AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP: A QUANTITATIVE STUDY OF THE EFFECT OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP ON GROUP COHESION AND WORK ENGAGEMENT IN STUDENT ORGANIZATIONS IN MEXICO

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ABSTRACT

Purpose: The purpose of this study was to develop an empirical investigation and discover quantitative evidence for the relationship between authentic leadership, group cohesion, and work engagement.

Theoretical framework: Authentic leadership has caught researchers’ attention, and it has gained recognition and position within leadership studies. The authentic leadership construct includes four dimensions: (a) self-awareness, which refers to how leaders understand their strengths and weaknesses and the motives they exposure to others; (b) balance processing, which refers to how leaders analyze all relevant data before coming to a decision; (c) internalized moral perspective, which refers to how leaders make decisions based on values and high internal ethical standards; and (d) relational transparency, which refers to how leaders are open in presenting one’s true self to others.

Methods: Utilizing previously validated instruments, the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ; Walumbwa et al., 2008), the Perceived Cohesion Scale (PCS; Bollen & Hoyle, 1990), and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). This study explored whether or not a relationship exists between authentic leadership behaviors of the leader (as perceived by the group members) and group cohesion and work engagement (as reported by the group members) within the Mexican context.

Results and conclusions: Using a sample of 226 participants who are members of student organizations (N = 226), it was clearly demonstrated that there is a positive relationship between the authentic leadership behaviors of the leader and the members’ group cohesion (r = .56, β = .54, p = .000) and that there is a positive relationship between the authentic leadership behaviors of the leader and the members’ work engagement (r = .54, β = .54, p = .000). The study’s findings demonstrate the need to advance the research of authentic leadership in Mexico and Latin America.

Findings implication: Authentic leadership’s predictive capacity it is still in the developmental phase. The study’s findings offer more evidence and new data to scholars in the leadership field that will help them better analyze the relationship that exists between authentic leadership, group cohesion, and work engagement.

Uniqueness/ value: This study represents one of the first investigations of authentic leadership in Mexico and Latin America, and it has some leadership implications within teams and small groups.

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LIDERAZGO AUTÉNTICO: ESTUDIO CUANTITATIVO DEL EFECTO DEL LIDERAZGO AUTÉNTICO SOBRE LA COHESIÓN GRUPAL Y EL COMPROMISO LABORAL EN ORGANIZACIONES ESTUDIANTILES DE MÉXICO

RESUMEN

Objetivo: El objetivo de este estudio fue desarrollar la investigación empírica y descubrir evidencia cuantitativa de la relación entre el verdadero liderazgo, la cohesión de grupo y la participación en el trabajo.

Estructura teórica: El liderazgo auténtico atrajo la atención de los investigadores y obtuvo reconocimiento y posición dentro de los estudios de liderazgo. El concepto de liderazgo auténtico incluye cuatro dimensiones: a) conciencia de sí mismo, que se refiere a la forma en que los líderes entienden sus fortalezas y debilidades y las razones por las que exponen a los demás; b) tratamiento del equilibrio, que se refiere a la forma en que los líderes analizan todos los datos relevantes antes de llegar a una decisión; c) una perspectiva moral internalizada, que se refiere a la forma en que los líderes toman decisiones basadas en valores éticos internos y altos estándares; y d) transparencia nacional, que se refiere a cómo los líderes están abiertos a presentar el verdadero sí mismos otros.

Métodos: Utilizando instrumentos validados previamente, el cuestionario de liderazgo auténtico (ALQ; Walumbwa y otros, 2008), la escala de cohesión percibida (PCS; Bollen & Hoyle, 1990) y la escala de compromiso de trabajo Utrecht (UWES; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Este estudio exploró si existe o no una relación entre los comportamientos de liderazgo auténticos del líder (percibidos por los miembros del grupo) y la cohesión y participación de grupos en el trabajo (como lo reportaron los miembros del grupo) dentro del contexto mexicano.

Resultados y conclusiones: Utilizando una muestra de 226 participantes que son miembros de organizaciones estudiantiles (N = 226), se demostró claramente que existe una relación positiva entre los comportamientos de liderazgo auténticos del líder y la cohesión del grupo miembro (r = 0,56, B = 0,54, p = 0,000) y que existe una relación positiva entre los comportamientos de liderazgo auténticos del líder y el compromiso trabajo de los miembros (r = 0,54, B = 0,54, p = 0,000). Los resultados del estudio demuestran la necesidad de avanzar en la investigación sobre el liderazgo auténtico en México y América Latina.

