

RESEARCH ARTICLE

The Role of Authentic Leadership in Project Success: Exploring the Mediating Effect of Trust and the Moderating Influence of Charisma

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Abstract: The purpose of the study is to determine whether trust mediated the effect of authentic leadership on project success. Additionally, a moderator (leadership charisma) was also evaluated using a moderated mediation approach. To address the primary aims, to measure the project manager's authentic leadership style, trust, charisma, and project achievement in project-based organizations of developing countries a questionnaire-based survey was used. The analyses suggest that increases in levels of authentic leadership enhance trust among team members and eventually contribute massively to project success. The results also show that charisma shows a statistically significant influence on developing trust. Finally, the findings suggest that charisma has a moderating effect on the relationship between authentic leadership dimensions and overall project success. The new method as suggested by Preacher and Hayes "process" was used to study this impact, which would contribute to method advancement in variables testing in the specific context of project management and leadership.

Keywords: Authentic Leadership, Charisma, Trust, Success, Moderated Mediation

Introduction

The success of an organization is supported by many factors, but the key factor has always been the management of human resources (Viitala et al., 2020). Human resource management not only helps people to show their true potential (Magrizos, & Roumpi, 2020), but also helps the organization in extracting the maximum out of the workforce that leads to increased output of an organization (Das, 2018). The management of human resources is often incorrectly associated with the human resource (HR) department of an organization (Gutierrez-Gutierrez et al., 2018). The HR department may hire the best of the best employees (Sarode & Deore, 2017), but the project manager may not lead them to deliver the desired benefits for an organization (Ul Musawir et al., 2017). The role of the project leader is, therefore, particularly important to not only be able to supply an environment that is conducive to keep the highly qualified staff (Laschinger et al., 2012), but also to use them optimally. The recent developments have made it incumbent on the leaders of organizations to be transparent, and guide the organization morally and ethically (Caesarius & Hohenthal, 2018). The leading organizations of the world today are more focused on training and encouraging its employees to be innovative, creative, and performing (Semedo et al., 2016) rather than being controlling and dominating to combat the distinctly competitive and challenging market environment (Burg et al., 2016). The role of leadership has thus suddenly become more important in the world (Dirani et al., 2020), causing the need for research in the part of leadership in human resource growth, supervision, and organizational implementation. Leadership has evolved from transactional leadership to authentic leadership.

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Authentic leadership is one of the most important comparative considerations that affects innovation and revolution (Mubarak & Noor, [2018](#)) by ensuring the right conditions for all the employees to give their best each day (Roberts & David, [2017](#)). There is growing evidence that trustworthy leadership has a convincing effect on the performance, creativeness (Semedo et al., [2016](#)), behavior, commitment (Delić, et. al, [2017](#)), job satisfaction of the worker (Olaniyan & Hystad, [2016](#)) and thus the overall success of an organization (Khan, [2020](#)).

The accomplishment of a project is the responsibility of the project director. He needs to prove his key performance indicators (KPIs), be authoritative about those KPIs and then take his team to achieve those in a healthy working environment (Nixon et al., [2011](#)). As leader he needs to ensure that the team trusts him (Turesky et al., [2020](#)), understands his priorities and work in the direction he wants, but at the same time should welcome inputs from his team with open heart (Harvey et al., [2019](#)). Sincere input would only be given if the team leader has charisma, authority and is trustworthy. Trust and charisma are important components of authentic leadership. A trusted and charismatic leader can ensure employees devote themselves to the work with passion and enthusiasm. Whenever a new project is started, the team members prefer to have an authoritative and charismatic leader (Chiang, et. al [2020](#)), so that he can supply more umbrellas of authority and reliability (Sarin & McDermott, [2003](#)). Trust and charisma research should keep concentrating on the conceptualization, measurement, and function of leadership in organizations because it is a notable construct in leadership literature (Men et al., [2020](#)).

