

The Effect of Authentic Leadership on Employee Engagement and the Moderating Role of Leader-Follower Value Congruence

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Abstract

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Despite the general knowledge of positive outcomes resulting from highly engaged employees, surprisingly little is known about how leaders can effectively contribute to a more engaged work force. With raising attention to positive forms of leadership styles in organizational behavior, this research study focuses first of all, how authentic leadership influences employee engagement and secondly, how this relationship changes with the introduction of leader-follower value congruence as a moderator.

A quantitative research design was conducted and a sample of 193 participants from Brazil and Germany was used to investigate this research question. Linear regression analysis was employed to assess the relationships between the variables. The results revealed that authentic leadership had significant positive effect on employee engagement. Importantly, balanced processing – which is one of the components of the authentic leadership construct – was strongly related to employee engagement. Moreover, the moderation analysis showed that when value congruence between the leader and follower is high, the positive relationship between authentic leadership and employee engagement becomes stronger.

Theoretical and managerial implications as well as limitations of the study results and suggestions for future research are discussed.

Keywords: Authentic Leadership; Employee Engagement; Leader-Follower Value Congruence; Balanced Processing; Moderation Analysis

Category: Master Thesis

Resumo

O Efeito da Liderança Autêntica no Envolvimento dos Empregados e o Papel Moderador da Congruência do Valor de Líderes- Seguidores

Felicitas Sara Isabelle Naderi Tabrizi

Apesar do conhecimento geral dos resultados positivos de empregados altamente empenhados, surpreendentemente pouco se sabe sobre como os líderes podem contribuir de forma eficaz para uma força de trabalho mais empenhada. Com o aumento da atenção para formas positivas de estilos de liderança no comportamento organizacional, este estudo de investigação centra-se em primeiro lugar, em como a liderança autêntica influencia o envolvimento dos empregados e, em segundo lugar, como esta relação muda com a introdução da congruência entre o valor do líder e o valor do seguidor como moderador.

Uma pesquisa quantitativa foi conduzida e uma amostra de 193 participantes do Brasil e da Alemanha foi utilizada para analisar esta questão da investigação. Uma análise de regressão linear foi utilizada para avaliar as relações entre as variáveis. Os resultados revelaram que a liderança autêntica teve um efeito positivo significativo no envolvimento dos funcionários. É importante ressaltar que o processamento equilibrado – que é um das componentes da autêntica construção da liderança – esteve fortemente relacionado com o envolvimento dos funcionários. Além disso, a análise de moderação mostrou que quando a congruência de valor entre o líder e o seguidor é elevada, a relação positiva entre a liderança autêntica e o envolvimento dos empregados torna-se mais forte.

São discutidas implicações teóricas e de gestão, bem como limitações dos resultados do estudo e sugestões para pesquisas futuras.

Palavras-chave: Liderança autêntica; Envolvimento dos funcionários; Congruência do Valor de Líderes-Seguidores; Processamento equilibrado; Análise da moderação

Categoria: Tese de Mestrado

Dedication

I am proud to dedicate this master thesis to my parents today. My final work at Católica Lisbon and FGV-EBAPE marks not only the end of my master's degree, but also the end of a chapter in my life in which I was able to devote myself 18-years long to my education. I did not only enjoy full support by my parents but they also gave me the privilege to have access to the best education on three different continents and in five different countries. The various experiences which I made during this journey made me become the strong, independent and highly educated woman who I am today. I am forever grateful to my parents for giving me this immense opportunity to be able to develop and grow beyond myself like this.

Furthermore, I dedicate this master thesis to my older brother, who has supported me along the way and motivated me to persevere in challenging times. Thank you for always being there for me and encouraging me to never give up.

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List of Abbreviations

ALQ	Authentic Leadership Questionnaire
JES	Job Engagement Scale
MBI	Maslach Burnout Inventory
SJR	Scimago Journal & Country
UWES	Utrecht Work Engagement Scale

Introduction

To have an engaged workforce is indispensable for organizations. According to previous literature employee engagement leads to higher job performance (A. Bakker, 2008; W. B. Schaufeli & Salanova, 2007; Xu & Cooper Thomas, 2011), increased productivity (Lin et al., 2016), higher financial returns and a competitive advantage for organizations (Macey et al., 2009; Schneider et al., 2018), higher level of in-role and extra-role performance (Christian et al., 2011) as well as employee well-being (Knight et al., 2017). At the same time, lower productivity of disengaged employees is very costly for organizations (Krueger & Killham, 2005). Gallup researchers estimated that this costs the economy of the United States alone about \$300 billion (Krueger & Killham, 2005). Solving this puzzle of what makes employees engaged, hence, is very relevant and important, especially given that only 36% of the working population in the U.S. were overall engaged at work in 2020, according to Gallup research (J. Harter, 2020).

Additionally, today's leaders are facing a very volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous business world (Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2015), which is not only demanding for themselves but also for their roles as leaders and thereby challenging their skills and competencies on how to successfully interact, motivate and engage their employees in those struggling times. The importance of the effective management and engagement of employees – especially in tough times – cannot be underestimated. As reported by Krueger and Killham (2005), research done by the Gallup Organization shows that a positive relationship between supervisors and their employees are central to employees' well-being and their overall engagement at work. At least 70% of the variance in employee engagement in a team can be explained by the quality of the leader (J. Harter, 2018).

For these reasons, it is crucial for organizations and especially managers in practice to know how to establish, maintain and foster engagement of their employees. As such, it has been recommended to focus in future research on resources and practices that enhance employee engagement (Rich et al., 2010). Surprisingly, only a few emerging studies such as the ones of Biggs et al. (2014) and Ouweneel et al. (2013) studied the effectiveness of interventions, such as leadership training or individual oriented positive psychology intervention, regarding the achievement of engagement at work. Also, it has been claimed that how leaders encourage the engagement of their employees has not been studied in depth yet and needs further research attention (A. B. Bakker & Albrecht, 2018; Tims et al., 2011). Therefore, the question arises

what kind of leader and what kind of leadership behavior is indeed needed to positively impact employee engagement.

