 2022; Karanika-Murray et al., 2015). This is supported by Ashforth and Mael (1989, as cited by He & Brown, 2013) who claim that employees will experience organisational identification when they perceive 'oneness' with the organisation at which they currently are employed.

Therefore, the stronger the psychological bond (the more the employee identifies with it), the more willing they are to perform better and engage with their work itself. Thus, based on the Social Identity Theory, Karanika-Murray et al. (2015) indicated that strong identification with a specific organisation will result in a feeling of engagement towards that organisation's goals.

Moreover, a relationship between organisational identification and work engagement is possible, since an employee's psychological bond with an organisation (or lack thereof) holds the potential of enhancing or decreasing their engagement in their work (Guo et al., 2022; Karanika-Murray et al., 2015, He & Brown, 2013). Thus, the following hypothesis was tested:

Hypothesis 3: Organisational identification has a positive relationship with work engagement.

The relationship between Authentic Leadership and Turnover Intention

A related study conducted by Azanza et al. (2015, as cited by Alkharabsheh & Alias, 2018) revealed that a significant negative relationship exists between authentic leadership and turnover intention. In addition, various other studies have supported the same significant negative relationship between authentic leadership and turnover intention, indicating that the presence of an authentic leader is likely to lower an employee's intention to leave their current organisation (Alkharabsheh & Alias, 2018). This is supported by Ladao et al. (2022) who hypothesised that 'authentic leadership is significantly and negatively related to turnover intention' due to the tendency of authentic leaders to capitalise on variables such as increased self-awareness, engagement, and trust in superiors, which will contribute to a decreased tendency in employees to leave their current organisation. Grobler et al. (2011) furthermore indicated that to reduce the turnover of their current employees, organisations must ensure good quality and integrity in the leadership styles implemented. However, Arokiasamy et al. (2022) furthermore stated that previous research failed to adapt to the new developments in the dynamic process present within an authentic leadership style, making it important to explore the benefits a genuine and value-based leadership holds for organisations. The next hypothesis was thus tested:

Hypothesis 5: Authentic leadership has a negative relationship with turnover intention.

The relationship between Organisational Identification and Turnover Intention

Research has shown that a negative relationship exists between organisational identification and turnover intention (Narayansany & Isa, 2021; Turkoglu & Dalgic, 2019; Alkharabsheh & Alias, 2018), indicating that an increase in organisational identification will lead to a decrease in turnover intention. Narayansany and Isa (2021) hold that when an employee engages with

other employees, they are likely to start building a psychological connection through shared values (cognitive) and by expressing trust (emotional). Thus, by building a personal relationship with others, employees will then start feeling more integrated into the organisation and start sharing common values and objectives with others. Grobler et al. (2011) indicated that an employee's personal fit with their organisation can prove to be a favourable impact for the organisation to retain their current employees. Turkoglu and Dalgic (2019) maintain that the turnover of high-performing employees will damage the organisation's productivity; therefore, it is important for leaders to find a solution by making the employees believe that they share the organisation's characteristics.

An employee who personally identifies with the organisation may in some sense see the organisation as their own business (Turkoglu & Dalgic, 2019). They might therefore experience high intrinsic motivation and involvement that will lead to the decrease in turnover intention. Thus, if an employee can identify with their organisation on a more personal basis, they will be less likely to leave their organisation unless they are faced with extreme circumstances (Narayansany & Isa, 2021). Hence the following hypothesis was tested:

Hypothesis 6: Organisational identification has a negative relationship with turnover intention.

The relationship between Work Engagement and Turnover Intention

A negative relationship between work engagement and turnover intention has been observed (Xiong & Wen; 2020 Alkharabsheh & Alias, 2018), meaning that an increase in engagement levels will lead to a decrease in an employee's turnover intention. Work engagement is often referred to as a predictor of work commitment and its presence may contribute to decrease an organisations current turnover intention (Xiong & Wen, 2020). Thus, to retain their current talent, organisations must provide their employees with work that they find to be challenging and meaningful (Grobler et al., 2011). The organisation will therefore need to keep their employees engaged in their work and in so doing make them feel more enthusiastic about their contributions to the organisational outcomes. However, when considering the JD-R model, the absence of key job resources can have severe consequences for an employee's engagement levels and can make it more likely that they would leave their current work. Placing emphasis on the importance for organisations to provide their employees with the needed job resources

will increase their engagement levels and decrease their likely intent to leave their current organisation. Thus, the following hypothesis was tested:

Hypothesis 7: Work engagement has a negative relationship with turnover intention.

The series of hypothetical relationships as previously discussed, are illustrated in Figure 1 below:

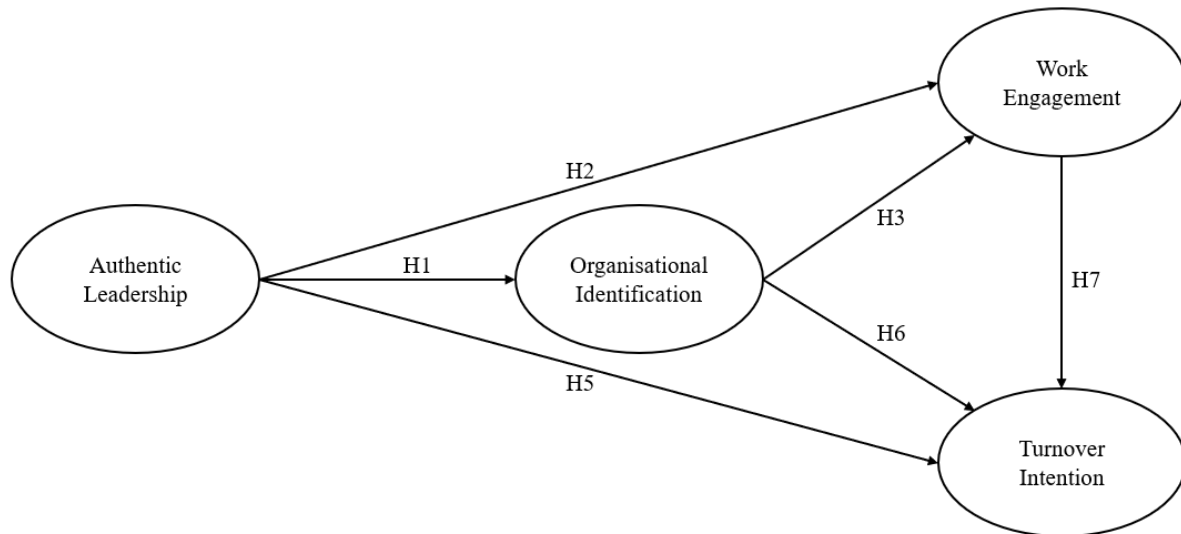


Figure 1. The research model illustrating direct hypothetical relationships between variables

Indirect Relationships

Not all hypothesised relationships tested in this study are likely to have a direct impact on another variable. There is a likelihood that organisational identification may act as a mediating factor between authentic leadership and its relationship with work engagement and turnover intention. Hence the following hypotheses were also tested:

Hypothesis 4: Authentic leadership has an indirect relationship with work engagement through organisational identification.

Hypothesis 8: Authentic leadership has an indirect relationship with turnover intention through organisational identification.

Hypotheses 9: Authentic leadership has an indirect relationship through both organisational identification and work engagement, in serial, to turnover intention.

Research Design

Research Approach

This study adopted a quantitative research approach that consisted of a large data sample and included collection procedures that are of a structured nature (Struwig & Stead, 2013; Struwig & Stead, 2001). Struwig and Stead (2013) further described a quantitative research study to be a method of research in which certain hypotheses concerning the causality of relationships in large data samples are tested. In addition, this study also included a cross-sectional research design to collect data from a convenient data sample to achieve the research objectives. Fouché et al. (2011) explained that a cross-sectional design is used to determine whether a certain problem exists within a diverse research sample group, at a specific point in time. Thus, a cross-sectional research design allowed the researcher to gain a broader base of knowledge on a specific subject, which was more reliable in terms of its participation rate and can be considered more cost effective (Fouché et al., 2011; Levin, 2006).

