

# Authentic Leadership and Organizational Commitment: The Mediating Role of Positive Psychological Capital Case of Alazhar University-Gaza

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**Abstract:** This descriptive and an analytical study present a structural equation model for studying the mediating role of positive psychological capital in the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational commitment. Quantitative data was collected from the case of Al-Azhar University based in Gaza Strip, a context in which the needs for both authentic leadership and a positive and committed academic staff are integral to the entire performance of the university. The results reveal that positive psychological capital insignificantly mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational commitment.

**Keywords:** authentic leadership, organizational commitment, positive psychological capital

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## I. Introduction

One way to address the issue of turnover is to understand the commitment that employees have to their organization, and to determine what affects the different levels of commitment. To do this, we must have a clear definition of organizational commitment and identify variables that might influence it (Vondrasek, 2000). Also, it has been argued that positive organizational behavior research became the catalyst for developing the construct of authentic leadership (Luthans & Avolio, 2009; Vondrasek, 2000). It is argued as a positive form of leadership that goes beyond traditional leadership styles in order to influence followers through genuine, ethical behavior (Tuttle, 2009; Luthans & Avolio, 2009). Prior research argued the influence of leadership on organizational commitment, which emphasizes one of the strategies followed by some organizations, including testing and implementing new types of leadership. This is the case of authentic leadership that positively influences individuals' commitment (Gatling, 2016). Other authors have studied the relationship between authentic leadership and positive psychological capital, and suggest in their studies that, among other things, authentic leadership promotes positive psychological capital and positive emotions (Rego, Sousa, Marques & Cunha, 2012a). Our attempt is to determine the mediating role of positive psychological capital in the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational commitment. This study makes a vital contribution to the human behaviors and management science by adopting the case of a university as our research context. Universities, like other institutions, are concerned with the commitment of their employees, as weak commitment leads to low performance and loss of confidence and loyalty of employees. The research question derives from the proposed relationship as to what point is positive psychological capital a mediator of the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational commitment. Descriptive analytical research will be conducted on the case of Al-Azhar University, which has more than 600 employees, including academics and administrative staff. In order to answer the research question, we follow the research logic, first reviewing the literature on authentic leadership, organizational commitment, and positive psychological capital.

### 1.1 Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership is a new factor that is gaining both popularity and notoriety in the leadership literature. Recently in the field of management studies there has been renewed interest in this construct due to the major shift to positive psychology. Authentic leadership is a root construct to any positive leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Authentic leadership is a leadership style that is grounded in positive psychology (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Gardner, Cogliser, Davis, & Dickens, 2011). Authors conceptualized authentic leadership into four main dimensions of authentic leadership, including relational transparency, self-consciousness, internal moral perspective, and balanced processing of information (e.g. Avolio & Gardner,

2005). One of the fundamental components of the authentic leadership construct is self-awareness. Researchers agree that self-awareness is the starting point of authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

## **1.2 Organizational Commitment**

This term was introduced by Becker (1960), who conducted early studies of organizational commitment. In organizational science, organizational commitment is recognized to be a bond of the individual to the organization (Samad, 2005). It is an emotional response that can be measured through people's behaviors, beliefs and attitudes, and can range anywhere from very low to very high. The focus of many of these studies was to find ways to improve how workers feel about their jobs, so that these workers would become more committed to their organizations (Meyer and Allen, 1997). Organizational commitment predicts work variables such as turnover and organizational citizenship behavior (Gatling et al., 2016). This considers the employees' state of commitment to assist in the achievement of the organization's goals, and involves the employees' levels of identification, involvement, and loyalty (Caught & Shadur, 2000). Meyer and Allen (1997) conceptualized three components of organizational commitment: affective, continuance and normative commitment.

