The Role of Authentic Leadership on Enhancing Organizational Trust:
An Analytical Study of the Opinion of Academic Staff in Colleges and Institutes in Soran Independent Administration in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq

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ABSTRACT: The focus of this study was to investigate the role of authentic leadership on enhancing organizational trust in college and institutes in Soran independent administration in KRI. The main objective of this research is to investigate the role of authentic leadership and its dimensions on enhancing organizational trust. A Descriptive method using quantitative technique (questionnaires) was employed to collect data from 183 academic staffs from 13 college and institutes in Soran independent administration in KRI. The study's findings highlight the crucial role of authentic leadership in fostering and cultivating organizational trust among academic staff. The results also confirmed that there is a significant correlation between authentic leadership and its dimensions (relational transparency, internal moral perspective, self-awareness, balance processing, and social-awareness), and organizational trust as a whole, furthermore the research shows that the impact of authentic leadership and its dimensions on organizational trust among academic staff statistically is significant, and balance processing has the greatest influence to make the academic staff to feel trust in their college and institutes. Finally, it is advisable to pursue qualitative method in the future, broadening the focus to include different groups such as employees in colleges and institutes. This approach will yield more comprehensive research findings and provide detailed insights.

Keywords: Authentic Leadership, Organizational Trust, Colleges and Institutes, Soran independent Administration

1 INTRODUCTION

In today's rapidly changing environment, leadership is increasingly complex due to evolving stressors, technologies, and market demands. This complexity calls for a renewed focus on authentic leadership, which emphasizes confidence, resilience, and connection. Authentic leadership, characterized by self-awareness, transparency, moral perspective, and balanced processing, has gained significant attention as a leadership style that fosters sincerity, openness, and trust within organizations. The concept of authentic leadership has emerged as a vital area of focus in contemporary leadership studies, particularly due to its significant impact on building organizational trust. In organizational behavior and leadership research, the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational trust is crucial, as trust significantly

influences employee attitudes, behaviors, and overall performance. When employees trust their leaders, they are more committed, collaborative, and aligned with organizational goals.

This paper explores the key components of authentic leadership—self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and moral reasoning—and their role in building and sustaining organizational trust. By understanding these elements, leaders can enhance their effectiveness, cultivate a trust-based culture, and drive organizational success.

Organizational trust instills confidence in employees regarding their manager's or supervisor's competence and qualifications, positively influencing their work experience and motivating behaviors that benefit the organization. It is a key predictor of crucial organizational outcomes, including job satisfaction, engagement, task and contextual performance, organizational commitment, and employee loyalty. A healthy working environment prioritizes trust among organizational members, as it is fundamental to fostering a positive organizational culture [1]. Although the concept of organizational trust is well-established in management, it has gained renewed attention in recent studies, particularly in organizational behavior [2]. Organizational trust ensures that individuals treat each other with dignity and respect, regardless of their imperfections [3].

1.1 RESEARCH PROBLEM

In organizations, a key challenge is the lack of trust between leaders and employees, as well as among employees, and towards the organization as a whole. This underscores the critical need for authentic leadership to effectively foster and maintain trust across all these dimensions within colleges and institutes in the Soran Independent Administration. Cevat and Ozge [4] highlighted that in educational institutions, where human interaction and values are central, organizational commitment, trust among colleagues and management, and perceived organizational support are crucial for achieving educational objectives. Understanding what teachers are committed to, the level of their commitment, and the influence of perceived organizational trust and support remains a significant issue.

Similarly, Akhunov et al., [5] discussed the challenges of downsizing, emphasizing that decisions made by upper management can affect both managers and employees, often leading to job losses for employees who are not responsible for the issues. This situation highlights the significant role that Authentic Leadership can play in building and fostering trust across all relationships within an organization. Authentic Leadership practices are essential for cultivating a trusting environment, thereby enhancing overall organizational cohesion and effectiveness.

This research aims to investigate the role of Authentic Leadership in fostering organizational trust within colleges and institutes in the Soran Independent Administration. It is an analytical study based on a sample of academic staff members from these institutions in the Kurdistan Region. The study addresses the following questions:

The main research questions that this study intends to investigate are:

1. Are authentic leadership and its dimensions significantly correlated with organizational trust among academic staff?

2. Does authentic leadership and its dimensions have a significant impact on the organization trust?

3. Do academic staff working in colleges and institutes in the Soran independent administration of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq have trust in their organizations?

1.2 IMPORTANT OF THE STUDY

The importance of this research lies in its ability to help colleges and institutes determine whether their academic staff perceive them as trustworthy. Additionally, the research holds significance for the following reasons:

1. This research holds particular scientific importance as it explores the impact of authentic leadership and its dimensions in cultivating trust among academic staff.

2. The study contributes to empirical research on organizational trust, aiding leaders in colleges and institutes to better understand how they can promote and enhance trust among their staff.