Research Method

Research Participants

Table 1 provides a breakdown of the participants who had completed the survey for this research study.

Table 1

Characteristics of the research participants (n = 414)

Item	Category	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age category (in years)	18 – 24	81	19.57
	25 – 34	272	65.70
	35 – 44	48	11.59
	45+	13	3.14
Gender	Male	208	50.24
	Female	205	49.52
	Non-binary	1	0.24
Ethnicity	African	346	83.57

	White	23	5.56
	Coloured	30	7.25
	Indian	15	3.62
	Other	0	0.00
Education (highest level)	High school	82	19.81
	Diploma	70	16.91
	Degree / Honours Degree	214	51.69
	Postgraduate Degree	48	11.59
Tenure	Less than 1 year	94	22.71
	1 year – less than 2 years	53	12.80
	2 years – less than 5 years	150	36.23
	5 years – less than 10 years	83	20.05
	10+ years	28	6.76
	Missing values	6	1.45
Reporting to current manager	Less than 1 year	111	26.81
	1 year – less than 2 years	80	19.32
	2 years – less than 5 years	160	38.65
	5 years – less than 10 years	56	13.53
	10+ years	7	1.69

This study applied a non-probability, purposive sampling method and collected data from employees ($n = 414$) within the South African workforce. The majority of the participants aged between 25 and 34 years (65.70%). From the demographic data it can be confirmed that all participants ($n = 414$) who participated in this study were at least the minimum age of 18 years. The participants also portrayed a near-balanced result between male (50.24%) and female (49.52%) representation, with this result leaning slightly in the favour of male representation. Regarding racial ethnicity, 83.57% of the participant were of African descent, with a further 5.56% White, 7.25% Coloured, and 3.62% of Indian descent. The participants also indicated their highest level of education whereby all have at least attended high school, with the majority seeking further education by obtaining a diploma (16.91%), a degree/honours degree (51.69%), and a further postgraduate degree (11.59%). With regard to their tenure, the majority of the participants (36.23%) indicated having at least 2 years but less than 5 years' work experience. In addition, all the participants indicated that they have an upward reporting line (reporting to a manager/supervisor) as required from them to be able to participate in this study. As a result, 38.65% indicated that they have reported to their current manager/supervisor for at least 2 years but less than 5 years.

Measuring Instruments

This study used various measuring instruments to achieve its purpose. These measuring instruments included the following:

Biographical characteristics

To obtain descriptive data regarding the research participants, this study included a biographical questionnaire that contained selected questions regarding the participants' age, gender, ethnicity, highest level of education, and tenure within their current organisation. However, no information that could identify the participants (e.g., name, surname, identification number) was required or used within this questionnaire. This allowed the survey to remain anonymous since the purpose of this questionnaire was only to gain relevant information that may assist in describing the population of this study and not to be used to compare different biographical groups. Obtaining demographic data of the research participants allowed the researcher to ensure that the population group is a true portrayal of the diversity within South Africa through a fair demographic distribution (fair balance in age, gender, ethnicity, levels of education included in the data sample). Additionally, this will also allow future studies to easily replicate the population group to ensure consistency should they wish to cross-reference the results.

Authentic leadership

This study used the Authentic Leadership Inventory (ALI) which consists of 14 items with a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (Neider & Schriesheim, 2011). The scale focuses on four dimensions of authentic leadership, namely: self-awareness; balanced processing; relational transparency; and internalised moral perspective (Coxen, et al., 2016). Example items included 'My leader shows consistency between his/her beliefs and actions' and 'My leader encourages others to voice opposing points of view.' The ALI scale is considered a good measure of authentic leadership with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging from 0.74 to 0.85 (Neider & Schriesheim, 2011) and has also been proven to be reliable within the South African context ($\alpha = 0.93$; Stander et al., 2015).

Organisational identification

To measure organisational identification, this study used Mael and Tetrick's Organisational Identification (OID) scale, which they developed in 1992. The OID consists of 6 items and is

rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). In a South African study recently conducted by Ndjama and Joubert (2020), the following items were included: ‘When someone criticises my institution, it feels like a personal insult’; ‘I am very interested in what others think about my institution’; ‘When I talk about my institution, I usually say ‘we’ rather than ‘they’’; ‘This institution’s successes are my successes’; ‘When someone praises this institution, it feels like a personal compliment’; and ‘If a story in the media criticises this institution, I would feel embarrassed.’ Ndjama and Joubert (2020) furthermore found that during a pilot study, the OID scale was deemed reliable with a Cronbach’s alpha coefficient of 0.86. However, to better fit the purpose of this current study, the wording of the 6 items has been adjusted from institution to organisation and referred to ‘my organisation’ instead of ‘this institution.’ This adjustment was made to make the question items more applicable to the general South African workforce.

Work engagement

The 9-item Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) was used to assess work engagement in this study (Schaufeli et al., 2006). The items of the UWES scale are grouped into three subscales that reflect the underlying dimensions of engagement: *Vigour (VI)* (3 items; ‘At my work, I feel bursting with energy’; ‘At my job, I feel strong and vigorous’; and ‘I am enthusiastic about my job’); *Dedication (DE)* (3 items; ‘My job inspires me’; ‘When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work’; and ‘I feel happy when I am working intensely’), and *Absorption (AB)* (3 items; ‘I am proud of the work that I do’; ‘I am immersed in my work’; and ‘I get carried away when I am working’) (Louw & Steyn, 2021). The more convenient 9-item scale was developed from the 17-item scale by Schaufeli et al. (2006). This development was conducted across ten countries, including South Africa, and indicated Cronbach’s alpha coefficients for the 9-item scale that varied between 0.85 and 0.92 (Schaufeli et al., 2006). The UWES-9 is a self-reporting questionnaire that makes use of a 7-point frequency rating scale: 0 (never), 1 (a few times a year or less), 2 (once a month or less), 3 (a few times a month), 4 (once a week), 5 (a few times a week) to 6 (every day) (Louw & Steyn, 2021).

Turnover Intention

This study used the Sjöberg and Sverke scale for Turnover Intention. This scale consists of 3 items (‘I am actively looking for other jobs’; ‘I feel that I could leave my job’; and ‘If I was completely free to choose, I would leave my job’) that are measured on a 5-point Likert scale 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree) (Sjöberg & Sverke, 2000). Used in multiple South

African studies, this scale has been proven to be reliable with Cronbach's alpha coefficients ranging between 0.73 and 0.83 (van Rensburg et al., 2017; Pienaar et al., 2007).

Statistical Analysis

Latent variable modelling was conducted to test the research hypotheses. Latent variables are described as variables (constructs or factors) that cannot be observed or measured directly due to the intangible nature thereof (Lomax & Schumacker, 2004). To depict the relationships among the observed variables, this research study made use of structural equation modelling (SEM). Here various types of models have been used, taking a quantitative approach in testing the theoretical model hypothesised by the researcher (Lomax & Schumacker, 2004). The research measurement model was determined by means of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA). Specifically, confirmatory factor analyses were conducted with Mplus 8.6 to confirm the validity of the questionnaires being used in this study. This assisted in the consideration of the research model fit by the following indices: Comparative fit index (CFI), Tucker-Lewis index (TLI), and Root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA). Values for the CFI and TLI of 0.90 or above show adequate fit whereas 0.08 and below is considered adequate for the RMSEA (van de Schoot et al., 2012). However, should the sample data not support the theoretical model, either the original model may be modified and retested, or other theoretical models need to be developed and tested (Lomax & Schumacker, 2004).

In line with Struwig and Stead (2013), correlations were used that are positive or negative, statistically significant (0.05 level or 0.01 level) and indicate the effect size of the correlation (small effect ($r \leq 0.29$), medium effect ($0.30 \leq r \leq 0.49$) or large effect ($r \geq 0.50$)). The correlation coefficient can vary from -1 – negative relation, 0 – no relationship to +1 – positive relationship (Struwig & Stead, 2013). Path analyses were done via Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) to determine which independent variables predict the dependent variables (Civelek, 2018).