Objective of the Study

The objective of this study is to assess the impact of trust in leadership (mediator) and leader charisma (moderator) and on the success of a project. The new method as implied by Preacher and Hayes "process" was used to study this impact, which contributed to method advancement in variables testing in the explicit context of project managing and leadership.

Literature Review

Authentic leadership is the ability to motivate individuals to achieve project success (Henkel et al., [2019](#)) through communication, trust, charisma, teamwork, and hard work (George et al., [2007](#); Aponte-Moreno & Koulouris, [2017](#)). Concerning the factors which may influence rank of an authentic leadership (Ribeiro et al., [2018](#); Vessey et al., [2014](#)), trust (Davidson & Hughes, [2020](#)) and charisma may be considered as amongst the key attribute to separate outstanding from those who are merely adequate (Alexander & Lopez, [2018](#); Karam, et. al [2017](#); Gatling et al., [2016](#)). Considerable research has been published to determine the impact of the various constructs of distinctive leadership styles on the success of a project. Trust, amongst numerous constructs, has generally been found to positively impact the productivity and success of a project (Brink, [2020](#)), like how it exponentially strengthens the relationship bond in personal lives (Park et al., [2019](#)). Authentic leadership develops trust between the leader and the team associates (Morgan, [2017](#); Černe et al., [2018](#); Shams et al., [2025](#)). Along with that Communication is a valuable tool in developing trust (Henderson et al., [2016](#)) and achieving success of a project. Charisma on the other hand is sole solution in circumstances that could be described as an emergency (Arora, & Sharma, [2017](#); Vergauwe et al., [2018](#)). Attribution equivocalness is not reminiscent of an emergency, and such circumstances do not really offer ascent to charismatic leaders.

Charisma fundamentally impacts attribution equivocalness is not reminiscent of an emergency and such circumstances do not really offer ascent to charismatic leaders. This helps produce top leaders who are trusted by peers and subordinates alike. The influence that charismatic leaders' visions, projects in correspondence to shareholders and employees, have on a key external constituency in the project (Shenhar et al., [1997](#); Varga, [2018](#)). This helps produce top leaders who are trusted by peers and subordinates alike

(Conger & Benjamin 1999). The influence that charismatic leaders’ visions, projects in correspondence to shareholders and employees, have on a key external constituency in the project. Studies show that the impact of charisma is most important when execution signs are ambiguous and project scope is not noticeably clear (Ika et al., 2020). Although charisma matters most in uncertain execution conditions (Nadel, 2019), our expectation that it would not make any difference under clear execution signs is not applicable; charisma matters, however to a lesser degree.

While writers have looked at the impact of trustworthy headship on the performance of organizations and project success, there are few studies that focus on project managers' authentic leadership styles and how they contribute to project success with charisma and trust.

