

# AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP PRACTICES OF EXCELLENT PRINCIPALS ON TEACHERS' WORK ENGAGEMENT IN NATIONAL SECONDARY SCHOOLS OF SOUTHERN MALAYSIA

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**Abstract:** *Today's educational systems across the world confront a number of challenges in establishing and sustaining effective teaching and learning. This imposes governments around the globe making myriads of efforts to obtain a high-quality education. At the same time, it elevates the amount of work-related stress and lowers enthusiasm among teachers as policy implementers. As a consequence, research is required to determine the impact of excellent principal leadership, particularly authentic leadership on the teachers' work engagement by educators in Malaysian secondary schools. This study used a quantitative design strategy with the utilisation of the ALQ and UWES instruments. The study sample included 298 teachers from the southern region of Malaysia who were led by excellent principals. The research data, which was analysed using IBM SPSS 26 statistical software, revealed that excellent principals' authentic leadership and teachers' work engagement occurred at a high and very high level. Correlation analysis reveals a substantial moderate link ( $r = .411$ ) between excellent principals' authentic leadership practises and teachers' work engagement. In fact, the data show that the principal's self-awareness is the primary predictor, accounting for up to 13.6% of the variance ( $R^2 = 0.136$ ) in enhancing teachers' work engagement. The study's findings have therefore added to current comprehension of how excellent principals' leadership practice in Malaysia affects teachers' organisational behaviour, particularly their work engagement in improving the performance of their schools.*

**Keywords:** *Leadership, Authentic Leadership, Work Engagement, Excellent Principals*

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## Introduction

Global developments necessitate educators in producing a workforce of high calibre in terms of academic qualification, technical expertise, creative thinking, and innovation. This poses a challenge to the Malaysian educational system (KPM, 2018), prompting the Ministry of

Education (MoE) to conduct a review of the national education system, which resulted in the Malaysian Education Blueprint 2013-2025 (KPM, 2013). The fifth shift in the PPPM 2013–2025, "ensuring high-performing leadership is installed in every school," is one of the MoE's strategic initiatives for projecting a significant impact on the country's educational system (KPM, 2013). This is due to the fact that school leaders are stated to be agents of impact in influencing teachers to fulfil the MoE's vision and goals. As a consequence, innumerable measures have been put in place, such as providing leadership training to future leaders and organising teachers under their leadership in order to help their organisations to flourish.

Nonetheless, there have recently been a number of concerns from teachers over their profession (Chong & Lai, 2019). The excessive workload is one of them (Siti Hauzimah, 2019). This undermines teacher morale, prompting many to contemplate early retirement, relocating to other schools, or, in the worst-case scenario, leaving the service or pursuing another career (Tan Sri Alimuddin M.D., 2022). In reality, information made public by the National Union of the Teaching Profession (NUTP) reveals that during the previous five years, more than 10,000 teachers have chosen to retire early (Luqman Arif Abdul Karim, 2022). Furthermore, the findings of the study by Chong, Muhammad Faizal and Zuraidah (2019), support the notion that teachers face work-related stress and thus refuse to deliver the dedication necessary by the organisation to fulfil its goals. Teachers are also less devoted to their profession as a result of a string of grievances, a high degree of teacher workload, and a desire to retire early. This can be proven through the findings of several studies that reported that teachers are more likely to complain on excess responsibility given to them, feeling demotivated and eventually become less committed and exhibit low work engagement (Kumar, Jauhari, Rastogi, & Sivakumar, 2018).

