



Authenticity and well-being in the workplace: a mediation model

Well-being in the workplace

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Received October 2010
Revised September 2010,
September 2010,
October 2010
Accepted October 2010

Abstract

Purpose – The purpose of this paper is to investigate the link between authenticity at work and well-being. First, the relationship between authenticity at work and hedonic and eudemonic well-being indexes is assessed. Second, the mediating role of meaning of work in the relationship between authenticity at work and subjective well-being at work is investigated.

Design/methodology/approach – In total, 360 managers from public organizations completed self-reported questionnaires. Multiple hierarchical regressions were used to assess the hypotheses.

Findings – Cognitive and behavioral components of authenticity at work explained a significant proportion of variance in each hedonic and eudemonic well-being indexes. Authenticity is positively associated with well-being at work. Moreover, meaning of work is a partial mediator of the relationship between authenticity and subjective well-being at work.

Practical implications – The results suggest that meaning of work is a mechanism in the relationship between authenticity and subjective well-being at work. The study highlighted a growing need to promote authenticity within organizations since it has been associated with public managers' well-being.

Originality/value – To the authors' knowledge, this is the first study showing the positive relationship between authenticity and well-being in the workplace amongst public organizations managers. It sheds a very new light on the importance of authenticity in work settings and on how it could be linked to meaningfulness in managerial roles.

Keywords Work identity, Managers, Public sector organizations, Employee attitudes

Paper type Research paper

Introduction

Employees' well-being recently emerged as an important challenge in organizations. The relationship between well-being and performance was clearly established (Gilboa *et al.*, 2008; Judge *et al.*, 2001). Hence, there is a growing need to fully understand what leads to employees' well-being. Since work is an important part of individuals' lives, understanding how to maintain and promote well-being in the workplace is crucial and managers are a particularly preoccupying group. Even if managers might have more control than employees over their work, they might be very susceptible to stress since they have high levels of responsibility and obligations (Brett and Stroh, 2003; Jamal, 1985) and are more likely to be exposed to work-related demands (Schieman *et al.*, 2006). Organizations face a growing problem of managing stress at work but are held back by a lack of understanding of the underlying causes or protecting factors of occupational stress.

Well-being and stress have been mainly explained by organizational factors (Viswesvaran *et al.*, 1999). Consequently, we still know few about personal factors that could lead to well-being. Amongst the personal factors, authenticity has recently emerged as a potential predictor of well-being (Ilies *et al.*, 2005). Some studies showed



empirical support for the positive link between authenticity but the number remains limited. As pointed out by Pavot *et al.* (1997), “conceptually, the connection between self-aspect congruence and subjective well-being seems clear, yet specific empirical linkages are largely lacking” (p. 184). There is a growing need to assess the role of authenticity on specific life domains such as work, particularly amongst managers (Llies *et al.*, 2005). To our knowledge, no study on the relationship of authenticity at work and well-being has been made amongst managers. Previous studies focused on general authenticity (Goldman and Kernis, 2002) and tended to favour a hedonic perspective of well-being (i.e. subjective well-being), putting aside the eudemonic aspect of well-being (i.e. psychological well-being) (Lent, 2004; Keyes *et al.*, 2002; Ryan and Deci, 2001; Ryff and Keyes, 1995). Not taking into account this perspective could lead to a restrictive view of well-being and limit the scope of the findings.

Accordingly, and following Llies and colleagues’ (2005) recommendation, namely to measure authenticity amongst managers or organizational leaders, the present study aimed to identify the relationship between authenticity at work and managers’ well-being in the workplace. In the next sections, formal definitions and conceptualisations of authenticity and well-being will be displayed. Moreover, the established relationships between authenticity and well-being will be reported.

Defining authenticity

In literature, authenticity refers to being one true or real self and acting in congruence with one self and values. Humanistic theorists refer to self respect, respect of one’s needs and values (see Erikson, 1959; Maslow, 1976), whereas self-determination theorists such as Deci and Ryan (1995, 2000) and Sheldon and Kasser (1995) refer to authenticity in terms of self-determined or self-initiated behaviors in concordance with intrinsic basic psychological needs of competency, autonomy and relatedness.