## **1.3 Psychological Capital**

For decades psychology has been viewed primarily as a method of dealing with the treatment of mental illness, although other areas of research and application have existed since its origins. At the end of the 1990's, the term "positive psychology" was introduced in the management field by M. Seligman and others in conducting research about organizational behaviors (Çavuş and Gökçen, 2015). Psychological Capital or positive psychology can be defined as "examining the processes by which positive attitudes, feedback, criticism contribute to the functioning and development of an individual, group or corporation" (Çavuş and Gökçen, 2015, PP. 245). Drawing from positive psychology constructs and empirical research, four psychological resources were determined to best meet the scientific criteria, including Hope, Efficacy, Resilience, and Optimism. These terms were defined by Luthans and colleagues as psychological Capital or PsyCap (Luthans et al., 2004). The four components are defined as follows: (1) Hope, which was developed by Snyder (2000) and defined as a positive motivational state where two basic elements - successful feeling of agency and pathways interact. (2) Self efficacy was first introduced by Bandura et al. (1997), who define it as people's confidence in their ability to achieve a specific goal in a specific situation. (3) Optimism was viewed and defined by Adams and others in 2003 as one that makes "Internal" or "dispositional", fixed and global attributions for positive events and "External" or "situational", not fixed and specific attributions to negative events (Fritz Heider, 1958), cited by Luthans et al. (2004). Finally (4) Resilience, found by Masten, et al. (2002) and defined it in Positive Psychology as a positive way of coping with adversity or distress.

## **II. Theoretical Framework**

### **2.1 Authentic leadership on organization's commitment**

Prior research on this important term comes in different forms. For example, Tuttle (2009) provides an empirical investigation of authentic leadership relating to the employee's behaviors. It was found that authentic-transformational leadership was directly related to a number of employee attitudes, and these, in turn, were related to positive employee behaviors. Choi et al. (2016) studied authentic leadership based on its impact on the organization's commitment, focusing on the mediating effects of Empowerment. The study found that authentic leadership had significant influences on nurses' organizational commitment and job satisfaction via empowerment. They emphasized the importance of developing such strategies to enhance nurse managers' authentic leadership and to develop empowering education programs for nurses. Chen et al. (2011) considers the mediating effects of employees' experience of inclusion and the moderating effect of individual work values that influence the relationship between authentic leadership and organization's commitment. The results indicated that employees' experience of inclusion mediated the relationship between authentic leadership and both affective and normative commitment. Beal (2016) emphasized authentic leadership as a way to retain hospitality staff in which positive leadership attitudes can encourage commitment. Most recently an inquiry by Rego et al. (2016) considers the mediating role of psychological capital. They show that positive psychological capital mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational commitment. We then assert the following hypothesis: H1 Authentic leadership has a significant impact on organization's commitment.

### **2.2 Authentic leadership on psychological capital.**

Research argues the importance of authentic leadership on psychological capital. Jensen and Luthans (2009) indicate initial empirical support of the impact of authentic leadership on psychological capital. Woolley et al. (2011) revealed a positive relationship between authentic leadership and followers' psychological capital, partially mediated by positive work climate. Rego et al. (2012) show that authentic leadership predicts employees' creativity, both directly and through the mediating role of employees' psychological capital. While

Wang et al. (2014) consider the impact on employee's performance from different viewpoint. They show that authentic leadership is positively related to leader-member exchange and consequently followers' performance, and to a larger degree, among followers who have low rather than high levels of psychological capital. Also Zubair et al. (2015) studied the effects that moderate the impact of authentic leadership - that psychological capital and work-related flow mediates in relationship between authentic leadership and employee creativity. Gaddy (2016) studied resilience of a leader as an important dimension of psychological capital in which was found a positive impact of authentic leadership on the resilience of the U.S. Army. We then assert the following hypothesis: H2 Authentic leadership has a significant impact on psychological capital.

