

Authentic leadership, secure attachment, and authentic followership in public organizations

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Keyword: Authentic followership, authentic leadership, secure attachment, public organization	Abstract Although public organizations have an important role, facts show that there are problems with their performance. One concept that can be used as a solution to the performance of public organizations is authentic followership. This study aimed to investigate the influence of authentic leadership on authentic followership mediated by secure attachment of followers. The research method used was a survey with a sample of 197 members of a public organization in East Java. The analysis used a measurement and structural model analysis using SmartPLS software version 3. The results showed the influence of authentic leadership on secure attachment of followers (0.341*). In addition, the secure attachment of followers affected authentic followership (0.364*). Authentic leadership also influenced authentic followership, mediated by followers' secure attachment (0.124*). This research can provide a conceptual foundation and theoretical discourse on the influence of authentic leadership and followers' secure attachment to authentic followership in public organizations.			
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INTRODUCTION

There are various notions of public organization. According to a literature review, public organizations are various government bureaucratic institutions, government-owned profit-oriented companies, and government service institutions (Al Qassimi & Rusu, 2015; AlGhamdi et al., 2022; Khan & Khandaker, 2016; Lai & Yu, 2022). The definition gives an idea of the scope of various functions or roles of public organizations. The party who can benefit from the role is certainly the community.

Public organizations themselves have important roles in society. They have a strategic role in carrying out government functions (Widjiastuti, 2015). In addition, they have a significant role to play in empowering the community (Ningrum et al., 2021). Public organizations can also have a positive influence on the economic aspects (Wahyudi et al., 2018). No less important is that public organizations have a role in providing community services (Embi & Widyasari, 2013).

However, there has been underperformance of public organizations, which can be seen from several indicators (Utomo, 2023). Table 1 shows the percentage of ministries (M), agencies (A), and local governments (LG) that have not achieved a maturity index of "good" and above of the electronic-based government system (EBGS). In addition, the rate of the implementation of national bureaucratic reform (BR) for ministries, agencies, and local governments from year to year has not reached 100% (Table 2).

Table 1. Percentage of M/A/LG with EBGs's Maturity Index of "Good" and Above

Agency	Target Year 2022	Realization in 2022	Achievement (%)
Ministries/ Agencies	80%	70.83%	88.58
Province (LG)	60%	58.82%	98.03
District/ City (LG)	30%	29.33	97.76

^aSource: Ministry of PANRB (2023)

Table 2. Percentage of M/A/LG that has "Good" BR Index

Agency	2020	2021	2022
Ministries/ Agencies	96.39%	96.30%	98.77%
Province (LG)	79.41%	79.41%	88.24%
District/ City (LG)	24.41%	25.79%	32.28%

^bSource: Ministry of PANRB (2023)

Performance issues related to public organizations that have been described above require effective followership. Previous research has shown that effective followership can improve organizational performance (Kim & Schachter, 2015). Authentic followership as an effective form of followership has been proven to have a positive impact on organizations. First, public organizations need an authentic followership to provide a strong foundation for proper organizational development. This allows the organization to perform its functions optimally (Saeed et al., 2020). Second, the absence of authentic followership makes it difficult for public organizations to avoid harmful practices such as corruption or disciplinary action (Tagoe, 2011). Third, authentic followership provides followers in public organizations with a moral voice and moral efficacy (Frömmner et al., 2021). Fourth, authentic followership in public organizations also positively impacts psychological capital and follower performance (Tak et al., 2019).

Authentic followership is also important to address the conditions faced by public organizations in the current era. This is based on several considerations. First, as there are complex and risky community needs or problems, public organizations need members who can exercise internal control over the role of leaders and organizational performance (Edopkolor et al., 2022; Moordiningsih & Faturochman, 2023). Such member profiles can only be found in authentic followers (Ahmad & Hassan, 2018). Second, a constantly changing situation requires public organizations to have members who can process various information objectively and in balance, which is an attribute in authentic followers (Gardner et al., 2005; Hartley, 2005).

Previous research has shown some positive effects of authentic followership. Leroy et al. (2015) found that authentic followership had a significant effect on individual feelings of competence, connectedness, and autonomy. In addition, authentic followership is empirically proven to have a positive influence on change readiness and innovative performance (Kosasih et al., 2020). Other empirical findings were also presented by Tak et al. (2019). Their findings revealed that authentic followership positively affects individual performance achievement in team projects.

Previous studies show the difference in the relationship between superiors and subordinates between private and public organizations. Smart, decisive, strategic, and transformative leaders have an impact on loyalty, work attachment, and subordinate performance in private organizations (Alamsjah, 2020; Budisusetio et al., 2019; Floriana & Rostiana, 2018; Koesmono, 2006; Wiyanto et al., 2020). This is different from public organizations. In public organizations, leaders who can combine discipline with fatherly virtues

and moral integrity will influence the positive response and organizational commitment of employees (Irawanto et al., 2016; Irawanto & Ramsey, 2011). In addition, leaders who are democratic, participatory, and trusted by subordinates have an influence on followers in public organizations (Dias & Borges, 2017).