Bruce J. Avolio and Gardner (2005), on the other hand, have noted that negative beliefs and actions of instructors may frequently be transformed by the practise of positive psychological leadership, that is, with the importance of self-awareness and internal moral perspective reinforced by leaders through their conduct. The remark is consistent with the statements of Chan, Hannah, and Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, and Walumbwa (2005), who claimed that interpersonal leadership methods such as authentic leadership can improve the significance of teachers' self-awareness. This is due to the fact that authentic leaders are continuously consistent in their conduct and speech, which makes their followers more likely to listen to their viewpoints and recommendations. In addition, authentic leadership empowers school leaders to impact the behaviour of their followers, particularly work engagement. As a result, the authentic leadership behaviours of educational leaders must be examined in order to determine the influence of such practises on teacher work engagement. The researcher therefore intends to investigate the authentic leadership practice of excellent principals in Malaysia's southern region with relation to the work engagement of teachers who work under them

### **Research Objectives**

1. Determining the extent of authentic leadership practises of excellent principals and teacher's work engagement of national secondary schools in Malaysia's southern zone
2. Examining the significant relationship between excellent principals' authentic leadership and teachers' work engagement.
3. Analysing the sub-dimension of authentic leadership, which is the most important predictor of teachers' work engagement.

## Research Questions

1. What is the extent to which authentic leadership practises of excellent principals and teacher's work engagement of national secondary schools in Malaysia's southern zone?
2. Is there a significant relationship between excellent principals' authentic leadership and teachers' work engagement?
3. Which of the authentic leadership sub dimensions is the most important predictor of teachers' work engagement?

## Literature Review

### Authentic Leadership

According to Western scholars, authentic leadership is required to promote transformational leadership, which is tied to the leader's emotions, values, ethics, standards, and long-term goals (Ahmed, 2023; Asim, Turi, Shahab, & Rubab, 2023; Gardner et al., 2005). If one look at the notion of authentic leadership from the standpoint of various studies, one will see that it is extremely different. According to Luthans and Avolio (2003), authentic leadership is a strategy that encourages followers to develop themselves and engage in good behaviour. Accordingly, authentic leadership may be characterised simply as leaders who can be trusted, who can be anticipated, and who exhibit behaviours that motivate their staff to give better services (George, Sims, McLean, & Mayer, 2007). Moreover, Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing and Peterson (2008), noted that authentic leadership is constructed from positive psychological reactions that regulate the leader's conduct while characterising his leadership, such as an ethical organizational culture, higher self-awareness, an internal moral perspective, balanced process, and transparency relationship. Several educational leadership academics, including Ribeiro, Duarte, Filipe, and Oliveira (2019); Sidani and Rowe (2018), concurred that a leader who focuses on moral principles, integrity, and consistency between the leader's words and deeds exemplifies authentic leadership in the eyes of their followers. Hence, to enhance the devotion and efficiency of their followers, authentic leaders should implement a strategy that mirrors authentic conduct in their leadership.

Avolio, Luthans, and Walumbwa (2004) in Avolio and Gardner (2005) also defined an authentic leader as an individual who understands himself and thinks and conducts from a position of knowledge of their own values. To them, real leaders are conscious of their own capabilities, aware of the situation in which they work, and confident in their actions by exhibiting optimism, perseverance, and high moral standards. In Shamir and Eilam (2005) define, authentic leaders are distinguished by the following characteristics: the leader's role is centred on self-concept, a high degree of accomplishing self-revolution or a clear self-concept, the leader's vision is connected with self-concept, and leaders act in accordance with their individual feelings.

Overall, authentic leaders are thought to be knowledgeable, loyal to themselves, rarely make mistakes, have a high trust value, and are more follower-centred than most leadership models, which are thought to be more leader-centred (Karadag & Öztekin-Bayir, 2018; Luthans, Youssef, & Avolio, 2007; Moh. Bahzar, 2019). As a result, Ladkin and Taylor (2010) argued that authentic leaders may identify themselves and behave in accordance with followers. Their followers are also said to be able to follow their leaders' authentic nature. Thus, authentic leaders may use authentic leadership in their leadership to influence employees to meet all planned expectations and even grow their staff members' talents to accomplish organisational success.