Recently, a more comprehensive conceptualisation of authenticity has emerged. This conception is strongly related to self-determination theories and growth. Indeed, Goldman and Kernis (2002) define authenticity as the unobstructed operation of one’s true or core self in one’s daily enterprise. According to their model, authenticity is comprised of cognitive (i.e. awareness and unbiased processing) and behavioural dimensions (i.e. action and relational orientation) Cognitive aspects of authenticity are related to the understanding and appraisal of the self. Those dimensions could be integrated in Deci and Ryan’s (2000) view of authenticity defined as aspects of the personality that are fully self-endorsed, volitionally enacted, and personally meaningful to the individual. On the other hand, behavioural dimensions are merely acting in concordance with one’s own true self and being genuine in one’s interactions and relations (Goldman and Kernis, 2002) (see Kernis and Goldman, 2006; Goldman and Kernis, 2004 for comprehensive descriptions). As pointed out by Llies and colleagues (2005), Goldman and Kernis’ (2002) multi-dimensional conceptualization of authenticity is very promising for studies in the workplace.

Defining well-being

Traditionally, well-being has been conceptualized according to two distinct traditions: hedonic/subjective and eudemonic/psychological (Waterman, 1993; Keyes *et al.*, 2002; Ryan and Deci, 2001). According to the results of a broad study using a national sample of US adults, indicators of subjective well-being and psychological well-being constitute

taxonomically distinct reflections of well-being (Keyes *et al.*, 2002). Accordingly, McGregor and Little (1998) found two distinct factors of well-being through factor analysis:

- (1) subjective well-being or happiness; and
- (2) psychological well-being or meaning.

Subjective well-being examines the evaluations of affect and life satisfaction or quality (Diener, 1984) whereas psychological well-being can be conceptualised as realizing one's true potential across lifespan (Ryan and Deci, 2001; Ryff and Keyes, 1995) and is the perceived thriving related to the existential challenges of life such as pursuing meaningful goals (Keyes *et al.*, 2002). Unfortunately, psychological well-being has been neglected in studies on well-being (Lent, 2004; Keyes *et al.*, 2002; Ryff and Keyes, 1995). Hence, along with subjective well-being, it constitutes a more comprehensive view of well-being (Ryan and Deci, 2001).

Even if there are not many studies establishing the relationship between authenticity and well-being, some concepts that are related to authenticity have been associated to both subjective/hedonic and psychological/eudemonic well-being, suggesting a link between authenticity and well-being. In the following section, empirical supports for the positive relationship between authenticity and, respectively, subjective and eudemonic well-being will be briefly displayed.

Hedonic view: subjective well-being through satisfaction and affect

Self-determination theorists (Deci and Ryan, 1985; Ryan and Deci, 2000) suggest that authentic integration and expression of core self-aspects are positively related to well-being. Sheldon and colleagues (1997) performed a study on the well-being through important roles (i.e. student, friend, romantic partner) amongst university students. The results revealed that individuals deliberately displaying valued aspects of the self in a role were less anxious ($\beta = -0.25, p < 0.01$), less depressed ($\beta = -0.29, p < 0.01$), and less distressed ($\beta = -0.28, p < 0.01$) than those who were more inconsistent with their core self. Hence, authenticity as the consistency of actions with the core self was positively associated to subjective well-being. Ryan *et al.* (2005) results abounded in the same direction. In their study on self-complexity amongst 89 students, they established that authenticity of the self aspects was strongly related to indicators of subjective well-being such as depressive symptoms ($r = -0.52, p < 0.001$), anxiety ($r = -0.53, p < 0.001$) and perceived stress ($-0.56, p < 0.001$). Also, in a series of researches on self-concordance of pursued goals, Sheldon and colleagues (Sheldon and Elliot, 1999; Sheldon and Kasser, 1995) showed that feeling one's goals are consistent with the self was positively associated to well-being. Moreover, Sheldon and Elliot (1999) showed there was an interaction between self-concordance and goal attainment, meaning that participants who pursued life goals with a sense that they express their authentic choices displayed more subjective well-being when they reached their goal. Hence, according to these studies, perceiving congruence with the self and self-endorsement across roles and in the targeted goals is positively related to subjective well-being ($\beta = 0.11, p < 0.05$, study 1 and $\beta = 0.23$, study 3).

Goldman and Kernis (2002) found out as well that general authenticity was positively associated to life satisfaction ($r = 0.40, p < 0.01$), and negatively related to negative affect ($r = -0.41, p < 0.01$). Results revealed that cognitive dimensions were both positively correlated with satisfaction ($r = 0.43, p < 0.01$ for awareness and $r = 0.23$,

$p < 0.05$ for unbiased processing) and negatively related with negative affect ($r = -0.36, p < 0.01$ for awareness). Hence, there is growing data supporting the idea that authenticity is positively related to hedonic or subjective well-being but none addressed these relationships in the workplace.

