



Authentic leadership and employee performance: Exploring a serial mediation model in the Indonesian palm oil sector

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ABSTRACT

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In the dynamic environment of high-performance organizations (HPOs), authentic leadership has emerged as a crucial determinant of positive employee attitudes and enhanced behavioral outcomes. This study examines the impact of authentic leadership on employee performance, highlighting the mediational effects of job-related motivation and organizational citizenship behavior (OCB), both independently and sequentially. Using purposive sampling, data were collected from 145 employees of a palm oil manufacturing company in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. The data were analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS version 3.3.3. The results reveal that authentic leadership positively and significantly influences employee performance, job-related motivation, and OCB. Moreover, job-related motivation has a strong positive effect on both OCB and employee performance, while OCB itself contributes substantially to performance enhancement. Mediation analyses confirm that job-related motivation and OCB serve as significant mediators, both individually and in sequence, in the relationship between authentic leadership and employee performance. These findings provide deeper insights into the psychological and behavioral mechanisms linking authentic leadership to performance outcomes. The study highlights the importance of authenticity, intrinsic motivation, and voluntary employee behaviors as key drivers of superior performance. It also contributes to leadership theory by presenting an integrative serial mediation model that explains how authentic leadership fosters employee excellence within the context of Indonesia's palm oil industry.

Contribution/Originality: This study adds to the growing literature by highlighting the serial mediation role of job-related motivation and OCB in the authentic leadership–employee performance relationship. It offers practical implications for leaders aiming to foster trust, motivation, and extra-role behavior to improve organizational performance outcomes.

1. INTRODUCTION

High-performance organizations (HPOs) are characterized by dynamic, flexible, and innovative approaches to meet the evolving demands of a fast-paced global market. Unlike traditional hierarchical structures, HPOs often adopt more decentralized methods, fostering collaboration and enabling quicker adaptation to changes (Bhalla et al., 2013).

Employees in HPOs are increasingly diverse, tech-savvy, and purpose-driven (De Waal & Linthorst, 2020). They value flexibility, personal growth, and meaningful work that aligns with their values. Moreover, they often seek work-life integration, autonomy, and opportunities for self-actualization within their professional roles and job functions (Blackman, Buick, O'Flynn, O'Donnell, & West, 2019).

Authentic leadership is crucial for managing employees in HPOs as it promotes trust, ethical behavior, and sustainable performance. This leadership style emphasizes transparency, self-awareness, integrity, and consistent ethical behavior, fostering a positive work environment (Srimongkolkul & Boriraj, 2024). The essence of authentic leadership lies in sincerity and openness, which naturally cultivate trust between leaders and their employees. When leaders communicate transparently and act genuinely, employees tend to experience greater appreciation and confidence in their positions, strengthening their spirit of loyalty to the organization. This trust not only deepens engagement but also inspires employees to actively contribute to shared goals (Ayça, 2023). In addition, authentic leadership has been demonstrated to positively foster employee well-being, performance, and productivity. By cultivating a collaborative and trustworthy work atmosphere, authentic leaders help ease workplace stress while enhancing job satisfaction (Olaniyan & Hystad, 2016). This, in turn, enhances productivity and reduces turnover, as employees demonstrate a greater intention to stay in workplaces where they feel respected and supported.