3. It examines the extent to which colleges and institutes have succeeded in fostering trust among their staff.

4. It clarifies the role of authentic leadership dimensions in instilling trust among academic staff.

1.3 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

This study aims to identify the impact of authentic leadership on organizational trust in in the college and institutes in Soran independent administration in KRI. The objectives of this study include:

We have a number of objectives to do this research:

1. Investigate the correlation between authentic leadership, its dimensions, with organizational trust among academic staff.

2. Examine the impact of authentic leadership and its dimensions on the organizational trust.

3. Assess the level of trust among academic staff in colleges and institutes within the Soran independent administration of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq.
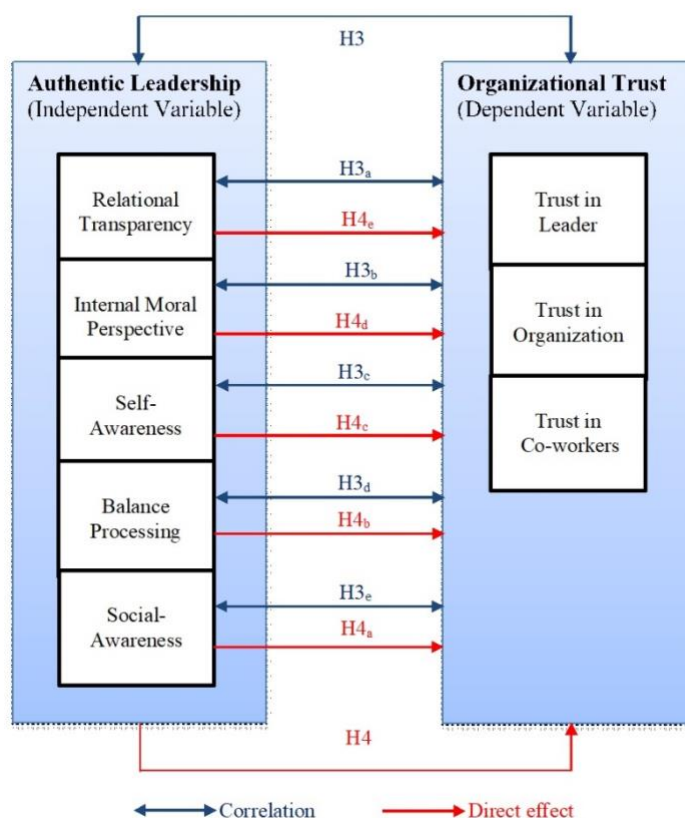
1.4 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

FIGURE 1. Conceptual Framework developed by Researchers

1.5 RESEARCH HYPOTHESES

The following are the hypotheses of this research:

Hypothesis One: *Authentic leadership is statistically significantly correlated to organizational trust in college and institutes in Soran independent administration in the Kurdistan region of Iraq at a significance level of (0.05).*

Hypothesis 1ₐ: *There is a statistically significant correlation between relational transparency and organizational trust at a significance level of (0.05).*

Hypothesis 1_b: *There is a statistically significant correlation between internal moral perspective and organizational trust at a significance level of (0.05).*

Hypothesis 1_c: *There is a statistically significant correlation between self-awareness and organizational trust at a significance level of (0.05).*

Hypothesis 1_d: *There is a statistically significant correlation between balance processing and organizational trust at a significance level of (0.05).*

Hypothesis 1_e: *There is a statistically significant correlation between social-awareness and organizational trust at a significance level of (0.05).*

Hypothesis Two: *Authentic leadership has a statistically significant impact on organizational trust in college and institutes in Soran independent administration in the Kurdistan region of Iraq at a significance level of (0.05).*

Hypothesis 2_a: *Relational transparency has a statistically significant impact on organizational trust at a significance level of (0.05).*

Hypothesis 2_b: *Internal moral perspective has a statistically significant impact on organizational trust at a significance level of (0.05).*

Hypothesis 2_c: *Self-awareness has a statistically significant impact on organizational trust at a significance level of (0.05).*

Hypothesis 2_d: *Balance processing has a statistically significant impact on organizational trust at a significance level of (0.05).*

Hypothesis 2_e: *Self-awareness has a statistically significant impact on organizational trust at a significance level of (0.05).*

Hypothesis Three: *Academic staff working in colleges and institutes in the Soran Independent Administration of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq exhibit a statistically significant level of trust in their organizations.*

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

The study examines authentic leadership, characterized by genuine, transparent, and ethically grounded behaviour. Key traits include self-awareness, transparent communication, ethical decision-making, and social awareness. Authentic leadership builds trust, enhances employee well-being, and drives positive organizational outcomes. Rooted in positive psychology, it emphasizes self-awareness and fostering open, trusting relationships, often shaped by interventions like training [6]. Despite some debate on defining authentic leadership, it is recognized for promoting positive psychological capacities and an ethical climate, leading to greater self-awareness and relational transparency in leaders [7]. Authentic leadership, considered a high level of leadership, prioritizes others' well-being and motivates employees to perform at their best. Authentic leaders are aware of their own and others' values and strengths, and they foster a positive, self-regulating organizational environment [8] [9].

