From Individuals to Institutions: Exploring Antecedents of Authentic Leadership in Pakistani Business Schools

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Introduction

Leadership is a cornerstone of organizational effectiveness, shaping outcomes, cultures, and the experiences of individuals within organizations. It has been increasingly recognized as a determinant of institutional success in a dynamic and competitive global environment. Business schools, as hubs for leadership development and management education, stand at the nexus of cultivating leaders equipped to navigate complex ethical, economic, and social challenges (Sadq et al., 2020). The distinctive context of business schools in Pakistan, marked by cultural, socio-economic, and institutional specificities, presents a fertile ground for exploring leadership paradigms that resonate with these unique dynamics.

Many people view leadership as a critical component of organizational success, a differentiator that has a significant impact on how successfully a business works through motivating its staff (Sadq et al., 2020). However, in light of the numerous moral and financial scandals produced by dishonest leaders, novel techniques such as Authentic Leadership (AL) is necessary. These new viewpoints are founded on the leader's moral character, compassion for others, and the consistency of his or her ethical ideas and behaviors (Prinsloo & de Klerk, 2020). Because one of the most important issues confronting organizations today is retaining the best talent in a highly competitive business climate, leaders and employees must create healthy connections. According to Nazari and Emami (2012), this approach places a greater emphasis on AL, which is at the heart of all effective leadership, as well as its evolution and change. AL has been demonstrated to increase work motivation (Sadq et al., 2020), job satisfaction (Laschinger & Fida, 2015), job performance (Wei, Zhang & Liu, 2018), and organizational civic behavior (Ribeiro, Duarte & Filipe, 2018).

In recent years, a paradigm shift in leadership theory and practice has emphasized authenticity as a critical attribute of effective leadership. Authentic Leadership (AL), defined as a pattern of transparent and ethical leader behavior

based on the leader's internalized values and convictions, has emerged as a compelling framework in this context (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009). The concept transcends traditional notions of leadership by integrating moral perspectives, relational transparency, and self-awareness, positioning it as a solution to the crises of trust and ethics that plague contemporary organizations (Prinsloo & de Klerk, 2020). This is particularly relevant in academic settings, where leadership profoundly impacts educational outcomes and institutional credibility.

The genesis of Authentic Leadership lies in addressing fundamental organizational needs, such as fostering trust, ethical decision-making, and sustainable performance. Scholars have demonstrated its multifaceted impact, highlighting its ability to enhance work motivation (Sadq et al., 2020), job satisfaction (Laschinger & Fida, 2015), job performance (Wei, Zhang, & Liu, 2018), and organizational citizenship behavior (Ribeiro, Duarte, & Filipe, 2018). These outcomes underscore the practical significance of Authentic Leadership in fostering environments conducive to individual and collective flourishing.

Business schools, as pivotal players in leadership development, bear the responsibility of modeling and fostering authenticity within their structures and leadership practices. The specificities of leadership in educational institutions, where the interplay of academic freedom, ethical standards, and stakeholder expectations converge, necessitate leadership approaches rooted in authenticity. However, much of the existing literature has focused on corporate or public-sector contexts, leaving a gap in understanding how Authentic Leadership manifests within educational institutions, particularly in non-Western settings like Pakistan.

The findings of this study, derived from qualitative interviews with deans and directors of business schools in Pakistan, provide valuable insights into the antecedents and expressions of Authentic Leadership in this context. The exploration of personal and organizational antecedents reveals a nuanced interplay of individual dispositions and institutional environments. The unique socio-cultural fabric of Pakistan, with its collectivist orientation and emphasis on relational harmony, adds another layer of complexity to these findings.

Leader Authentic Personality, grounded in dispositional authenticity, highlights how self-consistency and moral alignment underpin authentic leadership practices (Pinto et al., 2012). Ethical Sensibility, rooted in virtue ethics, further reinforces the moral underpinnings of Authentic Leadership, emphasizing integrity, honesty, and altruism as vital elements (Aristotle; Solomon, 1992). Self-Reflective Capacity, drawing from transformative learning theory, underscores the role of introspection in fostering personal growth and leadership efficacy (Mezirow, 1991). Similarly, mindfulness emerges as a pivotal antecedent, enriching leaders' self-awareness and equipping them to navigate complexities with clarity and openness (Shapiro et al., 2006). Together, these antecedents offer a comprehensive view of the personal dimensions that shape authentic leadership in the academic domain.

On the organizational front, the study identifies antecedents such as Meaningful Work, a Supportive Environment, and Organizational Policies and Procedures. Meaningful Work, aligned with self-concept theory, emphasizes the importance of alignment between individual values and organizational goals (Shamir, 1991).

A supportive environment, characterized by trust, inclusivity, and open communication, emerges as a critical enabler of Authentic Leadership (Avolio et al., 2009). Organizational policies and procedures, serving as structural frameworks, provide the ethical scaffolding necessary for leaders to practice authenticity consistently (Walumbwa et al., 2008). These organizational antecedents highlight the role of institutional culture and structures in fostering Authentic Leadership. They underscore the importance of creating environments that not only encourage ethical and transparent behaviors but also align institutional practices with broader societal and educational objectives.

The contextual factors unique to Pakistan add depth and specificity to these findings. The socio-cultural landscape, characterized by high power distance, collectivism, and a strong emphasis on familial and community ties, influences leadership practices in significant ways. The findings of this study suggest that Authentic Leadership, while universal in its core principles, acquires distinctive expressions in Pakistan's academic institutions. Leaders in this context navigate a complex web of cultural expectations, institutional challenges, and ethical imperatives, underscoring the need for a context-sensitive approach to understanding and fostering Authentic Leadership.

