

DOES AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP PROMOTE EMPLOYEES' ENTHUSIASM AND CREATIVITY?¹

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ABSTRACT

Innovation is crucial for long-term organizational success, employee's creativity being the first step in innovation. Thus, to survive and prosper, organizations need to take full advantage of their employees' creative potential, so that innovation, change, learning, performance and competitiveness can be achieved. This study focus on two antecedents of creativity: employees' enthusiasm at work and authentic leadership. Five hundred ninety five employees, working in 107 shops/stores of 37 organizations reported their enthusiasm at work, as well as their perceptions about their supervisors' authentic leadership. Supervisors (n=203) described their employees' creativity. Authentic leadership was measured through the 16 five-point scales of the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ, by Bruce J. Avolio, William L. Gardner and Fred O. Walumba; ©). The questionnaire measures four AL dimensions: self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing. Employees' enthusiasm was measured through six items proposed by Daniels (2000). Individual creativity at work was measured with the 13 items proposed by Zhou and George (2001), who adopted three items from Scott and Bruce (1994), and developed the remaining 10 items. Through structural equation modeling, we found that authentic leadership predicts employees' creativity both directly and through the mediating role of employees' enthusiasm. The study empirically validates theoretical arguments suggesting that authentic leadership fosters employees' positive emotions and creativity performance.

Keywords: creativity; authentic leadership; enthusiasm.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Employees' creativity is the first step in innovation, and innovation is crucial for long-term organizational success (Amabile, 1997). Thus, to survive and prosper, organizations need to take full advantage of their employees' creative potential, so that innovation, change, learning, performance and competitiveness can be achieved. Creativity in the workplace can be defined as the production of novel and useful ideas or solutions concerning products, services, processes, and procedures (Amabile, 1988, 1997; Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Zhou & George, 2001, 2003). Since a novel idea with no potential value cannot be considered "creative", the goal of creative performance is to solve problems, to create new products and services, to take advantage of business opportunities, and to improve organizational effectiveness.

Several researchers have focused on identifying the role played by specific leadership behaviors and leaders' characteristics in supporting, suppressing, facilitating or inhibiting creativity (e.g., Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Tierney et al., 1999; Shin & Zhou, 2003; Zhou, 2003; Rego et al., 2007). These behaviors include transformational leadership, emotional intelligence, close monitoring, developmental feedback, supportive supervision, and controlling supervision. In this paper, we focus on authentic leadership (AL). AL may be defined "as a pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development" (Walumbwa et al., 2008: p. 94).

Four dimensions have been included in the AL construct: (1) *Self-awareness*, or the degree to which the leader demonstrates an understanding of how (s)he makes sense of the world in which (s)he functions, is aware of his/her strengths and limitations, how others see him/her with regard to leadership and how his/her leadership style impacts on others (Kernis, 2003; Walumbwa et al., 2008); (2) *Balanced processing*, or the degree to which the leader shows that (s)he objectively analyses all relevant data before coming to a decision and solicits views that challenge his/her own deeply held beliefs, values and approaches (Gardner et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008); (3) *Internalized moral perspective*, the degree to which the leader sets a high standard for moral and ethical conduct, guides his/her own actions via a set of internal moral standards and values (as opposed to group, organizational, and societal pressures), and manifests decision making and related behavior that are consistent with such internalized values (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner et al., 2005; Ryan & Deci, 2003; Walumbwa et al., 2008); and (4) *Relational transparency*, the degree to which the leader presents his/her authentic self (as opposed to a counterfeit or distorted self) to others, openly shares information and expressions of his/her true thoughts and feelings, and reinforces a level of openness with others that provides them with an opportunity to be forthcoming with their ideas, challenges and opinions. Previous literature (Walumbwa et al., 2008) has suggested that the commonalities to be found between these four dimensions would indicate that AL is a core construct.

