

Authentic Leadership on Industrial Harmony in the Devolved Public Health Sector in Kenya

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Abstract

Organizations across the globe face challenges of achieving work place harmony impacting on the employees, employers, stakeholders, government, consumers and the economy at large. This study investigated the influence of authentic leadership on industrial harmony in the devolved public health sector in Kenya. The research design used in this study was mixed methods research methodology. The target population was 351 health workers in level 5 County Referral Hospitals selected using stratified random sampling, in the Central Economic Regional Bloc (CEREB). Qualitative data was collected using questionnaires and analysed using descriptive and inferential statistics. Descriptive statistics comprised means and standard deviation while inferential statistics comprised regression analysis. The study established that authentic leadership has a significant influence on industrial harmony in the devolved public health sector in Kenya. Authentic leadership brings in a sense of ownership, satisfying employees demands as well as self-actualization. Employees resonate with leadership that is transparent, ethical and objective in the way it handles their issues without bias. Such an environment enhances honest, genuine and timely work progress feedback hence minimizing the probability of work-related conflicts.

Keywords: Authentic Leadership, Industrial Harmony, Devolved Public Health Sector

Introduction

Peoples life as well as the economy of a nation is dependent on an effective and efficient health care system (Waithaka *et al.*, 2020). Work stoppages by health care workers has serious consequences not only on patients but also have the potential to disrupt operations (Shitsinzi, 2015). Industrial harmony is a state of relative peace and stability which inculcates trust between work groups, enabling employee – management understanding as well as reduced discontent between members in an organization (Bassey *et al.*, 2017).

Public health care institutions face immense pressure to offer quality service and create a favorable working environment for their employees (Kuluski *et al.*, 2021). Issues related to industrial disharmony according to Bassey *et al* (2017) are common in the public health sector

and this disturbs the economic, social and political life of a country. Sitienei, Manderson & Nangami (2021) opined that industrial actions have a link to the style of leadership and governance that is driven by lack of commitment to healthcare workers' issues.

Statement of the Problem

According to Sustainable Development Goal 3 (SDG 3) the health and well-being of the people should be prioritized. The main goal of SDG 3 is aimed at ensuring healthy lives and promoting the well-being for all people, at all ages. However, according to World Health Organization WHO (2017) statistics show that 3.9 billion of the worlds' population have no access to essential health services with the situation being worse in developing countries. Industrial disharmony in the public sector is a global phenomenon with the effects being worse in the low-and middle-income countries (Bhuiyan & Machowski, 2012). The right to health is guaranteed by the Kenyan constitution and any downing of tools by the health workers negates and denies the citizens that right to health and life (CoK, 2010).

Authentic leadership is vital in establishing an effective health service delivery system. This kind of leadership must be able to involve all stakeholders. Majority of industrial actions in the devolved public health sector in Kenya are attributed to leadership and management. Leaders not being able to proactively foster positive work environments and conduct business in an ethical and socially responsible manner.

During periods of industrial action; health care facilities admissions decrease dramatically leading to increased deaths and deterioration of health status for those with life threatening diseases. During an industrial action by health workers in Mombasa County Referral Hospital, outpatient attendance declined by 64.4%, special clinics attendance by 74.4%, deliveries by 53.5%, inpatient admissions by 57.8% and inpatient deaths by 26.3% (Njuguna, 2018). Private and mission hospitals offering health care services also become overwhelmed due to increased patient volumes that exceed their capacity during health workers industrial actions. Children that are born during periods of industrial action are less likely to survive as well as be able to receive early medical child health care (Friedman and Keates, 2014).

Objective of the Study

The study sought to determine the influence of authentic leadership on industrial harmony in devolved public health sector in Kenya.

Industrial Harmony

Industrial harmony requires that managers understand their responsibilities and that they should undergo the requisite training and have the authority to discharge those responsibilities (Kinzley, 2018). According to Chukwuka (2013) it is imperative for managers to ensure that they honour agreements with their employees as failure to do so may result in agitation by employees expressing their demands. When employees develop a perception that the managers are exploitative and nonchalant about their work conditions or without regard for their opinions and efforts; there will be disharmony at the workplace.

Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership has gained significant influence in research more so with the emergence of the positive-psychology movement. Authentic leaders are believed to motivate their

followers as well as promote individual, team and organizational effectiveness (Jiang & Luo, 2018). It is a leadership style which has gained the attention of numerous practitioners and scholars as well as researchers' attention due to its positive influence on employees' job outcomes and organizational-goal achievements (Alilyyani, 2018; Iqbal, 2018).

According to Besen, Tecchio & Fialho (2017) an authentic leader is true with the exhibited behavior positively transforming or developing associates into leaders. Kempster, Iszatt-white and Brown (2019) defines an authentic leader as confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, ethical, future-oriented, and who gives priority to developing associates to become leaders. According to Walubwa *et al* (2011) authentic leadership comprises four components; self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing and an internalized moral perspective.

Authentic leadership enhances employees' Organizational Citizenship Behavior (OCB), positively relates to an ethical culture and improves employees' organizational commitment (Gatling, 2016). Authentic leadership also increases employees' engagement at work, improves employee performance as well as trust (Leroy *et al.*, 2015).

Empirical Literature Review

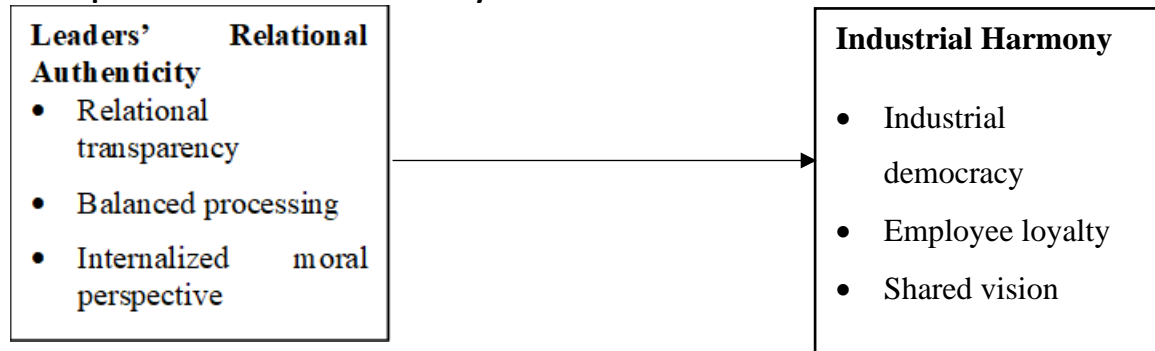
A study was undertaken by Fallatah (2020) on the effect of authentic leadership on new graduate nurses' organizational identification, trust in the manager, patient safety climate and willingness to report errors. The study research design was non-experimental cross-sectional design. The results of the study revealed that authentic leaders are able to create work environments that support new graduate nurses' error reporting through building trusting relationships. In another study, Muceldili *et al* (2013) examined the relationship of authentic leadership and creativity of nurses working at public hospitals through the mediating role of resilience. The study established that authentic leadership positively predicts hope among employees.

Coxen *et al* (2016) undertook a study on the influence of authentic leadership on organizational citizenship behaviour, through workplace trust among public health care employees in South Africa. According to the study, authentic leadership has a significant influence on employee's trust to an organization. A study by Kim (2018) on the effect of authentic leadership on employees' well-being established that authentic leadership increases employees' eudemonic well-being but does not significantly affect hedonic well-being. A study undertaken by Miidom, Dyke-Ebirika and Tidjoro (2021) on authentic leadership and workplace harmony, established that authentic leadership enhances workplace harmony.

Waweru (2021) examined the effect of authentic leadership on good industrial relations in tea estates in Kenya. The study found out that a leaders' self-awareness, balanced processing, relational transparency and internalized morals has a significant influence on industrial harmony. Another study was carried out by Qureshi and Alemi (2018) on the effect of authentic leadership on turnover intention in the healthcare sector of Pakistan. The study findings were that authentic leadership significantly and negatively impacts turnover intention and with partial mediating effect on workplace harmony.

Another study was undertaken by Nelson *et al.*, (2014) on the mediating role of work climate on the relationship between authentic leadership and psychological well-being of nurses at work. The findings of the study were that authentic leadership impacts the work climate in a positive manner; thereby, increasing levels of psychological well-being of employees at the work place.