## Work Engagement

Multiple definitions of work engagement resulted in a lack of agreement and clarity on what work engagement truly entails. In general, Kahn (1990), defines engagement as employees who will profit from their individual positions in the firm. They too employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally while carrying out their duties. Meanwhile, a group of researchers defines employee engagement as a good emotion about work, characterised by a willingness to provide energy, combat weariness, and have strong self-confidence in order to achieve organisational success. Meanwhile, to other scholars, work engagement is the participation and pleasure of those who are directly associated to employees in creating productivity, achieving customer satisfaction, making organisational profits, and being able to develop employees with high confidence (Gülbahar, 2017). Overall, these definitions demonstrate unequivocally that work engagement is a person's willingness to engage in their work is directly tied to how motivated they feel on the inside to carry out the duties that fall under their purview. In fact, it is regarded as a crucial aspect that may have a significant influence on increasing employee performance and organisational efficiency.

In the viewpoint of education, Bakker and Bal (2010); Kulophas, Ruengtrakul and Wongwanich (2015) stated that teacher work engagement is directly connected to how occupied a teacher is with work and how excited he is about his profession. White (2019), backs up this contention by noting that the engagement of the teacher's work is extremely significant during the teaching session in the classroom because the type of seriousness in the task is a predictor of the psychology of the teacher's self- engagement. As a result, this conduct may be changed through the impact of school leaders, cooperation, and solid support from school administration, as well as professional development programmes (Saeed & Ali, 2019). According to Kulophas et al. (2015), if the leader can make the teachers aware of the importance of valuing themselves, the leader will have no trouble developing a school that succeeds in academics. This reasoning is consistent with the findings of Feng (2016) in his study, which found that leadership practises have a favourable and substantial association with teacher psychology. Consequently, it is apparent that the engagement of teachers' activities must be regarded thoroughly and analysed by every school leader before designing a strategy in order to notice a high influence in the services delivered by them. Accordingly, in this study, the researcher employed the Work Engagement Model of Schaufeli et al. (2002), which is more relevant to the study's purpose of evaluating the effect of school leaders' leadership on the engagement of teachers' work.

### **The Relationship between Authentic Leadership and Teacher Work Engagement**

There is some research that shows that there is a link between authentic leadership and teacher work engagement. Kulophas, Hallinger, Ruengtrakul, and Wongwanich (2018), discovered that the impact of authentic leadership of primary school leaders on teacher work engagement in Thailand was moderate. This conclusion is consistent with the findings of Başaran and Kiral (2020), who discovered a favourable association between authentic leadership and teacher work participation in secondary schools in Aydın, Turkey. In the business world, the findings of a research conducted by Wirawan, Jufri, and Saman (2020), at an Eastern Indonesian firm reveal that authentic leadership has an indirect influence on employee work engagement. The impact of real leadership in promoting teacher organisational behaviour, particularly teacher's work engagement, must thus be thoroughly investigated.

## Research Methodology

This is quantitative research that used a questionnaire survey to determine teachers' perceptions of excellent principals' authentic leadership behaviours and its influence on their work engagement. This technique aids in gaining a deeper understanding of excellent principals' leadership practises and their influence on teachers' organisational behaviour, particularly teacher work engagement.

### Research Instrument

The instrument was modified from Walumbwa et al. (2008), Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ). The research instrument was organised into three major parts: Part A, Part B, and Part C. In Part A, the respondent's profile, including gender, age, race, and number of years spent working in the education industry and the present institution was gathered. Section B, on the other hand, comprised of 16 items covering four elements of genuine leadership: self-awareness, internal moral perspective, balanced process, and transparency relationship. Section C was based on the Utrecht Work Engagement Long Version (UWES) established by Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova (2006). The UWES questionnaire consisted of 17 items divided into three elements of work engagement: dedication, vigour, and absorption. As a result, the total number of elements in the disseminated questionnaire is 38. Both of these instruments have been pilot tested, and Table 1 summarises the reliability results for each instrument.

