



The Influence of Authentic Leadership on Work Engagement Mediated by Perceived Organizational Support at Dewi Sri Hotel

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Abstract

The dynamic work environment in the hospitality industry requires employees to maintain a high level of work engagement to ensure service quality and organizational competitiveness. One of the key factors influencing employee engagement is the leadership style applied by management. Authentic leadership is believed to foster relationships based on openness, honesty, and integrity, which in turn strengthen employees' trust and their perception of organizational support. This perception, known as perceived organizational support (POS), reflects the extent to which employees feel that the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being. This study aims to analyze the effect of authentic leadership and perceived organizational support on work engagement, as well as to examine the mediating role of perceived organizational support among 87 employees of Hotel Dewi Sri. Data were collected through questionnaires using a Likert scale and analyzed with Structural Equation Modeling Partial Least Square (SEM-PLS). The results show that both authentic leadership and perceived organizational support have a positive and significant influence on work engagement. Authentic leadership also has a positive and significant effect on perceived organizational support, while perceived organizational support acts as a complementary partial mediator in the relationship between authentic leadership and work engagement. These findings reinforce social exchange theory, which emphasizes that authentic leadership behavior encourages perceptions of organizational support, and through these perceptions, employees reciprocate by exhibiting higher levels of work engagement. The practical implications highlight the importance of communication transparency, value consistency, and concern for employee well-being as strategic approaches to enhance work engagement and overall organizational performance.

Keywords: *authentic leadership, perceived organizational support, work engagement*

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I. Introduction

Employee work engagement is central to service excellence and competitive advantage in hospitality organizations, where frontline behaviors directly shape guest experiences and brand reputation (Ekowati & Ariani, 2022). In resource-intensive service settings, engaged employees exhibit vigor, dedication, and absorption, translating into fewer errors, higher productivity, and superior service quality (Mondy & Martocchio, 2016). The strategic imperative of engagement is particularly salient for hotels that compete on intangible service cues; sustained engagement enables consistent delivery of personalized, responsive service while preserving operational reliability under variable demand (Wokas & Saerang, 2020). Engagement has also been associated with individual performance and discretionary effort, supporting retention and long-term organizational outcomes in human-intensive operations (Hadi, Putra, & Mardikaningsih, 2020).

Authentic leadership (AL)—characterized by self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing—has emerged as a robust antecedent of engagement in organizational research (Walumbwa et al., 2018). Theoretically, AL cultivates high-quality leader–member relationships that emphasize integrity and openness, which are critical for psychological safety, role clarity, and meaning-making in service work. Empirically, prior studies have linked AL to higher engagement by reinforcing trust, self-efficacy, and empowerment pathways (Hsieh & Wang, 2015; Farid et al., 2021). Leaders who consistently align espoused values with actions foster credibility, encouraging employees to invest cognitive and emotional resources in their roles (Wirawan, Jufri, & Saman, 2020). This effect appears particularly relevant in hospitality, where service scripts are complex and situationally demanding, requiring confident, ethically anchored guidance (Khalil & Siddiqui, 2019).

Yet, evidence is not uniformly consistent across contexts. Under high job stress, AL's influence on engagement may attenuate, suggesting boundary conditions that dilute the leader's positive effects (Maximo, Stander, & Coxen, 2019). Similarly, when employees perceive low organizational support, AL–engagement linkages can weaken, implying that signals from the broader organization shape how leadership behaviors are interpreted and reciprocated (Alilyyani, Wong, & Cummings, 2023). These mixed findings underscore the need to theorize and test intervening mechanisms that explain when and why AL promotes engagement in service-intensive workplaces (Rahmawati & Utami, 2023).

Social Exchange Theory (SET) offers a useful lens for clarifying these dynamics. SET posits that work relationships are governed by reciprocity norms: favorable treatment from leaders and organizations elicits employees' positive attitudes and behaviors in return (Jahan & Kim, 2020). In performance management and daily interactions, fairness, respect, and reliable support function as social currencies that invite reciprocation through engagement (Afrianty & Putriwahyuni, 2020). Within this framework, perceived organizational support (POS)—employees' global belief that the organization values their contributions and cares for their well-being—should operate as a pivotal psychological conduit through which AL translates into engagement.