We hypothesize that AL predicts employees' creativity primarily because it improves the quality of leader-member exchanges, thereby fostering employees trust and their sense of freedom to propose unconventional ideas and present conflicting opinions without fear of reprisal (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio et al., 2004; Brower et al., 2000; Gardner et al., 2005; Ilies et al., 2005; Liden et al., 1997; Prati et al., 2003; Tierney et al., 1999). We also hypothesize that AL predicts employee creativity through the mediating role of enthusiasm at work (Daniels, 2000). Enthusiasm is an *active positive* emotion (Larsen & Diener, 1992; Watson & Tellegen, 1985), characterized by high levels of active, excited and elated feelings (Lewis, 2000). Through positive social exchanges with their followers, authentic leaders may inspire them to perform work with more enthusiasm (Ashforth & Humphrey, 1995; Avolio et al., 2004; Ilies et al., 2005; Prati et al., 2003; Zhou & George, 2003). This positive emotion can broaden employees' scope of attention (increasing the number of cognitive elements available for association) and the scope of cognition (increasing the breadth of those elements treated as relevant to the problem at hand), thus increasing the probability of creative activities (Fredrickson, 2001; Isen et al., 1987; Wright & Cropanzano, 2004).

With the above in mind, we have structured the paper as follows. We start by presenting the hypotheses. Next, we provide details of the method used and the results obtained. Finally, we discuss the main findings, the limitations of the research and some avenues for future studies. With this study, we aim to contribute to enriching a line of research that is in an early stage of development and on which empirical studies and the corresponding literature is still in short supply (Walumbwa et al., 2008; Yammarino et al., 2008). Considering that most studies of leadership have emanated from the USA (House & Aditya, 1997), our study answers a call for research of a more culturally diverse nature (Gelfand et al., 2007; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

2. HYPOTHESES

2.1. *Authentic leadership as predictor of employees' creativity*

Authentic leaders may serve as role models and promote employee trust and respect (Avolio et al., 2004; Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Gardner et al., 2005; Ilies et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Trust and respect are important because employees experience higher emotional safety and feel free to propose unconventional ideas and introduce conflicting opinions without fear of the consequences (Avolio et al., 2004; Edmondson, 2008; Prati et al., 2003; Rego et al., 2007). Authentic leaders also foster authenticity among their subordinates, feel less threatened by the changes that employees' genuine/creative ideas may imply and are more inclined to welcome their creative suggestions (Michie & Gooty, 2005). They are more able to provide constructive criticism and feedback in a fair, respectful, informative and developmental (rather than controlling) manner (Avolio et al., 2004; Michie & Gooty, 2005; Zhou, 2003; Zhou & George, 2003). Such practices provide employees with relevant information to improve their performance without the perception that pressure for a particular outcome exists, thereby making them more prone to seek and propose creative ideas for solving problems and take advantage of new opportunities. Authentic leaders also promote employees' self-determination, self-esteem, the sensation that their work is meaningful (Gardner et al., 2005), and intrinsic motivation (Ilies et al., 2005), which can act as a "stimulant" for creativity (Amabile, 1997; Deci & Ryan, 1985; Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Tierney et al., 1999; Jaussi & Dionne, 2003; Kernis, 2003; Zhou & Shalley, 2003). Thus:

H1: authentic leadership is positively related with employees' creativity

2.2. *Enthusiasm at work as predictor of employees' creativity*

Enthusiasm at work, one dimension of affective well-being at work (Daniels, 2000; Rego & Cunha, 2008, 2009), may positively influence employees' creative performance via several mechanisms. Enthusiastic individuals tend to interpret failure more as a temporary setback caused by situational, as opposed to individually-based, circumstances (Forgas, 1992), thus demonstrating less fear of failure and being more prone to face problems and opportunities with creative ideas (Wright & Walton, 2003). Enthusiasm at work may also expand cognition, increase cognitive flexibility and facilitate creative behavior (Isen, 1999; Isen et al., 1987; Russ, 1993, 1999; Shaw & Runco, 1994). As suggested by the "broaden-and-build" theory (Fredrickson, 2001), positive emotions *broaden* the individual's momentary thought-action repertoire, thus promoting the discovery of novel and creative actions and ideas. Enthusiasm can also foster employees' perceptions that their work has enhanced meaning (Wright & Cropanzano, 2004), making them more intrinsically motivated and thus more creative (Amabile, 1988, 1997; Eisenberger & Shanock, 2003; Oldham & Cummings, 1996; Tierney et al., 1999). As Csikszentmihalyi (1988, p. 337) has argued, "no matter how original one might be, if one is bored by the domain, it will be difficult to become interested enough in it to make a creative contribution". Thus:

H2: employees with higher enthusiasm at work are more creative.

2.3. *Authentic leadership as predictor of employees' enthusiasm at work*

Several researchers have pointed out the relevance of emotions in AL (e.g., Avolio et al., 2004; Ilies et al., 2005; Michie & Gooty, 2005). For example, following the Harter et al. (2003) definition of employee engagement (the individual's involvement and satisfaction with, as well as enthusiasm for, work) Avolio et al. (2004, p. 805) have argued that "engagement [...] is an important consequence of authentic leadership that mediates its effects on follower outcomes." Ilies et al. (2005: 384), have suggested that "if authentic leaders experience more positive affective states (through self-awareness and relational orientation; Kernis, 2003) than inauthentic leaders, through emotional contagion, their followers will experience more positive affective states, compared to followers of inauthentic leaders." Gardner et al. (2005: 346-347) have asserted that "demonstrated integrity of authentic leaders, coupled with developmental experiences and meaningful work, produce high levels of trust, engagement and well-being among followers, while contributing to their development, which in turn fosters sustained and veritable follower performance." AL may also promote positive interpersonal relationships between leaders' and employees, and among employees as well (Ilies et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Such positive relationships may foster the employees' perceptions of meaningful work and promote their enthusiasm (Kets de Vries, 2001; Milliman et al., 1999; Rego & Cunha, 2008; Rego et al., 2009). Thus:

H3: authentic leadership is positively related with employees' enthusiasm at work.

3. METHOD

3.1. Sample and procedures

A convenience sample comprising 595 employees, working in 37 commerce organizations operating in Portugal, was collected. Organizations operated in several sectors (e.g., food, clothing, appliances, sport, toys, foot-wear and office materials, furniture and equipment). The data presented here is part of a larger study where other variables were measured (e.g., employees' psychological capital; employees' affective well-being at work). Individuals were asked to report on their own enthusiasm and on the AL of their supervisors. In turn, their own creativity was reported on by their supervisors. To avoid any form of embarrassment, subordinates and supervisors were asked to fill in their questionnaires in separate locations. To guarantee anonymity, answers were sealed and delivered directly to the researchers. Women accounted for 67.1% of the sample. Mean age was 26.8 years (standard deviation: 41.), mean organizational tenure is 3.4 years (SD: 2.1), and mean length of supervisor-employee contact is 2.9 years (SD: 1.8). 6.9% of the individuals have nine or fewer years of schooling, 40.5% have between 10 and 12 years, and 52.6% have at least a first higher education degree.

3.2. Measures

Employees' creativity. Individual creativity at work was measured by the 13 items proposed by Zhou and George (2001), who adopted three items from Scott and Bruce (1994), and developed the remaining 10 items themselves. Sample items are: (1) Suggests new ways to achieve goals or objectives; (2) Comes up with new and critical ideas to improve performance; (3) Is a good source of creative ideas. The Rego et al., (2007) Portuguese translation of the Zhou and George scales was used. Supervisors were asked to report how frequently the employee adopted each of the 13 behaviors on a scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (frequently). A principal component analysis, with varimax rotation, was conducted. Only one factor (KMO: 0.95) emerged with an eigenvalue of over 1, explaining 72.8% of variance. Loadings range from 0.80 to 0.90. The Cronbach Alpha was 0.97.