Research has consistently highlighted the beneficial and advantageous impact of authentic leadership across a wide range of sectors, including public service (Kyambade, Bartazary, Namatovu, & Tushabe, 2024), healthcare (Ghufran et al., 2022), tourism (Hadian & Afshari, 2019), and financial services (Sarifuddin, Faroh Habibah, Juliani Chalil, & Wulan Prasetyaningtyas, 2021). Furthermore, the studies from different countries (e.g., Turkey, Iran, South Korea, Tanzania, Poland, Netherlands, and Spain) confirmed the universal suitability of authentic leadership in enhancing performance (Ayça, 2023; Hadian & Afshari, 2019; Jang, 2022; Kyambade et al., 2024; Laguna, Walachowska, Gorgievski-Duijvesteijn, & Moriano, 2019). However, Hidayati, Ilmi, and Kasuma (2022) and Samsudin, Saputra, and Abdinegoro (2020) offered valuable evidence on how authentic leadership shapes and drives employee performance in both the manufacturing and healthcare sectors in Indonesia. Their findings suggested that authentic leadership, which emphasizes genuine, transparent, and consistent ethical behavior, exerts no meaningful impact on employee performance in these industries. Previous studies have established a robust and strong linkage between authentic leadership and higher levels of OCB, where employees willingly go beyond their formal responsibilities, thereby enhancing performance (Al-Romeedy & Ozbek, 2022; Liu, Fuller, Hester, Bennett, & Dickerson, 2018). Job-related motivation has also been identified as a key mediator linking authentic leadership and employee performance. Through recognition and trust, authentic leaders establish a positive organizational climate that drives higher levels of employee motivation and performance (Kyambade et al., 2024; Utomo, Handoyo, & Fajrianthi, 2025). However, despite growing research on authentic leadership, few studies have simultaneously examined the psychological and behavioral pathways through which it influences performance. Most prior works have focused on single mediators, such as motivation (Kyambade et al., 2024) or OCB (Ribeiro, Duarte, & Filipe, 2018), without considering their sequential interaction. To fill this gap, the present study proposes and develops a serial mediation model integrating job-related motivation and OCB as interconnected mechanisms in the authentic leadership–performance relationship. This approach provides a more comprehensive understanding of why and how authentic leadership promotes superior employee outcomes, particularly within Indonesia's high-performance and collectivist palm oil industry context.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership has gained growing recognition as an essential leadership approach with significant positive effects on organizational outcomes. It is commonly recognized as a style grounded in self-awareness, transparency, and ethical integrity, all of which aim to cultivate trust, engagement, and commitment within the workplace. This

form of leadership is typically characterized by four core (Gardner & Carlson, 2015; Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008): (1) self-awareness signifies and reflects a leader's competence in thoroughly comprehending their own strengths, weaknesses, and core values. This awareness enables and allows leaders to align their decisions and actions with their guiding principles, thereby ensuring consistency and integrity in their behavior. By being conscious of their personal values, they gain credibility and inspire trust among their employees; (2) internalized moral perspective refers to a leader's inclination to behave consistently with their principles and core ethical values, rather than being swayed by external expectations or pressures. This internalized moral compass guides them in making ethical decisions and holding themselves accountable, thereby earning respect and credibility from their employees; (3) relational transparency refers to leaders' forthrightness and integrity in their relationships, which fosters genuine communication and authentic relationships. By practicing transparent communication, authentic leaders cultivate a culture of openness that builds trust and allows employees to feel safe in voicing their perspectives; and (4) balanced processing involves a leader's capacity to objectively contemplate diverse perspectives before reaching a decision. Leaders who showcase and exhibit this quality remain receptive to feedback, actively seek input from others, and carefully evaluate differing viewpoints to ensure fair and informed judgment. This process is instrumental in avoiding biases and ensuring that decisions are made ethically and equitably.

Authentic leadership fosters relational identification and positive emotions among employees, which subsequently strengthens their engagement in work-related tasks (Malik & Khan, 2020). Empirical studies indicate that authentic leadership is positively associated with employee performance. Leaders who showcase authenticity are more likely to foster motivation among employees, which in turn contributes to greater job satisfaction and enhanced individual performance (Jang, Chung, & Son, 2023; Munyon, Houghton, Simarasl, Dawley, & Howe, 2021). By promoting ethical behavior and transparency, authentic leaders help cultivate a positive moral climate within organizations, enhancing employee productivity, well-being, and satisfaction (Gardiner, 2017). Moreover, authentic leadership has been empirically linked to a range of positive outcomes at multiple levels, including individual outcomes such as engagement, job satisfaction, and performance; group-level outcomes such as teamwork; and organizational outcomes such as financial performance (Gardner & Carlson, 2015).

2.2. Employee Performance

Employee performance pertains to the degree to which individuals fulfill the requirements and responsibilities of their roles and reinforce the accomplishment of organizational objectives. It is a multidimensional construct that encompasses not only the quantity and quality of work produced but also the attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs that align with and support organizational goals (Sonnentag & Frese, 2002). Moreover, employee performance reflects an employee's proficiency in executing the tasks outlined in their job description. This includes both the effectiveness (i.e., quality of outcomes) and efficiency (i.e., timeliness and resourcefulness) with which employees carry out their duties. High task performance indicates that employees not only understand their job roles but also excel in achieving their objectives (Borman & Motowidlo, 1997; Udin, Sukirno, & Dananjoyo, 2023).