2.1.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP:

According to Luthans and Youssef (2004) [10], while authentic leadership is important, it is not sufficient on its own to achieve desired outcomes. Their model illustrates that there is a process linking authentic leadership to followers' attitudes and behaviors. This process not only demonstrates how such leaders influence their followers but also shows how independent variables like hope, trust, positive emotions, and optimism can be enhanced. Followers learn from authentic leaders by observing the importance these leaders place on certain interactions, contributing to their own development. For example, authentic leaders' confidence, hope, and optimism are rooted in their strong belief in their positive psychological capital [7]. Authentic leaders are expected to have deep self-awareness and trust in their own thoughts, feelings, motives, and values, which allows them to maintain a balanced understanding of their strengths and weaknesses [11]. Gardner et al., [12] further emphasize that authentic leaders must act consistently with their core values, rather than being influenced by external pressures to please others.

2.1.2 THE DIMENSIONS OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP:

According to [7] [13] [14] (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Walumbwa *et al.* 2008; Walumbwa *et al.* 2010) The dimensions of authentic leadership involve (Relational Transparency, Internalized Morale, Self-awareness, Balance Processing), However, we have used the (Social Awareness) dimension for the Authentic Leadership variable for the first time.:

2.1.2.1 RELATIONAL TRANSPARENCY:

Transparency involves a leader's authentic representation of themselves, including their thoughts, feelings, and intentions, which fosters closeness, builds trust, and encourages employees to act similarly [15]. It entails personal disclosures, such as openly sharing information and expressing genuine thoughts and feelings with followers and relevant others [14] (Walumbwa et al., 2010). Relational transparency, in turn, helps establish positive workplace relationships, ultimately leading to improved well-being.

2.1.2.2 INTERNAL MORAL PERSPECTIVE:

Internalized moral perspective is grounded in personal moral values and principles rather than external influences [12]. This self-regulatory process involves leaders using their internal moral standards to guide their behavior, rather than succumbing to external pressures [16]. Individuals with an internalized moral perspective act in alignment with their expressed beliefs and morals, reflecting the concept of virtue ethics as described by Aristotle [17] and Cronin [18].

2.1.2.3 SELF-AWARENESS:

A leader's self-awareness is fundamental to developing authentic leadership. It involves the continuous revelation of their knowledge, abilities, experiences, core values, beliefs, and desires [13]. Self-aware leaders understand how followers perceive their leadership and are conscious of their own motives. They enhance their authenticity and effectiveness by integrating self-knowledge with their reflected self-image [14] (Walumbwa et al., 2010). Authentic leaders influence followers' self-awareness of values and moral perspectives through personal example and commitment rather than through inspirational appeals or impression management [7] [14]. Self-awareness and fairness, as dimensions of authentic leadership, contribute to improved workplace well-being and a sense of purpose [19].

2.1.2.4 BALANCE PROCESSING:

Balanced processing of information is central to personal integrity and significantly impacts decision-making and strategic actions [20]. It involves objectively analyzing all relevant information before making a decision [14] (Walumbwa et al., 2010). For authentic leaders, this dimension fosters personal growth by ensuring decisions are made based on a comprehensive and unbiased evaluation of information.

2.1.2.5 SOCIAL AWARENESS:

Social awareness is the ability to build and manage relationships and find common ground for lasting connections [21]. It is a key component of emotional intelligence and essential for effective leadership [22]. Strong social awareness helps achieve organizational goals and excel in dynamic environments [23]. Leaders must engage in self-development, such as reflecting on leadership experiences and using feedback, to enhance their social awareness [24]. This competency involves ethical behavior and mindful decision-making, reflecting a leader's character, values, and commitment to ethical practices [25].

2.2 ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST:

Organizational trust encompasses both trust in individuals and trust in the organization as a whole [26]. In an organizational context, trust can be directed towards specific people (personal trust) or the organization and its systems (impersonal trust) [27] [28] (Korsgaard et al., 2008; Maguire and Phillips, 2008). Historically, research has focused on interpersonal trust, particularly trust in managers, while trust between co-workers has received less attention [29] [30] [31]. Recently, there has been a shift towards understanding organizational-level trust [32]. Organizational trust is defined as the positive expectations individuals have about the intentions and behaviors of organizational members based on roles, relationships, and experiences [26]. It involves the belief that colleagues, managers, and stakeholders will act in a way that avoids harm [33]. It reflects mutual trust within the organization and the expectation that individuals and groups will act in good faith to uphold their commitments [34] [35] [36] [37].

2.2.1 THE IMPORTANCE OF ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST:

Tüzün (2007) [38] demonstrated that organizations with high levels of organizational trust tend to have more harmonious structures, stronger strategic alliances, better team formation, and more effective crisis management. Several studies [39], [40], [41], and [42], have emphasized that organizational trust is crucial during periods of disruption. It helps members navigate and respond constructively to challenges, thereby enhancing organizational agility and resilience. Huff and Kelley [43] further highlighted that organizational trust contributes significantly to the development of collaborative behavior, effective performance appraisal, goal-setting, and leadership. It also fosters team cohesion, strengthens organizational commitment, and boosts employee satisfaction.