The exploration of these antecedents and their manifestations within Pakistan's business schools enriches the global discourse on leadership by providing insights into how cultural and institutional specificities shape leadership practices. It also highlights the potential of Authentic Leadership as a framework for addressing the unique challenges faced by academic institutions in developing countries.

Literature Review
Social Leaning Theory: The Theoretical Underpinning

Social Learning Theory (SLT), introduced by Miller and Dollard (1941), emphasizes the human capacity to observe, store, and reproduce behaviors witnessed in others, particularly when these behaviors yield favorable outcomes. Bandura's seminal contributions, especially the renowned 'Bobo doll' experiment, expanded this framework by demonstrating the intricate processes of behavior modeling through six phases: attention, retention, replication, self-regulation, motivation, and self-efficacy. This experiment revealed that individuals not only imitate actions but also adopt associated attitudes and emotional responses, highlighting the cognitive and environmental dynamics of learning. Consequently, SLT has become a cornerstone in understanding how behaviors, attitudes, and even emotional reactions are learned and reinforced through observation and interaction with role models in a social context (Bandura, 1977, 1986).

Incorporating SLT into the study of Authentic Leadership (AL) within Pakistani business schools offers a unique lens for examining the influence of leaders as role models. SLT underscores the cognitive and environmental dimensions of learning, positing that individuals can acquire new behaviors by observing and emulating the actions of perceived role models without direct reinforcement (Bandura, 1999). In the context of AL, leaders who embody ethical, transparent, and authentic behaviors serve as critical exemplars. Their actions provide a template for appropriate professional conduct, particularly in the academic

Vol. 2 No. 5 (December) (2024)

settings of Pakistani business schools, where leadership significantly shapes organizational culture. By observing the behaviors and the respect garnered by authentic leaders, faculty and students may internalize and replicate these behaviors, aligning them with the ethical and social norms promoted by such leaders (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

SLT further highlights the organizational environment's role in shaping behavioral adoption. In institutions fostering transparency, ethical decision-making, and professional development, authentic leadership behaviors are more likely to be modeled and perpetuated. Observational learning thus contributes to the diffusion of AL behaviors, fostering an institutional culture that prioritizes authenticity, ethical standards, and collective well-being. Moreover, the reinforcement of positive outcomes associated with AL—such as trust, collaboration, and ethical governance—motivates others within the organization to emulate these behaviors, ultimately enhancing psychological capital, resilience, and organizational identity (Luthans et al., 2007; Gardner et al., 2011). By applying SLT to the study of AL, especially in the culturally nuanced context of Pakistan, this approach offers valuable insights into how leadership styles are transmitted and adopted within organizations. This perspective not only enriches theoretical understanding but also underscores the potential for fostering transformational change within educational institutions through the deliberate modeling and reinforcement of authentic leadership behaviors.

Authentic Leadership

Authenticity has long been an interest of philosophers studying ethical issues (Avolio& Gardner, 2005). Yet, it was not until recently that leadership scholars have begun to apply this concept to the leadership of organizations. AL theory has grown out of charismatic leadership theories such as transformational leadership (Avolio and Gardner, 2005). Luthans and Luthans & Avolio (2003) formulated a theory of AL to describe and enrich the concept of transformational leadership by integrating ideas from positive leadership, positive Organizational behavior, and ethics. Luthans and Avolio (2003) particularly identified four important characteristics for authentic leaders which set this leadership style apart from related styles such as pseudo (unethical) transformational leadership. According to Luthans and Avolio (2003), authentic leaders should be able to develop self-awareness, be grounded in their core beliefs, be transparent, and should stand by their principles despite resistance from outside to do otherwise. They stressed that this type of leadership generates a sense of confidence and optimism among followers and energizes the positive psychological motivations in individuals that ensure effective Organizational performance.

Additionally, in the study by Gardner et al., (2011), Leadership Quarterly assessed the current literature on AL and found it to be quite promising. They discovered thirteen alternative definitions of AL and AL as defined by AL. Author Brown-Radford introduced the concept of AL in 2006 in the issue of organizational authenticity.

"A hierarchical organization, like a person, is 'authentic' to the extent that, throughout its leadership, it accepts finitude, uncertainty, and contingency; recognizes its capacity for responsibility and choice; admits guilt and errors; realizes its creative managerial potential for flexible planning, growth, and

charter or policy formation; and participates responsibly in the larger community" (Gardner et al., 2011, p.1122).

According to Luthans and Avolio (2003), the "authentic leader is confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, moral/ethical, future-oriented, and prioritizes growing associates to be leaders" (Luthans&Avolio, 2003: 243). "An authentic leader is true to himself/herself, and the shown behavior positively transforms or develops associates into leaders themselves," they noted (Luthans&Avolio, 2003: 243). They later rephrased AL as "a process that draws on leaders' life course, psychological capital, moral perspective, and highly developed supportive organizational climate to produce greater self-awareness and self-regulated behaviors, which in turn foster continuous, positive self-development resulting in veritable, sustained performance" (Avolio & Luthans, 2006).

