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Improving civil servant performance through authentic leadership

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ABSTRACT

Civil servants play a vital role in government organizations, but their performance is often not optimal due to leadership weaknesses. One factor affecting performance is the lack of effective leadership in influencing employees. This study investigates how authentic leadership influences authentic followership and its impact on improving civil servant performance. A quantitative method was applied, with civil servants from the Government of Sidoarjo Regency, East Java, Indonesia, as respondents. The sample was selected randomly, and data was collected using the Authentic Leadership Inventory (ALI) and Authentic Followership Scale (AFS). Participants completed these instruments, and the data was analyzed through linear regression using JASP software version 0.18.3.0. The results show that authentic leadership significantly improves authentic followership, which, in turn, enhances civil servant performance. Authentic followership positively impacts both individual and organizational outcomes. The findings suggest that strengthening authentic leadership within government organizations can improve civil servant performance. This study contributes to the understanding of how authentic leadership promotes better performance through its influence on followership.

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1. Introduction

Government organizations have an important role in society. Government organizations enforce laws and support the community through policies (Gan et al., 2020; Nielsen et al., 2020). Government organizations have a function to provide digital services to the public (Baheer et al., 2020). van Veenstra et al. (2020) explained that improving the quality of public policy is also the role of government organizations. Furthermore, community welfare is the responsibility of government organizations (Adjei-Bamfo et al., 2020). Helping communities adapt to the impacts of climate change is also the role of government organizations (Karki et al., 2020). Government organizations also play a role in creating equal digital access for the community. As a public organization, government organizations primarily aim to provide services to all citizens (Peng et al., 2023). Public organizations must consider strategies and approaches that will help

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increase engagement levels among public sector employees. Increasing the involvement of public sector employees is also a task that is the responsibility of public organizations (Shah et al., 2022; Zahari and Kaliannan, 2023).

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Civil servants are part of a government organization. Civil servants must be able to work with a commitment to work and service. Civil servants should also be creative because they provide public services to the government system (Awang et al., 2020). Skovgaard and Svendsen (2023) stated that civil servants must strive to provide services to those in need. In addition, civil servants act as responsible and implementers of the national economic bureaucracy (Heinzel et al., 2021). As part of the government, civil servants must be able to give their best performance because they receive compensation (Venard et al., 2023). Furthermore, civil servants must focus on the community because they receive incentives for their role as social actors (Deng and Jeffreys, 2021).

Civil servants have an organizational hierarchical structure that regulates their work roles. The hierarchy indicates the organization's position (Kiland et al., 2024). The hierarchical position in the organization will determine its involvement with external stakeholders (Schmidt and Van de Walle, 2022). Sutiyoso and Faedlulloh (2024) explained that individuals who have higher positions will have

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increasingly complex decision-making roles. Furthermore, the higher the hierarchical position of an individual in the organization, the greater their influence in making policies. Furthermore, the determination of public policy and its implementation is largely determined by the function of the existing bureaucratic structure (Suzuki and Hur, 2020). Empowerment and guidance for subordinates are important for organizations with a high bureaucratic structure (Bayram and Zoubi, 2020).

One part of the civil servant organizational hierarchy that functions importantly to control members is the leader. Controlling an organization consisting of civil servants is a major challenge (Romme et al., 2022). The role of control that focuses on tasks is also an act of controlling organizational personnel (Dos Santos et al., 2022). Civil servant leaders must have an understanding of the interests of the individuals they lead and not always agree to their requests in order to achieve common goals (Hartley and Manzie, 2020). Individuals will easily achieve their goals and work targets when leaders show concern (Bayram and Zoubi, 2020). Furthermore, Račaitė-Samušienė et al. (2021) explained that leaders can inspire optimism and team spirit in achieving work targets.

The success of civil servants in carrying out their roles is highly dependent on the leadership function in public organizations. van der Meer et al. (2024a; 2024b) broadly divide the roles of civil servants into three. First, the role of implementing applicable procedures and regulations. The second role is to provide public services to citizens. The third role is as a liaison between various stakeholders. The results of Pham et al. (2024) research explained that leadership has an important influence on the work behavior of members in public organizations. The involvement of public sector employees in carrying out their roles is significantly influenced by leadership (Syafrudin et al., 2023; Zahari and Kaliannan, 2023).