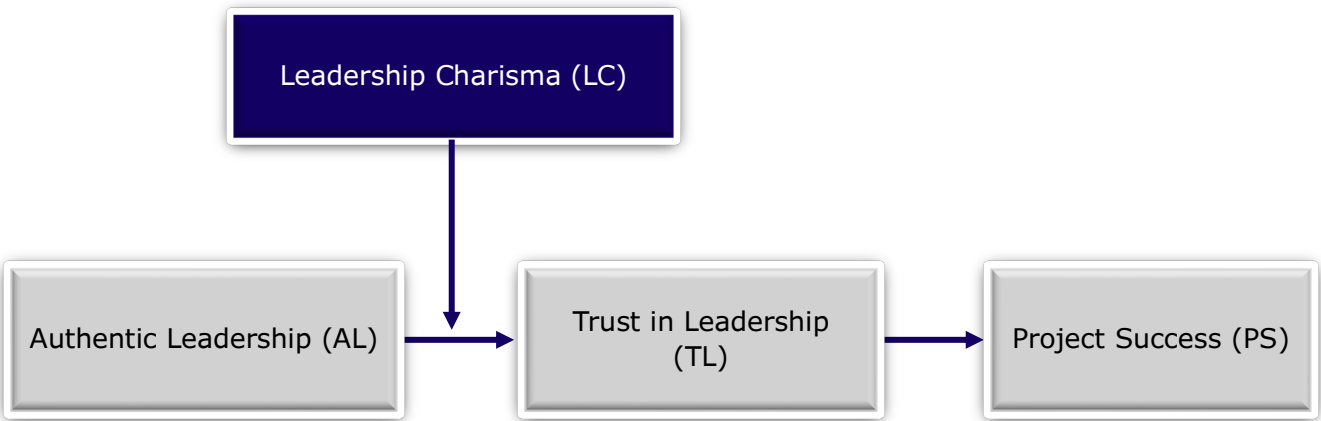
Hypothesis

- H1: Authentic leadership relates positively with trust in leadership
- H2: Authentic leadership relates positively with project success
- H3: Trust in leadership relates positively with project success.
- H4: Leader Charisma relates positively with trust in leadership
- H5: Leader Charisma relates positively with project success with a mediating role of trust in leadership.

Methodology
Research Model

In this thesis, trust in leadership was the mediator assumed in connection between project success and authentic leadership, in other words, trust as the mediator effects on authentic leadership and project success. The moderator of leader charisma gives strength to the association of trust in leadership and trustworthy leadership as it ensures the loyalty between leader and followers. The theoretical framework of this study is a conceptual model grounded on theoretical relationships between variables and is given below.