As discussed previously, there are two traditions in the study of well-being. Hence, other studies have assessed the relationship between authenticity and another important component of well-being: psychological well-being. In the following section, some results supporting a positive link will be described.

Eudemonic view: psychological well-being through meaning

Meaning is amongst the most important dimension of eudemonic well-being (Ryff and Singer, 1998). It seems intimately related to authenticity. In Reece's (2003) cases study about authenticity amongst five professionals, amongst the higher order categories that came off, experiencing meaning in life; passion and happiness and engaging in meaningful activities were directly reported when participants were questioned about living authentically. Quantitative studies also show a link between authenticity and psychological well-being. A study on self-concordant goals amongst 90 university students supported the positive connection between being self-concordant in one's goal pursuit and an aggregated measure of psychological well-being comprised of meaning, autonomy, mastery, relationships, growth and purpose ($r = 0.31, p < 0.01$; Sheldon *et al.*, 2002). Indeed, individuals who had a more integrated personality tended to display high psychological well-being. Also, in study on personal projects, McGregor and Little (1998) evaluated the relationship between integrity of the pursued project?merely, the consistency of the pursued actions and the self?and psychological well-being. According to their results, integrity was positively related to meaning ($\beta = 0.31, p < 0.001$). Also, when competing for variance, integrity amongst senior managers had a stronger association with well-being than efficacy, whereas it was the contrary amongst students.

In the self-discrepancy literature, Campbell *et al.*, (1994) showed that discrepancy between the real self and the ideal self was consistently negatively related to meaning in life ($\beta = 0.16, p = 0.001$). Hence, the closer individuals felt to their ideal selves, the more likely they were to report higher psychological well-being. However, amongst the reported studies, none has been made in work settings.

According to the theoretical relationships between authenticity, meaning and subjective well-being, we hypothesized a mediation model (Baron and Kenny, 1986; Preacher and Hayes, 2004):

- H1. Authenticity will be positively related to (a) satisfaction at work, and (b) positive affect at work and (c) meaning of work.
- H2. Negatively related to negative affect at work.
- H3. Meaning of work will be positively related to (a) satisfaction at work, and (b) positive affect at work.
- H4. Negatively related to negative affect at work.
- H5. The relationship between authenticity and (a) satisfaction at work, (b) positive affect at work, and (c) negative affect at work (i.e. subjective well-being at work) will be partially mediated through meaning of work.

Methods

Procedure

Three hundred and sixty French Canadian managers working in public organizations were invited to complete a series of questionnaires once, on the web via an email sent by the manager association of which they were members. Three associations were contacted. Participation was voluntary and completely anonymous. Participants were able to fill the questionnaires at the moment of their choice, either at work or at home. On average, participants took 20 minutes to complete the questionnaires. As a way of encouraging managers to participate, they were told that an executive report would be sent to their manager association and that they would be informed of general results. They had a between one to three months to complete the questionnaires. Two reminders were sent. We based our response rate on estimations of the number of members provided by each association. Hence, of the approximately 1,000 members invited to participate (i.e. 500 from the school managers association; 400 from the municipal managers association and 100 from governmental services), 360 completed the questionnaires, leading to a response rate of 36 percent. Participants' details are displayed in Table I.

Measure

For every selected questionnaire an instruction has been added to contextualise the items in the workplace. Besides, because the first language of participants was French, instruments were translated. Back translation method was used to validate the translation (Brislin *et al.*, 1973). In addition, five managers were invited to complete and comment the translated questionnaires to make sure that items were adequately formulated and easy to understand. Since we used translated questionnaires

Characteristic	Number of participants	Percentage
Gender		
Male	182	51.1
Female	178	49.4
Age group		
18 and 25 years old	4	1.1
26 and 35 years old	20	5.6
36 to 45 years old	70	19.4
46 to 55 years old	135	37.5
56 and 65 years old	31	8.6
Older than 65 years old	1 (marginal)	
Not mentioned	99	27.5
Domain		
School managers	173	48
Municipal managers	105	29.2
Managers from public governmental service	82	22.8
Management level		
First level manager (in charge of employees who were not managers)	240	66.7
Intermediate level manager (in charge of first level managers)	40	11.1
Executive level managers	24	6.7
Not mentioned	56	15.6

Table I.
Socio-demographic
characteristics of
participants

and adapted them to work settings, the structure of each translated questionnaire was assessed by parallel analysis (Horn, 1965; Zwick and Velicer, 1985) followed by principal factor analysis with orthogonal rotation. Items that loaded lower than 0.32 were removed (Tabachnik and Fidell, 2001). The factor analyses supported the original structures for each scale. However, as expected the structure of the authenticity scale was comprised of a behavioral and a cognitive dimension Table II.