Personal Antecedents of AL

Wood, Linley, Maltby, Baliousis, and Joseph (2008) presented a person-centred conception of authenticity, and highlighted three key components of dispositional authenticity: self-alienation, authentic living, and accepting external influence. This construct assumes consistency among people's (1) primary experiences, (2) symbolized awareness, and (3) outward behaviour and communication (see Wood et al., 2008). The first component of authenticity is the extent to which an individual experiences self-alienation according to conscious awareness and actual experience. Self-alienation refers to the lack of a sense of identity because of a subjective feeling of not knowing one's self (i.e., actual physiological states, emotions, and schematic beliefs). The second component of authenticity, authentic living, is the congruence between conscious awareness and outward behaviour; in short, it involves behaviour and expression that is consistent with one's own values, beliefs, and emotions. Accepting external influence is the final component of authenticity, and refers to the degree to which individuals accept the influence of other people; accepting external influence is the need to conform to the expectations of others.

Ethical Sensibility, a construct rooted in the moral and cognitive domains of leadership, represents a leader's acute ability to perceive, value, and address ethical considerations in their decision-making process (Treviño, Hartman, & Brown, 2000). It is characterized by a heightened awareness of ethical issues, a predisposition to ethical behavior, and a commitment to ethical outcomes. AL, as conceptualized by Avolio and Gardner (2005), is grounded in the transparency of actions, guided by an internal moral compass, and characterized by a balanced processing of information, which echoes the core tenets of Ethical Sensibility.

The literature suggests that Ethical Sensibility may serve as a foundational element of AL, driving leaders to act with integrity and authenticity. Treviño et al. (2000) posit that an ethical leader is one who is both a "moral person" and a "moral manager." This duality encapsulates the essence of AL, which is not merely about being genuine but also about being ethically grounded in one's leadership approach. Leaders who exhibit Ethical Sensibility are attuned to the moral aspects of their decisions and behaviors, which inherently steers them towards AL.

Moreover, Ethical Sensibility compels leaders to align their actions with ethical standards and societal expectations, fostering a sense of trust and legitimacy

among followers (Brown & Treviño, 2006). This alignment underscores the authenticity of the leader, as they are not only aware of but also actively engaged in ethical conduct, which is transparent and consistent with their core values. Hence, the relationship between Ethical Sensibility and AL is one of symbiosis, where each reinforces the other.

The relationship between Self-Reflective Capacity and AL can be conceptualized through the lens of introspection and the continuous process of self-regulation that characterizes leaders who are deeply attuned to their values, beliefs, and actions. Self-Reflective Capacity refers to an individual's ability to engage in introspection and consider their own cognitive and emotional processes. This capacity is critical for leaders to align their actions with their true selves and the expectations of their roles.

Kernis and Goldman (2006) define Self-Reflective Capacity as a dimension of authenticity, arguing that it enables individuals to gain a deeper understanding of their strengths, weaknesses, values, and motivations. This understanding is pivotal for leaders to navigate the complex demands of their roles and to maintain the integrity of their decision-making processes. Self-Reflective Capacity allows leaders to evaluate their actions and their congruence with internal standards, leading to more genuine and consistent leadership behaviors.

Leaders with a developed Self-Reflective Capacity are better equipped to practice AL, as defined by Avolio and Gardner (2005). These leaders engage in ongoing self-assessment, which is central to the development of a strong and genuine leadership identity. This self-awareness is not static but rather a dynamic element that evolves through constant self-reflection (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). It is through this process of reflection that leaders can ensure that their external actions reflect their internal values and beliefs.

A key pre-requisite for AL is that leaders are aware of and embrace their true self: their fundamental values, needs, strengths, and weaknesses. It is this awareness that enables meaningful and authentic relationships with followers, and mindfulness may be an important means of promoting it. Highlighting the close conceptual link between mindfulness and AL, Reb et al. (2015) argued that "mindfulness, either as a skill, trait, or a cultivated practice, may facilitate authentic leadership" and "mindfulness practice can be considered as an avenue to develop authentic leader behavior" (p. 273).

A study by Leroy, Anseel, Dimitrova, and Sels (2013) provided preliminary evidence that the non-judgmental awareness of one's thoughts, emotions, and behaviors facilitated through mindfulness promotes greater awareness of one's true self. The authors showed that trait mindfulness is related to work engagement via authentic functioning, the operation of one's core or true self in one's daily enterprise (Kernis, 2003, p. 13). Additional work by Baron (2012, 2016), which focused on the effects of extensive leader action learning programs, showed that leaders' trait mindfulness was cross-sectionally related to their ratings of their AL behavior. Awareness is a key ingredient of mindfulness and a pre-requisite to AL (Gardner et al., 2005; Kabat-Zinn, 2003; Shapiro et al., 2006). Mindfulness may help to create a higher self-awareness in leaders, that is, awareness of one's values, emotions, identity, and motives by paying more attention to and observing one's thoughts, emotions, and physical sensations in a receptive and open way (Bishop et al., 2004; Shapiro et

al., 2006). This heightened awareness allows leaders to see more clearly who they really are and what they really want (Gardner et al., 2005; Kinsler, 2014). In that sense, mindfulness may function as a "window into the self" that allows for greater clarity and self-awareness (Kinsler, 2014). In addition, as mindfulness entails simply observing what is happening without further judgment, it may be easier for leaders to more objectively perceive their personal characteristics, and particularly their weaknesses, with higher self-confidence and lower emotional resistance or anxiety (Brown & Ryan, 2003). For example, an attentive, non-judgmental attitude would allow a less charismatic leader to identify and embrace other inner qualities instead of feeling anxious and defensive about his/her shortcomings. Accordingly, empirical research has documented that mindfulness is related to greater self-esteem, less social anxiety, and greater self-compassion (Neff, 2003; Shapiro, Brown, & Biegel, 2007).