Research Procedure

Only after approval had been obtained from the Industrial Psychology and Human Resources Management Scientific Committee (IPSHRM SciCom), and thereafter the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC) of North-West University, did

the researcher commence with gathering data. The researcher made use of a third party, Prolific, to approach various participants that were purposefully identified by the inclusion criteria indicated for the research participants. Prolific invited the participants (via email, SMS or advertised on social media such as Facebook or LinkedIn) to participate in the online survey hosted on the Prolific platform. Upon accessing the survey, the participants firstly received an instruction page that clarified the purpose of the survey, the anonymous nature of the survey, ethical clearance, and the instruction on how to complete the survey. Here the participants were also presented with the needed contact information of the Prolific representative and/or researcher/research supervisor, to support with any additional uncertainties or technical difficulties experienced. The participants were provided with this contact information out of courtesy to address any concerns or questions they may have had. Such interaction was commenced by the participants themselves, causing them to forgo their anonymity of their own free will. Prolific and/or researcher/research supervisor ensured that all such interaction was kept strictly confidential.

On completion of the instruction procedure, the participants indicated that they understood the purpose of the survey and willingly participated in the research study. Following the instructions, the participants were directed to the items of the various measuring tools used within this study. The participants could withdraw from the process at any moment by ceasing the completion of the survey. The data gathering continued until an approximate data sample of $n \geq 300$ was achieved. Thereafter, once satisfied with the number of surveys completed, the survey was closed to prevent further completion (standardisation of data). Prolific then made the raw research data available to the researcher and research supervisor in Excel format to allow for the needed statistical analysis to take place. This data shared by Prolific did not contain any personal data that could be used to identify the research participants. Only the researcher and research supervisor had access to the data shared by Prolific, which is stored by the research supervisor on his password-protected computer (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2013). The final research results are made available in a disseminated format of a Master's mini-dissertation, where the results have been reported on anonymously and collectively.

Ethical Considerations

Only once ethical clearance had been obtained from the EMS-REC of North-West University (Ethics Number: NWU-01310-21-A4), did the researcher commence with this research study.

Ethical considerations are important to protect the rights of the participants. Therefore, the researcher followed the ethical guidelines as provided by Bogdan and Biklen (1997) and the Health Professions Council of South Africa's (HPCSA) to protect themselves and the research participants.

The researcher sought to ensure that under no circumstances would any participant have felt obligated to participate in this study. This was achieved by clearly informing the participants that by completing the survey they were willingly agreeing to do so and accept the term and conditions of the research study as indicated by the survey instructions. Participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any stage. The survey clearly defined the purpose of this research to allow the participant to make an informed decisions regarding what was expected of them and what they could expect from the researcher and the research process. In addition, should there be any uncertainty, the participants were provided with the needed contact details for the researcher and research supervisor should they have had any questions that required answering. The researcher and research supervisor were always respectful, co-operative, open and honest in any communications with the participants. It was the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that the participants understood what the study was about and to clarify any uncertainties.

Furthermore, the survey instruction clearly informed participants of their rights, especially with regard to the anonymity of the data collected. Due to the anonymous nature of this research study, no personal data (other than age, gender, ethnicity, highest level of education and tenure), that could have been used to specifically identify the participants' identities, were collected in accordance with the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPI Act no. 4 of 2013). Thus, given that the study recruited online and did not ask for explicit identifying information, the possibility of relating any survey back to a specific individual is not made possible. The only time a participant's identity could be made known is if they decided to reach out to the third party (Prolific) or researcher/research supervisor. Should the participants have decided to do so, they would have made their identity known of their own free will. Such interactions were then kept strictly confidential by the third party (Prolific) or researcher/research supervisor to honour the privacy of the participant and protect their identity from becoming known to others.

The researcher remained truthful when writing and reporting on the findings by ensuring the needful quality check with the research supervisor. The study was non-discriminatory and unbiased. The researcher ensured that all demographic data collected in this study were used to describe the data sample used in this study so that it may be replicated by future studies. The results have been reported on collectively and no comparisons have been drawn between demographic groups.

Results

The best-fitting factor structure for Authentic Leadership (AL)

As AL has been operationalised in different ways, this study sought to investigate the best-fitting factor structure of it to include in the overall measurement model. As Table 2 below depicts, a unidimensional, four-factor, second-order, bifactor (CFA), four-factor ESEM, and bifactor ESEM models were tested in this regard.

Table 2

Fit statistics of the AL measurement models

Description	χ^2	df	CFI	TLI	RMSEA [90%CI]	SRMR
Unidimensional model	653.96	77	0.925	0.912	0.143 [.133, .153]	0.059
Four-factor model	301.08	71	0.970	0.962	0.094 [.083, .105]	0.039
Second-order model	293.21	73	0.971	0.964	0.091 [.080, .101]	0.039
Bi-factor model	330.76	79	0.966	0.954	0.102 [.092, .114]	0.045
Four-factor ESEM*	80.75	41	0.995	0.989	0.051 [.035, .068]	0.015
Bifactor ESEM*	52.71	31	0.997	0.991	0.046 [.023, .067]	0.012

Notes: χ^2 = Chi-square; df = Degrees of freedom; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; TLI = Tucker-Lewis Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation; SRMR = Standardised Root Mean Squared Residual; * = Mplus DIFFTEST $p < 0.01$

The results indicated that the bifactor ESEM model of AL was the best-fitting model ($\chi^2 = 52.71$; $df = 31$; $CFI = 0.997$; $TLI = 0.991$; $RMSEA = 0.046$ 90% CI[.023, .067]). This was also supported by the Mplus DIFFTEST option, which compared the two ESEM models. The result of the chi-square difference test (DIFFTEST) was significant ($p < 0.01$), indicating that the ESEM model worsened model fit. The bifactor ESEM model was then converted into a bifactor ESEM-within-CFA model to be included in the overall set-ESEM measurement model – this

allows for the bifactor ESEM model to be specified with starting values in the presence of other CFA factors while retaining the accuracy from the original bifactor ESEM model.

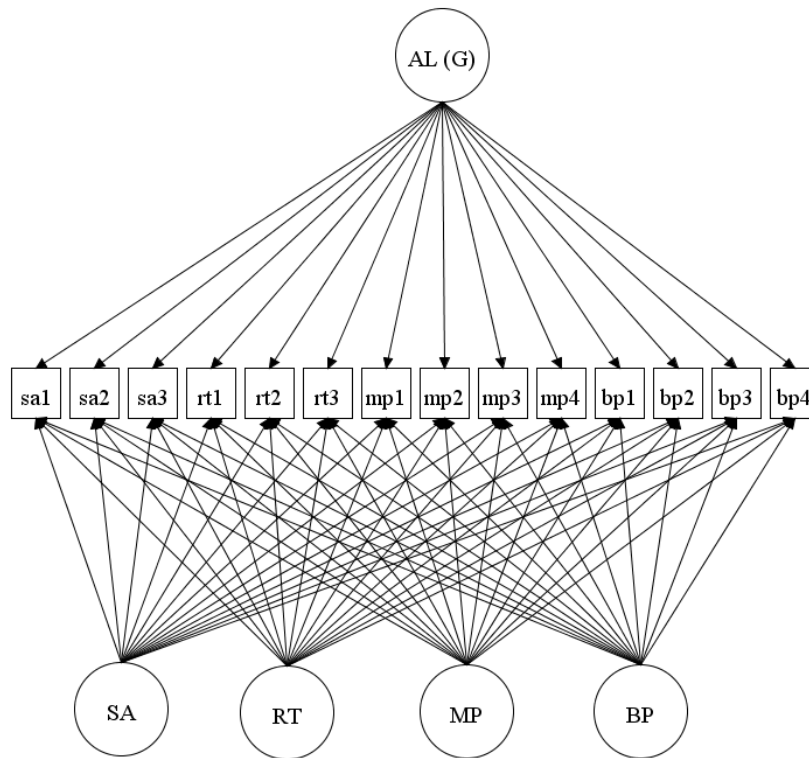


Figure 2. Visual representation of the bifactor ESEM model for AL

Full CFA model: Fit and item loadings of the research model

The full measurement research model that included all the study variables fitted the data well ($\chi^2 = 824.74$; $df = 422$; $CFI = 0.976$; $TLI = 0.971$; $RMSEA = 0.054$ 90% CI[.048, .059]). Table 3 below presents the factor loadings for the items for the latent variables in this model.