Conceptual Framework of the Study



Methodology

This study adopted a pragmatic research paradigm. The study target population was from the level 5 hospitals in Central Region Economic Block (CEREB) in Kenya. This economic block consists of 10 counties namely; Nakuru, Kiambu, Murang'a, Embu, Nyeri, Laikipia, Meru, Tharaka Nithi, Kirinyaga, and Nyandarua. This economic block is part of the eight economic blocks in Kenya. It is the bloc that contributes the largest share of Kenyas' economy at over 26% of the total National GDP (KNBS, 2020). The block has also had substantial industrial actions in the devolved public health sector. Some of the cases have resulted in dismissals and court cases. Laikipia and Kirinyaga counties, experienced serious stand-offs and protracted court battles between the county governments and the trade unions (Kenya Law, 2019; Kenya Law, 2020; Sitienei *et al.*, 2021). The two counties, permanently sacked some medical personnel because of industrial action.

The target population for this study consisted of medical doctors, pharmacists, clinical officers, nurses, medical laboratory technologists and technicians, public health officers, radiologists, dieticians and nutritionists' and consultants totaling to 3,355 health workers. Using Bartlett, Kotrlik and Higgins' table, through stratified random sampling; the study selected a sample size of 351 respondents. Reliability was tested using 10% of the target population during the pilot study. Primary data was collected using questionnaires which were distributed through drop and pick method by use of well-trained research assistants to the health workers at the county referral hospitals. 255 of the questionnaires were returned which represented 71.5% response rate.

Data analysis was carried out using both qualitative and quantitative analysis with qualitative data being analyzed using content analysis technique. Analysis of quantitative data was done using descriptive statistics and presented in form of tables. Correlation and linear regression were used to carry out inferential analysis (Johnson, 2012).

In order to establish the relationship between authentic leadership and industrial harmony in the devolved public health sector in Kenya; regression analysis was conducted using linear regression models. Normality, linearity and multi-collinearity tests, were also carried out to ensure model test assumptions were considered before running the regression model. Test of hypothesis was conducted using P-calculated values. The acceptance/rejection criterion

was that if the P-value is >0.05 , the null hypothesis is accepted, but if it is <0.05 , the null hypothesis is rejected. The study followed the recommendations of Blumberg, Cooper, & Schidler, (2014) in testing the significance of the model.

Results of the Findings

This section presents the findings and discussions of the study.

Descriptive Statistics for Authentic Leadership

The descriptive statistics results are presented in Table 1

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Authentic Leadership

Statement	Mean	SD
i. The leadership in this sector work towards creating win-win situations in case of internal conflict between the sector management and workers	2.24	1.43
ii. Managers are self-controlled and have a sober approach to issues	2.26	1.44
iii. The management of this sector has assisted employees to find meaning and connect with work	2.27	1.47
iv. The leadership of the sector considers employees opinions and views	2.47	1.56
v. Sector leaders have contributed in creation of a harmonious work environment	2.29	1.49
vi. The leaders encourage openness and self-disclosure between management and employees	2.30	1.38
vii. The managers have a sense of self-correction and reflection in pursuing a harmonious work environment for all workers	2.38	1.46
viii. Leadership in this sector offers hope and encouragement to employees	2.30	1.47
ix. The leaders in this sector encourage sharing of information	2.35	1.51
Mean of means	2.31	1.47

N=255

On statement i, majority of the respondents opined that the leadership does not work towards creating win-win situations in case of internal conflicts between the management and employees as shown by the mean score of 2.24 and a standard deviation of 1.43. Statement ii sought to assess whether managers are self-controlled and have a sober approach to issues. The results scored a mean score of 2.26 with a standard deviation of 1.44. The results indicated that the managers in the devolved public health sector in Kenya are not self-controlled and do not approach issues soberly.

Statement iii sought to assess whether the management assisted employees to find meaning and connect with work. The results were a mean score of 2.27 and a standard deviation of 1.47. Statement iv sought to assess whether the managers consider employees' opinions and views. The mean score was 2.47 and standard deviation of 1.56. The results in statement iii and iv revealed that the employees felt left out in connecting with the work environment and having their opinions given attention to. On item v, majority of the respondents disagreed

with the statement that the leadership has contributed in creation of a harmonious work environment as depicted by the mean score of 2.29 and standard deviation of 1.49. This can explain why there have been industrial unrest in the sector.