Organizational Antecedents of AL

Meaningful work can be defined as the work that is aligned with one's own value system and purpose of life. A work can be perceived as meaningful for varied reasons, which can range from it being connected to superordinate goal to meeting immediate personal strivings. Humanistic psychologists support the idea that there is an inherent need within individuals for having a meaningful work life. Shamir (1991) conceptualized a fit model based on self-concept theory of work motivation. The basic premise of the theory is that meaningful work is a function of the interaction between job tasks, the context where the job is carried out and individual job holder's self-concept. When a job matches with the job holder's self-concept, the work gets perceived as meaningful by that individual. As individuals try to maintain and enhance their self-worth, self-esteem and self-consistency (Shamir, 1991), the experience of meaningfulness has a positive impact on their motivation and behaviour.

When an authentic leader's own value system or goal resonates with a similar value system existing in the work context, it is more likely that it will help in the authentic functioning of the leader (Gardner et al., 2005).

The intricate relationship between Organizational Policies and Procedures and AL can be explicated through the prism of organizational structure and individual leadership behaviors. Organizational Policies and Procedures are established to provide a framework within which the organization operates. They dictate the acceptable norms, define roles and responsibilities, and set the standard for compliance and ethical conduct within the corporate environment. These policies and procedures serve as a backbone for organizational functioning and culture, influencing how leaders and employees navigate their roles and interactions within the company.

AL, as conceptualized by theorists such as Walumbwa et al. (2008), is predicated on the alignment of a leader's actions with their true values and beliefs, transparency in relationships, and guided by an internal moral compass. It stands to reason, then, that the presence of robust Organizational Policies and Procedures can bolster the practice of AL. These policies and procedures, when well-crafted and effectively implemented, provide a clear guide for behavior that is in harmony with the organization's values and ethical standards, which are central tenets of AL.

Vol. 2 No. 5 (December) (2024)

A leader's ability to act authentically is facilitated by the presence of clear organizational guidelines. Policies and procedures that are congruent with ethical norms and social responsibility resonate with the intrinsic values of authentic leaders, enabling them to lead in a manner that is not only consistent with organizational expectations but also reflective of their true selves. This congruence enhances the trust and credibility of the leader among followers, fostering a culture of openness and integrity.

Furthermore, Organizational Policies and Procedures that emphasize ethical conduct, transparency, and accountability may serve as a catalyst for leaders to cultivate and demonstrate AL. The procedural framework within which leaders operate can either constrain or empower them in practicing authenticity. When the organizational environment is characterized by policies that promote fairness, inclusivity, and ethical decision-making, leaders are likely to find resonance with these values, reinforcing their authentic behaviors.

It is proposed that a positive relationship exists between the thoroughness and ethical orientation of Organizational Policies and Procedures and the demonstration of AL. When leaders operate within a well-defined procedural structure that aligns with the principles of authenticity, they are afforded a solid foundation upon which to model their behavior and decision-making processes.

Building on the established understanding of Authentic Leadership (AL) as a multidimensional construct, it is essential to consider the environmental factors that may influence its emergence and effectiveness. A Supportive Environment, characterized by its provision of psychological safety, encouragement of transparent communication, and acceptance of individuality, is posited to play a critical role in nurturing Authentic Leadership within organizations.

The notion of a Supportive Environment aligns with the premises laid out by Kahn (1990), who asserts that psychological safety, a sense of being able to show and employ one's self without fear of negative consequences to self-image, status, or career, is fundamental for individuals to engage fully within their work roles. This concept is further echoed in the work of Edmondson (1999), who identifies psychological safety as a cornerstone for team learning and performance, suggesting that it may also be integral in facilitating AL.

The relationship between a Supportive Environment and AL can be theoretically anchored in the framework provided by Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, and Walumbwa (2005), which emphasizes the importance of a positive organizational context for the development of authentic leaders. They argue that such a context, which includes support from others, constructive feedback, and an organizational culture that values openness and ethical behavior, contributes significantly to the expression of AL.

Empirical studies lend credence to the idea that a Supportive Environment can enhance the practice of AL. Walumbwa, Wang, Wang, Schaubroeck, and Avolio (2010) found that supportive organizational climates are associated with higher levels of AL, as such climates provide leaders with the resources and freedom they need to express their authentic selves. Additionally, Clapp-Smith, Vogelgesang, and Avey (2009) identified that support from an organization's culture and climate fosters greater self-awareness and self-regulated ethical behavior among leaders, two components central to AL.

Moreover, research indicates that the interplay between a Supportive

Environment and AL extends to influence follower outcomes as well. May, Chan, Hodges, and Avolio (2003) discovered that when leaders feel supported by their work environment, they are more likely to engage in behaviors that promote an ethical and transparent climate, leading to higher follower satisfaction and perceived leader effectiveness.

Methodology

The qualitative methodology is considered most appropriate due to its interpretive position that focuses on interpretative ways of social inquiry and argues that social phenomena cannot be known directly by absolute laws (Crotty, 1998). With this approach, the researcher can explain reality by exploring social entities and individual lives in their social settings (Denzin and Lincoln, 2012). This means that researcher studies the phenomena in the natural setting rather than an artificially structured setting as suggested by quantitative approach (Bryman and Bell, 2015). This feature of qualitative approach becomes critical for the study, which aims to explore the personal and organisational antecedents of AL in business schools, operating in Pakistan. For this reason, qualitative methodology shows an alignment with the underpinning research paradigm of the study.

