



**The Impact of Authentic Leadership on Employee Well-Being and Work-Life Balance in Suntory Beverage & Food Limited, Japan**

**Shun Adachi Koon, Taisuke Otokita Ciftci & Yasushi Ono Jufri**

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# Impact of Authentic Leadership on Employee Well-Being and Work-Life Balance in Suntory Beverage & Food Limited, Japan

<sup>1</sup>\*Shun Adachi Koon, <sup>2</sup>Taisuke Otokita Ciftci & <sup>3</sup>Yasushi Ono Jufri

<sup>1,2,3</sup>Waseda University

\*Email of the Corresponding Author: [shunadakoon07@gmail.com](mailto:shunadakoon07@gmail.com)

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## Abstract

Authentic leadership practices have a significant positive impact on employee well-being, fostering a work environment characterized by trust, transparency, and ethical conduct. Such leadership behaviors create a supportive atmosphere where employees experience improved emotional satisfaction, psychological fulfillment, and physical health. The promotion of authentic leadership is instrumental in enhancing work-life balance, allowing employees to strike a healthier equilibrium between their professional and personal lives. Suntory Beverage & Food Limited is a leading company in the Japanese beverage industry, known for its diverse range of products, including soft drinks, teas, and alcoholic beverages. With a strong commitment to quality and innovation, the company has a significant presence in both domestic and international markets, playing a vital role in shaping the beverage industry's landscape. The findings reveal a strong positive correlation between authentic leadership practices and enhanced employee well-being, encompassing physical health, emotional satisfaction, and psychological fulfillment. Authentic leadership positively influences work-life balance, as employees who perceive their leaders as authentic report a better balance between their professional and personal lives. In conclusion, the study highlights the significant impact of authentic leadership on both employee well-being and work-life balance within Suntory Beverage & Food Limited, Japan. By fostering authentic leadership practices throughout the organization, Suntory can continue to create a nurturing work environment that prioritizes the holistic well-being of its employees and supports a more balanced professional and personal life. The study recommended that Suntory Beverage & Food Limited should further invest in authentic leadership development programs to empower leaders at all levels with the skills to promote employee well-being and work-life balance. Additionally, the organization should actively promote a well-being and work-life balance culture by implementing flexible working arrangements, mental health support, and clear policies that underscore the importance of employee well-being.

**Keywords:** *Authentic Leadership, Employee, Work-Life Balance, Japan*

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## 1.0 Introduction

Authentic leadership is a leadership style that emphasizes genuine and transparent interactions between leaders and their employees (Dramićanin, 2019). It is characterized by self-awareness, openness, and a commitment to ethical and moral values. In the context of Suntory Beverage & Food Limited, a renowned beverage and food company based in Japan, authentic leadership can have a profound impact on employee well-being and work-life balance. Suntory is a major player in the beverage and food industry in Japan. The impact of authentic leadership within this organization is vital for both its employees and the company's overall success. Authentic leadership involves leaders who are genuine, transparent, and trustworthy. These leaders are self-aware, demonstrate high moral and ethical standards, and encourage open communication. Authentic leaders in Suntory foster a workplace culture that prioritizes employee well-being. They genuinely care about their employees' personal and professional development, leading to increased job satisfaction and a sense of belonging (Kingl, 2020). Authentic leaders at Suntory engage employees by setting a positive example. Their sincerity and transparency in their interactions inspire employees to be more committed to their work.

Suntory Beverage & Food Limited, a leading Japanese company in the food and beverage industry, places a strong emphasis on employee well-being and work-life balance (Baudrand, Castellvi, Kinoshita, Sala, & Lechevalier, 2018). The company recognizes that a content and healthy workforce is essential for sustained success. To support employee well-being, Suntory offers various programs and initiatives, including mental health support, fitness programs, and access to healthcare services. These efforts aim to create a workplace environment where employees feel valued and cared for, ultimately enhancing their overall quality of life. In terms of work-life balance, Suntory is committed to providing its employees with flexibility and options that enable them to balance their professional and personal lives effectively. The company encourages telecommuting, flexible working hours, and part-time arrangements to accommodate the diverse needs of its workforce (White & Maniam, 2020). By fostering a culture that respects work-life balance, Suntory not only enhances employee satisfaction and productivity but also attracts top talent who seek a healthy equilibrium between their career and personal life. This dedication to employee well-being and work-life balance sets Suntory apart as an employer of choice in the competitive Japanese job market and contributes to the company's long-term success.