**Table 1: Instrument Reliability Values**

Variables	No of Items	Reliability value $\alpha$
Authentic leadership	16	0.915
Work engagement	17	0.933

### Population

This study's population comprises of national secondary school teachers who work under the supervision of excellent principals in Malaysia's southern zone, specifically the states of Malacca and Johor. This study delved into the leadership practises of excellent principals and their influence on teachers' work engagement. Their practices should be investigated since they serve as mentors to new school leaders (Lokman, M. Al Muzammil, & Mislina, 2013). Hence, in this study, the researcher will investigate their leadership practises, particularly the authentic leadership practises of excellent principals in Malaysia's southern zone.

According to EPRD data, there are approximately 650 teachers serving under the leadership of excellent principals in Malaysia's Southern Zone. In accordance with the table of Krejcie and Morgan (1970), this resulted in a total of 242 teachers participating in this study. To eliminate the chance of incomplete instruments and a poor return rate, the sample size was raised to 20%. (Hair, Black, Babin, & Anderson, 2019). This study included 48 more samples, resulting in 290 respondents. Nonetheless, there were 278 instruments that could be employed in this investigation. The selection of respondents is done by random sampling method.

### Data Collection Procedures

Researchers began gathering study data, which took four weeks to complete. To disseminate surveys and collect research data, online tools such as Google Forms were employed. All of these procedures were carried out with the assistance of school administration. The Google Form was shared with school officials and delivered to teachers at their respective schools.



### Data Analysis

The IBM SPSS 26 programme was utilised to analyse descriptive statistical data, correlation coefficients, and multiple regression in this investigation. Descriptive statistics were examined using mean values and standard deviations, while correlation coefficients were calculated using Pearson correlations and multiple regressions were performed using stepwise solutions. The interpretation of the mean score is based on the formulation of Lind, Marchal, and Wathen (2013) for descriptive analysis. Based on this concept, the mean score for the interval of 7 values on one interval is 1.2. As a result, the score is split into seven levels: very high (7.00 - 5.81), high (5.80 - 4.61), medium (4.60 - 3.41), low (3.40 - 2.21), and very low (2.20 - 1.00). While Randolph and Myers (2013), are cited for the interpretation of the Pearson correlation value. Several F-values and significance thresholds were investigated for the regression analysis, as well as convention coefficient values ( $R^2$ ) and beta values ( $\beta$ ).

The normality test was performed at the beginning to confirm that the data was normally distributed for each variable. This normality test is used before correlation and regression analysis. If the data in a study is regularly distributed, inferential analysis may be carried out. The data's normality is first determined, which includes missing data, multi-collinearity, and finding outliers and normality. The researcher additionally verifies that the data is comprehensive and meets the technical data criteria, such as Skewness and Kurtosis, as proposed by Hair, Black, Babin and Anderson (2019).

### Findings

#### Respondent Demographic Profile

Gender, age, race, tenure in the field of education, and length of experience serving in the current school constitute the demographic profile. Table 1 illustrates the frequency and percentage distribution of respondents' demographics.

**Table 2: Instrument Reliability Values**

Demographic	Characteristics	Frequencies	Percentage %
Gender	Male	61	21.9
	Female	217	78.1
Race	Malay	252	90.6
	Chinese	14	5
	Indian	9	3.2
	Other	3	1.1
Highest Academic Qualification	Diploma	1	4
	Bachelor	248	89.2
	Masters	29	10.4
	Doctorate	-	-
Age	23 years to 30 years	15	5.4
	31 years to 40 years	102	36.7
	41 years to 50 years	90	32.4
	51 years to 60 years	71	25.5
Tenure	1 year to 5 years	16	5.8
	6 years to 20 years	157	56.5
	21 years to 29 years	72	25.9
	30 years or more	33	11.9

Tenure in current schools	1 year to 5 years	67	24.1
	6 years to 10 years	63	22.7
	11 years to 15 years	77	27.7
	16 years to 19 years	37	13.3
	20 years or more	34	12.2