### 2.3 Psychological capital and organization's commitment.

Larson et al. (2006) consider the impact of psychological capital that predict work attitudes and that explores organization's commitment in which they found a significant relationship. Etebarian et al. (2012) studied several aspects of organizational commitment. They showed that there is a significant relationship between psychological capital and emotional commitment, while continuous commitment and normative commitment do not. Simons (2013) reveals a significant relationship between psychological capital, work engagement and organizational commitment. The results indicate work engagement as being the only significant predictor of organizational commitment. In another study by Jiayi et al. (2013) they were interested in studying job burnout throughout the structural equation model. The final model revealed a significant path from psychological capital to job burnout through organizational commitment. Recently Bharat Chandra et al. (2015) and Mehdi et al. (2016) found that psychological capital is the greatest predictor for organizational commitment. For example, Mehdi et al. (2016) indicated that psychological capital is highly correlated with organizational commitment and job satisfaction of employees. We then assert the following hypothesis: H3 Psychological capital has a significant impact on organization's commitment.

### 2.4 Psychological, authentic leadership and organizational commitment.

As already mentioned that links the authentic leadership influences organizational commitment and positive psychological capital. This is due to the leader's behavioral pattern. It can be assumed that authentic leadership directly and/or indirectly influences organizational commitment with positive psychological capital. Based on the theories and results of the various authors, we can consider the following hypothesis on mediation: H4 Psychological mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational commitment.

## III. Research Design

### 3.1 Samples

In the context of Al-Azhar University - Gaza, this study employs survey method for data collection. Extensive literature reviews the basis for developing an initial list of items to measure the components of the concepts. In order to revise the measurement items. For the pre-test, the study chooses 8 faculty members, who have expertise in general management from the same university, to examine whether these revised measurement items are both necessary and sufficient. In addition, the next step is conducting a pilot study involving 15 respondents to determine the efficiency of the questionnaire. Finally, this study checks item-to-total correlations to refine the measurements.

This study designs measurements with a 7-point Likert scale from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Our target respondents were academic or administrative employees who have been working in Al-Azhar University for over one year at least which we consider familiar ones. We sent out 100 questionnaires and received back 85, among which 82 are valid, that considering 82% valid rate.

**Table 1:** Presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents.

Factors	N	%
<b>Gender</b>		
Male	59	72.0
Female	07	08.5
Nonresponse	16	19.5
<b>Work</b>		
Academic	12	14.6
Administrative	70	85.4
<b>Qualification</b>		
PhD	08	09.8
Master	23	28.0
BA	39	47.6
Diploma	09	11.0
Other	03	03.7
<b>Experience</b>		
Less than 5 years	08	09.8

From 5 to 10 years	06	07.3
From 10 to 15 years	17	20.7
From 15 to 20 years	30	36.6
From 20 to 25 years	21	25.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>100.0</b>

**3.2 Measures**

**3.2.1. Organizational Commitment**

This dependent variable was measured by twelve Likert type items divided into three sub dimensions (*Emotional commitment EC, Ongoing commitment OC and Normative commitment NC*) whereas each Dimension has for items (As Appendix A shows).

**3.2.2 Authentic Leadership**

This independent variable as one construct consist of fifteen Likert type items (As Appendix A shows).

**3.2.3 Psychological Capital**

Psychological capital as a mediator that was molded in one dimension and consists of twelve Likert type items (As Appendix A shows).

**Table 2** Presents the means, standard deviations, and correlations of these measures.

	M	SD	LSH	PSC	EC	OC	NC
<b>LSH</b>	5.03	1.31	1				
<b>PSC</b>	5.37	1.28	0.89*	1			
<b>EC</b>	5.43	1.77	0.88*	0.84*	1		
<b>OC</b>	5.48	1.77	0.76*	0.74*	0.85*	1	
<b>NC</b>	5.40	1.66	0.75*	0.70*	0.84*	0.84*	1

**3.3 Reliability and Validity**

This study uses Cronbach's  $\alpha$  and Composite Reliability (CR) to explore the variables reliability. As shown in Table 3, the minimum Cronbach's  $\alpha$  of the scales is 0.922, which is found to be above the critical level of 0.7. indicating high internal consistency. The minimum (CR) is 0.944, above the critical level of 0.7 as well, indicating high reliability. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) is 0.618 for (LSH), 0.711 for (PSC), 0.873 for (EC), 0.848 for (OC) and 0.810 for (NC) above the critical level of 0.5, indicating high Convergent validity. Also, we found important indicator of internal consistency that, the minimum standard loading factor is 0.60, indicating datum collected in this study are of great validity (As Appendix A shows).