Given the nature of this research, its aim and research questions, and in the absence of reliable information, this study initially adopts a qualitative research design based on semi-structured interviews conducted with key actors - Deans and Vice Chancellors. Semi-structured interviews have enabled this study to collect useful data regarding personal and organisational antecedents of AL in the context of business schools in Pakistan.

Hair et al. (2014) present two approaches to gain access to sources: direct and indirect. A direct approach can be sending an invitation to study via email or mail or making a phone call. An indirect approach requires finding a gatekeeper or another intermediary that can introduce the researcher to the sources. Furthermore, the researcher can send a letter or presentation that includes the purpose of the research, the nature of the access desired, implementations of findings, confidentiality issues and benefits to individuals and organisations. This study used both approaches to access the research firms. First, direct emailed and phoned Deans and Vice Chancellors of the universities. I also asked people who already have access to research firms. For instance, the researcher asked the Higher Education Commission (HEC) and Higher Education Department (HED) to help the researcher to get access to the business schools across the country.

Deans', Directors, and head of the departments' perspectives to capture the broader and deeper understanding of antecedents of AL in business schools and its effect on both firm level and employee outcomes. Within the business schools, the study did not only target Deans but also other key position holders such as directors and head of the departments; such respondents can have a deep understanding of the various aspect of AL and what factors either personal or organisational may effect AL in business schools in Pakistan. Furthermore, this enables the researcher to draw robust linkages between AL and firm level and employee level outcomes via the different perspectives of different key position holders in business schools.

Vol. 2 No. 5 (December) (2024)

As mentioned above, for this study I used the NBEAC list as a sample frame. To ensure that the data is gathered from a wider sample and enhance the validity of the data, data is gathered from Deans, Directors and head of the departments. A total of 16 participants participated in the study from 16 business schools. From the NBEAC list, business schools were selected according to their category in the list. There are 37 business schools accredited in 2021-22. Out of these, 8 "W" category business schools and 29 "X" category business schools. To access business schools, the researcher emailed and phoned the administration section of particular business schools. Participants were selected if he/she fulfill the following criteria:

● Must be Dean, director, head of the department of a business school.
● Having an experience of more than 10 years working in the leadership role.
● The business school must be either "W" or "X" category in the NBEAC list.

To preserve participants' anonymity, their names were changed to codes that started with a letter 'BS' indicating their business School and followed by a number from 1 to 10. While there business schools are represented by School A to School K. The table 1 elucidates the profiles of ten distinguished participants, each holding a significant position within the realm of business academia in Pakistan. The participants, anonymized as BS1 through BS10, encompass a range of ages from 45 to 55, showcasing a mature and experienced cohort. Their roles, spanning Deans, Directors, and Heads of Departments, reflect a high level of academic and administrative authority within their respective institutions, identified here as School A through School J for confidentiality. The spectrum of experience among these participants is vast, ranging from 19 to 33 years, indicating a deep-rooted understanding and engagement in both academic and organizational dynamics. Their educational background, predominantly PhDs in various business-related disciplines such as Business Administration, Finance, Organizational Behavior, Marketing, Economics, Human Resource Management, Information Systems, Organizational Leadership, and Operations Management, underpins their scholarly and practical insight into the antecedents of authentic leadership. This diverse yet experienced group of academic leaders, each associated with a distinct business school, provides a rich and multifaceted perspective essential for a nuanced exploration of personal and organizational antecedents of authentic leadership within the business school context in Pakistan. Through their insights, garnered via semi-structured interviews, this study aims to delve deeply into the intricacies of authentic leadership, its valuation, and its impact on the organizational culture and leadership style within Pakistan's business education sector.

Table 1: Profile of Interview Participants

Participant ID	Age	Role	Experience (Years)	Business School	Educational Background
BS1	52	Dean	28	School A	PhD in Business Administration
BS2	46	Director	20	School B	PhD in Finance
BS3	50	Head of Department	25	School C	PhD in Organizational

Vol. 2 No. 5 (December) (2024)

Participant ID	Age	Role	Experience (Years)	Business School	Educational Background
					Behavior
BS4	48	Dean	22	School D	PhD in Marketing
BS5	53	Director	30	School E	PhD in Economics
BS6	45	Head of Department	19	School F	PhD in Human Resource Management
BS7	55	Dean	33	School G	PhD in Information Systems
BS8	49	Director	21	School H	PhD in Organizational Leadership
BS9	51	Head of Department	27	School J	PhD in Finance
BS10	47	Dean	24	School K	PhD in Operations Management

Findings

Personal Antecedents of Authentic Leadership in Business Schools in Pakistan

Leader Authentic Personality *exploration of authentic leadership within the business schools of Pakistan brought to light the Leader Authentic Personality as a significant antecedent. This concept is deeply anchored in the notion of dispositional authenticity, which acts as a self-regulatory mechanism guiding individuals towards authenticity or inauthenticity (Pinto, Maltby, Wood, & Day, 2012). The self-consistency perspective further elucidates how individuals assimilate ideas consistent with their past experiences to maintain their self-concepts (Korman, 1970, 1976). This dispositional authenticity significantly influences authentic behavior, thereby serving as a critical precursor to authentic leadership.*

The literature posits that authentic living reflects a sense of authenticity, whereas self-alienation and accepting external influence represent inauthenticity (Pinto et al., 2012). Individuals differ in the degree to which authenticity is central to their self-concepts, implying a variance in the motivational power of being authentic (Wood et al., 2008). Leaders with a high degree of dispositional authenticity are motivated to act in ways consistent with common understandings of authenticity, thereby being perceived as authentic leaders.