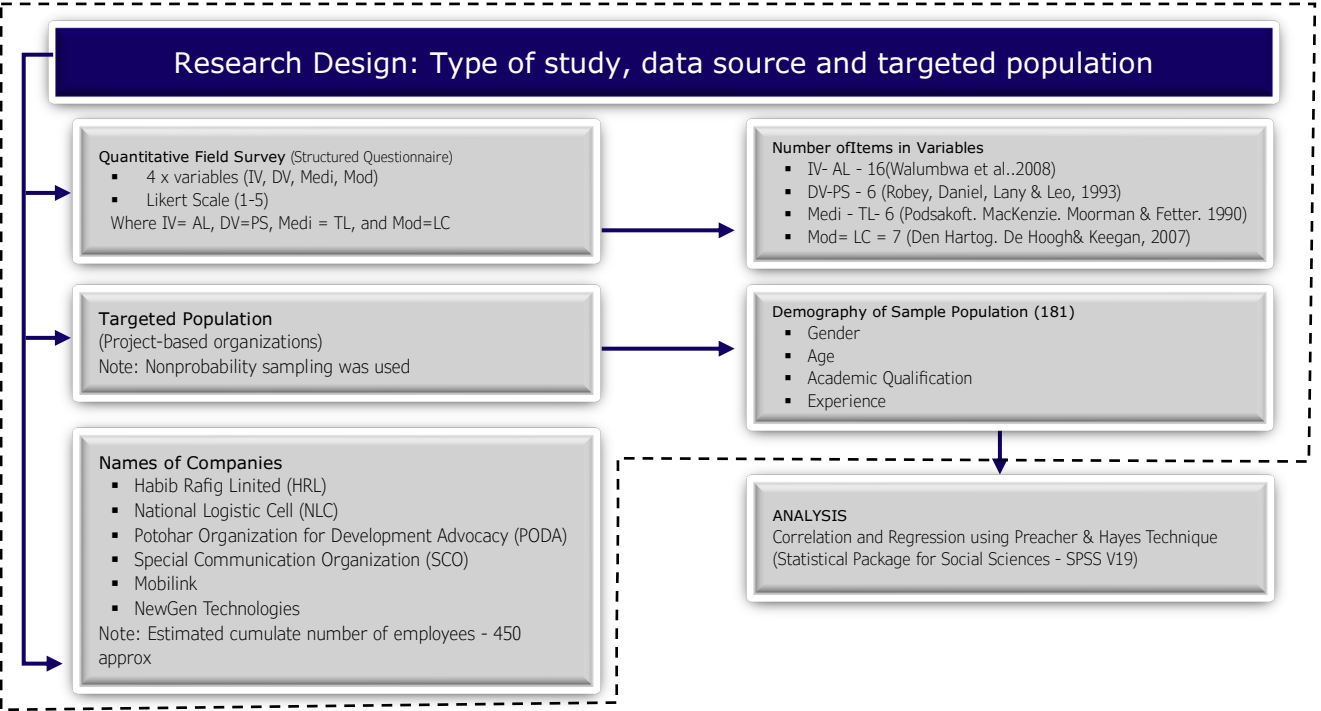
Figure 1



- AL to TL (path a1)
- LC to TL (path a2)
- TL to PS (path b)
- AL to PS (path c')
- LC/TL to PS (path a3)

Research Design

Figure 02



The method used in this research consists of the details of the population, the variables, the demographic considerations, and the method of analysis given in Figure 02. Questionnaires used for the data collection, adapted from earlier research. Responses to all questions were evaluated utilizing a 5-point Likert scale: where 1 = strongly disagree, 2 = disagree, 3 = Neutral, 4 = Agree and 5 = strongly agree.

Results & Analysis

Cronbach's Alpha (Reliability)

Table 1

Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha
AL	0.905
TL	0.911
PS	0.892
LC	0.917

Correlation Analysis

Table 2

Correlation Analysis

	1	2	3	4
Authentic leadership	1			
Trust in leadership	.742**	1		
Project Success	.433**	.504**	1	
Leadership Charisma	.664**	.772**	.560**	1

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

N: 208

Age: (1=18- 25 Years, 2=26-30 Years, 3=31-35 Years, 4=36-40 Years, 5=40+ Years)
Gender: (1=Male, 2=Female)
Experience: (1=<1 years, 2=1-3 years, 3=4-5 years, 4=6-10 years, 5=10+ years)
Qualification: (1=Matriculation, 2=Intermediate, 3= Graduate, 4=Postgraduate, 5=MPhil/Ph.D.)

Table 2 shows the relationship among variables authentic leadership, Trust in leadership, working environment and Project Accomplishment. The correlation between authentic leadership and trust in leadership is 0.742 which points towards a well-built positive relation concerning both variables. The association between authentic leadership and project success is 0.433 which means there is a definite relation between both variables. The correlation between authentic leadership and leadership charisma is 0.664 which shows a well-built positive relation concerning the variables. The correlation between leadership charisma and trust in leadership is 0.772 which shows a well-built positive relation between both variables. The correlation concerning project success and trust in leadership is 0.504 which shows a well-built positive relation between the variables. The correlation concerning project success and leadership charisma is 0.560 which shows a well-built positive relation between both variables. All the values of correlation are significant at 0.01 levels (99 %).

Regression analysis (on Mediator using Preacher and Hayes)

Independent, Moderator and Mediator Variables: DV=PS,IV= AL, MED=TL, MOD=LC, Sample Size (n)=208

Table 3
Regression Analysis (Mediator)

Variable	Coefficient	SE	t-value	p-value
Effect of IV on Mediator (a1 path)				
AL	.5075	.1085	2.8117	.0054
Effect of Moderator on Mediator (a2 path)				
LC	.3375	.1580	2.1364	.0338

p ≤ 0.05 (Significant)
AL: Authentic Leadership, LC: Leadership Charisma, TL: Trust in Leadership, PS: Project Success
The control variable is PS.

Table 4
Model Summary for Mediator Model

R	R-Sq	F	df1	df2	P
.5141	.2643	36.8227	2.0000	205.0000	.0000

Table 5
Bias Corrected Confidence Intervals

	Lower	Upper
AL	.1516	.8633
LC	.0260	.6490

Level of Confidence for Confidence Intervals: 95
Number of Bootstrap Samples: 1000

The mediator (TL) is influenced by both the independent variable (AL) and the moderator (LC) at 1% and 5% respectively (P-values respectively 0.0054 and 0.0338). Regression analysis helped to investigate the hypothesis that Authentic Leadership (AL) and Leadership Charisma (LC) positively affects the mediator Trust in leadership (TL). Table No 3 (path a1) indicated that Authentic Leadership (AL) was a significant predictor

of Trust in leadership (TL), $b = 0.5075$, $SE = 0.1085$, $p < .01$, and (path a2) indicates that Leadership Charisma (LC) was a significant and moderating between Authentic Leadership (AL) and Trust in leadership (TL), $b = 0.3375$, $SE = 0.1580$ $p < .05$. These results support my hypothesis 1 & 4.