Employees' enthusiasm. We measured employees' enthusiasm using six items proposed by Daniels (2000). Participants were invited to state to what extent they had experienced the six emotions over the last three months in the organization, with reference to a 7-point scale ranging from never (1) to always (7). The items mentioned were: enthusiastic, motivated, optimistic, bored, dull and sluggish, the last three ones being reverse coded. The Cronbach Alpha was 0.86.

Authentic leadership. AL was measured using the 16 five-point scales of the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ, by Bruce J. Avolio, William L. Gardner and Fred O. Walumba; ©). The questionnaire measures four AL dimensions: self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing. The items were translated from English into Portuguese by a first translator and then independently back-translated into English by a second translator. Discrepancies between the original and the back-translated versions were discussed between the translators. The final version was discussed again with two bilingual Portuguese researchers, and some final adjustments were made. Sample items are: (1) Accurately describes how others view his or her capabilities (self-awareness); (2) Listens carefully to different points of view before coming to conclusions (balanced processing); (3) Demonstrates beliefs that are consistent with actions (internalized moral perspective); (4) Says exactly what he or she means (relational transparency).

Employees were asked to report the frequency (0: "not at all"; 4: "frequently, if not always") with which their supervisors adopted the 16 behaviors. Confirmatory factor analyses (using LISREL with the maximum likelihood estimation method) were carried out to test the four-factor model. Although some indices were satisfactory (e.g., CFI: 0.94; IF4: 0.95; RFI: 0.92), others were below the cutoff values (e.g., RMSEA: 0.09; GFI: 0.89). Standardized residuals and modification indices were analyzed in order to locate the sources of misspecification (Byrne, 1998). After deliberate consideration based on both techniques, three items were removed (one relating to self-awareness, another to internalized moral perspective, and a third relating to relational transparency). A well-fitted 13-item model emerged (Table 1). All Cronbach Alphas were higher than 0.70. A second-order factor model was also tested, where the four AL dimensions were hypothesized to load on a higher AL factor. Fit indices were satisfactory. Comparison of the first- and second-order showed no significant change in χ^2 relative to the difference in degrees of freedom ($\Delta\chi^2_{(2)} = 2.52$; $p=0.28$). A single

latent factor (all 13 items loading on a single factor model) was also tested. The fit indices proved to be unsatisfactory (e.g., RMSEA: 0.15). The comparison of this single latent factor with the second-order factor model showed a significant change in χ^2 relative to the difference in degrees of freedom ($\Delta\chi^2_{(4)} = 581.41$; $p < 0.001$). Taking into account these findings and the usefulness analysis (see next section and Table 3), AL was considered to constitute a core construct. In order to acquire a composite AL score, the items for each of the four subscales were averaged so as to provide a composite average for each of the four subscales. Then the averages for each of the four subscales were themselves averaged to achieve a composite AL score for each employee.

Table 1: Employee-reported authentic leadership: Confirmatory factor analysis (completely standardized solution)

	1 st order factor model	2 nd order factor model
Self-awareness	(0.93)	(0.93)
Item # 14	0.91	0.91
Item # 15	0.90	0.90
Item # 16	0.91	0.91
Balanced processing	(0.84)	(0.84)
Item # 10	0.67	0.67
Item # 11	0.89	0.89
Item # 12	0.86	0.86
Internalized moral perspective	(0.88)	(0.88)
Item # 6	0.86	0.86
Item # 8	0.82	0.82
Item # 9	0.83	0.83
Relational transparency	(0.88)	(0.88)
Item # 1	0.85	0.85
Item # 3	0.81	0.81
Item # 4	0.79	0.79
Item # 5	0.78	0.78
Authentic leadership		(0.92)
Self-awareness		0.94
Balanced processing		0.89
Internalized moral perspective		0.92
Relational transparency		0.92
Fit indices		
Chi-square	295.98	298.50
Degrees of freedom	59	61
Chi-square/ degrees of freedom	5.0	4.9
Root mean square error of approximation	0.08	0.08
Goodness of fit index	0.93	0.93
Adjusted goodness of fit index	0.89	0.89
Comparative fit index	0.96	0.96
Incremental fit index	0.96	0.96
Relative fit index	0.94	0.94