POS has been conceptualized and evidenced as a powerful predictor of extra-role and in-role performance, strengthening affective commitment and encouraging employees to go beyond formal requirements (Kurniawan & Harsono, 2021; Chen, Eisenberger, Johnson, Sucharski, & Aselage, 2010). In hospitality teams, POS communicates that the organization recognizes service demands and will provide fair treatment, adequate resources, and supportive supervision; these signals foster security and sustained effort in guest-facing roles (Harahap, Nasution, & Tambunan, 2023). POS also captures fairness in resource allocation, supervisor support, rewards, and job conditions—elements salient for service recovery, peak workload periods, and role conflict resolution (Ulifa, Mas, & Suci, 2023). When POS is high, engagement rises, as employees are more willing to invest energy and attention in continuous service improvement (Taneu et al., 2023). POS further strengthens identification, responsibility, and persistence, contributing to better service outcomes (Imran et al., 2020; Bonauto et al., 2022).

In hospitality, engagement directly shapes service quality and guest satisfaction through the quality of frontline interactions (Zhang, Geng, & Sun, 2020). The broader leadership literature suggests that engagement can be indirectly enhanced when leaders cultivate identification and meaningfulness; however, the organization's structural and cultural support often conditions the magnitude of these effects (Buil, Martínez, & Matute, 2021). Synthesizing these streams, we posit that AL may elevate POS by signaling fairness, consistency, and genuine care; in turn, heightened POS should foster engagement, rendering POS a complementary partial mediator between AL and engagement (Vermeulen & Scheepers, 2020).

The present study addresses two related gaps. First, it responds to the mixed evidence regarding the direct effect of AL on engagement by introducing POS as a theoretically grounded mediator in the hospitality context. Second, it examines these relationships in an Indonesian hotel setting, where service traditions, cultural values, and resource configurations may shape exchange processes differently than in Western samples. Preliminary qualitative insights at the Dewi Sri Hotel (Legian–Kuta, Bali) indicate that leadership transitions have produced divergent perceptions around communication transparency, task allocation, and policy consistency. A pre-survey revealed that a large proportion of employees perceived limited transparency and fairness from supervisors (e.g., 80% reporting insufficiently transparent communication), which coincided with signs of lower engagement (e.g., minimal initiative and responsibility-taking). Such patterns are consistent with SET expectations: when leader and organizational signals are ambiguous or unfavorable, the perceived social exchange deteriorates, dampening engagement reciprocation.

Against this backdrop, we examine whether AL boosts engagement among hotel employees and whether POS operates as a mediating mechanism. We focus on three constructs—authentic leadership (X), perceived organizational support (Z), and work engagement (Y)—and test four hypotheses: AL → engagement; AL → POS; POS → engagement; and POS mediates AL → engagement. The empirical setting comprises the Dewi Sri Hotel, with a census sample of 87 employees across functional departments (e.g., front office, housekeeping, food & beverage, kitchen, engineering, security). Data were collected via a structured questionnaire using five-point Likert scales and analyzed with variance-based Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM), which is appropriate for predictive modeling with modest samples and latent constructs measured by reflective indicators (Hair et al., 2017; Ghazali & Latan, 2015). The study's design aligns with the hotel's operational realities and the constructs' measurement traditions in organizational behavior and human resource management research.