Statement vi sought to assess whether leaders encourage openness and self-disclosure between management and employees with statement vii assessing whether managers have a sense of self-correction and reflection in pursuing a harmonious work environment for all workers. The results were mean scores of 2.30 and 2.38 with standard deviations of 1.38 and 1.46 respectively. The results signified that the respondent's opinion was that there was lack of openness and that the managers were not working towards creating a harmonious work environment.

Statements viii and ix sought to investigate on leadership offering hope and encouragement to employees and on encouraging information sharing. The results revealed that the respondents were of a contrary opinion that leadership offers hope and encouragement to employees. The respondents were also of a contrary opinion that the leadership encourages sharing of information as depicted by the mean scores of 2.30 and 2.35 and standard deviations of 1.47 and 1.51 respectively. The results clearly indicated that, there is a need to create hope and openness for cohesion. The overall results recorded a mean of means score of 2.31 indicating that the level of authentic leadership was low in the devolved public health sector in Kenya.

Normality Test

In order to determine whether the data was fit for regression analysis; the study employed the Kolmogorov–Smirnov test. A p -value >0.05 implies that the data is normally distributed and is fit to conduct regression analysis whereas a p -value <0.05 indicates that the data is not normally distributed and hence not stable for regression model estimation (Ahad *et al.*, 2011). The findings are presented in Table 2

Table 2

Normality Test

Variable	Kolmogorov-Smirnov Statistic	Sig.
Authentic leadership	0.088	0.84

The results showed that data was normally distributed with a p -value of $0.84 > 0.05$.

Linearity Test

The linearity test was undertaken using compare means and the relationship was found to be linear. The linearity test of the relationship between authentic leadership and industrial harmony is presented in Table 3.

Table 3
Linearity Test

Variables	Between Groups	Results (Combined) Linearity Deviation from Linearity	Sig. 0.000 0.000 0.065
Industrial harmony*authentic leadership			

Correlation Analysis

Pearson’s correlation (*r*) test was carried out to explore the association between the factors, in terms of direction and strength ranging ± 1 where $r = +0.7$ and above indicates a strong association. $r = +0.5$ to 0.69 indicates a strong association, $r = 0.3$ to 0.49 indicates a moderate association, whereas $r < 0.29$ indicates a weak association. Where $r = 0$, it is an indication that there is no association. The correlation analysis results are presented in Table 4 below.

Table 4
Correlation analysis between authentic leadership and industrial harmony in the devolved public health sector in Kenya

		Industrial Harmony	
Authentic leadership	Pearson Correlation	.241**	
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.000

The results revealed that correlation between authentic leadership and industrial harmony was .241 implying that the correlation was positive and weak.

Test of Hypothesis

Regression Analysis between Authentic Leadership and Industrial Harmony

The study carried out simple regression analysis on the relationship between authentic leadership and industrial harmony in the devolved public health sector in Kenya. Table 5 presents the study findings.

Table 5
Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	R Square Change	Change Statistics F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
1	.241 ^a	.058	.052	4.91630	.058	15.570	1	253	.000

- a. *Dependent Variable: Industrial Harmony Score*
- b. *Predictors: (constant), Authentic leadership*

The model summary results indicate that authentic leadership explains 5.8% of industrial harmony implying that authentic leadership is able to influence 5.8% of industrial harmony in the devolved public health sector in Kenya.

Table 6

ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	412.720	3	137.573	5.681	.001 ^b
	Residual	6078.629	251	24.218		
	Total	6491.349	254			

a. *Dependent Variable: Industrial Harmony Score*

b. *Predictors: (constant), Authentic leadership*

Anova test was carried out to determine if the model was fit to predict industrial harmony. The results indicating an F value of 5.681 and conclusion made was that the model was good fit to predict the dependent variable. P-value for the F-statistic was 0.01 which was <0.05 significance level. From these findings conclusion made was that the model was a good fit to predict industrial harmony in Kenya's devolved public health sector. The coefficients results obtained are indicated in Table 7.