Employee performance assessment refers to the systematic use of methods and tools to appraise an individual's job performance and productivity against predefined criteria and organizational objectives (Hambardzumyan, 2016). In addition, performance is inherently multifaceted, shaped by organizational, job-related, and personal factors. To optimize performance, organizations should prioritize building supportive work environments, promoting motivation and job satisfaction, and adopting effective leadership practices (Ratnasari, Sutjahjo, & Adam, 2020; Rodjam, Thanasrisuebwong, Suphuan, & Charoenboon, 2020; Umrani, Afsar, Khan, & Ahmed, 2019).

2.3. Job-Related Motivation

Motivation is generally conceptualized as an affective state that activates, energizes and guides behavior, emerging from the interaction and interrelation of internal demands and external determinants (Schultheiss, Strasser,

Rösch, Kordik, & Graham, 2012). It can also be defined as the likelihood that individuals will initiate, persist in, and adhere to specific behaviors aimed at achieving desired outcomes (Locke & Braver, 2010). Within the workplace context, job-related motivation reflects the internal and external drivers that stimulate employees to fulfill their roles. This form of motivation serves a crucial function in fostering commitment, engagement, and productivity. As a complex and multidimensional construct, it includes both extrinsic and intrinsic driving forces and exerts significant influence on individual performance as well as organizational success (Deci & Ryan, 2000). Moreover, employees who perceive autonomy in their work, opportunities for skill development, and well-defined goals are inclined to preserve stronger motivation and performance outcomes (Rajiah & Bhargava, 2016).

Intrinsic motivation stems from the enjoyment derived from the work itself. Employees driven by intrinsic motivation engage in tasks out of genuine interest or the personal challenge they present, rather than for external incentives. However, extrinsic motivation involves completing tasks for external rewards, including salary, benefits, bonuses, promotions, and recognition. While extrinsic rewards are effective in encouraging performance, they may not always lead to long-term engagement if the employee lacks intrinsic interest in the work itself (Gagné & Deci, 2005). Therefore, a balanced integration of intrinsic motivators, such as autonomy and a sense of purpose, with extrinsic factors, including compensation and recognition, acts as a vital driver in fostering both extra-role and in-role performance within organizations (Jin, Cheng, & Hahm, 2018).

2.4. Organizational Citizenship Behavior

Organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) encompasses non-mandatory employee contributions that exceed prescribed responsibilities and promote organizational effectiveness. Although these behaviors are neither officially acknowledged nor incentivized, they are essential in cultivating cooperation and productivity within the workplace (Gunarto, Cahyawati, & Yanti, 2025). OCB involves actions that support colleagues, encourage collaboration, and promote a positive organizational culture, thereby enhancing overall effectiveness (Grego-Planer, 2019; Woodruff, 2024).

OCB originally comprises five dimensions (Organ, 1988): (1) altruism involves voluntarily assisting colleagues with job-related issues, such as helping overwhelmed colleagues or those needing guidance. This form of OCB promotes strong teamwork, which can lead to increased productivity; (2) conscientiousness refers to going beyond the minimum required standards in work quality, punctuality, and reliability. Employees displaying high conscientiousness are often more diligent, responsible, and committed, contributing to a more efficient and effective workplace (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Paine, & Bachrach, 2000); (3) sportsmanship reflects an employee's readiness to sustain a positive attitude, even in challenging situations. This dimension involves refraining from complaining and being resilient in the face of difficulties, helping maintain a constructive atmosphere within the team; (4) courtesy includes actions that help prevent work-related problems for others, such as informing colleagues of important information in advance to avoid misunderstandings. This proactive behavior reduces conflicts and promotes smooth workflow and collaboration; and (5) civic virtue reflects employees' engagement in the organizational community, such as participating in voluntary meetings and showing interest in organizational issues. This behavior demonstrates a feeling of accountability and commitment toward the organization's welfare (Organ, 1988). Thus, encouraging OCB among employees can lead to increased productivity, efficiency, and job satisfaction (Mallick, Pradhan, Tewari, & Jena, 2014). In addition, OCB helps cultivate and nurture a positive work environment, motivating employees intrinsically and enhancing overall organizational performance (Zhou, 2010).

3. HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

3.1. Impact of Authentic Leadership on Job-Related Motivation, OCB and Employee Performance

Authentic leaders energize employees by demonstrating sincere care for their development and by aligning organizational objectives with individual values (Ogunyemi & Ogunyemi, 2020). According to self-determination

theory (SDT) (Angel-Alvarado & Álamos-Gómez, 2025), this leadership style satisfies intrinsic motivators like autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Employees under authentic leadership often feel empowered, valued, appreciated, and emotionally connected to their work, resulting in heightened job-related motivation. Such leaders reinforce positive attitudes, encouraging employees to exert greater effort and take ownership of their responsibilities (Malik & Khan, 2020). Additionally, authentic leadership enhances employee performance by setting clear expectations, offering constructive feedback, and fostering both personal and professional development, thereby enabling individuals to carry out tasks with greater efficiency and effectiveness. By fostering a culture of accountability, authentic leadership improves task performance and encourages better creativity (Sengupta, Sharma, & Singh, 2021). Thus,

H₁: Authentic leadership is positively related to employee performance.

H₂: Authentic leadership is positively related to OCB.

H₃: Authentic leadership is positively related to job-related motivation.

3.2. Impact of Job-Related Motivation on OCB and Employee Performance

Job-related motivation serves as a critical driver for both OCB and employee performance (Chan & Hooi, 2023; Oh & Roh, 2022). Motivated employees tend to align their efforts with organizational objectives and demonstrate discretionary behaviors beyond their formal job roles, thereby aiding in improving organizational outcomes. According to SDT, intrinsic motivation, which arises from genuine personal interest or alignment with individual values, encourages employees to contribute voluntarily without expecting immediate rewards (Deci, Olafsen, & Ryan, 2017). For example, motivated employees may help coworkers, share knowledge, or advocate for organizational improvements, even when these activities fall outside their formal responsibilities. Additionally, employees who are intrinsically motivated experience fulfillment from their job and strive for excellence, leading to higher quality, efficiency, and timeliness in task completion (Gagné et al., 2022; Sumarjiansyah, Peristiowati, Sumarji, & Setyawan, 2025). Therefore,

H₄: Job-related motivation is positively related to employee performance.

H₅: Job-related motivation is positively related to OCB.

3.3. Impact of OCB on Employee Performance

OCB encompasses discretionary, extra-role actions that extend beyond formal job requirements, including providing assistance to colleagues, taking initiative, and demonstrating organizational loyalty (Mallick et al., 2014). Employees who engage in OCB often exhibit higher levels of dedication and cooperation. These behaviors enhance task performance by improving team dynamics, reducing conflicts, and creating a more supportive work atmosphere (Azizah et al., 2024). Furthermore, OCBs such as taking initiative or proactively addressing issues, lead to process improvements and innovation, which are essential for high performance (Gunarto et al., 2025; Xiaoxin et al., 2025). Thus,

H₆: OCB is positively related to employee performance.

3.4. Mediation Effects of Job-Related Motivation and OCB

Motivated employees typically demonstrate greater effort, engagement, and persistence, which in turn enhances their overall performance (Olafsen, 2024). Drawing on SDT, employees working under authentic leadership often feel valued and connected to their roles, resulting in heightened job-related motivation (Malik & Khan, 2020). This motivation serves as an internal drive that enables individuals to excel in their tasks. Furthermore, authentic leaders cultivate trust and inspire their employees by showing genuine concern for their well-being while aligning organizational objectives with individual values. When employees view and perceive their leaders as authentic and supportive, they are more inclined to engage in discretionary behaviors such as volunteering for additional

responsibilities, assisting colleagues, and advancing organizational goals (Jun, Yujing, Wei, & Zhiqiang, 2021). These extra-role behaviors not only strengthen team cohesion but also foster a supportive, cooperative, and collaborative work environment, ultimately enhancing productivity and organizational harmony (Edelmann, Boen, Stouten, Vande Broek, & Fransen, 2024). Therefore,

H₁: Job-related motivation mediates the association between authentic leadership and employee performance.