**Table 3:** Reliability and Validity Measurements.

	Alpha	CR	AVE
<b>LSH</b>	0.955	0.960	0.618
<b>PSC</b>	0.962	0.967	0.711
<b>EC</b>	0.952	0.965	0.873
<b>OC</b>	0.940	0.957	0.848
<b>NC</b>	0.922	0.944	0.810

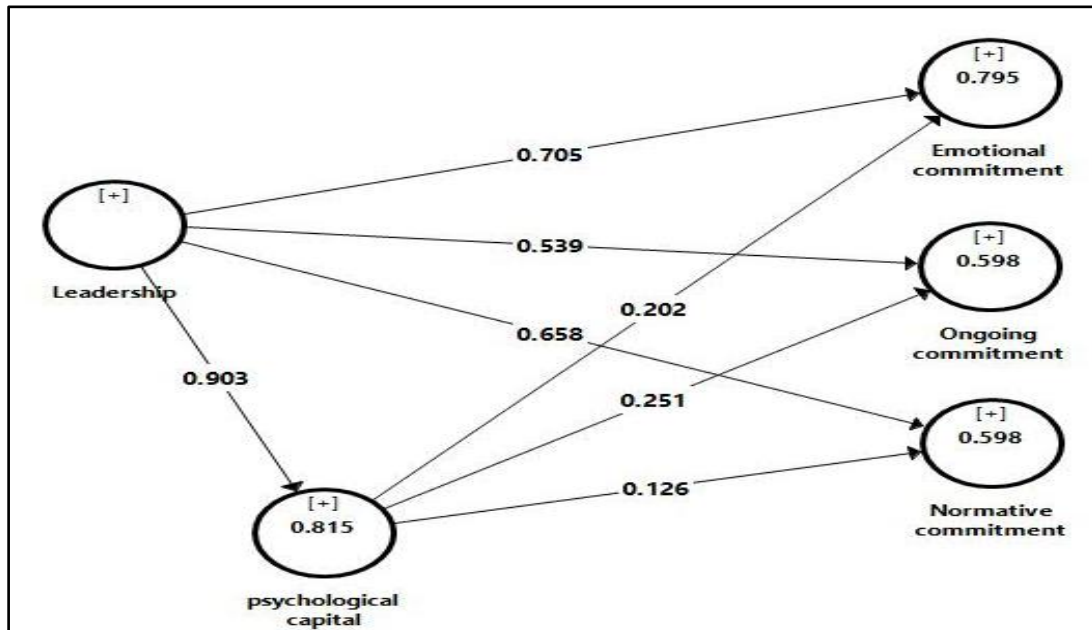
**IV. Results**

**The role of psychological capital as a mediator variable in relationship between leadership and organizational commitment.**