In brackets and bold: Cronbach Alphas

4. RESULTS

Mean, standard deviations and correlations are presented on Table 2. Employees' age relates negatively to the three dimensions of AL and to the overall employees-reported AL. Employees' tenure relates positively with leaders' balanced processing and employees' creativity. Employees' schooling relates negatively to leaders' self-awareness and internalized moral perspective, and positively with leaders' balanced processing. The length of supervisor-subordinate contact relates positively to leaders' balanced processing and employees' creativity. All dimensions of AL are positively intercorrelated. They are also positively correlated with employees' enthusiasm and creativity. Employees' enthusiasm correlates positively with creativity.

Table 2: Means, standard deviations and correlations

	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Age	26.8	4.13	-											
2. Tenure	3.4	2.09	0.59***	-										
3. Gender (a)	-	-	0.22***	0.01	-									
4. Schooling years (b)	2.5	0.62	0.47***	0.02	0.33***	-								
5. Length of supervisor-subordinate contact (years)	2.9	1.83	0.49***	0.74***	-0.05	0.10*	-							
6. Leaders' self-awareness	2.9	0.93	-0.12**	-0.01	-0.05	-0.11***	-0.01	(0.93)						
7. Leaders' balanced processing	3.0	0.80	0.02	0.08*	0.02	0.12**	0.10*	0.74***	(0.84)					
8. Leaders' internalized moral perspective	2.7	0.88	-0.14***	-0.00	-0.05	-0.10*	0.04	0.77***	0.74***	(0.88)				
9. Leaders' relational transparency	2.9	0.80	-0.10*	-0.04	-0.05	-0.10*	0.02	0.79***	0.69***	0.75***	(0.88)			
10. Overall AL (c)	2.8	0.77	-0.10*	0.01	-0.04	-0.06	0.04	0.92***	0.88***	0.91***	0.89***	(0.92)		
11. Employees' enthusiasm	5.2	0.83	-0.01	-0.04	0.05	0.03	0.05	0.68***	0.65***	0.61***	0.63***	0.71***	(0.86)	
12. Employees' creativity	3.2	0.85	-0.03	0.10*	0.01	0.00	0.13***	0.70***	0.65***	0.64***	0.59***	0.72***	0.60***	(0.97)

(a) 0: female; 1: male

(b) 1: nine or fewer years of schooling; 2: 10-12 years; 3: at least a bachelor's degree.

(c) Mean score of the four AL dimensions.

In brackets: Cronbach Alphas

* $p < 0.05$ ** $p < 0.01$ *** $p < 0.001$

Before considering AL as core construct for testing our hypothesized model, we carried out a usefulness analysis (Darlinton, 1990). After entering control variables (see notes on Table 3), a regression of each individual component of the AL construct was undertaken to predict employees' enthusiasm and creativity. Then the overall AL was entered into the regression and the increase in the R^2 value computed. These results were then compared with the reverse situation. The findings (Table 3) show the following: (a) in all cases, the overall AL adds more variance than each individual component in predicting both employees' enthusiasm and creativity; (b) the individual components add only between 0% and 1% of variance in predicting the dependent variables. Therefore, the overall AL increases the R^2 value above and beyond its individual components. We also compared the variance explained by the overall AL in predicting employees' enthusiasm (R^2 : 0.515) with the explained variance by all AL variables (0.525). R^2 increases only 0.01 when the four AL dimensions are considered separately. In predicting creativity, the R^2 change is lower than 0.02 (from 0.497 to 0.515). Taking into account these findings and the fit indices of the second-order factor model, it was considered appropriate to use the overall AL rather than the respective individual components.