In the last years positive leadership styles such as authentic, charismatic, ethical, servant and transformational leadership styles have gained more attention in the academic literature (Decuyper & Schaufeli, 2020). Practitioners along with scholars have for example recognized the importance of authentic leadership to receive more desirable outcomes (B. J. Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Research suggested that authentic leaders promote the development of authenticity in followers through their self-awareness, self-regulation, and positive modeling, which in turn positively contributes to the well-being of followers, and also reaching sustainable and veritable performance (B. J. Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

Authentic leadership has already been linked to employee engagement in previous studies (Alok & Israel, 2012; Paredes et al., 2021; Wang & Hsieh, 2013; Wong et al., 2010). Nevertheless, more comprehensive, valid and verified work is for several reasons needed in this field. First of all, none of the forementioned studies were published in any high quality academic journal such as the top 50 academic journals listed by the Financial Times or in a highly ranked journal published by the Scimago Journal & Country Rank (SJR). This questions the quality and reliability of the studies. Second, all of the above mentioned studies applied the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), which was developed by Schaufeli and colleagues (2006; 2010), to measure employees' work engagement. However, this scale was ultimately increasingly criticized among researchers for its validity and reliability (Byrne et al., 2016; Knight et al., 2017; Rich et al., 2010).

To the best of my knowledge, there has been no research so far investigating the relationship between authentic leadership and employee engagement using the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) of Walumbwa et al. (2008), and the Job Engagement Scale (JES) of Rich et al. (2010).

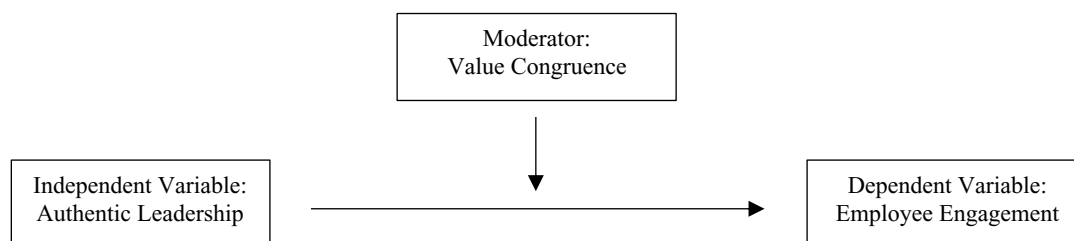
Furthermore, I suggest that it is important to take into consideration moderators, that could act as a boundary condition, influencing the relationship between authentic leadership and employee engagement. Accordingly, I studied the moderating effect of leader-follower value congruence. Since employees are more satisfied and committed to work when their personal values are congruent with the values of their supervisors (Meglino et al., 1989), it could be that lower levels of leader-follower value congruence weakens the presumed positive relationship between authentic leadership and employee engagement.

To test leader-follower value congruence, this study draws back on earlier research done by Lee et al. (2017). The authors adopted the original value congruence scale of Cable and DeRue (2002), which is normally used to measure person-organization fit.

To the best of my knowledge, no research investigated the relationship between authentic leadership and employee engagement yet, while at the same time accounting for the moderating effect of leader-follower value congruence. Therefore, I propose the following theoretical model in this study (see Figure 1):

Figure 1

Theoretical Model



To fill the research gaps mentioned above, the overall objective of this study was to examine the relationship between perceived authentic leadership and employee engagement, under the moderating effect of leader-follower value congruence. The following specific objectives were established: (1) investigate the literature of authentic leadership, employee engagement and leader-follower value congruence; (2) conduct empirical research about the developed model; (3) analyze the retrieved data and interpret the results; and (4) provide recommendations for future research as well as management.

In the following, I review the literature regarding authentic leadership and employee engagement. Next, I develop the hypotheses by discussing the relationship among them and including the moderating role of leader-follower value congruence. The methodological section covers the procedure and the sample used as well as the measures employed. In the results section, I analyze the main findings. I conclude with a discussion of the results. Finally, I highlight the theoretical contributions along with the limitations of the study and suggestions for future research. Managerial implications are discussed.

Literature Review

Authenticity

Historically, the construct of authenticity can be traced back long before the known work of Shakespeare (e.g., “To thine own self be true”) (Erickson, 1995), and goes even back to the ancient Greek philosophers (S. Harter, 2002). Socrates related to authenticity as that the “unexamined” life would not be worth of living (Kernis & Goldman, 2006). For the interesting reader, there are excellent reviews about historical and original perspectives within the philosophy of the authenticity construct by Erickson (1995), Harter (2002), as well as Kernis and Goldman (2006).

The modern construct of authenticity has been developed in the last 95 years (Erickson, 1995) and emerges in positive psychology (Cameron et al., 2003; Seligman, 2002). Harter (2002) along with Luthans and Avolio (2003) refer to authenticity as to be self-aware by owning one’s personal experiences and acting in accordance to one’s true self by expressing one’s thoughts and believes.

Although there are different concepts and definitions about authenticity, the most common mistake is to confuse the term authenticity with the term sincerity (Erickson, 1995). Therefore, both terms are clarified in the following: Sincerity is “a congruence between avowal and actual feeling” (Trilling, 1972, p. 4), which means that there is congruence between experienced thoughts and feelings and how one expresses externally those thoughts and feelings (B. J. Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Erickson, 1995). Hence, this definition carries the idea that one interacts with an *other* besides oneself and refers to whether a person represents the self truly and honestly to others, versus the extent to if a person is true to one’s self, which falls under the domain of authenticity, where one focuses on the relationship with *oneself* (B. J. Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Erickson, 1995; Trilling, 1972).

Erickson (1995) further emphasized in her work, that authenticity is not necessarily the opposite to inauthenticity, i.e., a person is not *fully* authentic or inauthentic, but rather more or less so.

Authentic Leader and Authentic Leadership

While researchers reveal more interest on the subject of authentic leaders, authentic leadership and its development, the examination of research articles underlines the inconsistency in this field (e.g., Ilies et al. (2005), Liu et al. (2017), Shamir and Eilam (2005)).

For the interested reader, the literature review of Gardner et al. (2011) provides a comprehensive overview.

Avolio et al. (2004) perceive an *authentic leader* to be a person who has high levels of authenticity by knowing who they are, what they believe in and value, while at the same time acting upon those values and beliefs and transparently interacting with others. The authors further refer to an earlier definition by Avolio, Luthans and Walumbwa (2004), which states that authentic leaders are “those individuals who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others’ values/moral perspective, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and high on moral character” (B. Avolio, Gardner, et al., 2004, p. 3).

Avolio et al. (2004) are confident that authentic leaders are able to enhance engagement, motivation, commitment, satisfaction and involvement in their followers, so that they can improve their work and performance outcomes.

Walumbwa et al. (2008) built on Luthan’s and Avolio’s (2003) initial definition and characterized *authentic leadership* as “a pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, and internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development” (p.94).