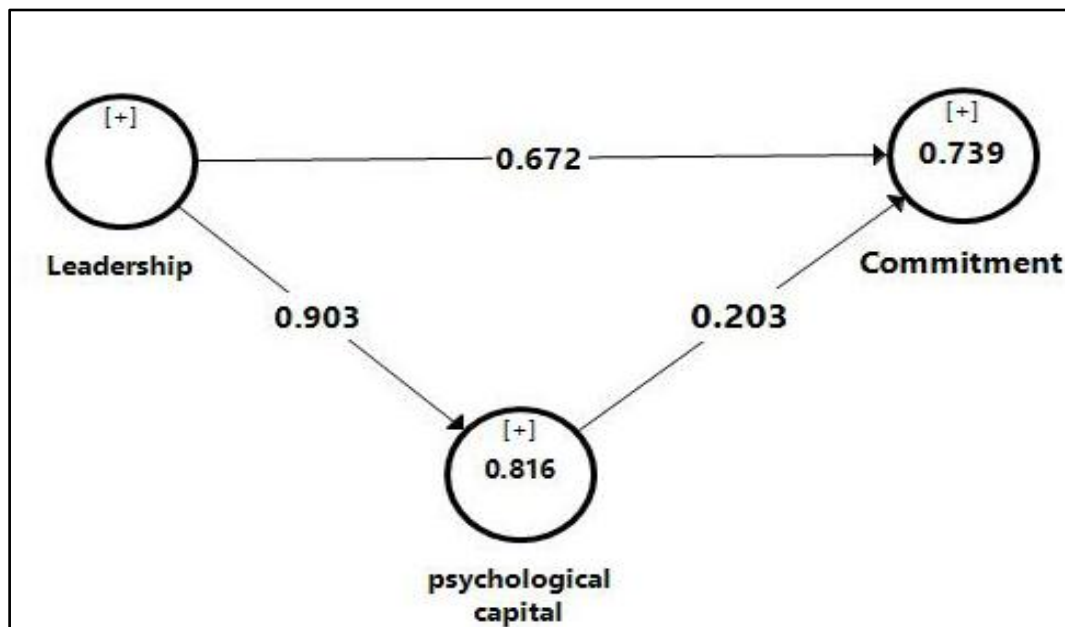
Table 4 shows the results we obtained from our structure equation model that developed from the studied constructs. Recalling that, organizational commitment as dependent variable, authentic leadership as independent variable and psychological capital as mediate variable. The table includes the direct and indirect effect of authentic leadership on organizational commitment, direct effect of psychological capital on organizational commitment variables and R-Square for each dependent variable that forming the organizational commitments.

**Table 4:** Direct and indirect relationship through psychological capital between authentic leadership and organizational commitment.

Dep.	Authentic Leadership				PSC		R-square
	Direct		Indirect		B	P	
	B	P	B	P			
<b>EC</b>	<b>0.71</b>	0.00	0.18	0.15	0.20	0.13	<b>0.795</b>
<b>OC</b>	<b>0.54</b>	0.02	0.23	0.28	0.25	0.26	<b>0.598</b>
<b>NC</b>	<b>0.66</b>	0.00	0.11	0.60	0.13	0.60	<b>0.598</b>
<b>OrgC.</b>	<b>0.67</b>	0.00	0.18	0.28	0.20	0.27	<b>0.739</b>



**Figure 1:** Structural equation model authentic leadership, psychological capital and sub dimension of organizational commitment (Emotional commitment, ongoing commitment and normative commitment).



**Figure 2:** Structural equation model authentic leadership, psychological capital and main dimension of organizational commitment.

### V. Discussion

We recall that, our study analyzes the mediating role of positive psychological capital in the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational commitment. Testing our hypotheses accordingly, this has been done with a reliable and validated statistical analysis of data obtained from the case of Al-Azhar University Gaza, using the techniques mentioned above. Our structure equation model supports H1, indicating that authentic leadership has influence on organizational commitment, which is consistent with Tuttle (2009) who provides an empirical investigation of authentic leadership relating to the employee's behaviors. Choi et al. (2016) studied authentic leadership based on its impact on the organization's commitment, focusing on the mediating effects of Empowerment. However, considering different degrees of organizational commitment that influenced by this dimensions. We found the authentic leadership has greater direct impact on emotional commitment (B= 00.71), ongoing commitment (B= 00.54), and normative commitment (B= 00.66). Also, the impact of authentic leadership on psychological capital found to be positive in which consisted with prior

research (e.g. Rego et al. 2012; Zubair et al. 2015). Regarding the role of psychological capital in which we consider H3 as a single term, while in H3 as a mediator term, we reject this two hypothesis as it has an insignificant impact on organizational commitment. We reveal that different degrees of organizational commitment are influenced by this dimension. We found the psychological capital positive but insignificant impact on organizational commitments, emotional commitment (B= 00.20), ongoing commitment (B= 00.25), and normative commitment (B= 00.15). These findings are consistent with previous studies, where they found significant and positive relationship e.g. Etebarian et al. (2012) revealed significant positive impact on several areas of organizational commitment. Also, Bharat Chandra et al. (2015) and Mehdi et al. (2016) found that psychological capital is the greatest predictor for organizational commitment. We refer this finding to the special context in which we consider the context on the country level where we have special social, economic, political environments; as well as the context on the firm's level, where we consider higher education institutions and academics, which forms our research sample. These variables lead to a special context in which we reveal different results from the prior studies.