Table 3

Standardised loadings and omega reliability for the latent factors in the measurement model

Factor	Item	Loading	SE	<i>p</i>	ω
Authentic leadership (AL) [G-factor]	SA1	0.74	0.00	Fixed*	0.95
	SA2	0.80	0.03	0.001	
	SA3	0.67	0.05	0.001	
	RT1	0.75	0.04	0.001	
	RT2	0.67	0.05	0.001	
	RT3	0.77	0.00	Fixed*	
	MP1	0.77	0.04	0.001	
	MP2	0.77	0.04	0.001	
	MP3	0.77	0.04	0.001	
	MP4	0.77	0.04	0.001	
	BP1	0.77	0.04	0.001	
	BP2	0.77	0.04	0.001	
	BP3	0.77	0.04	0.001	
BP4	0.77	0.04	0.001		

	MP2	0.45	0.06	0.001	
	MP3	0.42	0.00	Fixed*	
	MP4	0.61	0.05	0.001	
	BP1	0.68	0.05	0.001	
	BP2	0.81	0.03	0.001	
	BP3	0.84	0.02	0.001	
	BP4	0.74	0.00	Fixed*	
Self-awareness (SA) [S-factor 1]	SA1	0.32	0.07	0.001	0.35
	SA2	0.24	0.07	0.001	
	SA3	0.21	0.06	0.001	
	<i>RT1</i>	0.17	0.08	0.032	
	<i>RT2</i>	0.16	0.12	0.167	
	<i>RT3</i>	-0.06	0.00	Fixed*	
	<i>MP1</i>	-0.05	0.07	0.527	
	<i>MP2</i>	-0.11	0.08	0.192	
	<i>MP3</i>	-0.15	0.00	Fixed*	
	<i>MP4</i>	-0.06	0.09	0.487	
	<i>BP1</i>	-0.36	0.13	0.006	
	<i>BP2</i>	0.02	0.06	0.734	
	<i>BP3</i>	0.03	0.00	Fixed*	
	<i>BP4</i>	-0.04	0.00	Fixed*	
Relationship transparency (RT) [S-factor 2]	RT1	0.17	0.06	0.006	0.52
	RT2	0.36	0.10	0.001	
	RT3	0.46	0.09	0.001	
	<i>SA1</i>	-0.04	0.00	Fixed*	
	<i>SA2</i>	-0.02	0.07	0.743	
	<i>SA3</i>	0.08	0.07	0.254	
	<i>MP1</i>	0.09	0.06	0.120	
	<i>MP2</i>	-0.05	0.07	0.541	
	<i>MP3</i>	-0.14	0.00	Fixed*	
	<i>MP4</i>	-0.03	0.08	0.675	
	<i>BP1</i>	-0.03	0.08	0.690	
	<i>BP2</i>	-0.09	0.06	0.146	
	<i>BP3</i>	-0.18	0.00	Fixed*	
	<i>BP4</i>	0.10	0.00	Fixed*	
Moral perspective (IMP) [S-factor 3]	MP1	0.19	0.07	0.008	0.65
	MP2	0.48	0.09	0.001	
	MP3	0.65	0.08	0.001	
	MP4	0.42	0.09	0.001	
	<i>SA1</i>	0.02	0.00	Fixed*	

	<i>SA2</i>	0.10	0.07	0.149	
	<i>SA3</i>	-0.01	0.08	0.857	
	<i>RT1</i>	-0.03	0.08	0.678	
	<i>RT2</i>	0.16	0.10	0.098	
	<i>RT3</i>	0.06	0.00	Fixed*	
	<i>BP1</i>	-0.03	0.10	0.799	
	<i>BP2</i>	-0.04	0.07	0.520	
	<i>BP3</i>	-0.03	0.00	Fixed*	
	<i>BP4</i>	-0.08	0.00	Fixed*	
Balanced processing (BP) [S-factor 4]	BP1	0.23	0.11	0.031	0.54
	BP2	0.40	0.07	0.001	
	BP3	0.29	0.00	Fixed*	
	BP4	0.47	0.05	0.001	
	<i>SA1</i>	-0.03	0.00	Fixed*	
	<i>SA2</i>	0.07	0.07	0.369	
	<i>SA3</i>	0.03	0.09	0.700	
	<i>RT1</i>	0.04	0.09	0.649	
	<i>RT2</i>	0.26	0.10	0.012	
	<i>RT3</i>	-0.02	0.00	Fixed*	
	<i>MP1</i>	-0.02	0.08	0.817	
	<i>MP2</i>	-0.13	0.11	0.212	
	<i>MP3</i>	0.01	0.00	Fixed*	
	<i>MP4</i>	-0.17	0.11	0.099	
Organisational identification (OD)	ORGID1	0.53	0.05	0.001	0.89
	ORGID2	0.63	0.05	0.001	
	ORGID3	0.77	0.04	0.001	
	ORGID4	0.94	0.02	0.001	
	ORGID5	0.86	0.03	0.001	
	ORGID6	0.73	0.04	0.001	
Work engagement (WE)	ENG1	0.88	0.02	0.001	0.96
	ENG2	0.88	0.01	0.001	
	ENG3	0.92	0.01	0.001	
	ENG4	0.93	0.01	0.001	
	ENG5	0.90	0.01	0.001	
	ENG6	0.81	0.02	0.001	
	ENG7	0.82	0.02	0.001	
	ENG8	0.77	0.03	0.001	
	ENG9	0.69	0.03	0.001	
Turnover intention (TI)	TURN1	0.80	0.02	0.001	0.93
	TURN2	0.96	0.01	0.001	

TURN3 0.95 0.02 0.001

Notes: SE = standard error; ω = omega reliability coefficient; bolded text = target loadings of the bifactor ESEM model; italics = cross-loadings of the bifactor ESEM model; Fixed* = constraints for the bifactor ESEM-within-CFA specification

Most of the AL indicators loaded higher on the G-factor than on the specific AL factors, except items MP2 and MP3. The standard errors of the item estimates were also relatively small, indicating accuracy of the estimation process. The omega reliability coefficients showed that the overall AL factor (G-factor; $\omega = 0.95$) was essentially unidimensional, the only evidence for an additional meaningful S-factor was IMP ($\omega = 0.65$) which was close to the cut-off value of 0.70. The omega values for the other factors in the model were highly acceptable ($\omega \geq 0.89$).

Correlation matrix for the study variables

Table 4 presents the correlations between the latent variables.

Table 4

Reliabilities and correlation matrix for the latent variables

Variables	1	2	3	4	5
1. Authentic leadership (AL) [G-factor]	1.00				
2. Internal moral perspective (IMP) [S-factor]	0.00 ^c	1.00			
3. Organisational identification (OD)	0.42 ^a	0.07 ^{ns}	1.00		
4. Work engagement (WE)	0.51 ^b	0.01 ^{ns}	0.62 ^b	1.00	
5. Turnover intention (TI)	-0.49 ^a	0.12 ^{ns}	-0.50 ^b	-0.66 ^b	1.00

Notes: a = Medium effect; b = Large effect; c = Constrained to zero; ns = Not significant ($p > 0.05$)

As can be concluded from table 4, general authentic leadership factor had positive relationships with both organisational identification ($r = 0.42$; medium effect) and work engagement ($r = 0.51$; large effect), but negative with turnover intention ($r = -0.49$; medium effect). The specific factor, internal moral perspective (IMP) was not significantly correlated with any of the other factors. Furthermore, organisational identification was positively correlated with work engagement ($r = -0.62$; large effect) and negatively with turnover intention ($r = -0.50$; large effect). Lastly, work engagement was negative correlated with turnover intention ($r = -0.66$; large effect).