However, performance of the current government organizations still has several weaknesses. Sustainable economic development is still important for government organizations (Adjei-Bamfo et al., 2020). Furthermore, targeted subsidy policies must continue to be developed by government organizations (Nielsen et al., 2020). Government organizations also experience problems related to bureaucratic professionalism, which is still questionable (Rasul et al., 2021). Another problem government organizations face is the lack of innovation in public services (Promsiri et al., 2022). Accountability for decision-making in government organizations is also still a serious concern (van Veenstra et al., 2020).

Civil servants are still questioned about their performance in government organizations. The issue of high absenteeism of civil servants in one area of government is still being discussed (Utami et al., 2021). Sutiyoso and Faedlulloh (2024) reported that civil servants still need to improve their professionalism and compliance with public administration ethics. Furthermore, justification for violations of regulations by civil servants still occurs (Khan et al., 2024). Civil servants still experience a dilemma when government policies harm citizens (Niklasson et al., 2020). Aleksovska and Schillemans (2022) reported that civil servants procrastinate about their duties.

There are several reports about the negative image of civil servants. Jia et al. (2024) reported on violations of laws and regulations committed by civil servants of public administration institutions by imposing an obligation on another party. Discrimination based on gender roles has also been reported to still occur among civil servants. Furthermore, Kim et al. (2021) stated that superiors were still found to treat civil servants disrespectfully, thus violating the principle of politeness. Some civil servants were also reported to be still involved in bribery cases in providing public services (Khanal et al., 2022). Another violation civil servants commit is the continued occurrence of negative stereotypes toward citizens in providing services (Alon-Barkat and Busuioc, 2023). Workplace ostracism still occurs in public organizations and is carried out by some civil servants (Suyono et al., 2024).

Civil servants cannot perform optimally due to the ineffective role of leaders. The role and performance of civil servants are still widely questioned in the public administration process (Rasul et al., 2021). The performance of civil servants is a consequence of their interaction with leaders (Wang and Guo, 2022). Strict bureaucratic procedures and structures make leadership in the public sector have several limitations that can reduce the effectiveness of civil servant performance (Vogel et al., 2023). Venard et al. (2023) explained that the low performance of civil servants is because leaders cannot control acts of corruption. Leaders cannot control the performance of civil servants because they cannot get relevant information (Romme et al., 2022).

Civil servant leaders cannot be used as good examples to demonstrate optimal performance. Organizational performance and the mental wellbeing of civil servants can decline due to leaders who behave destructively. Destructive leaders themselves are not only about deviant leader behavior but also about excessive supervision of civil servants (Hattab et al., 2022). Furthermore, conflicts occur between leaders and followers due to the low self-awareness of leaders about the situation at hand (An et al., 2022). Cases of ethical violations committed by civil servants in recent times reflect the lack of ethical leadership roles (Qing et al., 2020).

This research is important because leaders have a significant impact on civil servant performance (Pham et al., 2024; van der Meer et al., 2024a; 2024b; Zahari and Kaliannan, 2023). Leadership style influences the behavior patterns of civil servants as followers (Adekanmbi and Ukpere, 2022; Bayram and Zoubi, 2020; Jiang and Wei, 2024; Muradli and Ahmadov, 2019). This pattern of civil

servant behavior will support the success of their performance (Pham et al., 2024; Sutton, 2020). An authentic leadership style is an alternative solution for its positive impact on follower behavior patterns (Gonzales, 2023; Schoofs et al., 2024). Previous research found a relationship between authentic leadership and authentic followership (Leroy et al., 2015; Nair et al., 2022). Authentic followership that emerges in an organization will positively impact individual performance (Kosasih et al., 2020; Schoofs et al., 2024; Tak et al., 2019). This research aims to the improvement of civil explain servant performance through the influence of authentic leadership on authentic followership.

2. Research method

The study used quantitative methods. Participants in this study were civil servants working in various government organizations in Sidoarjo Regency, East Java-Indonesia. Participants numbered 415 (58% female and 42% male) selected randomly. Participants' ages ranged from 22 to 59 years, with a mean age of 42.23 (SD=9.855). All participants had worked in the organization for at least one year (M=15.935; SD=9.88). The research instruments used were 16 items, ALI (Authentic Inventory), to reveal Leadership authentic leadership, and 16 items, such as the AFS (Authentic Scale), to measure Followership authentic followership. The ALI instrument is the Indonesian version Wirawan et al. (2020) adapted. ALI has a Cronbach's alpha value=.89 and a value of X^2/df = 2.8; RMSEA = .07. The AFS instrument developed by Leroy et al. (2015) was adapted into Indonesian. The Indonesian version of AFS has a Cronbach's alpha value=.692 and a value of $X^2/df = 4.25$; *CFI* = .926; RMSEA = .078.