Since I applied the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) in this study, developed by Walumbwa et al. (2008), the construct of authentic leadership, as regarded by the authors, is explained more profound hereinafter: Walumbwa and colleagues understand authentic leadership to be based on two crucial components of authentic leadership theory: an inherent *moral* component and a *development* focus. An advanced level of moral development is a prerequisite for any authentic leader and thus makes it a central role of authentic leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2008). The focus on the development of authentic leaders and followers makes authentic leadership *state*-like which means ultimately, one can develop it in leaders (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Authentic leadership consists in the authors’ view of four main components: 1) *self-awareness*, which refers to the understanding of how one derives and makes meaning of the world and how that meaning making process impact the way one views him/herself over time; 2) *relational transparency*, which refers to presenting one’s authentic self to others; 3) *balanced*

processing, which refers to showing to others to objectively analyze all data before they make a decision; and 4) *internalized moral perspective*, which refers to having an internalized and integrated form of self-regulation (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

The construct of Walumbwa et al. (2008) emphasizes that the authentic leader has in general a genuinely desire to understand their own leadership, to be able to better serve others, to act according to their own deeply held values and by building credibility to win respect and trust of their followers.

I chose the measurement tool of Walumbwa et al (2008) because researchers confirmed its validity several times (e.g., Alok & Israel (2012), Gardner et al. (2011), Paredes et al. (2021), Walumbwa et al. (2010), Wang & Hsieh (2013), Williams et al. (2012), Wong et al. (2010)).

Employee Engagement

Most researchers (e.g., Byrne et al. (2016), He et al. (2014), Knight et al. (2017), Macey & Schneider (2008), Rich et al. (2010), Xu & Cooper-Thomas (2011) or Young et al. (2018)) refer to the seminal and revolutionary work of Kahn (1990), when it comes to employee engagement.

Kahn investigated in the psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. Those terms describe the behaviors of people by which they take their personal selves *in* to execute their work during their work role performance or leave their personal selves *out* (Kahn, 1990). Kahn defined personal engagement “as the harnessing of organization members’ selves to their work roles [and] in engagement, people employ and express themselves *physically, cognitively, and emotionally* during role performances” (Kahn, 1990, p. 694).

Employees are engaged when they are *physically* involved in tasks, whereby it is irrelevant if with others or by themselves, when they are *cognitively* focused and attentive, and when they are *emotionally* connected to their work and with others (Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010).

Additionally, when employees are engaged, they are experiencing three psychological conditions: 1) *Meaningfulness*, which indicates that engaged employees are experiencing meaning in the sense of to receive reward for investing in work performance; 2) *psychological safety* and; 3) *availability*, which means to have the physical and psychological resources which are necessary for the job (Kahn, 1990; Knight et al., 2017).

Because Kahn's engagement concept refers to employees' personal resources and the allocation of them to their work role as well as how intensive and persistent they are applied, it is a *motivational* model (He et al., 2014; Kahn, 1990; Rich et al., 2010). Other research regard the engagement concept for example as the positive antithesis of *burnout* (Maslach et al., 2001; Maslach & Jackson, 1981; Maslach & Leiter, 1997; W. B. Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010).

The two approaches to engagement can be further distinguished in the sense of that the key reference of the motivational model is the *work role*, whereas the burnout model considers the key reference to be the work *activity* itself (W. B. Schaufeli & Bakker, 2010).

In regard to measuring engagement, there is no general consensus among researchers. The Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), constructed by Schaufeli et al. (2002), is until now the most used tool to measure engagement at work (Byrne et al., 2016; Rich et al., 2010). However, this certainly does not reflect today's ambiguous research field and its frequency of use does not make it the *best* measurement tool (Knight et al., 2017). The meta-analysis of Cole et al. (2012) revealed for instance high correlations between the UWES and the Maslach Burnout Inventory (MBI) (Maslach & Jackson, 1981), it overlaps with other job attitudes such as stress, job performance, organizational commitment and burnout (Knight et al., 2017), and the construct has been criticized for its validity and reliability (Byrne et al., 2016).

Although additional measurements of engagement were developed (e.g., May et al. (2004), Saks (2006), Shirom & Melamed (2006)), they insufficiently reflect the original engagement concept of Kahn (1990), lack on validity evidence, significantly overlap with the UWES, or were constructed for other purposes but were then applied to measure engagement (Byrne et al., 2016).

The Job Engagement Scale (JES) developed by Rich et al. (2010), is so far the only instrument which accurately measures the three-dimension structure of engagement as originally conceptualized by Kahn (1990) and has received various construct validity for its structure and use (e.g., Alfes et al. (2013), Byrne et al. (2016), He et al. (2014), Rich et al. (2010)). Thus, the JES emphasizes the *motivational* nature as constructed by Kahn (Rich et al., 2010).

Consequently, based on the argumentation above, I used the JES in this research. At the same time I followed the recommendation given by Byrne et al. (2016), to apply the JES in research settings.

The Relationship between Authentic Leadership and Employee Engagement

During the development of the JES, Rich et al. (2010) found *perceived organizational support* to be an *antecedent of engagement* and higher level of perceived organizational support was associated with higher level of employee engagement.

Eisenberger et al. (1986) researched about perceived organizational support and revealed that employees believe to receive favorable or unfavorable treatment by an organization. Their perception is enhanced to the extent that employees *personify* organizations such as to view actions by *agents* of the organization as actions of the organization itself (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Such an agent could be, for instance an employee's leader. If organizational support is perceived by employees *through actions of leaders* and is an antecedent as well as associated with employee engagement, the role of a leader becomes crucial. The question arises, what kind of *leader's actions* or what kind of *leadership behavior* are considered to be *favorable* by employees?

Researchers agree that leaders play an important role when building employee engagement and that the leadership style is essential when encouraging employees to be more engaged (Attridge, 2009; W. Schaufeli, 2012). In the theoretical work of Decuyper and Schaufeli (2020), the authors propose that especially *positive* leadership styles influence the engagement of employees. According to Decuyper and Schaufeli (2020), all leadership styles which *positively* influence employee outcomes are considered to be a positive leadership style. Hence, authentic leadership can be interpreted as a positive leadership style because it aims to influence employees' outcomes positively.

Previous studies (e.g., Alok & Israel (2012), Oh et al. (2018), Paredes et al. (2021), Wong et al. (2010)) already indicated a positive relationship between authentic leadership and employee engagement. And still, why should specifically authentic leadership intensify employee engagement? What exactly could an employee drive to be more engaged if led by an authentic leader?

Avolio et al. (2004) proposed a theoretical model which highlights how authentic leaders are influencing followers' attitudes, behaviors and performance. The authors suggested that authentic leaders influence followers' work attitudes such as engagement through the mediating effect of *personal identification* with the followers and by *social identification* with the organization (B. Avolio, Gardner, et al., 2004). More specifically, personal and social

identification impact the variables hope, trust and positive emotions, which then are positively related to the followers' attitudes, such as engagement (B. Avolio, Gardner, et al., 2004).