2.2.2 THE DIMENSIONS OF ORGANIZATIONAL TRUST:

According to Altuntas and Baykal [44] the dimensions of organizational trust include trust in leader, trust in organization, and trust in co-workers):

2.2.2.1 TRUST IN LEADER:

Whitener et al., [45] suggested that leaders should be proactive in initiating trust-building processes, making this a key challenge and responsibility for management. Laboratory and field experiments by Korsgaard et al., [46] and Lind [47] have shown that trustworthy behavior positively influences trust in leaders. According to McAllister [48], interpersonal trust between leaders and subordinates can improve coordination and reduce administrative costs. Fulk et al., [49] emphasized that trust is a crucial element in the relationship between employees and leaders, impacting employees' perceptions of fairness in performance evaluations. Additionally, Whitener et al., [45] note that leaders are encouraged to test their employees as a strategy for establishing and nurturing trust.

2.2.2.2 TRUST IN ORGANIZATION:

Gilbert and Tang [50] defined organizational trust as an employee's sense of support and confidence in their employer, coupled with the belief that the organization has their best interests at heart. Cummings and Bromiley [51] argued that

when employees trust their organization, they are more likely to invest energy and effort towards achieving organizational goals. Devos et al., [52] described organizational trust as having confidence in the institution's reliability, adherence to rules, effectiveness, and commitment to the general interest. Tan and Lim [31] characterized trust in organizations as an employee's willingness to be vulnerable to actions of the organization that they cannot control.

2.2.2.3 TRUST IN CO-WORKERS:

Tan and Lim [31] defines trust in co-workers as the willingness to be vulnerable to their actions, which are beyond one's control. Kiffin-Petersen and Cordery [53] suggested that trust in co-workers partially mediates the relationship between an individual's propensity to trust strangers and their preference for teamwork. Ferres et al., [30] find that trust in co-workers is associated with higher perceived organizational support, reduced turnover intentions, and increased affective commitment.

3 METHODOLOGY

3.1. RESEARCH METHOD AND TARGET POPULATION:

This research adopts a quantitative method for data collection and analysis, focusing on determining the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational trust, as well as evaluating the impact of authentic leadership on organizational trust. The target population consists of academic staff from colleges and institutes within the Soran independent administration, covering the areas of Soran, Rawandoz, Choman, and Mergasur. A total of 325 academic staff members were surveyed using distributed questionnaires to ensure a representative sample for the study.

3.2 DATA COLLECTION AND SAMPLE SELECTION

Questionnaires are essential tools for collecting primary data in practical research, providing researchers with control over sample selection and question types [54]. In this study, primary data were gathered using a questionnaire, with a comprehensive sampling technique. The questionnaire targeted 325 academic staff members from colleges and institutes within the Soran independent administration, with 183 staff members ultimately participating to explore the impact of authentic leadership on organizational trust. The questionnaires were administered in both English and Kurdish to ensure clarity and accessibility, given that these are the official languages used in most university departments. To determine the required sample size, the following formula was applied, assuming a 95% confidence level and P = 0.05:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{325}{1 + 325(0.05)^2}$$

$$n = \frac{325}{1 + 0.8125}$$

$$n = 179.31$$

Table .1 shows the distribution of participants according to their name of colleges/ Institutes out of a total of 183 people, the highest number of respondents is in Soran technical college with 25 (13.7), and the lowest is in Choman technical institute with 5 (2.7). Because the number of academic staff of Choman technical institute is small, they participated the least, but as it is obvious, the academics staff of Soran technical college participated eagerly because the number of participants was high.

3.3 DATA ANALYSIS TOOLS AND MEASUREMENTS:

The data was analyzed using a range of statistical techniques. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26.0 was employed to conduct descriptive statistics, frequency analysis, and reliability assessment. Additionally, the correlation coefficient was calculated to determine the strength of the linear relationship between the variables of authentic leadership and organizational trust. Multiple linear regression was utilized for the analysis of statistical data and hypothesis testing.

Table 1. Distribution according Participants Colleges and Institutes

Colleges/ Institutes		
Name of Colleges and Institutions	**Frequency**	**Percent**
Faculty of Law, Political Sciences & Management	23	12.6
Faculty of Art	23	12.6
Faculty of Science	23	12.6
Faculty of Engineering	7	3.8
Faculty of Education	11	6
Soran Computer Institute	17	9.3
Soran Technical College	25	13.7
Rawanduz Private Technical Institute	9	4.5
Data Institute for Computer Sciences	10	5.5
Choman Technical Institute	5	2.7
Mergasur Technical Institute	10	5.5
Zagros Institute	12	6.6
Scientific Research Centre of Soran Ubiversity	8	4.4
Total	183	100.0

Source: by the researcher from the results of the program (SPSS-26)