Structural model fit and path results

Structural paths were added to the measurement model in line with the formulated hypotheses. The model was also a good fit to the data ($\chi^2 = 859.71$; $df = 419$; $CFI = 0.973$; $TLI = 0.968$; $RMSEA = 0.056$ 90% $CI[.051, .062]$; $SRMR = 0.044$). The results are presented in Table 5 below.

Table 5

Direct path results for the structural model

Structural path	β	SE	<i>p</i>	Result
AL (G) → Organisational identification	0.42	0.06	0.001*	Significant
IMP (S) → Organisational identification	0.07	0.11	0.547	Not significant
AL (G) → Work engagement	0.30	0.06	0.001*	Significant
IMP (S) → Work engagement	-0.03	0.07	0.712	Not significant
Organisational identification → Work engagement	0.49	0.06	0.001*	Significant
AL (G) → Turnover intention	-0.20	0.07	0.003	Significant
IMP (S) → Turnover intention	0.13	0.08	0.097	Not significant
Organisational identification → Turnover intention	-0.12	0.08	0.115	Not significant
Work engagement → Turnover intention	-0.48	0.07	0.001*	Significant

Notes: AL = Authentic leadership, IMP = Internal moral processing; β = standardised beta coefficient; SE = Standard error; *p* = Two-tailed statistical significance; * = $p < 0.001$

The results indicate that some of the hypotheses were supported, and some were rejected. Authentic leadership had positive direct paths to organisational identification ($\beta = 0.42$, $SE = 0.06$; supporting H_1) and work engagement ($\beta = 0.30$, $SE = 0.06$; supporting H_2). Organisational identification also had a positive path to work engagement ($\beta = 0.49$, $SE = 0.06$; supporting H_3). Furthermore, authentic leadership ($\beta = -0.20$, $SE = 0.07$; supporting H_5), and work engagement ($\beta = -0.48$, $SE = 0.07$; supporting H_7) had negative direct paths to turnover intention, but organisational identification did not ($\beta = -0.12$, $p = 0.115$; rejecting H_6). The specific factor of the bifactor ESEM model, internal moral processing (IMP) was also used in the structural model but none of these paths were significant in the presence of the authentic leadership general factor.

Indirect effects

Regarding H_4 and H_8 , the first proposed indirect effect was from authentic leadership to work engagement through organisational identification. Results from bootstrapping showed that this indirect relationship was meaningful (Estimate = 0.21; 95% CI[0.14, 0.28]) – supporting H_4 . H_8 proposed an indirect relationship from authentic leadership to turnover intention through organisational identification, but this effect was not meaningful as the confidence interval included zero (Estimate = -0.05; 95% CI[-0.12, 0.01]) – rejecting H_8 . Both indirect effects' confidence intervals did not include zero – supporting both hypotheses. However, even though not expressly hypothesised, a serial indirect effect was also possible and found to be meaningful; that is the indirect effect from authentic leadership to turnover through organisational identification and work engagement (Estimate = -0.10; 95% CI[-0.15, -0.06]).

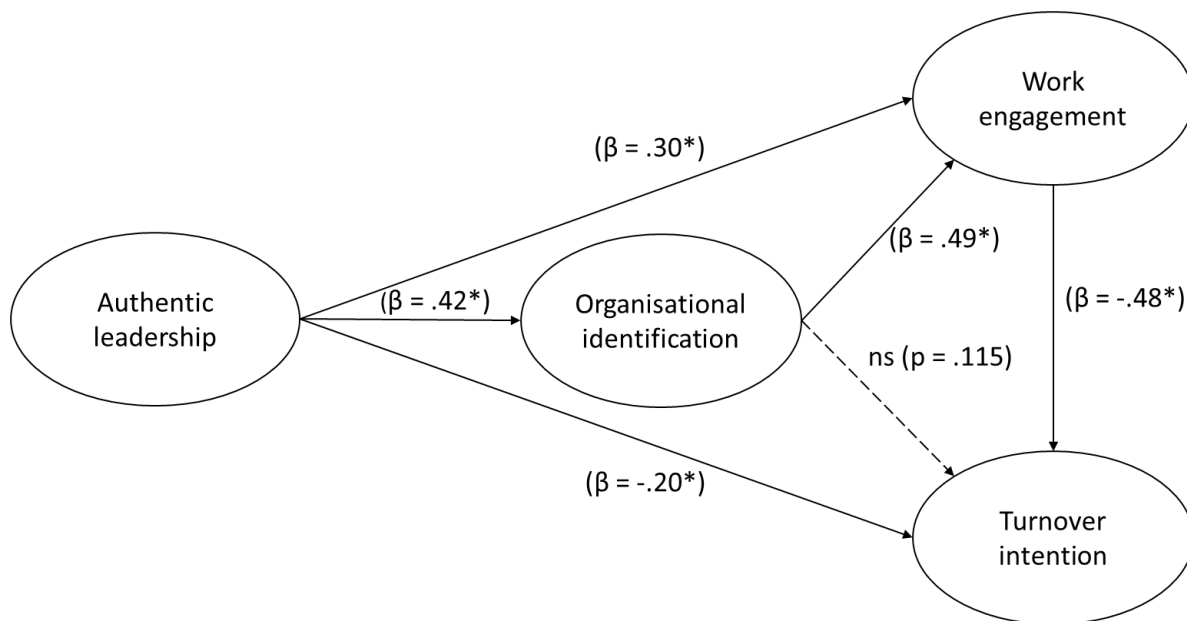


Figure 3. *The structural model with path results*

Discussion

Outline of the Results

The general aim of this study was to investigate the relationship between authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement, and turnover intention within the South African work context. To date, literature has shown that limited research exists, including all

the dynamics of the forementioned constructs, with this study uniquely incorporating an element of an employees' identity with their current organisation.

The results indicated that a significant positive relationship exists between authentic leadership on the one hand and organisational identification and work engagement on the other hand, giving an indication that the presence of an authentic leader will lead to an increase in an employee's level of identification with their current organisation (supporting H_1). This supports García-Guiu et al.'s (2014) belief that an authentic leader will have a positive impact on organisational identifications due to the natural tendency of an authentic leader to place focus on building trust with others. The followers of authentic leaders will, in turn, develop a stronger identification with their leader and organisation. The results indicated that an authentic leader style will also lead to employees experiencing an increase in work engagement (supporting H_2). This is supported by Ciftci and Erkanli (2020) who claim that a leader who is authentic by nature and able to create a trusting, fair, secure, and pressure-free climate, will likely contribute to increased levels of engagement in their followers.

In addition, organisational identification also displayed a significant positive relationship with work engagement. Thus, indicating that when employees feel that they have an identity within their current organisation, they will display higher levels of engagement towards their work (supporting H_3). Karanika-Murray et al. (2015) stated that when an employee highly identifies with their current organisation, they will experience increased feelings of engagement towards the accomplishment of that organisation's goals. Furthermore, the results displayed a meaningful indirect relationship between authentic leadership and work engagement through organisational identification as a mediating variable (supporting H_4).

This study also explored the relationship between authentic leadership and turnover intention. These variables reported a negative relationship that is significant; thus, indicating that the presence of an authentic leader will lead to the decrease in turnover intention, resulting in employees being less likely to leave their current organisation with the presence of a leader who is their authentic self (supporting H_5). Grobler et al. (2011) indicated that for organisations to improve their current employee turnover, they need to ensure good quality and integrity in the leadership styles they are implementing. Hypothesis 7 (H_7) was also supported by the results with work engagement displaying a negative relationship with turnover intention, implying that an engaged employee who is committed to their work obligations will be less

likely to leave their current organisation in search of new opportunities (Grobler et al., 2011). The organisation will consequently need to keep their employees engaged in their work about which they feel enthusiastic.