Also the original concepts of authentic leadership and employee engagement suggest a relationship between the two constructs: Authentic leaders are *self-aware* and *relational transparent*. This means they show an understanding of their strengths and weaknesses and present their authentic self to the employees, thus promoting *trust* among them (Walumbwa et al., 2008). To promote trust directly relates to the *psychological safety* dimension of work engagement proposed by Kahn (1990) (Alok & Israel, 2012). Hence, this gives further reasoning why and how authentic leadership could enhance employee engagement.

Furthermore, the fourth component of authentic leadership, the *internalized moral perspective*, which refers to the internalized and integrated form of self-regulation, is led by internal moral standards and values (Walumbwa et al., 2008). As such, authentic leaders will probably treat their employees with respect, dignity and a fair manner, for which reason also *interactional justice* could play an important role through which authentic leadership strengthens employee engagement (Alok & Israel, 2012; Pati & Kumar, 2011).

Lastly, Decuyper and Schaufeli (2020) suggested that through *social exchange* between leader and follower and thus because of the expectation of reciprocation, employees might unconsciously feel obliged to reciprocate the work, effort and support they are receiving from their leader and even the same degree of engagement, if they have a highly engaged leader.

The literature review of authentic leadership and employee engagement as well as the argumentation above regarding construct correlation leads to the following first hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: Authentic leadership is positively related to employee engagement, so that if authentic leadership is perceived to be higher, employee engagement is higher.

The Moderating Role of Leader-Follower Value Congruence

Research showed that leaders should align employees' values with their own values to achieve positive outcomes (Ashkanasy & O'Connor, 1997; Meglino et al., 1989; Weiss, 1978). Meglino et al. (1989) discovered that employees are more satisfied and committed to work when their personal values are congruent with the values of their supervisor. Accordingly, one might ask the question, what happens if the values of leader and their followers are not, or not so much aligned? Will this negatively affect the positively assumed relationship between authentic leadership and employee engagement? If so, will the negative effect weaken the positive presumed relationship between authentic leadership and employee engagement? Similarly, will the assumed positive relationship between authentic leadership and employee engagement be even stronger, if the values between leader and followers are congruent?

In line with these thoughts and to better understand the relationship between authentic leadership and employee engagement I additionally included leader-follower value congruence as a moderator in this study.

With value congruence, research mostly relates to the fit between individual and organizational values (e.g., Cable & DeRue (2002), Edwards & Cable (2009), Kristof (1996)). In this study the term value congruence refers to the fit between the values of two *individuals*, the leader's values and the follower's values. Moreover, even though *actual* value fit can be measured (Brown & Treviño, 2009; Kristof, 1996), I focused for reasons of feasibility on employees' *perceptions* of value congruence between their leaders and themselves. Therefore, as in previous research, the term leader-follower value congruence is defined as "perceived similarity between values held by a leader and a follower" (Lee et al., 2017, p. 2).

Personal values have great importance in the lives of individuals in general and particularly in leader-follower relationships becomes value congruence visible (Erdogan et al., 2004; Lee et al., 2017). As explained above, there seems to be an underlining mediating effect of *personal identification* in the relationship between authentic leadership and employee engagement (B. Avolio, Gardner, et al., 2004). Since authentic leaders know their values, act upon them and interact transparently with others, their employees know what they believe in and what they stand for. However, if employees themselves have *different* values and do *not* agree with the same value set of their leaders, employees might not personally identify with them. Thus, this could hinder the mediating effect of personal identification between authentic leadership and employee engagement and result in lower employee engagement. At the same

time, if employees have the same values as their leader, employees might even more identify with their leaders, which could result in higher employee engagement.

In addition, as stated above, other researchers argued that because leaders present their authentic self to their employees, they promote trust among them, which then relates to the psychological safety dimension of employee work engagement (Alok & Israel, 2012; Kahn, 1990; Walumbwa et al., 2008). However, if employees do *not* agree with the authentic self of their leader, which probably means that they also not agree with the leader's values upon which they act, this could *hinder the creation of trust* and result in less engaged employees. Whereas, if employees share the same values as their leader, this could create even more trust and result in even more engagement among employees.

Furthermore, if two individuals have high value congruence, they usually share similar aspects of information processing, which results in a smoother communication between them (Lee et al., 2017; Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). In case of high value congruence between leader and employee, this could mean that employees better and truly understand the behavior and decisions made by the leader. Thus, with higher value congruence the assumed positive influence of authentic leadership on employee engagement might even be stronger and hence result in a more engaged employee.

Finally, according to Brown and Treviño (2009), value *incongruence* between leader and follower means that different attitudes, behaviors, goals and guiding principles generally exist. Therefore, an employee with high divergent attitudes toward the guiding principles espoused by an authentic leader, might even view the practiced authentic leadership style as naïve or weak and therefore feel unmotivated, which could lead to lower engagement.

The discussion above regarding leader-follower value congruence and its possible influence on the authentic leadership-employee engagement relationship, leads to the following second hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: Leader-follower value congruence moderates the authentic leadership-employee engagement relationship, such that a positive relationship is stronger when value congruence is high and weaker when value congruence is low.

Methodology

Procedure and Sample

I distributed the for this research created survey through Instagram, LinkedIn, WhatsApp and direct mailing with an advertised link incorporated in a post or direct message. To maximize participation I sent reminder messages a few days after. I collected data during April 6th and April 27th, 2022. The invitation to participate in the survey was sent to friends, family and acquaintances, previous and current fellow students, former work colleagues, past and potential employers, different WhatsApp groups, roommates, sports teammates and university professors as well as other professionals. The only sociodemographic filter I used, was the restriction to be 18 years old or older, and to be currently employed. I asked to participate in the survey to support me for my Master Thesis as well as to forward the survey to other friends and colleagues. I told participants I was conducting research regarding leadership behavior and employee engagement and that the survey was designed to better understand the relationship between supervisors and employee motivation. I further explained the expected duration of participation in the survey, that there were no right or wrong answers and that participants could withdrawal from the survey at any time without any further explanation. I described what would happen to the study results and that all responses would be kept absolutely confidential. The survey ended with a short debriefing statement from my side, where I revealed the exact research question and explained the relevance of the study. Moreover, I thanked the participants for their time and support and highlighted the possibility to contact me in case of questions or interest in the study results. Finally, I requested to not discuss the study with anyone else to not compromise the scientific integrity.