According to Table 2, female teachers made up the majority of the respondents at 217 or 78.1% compared to 61 or 21.9% of male respondents. In terms of racial demographics, the Malay has the largest frequency of 252 or at 90.6%. This is followed by the Chinese at 14 or 5% of the respondents and the Indian with 9 or 3.2% of the respondents. Other races made up the minority at 3 or 1.1% of the total samples. In terms of the highest academic level, 248 (89.2%) of the respondents had earned a master's degree, followed by 29 sample (10.4%) who had obtained bachelor's degrees and diploma at 4%. No respondents with a doctorate degree as sample in this study.

The bulk of respondents aged 31 to 40 were 102 (36.7%), followed by 90 (32.4%) aged 41 to 50. A total of 71 respondents (25.5%) are between the ages of 51 and 60, while just 15 (5.4%) are between the ages of 23 and 30. A total of 157 respondents have service tenure in the field of education ranging from 6 to 20 years, accounting for 56.5%. Whereas, 72 respondents who have served from 21 to 29 years representing 25.9% of the current school. Nevertheless, 33 respondents have served for 30 years or more, accounting for 11.9%, while just 16 respondents have served for 1 to 5 years, accounting for 5.4%. In terms of duration of service at the current school, the biggest percentage of 77 respondents (27.7%) served for 11 to 15 years. After that, 67 respondents (24.1%) served at their present school from 1 to 5 years, 37 respondents (13.3%) served from 16 to 19 years, and 34 respondents (12.2%) served for 20 years or more at their current school.

### The Level of Authentic Leadership Practises of Exceptional Principals and Teacher’s Work Engagement of National Secondary Schools in The Southern Zone of Malaysia

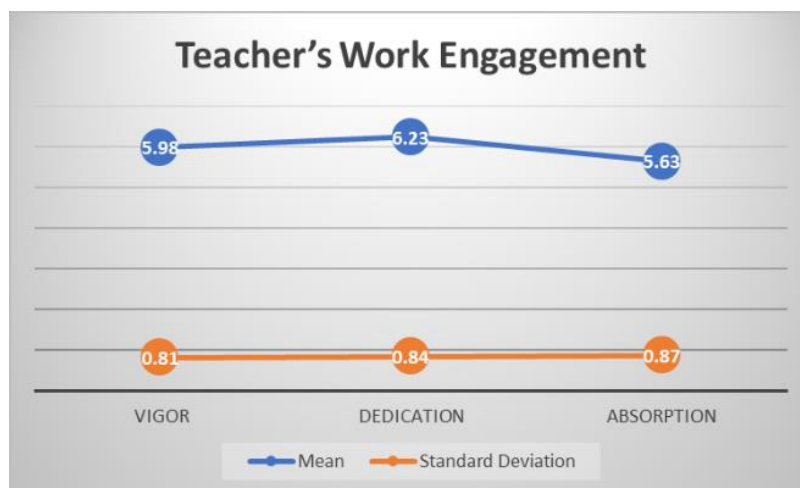
The study data was evaluated using descriptive analysis, which makes reference to the mean value and standard deviation, in order to quantify the extent of authentic leadership behaviours.



**Figure 1: Level of Authentic leadership Practice**

Interpretation Mean Value 1.0 – 2.2: Very Low, mean 2.21 – 3.4: Low, mean 4.61 – 5.80 High, Mean 5.81 – 7.00 Very High

Figure 1 depicts the degrees of aspects of authentic leadership practises of excellent principals in Malaysia's southern zone, all of which are at a high level. Yet, among the four dimensions of authentic leadership of these excellent principals, the mean value for the dimension of internal moral perspective (Mean = 5.43, Standard Deviation = 0.89) is at a high level compared to the dimension of self-awareness (Mean = 5.37, Standard Deviation = 1.02), which is second, followed by the transparency relationship dimension (Mean = 5.30, Standard Deviation = 1.15), and the balanced process dimension (Mean = 4. This demonstrates that excellent principals are consistently adhered to their core beliefs while making decisions to solve an issue.