Regression Analysis (on DV using Preacher and Hayes)

Independent, Moderator and Mediator Variables: DV=PS, IV=AL, MED=TL, MOD=LC, Sample Size (n)=208

Table 6
Regression Analysis

Variable	Coefficient	SE	t-value	p-value
Effect of Mediator on DV (b path)				
TL	.3366	.774	4.3477	.0000
Effect of IV on DV (c' path)				
AL	.1783	.1028	1.7334	.0845

$p \leq 0.05$ (Significant)
AL: Authentic Leadership, LC: Leadership Charisma, TL: Trust in Leadership, PS: Project Success
Control variable is LC which affects dependent variable (including mediator)

Table 7
Model Summary for Mediator Model

R	R-Sq	F	df1	df2	P
.8032	.6451	123.6221	3.0000	204.0000	.0000

Table 8
Bias Corrected Confidence Intervals

	Lower	Upper
TL	.1840	.4892
AL	-.0245	.3811

Level of Confidence for Confidence Intervals: 95
Number of Bootstrap Samples: 1000

The path b shows that Trust in leadership (TL) when introduced as a mediator has positive and significant effect on dependent variable Project Success (PS) ($b = 0.3366$, $SE = 0.1453$, $p < .01$). C1 (low) $b = 0.20$, C2 (average) $b = 0.21$, C3 (high) $b = 0.22$, $Bt(205) = 4.35$, $p < 0.05$, $C prime t(205) = 1.73$, $p > 0.05$. We can see that the conditional indirect effects of AL on PS at different values of the moderator is not significantly different from one another i.e., C1, C2 and C3 are almost equal. But these three values are different from the direct effects i.e., $C prime = 0.17$ which shows that there may be mediation, cementing my hypothesis 3. When we check the direct impact of Authentic Leadership (AL) on DV, i.e., Project Success (PS) we see it positively or significantly affects the DV ($b = 0.1783$, $SE = 0.1028$, $p < 0.0845$) when checked on DV, hence approving my hypothesis 2,

Index of Moderated Mediation using Preacher and Hayes

Table 9
Bias Corrected Confidence Intervals

	Lower	Upper
TL	-.0077	.422

Level of Confidence for Confidence Intervals: 95
Number of Bootstrap Samples: 1000

Now the most important thing, the index of moderated mediation (path a3) exhibits that the value zero includes in linking the lower confidence interval (-.0077) and upper confidence interval (.0422) which confirms that there is no moderated mediation. This was already shown by the insignificant value of interaction term. So, we conclude that there may be mediation but no moderate mediation. So, my hypothesis 5 is also rejected.

Table 10
Summary of Hypothesis

Hypothesis	Description	Results
Hypothesis 1	Authentic leadership relates positively with trust in leadership	Accepted
Hypothesis 2	Authentic leadership relates positively with project success	Accepted
Hypothesis 3	Trust in leadership relates positively with project success	Accepted
Hypothesis 4	Leader Charisma relates positively with trust in leadership	Accepted
Hypothesis 5	Leader Charisma relates positively with project success with a mediating role of trust in leadership	Rejected