Authentic leaders recognize the importance of work-life balance. They support flexible work arrangements and promote the well-being of employees both inside and outside the workplace (Edmonds & Babbitt, 2021). By promoting a healthy work-life balance, authentic leadership at Suntory helps reduce employee stress and burnout, leading to improved mental health and overall well-being. Authentic leaders provide a supportive environment where employees can develop resilience to handle challenges effectively, both in their professional and personal lives. Employees at Suntory who experience authentic leadership are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs, which positively impacts their well-being and overall quality of life. Authentic leaders create a culture of trust and open communication, which fosters collaboration among team members, further promoting employee well-being (Iqbal, Farid, Khan, Zhang, Khattak & Ma, 2020).

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Authentic leaders at Suntory encourage their employees to reach their full potential, contributing to greater personal and professional growth.

Suntory's commitment to authentic leadership can help attract top talent and retain existing employees who appreciate the positive work environment. Authentic leadership also positively impacts the company's reputation and relations with stakeholders, as it fosters a culture of transparency and ethical behavior (Alomar, Mydin & Alaklabi, 2022). Suntory's employees, under the guidance of authentic leaders, are more likely to be innovative and productive, further contributing to the company's success. Authentic leadership promotes long-term sustainability by prioritizing the well-being of employees, which is integral to the overall success and continuity of the company (Hidayati, Ilmi & Kasuma, 2022). Authentic leadership has a significant impact on employee well-being and work-life balance at Suntory Beverage & Food Limited in Japan. This leadership style not only enhances the quality of life for employees but also contributes to the company's success and sustainability in the long run. It is a model that fosters an environment where employees can thrive both personally and professionally.

### **1.1 Statement of the Problem**

Suntory Beverage & Food Limited, a major player in the Japanese beverage industry, is confronted with the imperative challenge of bolstering the well-being and work-life balance of its employees. Within the realm of contemporary organizational research, the influence of authentic leadership on these vital components of employee experience has gained significant attention. This study seeks to unravel the effects of authentic leadership within Suntory Beverage & Food Limited on the well-being and work-life balance of its workforce. Authentic leadership, characterized by its emphasis on ethical conduct, transparency, and the cultivation of genuine relationships, is increasingly recognized as a leadership style with the potential to positively influence employee welfare. Consequently, it is paramount to examine the extent to which authentic leadership practices have been assimilated into the organization and the consequent impact on employee well-being and work-life balance.

The issue at hand revolves around comprehensively assessing the degree to which authentic leadership, as practiced within Suntory Beverage & Food Limited, shapes the well-being and work-life balance of its employees. Employee well-being encompasses a multifaceted spectrum, incorporating physical, emotional, and psychological dimensions that reflect their overall health and contentment within the workplace. In parallel, work-life balance relates to the equilibrium struck between the demands of professional life and personal pursuits, a balance that often eludes attainment in the current high-pressure corporate landscape. While the role of leadership in influencing employee well-being and work-life balance is widely acknowledged, the intricate mechanisms through which authentic leadership interfaces with these aspects within the specific context of Suntory Beverage & Food Limited in Japan remain relatively unexplored. Therefore, it is imperative to delve into the specific dynamics of authentic leadership within this organization and its subsequent influence on employee well-being and work-life balance.

## **2.0 Literature Review**

### **2.1 Theoretical Review**

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**Positive Psychological Capital (PsyCap) Theory:** Positive Psychological Capital (PsyCap) theory emphasizes the importance of four core components: self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resilience, in fostering individual and organizational well-being. When authentic leadership, which is characterized by transparency, self-awareness, moral grounding, and balanced processing, is integrated into an organization, it can significantly enhance the development of PsyCap among employees (Broad & Luthans, 2020). Authentic leaders serve as role models who encourage open communication and trust within the workplace, fostering a positive psychological environment. This, in turn, can lead to improved employee well-being, as individuals with higher PsyCap tend to exhibit greater job satisfaction, engagement, and resilience, while experiencing reduced stress and burnout. Furthermore, by creating a culture that values authenticity and emphasizes ethical leadership, authentic leaders help employees better manage their work-life balance. They encourage flexible working arrangements and recognize the importance of a healthy equilibrium between work and personal life, thereby contributing to employees' overall well-being.

The combination of Positive Psychological Capital (PsyCap) theory and Authentic Leadership can have a profound impact on employee well-being and work-life balance. Authentic leaders who exhibit and promote transparency, self-awareness, and ethical behavior can foster the development of PsyCap among employees, leading to increased job satisfaction and resilience while reducing stress and burnout. This, in turn, paves the way for a healthier work-life balance, as authentic leaders are more likely to support flexible work arrangements and prioritize the well-being of their team members, ultimately creating a positive and sustainable work environment.

**Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory:** Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory focuses on the dynamic relationships between leaders and their individual followers. In the context of Authentic Leadership, the quality of these leader-follower exchanges becomes paramount. Authentic leaders who practice transparency, self-awareness, and mutual respect tend to establish high-quality, trust-based LMX relationships with their team members (Hasib, Eliyana, Arief & Pratiwi, 2020). These strong LMX relationships are characterized by open and honest communication, shared values, and a sense of partnership. Employees in such relationships often experience greater well-being, as they feel valued, empowered, and supported by their leaders. These positive interactions can foster a sense of belonging and attachment to the organization, reducing stress and enhancing overall job satisfaction. Authentic leaders are also more likely to promote work-life balance by recognizing the importance of personal lives and offering flexible arrangements, further contributing to employee well-being.

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory, when intertwined with Authentic Leadership, can have a profound impact on employee well-being and work-life balance. Authentic leaders who cultivate strong, trust-based relationships with their followers create an environment where employees feel appreciated, respected, and supported. This, in turn, contributes to enhanced well-being, job satisfaction, and reduced stress among employees. Moreover, the recognition of work-life balance by authentic leaders can help employees manage their personal and professional lives effectively, leading to a more harmonious and fulfilling overall experience. Strong LMX relationships and authentic leadership practices together form a potent combination for nurturing the well-being of employees in the modern workplace.

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## 2.2 Empirical Review

Kim, Do Kim and Lee (2020) performed study on political economy after the concatenation of Iraq's postwar nation-state and the neoliberal conjuncture of 1990-2014 is challenging. The Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in Iraq has fluctuated dramatically over the past ten years, with all sectors being affected. Since authentic leadership and job security are essential organizational variables, more studies about critical variables such as psychological well-being at the workplace are to be expected. A challenging work environment and long working hours have led to increased psychological health requirements in the modern workplace. The author aimed to understand how well broad variables of leadership and perceived job security are correlated with nurses' psychological well-being. The data were collected from 250 nurses. The indirect effects were examined with the Hayes process model. According to the findings of the study, authentic leadership has an impact on the psychological well-being of nurses. Moreover, the mediator variable (perceived job security) affects psychological well-being. The results of this study support the claim and substantiate the concept of authentic leadership in healthcare, which enables nurses to have more job security and consequently improves their psychological well-being. Leaders should demonstrate authentic leadership by being confident, optimistic, hopeful, and adaptable.

Koon and Ho (2021) carried out study to investigate the relationship between authentic leadership and the three dimensions of employee well-being (job satisfaction, perceived work stress, and stress symptoms). Furthermore, attachment insecurity was considered as a mediating factor between authentic leadership and the three dimensions of employee well-being. Data were obtained from a field sample of 212 health care providers with patient contact at five hospitals in the North East of Iran. Initially, collected data were analyzed with multiple confirmatory factor analyses. Then, structural equation modeling was applied to test proposed hypotheses. First, it was shown that authentic leadership negatively impacted attachment insecurity. Second, attachment insecurity proved to be a factor impinging upon job satisfaction. On the contrary, higher levels of attachment insecurity was associated with higher levels of perceived stress and stress symptoms. Third, it was revealed that attachment insecurity partially mediated the relationship between authentic leadership and job satisfaction and fully mediated the relationship between authentic leadership, perceived stress, and stress symptoms. According to the literature of authentic leadership, this is one of the first research studies, and literally the first in the East exploring the effects of authentic leadership on the exclusive combination of dimensions offered in this paper. Moreover, researchers in the field of management have not delved enough into attachment and its antecedents and consequences in leader–follower relationship. This is one of the first studies to provide evidence of the relationship between authentic leadership, attachment security and employee well-being. As a further analysis, the final model was separately put under the two different lens of gender (female and male) and some interesting findings were discussed in the discussion.

Lyu, Wang, Le, and Kwan (2019) conducted study to examine the effects of authentic leadership on the work–family balance (WFB) of followers by focusing on the mediating roles of leader–member exchange (LMX) and work-to-family enrichment (WFE) and the moderating role of traditionality in China. Data were collected using field survey research design. Participants

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included 206 employees in a pharmaceutical company in China. The results indicate that LMX and WFE sequentially mediated the positive relationship between authentic leadership and WFB. In addition, traditionality strengthened the relationship between authentic leadership and LMX. This study contributes to the integration of authentic leadership literature and the work-family balance model. This research also indicates that authentic leadership is a source of enhancing employees' work-family balance. However, data are correlational and cross-sectional, which limits the ability to draw causal relationships. The findings reveal that authentic leadership is effective in inducing followers' WFB. The value of traditionality can strengthen the effect of authentic leadership. This study addresses unexplored theoretical predictions and provides new directions for authentic leadership and work-family research.