I recruited 521 participants who showed interest in the survey. However, three participants did not give their consent, 163 participants failed to answer the first question and further 39 participants did not answer the last question, the response rate was therefore (61%). Since I only included those participants in the analysis who completed the whole survey, there remained 316 participants from 33 different countries. Further 7 participants needed to be excluded from the sample who did not want to answer the gender question or could not be assigned to either male or female and because the number of other gender types was too little to be representative for their respective group. It also did not seem reasonable to cluster them together. Other 68 observations needed to be dropped because participants not answered further sensitive questions (e.g., race) or they could not provide relevant information about their

supervisor (e.g., education level of supervisor or job tenure of supervisor), which I wanted to include in the analysis. I then decided to further only focus on participants from Germany and from Brazil, because the spread of the remaining 88 participants from 31 countries was too big and it seemed unreasonable to cluster them together to give meaningful results about this very diverse group of people.

The final sample which I used for the further analysis included 193 participants. 105 participants (54%) were from Germany and 88 participants (46%) from Brazil. Participants were predominantly male (61%), Caucasian (70%), between 18 and 34 years old (77%) and the majority had at least completed a Bachelor's Degree (88%). On average, the participants had until five years of tenure (55%) and had already worked one year or more under their current leader (64%). The complete demographic characteristics of the final sample which was included in the analysis are presented in Table 1.

Measures

Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership was measured using the scale developed by Walumbwa et al. (2008). The research project and its objectives were presented to Mind Garden, Inc. and research permission to use the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) was given. The scale contains 16 items designed to assess *relational transparency* (5 items; e.g., "My leader says exactly what he or she means"), *internalized moral perspective* (4 items; e.g., "My leader demonstrates beliefs that are consistent with actions"), *balanced processing* (3 items; e.g., "My leader solicits views that challenge his or her deeply held positions"), and *self-awareness* (4 items; e.g., "My leader seeks feedback to improve interactions with others").¹ Participants rated the behavioral statements about their supervisor on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *not at all* and 5 = *frequently, if not always*). The Cronbach's alpha values for the four subscales were between .72-.82 and for the entire scale .91 demonstrating acceptable reliability (see Table 2).

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Table 1*Demographic characteristics of the final sample*

Demographic	Frequency (n)	Per cent %
Follower's Gender		
<i>Female</i>	76	39.38
<i>Male</i>	117	60.62
Leader's Gender		
<i>Female</i>	56	29.02
<i>Male</i>	137	70.98
Follower's Age		
<i>18-34 years</i>	148	76.68
<i>35+ years</i>	45	23.32
Leader's Age		
<i>18-34 years</i>	43	22.28
<i>35-54 years</i>	125	64.77
<i>55+ years</i>	25	12.95
Follower's Race		
<i>Other than Caucasian</i>	58	30.05
<i>Caucasian</i>	135	69.95
Leader's Race		
<i>Other than Caucasian</i>	48	24.87
<i>Caucasian</i>	145	75.13
Follower's Education Level		
<i>Less than Bachelor's Degree</i>	23	11.92
<i>Bachelor's Degree</i>	82	42.49
<i>Higher than Bachelor's Degree</i>	88	45.60
Leader's Education Level		
<i>Less than Bachelor's Degree</i>	18	9.33
<i>Bachelor's Degree</i>	36	18.65
<i>Higher than Bachelor's Degree</i>	139	72.02
Follower's Nationality		
<i>Brazilian</i>	88	45.60
<i>German</i>	105	54.40
Follower's Tenure		
<i>until 5 years</i>	107	55.44
<i>6 years or more</i>	86	44.56
Follower's Tenure under Leader		
<i>less than 1 year</i>	68	35.23
<i>1 year or more</i>	125	64.77
Leader's Job Tenure		
<i>until 5 years</i>	124	64.25
<i>6 years or more</i>	69	35.75

Note. n = 193

Table 2

Number of items, alpha coefficients, means, standard deviations and intercorrelation matrix for instrument scales and subscales

Measurements	Number of items	Alpha coefficient	Mean	SD	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)	(10)
(1) Authentic Leadership	16	0.9149	-0.000	0.963	—									
(2) <i>Relational transparency</i>	5	0.7403	-0.000	0.876	0.8580*	—								
(3) <i>Intern. moral perspective</i>	4	0.7232	0.000	0.863	0.8008*	0.6329*	—							
(4) <i>Balanced processing</i>	3	0.7367	0.000	0.867	0.8780*	0.7161*	0.5988*	—						
(5) <i>Self-awareness</i>	4	0.8155	-0.000	0.908	0.9217*	0.6844*	0.6840*	0.7458*	—					
(6) Value Congruence	3	0.9138	-0.011	0.942	0.6642*	0.5335*	0.6113*	0.4982*	0.6448*	—				
(7) Job Engagement	18	0.9289	-0.000	0.967	0.3128*	0.2336*	0.2743*	0.3097*	0.2662*	0.3315*	—			
(8) <i>Physical engagement</i>	6	0.8722	-0.010	0.930	0.1540*	0.1094*	0.1522*	0.1750*	0.1145*	0.2026*	0.9102*	—		
(9) <i>Emotional engagement</i>	6	0.8991	-0.007	0.948	0.4697*	0.3586*	0.4041*	0.4060*	0.4591*	0.4959*	0.6945*	0.5048*	—	
(10) <i>Cognitive engagement</i>	6	0.8732	-0.006	0.933	0.2329*	0.1731*	0.2031*	0.2496*	0.1748*	0.2162*	0.9136*	0.7884*	0.4703*	—

Note. n = 193. * = Pearson's correlation is significant at 99%

Leader-Follower Value Congruence

Leader-follower value congruence was measured by following Lee's et al. (2017) approach and adapting the three-item value congruence scale of Cable & DeRue (2002). Participants were asked to indicate their perceived value congruence between themselves and their supervisor such as "The things that I value in life are very similar to the things that my supervisor values" on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*) (see Appendix A for full scale). The three items on the scale exhibited acceptable reliability with Cronbach's alpha = .91 (see Table 2).

Employee Engagement

Employee engagement was measured using the scale developed by Rich et al. (2010). The Job Engagement Scale (JES) contains 18 items (6 items per dimension) and assesses *physical engagement* (e.g., "I work with intensity on my job"), *emotional engagement* (e.g., "I am enthusiastic in my job") and *cognitive engagement* (e.g., "At work, my mind is focused on my job") (see Appendix B for full scale). Each item was scored on a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly disagree* and 5 = *strongly agree*). The scale demonstrated acceptable reliability with Cronbach's alpha values of .87-.90 for the three subscales and .93 for the entire JES (see Table 2).