**Figure 2: Level of Teacher's Work Engagement**

Interpretation Mean Value 1.0 – 2.2: Very Low, mean 2.21 – 3.4: Low, mean 4.61 – 5.80 High, Mean 5.81 – 7.00 Very High

Based on Figure 2, the levels for the dimensions of teachers' work engagement under the guidance of excellent principals in the southern zone of Malaysia are presented, all of which are at a very high level dimensions of dedication and vigor and high dimensions of absorption. However, among the three dimensions of teachers' work engagement, the mean value for the dedication dimension (Mean = 6.23, Standard Deviation = 0.84) is at a high level compared to the vigor dimension (Mean = 5.98, Standard Deviation = 0.81) which is in second place, followed by the absorption dimension (Mean = 5.63, Standard Deviation = 0.87) This shows that teachers under the guidance of excellent principals always show very high work engagement especially from the aspect of dedication and vigor followed by absorption.

**Table 3: The Overall Level of the Excellent Principal's Authentic Leadership and Their Teacher's Work Engagement**

Variables	Mean	Standard deviation
Authentic leadership	5.25	0.852
Teacher's work engagement	5.93	0.749

Interpretation Mean Value 1.0 – 2.2: Very Low, mean 2.21 – 3.4: Low, mean 4.61 – 5.80 High, Mean 5.81 – 7.00 Very High

Table 3 illustrates the total degree of authentic leadership behaviours and teacher's work engagement under the supervision of excellent principals. Based on Table 3, authentic leadership behaviours of excellent principals in Malaysia's southern zone are at a high level, with a mean value of 5.25 and a standard deviation of 0.852. In addition, the degree of commitment of teachers is quite high under the leadership of an excellent principal.



### The Relationship between the Principal's Authentic Leadership and The Teacher's Work Engagement

The Pearson correlation test was performed to examine the link between two research variables, namely the association between authentic leadership and teachers' work engagement.

**Table 4: Person Correlation Analysis of Excellent Principals' Authentic Leadership and Teachers' Work Engagement in Malaysia's South Zone**

Authentic Leadership Dimensions	Work Engagement
	0.411**

\*\* significant at a value of 0.01 (2-tailed)

Table 4 demonstrates the correlation coefficient ( $r=0.411$ ) between the excellent principal's authentic leadership variables and the teacher's work engagement. The Pearson Correlation test coefficient for the entire study sample ( $N=278$ ), as shown in Table 4, demonstrates the existence of a substantial positive association between authentic leadership of excellent principals and engagement of teachers' work ( $r=0.411$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). According to Randolph and Myers (2013) assessment of the relationship, as shown in Table 5, a moderate strength of relationship was obtained for the relationship between the excellent principal's authentic leadership variables and the teacher's work engagement. The findings of this substantial association indicate that when the principal's authentic leadership score is high, the achievement of teachers' work engagement is consistently greater. Consequently, the study's findings indicate a link between the authentic leadership variable of excellent principals and the variable of teachers' work engagement.

**Table 5: Strength Level of Correlation Coefficient Value (r)**

Size of Correlation Coefficient (r)	Correlation strength
.50 – 1.00	High
.30 - .49	Moderate
.10 - .29	Low

Source: Randolph & Myers (2013, p. 103)

### The Most Important Predictor of Teacher Work Engagement in the Authentic Leadership Sub-dimension

**Table 6: The Model Influence of Authentic Leadership Practices on Teachers' Work Engagement**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.368a	.136	.132	.69823
2	.394b	.155	.149	.69143
3	.409c	.168	.158	.68769