Authenticity. Authenticity in the workplace was assessed using 25 items from the authenticity inventory (Goldman and Kernis, 2004) which were contextualized to refer to the participant's work setting. Nineteen items loaded significantly on only one factor (> 0.32 , Tabachnik and Fidell, 2001) but six items loaded significantly on both factors, leading to two main dimensions. Results were described in more details elsewhere (Ménard, 2008). Judgement based on theoretical background was used to determine to which factor the item belonged to. The behavioral dimension, authentic behaviors at work, was assessed by 13 items such as "I find that my behavior at work typically expresses my values" and "I try to act in a manner that is consistent with my personally held values when I am at work, even if others criticize or reject me for doing so". For each item, participants rated their agreement on each items on a 5 points Likert scale ranging from 1-strongly disagree to 5-strongly agree. Scale internal consistency was high ($\alpha = 0.81$). The cognitive dimension, unbiased awareness, assessed the awareness and knowledge of, trust in and minimal denial distortion, exaggeration or ignoring of one's motives, feelings, desires and self relevant cognitions. This dimension included 12 items such as: "In my workplace, I am very uncomfortable objectively considering my limitations and shortcomings" and "I am often confused about my feelings at work". Scale internal consistency was acceptable ($\alpha = 0.78$).

Meaning of work. The hypothesized mediating variable was assessed by the 5 items of the Presence scale from the Meaning in Life Questionnaire (Steger *et al.*, 2006), contextualized to the workplace. For each item (e.g. my work has a clear sense of purpose; I understand my work's meaning.) participants had to indicate whether the item was true on a 7 points Likert scale ranging from 1-absolutely untrue to 7-absolutely true. Scale internal consistency was high ($\alpha = 0.83$) and comparable to the original version ($\alpha = 0.86$).

Subjective well-being at work. Two widely used and acknowledged questionnaires were chosen to assess subjective well-being (see Diener, 1984 and Keyes *et al.*, 2002 for more details). First, the satisfaction with life scale (Diener *et al.*, 1985) translated by Blais *et al.* (1989) and contextualised in the workplace were used to assess current satisfaction at work. For each of the 5 items (e.g. I am satisfied by my work), the participant had to indicate if he/she "strongly disagree" or "strongly agree" on a 7 points Likert scale. Scale internal consistency was high ($\alpha = 0.81$). Second, the affect scale from Diener *et al.* (1995) translated in French by Rolland (1998) was used to assess positive and negative affect. The inventory is composed by six items assessing positive affect (e.g. joy) and 18 items assessing negative affect (e.g. anxiety). For each item, the participant had to indicate the frequency of the experienced affect over the last month on a 7 points Likert scale, ranging from 0-never to 6-many times a day. Scale internal consistency was high (i.e. $\alpha = 0.92$ for positive affect and 0.93 for negative affect) and comparable to both translated (i.e. $\alpha = 0.90$ for positive affect and 0.95 for negative affect) and original version (ranging between 0.78 and 0.85).

Predictor Variable	Satisfaction at work					Outcome Variables					Negative affect at work											
	F	df	B	SE	R ²	t	Sig.	F	df	B	SE	R ²	t	Sig.	F	df	B	SE	R ²	t	Sig.	
Meaning of work	202.104	357	0.879	0.062	0.601	14.216	0.000	51.085	349	0.557	0.078	0.357	7.147	0.000	13.050	349	-0.138	0.022	0.312	0.098	-6.151	0.000

Table II. Summary of multiple regression analyses for meaning of work predicting subjective well-being at work ($n = 358$)

Analyses

We tested our hypotheses by performing hierarchical multiple regressions. To assess mediation, we used Preacher and Hayes' (2004) procedure. Tables II, IV and V show the procedure, step by step.