Control Variables

Extraneous variables could hinder the measurement of the unique relationship between independent and dependent variable in nonexperimental research (Bernierth et al., 2018). To reduce alternative explanations and to avoid confounding effects on the dependent variable and the main construct, I controlled for the following variables:

Follower's and leader's *gender*; since McColl-Kennedy and Anderson (2005) showed that different gender combinations between supervisors and subordinates impact organizational commitment differently.

Follower's and leader's *age*, *race* and *educational level*; because supervisor's and subordinate's similarities (e.g., individual characteristics) affect employee outcomes (e.g., performance) differently (Turban & Jones, 1988) and employee engagement is positive and statistically significantly related to employee performance (Rich et al., 2010).

Follower's *nationality*; given that culture influences on what and to what extend values are assigned (Hofstede, 2011). Especially in corporate contexts is this apparent (e.g., expected leadership style) (Hofstede, 2011).

Follower's *tenure*; considering that Sonnentag (2003) researched employee tenure to be positively correlated to work engagement.

Follower's *tenure under the leader*; because leader and follower relationship develop over time (Judge & Ferris, 1993). Differences in time might influence the way followers perceive their supervisors such as more time spend with a supervisor could mean that the follower knows the supervisor and the behavior better and can better assess the leadership style and the value congruence between them.

Leader's *job tenure*; due to the assumption that a leader who is in a leadership position for a longer time period probably gathered more experiences in leading employees together with which applied behavior resulted in higher employee engagement.

Results

For the analysis a psychometric approach was used and all measures were standardized to a mean of 0 and a standard deviation of 1. Intercorrelations among the study measures are displayed in Table 2.

Authentic leadership and job engagement are positively correlated ($r = .31, p < .01$), hence indicating a first positive relationship between the two constructs.

Value congruence is positively correlated with authentic leadership ($r = .66, p < .01$), thus indicating a further positive relationship.

The two subscales *balanced processing* and *self-awareness* have the highest correlation with authentic leadership, at a significance level of $p < .01$ and the subscale *emotional engagement* has the highest correlation with job engagement, at a significance level of $p < .01$.

To test the hypotheses, I ran different OLS regressions and controlled for the factors mentioned in the literature review, which could possibly influence employee job engagement. Hypothesis 1 predicted that authentic leadership is positively related to employee engagement. This hypothesis was supported ($\beta = .31, p < .01$; Table 3, Model 1), even when including the control variables ($\beta = .33, p < .01$; Table 3, Model 2). Model 2 further shows that follower's gender is associated with employee job engagement ($p < .1$), male employees seem to be on average less engaged compared to female employees. Also, the education level, when higher than a Bachelor's Degree, is significantly associated with employee job engagement ($p < .05$), this effect is on average positive for followers and negative for leaders.

To better comprehend *how* authentic leadership affects employees engagement, I ran a second regression analysis with the subscales of the authentic leadership instrument. The data shows that only balanced processing was significantly associated with employee job engagement, control variables included ($\beta = .26, p < .05$; Table 3, Model 3). Additionally, Model 3 appears to capture the theoretical model better, compared to Model 2 due to the higher R^2 .

Table 3*Summary of regression analysis results*

Variables	Job Engagement				
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
Follower Male		-0.274*	-0.264*	-0.237*	-0.217
		(0.141)	(0.135)	(0.135)	(0.132)
Leader Male		-0.0335	-0.0391	0.00726	-0.00495
		(0.143)	(0.145)	(0.141)	(0.141)
Follower Age 35+ years		0.255	0.299	0.228	0.184
		(0.201)	(0.221)	(0.198)	(0.213)
Leader Age 35-55 years		-0.0543	-0.0876	0.0303	-0.00271
		(0.186)	(0.183)	(0.171)	(0.169)
Leader Age 55+ years		-0.137	-0.122	0.102	0.105
		(0.262)	(0.262)	(0.262)	(0.263)
Follower Caucasian		-0.0131	-0.00211	-0.138	-0.151
		(0.228)	(0.235)	(0.239)	(0.246)
Leader Caucasian		0.0837	0.113	0.215	0.263
		(0.215)	(0.223)	(0.219)	(0.227)
Follower Education Bachelor's Degree		0.365	0.284	0.428*	0.289
		(0.291)	(0.302)	(0.254)	(0.277)
Follower Education higher than Bachelor's Degree		0.608**	0.521*	0.641**	0.512*
		(0.298)	(0.307)	(0.257)	(0.281)
Leader Education Bachelor's Degree		-0.504	-0.523	-0.405	-0.477
		(0.313)	(0.322)	(0.302)	(0.317)
Leader Education higher than Bachelor's Degree		-0.711**	-0.705**	-0.644**	-0.650**
		(0.306)	(0.309)	(0.290)	(0.303)
Follower German		-0.116	-0.0949	-0.121	-0.119
		(0.188)	(0.200)	(0.176)	(0.193)
Follower Tenure 6 years or more		0.102	0.112	0.0198	0.0652
		(0.171)	(0.180)	(0.159)	(0.166)
Follower Tenure under Leader 1 year or more		-0.105	-0.128	-0.186	-0.207
		(0.150)	(0.146)	(0.139)	(0.140)
Leader Job Tenure 6 years or more		0.146	0.165	0.107	0.124
		(0.153)	(0.156)	(0.151)	(0.152)
Authentic Leadership	0.314***	0.331***		0.181*	
	(0.0752)	(0.0778)		(0.103)	
<i>Relational Transparency</i>			-0.0443		-0.0818
			(0.139)		(0.132)
<i>Internal Moral Perspective</i>			0.226		0.120
			(0.142)		(0.132)
<i>Balanced Processing</i>			0.261**		0.301**
			(0.127)		(0.125)
<i>Self-Awareness</i>			-0.0112		-0.123
			(0.134)		(0.136)
Value Congruence				0.275**	0.323***
				(0.106)	(0.110)
Authentic Leadership X Value Congruence				0.227***	
				(0.0659)	
Balanced Processing X Value Congruence					0.249***
					(0.0719)
Constant	-0.000128	0.337	0.380	0.0592	0.218
	(0.0663)	(0.386)	(0.389)	(0.383)	(0.387)
R ²	0.098	0.186	0.200	0.276	0.284