Table 7

Coefficients^a

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients Beta	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
1	(Constant)	35.231	.308		114.436	.000
	Authentic leadership	.703	.178	.241	3.946	.000

a. *Dependent Variable: Industrial Harmony Score*

b. *Predictors: (constant), Authentic leadership*

The results in table 7 indicate that the constant had an unstandardized coefficient of 35.23. This indicates that holding all other factors constant and authentic leadership at zero (0), industrial harmony level would be equal to 35.231. Further, the t-statistic for the constant was found to be 114.436 and was greater than the t-critical value (at 152 df and 0.05 significance level= 1.655). The results revealed that the standardized beta coefficient for authentic leadership was .703. The results indicated that if all the factors are held constant, a rise in authentic leadership by a single unit leads to a .703 rise in industrial harmony in the devolved public health sector in Kenya.

The t-test statistic for the coefficient was found to be 3.946. This value was greater than the t-test critical value (t-critical at 152 df and 0.05 significance level= 1.655). The P-value for authentic leadership coefficient was found to be 0.000 which was less than 0.05 significance level and this led to the rejection of the null hypothesis. The study therefore concluded that authentic leadership has a significant influence on industrial harmony in the devolved public health sector in Kenya.

Summarized model was in the form of $Y_1 = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \epsilon$ hence;
Industrial Harmony = $35.321 + 0.703 \text{ authentic leadership} + \text{error}$.

The results were an indicator that the correlation coefficient between authentic leadership and industrial harmony was .241 being an indication of a weak and positive correlation between authentic leadership and industrial harmony in the devolved public health sector in Kenya. The coefficient value of authentic leadership ($\beta = 0.703$, $P, .0.000 < 0.005$) was found to be positive and statistically significant. The results imply that authentic leadership should enhance industrial harmony in the devolved public health sector in Kenya.

The model summary therefore signified that authentic leadership explains 5.8% of industrial harmony in the devolved public health sector in Kenya. The coefficient of authentic leadership and industrial harmony was realized to be positive as well as significant.

Conclusions

The study concluded that authentic leadership has a significant and positive influence on industrial harmony in the devolved public sector in Kenya. Authentic leadership is an enhancer of trust at the workplace which improves working relationships. Authentic leadership also satisfies workers' demands on safety giving them a sense of ownership as well as self-actualization.

Employees' resonate well with leadership that is transparent, ethical and that handles issues objectively without bias. The ability of managers to cultivate ethical and honest behavior among employees is an ingredient of a disciplined workforce. A workforce that adheres to rules and regulations minimizes the probability of work-related conflicts in an organization. Authentic leadership will in itself enable employees to acquire intellectual stimulation and be in a position to address issues and come up with solutions. It becomes easier to resolve industrial related conflicts before they turn into crisis when employees have solutions at their disposal (Boehm, 2015).

A transparent employer is able to disclose all required information pertaining to employee's welfare and any form of binding agreement regarding their welfare. Failure to disclose sensitive information is prone to promote suspicion and mistrust which might cause tension and unease at the workplace. The devolved public health sector leadership was revealed as not being transparent, open to criticism and tolerant to divergent views. This has a negative influence on industrial harmony as there will be no comprehensive and time bound feedback to the employees. This can be detrimental to good working relationships.

Recommendations

The devolved public health sector leadership should strive to be transparent and open to criticism as well as be tolerant to divergent views. This will in turn have a positive influence on industrial harmony within the sector. The study recommends that work progress feedback should also be given within acceptable and agreed on time frames and where not practical progress reports should always be provided. They should also work towards creating a conducive environment where employees have a sense of ownership as well as self-actualization.

The results were found to be consistent with the theoretical foundations of the Social Exchange Theory (SET). The theory postulates that employees' reciprocation is a way of giving back what they interpret to be a fair and kind consideration from the leaders/managers. Based on the postulates of this theory; it is conceived that a cordial relationship emanates out of the perception that the manager positively ignites hope among employees. The findings of this study were also consistent with reviewed empirical literature revealing that authentic leadership helps employees find meaning and connection at work.

The sectors managers were said not to be role models and some were said to have self-interests. Some were also said not to be psychologically qualified to manage employees or institutions. It is of necessity that the sector enhances subordination of individual interests to organizational interests. Enhancement of managerial skills development for effective handling of employee issues should also be prioritized. It is recommended that the managers should be role models and hence setting good examples to be emulated. They should also not be self-seekers and must be psychologically qualified to manage employees or institutions and in adherence to the core values. The sector leadership should also be transparent in their operations, open to criticism and tolerant to divergent views as employees resonate well with leadership that is transparent, ethical and that handles issues objectively without bias.

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