Table 3: Usefulness analysis of overall AL compared with the individual components of the construct

	Employees' enthusiasm	Employees' creativity
1. Leaders' self-awareness	0.48***	0.48***
2. Overall AL	0.04***	0.03***
1. Overall AL	0.51***	0.51***
2. Leaders' self-awareness	0.01**	0.01***
1. Leaders' balanced processing	0.43***	0.41***
2. Overall AL	0.09***	0.09***
1. Overall AL	0.52***	0.50***
2. Leaders' balanced processing	0.00	0.00
1. Leaders' internalized moral perspective	0.39***	0.39***
2. Overall AL	0.14***	0.11***
1. Overall AL	0.52***	0.50***
2. Leaders' internalized moral perspective	0.01*	0.00
1. Leaders' relational transparency	0.39***	0.35***
2. Overall AL	0.12***	0.16***
1. Overall AL	0.51***	0.50***
2. Leaders' relational transparency	0.00	0.01***

*p<0.05 **p<0.01 ***p<0.001

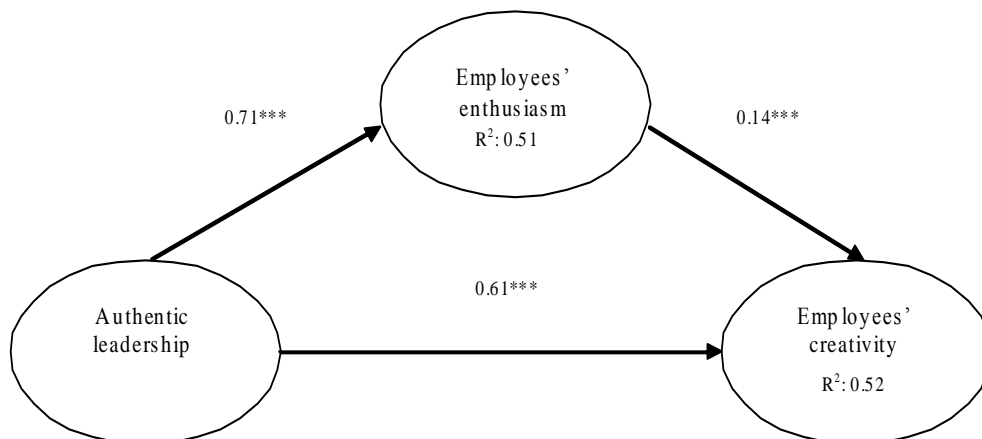
Notes:

(1) The first line represents the R²; the second line represents the change in R².

(2) Employees' age, tenure, gender and years of schooling, as well as the length of supervisor-subordinate, were inserted as control variables.

Structural equation modeling (using LISREL with the maximum likelihood estimation method) was used to test the causal model. The findings are presented in Figure 1, where standardized path coefficients are depicted. All paths are significant, the model being saturated, the fit being perfect. The findings support the three hypotheses, suggesting that AL predicts employees' creativity both directly and through the mediating role of employees' enthusiasm. A full mediated model (i.e., without the path between AL and creativity) was also tested, but the fit indices proved unsatisfactory (e.g., RMSEA: 0.52).

Figure 1: Structural equation model for predicting employees' creativity (standardized path coefficients)



***p<0.001

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

5.1. *Making sense of the main findings*

In an increasingly more knowledge-based and fast-paced economy, promoting creativity is a necessity, not an option, for organizations interested in responding to changing and uncertain environments, if innovative competitors are to be overcome and the firm's performance is to be improved (Egan, 2005; Reiter-Palmon & Illies, 2004). Thus organizations need to take advantage of and promote the creativity of their employees. This study may help organizations and researchers to identify ways in which these needs may be addressed. As indicated above, AL predicts employees' creativity both directly and through the mediating role of employees' enthusiasm.