Interpretation of  $R^2$  Value:  $<.13$  minor influence,  $.13-.26$  moderate influence,  $>.26$  high influence a. Predictors: (Constant), ALawareness

b. Predictors: (Constant), ALawareness, ALtransparency

c. Predictors: (Constant), ALawareness, ALtransparency, ALmoral

d. Dependent Variable: Engagement

**Table 7: Anova Table for the Influence of Authentic Leadership Practice Dimensions on Teacher Work Engagement**

ANOVA <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	21.099	1	21.099	43.277	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	134.556	276	.488		
	Total	155.655	277			
2	Regression	24.184	2	12.092	25.293	.000 <sup>c</sup>
	Residual	131.470	275	.478		
	Total	155.655	277			
3	Regression	26.075	3	8.692	18.379	.000 <sup>d</sup>
	Residual	129.579	274	.473		
	Total	155.655	277		43.277	

a. Dependent Variable: Engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), ALawareness

c. Predictors: (Constant), ALawareness, ALtransparency

d. Predictors: (Constant), ALawareness, ALtransparency, ALmoral

**Table 8: Table of Influence Coefficient Values of Dimensions in Authentic Leadership Practices on Teachers' Work Engagement**

Coefficients <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	4.473	.225		19.868	.000
	AL awareness	.271	.041	.368	6.579	.000
2	(Constant)	4.334	.230		18.878	.000
	AL awareness	.172	.057	.233	3.034	.003
	ALtransparency	.127	.050	.195	2.541	.012
3	(Constant)	4.067	.264		15.386	.000
	AL awareness	.108	.065	.146	1.667	.097
	ALtransparency	.108	.051	.166	2.130	.034
	ALmoral	.131	.065	.155	2.000	.047

a. Dependent Variable: Engagement

Significant level  $p < 0.05$

**Table 9: t Test of Predictor Variables Not Included in The Regression Model**

Excluded Variables <sup>a</sup>						
Model		Beta In	t	Sig.	Partial Correlation	Collinearity Statistics Tolerance
1	ALmoral	.186 <sup>b</sup>	2.431	.016	.145	.524
	ALbalance	.174 <sup>b</sup>	2.237	.026	.134	.510
	ALtransparency	.195 <sup>b</sup>	2.541	.012	.151	.521
2	ALmoral	.155 <sup>c</sup>	2.000	.047	.120	.505
	ALbalance	.097 <sup>c</sup>	1.064	.288	.064	.368

3	ALbalance	.080 <sup>d</sup>	.880	.380	.053	.365
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Significant level  $p < 0.05$

a. Dependent Variable: Engagement

b. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), ALawareness

c. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), ALawareness, ALtransparency

d. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), ALawareness, ALtransparency, ALmoral

Tables 6, 7, 8 and 9 demonstrate that for the study population (sample size = 278), the three dimensions of ALawareness (self-awareness), dimension ALtransparency (transparency relationship), and dimension ALmoral (internal moral perspective) are predictors of teacher work engagement scores. The study's results demonstrate that the dimension ALbalance (balanced process) has no beneficial impact on the amount of teachers' work engagement. Notably, self-awareness [ $F(1,276) = 43.28, p < 0.05$ ] accounted for 13.6% of the variation in the teacher's work engagement score ( $R^2 = 0.136$ ). This demonstrates how well the component of ALawareness, self-awareness ( $\beta = .368, p < 0.05$ ), likely influence teachers' work engagement. The findings revealed that the dimension of ALawareness, self-awareness, contributed as much as 13.6% to the variant of increased teachers' work engagement with a value of  $\beta = .368$ . This means that an increase of one unit in the dimension of ALawareness, self-awareness, contributes to an increase of .136 in teachers' work engagement.