4 RESULTS

4.1 SOCIO-DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS OF RESPONDENTS:

Table .2 presents the distribution of participants based on gender, age, education level, and years of service among a total of 183 individuals. In terms of the participants, 123 (67.2%) are male, and 60 (32.8%) are female, reflecting a higher graduation rate of males from colleges and institutes in the Soran independent administration. This gender disparity is further influenced by cultural norms that afford men greater freedom to work in various sectors, including government offices, institutions, and private organizations. Regarding age, the majority of participants are between 31-40 years old (92 participants, 50.3%), while the smallest group is over 50 years old (10 participants, 5.5%). This distribution suggests that the academic staff in the Soran independent administration are predominantly young, benefiting from increased opportunities and a strong desire to continue their education. In terms of educational background, the majority of participants hold a master's degree (125 participants, 68.3%), with only a small fraction having a bachelor's degree (11 participants, 6.0%). This trend indicates that individuals with master's degrees are more likely to become academic staff due to their younger age and greater numbers. Finally, the distribution of years of service shows that most participants have 11-15 years of experience (61 participants, 33.3%), while those with over 20 years of service represent the smallest group (15 participants, 8.2%). This pattern is likely due to the younger demographic of academic staff with master's degrees, as those with longer service tend to retire or are replaced by newer members.

Table 2. **Respondent Profile**

Sex		
Group	Frequency	Percent
Male	123	67.2
Female	60	32.8
Total	183	100.0
Age (years)		
20-30	42	23
31-40	92	50
41-50	39	21.3
Above 50	10	5.5
Total	183	100.0
Educational Level		
Bachelor's	11	60
High Diploma	14	7.7
Master	125	68.3
PhD	33	18
Total	183	100
Years of Academic service		
1-5	47	25.7
6-10	32	17.5
11-15	61	33.3
16-20	28	15.3
Above 20	15	8.2
Total	183	100

Source: by the researcher from the results of the program (SPSS-26)

4.2 TESTING THE HYPOTHESES OF THE CORRELATIONS BETWEEN THE VARIABLES OF THE STUDY:

Table three will discuss the results of testing and analyzing the correlation relationships between the variables of the study and their relevant hypotheses. The hypotheses specified in the main hypotheses and the sub-hypotheses originating from them will be tested successively as outlined in the study methodology.

Table 3. **Respondent Profile Correlation between Authentic Leadership, its Dimensions and Organizational Trust**

The Correlation Coefficient	Authentic Leadership	Relational Transparency	Internal Moral Perspective	Self-awareness	Balance Processing	Social-awareness
Organizational Trust	0.6677**	0.675**	0.546**	0.728*	0.784**	0.682**
Sig. (2tailed)	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.000

Source: by the researcher from the results of the program (SPSS-26)

a) Table .3 displays the outcomes of a correlation analysis examining authentic leadership and organizational trust. The analysis uncovers a robust positive correlation (R = 0.677) between these variables. This suggests that higher levels of authentic leadership correspond to increased organizational trust. The statistical significance of this link is affirmed by a p-value (Sig.) of 0.000. Consequently, the first hypothesis, asserting *"Authentic leadership is statistically significantly correlated to organizational trust in college and institutes in Soran independent administration in the Kurdistan region of Iraq at a significance level of (0.05)",* can be accepted at a significance level of 0.05.

b) The results reveal a robust positive correlation (r = 0.675**) between relational transparency and organizational trust, emphasizing the statistical significance with a p-value (Sig.) of 0.000. Hypothesis 1_a, *"There is a statistically significant correlation between relational transparency and organizational trust at a significance level of (0.05)".* is confidently accepted.

c) Findings demonstrate a strong positive correlation (r = 0.546**) between internal moral perspective and organizational trust, supported by a significant p-value (Sig.) of 0.000. Hypothesis1_b *"There is a statistically significant correlation between internal moral perspective and organizational trust at a significance level of (0.05)".* is strongly supported, suggesting that leaders with strong moral values positively influence employees' trust in the organization.

d) The results show a compelling positive correlation (r = 0.782**) between self-awareness and organizational trust, supported by a significant p-value (Sig.) of 0.000. Hypothesis1_c *"There is a statistically significant correlation between self-awareness and organizational trust at a significance level of (0.05)."* is firmly supported, highlighting the importance of leaders' self-awareness in fostering trust among staff.

e) The findings indicate a notable positive correlation (r = 0.784**) between balanced processing and organizational trust, with a significant p-value (Sig.) of 0.000. Hypothesis1_d *"There is a statistically significant correlation between balance processing and organizational trust at a significance level of (0.05)."* is confidently accepted, indicating a strong relationship between balanced decision-making and organizational trust.

f) Lastly, social-awareness exhibits a notable positive correlation (r = 0.682**), confirmed by a significant p-value (Sig.) of 0.000. Hypothesis1_e *"There is a statistically significant correlation between social-awareness and organizational trust at a significance level of (0.05)."* is confidently accepted, signifying a strong relationship between social-awareness and organizational trust.

In conclusion, authentic leadership, characterized by relational transparency, internal moral perspective, self-awareness, balanced processing, and social-awareness, significantly contributes to enhancing trust among academic staff.