The predictive power of AL for employees' creativity may be explained by the impacts that the perceived leaders' authenticity have on problem identification/construction, information search and encoding, generation of alternative solutions and idea evaluation (Reiter-Palmon & Illies, 2004). For example, the perceived leaders' balanced processing makes employees to feel that leaders are more receptive to different employees' perspectives about the sources of the problems and the ways available to solve them. The perceived leaders' balanced processing and moral orientation promotes employees' trust and respect, thus they feel freer to propose solutions different from those of the leader and/or of other powerful team members. The perceived leaders' relational transparency impels employees to express their true thoughts, opinions and feelings, and to feel that the leader's proposals and ideas are also genuine and reliable to deal with problems and opportunities.

The predictive power of employees' enthusiasm for their creativity is consistent with the broaden-and-build model and with the literature suggesting that positive emotions may promote creative performance (Fredrickson, 2001; Isen et al., 1987; Wright & Cropanzano, 2004). The influence of AL on employees' creativity through the mediating role of their enthusiasm corroborates the evidence provided by Avolio et al. (2004), who suggested that AL increases employees' identification with the organization and the leader, thus fostering employees' positive emotions (as well as trust and hope), which in turn promote their optimism and positive work attitudes, thereby influencing their performance. Our model is more parsimonious than that of Avolio et al. (2005). Nevertheless, in a field in which empirical studies are still scarce (Walumbwa et al., 2008; Yammarino et al., 2008), the findings are valuable for understanding the importance of AL in the organizational contexts.

5.2. *Limitations and future studies*

Studying a single culture may have produced some idiosyncratic findings. For example, do the feminine and highly in-group collectivistic features of the Portuguese culture (Hofstede, 1980; House et al., 2004) may make Portuguese employees more sensitive to authentic leaders than the employees from masculine and individualistic cultures? Future studies should use cross-cultural research methods to test if culture moderates the relationship between AL and dependent variables. Due to the cross-sectional nature of our study, a causal relationship between dependent and independent variables cannot be established. For example, the relationship between employees' enthusiasm and creativity may emerge because developing/proposing creative ideas leads individuals to experience higher enthusiasm. The relationship between AL and employees' enthusiasm and creativity may have a different basis. For example: (a) employees experiencing more enthusiasm at work and adopting more creative behaviors may make leaders more prone to reciprocate with positive (i.e., authentic) behaviors toward them; (b) employees experiencing more enthusiasm at work may feel prone to describe their supervisors more positively; (c) authentic leaders experience more positive emotions, and are therefore more benevolent in describing employees' creativity. Future studies should use longitudinal or quasi-experimental methods for clarifying the direction of causality. The sample is idiosyncratic (employees working in commercial rather than manufacturing or service organizations). Future studies must test the hypothesized model with employees from other kinds of organizations and industries. Other mediating variables (e.g., psychological capital, trust, identification with the organization and/or the leader, feelings of meaningful work, intrinsic motivation psychological empowerment, leader-member exchanges and employees' authenticity) must also be considered in future research.

5.3. Implications for management and concluding remarks

In spite of the limitations mentioned above, the study suggests that AL may ‘force’ employees to experience higher enthusiasm at work and to be more creative, thus helping organizations to deal with the idiosyncratic and stressful features that today’s organizations face. Indirectly, the study suggests that (a) selecting as leaders those with authentic leadership features and (b) implementing training/development actions aiming at increasing AL (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003) may have a positive impact on employees’ emotions and performance. The study also suggests, indirectly, that organizations may foster employees’ creativity through promoting work conditions that promote employee enthusiasm (e.g., providing employees with opportunities for learning and personal development, and/or making sure that they perform meaningful work). A former CEO of Medtronic argued: “we need leaders who lead with purpose, values, and integrity; leaders who build enduring organizations, motivate their employees to provide superior customer service, and create long-term value for shareholders” (George 2003: p. 9). Our study suggests that this claim makes sense, both theoretically and empirically, at least regarding creativity, one of the key paths for fostering improved organizational performance.

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