Not all relationships between the variables were supported by this study, with the results rejecting two hypotheses. The first hypothesis to be rejected is the relationship between organisational identification and turnover intention (H_6). Although a negative correlation between organisational identification and turnover intention was found, the results display an insignificant direct path. This is in contradiction to the literature review that has indicated that when an employee becomes more personally invested in their current organisation, they would display more reluctance to terminate their employment (Narayansany & Isa, 2021; Grobler et al., 2011). Added to this, hypothesis 8 (H_8), the relationship between authentic leadership and turnover intention through organisational identification, has also been rejected due to a non-meaningful, non-significant relationship found between organisational identification and turnover intention. However, Grobler et al. (2011) have indicated that an employee's personal fit with their organisation can prove to be a favourable impact in retaining their current employees; thus, minimising the turnover intention.

Despite the rejection of these two hypotheses, the results did show support for a meaningful indirect effect from authentic leadership to turnover intention, through both organisational identification and work engagement in serial; thus, including a 9th hypothesis (H_9) – the results indicate that a process is present in which the presence of an authentic leader will lead to employees experiencing a greater sense of belonging within their organisation and feel more engaged and committed to achieve their current work objectives. These increased experiences of identifying with their organisation and feeling engaged will then result in them being less likely to leave their current organisation; therefore, indicating that organisational identification most likely has a negative relationship with turnover intention through this process.

Practical implications

With tomorrow's world of work being driven by values and people; organisations are adopting new approaches to conducting everyday work. A key driver is the new approach of Purpose Beyond Profit (Corduneanu et al., 2022; Buder and Kittinger-Rosanelli, 2021; Schoenwaelder et al., 2020). Deloitte defines Purpose Beyond Profit as 'an organisation's explicit drive to

create value beyond profit, specifically for our planet and the people on it' (Corduneanu et al., 2022); thus, indicating that for organisations to remain competitive and attract top talent, they will require a clearly articulated purpose and specified organisational values (Buder & Kittinger-Rosanelli, 2021). The employees of today (46%) are searching for work that allow them to make a positive impact on society and work on projects that they find interesting and fascinating (Buder & Kittinger-Rosanelli, 2021). This gives a clear indication that an integrating purpose is core to the business strategy and has become an essential part for organisations of the future to maintain a competitive edge and safeguard their future (Schoenwaelder et al., 2020).

This makes it more important now than ever before for organisations to become aware of authentic leadership and the manner in which it places an organisation's purpose at the core of the function. An authentic leader will drive the organisation to achieve its objectives by capitalising on the organisational value, taking them on as their own and sharing them with those around them. Thus, this research study found that organisations should focus on strengthening the authenticity in their leaders through the encouragements of having a more open, honest, and genuine workforce. The presence of an authentic leader will contribute to a more positive manner in which employees see themselves in the organisation and towards their willingness to accept the organisation's objectives as their own. When we consider the positive impact of an authentic leader, we have learned through the JD-R model that leadership is considered to be an important job resource that will contribute to an increased level of engagement among employees (Stander et al., 2015; Wissing et al., 2014; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). This is further supported by Barbara Frederickson's broaden-and-build model indicating that a leader who is able to contribute to the positive emotions experienced by others will be able to build a far greater and more sustainable well-being among their subordinates (Wissing et al., 2014); thus, making authentic leaders essential for organisations so as to build and maintain an engaged workforce.

An authentic leader will not only contribute to more positive outcomes such as an increased organisational identification and work engagement but will also contribute to decreasing negative outcomes such as their employees' likelihood to leave their current employer. Therefore, this research study provides organisations with valuable insight into building a competitive strategic edge by capitalising on an authentic leadership style that will build an organisational culture that embraces the organisational values as personal values, where

employees experience high levels of engagement and are reluctant to leave their current employment. It can thus be concluded that organisations, that implement the incorrect leadership role that is not aligned to their purpose of values, or when they misunderstand the current leadership role, will experience a higher likelihood of employees leaving their current organisation (Adigüzel et al., 2022).

Limitations and Recommendations for Future Research

Firstly, this study was conducted within the specific geographic demography of the South African work context. Data were collected using a convenient, purposive sampling method. Hence these results must be viewed with caution due to its generalisation across a global workforce and not simply a South Africa-specific workforce.

In addition, the second limitation relates to the use of an online self-reported questionnaire. This may have impacted the manner in which the participants completed the questionnaire due to limited control over the circumstances in which the questionnaire was completed and the researcher's inability to provide support should difficulties have arisen, unless contacted. A self-reported questionnaire can also be subjected to forms of method bias in which the data collected is not related to the actual situation to be measured. This further highlights the importance of having the correct measures in place to prove the causal mechanisms that is being investigated (Podsakoff et al., 2012; Podsakoff et al., 2003).

Lastly, this research study applied a quantitative, cross-sectional design, with the research data collected via an online survey at a specific point in time (De Vos et al., 2011; Olsen & St George, 2004). Therefore, being considered more suitable for studying the cause-and-effect relationship within behavioural studies, it would have been more appropriate to collect the research data using a longitudinal approach (Collins, 2006). A longitudinal study would rather evaluate the relationships between the research variables across a period of time to provide more reliable research data that considers personal change in the participants and measure the progress of their interest towards the research topic (Rast & Hofer, 2014).

Despite these limitations, this research study still adds value to the literature regarding the investigation of authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement, and turnover intention within the South African work context.

Conclusion

The leaders of today have emphasised the importance of having the correct leadership style present in the organisation (Burnison, 2022). That is why the overall aim of this current study was to investigate the relationship between authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement and turnover intention within the South African work context. Thus, not only does this study enhance the literature available on the variables; it also provides valuable insights into the leadership preferences within the South Africa workforce. The results of this study indicated that the presence of an authentic leadership style will lead to an increase in the levels of organisational identification and work engagement. Additionally, the presence of an authentic leader will also lead to decreased turnover intention, either directly or through higher levels of work engagement.

Although organisational identification did not indicate any direct relationship with turnover intention, it did display a contribution to decreased levels of turnover intention by enhancing the engagement level experienced by employees. When considering the JD-R Model, it has been emphasised throughout this study that the levels of interpersonal and social relations experienced between employees and organisations/colleagues (e.g., leadership- and co-worker-support, team climate etc.) are key job resources that will decrease the strains caused by the job demands (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011). Therefore, authentic leadership, and its role as a job resource, contributes to a more engaged workforce that can identify with the organisational/team values and ultimately make the employee feel less likely to leave their current employment (Tims et al., 2013).

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CHAPTER 3
CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions, Limitations, and Recommendations

This chapter provides a conclusion to this study by reporting on the results found within this research study. This chapter furthermore identifies the limitations and shortcomings of this study and makes recommendations for organisations and future research.

3.1. Conclusions

The current study aimed to address the literature gap regarding the relationships between authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement, and turnover intention. Although research regarding leadership will always be important, this study will be the first to explore the relationship between the forementioned variable while using organisational identification as a mediating factor. In addition, this study also aimed to contribute to the literature within the South African context with a view to provide researchers and organisations with the needed guidance to continuously expand on the knowledge regarding leadership within South Africa and how it may impact future practice. The general objective of this study thus was to investigate the relationships between authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement and turnover intention within the South African work context.

First specific objective: To conceptualise authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement and turnover intention according to the literature.