Implicación de los descubrimientos: La capacidad predictiva de un liderazgo auténtico todavía está en fase de desarrollo. Los resultados del estudio ofrecen más evidencia y nuevos datos a los académicos en el campo del liderazgo que les ayudarán a analizar mejor la relación entre el verdadero liderazgo, la cohesión de grupo y la participación en el trabajo.

Unicidad/Valor: Este estudio representa una de las primeras auténticas investigaciones de liderazgo en México y América Latina, y tiene algunas implicaciones de liderazgo dentro de equipos y pequeños grupos.

Palabras clave: liderazgo real, cohesión de grupo, compromiso con el trabajo.
1 INTRODUCTION

To analyze and understand leadership is trying to comprehend a complex phenomenon (Bennis, 1989). Burns (1978) argued, “the nature of leadership in our society is very imperfectly understood” (p. 471). However, the aim of understanding the complexity of leadership has been strong (Parks, 2005). Northouse (2013), Lussier and Achua (2005), and Yukl (2006) framed leadership using different approaches, seeking to understand how leadership works and what has influenced leaders to become people who achieve outstanding results. Challa and Perwez (2023), argued that “leadership play a critical role in shaping organizational performance” (p. 7). According to Yusuf, et al., (2023) one factor in “the success or failure of an organization is the quality of the organization's leaders” (p. 4).

Authentic leadership as a construct has caught researchers’ attention. It has positioned itself in leadership studies, because there is a need for more authentic leaders in these challenging times (Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Seligman, 2002). For George (2003), these times need “leaders who lead with purpose, values, and integrity; leaders who build enduring organizations, motivate their employees to provide superior customer service, and create long-term value for shareholders” (p. 9). Authentic leaders exemplify four components: self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective (George, 2003; Giallonardo et al., 2010; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Authentic leadership’s predictive capacity is in the developmental and discovering phase. Empirical studies on authentic leadership have less than 18 years, and there is still much to analyze and discover regarding this construct. Authentic leadership has been related to work engagement (Alok & Israel, 2012; Bamford, Wong, & Laschinger, 2013; Giallonardo et al., 2010; Wong, Laschinger, & Cummings, 2010; Oh, Cho, & Hun-Lim, 2018; Basaran & Kiral, 2020), organizational citizenship behavior, organizational commitment, follower satisfaction, job performance, organizational climate (Walumbwa et al., 2008), trust in the leader (Wong & Cummings, 2009; Wong, Laschinger, et al., 2010), job satisfaction (Giallonardo et al., 2010), structural empowerment (Wong & Laschinger, 2012), collective efficacy, group performance (Xiong & Fang, 2014), employee innovation (Zhou, Ma, Cheng, & Xia, 2014), organizational trust (Onorato & Zhu, 2014), positive psychological capital (Clapp-Smith, Vogelgesang, & Avey, 2009),...
and, recently, group cohesion (García-Guiu, Molero, Moya, & Moriano, 2015; Ruan & Liu, 2021; Kim, Choi & Gregg, 2021).

The purpose of this study was to develop an empirical investigation and discover quantitative evidence for the relationship between authentic leadership, group cohesion, and work engagement. Currently, few studies have examined and shown evidence of the relationship between authentic leadership and work engagement, and only one has demonstrated the relationship between authentic leadership and group cohesion. The current study sought to answer the following research questions:

RQ1: Is there a relationship between authentic leadership, group cohesion, and work engagement in a Mexican organization?

RQ2: Does authentic leadership predict group cohesion and work engagement in a Mexican organization?

Authentic leadership has been analyzed by Walumbwa et al. (2008); Clapp-Smith et al. (2009); Wong and Cummings (2009); Giallonardo et al. (2010); Wong, Laschinger, et al. (2010); Alok and Israel (2012); Wong and Laschinger (2012); Bamford et al. (2013); Xiong and Fang (2014); Zhou et al. (2014); and Onorato and Zhu (2014) using samples in China, Kenya, Canada, Malaysia, and the United States. However, the current study presented a sample of undergraduate members who participate in cultural, sports, and leadership groups in a Mexican university. The study’s findings offer more evidence and new data to scholars in the leadership field that will help them better analyze the relationship that exists between authentic leadership, group cohesion, and work engagement.

This study explored whether or not a relationship exists between authentic leadership behaviors of the leader (as perceived by the group members) and the group cohesion and work engagement (as reported by the group members) in the Mexican context. Previous studies have provided empirical evidence of a positive relationship between authentic leadership and work engagement (Alok & Israel, 2012; Bamford et al., 2013; Giallonardo et al., 2010; Wong & Laschinger, 2010). However, there is only one empirical investigation of the positive relationship between authentic leadership and group cohesion developed by Garcia-Guiu et al. (2015). Therefore, this study quantitatively examined the relationship of the variables via the following research hypotheses:
H1: There is a positive relationship between authentic leadership behaviors of the leader and members’ group cohesion.

