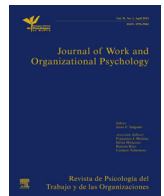




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## Employees' psychological capital, job satisfaction, insecurity, and intentions to quit: The direct and indirect effects of authentic leadership

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### ABSTRACT

To investigate the impact of an authentic leader on employees' psychological capital (PsyCap), job satisfaction, job insecurity, and intentions to quit the organisation, mediation analyses, as well as a conditional process analyses, were conducted using data collected from an offshore organisation. Findings showed that employees who perceived their leader as being authentic reported more job satisfaction and less job insecurity and intentions to quit the organisations. Moreover, results also showed an indirect effect of authentic leadership through PsyCap. Finally, the influence of the captains' authenticity did not vary depending on whether or not the captain was the employees' immediate superior. Results from this study suggest that efforts should be made to focus on the components of an authentic leader during recruitment, training, or intervention. Conclusively, employees working in the marine/offshore sector are faced with persistent fluctuations and uncertainties, and having an authentic leader will promote job satisfaction, while reducing both job insecurities and turnover intentions among employees.

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## Capital psicológico, satisfacción laboral, inseguridad e intención de abandono de los trabajadores: efectos directos e indirectos del liderazgo auténtico

### RESUMEN

Con objeto de investigar la influencia del líder auténtico en el capital psicológico de los trabajadores (cap-psi), la satisfacción en el trabajo, la inseguridad laboral y la intención de abandonar la empresa, se llevaron a cabo análisis de mediación y de procesos condicionales con datos sacados de una empresa *offshore*. Los resultados muestran que los trabajadores que percibían a su jefe como auténtico estaban más satisfechos y con menor inseguridad laboral e intención de abandonar la empresa. También había un efecto indirecto del liderazgo auténtico a través del capital psicológico. Por último, la influencia de la autenticidad de los jefes no variaba por que el jefe fuera el inmediato superior. Estos resultados indican que habría que hacer hincapié en los componentes del líder auténtico durante el reclutamiento, la formación y la intervención. Como conclusión, los trabajadores del sector marino/*offshore* se enfrentan a continuas fluctuaciones e incertidumbre, por lo que la existencia de un liderazgo auténtico aumentaría la satisfacción a la par que disminuirían tanto la inseguridad laboral de los trabajadores como su intención de abandono.

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#### Palabras clave:

Liderazgo auténtico

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John C. Maxwell, a critically acclaimed American expert on leadership once said that “everything rises and falls on leadership” (Maxwell, 2007, p. 267). Taken literally, this means that simple organisational variables like a successful psychosocial work environment, employees' satisfaction, absenteeism, and presentism, job insecurity, and intentions to quit the organisation, to name

a few, could be appropriated to the leadership's efforts or lack thereof. The present study was conducted among workers in the offshore oil and gas shipping re-supply industry. Workers in this particular field have been purported to epitomize safety critical organisations (SCOs). Seafaring as a profession has been regarded as a very demanding endeavour usually occurring within a dangerous environment (Hystad, Saus, Sætrevik, & Eid, 2013). According to Bergheim, Nielsen, Mearns, and Eid (2015), the working environment in the maritime sector appears to expose its workers to high rates of hazards, accidents, and catastrophes. Furthermore, the researchers maintain that "happy ship" is a very common expression among these workers, meaning that "job satisfaction and individual motivation are considered crucial elements in maritime organisations" (Bergheim et al., 2015, p. 27). Additionally, job insecurity and turnover intentions are among the ills of the maritime sector, potentially leading concerned employees to the violation of safety procedures, under-reporting of accidents, as well as decreased organisational citizen behaviour and commitment (Beecroft, Dorey, & Wenten, 2008; Cole & Bruch, 2006; Coyne & Ong, 2007; Probst, Barbaranelli, & Pettita, 2013; Probst & Ekore, 2010). In relation to the above, what can a leader do to increase job satisfaction while simultaneously reducing job insecurities and turnover intentions among employees? Concretely, can a leader influence employees' perception of job insecurity, turnover intentions and job insecurity?