Discussion

With a moderated mediation model, the study's current focus was on examining the connections concerning authentic leadership (AL), leadership charisma (LC), trust in leadership (TL), and project success (PS). Regression analysis was performed to decide the impact of independent variables on dependent variables and to identify any potential modes of moderation, mediation, and moderated mediation because the goal of this study was a hypothetical deduction.. For this Preacher and Hayes (2008) method was used which is a nonparametric bootstrapping technique. Data analysis supported 4 of hypothesis H1, H2, H3 and H4 and rejected H5. Hypothesis accepted are with noteworthy results and supported that Authentic leadership (AL) has a positive impact on trust in leadership (TL), trust in leadership (TL) has a positive impact on project success (PS), and leader charisma (LC) also has a positive impact on trust in leadership (TL). Rejected hypotheses revealed that leader charisma (LC) does not have a positive impact on project success (PS), and trust in leadership (TL) serves as a mediator in these relationship

In hypothesis H1 we conjecture that authentic leadership (AL) has a positive impact on trust in leadership (TL). Results extracted based on data collected for this study from different project-based organizations are aligned with earlier studies. Authentic leadership affects representative work engagement through worker trust. authentic leaders epitomize high good gauges, respectability and genuineness, and their great notoriety encourages uplifting desires among employees, upgrading their levels of trust. Authentic leadership identified with both execution and trust. At the point when employees see that their leaders are authentic, they will believe that they can trust their leaders. Trust has been recommended as an arbiter to performance for leaderships speculation. Hence it is proved that an authentic leader has higher level of traits that develops a relationship of trust amongst his followers.

Hypothesis H2 argued that authentic leadership (AL) has a confirmed impact on project success (PS). Upon data analysis it was decided that this hypothesis was accepted as it was supported from earlier studies conducted by different authors like. An authentic leader plays a key role in project success. He develops an initiative-taking team, which works effectively and efficiently. This ensures high output, so contributing to project success (Geoghegan & Dulewicz, 2008). As a leader trusts his team, it has less communication gap. A strong relationship developed within the organization ensuring better performance, resulting in higher output and project success (Staples & Webster, 2008).

Hypothesis (H3) proposed that Trust in leadership (TL) has a positive impact on project success (PS). It also supported and concluded that higher the level of trust will result in greater probability of project success. Trust and communication are indistinguishable, and they are basic components of project success. It is also figured out that relational characteristic (like trust) in project teams (managers and employees alike) are of immense influence and ought to be given extra consideration by project associates, supervisors, and others concerned with efficacious project consequences. Hence it is argued that if the employees have more faith in their leaders, they tend to put in an extra bit to make sure that their venture succeeds.

Similarly, hypothesis (H4) proposed that Leader Charisma (LC) has a positive impact on trust in leadership (TL). It concluded through analysis that charisma does play a role in developing trust amongst the employees and the leader. The worker needs to ensure that the supervisor is on 'their side', will not hurt them and will harbor positive goals regarding them. The leader ought to show a certified worry for others which is an especially important trait of his charisma. Leaders' charisma is a key use point for upgrading group level trust and mutual understanding. Discoveries additionally prove that a leader's charisma identified with trust in the leader. To profit by leaders' authority's beneficial outcomes, associations can use few procedures to support charismatic leadership.

Hypothesis (H5) was that Leader Charisma (LC) has a positive influence on project achievement (PS) with a mediating role of trust in leadership (TL). It was a moderated mediation model, and the hypothesis was rejected. When discussed with the respondents, their view was that charisma and trust do not really exist in combination in our society. The approach of our leaders is more autocratic than charismatic. Though when they find a charismatic personality, they do trust him, that is rare for them. When it was discussed with the employees, they said that "in today's environment with so much less jobs available, we must listen to our bosses whether they are authentic leaders or not. Or else we will be fired, and tens will be ready to replace us, so they do not take risk on their bread and butter." Along with that another reason which was given was that there is too much unemployment, that people are ready to do the job at a little salary making everyone dispensable.

Organizations can foster authentic leadership behaviors through targeted training programs that emphasize ethical practices, self-awareness, and transparent communication (Chimakati & Oduol, [2023](#)). Additionally, leveraging leader charisma can be achieved by selecting and developing leaders with strong interpersonal skills and the ability to inspire and motivate their teams (Mayberry, [2024](#)).

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