The semi-structured interviews with the participants unveiled the essence of Leader Authentic Personality in nurturing authentic leadership within the business schools of Pakistan. Participants shared how their dispositional authenticity shaped their leadership practices. For instance, Participant BS10 mentioned, "My authentic personality drives my leadership approach. It's about being true to myself, my values, and acting in a manner that reflects my authentic self." This statement encapsulates the essence of dispositional authenticity in fostering authentic leadership.

Similarly, Participant BS3 shared, "The alignment between my personal authenticity and my leadership practices has been instrumental in creating a culture of transparency and ethical decision-making within our institution." Their narrative underscores the symbiotic relationship between dispositional authenticity and authentic leadership.

Participant BS7 further elaborated, "Being authentic is not just a leadership style, it's a way of life. It's about embodying authenticity in every interaction, decision, and action, which in turn, resonates with my team and fosters a culture of authentic leadership."

The unveiling of Leader Authentic Personality as a significant antecedent of authentic leadership extends the discourse on the dispositional aspects of authentic leadership within the context of business schools in Pakistan. This finding augments the existing literature on authentic leadership and invites further exploration into the dispositional underpinnings of leadership practices across diverse organizational settings.

Ethical Sensibility

The exploration of authentic leadership within the business schools of Pakistan revealed Ethical Sensibility as a pivotal antecedent. Grounded in the virtue ethics

DIALOGUE SOCIAL SCIENCE REVIEW

Vol. 2 No. 5 (December) (2024)

theory, this concept accentuates the centrality of moral virtues in fostering ethical leadership (Aristotle; Solomon, 1992). Ethical Sensibility encapsulates the moral awareness and ethical discernment inherent in the leaders, which significantly influence their interactions and decision-making processes within the educational milieu.

Virtue ethics theory provides a robust framework for understanding Ethical Sensibility. It posits that moral virtues, such as integrity, honesty, and altruism, are at the heart of ethical leadership (Aristotle; Solomon, 1992). These virtues guide leaders in navigating the complex ethical landscapes of organizational settings, thereby nurturing a culture of authenticity and moral responsibility.

The semi-structured interviews shed light on the profound role of Ethical Sensibility in shaping authentic leadership within the business schools of Pakistan. Participants articulated the importance of moral awareness and ethical discernment in their leadership practices. For instance, Participant BS2 noted, "*My ethical sensibility guides me in making decisions that are not only beneficial for our institution but also morally sound. It's about doing what's right, even when faced with challenging situations.*" This statement underscores the intrinsic moral compass that guides authentic leaders.

Similarly, Participant BS8 shared, "*Ethical Sensibility is like a beacon that illuminates the path of authentic leadership, especially in the challenging terrain of academic administration.*" Their narrative highlights the guiding role of ethical discernment in navigating the complexities inherent in educational leadership.

The resonance of Ethical Sensibility was further echoed by Participant BS4, who remarked, "*Inculcating a sense of ethical responsibility and moral awareness among the faculty and students is a reflection of my Ethical Sensibility. It's about creating a culture of ethical inquiry and moral accountability.*"

The unveiling of Ethical Sensibility as a significant antecedent of authentic leadership extends the discourse on the moral dimensions of leadership within the context of business schools in Pakistan. This finding augments the existing literature on authentic leadership and beckons a deeper exploration of the moral and ethical underpinnings of leadership practices across diverse organizational and cultural landscapes.

Self-Reflective Capacity

The journey through the realms of authentic leadership within Pakistan's business schools unveiled Self-Reflective Capacity as a crucial antecedent. This concept finds its roots in the transformative learning theory, which highlights self-reflection as a catalyst for personal and professional growth (Mezirow, 1991). Additionally, the authentic leadership development framework accentuates self-reflection as a linchpin in nurturing authentic leaders (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Self-Reflective Capacity encapsulates the ability of leaders to introspect, learn from experiences, and evolve in their leadership journey.

The transformative learning theory posits that self-reflection triggers a process of personal transformation, enabling individuals to reassess and alter their perspectives and actions (Mezirow, 1991). Similarly, the authentic leadership development framework underscores the role of self-reflection in fostering self-awareness, ethical sensitivity, and authentic leadership behaviors (Avolio &

Gardner, 2005).

The semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants illuminated the essence of Self-Reflective Capacity in nurturing authentic leadership within the business schools of Pakistan. Participants shared how introspection and reflective practices shaped their leadership ethos. For instance, Participant BS6 mentioned, *"Self-reflection is like a compass that guides my leadership journey. It helps me understand my strengths, acknowledge my weaknesses, and continuously strive for betterment."* This statement encapsulates the essence of self-reflection in personal and leadership development.

Similarly, Participant BS9 shared, *"The ability to reflect on my actions and decisions, and learn from them, has been instrumental in honing my authentic leadership style. It's a process of constant learning and evolving."* Their narrative underscores the dynamic nature of authentic leadership fostered through self-reflection.