This inquiry offers three contributions. Theoretically, it refines AL–engagement linkages by explicating POS as a complementary partial mediator within the SET paradigm, addressing boundary conditions that have yielded contradictory results in prior work. Empirically, it provides evidence from an under-examined, non-

Western hospitality setting, extending generalizability and contextual sensitivity of AL and POS literatures. Practically, it informs leadership development and HR policies in hotels by highlighting the need to couple leader authenticity with systemic organizational support—fair procedures, transparent communication, supervisor help, and credible rewards—to unlock engagement at scale. Findings are expected to inform interventions such as transparency protocols, supervisor coaching on relational behaviors, and recognition systems calibrated to frontline service demands. These levers collectively reinforce employees' belief that the organization cares and values them, strengthening the reciprocity loop that underpins engagement in high-contact service work.

At the Dewi Sri Hotel, early descriptive results suggested moderate POS and engagement, with relatively strong perceptions of leaders' ethical decision-making but weaker ratings on information clarity and recognition for contributions. These patterns indicate that while leaders may embody moral courage and internalized values, engagement gains may stall if organizational signals about fairness, support, and rewards are not sufficiently salient or consistent. In SET terms, leader authenticity must be matched by organizational reciprocity cues to fully realize engagement benefits. This reinforces the study's central premise: AL can set the tone, but POS often carries the signal into everyday practices that employees experience—resource availability, equitable task assignment, supportive supervision, and recognition. By testing mediation, the study distinguishes the leader's proximal effects from the organization's systemic influence on engagement, clarifying where managerial attention should be directed for maximal returns.

The Indonesian hospitality landscape further underscores the relevance of this model. Hotels navigate fluctuating demand, complex service scripts, and high emotional labor; employees rely on fair, transparent structures and responsive supervision to sustain engagement. The AL–POS–engagement chain provides a diagnostic framework: if engagement is low, managers can assess leader authenticity behaviors (e.g., transparency, relational respect) and organizational support signals (e.g., fairness, rewards, job conditions). Calibrating both sides of the exchange, rather than focusing solely on leader traits, can produce more durable engagement improvements. The model also suggests contingency planning during leadership transitions: proactively strengthening communication protocols and recognition practices may buffer engagement against uncertainty and signal consistent organizational care.

In sum, this study leverages SET to articulate why AL should enhance POS and, in turn, engagement, and empirically tests this mediated relationship in a hotel workforce. By situating the analysis within Dewi Sri Hotel's operational context and using PLS-SEM to model latent constructs, the research advances understanding of engagement drivers in hospitality and offers actionable guidance for leaders and HR practitioners. The remainder of this article details the theoretical framework and hypotheses, the research method and measures, the results of the structural model, and the implications for theory and practice in hospitality management.

II. Research Methodology

This study adopts a quantitative associative research design, aiming to examine causal relationships among authentic leadership, perceived organizational support, and work engagement within the hospitality context. The approach is grounded in positivist assumptions, emphasizing objective measurement and statistical inference to validate the proposed hypotheses (Sugiyono, 2024).

Research Setting and Object

The empirical investigation was conducted at Dewi Sri Hotel, located in Legian–Kuta, Bali, Indonesia. The hotel was selected due to its operational challenges related to employee engagement and leadership transitions, which provided a relevant context for testing the conceptual model. The objects of analysis comprise three latent constructs: authentic leadership (X), perceived organizational support (Z), and work engagement (Y).

Population and Sampling

The population consists of all employees of Dewi Sri Hotel, totaling **87 individuals** across ten functional departments, including management, front office, housekeeping, food and beverage service, kitchen, engineering, and security. Given the relatively small population size, the study employed a **census sampling technique**, wherein all members of the population were included as respondents. This approach ensures comprehensive coverage and minimizes sampling error (Sugiyono, 2024).

Research Design and Variables

The research model incorporates:

- Exogenous variable: Authentic Leadership (X)
- Endogenous variable: Work Engagement (Y)
- Mediating variable: Perceived Organizational Support (Z)

Each construct was operationalized using reflective indicators derived from validated scales in prior studies. Authentic leadership was measured through four dimensions—transparency, moral courage, relational orientation, and internalized values (Aini, 2023). Perceived organizational support was assessed via fairness, supervisor support, organizational rewards, and job conditions (Ulifa et al., 2023). Work engagement was captured through vigor, dedication, and absorption indicators adapted from Pranitasari & Rozaq (2019).