## VI. Future Studies

Findings of our research present a number of opportunities for future research. This study is suggesting a new context, considering different industries in similar cultural and socio-economic contexts, and comparing the results with those obtained in this study. Considering different variables as sub diminutions of authentic leadership and psychological capital, as both diminution is vital in organizational research, as suggested by Walumbwa et al. (2008) in their studies, i.e. that both variables are important in an organizational context. And so we suggest for future studies the context target of non-profit organizations, such as governmental sectors and NGOs, as well as the manufacturing sectors too. We expect different organizational commitments from their employees as the purpose of the exiting of their organizations is different.

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**Appendix A.**

**Measurement items and Standardized factor Loading.**

<b>Authentic Leadership</b>	<b>Loading</b>
I can count my strengths and weaknesses.	<b>0.844</b>
My work reflects my core values.	<b>0.825</b>
I always ask the opinion of others before making my decision.	<b>0.692</b>
Open up and share my feelings with others with confidence.	<b>0.854</b>
Do not allow pressure of working groups to control.	<b>0.782</b>
I listen carefully to the thoughts of those who disagree with me.	<b>0.833</b>
I allow others to know who I am.	<b>0.836</b>
I take care of reactions as a way to assess myself.	<b>0.787</b>
Other people know where I stand from all the controversial issues.	<b>0.608</b>
I do not hold my point of view at the expense of others.	<b>0.709</b>
He has rarely been shown "false" in front of others.	<b>0.597</b>
I am satisfied with myself as I am.	<b>0.805</b>
My moral orientation to what I do.	<b>0.894</b>
I care to listen carefully to the thoughts of others before making decisions.	<b>0.861</b>
I admit my mistakes to others.	<b>0.792</b>
<b>Psychological Capital (PSC)</b>	
I have the ability to perform my work according to the requirements of the university administration.	<b>0.897</b>
I have the ability to contribute to the discussion of my university plan.	<b>0.852</b>
I can contribute useful information to coworkers.	<b>0.879</b>
If I find myself in trouble while working, I can think of many ways out of it.	<b>0.858</b>
I see myself as being very successful in my work at the moment.	<b>0.818</b>
I can think of many ways to reach current business goals.	<b>0.883</b>
I can achieve the goals I have set for myself.	<b>0.916</b>
I can only work if necessary.	<b>0.818</b>
Overcome stressful work in one step.	<b>0.714</b>
I have experience in solving work problems.	<b>0.859</b>
Always look at the bright side of things related to my work.	<b>0.896</b>
Optimistic towards my future career.	<b>0.701</b>
<b>Organizational commitment</b>	
<b>Emotional commitment</b>	
I would be very happy to spend the rest of my life with this university.	<b>0.939</b>
I enjoy discussing with people outside of work around my university.	<b>0.930</b>
I really feel that the problems of this university are my problems.	<b>0.941</b>
This university has a great deal for me.	<b>0.928</b>
<b>Ongoing commitment</b>	

*Authentic Leadership and Organizational Commitment: The Mediating Role of Positive Psychological*

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It is very hard for me to leave my university.	<b>0.929</b>
A lot in my life will hang if I leave my university.	<b>0.954</b>
Staying with my university is currently a necessary issue.	<b>0.921</b>
I feel a few options when thinking about leaving this university.	<b>0.878</b>
<b>Normative commitment</b>	
<hr/>	
I believe in the loyal loyalty of my university.	<b>0.955</b>
I feel a sense of moral obligation in this university.	<b>0.948</b>
I would feel uncomfortable if I got a better job elsewhere and left my job.	<b>0.849</b>
It is recommended that employees spend most of their lives in one university.	<b>0.843</b>

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