H2: There is a positive relationship between authentic leadership behaviors of the leader and members’ work engagement.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The component of authentic leadership has gained recognition and position within leadership studies. Based on an exhaustive review of leadership studies, George, Sims, et al. (2007) argued that during the last 50 years, scholars have tried to determine the characteristics or the personality traits of great people who have impacted their organizations. Not one of these studies has produced a unique profile of the ideal leader or member, because organizations around the globe have required different types of people according to their needs and challenges (George, Sims, et al., 2007).

2.1 AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

The new construct of authentic leadership emerged during a dialogue among scholars, practitioners, businesspeople, politicians, educators, and military leaders in June 2004 in Omaha, Nebraska at the Gallup Leadership Institute Summit. Authentic leadership was defined as “a pattern of the leader’s behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency” (Walumbwa et al., 2008, p. 94). The new construct included four dimensions: (a) self-awareness, which refers to how leaders understand their strengths and weaknesses and the motives they exposure to others; (b) balance processing, which refers to how leaders analyze all relevant data before coming to a decision; (c) internalized moral perspective, which refers to how leaders make decisions based on values and high internal ethical standards; and (d) relational transparency, which refers to how leaders are open in presenting one’s true self to others (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

2.2 WORK ENGAGEMENT

According to Schaufeli and Bakker (2004), work engagement is a construct characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption in one’s work. Vigor reflects the
readiness to devote effort in one’s work, an exhibition of high levels of energy while working, and the tendency to remain resolute in the face of task difficulty or failure. Dedication refers to a strong identification with one’s work and encompasses feelings of enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge. Finally, absorption refers to being fully concentrated in one’s work and having difficulty detaching oneself from it.

Giallonardo et al. (2010) demonstrated a relationship between authentic leadership and work engagement: “New graduate nurses’ perceptions of managers’ authentic leadership, positively predicts work engagement” (p. 996). Giallonardo et al. used a sample of 170 nurses. The authors showed that authentic leadership is positively related to work engagement ($\beta = .21$, $p = .01$). Giallonardo et al.’s investigation is one of the first studies that related authentic leadership to work engagement.

Wong, Laschinger, et al. (2010) investigated the indirect relationship between authentic leadership, trust, and work engagement. For Wong, Laschinger, et al., authentic leadership significantly and positively influenced employees’ trust in the leader and work engagement. A nonexperimental and predictive survey was used in a sample of 280 nurses working in hospitals on Ontario, Canada. The results of this study suggested that authentic leadership mediated by trust in the leader play an important role in fostering work engagement ($\beta = .22$, $p = .001$). Wong, Laschinger, et al. confirmed the relationship between both constructs authentic leadership and work engagement.

Alok and Israel (2012) examined if authentic leadership relates to work engagement and psychological ownership and if psychological ownership interferes with the relationship between authentic leadership and work engagement. “Authentic leadership is gaining ground amidst the growing global concerns regarding rising social costs of business and the resultant demands for authenticity” (Alok & Israel, 2012, p. 498). Likewise, for Alok and Israel, the authentic leadership of supervisors develops organizational contexts that promote positive attitudes and behaviors, and authentic leadership will significantly predict followers’ work engagement. Alok and Israel used a sample of 117 working professionals in India. The authors showed that authentic leadership affects work engagement ($\beta = .56$, $p = .000$). Alok and Israel’s investigation is relevant to this study by identifying how authentic leadership can predict work engagement in an international context, not only in the United States.

Bamford et al. (2013) examined the relationship among nurses’ perceptions and managers’ authentic leadership overall person–job match in six areas of work life and
their work engagement. For Bamford et al., “Work engagement is viewed as an important positive consequence of authentic leadership” (p. 532). Bamford et al. surveyed 280 nurses and showed that years of nursing experience ($\beta = .20, p = .001$) and authentic leadership ($\beta = .26, p = .001$) were related to work engagement. Bamford et al.’s study is relevant because it demonstrates that the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ) subscales correlate positively with work engagement, suggesting that “all four components that characterize an authentic leader are important in influencing nurses’ work engagement” (p. 536).

Oh, Cho & Hun-Lim (2018) investigated the mediating effect of practicing core values on the relationship between authentic leadership and work engagement in a Korean corporate environment. The data were obtained from 281 employees of three Korean corporations. One of the research questions in the study was: “how does authentic leadership affect employees’ work engagement in a corporate setting?” (p. 277). This study revealed that authentic leadership has an influential relationship with work engagement ($\beta = .33, p = .001$).