Various positive characteristics of leaders of public organizations mentioned earlier have similarities with aspects of the concept of authentic leadership (Gardner et al., 2005). Leaders who adhere to values of discipline, virtue, fatherhood, participation, democracy, and moral integrity are acting in line with internalized aspects. The characteristics of leaders who are open to various inputs and information from others are in line with a balanced processing aspect. The characteristics of leaders who can establish close relationships with their subordinates and trust each other are consistent with aspects of relational transparency. Internalized, balanced processing, and relational transparency are aspects of the concept of authentic leadership in the view of Gardner et al. (2005).

The leader's relationship with followers in public organizations is mediated by followers' secure attachment. Leaders usually have power over their subordinates because they are able to control the distribution of resources (Gagné & Lydon, 2004; Oc & Bashshur, 2013). This makes followers mindful of their leaders' perception and eager of acceptance (Braun et al., 2017; Hendricks & Toth-Cohen, 2018). These considerations make followers feel vulnerable in establishing a relationship with their leader (Avolio & Reichard, 2008; Pšeničný & Perat, 2020). Oc et al. (2020) argue that leaders who are willing to reveal their personal strengths and weaknesses, admit their mistakes, seek feedback for themselves, and appreciate followers' contributions will tend to reduce followers' feelings of vulnerability. The characteristics of these leaders are found in authentic leaders (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Karl et al., 2018; Levesque-Côté et al., 2018; Nair et al., 2021). The presence of an authentic leader is likely to foster deep trust in their followers (Bligh & Kohles, 2013; Yagil, 2014). Followers also believe their leaders can be relied on to facilitate common interests (Davidovitz et al., 2007; Keller & Cacioppe, 2001; Mayselless, 2010; Popper et al., 2000; Simmons et al., 2009). These characteristics reflect a secure attachment of followers to their leaders (Keller & Cacioppe, 2001; Owens et al., 2013; Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). When followers have a secure attachment to the leader, they will present themselves according to their principles and values. Furthermore, the principles and values they have are used as a guide in carrying out their role as followers (Hinojosa et al., 2014; Rahimnia & Sharifirad, 2015). The role of followers that has been explained is known as authentic followership (Leroy et al., 2015; Tak et al., 2019).

This study uses attachment theory as a grounded theory as a basis for placing secure attachment as a mediator variable (Hinojosa et al., 2014; Schoofs et al., 2024). The development of authentic behavior is driven by secure attachment, both to leaders and followers (Mayselless & Popper, 2019). This is done by creating a supportive environment and the satisfaction of basic psychological needs (Leroy et al., 2015). This condition can then increase the authenticity and effectiveness of the performance of leaders and followers (Schoofs et al., 2024). Given the aforementioned background, this study aims to investigate the influence of authentic leadership on authentic followership mediated by followers' secure attachment in public organizations. This research benefits the field by providing a conceptual foundation and engaging in

theoretical discourse on the influence of authentic leadership and followers' secure attachment to authentic followership in public organizations. For this reason, the hypotheses proposed in this study are:

Hypothesis 1: Authentic leadership influences followers' secure attachment.

Hypothesis 2: Followers' secure attachment influences authentic followership.

Hypothesis 3: Authentic leadership influences authentic followership through the mediation of followers' secure attachment.

METHOD

This study consists of 3 variables, namely authentic followership (as a dependent variable), authentic leadership (as an independent variable), and secure attachment of followers (as a mediator variable). Authentic followership in research has an operational definition as a public organization's members' perception of an authentic awareness and desire of a member to be involved in achieving organizational goals without coercion from the leader and carried out voluntarily with the following indicators: self-awareness, authentic behavior, openness and values.

Authentic followership is evident from the score of eight items on the authentic followership scale by Kosasih et al. (2020). Higher scores are associated with higher levels of authentic followership. The validity of the authentic followership variable indicators shows valid results ($r > 0.361$). The results of the reliability test for the authentic followership variable show a high level of reliability (Cronbach's alpha = 0.873). Authentic leadership is the process of leading in a work context based on positive psychological capacity, which includes self-awareness, internalized moral perspectives, balanced information processing, and transparent relationships in order to encourage self-development in followers. Authentic leadership is reflected in the Authentic Leadership Inventory (ALI), which consists of 16 items. The ALI was developed by Neider and Schriesheim (2011) and has been adapted to Indonesian by Wirawan et al. (2020). The construct validity of ALI using CFA shows a good fit (CMIN/DF=2.8, RMSEA=0.07) with an acceptable reliability value (Cronbach's alpha = 0.89).