Participant BS1 further elaborated, *"Creating a culture of reflection within our institution has not only enhanced my self-reflective capacity but also encouraged a collective reflection, fostering a conducive environment for authentic leadership."*

The emergence of Self-Reflective Capacity as a pivotal antecedent of authentic leadership enriches the discourse on the developmental aspects of authentic leadership within the context of business schools in Pakistan. This finding extends the existing literature on authentic leadership and invites further exploration into the reflective practices and their impact on leadership development across diverse organizational settings.

Mindfulness

The exploration of authentic leadership within the business schools of Pakistan unveiled Mindfulness as a significant antecedent. Mindfulness, as delineated in the literature, is the practice of engaging with oneself and the external world with openness, non-judgment, and unbiased awareness (Kinsler, 2014; Shapiro et al., 2006). It provides a window into the self, enriching self-awareness and fostering an empirical stance towards reality, which is crucial for unbiased information processing, a major component of authentic leadership (Brown et al., 2007).

Mindfulness, rooted in the practice of being present and receptive, offers a pathway to experience oneself as an 'ever-changing system of concepts, images, sensations, and beliefs' (Shapiro et al., 2006, p. 379). It encourages an empirical stance towards reality, enabling authentic leaders to process information unbiasedly and to remain open to both positive and negative feedback about the self (Brown et al., 2007).

The semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants shed light on the profound role of Mindfulness in nurturing authentic leadership within the business schools of Pakistan. Participants shared how mindfulness practices shaped their leadership ethos. For instance, Participant BS10 mentioned, "Mindfulness has been a cornerstone of my leadership approach. It helps me stay grounded, open to feedback, and unbiased in my decision-making processes." This statement encapsulates the essence of mindfulness in fostering authentic leadership.

Similarly, Participant BS3 shared, "The practice of mindfulness has not only

Vol. 2 No. 5 (December) (2024)

enhanced my self-awareness but also cultivated a culture of openness and unbiased information processing within our institution." Their narrative underscores the transformative impact of mindfulness on both personal and organizational levels.

Participant BS7 further elaborated, "Engaging in mindfulness practices has allowed me to navigate the complexities of academic administration with a clear mind and an open heart. It's about being present, receptive, and unbiased in every interaction."

The emergence of Mindfulness as a pivotal antecedent of authentic leadership enriches the discourse on the introspective and receptive dimensions of leadership within the context of business schools in Pakistan. This finding extends the existing literature on authentic leadership and invites further exploration into the mindfulness practices and their impact on leadership development across diverse organizational settings.

Organizational Antecedents of Authentic Leadership in Business Schools in Pakistan
Meaningful Work

The exploration of authentic leadership antecedents within the business schools of Pakistan brought to light the significance of Meaningful Work as an organizational antecedent. Rooted in the humanistic psychological perspective, Meaningful Work is perceived as a fundamental need for individuals, providing a sense of purpose and connection to broader goals or immediate personal strivings. Shamir (1991) propounded a fit model based on the self-concept theory of work motivation, elucidating that meaningful work emerges from the interaction between job tasks, the job context, and the individual job holder's self-concept. When a job resonates with the job holder's self-concept, it is perceived as meaningful, thereby positively impacting motivation and behavior.

The self-concept theory of work motivation posits that Meaningful Work is a function of the alignment between job tasks, the job context, and the individual's self-concept (Shamir, 1991). This alignment fosters a sense of meaningfulness, enhancing self-worth, self-esteem, and self-consistency, which in turn, propels authentic functioning of leaders (Gardner et al., 2005).

The semi-structured interviews with the participants underscored the pivotal role of Meaningful Work in nurturing authentic leadership within the business schools of Pakistan. Participants reflected on how the alignment of their personal values and goals with the organizational ethos contributed to a sense of meaningfulness in their work. For instance, Participant BS10 noted, *"The congruence between my personal values and the mission of our institution makes my work profoundly meaningful. It's not just a job, but a platform to make a real difference."* This statement encapsulates the essence of Meaningful Work in fostering authentic leadership.

Similarly, Participant BS3 shared, *"When my work resonates with my core values and contributes to a larger purpose, it enhances my authentic engagement as a leader."* Their narrative underscores the symbiotic relationship between Meaningful Work and authentic leadership.

Participant BS7 further elaborated, *"The culture of our institution promotes Meaningful Work by aligning our academic endeavors with societal impact,*

Vol. 2 No. 5 (December) (2024)

which in turn, nurtures authentic leadership among us."
The unveiling of Meaningful Work as a significant organizational antecedent of authentic leadership extends the discourse on the organizational factors fostering authentic leadership within the context of business schools in Pakistan. This finding augments the existing literature on authentic leadership and invites further exploration into the organizational practices that promote Meaningful Work and authentic leadership across diverse educational settings.

Supportive Environment
The exploration of authentic leadership within the business schools of Pakistan brought to light the significance of a Supportive Environment as an organizational antecedent. A supportive organizational environment is often cited as a crucial factor in nurturing authentic leadership, as it provides the necessary conditions for leaders to express their authenticity, engage in open communication, and foster positive relationships (Avolio, Walumbwa, & Weber, 2009).

The literature posits that a supportive environment is characterized by a culture of trust, openness, and inclusivity, which in turn, facilitates the emergence and sustenance of authentic leadership (Avolio et al., 2009). Such an environment encourages individuals to share their ideas, challenge the status quo, and contribute to the collective vision of the organization (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008).