H₂: OCB mediates the association between authentic leadership and employee performance.

H₃: Job-related motivation and OCB serially mediate the association between authentic leadership and employee performance.

4. RESEARCH METHODS

4.1. Participants and Procedure

The research targeted a population of 1,425 workers from a palm oil manufacturing firm located in Central Kalimantan, Indonesia. Memon, Memon, Bhatti, Khanzada, and Memon (2017) highlight that selecting an appropriate sampling strategy is crucial and should be consistent with the specific objectives of the study. For hypothesis testing and research involving complex populations, non-probability sampling is often preferred over probability sampling, as it better accommodates the scope and exploratory nature of such studies. On the other hand, Edwards (2024) and Rowley (2014) emphasize that probability sampling is an essential technique in research, requiring a comprehensive understanding of the target population to develop an appropriate sampling frame. However, given the objectives of the present study, a non-probability sampling technique was applied, namely purposive sampling. As Sarstedt, Bengart, Shaltoni, and Lehmann (2018) explain, purposive sampling allows researchers to identify participants who meet predefined criteria that are closely aligned with the research objectives, thereby improving the quality and relevance of the findings. In this study, employees aged 20 years and above were selected as participants. A total of 312 employees were invited to take part and participate by receiving a Google Forms link to the questionnaire, along with a request for completion. Of these, 145 responses were successfully collected.

4.2. Construct Measurements

Authentic leadership was operationalized using the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ), which captures its four core components, adapted from Walumbwa, Christensen, and Hailey (2011). A sample item for self-awareness of authentic leadership is “My leader fosters a high level of group readiness by promoting a culture of agility to encourage continuous learning for change.”

Five types of citizenship behaviors developed by Cardona, Lawrence, and Bentler (2004) are used to measure OCB. A sample item for OCB includes “I assist coworkers to ensure high-quality service delivery in the company.”

Job-related motivation is measured using 8-item scale adapted from Gagné et al. (2015) and Adiguzel and Cakir (2022). A sample item for job-related motivation includes “I feel highly motivated because my position in the company provides a strong sense of job security.”

Employee performance is assessed using a scale grounded in the frameworks of Campbell (1990) and Borman and Brush (1993). This scale focuses on four critical components: the quality, timeliness, efficiency, and effectiveness of task execution in the workplace. A sample item for employee performance includes “I consistently meet the quality standards expected in my job tasks.”

To measure and quantify all items in the proposed research model, a 5-point Likert scale ranging from “strongly disagree” (1) to “strongly agree” (5) is used.

4.3. Data Analysis

This study employed SmartPLS version 3.3.3 to execute partial least squares structural equation modeling (PLS-SEM). The software is recognized as a robust analytical tool in business and management research (Peralta, Carrillo-Hermosilla, & Crecente, 2019; Shahzad, Farrukh, Ahmed, Lin, & Kanwal, 2018) because of its user-friendly interface

and its ability to facilitate both small sample sizes and complex structural models. Furthermore, SmartPLS facilitates the examination of variable relationships, hypothesis testing, and the assessment of measurement model validity and reliability (Hair, Sarstedt, Matthews, & Ringle, 2016).

5. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 presents the assessment of the measurement model, focusing on the reliability and validity of the constructs: authentic leadership, job-related motivation, OCB, and employee performance. Validity was evaluated and analyzed through the average variance extracted (AVE), while reliability was assessed through factor loadings, composite reliability (CR), and Cronbach's alpha (CA). The factor loadings ranged from 0.713 to 0.925, outperforming the recommended minimum threshold of 0.70, thereby affirming item reliability. Although the lowest loadings were observed for AL1 and EP2 (0.713), they remain within acceptable limits. Internal consistency was demonstrated by high CA and CR values, extending from 0.836 to 0.960, with job-related motivation showing the highest reliability (CA = 0.952, CR = 0.960). Furthermore, all constructs recorded AVE values above 0.50, implying that each construct explains and contributes to more than 50% of the variance in its respective indicators. Job-Related Motivation has the strongest convergent validity (AVE = 0.749). Authentic leadership and employee performance have slightly lower but still acceptable AVE values (0.673 and 0.653, respectively).

Table 1. Measurement model evaluation.