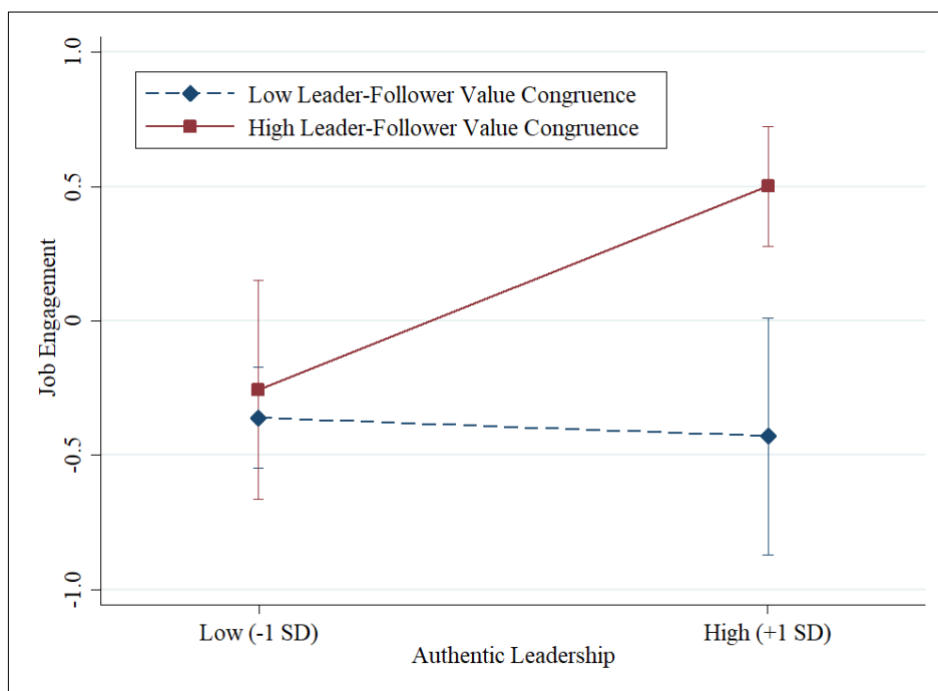
Note. n = 193. * p < 0.1; ** p < 0.05; *** p < 0.01

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

Hypothesis 2 predicted that the level of leader-follower value congruence will moderate the relationship between authentic leadership and employee engagement, the data supported this hypothesis. The interaction term between authentic leadership and leader-follower value congruence predicted employee engagement even when including the control variables ($\beta = .23$, $p < .01$; Table 3, Model 4). Simple slope analyses revealed when leader-follower value congruence was high, authentic leadership had a stronger effect on employee job engagement, and when leader-follower value congruence was low the effect was weaker. The marginal effects of this relationship at one standard deviation above and below the mean of leader-follower value congruence is depicted in Figure 2.²

Figure 2

Moderating effect of leader-follower value congruence on the relationship between authentic leadership and employee's job engagement



²An additional regression analysis using the moderator as a categorical variable (one standard deviation above and below the mean) confirmed that authentic leadership was positively associated with employee engagement when leader-follower value congruence was high ($\beta = .34$) and negatively associated with employee engagement when leader-follower value congruence was low ($\beta = -.67$).

Furthermore, and for consistency reasons, I run another moderation analysis with the subscales of the authentic leadership instrument. The interaction term between balanced processing and leader-follower value congruence was significantly associated with employee engagement ($\beta = .25$, $p < .01$; Table 3, Model 5). Model 5 seems to capture the theoretical model better compared to Model 4, due to a higher R^2 .

Discussion

Are leaders, who exercise an authentic leadership style, capable of positively influencing the engagement of their employees? If so, how important is value congruence between leaders and their employees in this context? Through this research study, I attempted to provide insight to those questions.

Even though the results are limited by sample size and the study captures solely the view by the employees, the results of the regression analysis demonstrated that authentic leadership is indeed positively related to employee engagement. If authentic leadership is perceived to be higher, employee engagement is higher.

The question arises, what the underlying causes for this relationship are. The results indicate support for various reasons. Employees might be more engaged because they personally identify with their supervisor (B. Avolio, Gardner, et al., 2004), since the authentic leader is more open and shows strengths and weaknesses. Also, it could be that engaged employees experience higher psychological safety (Kahn, 1990; Knight et al., 2017), because authentic leaders promote more trust among the employees through their self-awareness, and by revealing their authentic self transparently (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Furthermore, considering the internalized and integrated form of self-regulation of authentic leaders (Walumbwa et al., 2008), a fair and respectful treatment of the employees is more likely, and through interactional justice (Alok & Israel, 2012; Pati & Kumar, 2011), employees could feel more valued and thus experience meaningfulness (Kahn, 1990; Knight et al., 2017), which motivates them to be more engaged at work. Possible might also a higher engagement of the employees, because authentic leaders who are more engaged themselves, openly show this, whereby employees subconsciously feel more obliged to reciprocate the same level of engagement (Decuyper & Schaufeli, 2020).

Moreover, the results revealed that the authentic leadership dimension balanced processing seems to have the strongest impact on employee engagement. Authentic leaders are able to more objectively process relevant and non-relevant self-esteem information as well as evaluate and accept positive along with negative aspects, attributes and qualities of themselves, such as skill deficiencies, suboptimal performance or negative emotions (Gardner et al., 2005). Therefore, an authentic leader makes more balanced self-assessments without being distracted by self-defense motives such as self-enhancement and self-protection (Gardner et al., 2005). Hence, this behavior might lead to psychological as well as interpersonal enhancement in such a way that employees might feel more connected to their leader, are more motivated and thus show higher engagement at work.

The results of the moderation analysis further illustrated that value congruence moderates the relationship between authentic leadership and employee engagement. A positive relationship is stronger when value congruence is high, and weaker when value congruence is low. Hence, I found indications that with high value congruence, employees might identify more with their leader (B. Avolio, Gardner, et al., 2004), thus are more satisfied at work (Meglino et al., 1989), and show therefore higher job engagement. On the contrary, with low value congruence, employees might identify less with their leader, which results in lower job engagement.

Besides, it could indeed be that because of high value congruence, employees create more trust in their leader, which relates to the psychological safety dimension of work engagement and thus employees are more engaged at work (Alok & Israel, 2012; Kahn, 1990; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Whereas, if value congruence is low, employees trust their leaders less, the psychological safety dimension is not fulfilled and employees are not so much engaged.

Likewise, the results give indications that because of high value congruence, leader and employee share similar aspects of information processing and the communication is smoother (Lee et al., 2017; Meglino & Ravlin, 1998). Thus, employees truly understand the behavior and decisions made by their leader, which might have a motivating effect and result in higher engagement among employees.