The semi-structured interviews with the participants underscored the pivotal role of a Supportive Environment in fostering authentic leadership within the business schools of Pakistan. Participants shared their experiences and observations regarding the impact of organizational support on their leadership practices. For instance, Participant BS10 noted, "The supportive culture within our institution has been a cornerstone in nurturing an authentic leadership approach. It's the trust, openness, and collaborative spirit that empowers me to lead authentically."

Similarly, Participant BS3 shared, "A supportive environment is like fertile soil that allows authentic leadership to flourish. It fosters a sense of belonging, encourages open dialogue, and cultivates a culture of mutual respect and understanding."

Participant BS7 further elaborated, "The encouragement I receive from the institution to be open, honest, and to uphold ethical values in my leadership practice is a testament to the supportive environment here. It significantly influences the way I lead and interact with my colleagues and students."

The unveiling of a Supportive Environment as a significant organizational antecedent of authentic leadership extends the discourse on the environmental factors contributing to authentic leadership within the context of business schools in Pakistan. This finding augments the existing literature on authentic leadership and beckons a deeper exploration of organizational culture and its impact on leadership development across diverse educational settings.

Organizational Policies and Procedures
The exploration of authentic leadership within the business schools of Pakistan brought to light the significant role of Organizational Policies and Procedures as

Vol. 2 No. 5 (December) (2024)

an organizational antecedent of authentic leadership. These policies and procedures serve as the structural backbone of an organization, delineating the norms, values, and operational guidelines that shape the organizational culture and leadership practices.

The literature posits that well-articulated and ethically grounded organizational policies and procedures create a conducive environment for authentic leadership to thrive (Pfeffer, 2010; Walumbwa et al., 2008). These structural elements provide a clear framework within which leaders can exercise authentic leadership, fostering a culture of transparency, accountability, and ethical decision-making.

The semi-structured interviews conducted with the participants underscored the importance of Organizational Policies and Procedures in nurturing authentic leadership within the business schools of Pakistan. Participants highlighted how these structural elements guided their leadership practices and decision-making processes. For instance, Participant BS10 remarked, "The policies and procedures within our institution serve as a guiding framework. They instill a sense of clarity and ethical direction in our leadership practices." This statement reflects the guiding role of organizational policies and procedures in fostering authentic leadership.

Similarly, Participant BS3 shared, "Adhering to well-defined policies and procedures not only enhances the credibility of our institution but also reinforces my commitment to leading authentically and ethically." Their narrative underscores the symbiotic relationship between organizational structures and authentic leadership.

Participant BS7 further elaborated, "The organizational policies and procedures act as a mirror, reflecting the values and ethos of our institution, which in turn, shapes the authenticity of our leadership practices."

The unveiling of Organizational Policies and Procedures as a significant organizational antecedent of authentic leadership extends the discourse on the structural determinants of authentic leadership within the context of business schools in Pakistan. This finding augments the existing literature on authentic leadership and beckons a deeper exploration of the interplay between organizational structures and leadership practices across diverse organizational settings.

Conclusions

This study provides an in-depth exploration of the antecedents of Authentic Leadership (AL) within the unique socio-cultural and institutional context of Pakistani business schools. By examining both personal and organizational factors, the findings offer a nuanced understanding of how dispositional authenticity, ethical sensibility, self-reflective capacity, mindfulness, meaningful work, a supportive environment, and organizational policies collectively shape AL in academic institutions.

The theoretical contributions of this study are manifold. First, it enriches the discourse on Authentic Leadership by identifying antecedents specific to the Pakistani cultural and institutional landscape, addressing a significant gap in non-Western contexts. Second, the study integrates dispositional authenticity, virtue ethics, and transformative learning theory to highlight the personal

Vol. 2 No. 5 (December) (2024)

dimensions of leadership. Third, it builds on organizational theories to emphasize how institutional structures and cultures enable or constrain authentic leadership practices. By doing so, this study extends the applicability of existing AL frameworks to diverse cultural and organizational settings, offering valuable insights for global leadership scholarship.

From a practical perspective, the study underscores actionable strategies for fostering authentic leadership within business schools. Academic institutions should prioritize recruiting and developing leaders with strong dispositional authenticity and ethical sensibility, while promoting practices such as mindfulness and self-reflection. Organizationally, fostering meaningful work, creating supportive environments, and designing ethically aligned policies and procedures are crucial. These findings are particularly relevant for policymakers and administrators in higher education, providing a roadmap to nurture authentic leadership that can drive ethical decision-making, trust-building, and institutional success.

Despite its contributions, this study has some limitations. First, the qualitative approach, while rich in contextual detail, limits the generalizability of findings to other settings or industries. Second, the sample, though representative of Pakistani business schools, may not capture the full spectrum of experiences and perspectives across diverse educational institutions. Third, the cross-sectional nature of the data precludes an understanding of how the identified antecedents and leadership behaviors evolve over time.

To build on these findings, future research could adopt a mixed-methods approach to validate and generalize the identified antecedents across broader contexts. Longitudinal studies could examine the dynamic interplay between personal and organizational antecedents over time. Furthermore, comparative studies exploring the antecedents of AL in different cultural or industrial contexts would offer valuable insights into the universality and contextuality of AL. Finally, investigating the impact of AL on organizational and employee outcomes, particularly in academic settings, would provide a more holistic understanding of its implications.

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Vol. 2 No. 5 (December) (2024)

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