Results

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlations between predictors and outcome variables are shown in Table III. To make sure gender and managerial level were not correlated to the predictors bivariate correlations were performed and revealed they were not significantly related to authenticity. Satisfaction at work, meaning and negative affect was negatively related to managerial level. Hence, it appears that executive managers felt less satisfaction and meaning in their work than first level managers. This could be related to the increasing social pressure associated to this role within an organization. Despite that, negative affect were less frequent amongst executive managers. Predicted and predictor variables were significantly related to each other, which is consistent with the relevant theories, research, and hypotheses mentioned above. The correlation between dependant variables ranged from weak to moderate (Cohen, 1988) and were all significant ($p < 0.05$). Correlations between the predictors were moderate to strong (Cohen, 1988). Additionally, the variance inflation factor and tolerance indexes revealed there were no multicollinearity problems that could jeopardize our analyses (Tabachnik and Fidell, 2001). Since the distribution of negative affect was positively skewed, a square root transformation was performed to make sure the regression assumptions were respected (Tabachnik and Fidell, 2001).

Using Preacher and Hayes' (2004) procedure, we assessed the mediation of meaning of work between authenticity and subjective well-being at work. Hence, for each of outcome variables, four regressions were performed. Step 1 assessed the correlation between each dimension of authenticity and each outcome variable. Results are displayed in Table V. Step 2 is displayed in Table IV and assessed the correlation

Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. Gender	1.49	0.50	0.01	0.00	-0.05	0.10	-0.02	-0.09	-0.03	
2. Management level	1.70	1.13		-0.15**	0.02	-0.13**	-0.12**	0.02	-0.07	
3. Satisfaction at work	5.35	1.17			0.45**	-0.33**	0.60**	0.42**	0.47**	
4. Positive affect at work	3.67	1.25				-0.13*	0.36**	0.39**	0.34**	
5. Negative affect at work (transformed)	0.98	0.36					-0.31**	-0.42**	-0.31**	
6. Meaning of work	6.22	0.80						0.46**	0.45**	
7. Unbiased awareness	3.52	0.59								0.54**
8. Authentic behaviors	3.98	0.51								

Table III. Means, standard deviations, and bivariate correlations of study variables ($n = 360$)

Note: Significance at: * $p < 0.05$ and ** $p < 0.01$

between each dimension of authenticity and the mediator (i.e. meaning of work). Step 3 assessed the correlation between meaning of work and each outcome variables. Finally, the last step assessed the result of adding meaning to the prediction model. According to the procedure, there is a full mediation when the correlation of the predictor is reduced to zero (i.e. when it becomes statistically non-significant). When the correlation of the predictor significantly decreases by adding the mediator, there is a partial mediation. Results are displayed in Table V. Sobel (1982) tests were performed to find out whether the partial mediations were significant. The results support a partial mediation model for every predictor and outcome variables and are displayed in Figure 1. Results of Sobel tests are displayed in Table VI.

Hence, *H1a*, *Hb* and *H2* were supported for the three components of subjective well-being. Overall, authenticity at work was moderately related to subjective well-being at work, with beta coefficients ranging from -0.313 to 0.469 (Cohen, 1988). More precisely, there was a positive relationship between satisfaction at work and both unbiased awareness and authentic behaviors at work (respectively, $\beta = 0.418$, $p = 0.000$; $\beta = 0.469$, $p = 0.000$). Negative affect at work was negatively related to unbiased awareness ($\beta = -0.419$, $p = 0.000$) and authentic behaviors at work ($\beta = -0.313$, $p < 0.001$). Positive affect at work was also significantly and positively related to authentic behaviors at work ($\beta = 0.336$, $p < 0.001$) and unbiased awareness ($\beta = 0.386$, $p = 0.000$).

H1c was supported. Authenticity was moderately related to meaning of work (Cohen, 1988). Taken separately, unbiased awareness ($\beta = 0.429$, $p = 0.000$) and authentic behaviors at work ($\beta = 0.454$, $p = 0.000$) were significantly correlated to meaning of work. Hence, the cognitive dimension of authenticity, namely unbiased awareness, explained 18.4 percent of the variance of meaning. Also, the behavioral dimension of authenticity explained 20.6 percent of the variance of meaning of work.

H3a, *H3b* and *H4* were also supported. Taken separately, meaning of work was a significant predictor of each component of subjective well-being at work. The relationship between meaning of work and satisfaction at work was positive and especially strong ($\beta = 0.601$, $p = 0.000$) (Cohen, 1988). The link between meaning of work and both types of affect was moderate (Cohen, 1988). Indeed, meaning of work was also positively related to positive affect at work ($\beta = 0.357$, $p < 0.001$) and negatively related to negative affect at work ($\beta = -0.312$, $p < 0.001$).