Today, we witness an upsurge in various types of leadership theories (Antonakis, 2003; Avolio & Bass, 2002; Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Walumbwa, 2005; Skogstad, Einarsen, Torsheim, Aasland, & Hetland, 2007; Yukl, 2008). One of such theories is the authentic leadership style with its origin from the domain of positive psychology and positive organisational behaviour (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). As its name implies, it is described as the sense of personal ownership to one's "experiences, be they thoughts, emotions, needs, preferences, or beliefs, processes captured by the injunction to oneself" as well as behaviours that are consistent with the true self (Harter, 2005, p. 382).

The definition of authentic leadership style as a construct is built upon many underlying dimensions (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). Luthans and Avolio (2003, p. 243) were first out to define authentic leadership as the "process that draws from both positive psychological capacities and a highly developed organisational context, which results in both greater self-awareness and self-regulated positive behaviours on the part of leaders and associates, fostering self-development". So, an authentic leader not only feeds on psychological abilities in order to reach positive results, she also has a highly developed organisational contexts, all of which results into self-development both for the leader and her associates. The authentic leader's positive influence on her subordinates has made this construct attractive to scholars. This probably explains why many studies (e.g., Borgersen, Hystad, Larsson, & Eid, 2014; Rego, Sousa, Marques, & Cunha, 2012) have investigated the authentic leaders' role in organisational variables like job satisfaction, employees' performance, employees' creativity, and safety perceptions, among other things.

In the current study, we will build upon earlier studies and investigate if authentic leadership style plays any role in tangible organisational variables like employees' job satisfaction, whether or not employees feel secured in their positions, and lastly, employees' intentions to quit the organisation. We propose that authentic leadership exerts an influence not only directly, but also indirectly through a set of psychological qualities known as "psychological capital" (PsyCap) (Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007). In what follows, we will briefly expand our discussion of authentic leadership and why it may influence follower PsyCap. In the final part of the introduction, we will give an overview of the current study and

present our hypotheses. This part will also contain a brief discussion of our organisational outcomes variables.

### Authentic Leadership and Psychological Capital

Apart from the definition of authentic leadership given above, there have been attempts by several other researchers to give their own definition of authentic leadership style. For instance, Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber (2009, p. 424) described authentic leadership style as a sequence "of transparent and ethical leader behaviour that encourages openness in sharing information needed to make decisions while accepting input from those who follow". Through this definition, it is apparent that the actions of an authentic leader influence her subordinates. Avolio, Luthans, and Walumbwa (2004, as cited in Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004) also give a more comprehensive definition of authentic leaders in their work on authentic leadership. These researchers define authentic leaders as:

Those 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 perspectives, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character (p. 4, as cited in Avolio et al., 2004).

In conjunction with the above, there has been an increase in studies implicating PsyCap as a mediator in the relationship between authentic leadership style and several organisational variables (Rego et al., 2012; Spence Laschinger & Fida, 2014; Wang, Sui, Luthans, Wang, & Wu, 2014). According to Luthans et al. (2007, p. 3), PsyCap can be described as:

An individual's positive psychological state of development and is characterized by: (1) having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting path to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resiliency) to attain success.

The significance of PsyCap in organisations has been demonstrated in several recent studies.

For example, Avey, Luthans, and Youssef (2010) investigated the value of PsyCap in predicting work attitudes and behaviours among employees selected from a spectrum of organisations and jobs. The results from this study showed that PsyCap was positively related to organisational citizenship behaviours and negatively related to organisational cynicism, counterproductive work behaviours, and intentions to quit the organisation. A plethora of additional studies corroborate the importance of PsyCap, demonstrating favourable impact of PsyCap on entrepreneurs (e.g., Jensen & Luthans, 2006), on mental health and substance abuse (Krasikova, Lester, & Harms, 2015), job satisfaction and safety perceptions (Bergheim et al., 2015), as well as on employees' attitudes, behaviours, and performance (Avey, Reichard, Luthans, & Mhatre, 2011; Luthans, Avolio, Walumbwa, & Li, 2005).

Authentic leadership style has previously been found to have a positive effect on employees' PsyCap (Hystad, Bartone, & Eid, 2014; Rego et al., 2012). For instance, in a study conducted among workers in the offshore oil and gas industry, Hystad et al. (2014) showed that part of the association between authentic leadership and a positive safety climate was mediated through the effect that authentic leadership had on the subordinates' PsyCap. There are sound theoretical reasons for expecting authentic

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