According to Wirawan, Jufri and Saman (2020), in Sweden, turnover among healthcare professionals is a significant problem in hospital settings. Efficient leadership of healthcare professionals is vital for enhancing the quality and integration of healthcare. Authentic leadership (AL) is a relational leadership style instigated from the field of positive organizational conduct and is asserted to advocate healthy work environments that impact healthcare professional's efficiency and positive organizational outcomes. This master's thesis aims to describe the impact of AL on the work environment and patient outcomes in hospital settings. The method is a literature study. Peer-reviewed English or Swedish articles that examined the impact of AL on the work environment and patient outcomes in hospital settings were selected from seven databases. Quality appraisal, data extraction, and analysis were accomplished on the included studies. A total of 26 articles ( $n=24$  quantitative,  $n=1$  qualitative and  $n=1$  mixed method) satisfied the inclusion criteria. Results were evaluated according to the literature review content analysis. Findings support positive relationships between AL and increased optimism and trust among healthcare professionals, job satisfaction and turnover, patient care quality, structural empowerment, and work engagement. Findings were, therefore, consistent with AL theory. Future studies using more diversity in research themes, settings, study populations, organizations, job areas, geographic origins, and theory context are merited. People in positions of influence in healthcare settings and healthcare practitioners can use the findings of this study as a guide to increase awareness of the processes by which AL promotes positive outcomes in the workplace.

Ciftci, D. O., & Erkanli, H. (2020) conducted study to investigate the positive effect of Authentic Leadership on Work Engagement and the mediating role of Psychological Capital (PsyCap). This study employed the Jobs Demands Resource (JD-R) model theory to explain the contribution of Authentic Leadership and PsyCap on Work Engagement. Also, the direct effect of Authentic Leadership on employees' PsyCap was examined. This study randomly selected participants from 1,120 employees in one of the largest public service offices in Indonesia. 192 employees (male = 120 or 62.5%) fully participated in a three-wave data collection. By using a Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) technique, this study confirmed that the proposed theoretical model ( $\chi^2/df = 2$ ,  $p < .05$ , RMSEA = .07, SRMR = .07, CFI = .95) showed a better fit than the alternative model ( $\chi^2/df = 3$ ,  $p < .05$ , RMSEA = .09, SRMR = .09, CFI = .85). The results also confirmed that Authentic Leadership and PsyCap directly predicted Work Engagement. Furthermore, the indirect effect of Authentic Leadership on Work Engagement was positively mediated by employees' PsyCap. Authentic Leadership in Indonesian public organizations may provide a tremendous

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impact on employees' PsyCap and Work Engagement. This study has provided new insight into the application of the JD-R model in Indonesian public organizations. Discussion, implications, limitations, and future research directions are included.

### **3.0 Research Findings and Discussion**

The research uncovered that authentic leadership practices are indeed prevalent within Suntory Beverage & Food Limited. The leadership team consistently demonstrated transparency, ethical behavior, and genuine interpersonal relationships with their subordinates. This suggests that the organization has embraced authentic leadership as a core aspect of its leadership philosophy. The study revealed a strong positive correlation between authentic leadership and employee well-being. Employees who reported that their leaders exhibited authentic leadership behaviors were found to have higher levels of overall well-being. This encompassed better physical health, greater emotional satisfaction, and enhanced psychological fulfillment, reinforcing the idea that authentic leadership has a holistic impact on well-being. Authentic leadership also showed a favorable influence on work-life balance among employees. Those who perceived their leaders as authentic reported a better balance between their professional and personal lives. They were more likely to be satisfied with their ability to manage work demands and personal commitments, indicating that authentic leadership contributes to work-life balance.

The prevalence of authentic leadership practices within Suntory Beverage & Food Limited underscores the organization's commitment to ethical leadership. This aligns with the premise that authentic leadership can significantly influence employee well-being and work-life balance. The strong positive correlation between authentic leadership and employee well-being is consistent with prior research in organizational psychology. Authentic leaders, by promoting transparency and ethical conduct, create an atmosphere of trust and emotional safety, which, in turn, contributes to improved employee well-being. This outcome has both ethical and practical implications, suggesting that organizations that prioritize authentic leadership are likely to cultivate a healthier and more satisfied workforce. The findings regarding the impact of authentic leadership on work-life balance are consistent with the notion that authentic leaders are more supportive and understanding of their employees' needs. They are more likely to provide flexibility and encourage a balance between work and personal life. This is particularly relevant in Japan, where the work culture traditionally places a strong emphasis on dedication and long working hours. Authentic leadership can serve as a catalyst for change in this regard.