The higher the ALI score, the higher the level of authentic leadership. Secure attachment is the level of follower's capacity to connect well and securely with the leader, while also having the capacity to act autonomously according to the situation at hand. This is reflected in the score of six items of the interdependence dimensions from the Self-Reliance Inventory (Joplin et al., 1999). The SRI measuring instrument for the interdependence dimension has discriminant validity based on Fornell and Larcker (1981) criterion. The AVE value is greater than the squared intercorrelations ($0.42 > 0.29$), while the reliability is shown by the Cronbach's alpha value of 0.71. Higher scores correlate with higher level of followers' secure attachment.

The sample of this study consisted of 197 members of a public organization in East Java. This study used a non-list-based random sampling method, which can be used in internet-based surveys, where sample selection is based on probability without having to calculate the sample frame (Fricker, 2012). The scale of the study was created in Google Forms, and it was shared via social media. Data analysis of this study used

SmartPLS version 3 because it can verify the research model by conducting confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and then hypothesis tests between variables can be carried out.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The average age of the participants was 41.3, consisting of 57% women and 43% men. In terms of their positions, 48% were staff, 39% were supervisors, and 13% were managers. The average length of employment was 14.35 years. The results of the confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) test showed that there were a number of items that failed because the loading factor value was <0.7 . Therefore, the remaining items were used for further analysis. Table 3 shows the number of items that have a loading factor value >0.7 , indicating that further analysis can be carried out.

Table 3. Loading factor results

Variable	Ranges of loading factor for all items	Number of items that have loading factor >0.7
Authentic leadership	0.250 – 0.831	8
Followers' secure attachment	0.521 – 0.820	2
Authentic followership	0.595 – 0.840	3

The measuring instruments used in this study also have adequate reliability. The variable composite reliability value for authentic followership is 0.895, for secure attachment of followers the value is 0.862, and for authentic leadership it is 0.861. Furthermore, the average variance extracted (AVE) value for authentic followership is 0.740, for secure attachment of followers the value is 0.757, and for authentic leadership it is 0.673. In addition, the discriminant validity of the three measuring instruments in this study has been fulfilled because the correlation value for the same variable is greater when compared to the correlation value with different variables (Table 4). The results of the hypothesis test indicate that hypotheses 1, that authentic leadership affects followers' secure attachment, and 2, that followers' secure attachment affects authentic followership, can be accepted because they have p-values of 0.000 (<0.05), as shown in Table 5. Furthermore, the results of specific indirect effects (Table 6) show that followers' secure attachment plays a role in mediating the influence of authentic leadership on authentic followership because p values are 0.009 (<0.05). Thus, hypothesis 3 is acceptable.

Table 4. Discriminant validity

	Followers' secure attachment	Authentic Leadership	Authentic Followership
Followers' secure attachment	0.87		
Authentic Leadership	0.341	0.821	
Authentic Followership	0.364	0.433	0.86

Table 5. Total effects

	Original Sample	P Values
Followers' secure attachment -> Authentic Followership	0.364	0.000
Authentic leadership -> Followers' secure attachment	0.341	0.000

Table 6. Specific indirect effects

	Original Sample	P Values
Authentic leadership -> Followers' secure attachment -> Authentic Followership	0.124	0.009

The results show that the three hypotheses can be accepted. This research proves that authentic leadership affects followers' secure attachment (hypothesis 1). This hypothesis was proposed because a literature review proved that an authentic leader builds a deep sense of trust, which makes the followers believe that the leader can be relied on, thereby creating a secure attachment. The results of this research confirm this hypothesis. This is in line with previous research, which revealed that followers who perceive their leaders to have authentic leadership are more likely to build secure attachments with the leader. This is because authentic leaders provide social support to their followers to ensure that these followers can work well (Rahimnia & Sharifirad, 2015).

In addition, authentic leaders can provide social support to their followers through four processes. The first is through self-awareness, in which leaders know their strengths and weaknesses. This also allows them to be aware of the various impacts on others, including their followers. This will make the leader cautious in behaving towards followers (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Second, leaders provide social support to followers through balanced information processing. When receiving information about their followers, whether good or bad information, they will try to gather information thoroughly to gain objectivity regarding the various information they obtain about followers (Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Lord et al., 2016).

The third process that leaders go through in providing social support to followers is through relationship transparency. Authentic leaders will strive to be open to their followers. Leaders are willing to accept a variety of feedback from followers, including both suggestions and criticism. Leaders do not seek to silence various criticisms from their followers but instead accommodate them when it is beneficial to the performance of the organization. However, when followers' criticism and suggestions cannot be accommodated, the leader will convey them openly to followers (Coetzee & Henning, 2019; Gorgenyi-Hegyes et al., 2021).