As illustrated in Figure 1, *H5* was supported. Therefore, the relationship between authenticity and subjective well-being at work was partly mediated by the perception of meaning of work. As displayed in Table VI, Sobel (1982) tests were performed and the partial mediations were significant for both cognitive (i.e. unbiased awareness) and behavioral (i.e. authentic behaviors) aspects of authenticity and satisfaction, positive affect and negative affect at work. Steps 1 and 4 are displayed in more details in Table V.

Predictor variable	F	df	B	Outcome variable		R ²	t	Sig.
				Meaning of work	SE			
Unbiased awareness	81.124	359	0.591	0.066	0.429	0.184	9.007	0.000
Authentic behavior	93.362	359	0.738	0.076	0.454	0.206	9.662	0.000

Table IV.
Summary of multiple regression analyses for authenticity at work predicting meaning of work ($n = 360$)

Table V.
Summary of hierarchical
regression analyses for
testing the mediation of
meaning of work
(*n* = 358)

Predictor variables	Satisfaction at work					Outcome variables					Negative affect at work					
	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>R</i>	ΔR^2	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>	<i>F</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>B</i>	<i>SE</i>	<i>R</i>	ΔR^2	<i>t</i>	<i>Sig.</i>
<i>Step 1</i>																
Unbiased awareness	75.626	357	0.840	0.097	0.418	0.175	8.696	0.000	60.986	349	0.825	0.106	0.386	0.149	7.809	0.000
Authentic behaviors	100.693	357	1.11	0.111	0.469	0.220	1.0035	0.000	44.478	349	349	0.852	0.128	0.113	0.336	6.669
<i>Step 2</i>																
Unbiased awareness	128.452	356	0.388	0.092	0.198	0.219	4.343	0.000	19.601	348	0.610	0.114	0.285	0.045	5.357	0.000
Meaning of work			0.76	0.067	0.517		11.334	0.000			0.367	0.083	0.236		4.427	0.000
Authentic behaviors	115.352	356	0.591	0.108	0.249	0.291	5.464	0.000	22.087	348	.556	0.139	0.219	0.053	3.987	0.000
Meaning of work			0.715	0.067	0.489		10.740	0.000			0.402	0.086	0.258		4.700	0.000

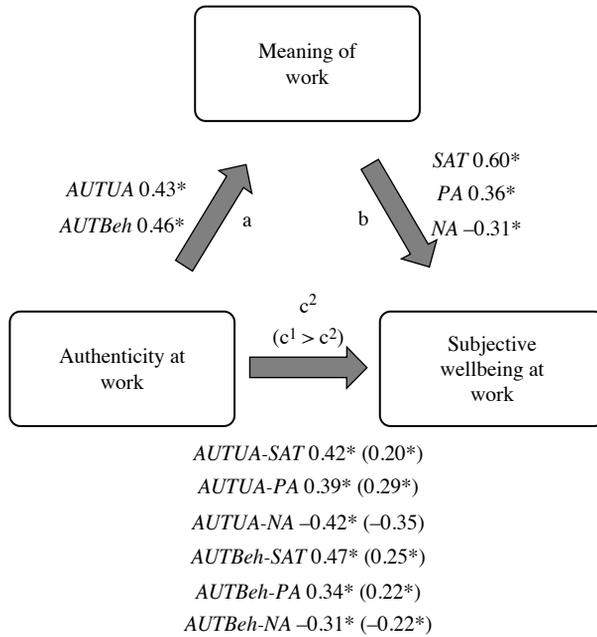


Figure 1.

Variables	Sobel test scores (Z-value)	Sig.(p-value)
Unbiased awareness-satisfaction at work	7.01	0.000
Unbiased awareness-positive affect at work	3.97	0.000
Unbiased awareness-negative affect at work	-2.06	0.003
Authentic behaviors-satisfaction at work	7.18	0.000
Authentic behaviors-positive affect at work	4.21	0.000
Authentic behaviors- negative affect at work	-3.54	0.000

Table VI.
Summary of sobel tests of mediation for meaning of work

Note: Sobel tests scores were calculated using Preacher and Hayes' (2004) macro

Discussion

This study examined the relationship between authenticity and well-being amongst managers. The results revealed that authenticity of managers is positively linked to subjective well-being at work. Moreover, we found that this relationship is partly mediated by their perception of the meaning of their work. In the following section, the results will be discussed in details. First, the factorial dimensions of authenticity at work will be discussed. Second, the positive connection between authenticity and subjective well-being at work will be examined. Thirdly, the mechanism of meaning will be described.