This specific objective was achieved by conducting a literature review on all the forementioned variables. Authentic leadership is derived from Greek philosophy meaning ‘To thine own self be true’ (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 6; Luthans & Avolio, 2003, p. 242); thus, conceptualising an authentic leader as being genuine, reliable, trustworthy, veritable, and real. Describing them as both owning their personal experiences and acting as one’s true self, authentic leaders can be perceived as open and honest in their opinions and seizing the opportunity of bringing valuable contributions to their subordinates and organisation (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Organisational identification is conceptualised as the perception of oneself or the self-categorising within a specific organisation (Inoue et al., 2022). It can also refer to the degree to which an employee displays awareness of how they identify themselves with their organisation, playing an important role to explain their own perception, attitudes, and

behaviours (Kim et al., 2018). Organisational identification furthermore refers to the degree to which an individual's self-identity becomes intertwined with the organisation due to the overlaps between how they view their own identity and that of the organisation (Lee et al., 2020).

Work engagement is conceptualised as an employee's physical, cognitive, and emotional absorption in a task, where one becomes oblivious of time and external distractions, experiencing feelings of deep focus and harmony with others involved in the same task (Werner, 2011). Most studies use Schaufeli and Bakker's (2004) words to define work engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption (Bakker & Albrecht, 2018; Breevaart et al., 2012; Schaufeli et al., 2006). Schreuder and Coetzee (2011) point out that *vigour* refers to the high energy levels and cognitive/mental resilience that enable employees to overcome difficult tasks and solve complex problems. *Dedication* (efficacy) is the enthusiasm, motivation, inspiration, pride, and openness to challenges that allows employees to find meaning in their work that allows them to become engaged in what they are doing and to be willing to invest their time doing so. Lastly, *absorption* refers to employees focussing on achieving their current task, becoming fully invested in what they are doing, causing them to become unaware of their surroundings (Schreuder & Coetzee, 2011; Werner, 2011). Many ways are found in literature for conceptualising turnover intention, with the most common description used being 'an employee's desire to quit their current job within a certain point in time' (Tolksdorf et al., 2022). Long et al. (2012) defined turnover intention as 'an employee's personal estimated probability that he or she intends to leave the organization permanently in the near future' (p. 576).

Second specific objective: To determine the direct relationships between authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement, and turnover intention.

The results of this study indicated a significantly positive relationship between authentic, organisational identification and work engagement, indicating that the presence of an authentic leader will lead to an increase in an employee's identity within their current organisation (supporting H_1) and that this presence of an authentic leader will also lead to the employee experiencing an increase in work engagement (supporting H_2). Adıgüzel et al. (2022) hold the view that positive characteristics in authentic leaders will have a positive impact on the way

employees see themselves due to the supportive, encouraging, and motivational nature of such leaders. A leader who can create a trusting, fair, secure, and pressure-free climate is likely to contribute positively to increased engagement levels in their followers. Thus, Ciftci and Erkanli (2020) indicated a positive relationship between authentic leadership and work engagement. This implies that the presence of a leadership style that is genuine and true to the leader's own values will contribute to making employees' identification with an organisation; building a greater sense of engagement for employees to view the organisational goals as their own; thus, striving to accomplish these set objectives.

Organisational identification also displayed a significantly positive relationship with work engagement; indicating that when an employee feels they have an identity within their current organisation, they are likely to feel more engaged in their work and driven to accomplish the organisational goals (supporting H_3) – likely adopting such goals as their own. Thus an employee's strong identification with a specific organisation will result in feelings of engagement towards that organisation's vision and purpose, creating a psychological bond with their organisation (Guo et al., 2022; Karanika-Murray et al., 2015); thus concluding that an authentic leader will make an employee feel valued in their organisation by considering the insights of the employee and treating them with the needed respect; thereby building a stronger work engagement among employees who enjoy working with the authentic leader.

This study also explored the negative relationship between authentic leadership and turnover intention, with work engagement also displaying a negative relationship to turnover intention, indicating that the presence of an authentic leader will lead to the decrease in turnover intention among employees (supporting H_5). This thus indicates that employees who have an authentic leader and who experience higher levels of engagement, will be less likely to leave their current organisation (supporting H_7). This is supported by various studies that also found a significantly negative relationship between authentic leadership and organisational identification, indicating that the presence of a leader that is authentic by nature will lead to the employees being less likely to leave their current organisation (Ladao et al., 2022; Alkharabsheh & Alias, 2018).

However, no significant relationship has been found between organisational identification and turnover intention (rejecting H_6). This is in contradiction to various other studies that indicated a negative relationship between organisational identification and turnover intention through the

presence of a psychological connection that is based on shared values and trust. This would contribute to greater integration of employees into their current organisation and decrease the likelihood of them leaving their employment (Narayansany & Isa, 2021; Turkoglu & Dalgic, 2019; Alkharabsheh & Alias, 2018; Grobler et al., 2011).

Third specific objective: To determine the indirect relationships between authentic leadership, organisational identification, work engagement and turnover intention.

Authentic leadership displayed a positive relationship with work engagement through organisational identification, which acted as a mediating variable (supporting H_4), indicating that an authentic leader who builds genuine and transparent relationships with their subordinates is likely to make their employees feel more at one and engaged to their team and organisation due to the openness of the leaders to share their values with others. Furthermore, hypothesis 8 (H_8) has also been rejected, indicating that no meaningful indirect relationship has been found between authentic leadership and turnover intention, with organisational identification as the mediating variable. This finding indicates that an employee's likelihood to feel they form a significant part of the organisation is not likely to directly impact their decisions to leave their current organisation in pursuit of new opportunities. This result contradicts that which was emphasised, namely that the 'connection to the organisation or to senior management' is one of the top five predictors of turnover (Robison, 2008). This indicates that the connection an authentic leader builds with their follower and how well their values are shared with one another, the team, and the organisation, must have an impact on an employee's decision to leave their current organisation.

However, an unintentional hypothesis (H_9) did indicate that organisational identification has a negative relationship with turnover intention through work engagement as a mediating variable. By extension, authentic leadership also displays a negative relationship with turnover intention via organisational identification and work engagement. The presence of an authentic leader who is truthful, respectful, and accommodating of others' views is likely to contribute to an increase in how the workforce view themselves and relate to the identity of the organisation. When experiencing a cohesion between their own identity and values and those of the organisation, the workforce will then be more likely to experience higher levels of engagement within their organisation, reporting on a decrease in the likelihood of them leaving their current organisation due to their personal satisfaction in remaining in their current position.

Fourth specific objective: To make recommendations for future research and practice.

The limitations and recommendations of this study have already been addresses briefly in Chapter 2 of this mini-dissertation and will therefore be further elaborated on in the sections below.

3.2. Limitations

This study contributed to the literature finding regarding the relationship between authentic leadership, organisation identification, work engagement, and turnover intention. However, despite these contributions to literature, the following limitations need to be pointed out, and recommendation have to be made. Firstly, this study was conducted within the South African workforce using a convenient, purposive sampling method. This should be regarded as a limitation due to the results being more relevant to the South African population and their perception of the research variables.

Secondly, with regard to the research participants, 85.27% of the participants were younger than 34 years, with 71.74% indicating a tenure of less than 5 years, and 84.78% reporting less than 5 years under their current manager; thus indicating that the research population is more likely to contain the views of a younger workforce that still have more than half of their career journey ahead of them and that may have, up until the present, only ever needed to report to a single manager. This limits the insights the research population had to offer towards this study. A younger research population (85.27% younger than 35 years of age) may also be more open to still explore various opportunities available in their careers. Thus, indicating that despite experiencing high levels of engagement, they may still be more inclined to leave their current organisation or position in an attempt to further their own professional growth.

Thirdly, this study made use of a quantitative, cross-sectional design. This indicates that the data were collected at a specific point in time using an online survey (De Vos et al., 2011; Fouché et al., 2011). This will therefore bring the reliability of the results into question as this study has only measured the different variables once in accordance with the participants' understanding of each variable at that specific point in time.