The combination of ALawareness, self-awareness ( $\beta = .233, p < 0.05$ ) and dimension of ALtransparency, relationship transparency ( $\beta = .195, p < 0.05$ ) increased teachers' work engagement by (15.5-13.6) % or 1.9% to the variance ( $R^2 = 0.155$ ) [ $F(2,275) = 25.29, p < 0.05$ ]. While the combination of dimensions of ALawareness, self-awareness ( $\beta = .146, p > 0.05$ ) with ALtransparency, relationship transparency ( $\beta = .166, p < 0.05$ ) and dimensions of ALmoral, internal moral perspective ( $\beta = .155, p < 0.05$ ) was found to increase teachers' work engagement by (16.8 -15.5) % or 13% variance ( $R^2 = 0.168$ ) [ $F(3,274) = 18.38, p < 0.05$ ].

## Discussion

The study's results indicate that excellent principals have a high level of authentic leadership. This demonstrates that excellent principals constantly conduct authentic leadership in their schools, where their words and behaviour are consistent, increasing the value of trust in them. Furthermore, according to teachers' perceptions, the balancing dimension of the information process is at the greatest level, indicating that leaders always engage teachers in making school decisions. It is fair to assert that the teacher's voice and opinion are always taken into account during the decision-making process.

In addition, the findings suggest that the level of teachers' work engagement is very high. As mentioned by Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzales-Roma and Bakker (2002), teachers are constantly motivated and willing to devote energy, battling exhaustion, and having strong self-confidence to achieve organisational effectiveness. When thoroughly analysed, the dimension of dedication reveals a very high degree. According to Schaufeli et al. (2002), if a teachers has access to extra resources, such as support from colleagues, appropriate feedback, and the construction of a learning environment by school leaders, the dimension of dedication may be at a high level. As a result, excellent principal leadership inspires teachers to elevate their enthusiasm to work

Other than that, the results obtained from this study demonstrate a substantial moderate relationship ( $r = .411$ ) between excellent principals' authentic leadership practises and teachers' work engagement. This conclusion is consistent with the findings of Kulophas et al. (2018),

who discovered a modest effect of authentic leadership of primary school leaders on teachers' work engagement in Thailand. This conclusion is consistent with the findings of Başaran and Kiral (2020), who had discovered a favourable association between authentic leadership and teachers' work engagement in secondary schools in Aydın, Turkey. In the business world, the findings of a research conducted by Wirawan et al. (2020), at an Eastern Indonesian firm showed that authentic leadership has an indirect influence on employees' work engagement. The outcomes of this study also suggest that the self-awareness dimension of excellent principals is the key predictor (13.6% variance,  $R^2=0.136$ ) in raising the level of teachers' work engagement. It is evident from this that good principals appreciate their connections with those around them. This clearly demonstrates that teachers perceive their principal to be someone who constantly examines self-reflection internally before making any choice, and who is also always aware of the values, identity, emotions, objectives, and reasons in the area in which they work (Saeed & Ali, 2019; Walumbwa et al., 2008). This practise is inextricably linked to the mentoring process whereby the excellent principals become mentors to their teachers (mentees) in order to improve teachers' professionalism or teachers' instructional knowledge and skills. This understanding is a priority for every school leader in boosting students' academic progress, which excellent principals always put in their minds.

### Conclusion

Essentially, leaders who practise authentic leadership have their distinctive characteristics and behaviours that might have an influence on teachers' work engagement. According to Hollis (2018), individuals who succeed in their area frequently place a high importance on their own authenticity. That is consistent with the study's findings that excellent principals are continuously consistent with their words and deeds, allowing them to quickly acquire the trust of teachers. Moreover, it has been demonstrated that authentic leadership by excellent principals contributes to increasing teachers' work engagement. Excellent principals frequently promote teacher participation in decision-making. Transparent communication, in essence, offers teachers confidence and trust to support all school reforms. This study has shown excellent principals' leadership to the ministry division, novice leaders and teachers on the practice of excellent leaders. In addition, it is also suggested that a qualitative study may be conducted in future to explore the leadership of excellent principals in order to extract their real-life effective practice of leadership in schools.

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