Operational Definitions and Measurement

All indicators were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (“strongly disagree”) to 5 (“strongly agree”). This scaling facilitates interval-level measurement suitable for structural equation modeling. Prior to hypothesis testing, the instrument underwent validity and reliability assessments, including convergent validity (outer loadings > 0.70), discriminant validity (Fornell–Larcker criterion), and internal consistency reliability (Cronbach’s alpha and composite reliability > 0.70). Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values exceeded 0.50 for all constructs, confirming adequate convergent validity.

Data Collection Procedures

Primary data were obtained through structured questionnaires distributed to all employees. The instrument was designed based on theoretical constructs and pre-tested for clarity and relevance. Secondary data, such as organizational charts and employee demographics, were sourced from the hotel’s HR department. Ethical considerations were observed by securing informed consent and ensuring confidentiality of responses.

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis employed Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) using SmartPLS version 4, which is appropriate for predictive modeling with small samples and complex mediation structures (Hair et al., 2017; Ghozali & Latan, 2015). The analytical procedure comprised:

1. Outer Model Evaluation: Assessing indicator reliability, composite reliability, and validity (convergent and discriminant).
2. Inner Model Evaluation: Examining path coefficients, R^2 values, and predictive relevance (Q^2). The model yielded R^2 values of 0.394 for perceived organizational support and 0.551 for work engagement, indicating moderate explanatory power.
3. Goodness-of-Fit (GoF): Calculated as 0.612, signifying a strong overall model fit.
4. Hypothesis Testing: Conducted via bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples to estimate t-statistics and p-values. Significance was determined at $\alpha = 0.05$ ($t > 1.96$; $p < 0.05$).
5. Mediation Analysis: The indirect effect of authentic leadership on work engagement through perceived organizational support was tested using the bootstrapping approach, confirming complementary partial mediation.

III. Results and Discsison

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The analysis was conducted using **Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM)** with SmartPLS 4 to evaluate the measurement and structural models. The results are presented in three stages: measurement model assessment, structural model evaluation, and hypothesis testing.

Measurement Model Assessment

The outer model evaluation confirmed that all indicators met the reliability and validity criteria. **Outer loadings** ranged from 0.824 to 0.937, exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.70, indicating strong indicator reliability. **Average Variance Extracted (AVE)** values were 0.807 for work engagement, 0.791 for authentic

leadership, and 0.779 for perceived organizational support, surpassing the recommended level of 0.50, thus establishing convergent validity. Discriminant validity was verified through the **Fornell–Larcker criterion**, where the square root of AVE for each construct was greater than its correlations with other constructs. Internal consistency reliability was confirmed with **Cronbach's alpha** and **composite reliability** values above 0.90 for all constructs, demonstrating high reliability.

Structural Model Evaluation

The structural model exhibited moderate explanatory power. The **R² value for perceived organizational support was 0.394**, indicating that authentic leadership explains 39.4% of its variance. For work engagement, the **R² value was 0.551**, suggesting that authentic leadership and perceived organizational support jointly explain 55.1% of its variance. The **Q² predictive relevance score of 0.728** confirmed strong predictive capability, while the **Goodness-of-Fit (GoF) index of 0.612** indicated an excellent overall model fit.

Hypothesis Testing

Bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples was employed to assess the significance of direct and indirect effects. Table 1 summarizes the results:

Table 1. Hypothesis Testing Results

Hipotesis	Original Sample	t statistic	p values	Information
Direct Influence				
Authentic leadership -> Work engagement	0,354	4,543	0,000	Signifikan
Authentic leadership -> Perceived organizational support	0,628	9,192	0,000	Signifikan
Perceived organizational support -> Work engagement	0,467	5,672	0,000	Signifikan
Indirect Influence				
Authentic leadership -> Perceived organizational support -> Work engagement	0,293	4,650	0,000	Signifikan

All hypothesized relationships were positive and statistically significant at **p < 0.05**, confirming that authentic leadership directly influences work engagement and perceived organizational support, while POS also positively affects engagement. Mediation analysis revealed that POS acts as a **complementary partial mediator**, as both direct and indirect effects were significant and aligned in direction.