The procedure is that participants are asked to fill out the research instrument used. Furthermore, the collected data were analyzed using linear regression with the help of JASP software version 0.18.3.0. This study was conducted after passing the ethical feasibility test by the Ethics Commission of the University of Surabaya.

3. Results and discussion

The results show an average score of 62.961 (SD=10.814) for authentic leadership and 56.586 (SD=10.236) for authentic followership. Valid data amounted to 415. The results of descriptive statistics show that the research data obtained are not normally distributed because the P-value of Shapiro-Wilk<.05 (Table 1). Nevertheless, data analysis is still carried out using ANOVA, one of the parametric methods. There are several considerations related to the continued use of ANOVA, even though the data is not normally distributed. First, ANOVA requires the assumption of a normal distribution to be met. However, real-world data often does not conform to the assumption of a normal distribution. This results in inaccuracies in statistical conclusions (Gosselin, 2024; Keselman et al., 2013; Meng and Jiang, 2023). Second, sample size greatly affects the results of the data normality test. Shapiro-Wilk will be effective for small sample sizes but becomes less effective for large sample sizes.

The results of the ANOVA (Analysis of Variance) analysis prove that there is a significant influence between authentic leadership and authentic followership because the p-value<.001 (Table 2). Furthermore, the authentic leadership variable can explain 24.5% of the variation in the authentic followership variable (Table 3). The regression coefficient can also be determined based on the results of data analysis (Table 4). The following formula can generate the regression coefficient between authentic leadership and authentic followership: Y = C + B.X. Based on this formula, the regression coefficient of this study is: Authentic followership = 27.07 + .469 *Authentic leadership.

| | | | | ALI | AFS | | |
|-------------------------|--|--|--|--|----------------------------------|----------------------|--|
| Valid | | | 415 | | 415 | | |
| Mean | | 62.961 | | 56.586 | | | |
| Stdandard deviation | | | 10.814 | | 10.236 | 10.236 | |
| Shapiro-Wilk | | .935 | | .946 | | | |
| P-value of Shapiro-Wilk | | <.001 | | <.001 | | | |
| | | Table 2: ANOVA resu | llts for leadership influenc | e on followership | | | |
| Model | | Sum of squares | Degree of freedom | Mean square | F-statistic | P-value | |
| H1 | Regression | 10638.704 | 1 | 10638.704 | 134.219 | < .001 | |
| | Residual | 32736.009 | 413 | 79.264 | | | |
| | Total | 43374.713 | 414 | | | | |
| | Total | 433/4./13 | 414 | | | | |
| | Totai | | mary for authentic followe | ership prediction | | | |
| Мс | odel | | | ership prediction Adjusted R ² | Root mean s | quare error | |
| | | Table 3: Model sum | mary for authentic followe | | Root mean se 10.2 | | |
| H | odel | Table 3: Model sum: R | mary for authentic followe R ² | Adjusted R ² | | 236 | |
| H | odel 1 ₀ 1 ₁ | Table 3: Model sum R 0.000 0.495 | mary for authentic followe R ² 0.000 | Adjusted R ² 0.000 0.243 | 10.2 8.90 | 236 | |
| H | odel 1 ₀ 1 ₁ | Table 3: Model sum R 0.000 0.495 | mary for authentic followe R ² 0.000 0.245 | Adjusted R ² 0.000 0.243 | 10.2 8.90 | 236 03 | |
| ŀ | odel 1 ₀ 1 ₁ | Table 3: Model sum R 0.000 0.495 Table 4: Regression coe | mary for authentic followe R ² 0.000 0.245 fficients for leadership's e | Adjusted R ² 0.000 0.243 ffect on followershij | 10.2 8.90 | 236 03 | |
| H H Model | odel 4 ₀ 4 ₁ | Table 3: Model sum R 0.000 0.495 Table 4: Regression coe Unstandardized | mary for authentic followe R ² 0.000 0.245 fficients for leadership's e Standard error | Adjusted R ² 0.000 0.243 ffect on followershij | 10.2 8.90 D T-statistic | 236 03 P-value | |

Table 1: Descriptive statistics of leadership and followership measures

The purpose of this study can be answered by explaining it through the theory of authentic leadership. Leaders, followers, and government organizations can benefit from applying the authentic leadership theory. The benefits of authentic leadership have been shown by hundreds of previous studies (Einola and Alvesson, 2021). Authentic leadership is a leadership pattern that seeks to provide attention and support to its followers by ensuring their basic needs and life goals are met (Johnson, 2019). McPherson et al. (2022) explained that authentic leadership consists of selfbalanced processing, awareness, relational transparency, and internalized moral perspective. How authentic leadership can influence authentic followership in the context of civil servants can be explained through the 4 constructs mentioned previously.