This last limitation relates to the use of a self-reported questionnaire. Making use of such a questionnaire in an online format means that a possibility exists of the participants misinterpreting the instructions of the survey, especially when English, the language used in the questionnaire, is not the participant's native language. Despite language data not being specifically collected during this study, the research population contained an 83.57% African ethnicity representation; it would therefore be more ethnical to make the survey available in other South African languages. In addition, an online survey also makes it difficult for the researcher to identify when help is needed with understanding the survey, making the researcher unable to fully support as needed, unless directly contacted (Foxcroft & Roodt, 2013; Bogdan & Biklen, 1997). A self-reported questionnaire can also be subjected to forms of method bias in which the data collected is not related to the actual situation to be measured, highlighting the importance of having the correct measures in place to prove the causal mechanisms being investigated (Podsakoff et al., 2012; Podsakoff et al., 2003).

3.3. Recommendations

3.3.1. Recommendations for Practice

The ultimate recommendation for any organisation is to foster an authentic leadership style throughout the organisation to place focus on the organisation's values while striving after the achievements of its goals in a committed and collective manner. Buder and Kittinger-Rosanelli (2021) evaluated the leaders of tomorrow and found that the generations Y and Z are moving up in the organisations and have a voice to be heard. In a survey conducted in 2015, it was found that Millennials want to be motivated by careers that allow them to make a positive impact on society (46%), which allows them to work on projects they find interesting and fascinating (Buder & Kittinger-Rosanelli, 2021). Therefore, global organisations, such as Deloitte Africa, have recently adopted a new approach to work in which people come first. This approach is called Purpose Beyond Profit (Corduneanu et al., 2022; Schoenwaelder et al., 2020). According to Corduneanu et al. (2022) Deloitte defines Purpose Beyond Profit as 'an organisation's explicit drive to create value beyond profit, specifically for our planet and the people on it.'

The new employee is looking for a purpose in the organisation that speaks to who they are as individuals. Therefore, companies that aim to hire top talent job seekers by only offering competitive salaries and benefit packages may fail in attracting their ideal candidates without a clearly articulated purpose and specific values (Buder & Kittinger-Rosanelli, 2021). Many studies have shown the following factors to be consistent when it comes to an organisation's purpose. These factors include: employees wanting to know what the organisation's purpose is; how it is imbedded in the everyday actions of the organisation (consistency with internal practices, e.g., leadership behaviours and workplace culture) and how this purpose is perceived by the public (Corduneanu et al., 2022; Buder & Kittinger-Rosanelli, 2021; Schoenwaelder et al., 2020). An integrating purpose that fits into the core business strategy forms an essential part of organisations of the future to maintain a competitive edge and safeguard the profitability of the future (Schoenwaelder et al., 2020).

It is for this reason that it is important for organisations to become aware of authentic leadership and the way it can contribute to the growth of the organisation. Authentic leadership places an organisation's purpose at the core of the function. It is there to drive the organisation to achieve its objectives by capitalising on the organisational value, taking them on as their own and sharing them with those around them. Through this research study it was found that organisations should focus on strengthening the authenticity in their leaders through the encouragements of having a more open, honest, and genuine workforce. By placing more emphasis on the principle of having an authentic leader present within the organisation, a major ripple effect will be seen throughout the organisation where employees will start identifying with their organisation much easier and will attach their own personal value to the achievement of the organisational goals.

When an authentic leader can increase the way employees view themselves in the organisation and increase their attachment to the organisational objectives, they will be contributing to having a more engaged workforce. When considering the JD-R model, not only is leadership in general an important resource that will contribute to increased engagement levels, but an authentic leader that focuses on building positive emotions in employees, will also increase employees' work efforts (Stander et al., 2015; Wissing et al., 2014; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). This is supported by Barbara Frederickson's broaden-and-build model where we saw that the more frequently a leader is able to contribute to the positive emotions experienced by others, the more likely it is that they will be able to build a far greater and sustainable sense of well-

being among their subordinates (Wissing et al., 2014; Fredrickson, 2001). Hence an authentic leadership style has been proven essential in order for organisations to build and maintain an engaged workforce. Furthermore, this study also found that not only will an authentic leader contribute to positive outcomes such as an increased organisational identification and work engagement, but the presence of such a leader will also support the organisation in decreasing negative outcomes such as their employees' likelihood to leave their current employer. However, the focus on more positive emotions does not mean that negative emotions no longer exist; thus, certain circumstances may require authentic leaders to use negative emotions in order to obtain an immediate result (e.g., disciplinary discussions) (Wissing et al., 2014; Fredrickson, 2001).

Nonetheless, organisations will benefit from superiors practising an authentic leadership style as this will lead to an increase in an employee's organisational identification, provide higher levels of engagement, and decrease their turnover intention, and in so doing, provide organisations with valuable insight into how to build a competitive strategic edge by capitalising on a leadership style that is genuine and places the needs of the organisation and employees above those of their own. Thus, authentic leaders are likely to contribute towards building a culture that embraces the organisational values as personal values with which employees can personally identify, allowing employees to experience high levels of engagement and making them reluctant to leave their current employment. According to Adigüzel et al. (2022) the most preferred situation for any organisation to maintain their competitiveness is by having a workforce that expresses a long-term desire to stay in the organisation and have a minimal intention to leave their employment. Thus, when considering the research results, it became clear that the presence of an authentic leadership style will hold great benefits for organisations in retaining their current employees. An organisation that implements the incorrect leadership role that goes against its culture and values, or where there is an incorrect understanding of a leadership role, will experience a higher likelihood of employees leaving their current organisation (Adigüzel et al., 2022).

3.3.2. Recommendations for Future Research

Since this study was conducted within the South African work context, it is recommended for future studies to replicate this study and explore these variables within other nationalities as well. This will provide a more in-depth understanding of the relationship between authentic

leadership, organisational identification, work engagement, and turnover intention. In addition, conducting this study in other nationalities will contribute to a more global perspective.

Secondly, based on the demographical data obtained, the research population is more likely to contain the views of a younger workforce (85.27% younger than 34 years) that still have more than half of their career journey ahead of them (71.74% indicating a tenure of less than 5 years) and that may have up until the present only reported to a single manager (84.78% reporting to their current manager for less than 5 years). It is therefore recommended that future studies include a research population with a higher tenure so that a wider diversity may be considered with regard to various leadership levels and roles they have witnessed or participated in. Although it is beneficial to have the views of the current and future workforce, this does limit the insights the research population has to offer towards this study with regard to the variety of leadership styles experienced. The exposure to various leadership styles (e.g., Transformational -, Transactional -, Democratic -, or Bureaucratic Leadership) is essential, especially when considering a variable such as organisational identification. Real-life experiences with regard to how an individual respond to leadership is key in behavioural studies regarding leadership. An older research population is also more likely to have obtained stability in their professional career and may therefore be less likely to leave their current position or organisation.

Thirdly, the use of a self-reported questionnaire may not have been the most suitable since there is always a possibility of the participant misinterpreting the question items due to English, as used in the questionnaire, not being their native language. Especially in a country such as South Africa where there are 11 official languages, with English being the 4th most spoken language, the possibility was increased that the individual participating in the survey was not completing it in the language in which they are most comfortable. It is therefore recommended for future research to make use of multiple data-collection methods by combining a qualitative and quantitative research design. This will allow the researcher the opportunity of supporting the participants when needed. Alternatively, as an online questionnaire remains the most cost-effective manner in which to conduct research (both in time and cost), it is recommended that the questionnaire be made available in various languages. Future research may also benefit from conducting a multigroup confirmatory factor analysis, this will allow the researcher to explore the measurement invariance of the scales measured between different language groups in the South African context. By pre-conditioning this analysis method, practitioners may use these constructs to make decisions about people within the South African workforce.

Lastly, since this research study is of a quantitative, cross-sectional design with the research data collected at a specific point in time via an online survey, it is recommended for future studies to replicate this research using a more suitable form of research that is focused on studying the cause-and-effect relationship within behavioural studies (de Vos et al., 2011; Olsen & St George, 2004). It is therefore considered more appropriate to collect the research data using a longitudinal approach (Collins, 2006). According to Rast and Hofer (2014) a longitudinal study evaluates the relationships between the research variables across a period of time and in so doing provides more reliable research data that considers personal change among the participants and the progression of their personal interest to the research topic.

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