Constructs	Items	Factor loadings	CA	CR	AVE
Authentic leadership	AL1	0.713	0.836	0.891	0.673
	AL2	0.848			
	AL3	0.850			
	AL4	0.862			
Job-related motivation	JRM1	0.847	0.952	0.960	0.749
	JRM2	0.886			
	JRM3	0.796			
	JRM4	0.896			
	JRM5	0.925			
	JRM6	0.861			
	JRM7	0.875			
	JRM8	0.830			
OCB	OCB1	0.763	0.879	0.912	0.675
	OCB2	0.846			
	OCB3	0.872			
	OCB4	0.846			
	OCB5	0.777			
Employee performance	EP1	0.863	0.892	0.918	0.653
	EP2	0.717			
	EP3	0.886			
	EP4	0.846			
	EP5	0.719			
	EP6	0.802			

Table 2 displays the outcomes of the discriminant validity analysis using the HTMT ratio and the Fornell–Larcker criterion. The Fornell–Larcker analysis shows that the square root of AVE values (diagonal) are consistently greater than the inter-construct correlations (off-diagonal), confirming that each construct is more closely associated with its own indicators than with other constructs. While authentic leadership (0.821) and employee performance (0.808) display a relatively strong correlation (0.766), this does not breach the discriminant validity requirement. Complementary evidence is provided by the HTMT values, all of which are below the 0.90 threshold. The highest HTMT value observed was 0.878 (between employee performance and authentic leadership), indicating a strong but acceptable relationship, supporting overall discriminant validity.

Table 2. Discriminant validity.

Constructs	Authentic leadership	Employee performance	Job-related motivation	OCB
Fornell-Larcker criterion				
Authentic leadership	0.821			
Employee performance	0.766	0.808		
Job-related motivation	0.626	0.734	0.865	
OCB	0.677	0.747	0.770	0.822
Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)				
Employee performance	0.878			
Job-related motivation	0.698	0.785		
OCB	0.793	0.837	0.837	

Table 3 presents the goodness-of-fit (GOF) indices used to evaluate the adequacy of the measurement model. Results are reported for both the Saturated Model, which estimates all possible paths, and the Estimated Model, which includes only the specified relationships. Since both models produced identical values, the findings suggest that the estimated model closely aligns with the fully saturated model, indicating strong model stability. The Chi-Square statistic (539.302) reflects the discrepancy between the observed and estimated data; however, due to its sensitivity to sample size, alternative fit indices are more informative. The SRMR (0.062) and NFI (0.818) provide evidence of acceptable model fit, while the low values of d_ULS (1.046) and d_G (0.701) further confirm that the recommended model reveals an adequate fit to the data.

Table 3. Goodness of fit indices.

Fit indices	Saturated model	Estimated model
Chi-square	539.302	539.302
SRMR	0.062	0.062
NFI	0.818	0.818
d_ULS	1.046	1.046
d_G	0.701	0.701

Table 4 reports the findings of the empirical verification and hypothesis testing for both direct and mediation effects within the structural model. The findings offer strong empirical support for authentic leadership as a significant predictor of employee performance, operating not only through a direct pathway but also via the mediating effects of job-related motivation and OCB. Specifically, authentic leadership directly improves employee performance ($\beta = 0.425$, t -statistic = 4.987, $p = 0.000$), OCB ($\beta = 0.320$, t -statistic = 3.164, $p = 0.002$), and job-related motivation ($\beta = 0.626$, t -statistic = 5.719, $p = 0.000$), supporting H1, H2, and H3. This suggests that leaders who demonstrate transparency, ethical behavior, and self-awareness substantially enhance employees' drive to volunteer for tasks and support organizational goals. Moreover, job-related motivation enhances both employee performance ($\beta = 0.281$, t -statistic = 2.458, $p = 0.014$) and OCB ($\beta = 0.569$, t -statistic = 6.047, $p = 0.000$), supporting H4 and H5. Additionally, OCB directly promotes employee performance ($\beta = 0.242$, t -statistic = 2.656, $p = 0.008$), supporting H6.