Civil servants who act as authentic leaders influence their followers through four dimensions. The four dimensions of authentic leadership are selfawareness. balanced information processing, relationship transparency, and internalized moral perspective (Daraba et al., 2021; Lee, 2020; Steffens et al., 2021; Wirawan et al., 2020). Leaders who have self-awareness know their various strengths and weaknesses. The leader also knows about the impact of his strengths and weaknesses on others, including his followers. This condition makes him wiser when interacting with his followers (Alvesson and Einola, 2022). Authentic leaders also influence their followers through the way they process information. Authentic leaders always use various available information to make important decisions. The available information is processed in a balanced manner. This action is taken to obtain an objective point of view and prevent subjectivity. Consequently, the decisions will be accurate because they are based on objective information (McPherson et al., 2022; Vogel et al., 2023). These decisions include work decisions related to followers. Furthermore, followers will feel positive benefits from decisions made by authentic leaders (Yagi et al., 2024).

Another step taken by authentic leaders in influencing followers is through transparency of relationships and internalized moral perspectives. Lynch et al. (2022) explained that authentic leaders communicate honestly and clearly about personal goals and values to others. This action lets followers know the real goals and principles of interacting. This reflects the display of the leader's authenticity to followers. This treatment also makes followers more open in expressing their thoughts and feelings to leaders while working. Furthermore, followers are influenced by authentic leaders through internalized moral perspectives. This internalized moral perspective is manifested through authentic leaders' self-regulation. Internalized values guide the actions and decision-making of authentic leaders. This condition creates consistency between the leader's behavior and the values he adheres to. The attitude of authentic leaders gives followers respect and appreciation. As a result, it is easier for leaders to

provide input and direction to followers because there is already trust (Nair et al., 2022; Schoofs et al., 2024).

Authentic leaders' various attitudes and actions have their own impacts on civil servants who act as followers. This impact can be explained through positive modeling theory (Douglas et al., 2021; Ostaszewski, 2020). Followers who see various behaviors of authentic leaders while working will make them do positive modeling. This condition occurs because the follower sees the leader as a good example in displaying performance. This positive modeling intends to imitate the leader's actions and reproduce these activities as part of the follower's self. Consequently, followers will develop selfbalanced information awareness. processing. relationship transparency, and internalized moral perspectives. These actions will make him an authentic follower.

Authentic followers in an organization are demonstrated through the actualization of selfawareness dimensions. balanced information processing, relationship transparency, and internalized moral perspectives (Kosasih et al., 2020; Schoofs et al., 2024). The manifestation of selfawareness displayed by authentic followers is their knowledge of their strengths and weaknesses at work. This condition allows followers to optimize their strengths and prevent weaknesses at work. Furthermore, authentic followers also carry out balanced information processing of the various information they receive at work. This process produces objectivity in the information obtained, resulting in accurate work decision-making. Furthermore, authentic followers also promote transparency in work relationships with various internal and external parties to the organization. This relationship transparency will create work transparency. Another process carried out by authentic followers is carrying out work activities based on an internalized moral perspective. This condition will make followers act according to their moral principles. One of the moral principles adopted is integrity.

of The various actualizations authentic followership dimensions that have been explained will positively impact when civil servants can apply them. This positive impact can be felt in the context of individual and organizational performance (Balasubramanian and Kakani, 2024; Khan et al., 2024; Schoofs et al., 2024; Tak et al., 2019). Civil servants who act as authentic followers can prevent various harmful practices in the workplace. Selfawareness makes followers know exactly what their duties and roles are as civil servants. Authentic followers also know what they should and should not do as civil servants. This condition makes them behave professionally as civil servants. Furthermore, civil servants who can process information in a balanced manner can make the right policies and work decisions. This condition has an impact on optimizing their service function to the community.