Additionally, also the moderation analysis further supported the previous finding, that the balanced processing dimension in authentic leadership reveals to be most important. This could imply that high value congruence is particularly fundamental in regards to more objectively processing information and more balanced self-assessments. As such, if these

values are congruent between leader and employee, the authentic leadership style has a particular positive effect on employee engagement.

Finally, the relatively small R^2 in all five models could be due to omitted variable bias. Such an omitted variable could be the missing aspect of the organizational culture, due to which there could be higher employee engagement, regardless of the leader. For example, employees could show higher engagement because of a high performance culture, or because they feel intrinsically motivated when they experience their work as meaningful, in case of an organizational culture which emphasizes the organization's purpose. Also, it might be that more resilient individuals are more engaged at work, irrespective of the leadership style; or more confident employees could evaluate their own job engagement higher but are more critical when evaluating their leaders.

Theoretical Contributions and Implications

This Master Thesis makes several contributions to the leadership literature. First of all, by constructing a theoretical model which made use of the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) as well as the Job Engagement Scale (JES) to measure the effect of authentic leadership on employee engagement, it is to the best of my knowledge the first study which brought together these two constructs. Since the results revealed to be significant, this could imply for future studies to make use of the same scales when investigating in this field.

Second, by understanding the authentic leadership construct better, in regards to employee engagement, I revealed balanced processing to be the main effect of authentic leadership on employee job engagement and hence, this has essential implications. Researchers should, additionally to the full ALQ scale, also make use of the four subscales, when conducting research and, additionally, focus future research on the balanced processing subscale and the underlining effects on job engagement.

Finally, the conducted study attempted to fill the existing research gap by introducing leader-follower value congruence as a moderator to the relationship between authentic leadership and employee engagement. Given that value congruence demonstrated a significant role as a moderator, this implies that future research should be conducted to learn about the underlining effects in this relationship and to be able to expand the knowledge.

Limitations and Future Research

Although the findings of this study supported my hypotheses, the research design had several limitations that could be addressed in future research.

First, the sample size ($n = 193$) with 105 German and 88 Brazilian participants is not enough to generalize the results and to obtain meaningful results for those specific labor markets. This is also visible in the surprising absence of significant results related to followers' nationality in the regression analysis and may be attributed to the fact of the small sample. Future research could therefore be conducted with a larger sample and focus only on two countries, such as Brazil and Germany, and give cultural aspects higher importance since different norms and values influence employees and their perceptions of leadership.

Second, I used a self-reported questionnaire in the study for which reason several problems might have arisen. On the one side, participants might have been biased in their responses due to social desirability and might not have answered according to their actual thoughts and feelings. On the other side, the self-reported questionnaire was answered exclusively by the employees, hence the results only reflect the subjective views of the employees. It is as such not possible to control for the leadership style that the respective leader actually applied. Therefore, I could only measure the perceived leadership style, the perceived leader-follower value congruence and the perceived employee engagement. To be able to draw more objective conclusions, future research could additionally use a self-reported questionnaire for the particular leader of the employee and compare the results.

Third, the survey was created in English, however, the final sample only included participants from Germany and Brazil. It could be that participants had difficulties understanding the questions due to language barriers, which might have caused misunderstandings and misinterpretations and thus influenced participants' responses. For that reason, future studies should either address native English speakers or have the survey professionally translated into the necessary language to reduce unintended responses from participants.

Fourth, for all control variables I used categorical data with many different options to choose from. This resulted on the one side in the dropping of a lot of data and on the other side it narrowed down the conclusiveness of the results. For future research, I suggest to keep the options for categorical data to the minimum and use continuous data whenever possible.

Finally, this was a non-experimental study which makes it difficult to infer causal relationships. Although the results supported the hypotheses, it is not possible to rule out other explanations for the findings. Future research should as such begin to employ an experimental study design that measures employee engagement before and after exposure with a more or less authentic leader.

Managerial Contributions and Implications

Although this study was primarily designed to test theoretical derived hypotheses, the obtained findings have several managerial implications.

First, this research underlines once more the importance of leaders in work settings and their leadership style they apply. The results suggest that authentic leadership can enhance employee engagement. Since theory reported that authentic leadership is state-like and can be developed in leaders (Walumbwa et al., 2008), managers in practice can be optimistic about acquiring the skills of an authentic leader. Therefore, it may be worthwhile to invest in leadership training or executive coaching that explicitly focuses on the development of *authentic* leadership skills.

Second, the study results revealed the authentic leadership dimension balanced processing to be most important in positively influencing employee engagement. Thus, managers should be particularly aware to more objectively process self-esteem information and make more balanced self-assessments. Those results also give advice for executive coaches where to focus in their training with their clients and helps organizations to provide managers with the appropriate development programs.

Finally, as noted earlier, value congruence moderates the relationship between authentic leadership and employee engagement. Hence, I believe it is important that managers take this insight into the recruiting and interviewing processes. First of all, it is advisable to emphasize from the outset, at recruitment events, in advertisements and job postings, the values for which the organization and ultimately the leader stand. Secondly, not only should the HR department or other colleagues interview the applicant, but above all, the future leader should really take time for the interview to present his or her own values and learn about the applicant's values, in order to increase the likelihood of value congruence.

Conclusion

It is imperative for organizations, and especially leaders in practice, to know how to build, sustain, and promote employee engagement. Because the literature suggests that positive leadership styles, such as authentic leadership, can positively influence employee engagement, and previous research has begun to explore this relationship, I intended to advance the leadership literature by first confirming this and further introducing value congruence as an important moderating factor in this relationship. The results strongly supported my theoretical model, which builds on these ideas, as well as all of the hypotheses established.

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Appendix A**Table A1***Leader-Follower Value Congruence Scale with all its items*

Items

The things that I value in life are very similar to the things that my supervisor values

My personal values match my supervisor's values and ideals

My supervisor's values and ideals provide a good fit with the things that I value in life

Appendix B

Table B1

Job Engagement Scale (JES) with all its items

Items

Physical Engagement

- I work with intensity on my job
- I exert my full effort to my job
- I devote a lot of energy to my job
- I try my hardest to perform well on my job
- I strive as hard as I can to complete my job
- I exert a lot of energy on my job

Emotional Engagement

- I am enthusiastic in my job
- I feel energetic at my job
- I am interested in my job
- I am proud of my job
- I feel positive about my job
- I am excited about my job

Cognitive Engagement

- At work, my mind is focused on my job
 - At work, I pay a lot of attention to my job
 - At work, I focus a great deal of attention on my
 - At work, I am absorbed by my job
 - At work, I concentrate on my job
 - At work, I devote a lot of attention to my job
-