Descriptive Analysis

Descriptive statistics indicated that employees perceived authentic leadership at a relatively high level (mean = 3.54), particularly in ethical decision-making and adherence to organizational values, while transparency scored lower (mean = 3.26). Perceived organizational support was rated moderate (mean = 3.37), with job conditions receiving the highest score and recognition for contributions the lowest. Work engagement averaged 3.40, suggesting a moderate level of vigor and dedication, with enthusiasm for tasks scoring higher than responsibility for unfinished work.

Model Interpretation

The findings validate the theoretical proposition that authentic leadership enhances work engagement both directly and indirectly through perceived organizational support. This mediation effect underscores the importance of organizational-level signals—fairness, supervisor support, and recognition—in amplifying the positive influence of leader authenticity on employee engagement. These results are consistent with **Social Exchange Theory**, which posits that reciprocal exchanges between leaders, organizations, and employees foster sustained engagement in hospitality settings.

Discussion

The findings of this study confirm that **authentic leadership (AL)** exerts a significant positive influence on **work engagement (WE)** among hotel employees, both directly and indirectly through **perceived organizational support (POS)**. This outcome reinforces the theoretical assumptions of **Social Exchange Theory (SET)**, which posits that reciprocal relationships between leaders, organizations, and employees foster desirable work attitudes and behaviors (Afrianty & Putriwahyuni, 2020). In the context of hospitality,

where service quality depends heavily on frontline employee commitment, these results underscore the strategic importance of leadership authenticity and organizational support mechanisms.

Authentic Leadership and Work Engagement

The direct effect of AL on WE ($\beta = 0.354$, $p < 0.001$) suggests that leaders who demonstrate transparency, moral integrity, and relational openness can stimulate employees' psychological investment in their roles. This finding aligns with prior research indicating that authentic leaders create environments of trust and psychological safety, which are essential for engagement (Walumbwa et al., 2018; Farid et al., 2021). In Dewi Sri Hotel, employees reported relatively high perceptions of ethical decision-making and adherence to organizational values, which likely contributed to their enthusiasm and dedication at work. However, lower ratings on transparency indicate that communication gaps may limit the full potential of AL in driving engagement—a nuance that warrants managerial attention.

Authentic Leadership and Perceived Organizational Support

The strong positive relationship between AL and POS ($\beta = 0.628$, $p < 0.001$) highlights the role of leadership behaviors in shaping employees' global beliefs about organizational care and recognition. Leaders who act consistently with organizational values and exhibit genuine concern for employee well-being signal fairness and reliability, thereby enhancing POS (Saruksuk et al., 2022; Cottrill et al., 2014). This linkage is particularly critical in hospitality settings, where employees often face high emotional labor and unpredictable workloads. At Dewi Sri Hotel, while job conditions were rated favorably, recognition for contributions scored lowest, suggesting that organizational support practices need to complement leadership authenticity to sustain positive perceptions.

Perceived Organizational Support and Work Engagement

The significant effect of POS on WE ($\beta = 0.467$, $p < 0.001$) corroborates previous studies asserting that employees who feel valued and supported exhibit higher levels of vigor, dedication, and absorption (Imran et al., 2020; Bonauto et al., 2022). POS provides psychological resources that buffer stress and enhance motivation, enabling employees to maintain service quality under demanding conditions. In this study, moderate POS scores indicate room for improvement, particularly in recognition and reward systems, which are instrumental in reinforcing engagement behaviors.