The next dimension that positively impacts civil servant performance is the transparency of relationships and internalized moral perspectives. The existence of transparency in relationships detrimental practices such prevents as and workplace procrastination, corruption, ostracism (Khanal et al., 2022; Neo et al., 2023; Niklasson et al., 2020; Schoofs et al., 2024; Tak et al., 2019; van Dorp, 2023). This condition can be realized because, with transparency of relationships, the public can exercise control through the performance supervision of civil servants. Transparency of relationships carried out by civil servants will also stimulate innovative behavior at work. This condition occurs because civil servants will easily absorb creative ideas from various parties, thus allowing innovation in their work. In other words, transparency of relationships can have a positive impact on civil servant performance because it will provide positive control and input from external parties. The external parties in question include supervisory organizations and the community. On the other hand, the internalized moral perspective dimension functions as an internal control within civil servants. The existence of an internalized moral perspective will guide the behavior of civil servants by the moral principles within them. These moral principles include honesty and integrity. This condition can prevent negative practices in the workplace. Internalization of moral principles within civil servants will enable them to continue to speak critically toward their leaders and the organization where they work. Furthermore, moral principles can also be the basis for the professional behavior of civil servants. This happens because moral principles guide civil servants to behave according to their role in government organizations.

The presence of authentic followership also performance of government influences the organizations. Authentic followership can help organizations perform efficiently and increase the organization's ability to adapt to changes in the future (Kosasih et al., 2020). Furthermore, leaders in government organizations can use the authenticity that exists in followers to align with the organization's vision and mission (Vogel et al., 2023). This condition will increase the success of achieving the organization's vision and mission. In addition, the performance and achievement of organizational goals will be more effective when the role of followers in the organization is strengthened (Li and Zheng, 2024). The organizational outcomes can be explained through the role of followers in the organization.

There are various positive outcomes caused by the presence of authentic leadership based on the results of previous studies. These positive outcomes include the occurrence of extra follower efforts, organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and perceptions of team effectiveness (Peus et al., 2012; Zhang et al., 2022). Team performance and commitment have also been shown to be positively and significantly influenced by authentic leadership (Zhang et al., 2022). Team performance and commitment are also influenced by authentic leadership through the collective efficacy process (Saleem et al., 2023). Furthermore, leaders' psychological well-being is also related to authenticity in leadership (Toor and Ofori, 2009). Intesarach and Ueasangkomsate (2021) reported that authentic leadership has a positive impact on reducing employee turnover intention and a psychologically safe climate.

This study has several important implications for public organizations in various sectors. First, authentic leadership has a positive influence on OCB (Organizational Citizenship Behavior), which is mediated by psychological capital. This condition provides an illustration that employee engagement and performance in various public sector roles can be improved through authentic leadership development (Sri Ramalu and Janadari, 2022). Second, improving performance results in various public sector environments can utilize authentic leadership, by creating a work climate that stimulates self-development (Kyambade et al., 2024). Third, developing moral and ethical leaders in the public sector is an important role of authentic leadership. This condition is consistent with the needs of the public administration sector and policymaking that require high ethical standards (Kyambade et al., 2024). Fourth, there is a transformation of organizational, social, and cultural orders as a consequence of the presence of authentic leadership. This condition is important for modern public organizations that are transforming towards a bureau-enterprise culture. This culture emphasizes democratic and entrepreneurial values (Woods, 2007). Fifth, the application of authentic leadership varies based on social and cultural contexts. The existence of certain behaviors, values, and beliefs displayed by leaders is something that is considered authentic by their colleagues. These behaviors, values, and beliefs can be adapted to various roles and contexts in the public sector (Williams et al., 2022).

This study also has several weaknesses. First, this study only involved civil servant participants who worked in government organizations in Sidoarjo Regency, East Java-Indonesia. This condition makes the results of the study less representative when they have to be generalized to civil servant populations other than the Sidoarjo Regency. Based on these weaknesses, further research should add civil servant participants outside the Sidoarjo Regency. Second, this study only used authentic leadership as the only independent variable. Consequently, further research needs to find out how other variables influence authentic followership in the context of civil servants.

4. Conclusion

The improvement of civil servant performance can be explained through the influence of authentic leadership on authentic followership. The study's results prove that authentic leadership significantly affects authentic followership. This study provides an overview of the importance of authentic leadership for civil servants. The existence of authentic leadership will have a positive effect on the presence of authentic followership. Furthermore, the existence of authentic followership in civil servants will have a positive impact on individual and organizational performance. The study's findings suggest that improving civil servant performance can be done through authentic leadership in government organizations.

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Compliance with ethical standards

Ethical considerations

This study was approved by the Ethics Commission of the University of Surabaya. Participants provided informed consent, and their anonymity and confidentiality were ensured throughout the research.

Conflict of interest

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

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