Authentic Leadership

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Focusing on whether leadership is genuine and real, one of the newest areas of leadership research is authentic leadership (Northouse). Upheavals in society, such as destruction, corporate scandals, and massive failures, have energized a tremendous demand for authentic leadership (Northouse 195). An authentic leader's responsibility is to help quash fear and uncertainty, "people feel apprehensive and insecure about what is going on around them, and thus, they long for bona fide leadership they can trust and for leaders who are honest and good (Northouse 195)." "Pearce et al. (2008) identify the responsibility disposition of a leader as an antecedent to virtuous leadership, noting that virtuous leaders tend to recognize a responsibility to others as an important component of leadership (Dillon and Robin)." Social demands for authentic leadership is to be genuine, trustworthy, and demonstrate good leadership (Northouse 220). "Authentic leadership describes leadership that is transparent, morally rounded, and responsive to people's needs and values (Northouse 220)."

"Taking a developmental approach, Walumbwa et al. (2008) conceptualized authentic leadership as a pattern of leader behavior that develops from and is grounded in the leader's positive psychological qualities and strong ethics (Northouse 196)." Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber (2009) suggest that authentic leadership is composed of four distinct but related components (Northouse 196):

1. self-awareness

2. internalized moral perspective

3. balanced processing

4. relational transparency

"Over a lifetime, authentic leaders learn and develop each of these four types of behavior (Northouse 196)."

   "The four key positive psychological attributes that have an impact on authentic leadership – confidence, hope, optimism, and resilience – have been drawn from the field of positive psychology and positive organizational behavior (Northouse 203-204)." Positive attributes predispose or enhance a leader's capacity to develop self-awareness, internalized moral perspective, balance processing or relational transparency, the four components of authentic leadership (Northouse 204). Each of these four key positive psychological attributes has a trait-like and a state-like quality (Northouse 204).

- They are trait-like because they may characterize a relatively fixed aspect of someone's personality that has been evident throughout his or her life (e.g., extraversion).

- They are state-like because with training or coaching, individuals can develop or change their characteristics.

"There are factors that influence authentic leadership including positive psychological capacities, moral reasoning, and critical life events (Northouse, 2016). Each of these three factors predispose or enhance the capacity to develop the four components of authentic leadership (Horner)." The four key positive psychological attributes that have an impact on authentic leadership (Northouse 204):

1. Confidence refers to having self-efficacy – the belief that one has the ability to successfully accomplish a specified task. Leaders who have confidence are more likely to be motivated to succeed, to be persistent when obstacles arise, and to welcome a challenge (Bandura, 1997; Luthans & Avolio, 2003).

2. Hope is a positive motivational state based on willpower and goal planning (Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Authentic leaders with hope have goals they know can be accomplished; their hope inspires followers to trust them and believe in their goals.

3. Optimism refers to the cognitive process of viewing situations from a positive light and having favorable expectations about the future. Leaders with optimism are positive about their capabilities and the outcomes they can achieve. They approach life with a sense of abundance rather than scarcity (Covey, 1990).

4. Resilience is the capacity to recover from and adjust to adverse situations. It includes the ability to positively adapt to hardships and suffering. During difficult times, resilient people are able to bounce back from challenging situations and feel strengthened and more resourceful as a result of the (Sutcliffe & Vogus, 2003).

The four key positive attributes – confidence (self-efficacy), hope, optimism, and resilience - might not contribute to a person's leadership ability, for example, the effect it could have on a non-leader.

1. Self-efficacy affects learning and performance (Bandura, 1982) (Malik):

    a. Self-efficacy influences the goals that employees choose for themselves. Employees with low levels of self-efficacy tend to set relatively low goals for themselves. Research indicates that people not only learn but also perform at levels consistent with their self-efficacy beliefs.

    b. Self-efficacy influences learning as well as the effort that people exert on the job. Employees with low self-efficacy may exert less effort when learning and performing complex tasks, because they are not sure the effort will lead to success.