4.3 TESTING THE REGRESSION HYPOTHESES BETWEEN THE VARIABLES OF THE STUDY:

In this section, the effect of authentic leadership and its dimensions namely (relational transparency, internal moral perspective, self-awareness, balanced processing, and social awareness) on organizational trust will be discussed. Linear regression model is formed to represent and analyze this relationship.

Table 4. **Testing the Effect Hypothesis Between the Independent Variable (Authentic Leadership) and its Dimensions in Relation to Dependent Variable (Organizational Trust)**

	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	R Square	T	Sig.
Variables	B	Std Error	Beta			
Authentic Leadership	0.575	0.046	0.677	0.458	12.376	0.000
Relational Transparency	0.553	0.045	0.675	0.456	12.307	0.000
Internal Moral Perspective	0.542	0.062	0.546	0.298	8.870	0.000
Self-Awareness	0.618	0.043	0.728	0.530	14.288	0.000
Balance Processing	0.607	0.036	0.784	0.614	16.974	0.000
Social-Awareness	0.593	0.047	0.682	0.466	12.563	0.000
Dependent Variable: Organizational Trust						

Source: by the researcher from the results of the program (SPSS-26)

a) The Second Main Hypotheses

The results in the Table. 4 reveal that authentic leadership have a significant and positive impact on organizational trust. For each unit increase in authentic leadership, there is an estimated increase of 0.575 units in organizational trust (B = 0.575). A one standard deviation increase in authentic leadership is associated with a 0.677 standard deviation increase in organizational trust (Beta = 0.677). Approximately 45.8% of the variance in organizational trust can be explained by variations in Authentic Leadership (R Square = 0.458). The coefficient for authentic leadership is statistically significant, with a t-value of 12.376. The p-value (Sig.) is 0.000, indicating a strong statistical significance. The results suggest that organizations and leaders who prioritize and demonstrate authentic leadership behaviors can significantly enhance organizational trust. Therefore, the second hypothesis, which states, *"Authentic leadership has a statistically significant impact on organizational trust in college and institutes in Soran independent administration in the Kurdistan region of Iraq at a significance level of (0.05)."* can be accepted. These results closely correspond with those of [55][56], highlighting the direct influence of authentic leadership on organizational trust.

b) The First Sub-hypothesis of the Second Main Hypotheses

Based on the results in the table (4), any increase in relational transparency is associated with a positive impact on organizational trust. For each unit increase in relational transparency, there is an estimated increase of 0.553 units in workplace spirituality (B = 0.553). A one standard deviation increase in relational transparency corresponds to a 0.679 standard deviation increase in organizational trust (Beta = 0.675). Approximately 45.6% of the variance in organizational trust can be explained by variations in relational transparency (R Square = 0.456). The coefficient for relational transparency is statistically significant, with a t-value of 12.307. The p-value (Sig.) is 0.000, indicating a strong statistical significance. The findings suggest that leaders who foster transparent relationships can significantly enhance organizational trust. Relational transparency is a meaningful predictor of organizational trust. Hence, hypothesis 2_a, which posits that *"Relational transparency has a statistically significant impact on organizational trust at a significance level of (0.05)."*, can be affirmed.

c) The Second Sub-hypothesis among the Second Main Hypotheses

In accordance with the findings presented in table (4), internal moral perspective (IMP) exhibits a significant and positive impact on organizational trust. The unstandardized coefficient (B) for IMP is 0.542, signifying that each one-unit increase in IMP corresponds to a 0.542-unit increase in organizational trust. Furthermore, the standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.546 indicates that a one standard deviation increase in IMP is associated with a 0.546 standard deviation increase in organizational trust. The R square value of 0.298 reveals that approximately 29.8% of the variance in organizational trust

can be accounted for by variations in IMP. The t-value of 8.870 underscores the statistical significance of the IMP coefficient. A higher t-value reflects increased confidence in the relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable. The associated p-value (Sig.) of 0.000, falling below the conventional threshold of 0.05, confirms the statistical significance of the relationship between IMP and organizational trust. These findings suggest that leaders with a strong internal moral compass have a positive influence on workplace spirituality. Consequently, based on these results, hypothesis 2_b, can be accepted as it strongly implies that *" Internal moral perspective has a statistically significant impact on organizational trust at a significance level of (0.05)."*

d) The Third Sub-hypothesis among the Second Main Hypotheses

In line with the findings presented in Table (4), it is evident that self-awareness significantly impacts workplace spirituality. The unstandardized coefficient (B) of 0.618 reveals that a one-unit increase in self-awareness corresponds to a 0.681-unit increase in organizational trust. Moreover, the standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.728 indicates that a one standard deviation increase in self-awareness leads to a 0.728 standard deviation increase in organizational trust. The R square value of 0.530 suggests that 53 % of the variability in organizational trust can be explained by variations in self-awareness. The t-value of 14.288 signifies the statistical significance of the coefficient for self-awareness, indicating a strong relationship between the variables. These findings suggest that leaders with a strong self-awareness compass have a positive influence on organizational trust. Additionally, the associated p-value (Sig.) of 0.000, below the conventional threshold of 0.05, confirms the statistical significance of the relationship between self-awareness and organizational trust. The results firmly suggest that