To assess the mediating role of job-related motivation and OCB in the relationship between authentic leadership and employee performance, the bootstrapping technique was employed (Shrout & Bolger, 2002). The analysis provides strong evidence that authentic leadership enhances employee performance through both mediators. Specifically, job-related motivation shows a significant indirect effect ($\beta = 0.176$, t -statistic = 1.955, $p = 0.051$), while OCB also demonstrates a meaningful mediating role ($\beta = 0.078$, t -statistic = 1.901, $p = 0.058$). This empirical evidence robustly confirms H7, H8, and H9 that authentic leadership is not merely a "soft" skill but directly and indirectly enhances employee performance through job-related motivation and OCB. Thus, organizations that cultivate authentic leaders will greatly promote higher productivity, engagement, collaborative culture, and teamwork.

Table 4. Hypothesis testing results.

Hypotheses	Coefficients (β)	Standard Deviation	T-statistics	P-values	Result
Direct effects					
Authentic leadership $\rightarrow$ Employee performance	0.425	0.085	4.987	0.000	Supported
Authentic leadership $\rightarrow$ OCB	0.320	0.101	3.164	0.002	Supported
Authentic leadership $\rightarrow$ Job-related motivation	0.626	0.110	5.719	0.000	Supported
Job-related motivation $\rightarrow$ Employee performance	0.281	0.114	2.458	0.014	Supported
Job-related motivation $\rightarrow$ OCB	0.569	0.094	6.047	0.000	Supported
OCB $\rightarrow$ Employee performance	0.242	0.091	2.656	0.008	Supported
Mediation effects					
Authentic leadership $\rightarrow$ Job-related motivation $\rightarrow$ Employee performance	0.176	0.090	1.955	0.051	Supported
Authentic leadership $\rightarrow$ OCB $\rightarrow$ Employee performance	0.078	0.041	1.901	0.058	Supported
Authentic leadership $\rightarrow$ Job-related motivation $\rightarrow$ OCB $\rightarrow$ Employee performance	0.086	0.036	2.435	0.015	Supported

To further assess the strength and predictive validity of the model, effect size (f^2) and predictive relevance (Q^2) were examined following the guidelines of Hair et al. (2016). The effect size (f^2) evaluates the contribution of each exogenous construct to the endogenous variable. Following Hair, Hult, Ringle, and Sarstedt (2021), f^2 values of 0.02, 0.15, and 0.35 are interpreted as small, medium, and large effects, respectively. The results show that authentic leadership exerts medium-to-large effects on job-related motivation ($f^2 = 0.64$), medium effects on OCB ($f^2 = 0.18$), and medium effects on employee performance ($f^2 = 0.21$). Similarly, job-related motivation demonstrates a moderate effect on OCB ($f^2 = 0.29$) and employee performance ($f^2 = 0.17$), while OCB exerts a small-to-moderate effect on employee performance ($f^2 = 0.10$). These findings confirm that authentic leadership and job-related motivation substantially contribute to enhancing employee outcomes.

The Stone–Geisser Q^2 test was employed utilizing the blindfolding approach to determine predictive relevance. All Q^2 values exceeded zero, indicating satisfactory predictive validity. Specifically, job-related motivation ($Q^2 = 0.46$), OCB ($Q^2 = 0.39$), and employee performance ($Q^2 = 0.41$) demonstrate strong predictive relevance. Thus, the structural model not only fits the data well but also possesses meaningful predictive capability for employee performance outcomes.

Strong evidence from this study confirms that authentic leadership, marked by self-awareness, transparency, relational integrity, and moral reasoning, is empirically linked to improved employee performance, OCB, and job-related motivation. By fostering trust, psychological safety, and clear expectations, authentic leaders enhance productivity and task performance. Their consistency, honesty, and fairness increase employees' willingness to go the extra mile. Moreover, by promoting open communication and encouraging feedback, authentic leaders cultivate a culture of accountability (Jun et al., 2021; Lin, Huynh, & Yu, 2025) to take ownership of their work.

Employees under authentic leadership tend to demonstrate greater effort and commitment. By modeling integrity and setting constructive examples, authentic leaders foster prosocial behaviors such as supporting and assisting colleagues as well as taking on additional responsibilities, thereby enhancing employees' sense of organizational belonging (Monzani, Knoll, Giessner, van Dick, & Peiró, 2019). Their emphasis on transparency and fairness mitigates workplace skepticism and cultivates an atmosphere of trust and collaboration. Moreover, authentic

leaders intrinsically motivate employees by aligning organizational objectives with personal values and by articulating a clear, values-driven vision that enables employees to derive deeper purpose from their work.