Mediating Role of POS

The mediation analysis revealed that POS partially mediates the AL–WE relationship (indirect effect $\beta = 0.293$, $p < 0.001$), classified as **complementary partial mediation**. This finding suggests that while AL directly influences engagement, its impact is amplified when employees perceive strong organizational support. Theoretically, this underscores the dual importance of leader-driven and system-driven signals in sustaining engagement. Practically, it implies that leadership development initiatives should be integrated with HR policies that institutionalize fairness, recognition, and supportive work conditions.

Comparison with Prior Research

These results are consistent with global evidence on AL and engagement but add contextual insights from an Indonesian hospitality setting. Similar to findings by Vermeulen and Scheepers (2020), this study confirms POS as a critical psychological mechanism linking leadership authenticity to engagement. However, the moderate engagement and POS levels observed here contrast with higher scores reported in Western hotel chains, possibly reflecting cultural and structural differences in organizational practices. This highlights the need for culturally attuned interventions that address local expectations of fairness, communication, and recognition.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

From a theoretical perspective, this study extends SET by demonstrating how leader authenticity and organizational support jointly shape engagement in service-intensive environments. It also validates the multidimensional nature of AL and POS as antecedents of engagement, offering a nuanced understanding of their interplay. Practically, hotel managers should prioritize transparent communication, ethical decision-making, and relational openness while simultaneously strengthening organizational support systems—such as reward programs, career development opportunities, and supervisor coaching—to maximize engagement outcomes.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite its contributions, this study has limitations. The cross-sectional design restricts causal inference, and the single-site context limits generalizability. Future research could adopt longitudinal designs to

capture dynamic changes in engagement and explore additional mediators such as psychological empowerment or job satisfaction. Comparative studies across different cultural and organizational settings would further enrich understanding of how contextual factors moderate the AL–POS–WE nexus.

Conclusion

This study demonstrates that **authentic leadership (AL)** significantly enhances **work engagement (WE)** among hotel employees, both directly and indirectly through **perceived organizational support (POS)**. The findings confirm that AL fosters trust, transparency, and ethical consistency, which positively influence employees' psychological attachment to their work. Moreover, POS acts as a complementary partial mediator, amplifying the effect of AL on engagement by reinforcing employees' perceptions of organizational care and fairness. These results validate **Social Exchange Theory**, emphasizing that reciprocal exchanges between leaders and organizations create conditions for sustained engagement in service-intensive environments.

The explanatory power of the model ($R^2 = 0.551$ for WE) and strong predictive relevance ($Q^2 = 0.728$) indicate that leadership authenticity and organizational support jointly account for a substantial proportion of engagement variance. However, descriptive findings reveal moderate levels of POS and WE, suggesting that while leadership behaviors are relatively strong, organizational support practices—particularly recognition and transparent communication—require improvement to fully realize engagement potential.

Recommendations

1. Enhance Leadership Transparency and Communication

Hotel managers should prioritize open and consistent communication regarding policies, performance expectations, and organizational changes. Training programs focused on authentic leadership competencies—such as relational transparency and balanced decision-making—can strengthen trust and psychological safety among employees.

2. Institutionalize Organizational Support Mechanisms

Beyond leadership behaviors, systemic HR interventions are essential. Implementing structured recognition programs, equitable reward systems, and clear career development pathways will reinforce employees' perceptions of organizational care. These measures should be complemented by supervisor coaching to ensure alignment between organizational policies and daily practices.

3. Integrate Leadership Development with HR Strategy

Authentic leadership initiatives should not operate in isolation. Linking leadership training with organizational support frameworks—such as fairness audits, employee feedback systems, and well-being programs—will create a coherent environment that sustains engagement.

4. Monitor Engagement and Support Indicators Regularly

Establishing periodic surveys and feedback loops will enable management to track changes in engagement and POS, identify emerging gaps, and implement timely corrective actions. This proactive approach is critical in dynamic hospitality settings where employee morale directly impacts service quality.

5. Prepare for Leadership Transitions

Given the sensitivity of engagement to leadership changes, hotels should develop transition protocols that emphasize continuity in communication and support practices. This will mitigate uncertainty and preserve engagement during periods of managerial turnover.

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