" Self-awareness has a statistically significant impact on organizational trust at a significance level of (0.05)." So, hypothesis 2_c can be affirmed.

e) The Fourth Sub-hypothesis among the Second Main Hypotheses

the results of the Table 4. reveals a significant impact of balance processing on workplace spirituality. The unstandardized coefficient (B) of 0.607 indicates that a one-unit increase in balance processing is associated with a 0.607-unit increase in organizational trust. Similarly, the standardized coefficient (Beta) of 0.784 suggests that a one standard deviation increase in balance processing corresponds to a 0.784 standard deviation increase in organizational trust. The R square value of 0.614 indicates that approximately 61.4% of the variability in organizational trust can be explained by variations in balance processing. This indicates that balance processing is a meaningful predictor of organizational trust. Furthermore, the t-value of 16.974 reflects the statistical significance of the coefficient for balance processing, signifying a strong relationship between the variables. The associated p-value (Sig.) of 0.000, which falls below the conventional threshold of 0.05, confirms the statistical significance of the relationship between balance processing and organizational trust. In summary, these findings suggest that balance processing plays a crucial role in influencing organizational trust. The results provide compelling evidence that *"Balance processing has a statistically significant impact on organizational trust at a significance level of (0.05)."* Consequently, hypothesis 2_d can be accepted.

f) The fifth Sub-hypothesis of the Second Main Hypotheses

The results in the Table 4. reveal that social-awareness has a significant and positive impact on organizational trust. For each unit increase in social-awareness, there is an estimated increase of 0.593 units in organizational trust (B = 0.593). A one standard deviation increases in social-awareness is associated with a 0.682 standard deviation increase in organizational trust (Beta = 0.682). Approximately 46.6% of the variance in organizational trust can be explained by variations in social-awareness (R Square = 0.466). The coefficient for social-awareness is statistically significant, with a t-value of 12.563. The p-value (Sig.) is 0.000, indicating a strong statistical significance. The results suggest that organizations and leaders who prioritize and demonstrate social-awareness behaviors can significantly enhance organizational trust. Therefore, Hypothesis 2_e, which states, *"Social-awareness has a statistically significant impact on organizational trust in college and institutes in Soran independent administration in the Kurdistan region of Iraq at a significance level of (0.05)."*, can be accepted.

4.4 TESTING THE HYPOTHESIS OF THE LEVEL OF ACADEMIC STAFF'S TRUST IN THEIR ORGANIZATIONS

Table 5. reveals the conclusive outcomes associated with different dimensions of organizational trust. This encompasses the weighted arithmetic mean, response rate, importance order, and the arrangement of dimensions. These metrics collectively facilitate the understanding of the degree of agreement and uniformity within the responses provided by a selected sample of respondents.

Table 5. The Level of Academic Staff's Trust in Their Organization

Questions	Strongly disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly agree	Weighted Arithmetic Mean	Response rate (%)	Impotence Order
	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)	N (%)			
Y1	17 (9.3)	27 (14.8)	39 (21.3)	66 (36.1)	34 (18.6)	3.40	67.98	1
Y2	12 (6.6%)	30 (16.4)	46 (25.1)	68 (37.2)	27 (14.8)	3.37	67.43	2
Y3	19 (10.4)	42 (23)	39 (21.3)	53 (29)	30 (16.4)	3.18	63.61	3
TiL	**16 (8.77)**	**33 (18.07)**	**41.33 (22.57)**	**62.33 (34.1)**	**30.33 (16.6)**	**3.32**	**66.34**	**3rd**
Y4	14 (7.7)	26 (14.2)	48 (26.2)	58 (31.7)	37 (20.2)	3.43	68.52	1
Y5	8 (4.4)	47 (25.7)	47 (25.7)	60 (32.8)	21 (11.5)	3.21	64.26	3
Y6	11 (6.0)	35 (19.1)	43 (23.5)	61 (33.3)	33 (18)	3.38	67.65	2
TiO	**11 (6.03)**	**36 (19.67)**	**46 (25.13)**	**59.67 (32.6)**	**30.33 (16.57)**	**3.34**	**66.81**	**2nd**
Y7	5 (2.7)	20 (10.9)	38 (20.8)	77 (42.1)	43 (23.5)	3.73	74.54	1
Y8	7 (3.8)	19 (10.4)	35 (19.1)	86 (47)	36 (19.7)	3.68	73.66	2
Y9	8 (4.4)	18 (9.8)	42 (23)	73 (39.9)	42 (23)	3.67	73.44	3
TiCo	**6.67 (3.63)**	**19 (10.37)**	**38.33 (20.97)**	**78.67 (43)**	**40.33 (22.07)**	**3.69**	**73.88**	**1st**
OT	**11.22 (6.14)**	**29.33 (16.04)**	**41.89 (22.89)**	**66.89 (36.57)**	**33.66 (18.41)**	**3.45**	**69.01**	**1**