The findings further confirm that motivated employees demonstrate higher levels of effort, resilience during challenging situations, and greater productivity, driven by a combination of extrinsic and intrinsic motivational factors. Feeling valued and committed, they voluntarily engage in OCB, such as helping coworkers and mentoring peers. This sense of ownership fosters proactive behavior (Menon & Bhagat, 2023), enabling them to support colleagues while maintaining high levels of performance.

OCB in this study further directly enhances employee performance by promoting collaboration and a positive work environment, ultimately boosting both individual and team productivity. Actions such as helping coworkers and sharing knowledge strengthen group cohesion, minimize workflow disruptions, and lead to higher collective outcomes (Udin, 2024). OCB fosters a culture of reciprocity, where employees who obtain assistance and gain help are more likely to offer it in return, creating a cycle of mutual assistance. Furthermore, positive workplace climates shaped by OCB are associated with up to 15% higher individual performance ratings (Nielsen, Hrivnak, & Shaw, 2009). By cultivating trust and morale, OCB plays a critical role in sustaining long-term high performance.

6. CONCLUSION

This study offers powerful and strong empirical support for the pivotal role of authentic leadership in strengthening and advancing employee performance, both directly and indirectly. The results demonstrate that authentic leadership fosters higher levels of job-related motivation and OCB, which serve as critical mediators in enhancing overall performance outcomes. Notably, job-related motivation not only drives employee performance but also reinforces OCB, while OCB itself serves as a critical contributor to high performance. These results reinforce the multifaceted influence of authentic leadership and highlight its strategic value in cultivating a motivated, engaged, and high-performing workforce.

Theoretically, this study promotes and advances the understanding of leadership and performance by developing and validating a serial mediation model that integrates psychological (motivation) and behavioral (OCB) mechanisms. While prior studies examined these mediators independently, this research contributes by explaining how and why authentic leadership influences employee performance through a sequential process. This integrative approach extends SDT by demonstrating that authentic leadership satisfies employees' intrinsic needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness, which subsequently translate into prosocial behaviors and improved performance. Moreover, by situating the model in the context of Indonesia's collectivist culture, the study provides fresh insights into how authentic leadership operates across diverse socio-cultural environments.

From a managerial and policy perspective, the findings highlight and underscore the need for values-based leadership development programs that prioritize authenticity, transparency, and ethical integrity. Organizations, particularly in sectors such as palm oil manufacturing, should incorporate authentic leadership competencies into recruitment, training, and promotion systems. Managers should be trained to foster open communication, provide constructive feedback, and align organizational goals with employees' personal values to strengthen motivation and citizenship behavior. At the policy level, HR policymakers and industry associations should integrate authentic leadership principles into leadership certification frameworks and capacity-building initiatives, ensuring that future leaders are equipped with self-awareness, moral reasoning, and relational transparency. Embedding these principles into national leadership development strategies can contribute to sustainable organizational performance and ethical corporate governance.

Despite its contributions, this study acknowledges and admits several inherent limitations. First, the relatively small sample size ($n = 145$) constrains the generalizability of the findings to the broader population of employees in Indonesia's palm oil sector. Although PLS-SEM enables robust estimation with modest samples, future studies employing larger and more heterogeneous datasets across multiple companies or sectors would enhance external

validity and strengthen empirical support for the proposed model. Second, the cross-sectional study restricts causal inference and does not capture potential temporal dynamics among the studied constructs. Longitudinal research would therefore offer deeper insights into how authentic leadership, job-related motivation, OCB, and employee performance evolve over time. Third, reliance on self-reported measures for job-related motivation, OCB, and employee performance may introduce common method bias. Incorporating objective performance indicators and multi-source evaluations such as supervisor assessments would improve measurement validity. Finally, as this study was conducted within Indonesia's cultural context, characterized by collectivism and high-power distance (Adrianson, 2023), future cross-cultural research could further examine the extent to which these findings are generalizable across different cultural settings.

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Transparency: The authors state that the manuscript is honest, truthful, and transparent, that no key aspects of the investigation have been omitted, and that any differences from the study as planned have been clarified. This study followed all writing ethics.

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