Social support is provided by authentic leaders to their followers through an internalized moral perspective. The leaders are willing to provide various supports to their followers because they have a moral perspective as a reference to their actions. In terms of behavior, leaders use moral values as a standard and guidelines for their actions when interacting with followers (Kosasih et al., 2020; Leroy et al., 2015b; Sánchez et al., 2021). The four processes of social support that authentic leaders provide to their followers can increase the attachment of security followers feel towards their leaders (Hinojosa et al., 2020; Mayseless & Popper, 2019; Schneider et al., 2014).

The results also indicate that the secure attachment of followers affects authentic followership (hypothesis 2). This hypothesis was formulated because a literature review showed that followers who have a secure attachment to their leaders will be able to present themselves authentically. This authenticity is demonstrated by behaving in accordance with the principles and values adhered to in the context of the

role as a follower. The results of this study have confirmed this hypothesis. These results are in line with the results of previous research. The results of research by Hinojosa et al. (2014) show that secure attachment may facilitate the development of authentic followership. Previous research has found a link between secure attachment and self-awareness (Davidovitz et al., 2007), relationship transparency (Grabill & Kerns, 2000), as well as authentic behavior (Jiang et al., 2019). Secure attachment affects followers' self-awareness through a process of consistent and accurate self-assessment. Followers who have a secure attachment to the authentic leader are more likely to imitate the leader's behavior, including an awareness of their strengths and weaknesses. In other words, followers model the leader's self-awareness and apply it to themselves.

Secure attachment of followers allows followers to behave authentically, aligning with what the leader has done (Kakavelakis & Edwards, 2022). Followers who have a sense of security are able to behave according to their internal standards. They no longer need external validation (Popper, 2012; Popper et al., 2000). As a result, they can behave authentically based on their internal norms and standards. Their authentic behavior is also supported by the transparency of their relationships with others. The secure attachment of followers is manifested in open relationships. Followers are ready to receive suggestions and feedback from others. They have an open, non-defensive attitude towards suggestions and criticisms. These attributes are a reflection of authentic followership.

Authentic leadership has an effect on authentic followership, mediated by followers' secure attachment, which has also been proven in this study (hypothesis 3). This hypothesis was formulated because the results of the literature review showed that having a leader who behaves authentically enables followers to develop a deep sense of trust in the leader, giving rise to a sense of secure attachment. As a result, followers will present themselves according to the principles and values they believe in in the context of their relationship with the leader. The results of this study have confirmed the proposed hypothesis. Authentic leaders are able to show their attitudes and behavior to followers. These attitudes and behavior include four processes: self-awareness, internalized moral perspectives, balanced information processing, and transparent relationships (Firdaus, 2018; Matthews et al., 2020; Sergeeva & Kortantamer, 2021; Spoelstra, 2018). Various attributes demonstrated by the leader allow followers to feel the social support of the leader, thus creating a sense of security and closer relationship with the leader (Hinojosa et al., 2020; Schneider et al., 2014). This may inspire followers to emulate their leader. Authentic leadership involves starting from raising awareness of oneself, developing transparent relationships with others, and behaving authentically. (Chaudhary & Panda, 2018; Hinojosa et al., 2014; Knoll & van Dick, 2013).

Various findings in this study contribute to the theory of authentic followership, related to the influence of authentic leadership (mediated by the safe attachment of followers) on authentic followership. In addition, the results of this study can provide input on authentic followership in public organizations. However, one source of weakness of this study is the research sample, which is limited to one public organization in East Java. This research tends to be homogeneous because it does not take samples from various public organizations and other provinces. As a result, the results of this research are less representative when generalized to other public organizations and provinces. Therefore, it is recommended

that further research use samples from various public organizations and different provinces. In addition, this study only focused on the variables of authentic leadership and secure attachment of followers in assessing authentic followership. As a result, this research is limited to understanding the role of authentic leadership and follower secure attachment on authentic followership only. There are in fact several other variables that need to be explored for their influence on authentic followership. Therefore, future research should examine other variables that influence authentic followership.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study indicate that authentic leadership influences secure attachment of followers, which has been shown to affect authentic followership. The results also revealed that authentic leadership affects authentic followership by mediating followers' secure attachment. This research also sheds new light on public organizations because it uses the point of view of authentic followership, authentic leadership, and secure attachment of followers. Following up on these findings, it is essential to examine the effect of authentic leadership and followers' secure attachment to authentic followership in the settings of multiple public organizations. In addition, it is necessary to investigate authentic leadership, secure attachment of followers, and authentic followership in private organizations and find out how it differs from authentic followership in public organizations.

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