Source: by the researcher from the results of the program (SPSS-26)

The findings in Table 5. indicate a strong level of organizational trust among academic staff, with trust in co-workers ranking highest (M = 3.69, 74.54%), followed by trust in the organization (M = 3.34, 66.81%) and trust in leaders (M = 3.32, 66.34%). The highest-rated items highlight the honesty of administration, the organization's reliable actions, and colleagues' willingness to share job-related information, while the lowest-rated items reflect concerns about equal rule application, personal needs prioritization, and emotional support from co-workers. The overall arithmetic mean for organizational trust is 3.45, with a response rate of 69.01%, confirming the acceptance of the third hypothesis, which asserts that *"Academic staff working in colleges and institutes in the Soran Independent Administration of the Kurdistan Region of Iraq exhibit a statistically significant level of trust in their organizations.,"*

5 DISCUSSION

This finding aligns with the research of [56], which emphasizes the significant relationship between authentic leadership and employee trust. Similarly, the results are consistent with the findings of [57], who state that authentic leadership has a significant positive effect on trust in leaders. [55] further supports this by revealing that the authentic leadership of deans and directors significantly and positively influences organizational trust. Moreover, the findings show cohesion with the research of [58], which demonstrates that authentic leadership enhances organizational trust by strengthening both horizontal trust (trust among colleagues at the same hierarchical level) and vertical trust (trust between employees and their higher authorities). Additionally, their study highlights that authentic leadership fosters effective communication between individuals and positively impacts employees' institutional trust. Furthermore, the results of this study show a partial correlation with the findings of [59], which indicate a positive and significant relationship between leadership and trust.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

Conclusions are drawn from the analyzed data, and suggestions and future actions are proposed based on the findings. This includes summarizing conclusions, acknowledging limitations, offering practical recommendations, and suggesting actions for addressing challenges or leveraging opportunities identified in the study. The recommendations focus on practicality, clarity, and anticipated benefits, while also considering potential challenges.

The primary objective of this study was to evaluate the impact of authentic leadership on organizational trust. A quantitative approach was employed, resulting in the collection of 183 questionnaires from academic staff across 13 colleges and institutes within the Soran independent administration in the Kurdistan Region of Iraq. The principal findings are detailed below:

1. The study found a higher representation of male academic staff in Soran's colleges and institutes, possibly due to cultural or work-life balance factors affecting women.

2. The sample predominantly included young participants, reflecting both the region's youthful demographic and the influx of recent graduates entering academic roles.

3. Many participants held master's degrees, aligning with the growing need for higher qualifications in the expanding academic departments of Soran.

4. A strong positive correlation was identified between authentic leadership and organizational trust, demonstrating a significant relationship between these variables.

5. Authentic leadership dimensions, particularly balanced processing, showed a strong correlation with organizational trust, indicating that leaders' thorough and transparent decision-making enhances trust.

6. The study underscores the significant impact of authentic leadership and its dimensions—relational transparency, internal moral perspective, self-awareness, balanced processing, and social awareness—on organizational trust.

These important recommendations cover different aspects relevant to colleges and institutes in Soran independent administration in Iraqi Kurdistan. They offer practical insights and guidance for addressing key issues and improving results. Below, a more detailed explanation of each recommendation's significance and potential impact is provided.

1. Given the lower participation of females compared to males, fostering gender diversity and inclusivity within colleges and institutes in Soran independent administration should involve increasing the number of female academic's staff and creating additional support and opportunities for women to benefit equally with men.

2. Since young staff comprised a significant portion of the participants in this study, colleges and institutes in Soran independent administration should maintain their support for young individuals. This support will enable them to leverage their talents and abilities, thereby enhancing scientific and cultural activities among the community.

3. The study's conclusions indicate that a majority of participants hold master's degrees. In light of this, colleges and institutes should persist in recruiting highly qualified individuals to facilitate the spread of knowledge and promote increased awareness among individuals.

4. In light of the statistically strong and significant relationship between the study variables, specifically authentic leadership and organizational trust, it is recommended that leaders of colleges and institutes continue implementing various tasks and activities. These efforts will effectively enhance and improve the level of relationship between these variables

5. Given the strong relationships between authentic leadership dimensions and organizational trust, especially balanced processing, leaders should prioritize seeking diverse opinions. This approach enhances decision-making and boosts organizational performance.

6. The study underscores the impactful influence of authentic leadership and its dimensions, including relational transparency, internal ethical perspective, self-awareness, congruence processing, and social consciousness, on organizational trust. Consequently, leaders should prioritize developing high levels of consciousness and morality while enhancing and fortifying relationships.

FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could benefit from examining the impact of various leadership styles beyond authentic leadership on organizational trust. Expanding the study to include employees from diverse sectors and organizations, in addition to academic staff, would provide a broader perspective. Integrating qualitative methods with quantitative approaches could yield a more comprehensive understanding of the topic. Utilizing online platforms for distributing questionnaires may also enhance the efficiency and completeness of data collection.

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