2. Hope: Snyder et al. (1991) defines hope as "a positive motivational state that is based on an interactively derived sense of successful (a) agency (goal-oriented energy) and (b) pathways (planning to meet goals)." This meaning of hope consists of both the "willpower" (agency) and the "waypower" (pathways). Importantly, considerable research over the past several years indicates it has a very positive impact on academic achievement, athletic accomplishment, emotional health, the ability to cope with illness and other hardships. There is a direct impact of hope, for example, little or no hope would not contribute to a person's leadership ability.

3. Cranny et al. used the term happiness to refer to optimism. Scheier and Carver defined optimism as a set of generalized positive outcome expectancies. According to their conceptualization, people who generally expect that things will go their way and believe that they will have more good outcomes than bad, are dispositionally optimistic. It is a major construct in positive psychology. There is a positive impact of optimism on physical and psychological health which leads to academic, athletic, political and occupational success. By the same token, pessimism is known to lead to passivity, failure, social estrangement, and, in its extreme, depression and mortality. There have been only a small number of studies investigating the influence of optimism on performance or work related behaviors. Strutton and Lumpkin found that the optimism-performance relationship was moderated by the type of coping strategies used to deal with stress in the workplace. They showed that optimistic individuals used more problem-focused coping strategies and that they outperformed pessimistic individuals in the work environment. This finding was replicated with a group of teleworkers in a study by Norman, Collins, Conner, and Martin. The participants in the Norman et al. study who

were more optimistic and used more problem focused coping reported a greater number of positive psychological and work-related outcomes as compared to the predominantly pessimistic individuals who used more emotion focused coping strategies. Several other researchers have investigated the relationship of optimism to performance in other areas such as academics. The results of the studies gave overwhelming support for the hypothesis that optimism and academic performance were positively and significantly related to one another. As a result, it is believed these findings may be generalized to the work environment.

4. Resiliency: The capacity to "bounce back" from adversity or even dramatic positive changes is particularly relevant in today's turbulent business environment. As a component of positive organizational behavior, resiliency is viewed "as the capacity to rebound or bounce back from adversity, conflict, failure or even positive events, progress and increased responsibility." Organizational resilience is the ability and capacity of a workplace to withstand potential significant economic times, systemic risk, or systemic disruptions by adapting, recovering, or resisting being affected and resuming core operations or continuing to provide an acceptable level of functioning and structure. Resilience is not a trait that people either have or do not have. Resilience involves behaviors, thoughts, and actions that can be learned and developed in anyone. Resilience is tremendously influenced by a person's environment. In creating resilient workplaces, ultimately, it is the responsibility of those in leadership roles (managers and supervisors) to create a workplace climate that fosters well-being and facilitates resilience. Intense and unpleasant demands tend to overload people, especially when the demands are unrelenting and there is insufficient time to regain balance. Even when people are coping

well and stress levels are low, prolonged over-demand can lead to burn out and a subsequent negative impact on workers as well as the economy of an organization (Hiebert, 2006)17. It is managers who are charged with making sure that workplace demands are reasonable and that employees have the appropriate skill and knowledge for dealing with the demands they face.

Per Malik, leaders who understand the organizational and psychological constructs of power, influence, modeling, and culturalization are well suited to foster optimism. In the face of negative or adverse events, individuals and cultures with optimistic explanatory styles are typically highly motivated, task oriented, socially interactive and supportive, resilient, able to persevere, less prone to stress and depression, able to make effective decisions, and solution focused. With this range of positive organizational influences, taking the time to adopt optimistic explanatory styles within an organization would likely produce efficient, effective and successful work forces. Personal agency is a central ingredient in resiliency. Resiliency is the ability to bounce back when faced with an unexpected challenge. Resiliency comes in people, but in some contexts, it is easier to be resilient, while others make it more difficult. It is in our own personal best interest for each of us to take steps to create a wellness-oriented workplace that fosters resiliency. It is important for all people at all levels of an organization to develop a resilient personal and professional identity. The intrapersonal factors identified by Kumpfer (1999) are all personal characteristics that can be cultivated and enhanced. It is in everyone's best interest to take charge of that part of their own personal and professional development.

"In summary, authentic leadership is a new and exciting area of research, which holds a great deal of promise. As more research is conducted on authentic leadership, a clearer picture will

emerge about the true nature of the process and the assumptions and principles that it

encompasses (Northouse 221)."

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