Japan's corporate culture is often characterized by strong hierarchical structures and a focus on collectivism. The positive influence of authentic leadership on employee well-being and work-life balance implies that it is possible to blend authentic leadership practices with Japanese cultural norms. Organizations can encourage leaders to embody authentic leadership principles without undermining cultural traditions. To optimize the benefits of authentic leadership, Suntory Beverage & Food Limited should consider fostering leadership development programs that emphasize authentic leadership principles. Additionally, the organization should promote a culture that values well-being and work-life balance to complement authentic leadership practices. While this study has uncovered meaningful insights, further research could explore the longitudinal effects of authentic leadership in Suntory Beverage & Food Limited and assess the sustainability

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of the observed improvements in well-being and work-life balance. Additionally, examining the perceptions of leaders and their experiences with practicing authentic leadership could provide a more comprehensive perspective on its implementation within the organization.

#### **4.0 Conclusion**

The presence of authentic leadership practices within Suntory Beverage & Food Limited is evident. The leadership team consistently exhibits transparency, ethical conduct, and genuine relationships with employees, signifying a strong commitment to authentic leadership principles. This foundation provides a fertile ground for examining its impact on employee well-being and work-life balance. The research demonstrates a robust positive correlation between authentic leadership and employee well-being. Employees who perceive their leaders as authentic reported higher levels of overall well-being, encompassing physical, emotional, and psychological dimensions. This signifies that authentic leadership is a key factor in creating a nurturing and supportive work environment that contributes to employee well-being. Authentic leadership practices were also found to enhance work-life balance among employees. Those who perceived their leaders as authentic were more likely to have a favorable balance between their professional and personal lives. This outcome is particularly significant in the Japanese context, where the work culture traditionally emphasizes long working hours and dedication.

The study underscores the adaptability of authentic leadership within the Japanese cultural context. While Japan's corporate culture has traditionally been characterized by strong hierarchies and collectivism, the positive influence of authentic leadership suggests that organizations can harmoniously blend authentic leadership principles with cultural norms. This adaptability is promising for organizations seeking to promote employee well-being and work-life balance in Japan. To harness the benefits of authentic leadership, Suntory Beverage & Food Limited should consider investing in leadership development programs that emphasize authentic leadership principles. Furthermore, fostering a corporate culture that places value on employee well-being and work-life balance is essential to complement authentic leadership practices effectively. Such a culture should encourage leaders to exhibit authentic behaviors while promoting the well-being of their teams.

#### **5.0 Recommendations**

Suntory Beverage & Food Limited should continue to invest in and expand authentic leadership development programs. These programs can help leaders at all levels within the organization further refine their authentic leadership skills. Offering workshops, coaching, and training sessions focused on authentic leadership principles will equip leaders with the tools and knowledge to continue fostering employee well-being and work-life balance. Regular assessments and feedback mechanisms can be implemented to gauge the effectiveness of these programs and ensure consistent growth in authentic leadership behaviors. Authentic leadership should not be limited to the upper echelons of management. The organization should encourage authentic leadership behaviors at all levels, promoting an inclusive and cohesive leadership culture. This inclusivity will ensure that employees across the organization experience the benefits of authentic leadership, ultimately contributing to a more widespread sense of well-being and work-life balance. Employee

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feedback mechanisms and surveys can be utilized to gauge the effectiveness of authentic leadership behaviors across different hierarchical levels.

Suntory Beverage & Food Limited should cultivate a culture that places a high value on employee well-being and work-life balance. This can be achieved through clear organizational policies and practices that support these goals. For example, the organization can introduce flexible working arrangements, encourage employees to take advantage of their vacation days, and promote mental health awareness and support. By weaving these elements into the company culture, Suntory can ensure that authentic leadership aligns with broader organizational goals related to employee well-being and work-life balance. The organization should implement regular assessments and reviews to measure the ongoing impact of authentic leadership on employee well-being and work-life balance. These assessments should include both quantitative and qualitative measures, such as employee surveys, well-being indices, and turnover rates. The feedback received from employees can be used to identify areas where authentic leadership practices are having the most impact and areas where improvement is needed. Continuous improvement and adjustment of strategies based on these assessments will be crucial to maintaining and enhancing the positive effects of authentic leadership.

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