A preliminary aim of this study was to follow Ilies and colleagues' (2005) recommendation: to measure authenticity amongst managers or organizational leaders. Hence, items from the Authenticity Inventory (Goldman and Kernis, 2004) were contextualized in the workplace and the sample was exclusively comprised of managers working in public organizations. The second aim of the present study was to identify the relationship between authenticity of managers and subjective well-being

at work. As hypothesized, both cognitive and behavioral dimensions of authenticity at work explained satisfaction at work. Affect experienced by managers were predicted by unbiased awareness of the self aspects and by authentic behaviors at work. Hence, according to the results obtained, when managers were more authentic, they were also more satisfied and experienced positive affect more frequently and negative affect less frequently. This finding goes along with the humanistic view that sees authenticity as a privileged way of reaching happiness (Maslow, 1976). It is also in concordance with self-determination theory which postulates that self initiated actions leads to positive outcomes (Deci and Ryan, 2000).

Another aim in the present study was to find out the mechanism through which authenticity is related to subjective well-being. As hypothesized by Ilies and colleagues (2005), authenticity is significantly related to psychological well-being on the part of the managers. Hence, perception of authenticity was associated to the perception of having a meaningful job. So, managers who perceived they were themselves while exerting their function also tended to find meaning and purpose in their occupation. More importantly, the findings revealed that meaning of work was a significant partial mediator of the relationship between authenticity and subjective well-being. This result is supporting many views on the positive connection between authenticity, meaning and well-being. Indeed, Erikson's (1959) theory of psychological growth alleged that humans possess a drive to find meaning in life through authenticity. Also, Jung (1983) postulated that within each individual there is a "spiritual seed" guiding towards a transcendent meaningful life in which the individual achieve full expression of one self. More recently, Csikszentmihalyi (1990) postulated that meaningful activities, such as work, that are initiated by the self lead to a healthy functioning. Therefore, the present study showed that authenticity leads to meaning which, in turn, leads to happiness. This finding highlights the positive bond between authenticity and satisfaction and emotions at work, through sense of meaning. As pointed out by Ryff and Singer (1998):

Largely missing is a counterpoint literature on how work facilitates human purpose, meaning, self-realization, and enactment of one's unique abilities, and thereby enhances one's health. The linkage between these aspects of work and the enhancement of one's health has rarely been addressed (p. 8).

According to our results, authenticity could be an important piece in the puzzle.

Suggestions for future research and practical implications

Future studies should replicate the current findings with different types of managers and workers in order to assess the generalizability of our results. Also, as suggested by Ilies and colleagues (2005), assessing the relationship of manager's authenticity and employees' well-being could be amongst the future avenues. The current results have key implications for the literatures on self and occupational stress and well-being, and how these literatures can reciprocally inform each other in the future. Also, it sheds a very new light on the potential role of authenticity in work settings. As informally reported by some participants, the current results address the following taboo: "To be or not to be" oneself when in managerial role. In our study, managers who were themselves at work experienced more positive outcomes. Hence, in order to promote well-being in work settings, authenticity should be encouraged in organizations. In the end, both organizations and workers could win.

Limitations

It is worth noting the limitations of the present study. First of all, this study was cross-sectional so there is a need to get longitudinal data to confirm the direction of the causation. Diary methods on an everyday basis could be a very interesting way to assess authenticity across time and situations. Another possible limitation of the study is that all measures used were self-report. Hence, response biases and social desirability effects could have been introduced. However, since authenticity is a self-perception, self-report is the privileged way of assessing it. Finally, given the amount of missing values (i.e. 27.5 percent) age was not considered in the present study.

Conclusion

Hence, authenticity of managers in the workplace is significantly related to their well-being. It appears that meaning of work could be an important mechanism through which the relationship between authenticity and subjective well-being at work. The present study was amongst the first to empirically explore authenticity in the workplace. Moreover, it assessed the positive connexion between authenticity and managers' well-being in work settings. This research speaks to the need to move toward further delineating the actual connection between being oneself and workers well-being.

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Further reading

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