### 2.3 GROUP COHESION

Lewin (1935) was the first to use the concept of cohesiveness and described it as an important element within groups. Lewin defined cohesion as the forces of attraction that kept group members together. Then, Festinger et al. (1950) defined group cohesiveness as a force that acts on the members, influencing them to remain in the group.

Casey-Campbell and Martens (2009) made a broader and exhaustive review of the literature of cohesiveness, including the known antecedents and consequences of group cohesion. For Casey-Campbell and Martens, the antecedents that affect group cohesion are members’ identification, members’ intention to remain within the group, interpersonal ties, attraction to the group, and work group diversity. Some consequences of group cohesion are members’ duration within the group, members’ participation and cooperation, social support, task interdependence, and increased organizational citizenship behavior (Casey-Campbell & Martens, 2009). Casey-Campbell and Martens contended that group cohesion improves the communication between group members, which results in greater participation and role acceptance. Casey-Campbell and Martens defined cohesion “as the group members’ inclinations to forge social bonds, resulting in the group sticking together and remaining united” (p. 223). After this study, Casey-
Campbell and Martens argued that although group cohesion is a widely studied construct, there is a considerable lack of clarity, consistency, and agreement regarding the definition of the construct.

Recognizing that a generalized and objective definition of the concept cohesion did not exist, Bollen and Hoyle (1990) introduced and proposed a new theoretical definition of perceived cohesion having two dimensions: (a) sense of belonging and (b) feelings of morale. Bollen and Hoyle contributed to the conceptualization and measurement of the new construct called perceived cohesion. As a result, the authors proposed a definition of perceived cohesion: “an individual’s sense of belonging to a particular group and his or her feelings of morale associated with membership in the group” (p. 482). Belongingness refers to the sense of individual identification, and morale refers to the affective element of perceived group cohesion (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990). Also, the authors presented the Perceived Cohesion Scale (PCS) that measures the two dimensions of perceived cohesion. According to the authors, both dimensions are relevant for small and large groups. Thus, according to Bollen and Hoyle, group cohesion is one of the most important variables in small groups.

García-Guiu et al. (2015) examined the relationship between authentic leadership and group cohesion in security and emergency teams. For García-Guiu et al., group cohesion is an important factor that helps “to better understand the performance of people and teams” (p. 59). García-Guiu et al. contended that authentic leadership fosters group cohesion. Their study’s goal was “to advance knowledge on the relationship between authentic leadership and group cohesion” (p. 59). They surveyed 221 police officers and firefighters and showed that authentic leadership has a direct and positive relationship to group cohesion ($\beta = .53$, $p = .01$). García-Guiu et al.’s research is the first research that analyzed the relationship between authentic leadership and group cohesion. In addition, their investigation used the ALQ in Spanish language, which may be useful for the current study.

Kim, Choi & Gregg (2021) analyzed the relationship between authentic leadership and group cohesion. The purpose of this study was to understand the impact of authentic leadership on 249 college soccer players by analyzing the relationship between authentic leadership and team cohesion. Kim’s, et al, (2021) hypothesis was that “authentic leadership has a significant influence on group cohesion” (p. 221). The authors showed that authentic leadership is positively related to group cohesion ($\beta = .34$, $p = .01$).
Ruan & Liu (2021) examined the effect of authentic leadership on team cohesion. The aim of the study was to investigate the impact of authentic leadership, performance satisfaction, psychological well-being, mediated by team cohesion. Ruan & Liu (2021) used 250 female athletes of different team groups in China. One of the key objectives of this study was “to determine the effect of authentic leadership with team cohesion” (p. 191). The authors showed that authentic leadership is positively related to team cohesion ($\beta = .58, p = .05$).

3 METHODOLOGY

To test the two hypotheses, the participants answered and completed three previously validated instruments: The Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ; Walumbwa et al., 2008), the Perceived Cohesion Scale (PCS; Bollen & Hoyle, 1990), and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). The three instruments were incorporated in a questionnaire hosted by SurveyMonkey.com and distributed by email and a Facebook message. Each potential participant in this study received a link to the web address of the questionnaire. All participants were informed about the research procedure and that they might decline the invitation to participate in the research. Those who chose to participate had the right of confidentiality regarding any information they freely provided to the researcher during the data collection process (Winston et al., 2010). Once the data collection period ended, all the data were imported to the SPSS Statistics 21.0 to make the appropriate statistical analysis.

3.1 INSTRUMENTATION

This study used three preexisting self-report instruments. These instruments have published validity and reliability for measuring the relationship between authentic leadership with group cohesion and work engagement in a Mexican context. The research used the ALQ with an acceptable internal consistency that has been reported with Cronbach’s alphas ranging from .66 to .93 (Walumbwa et al., 2008) to measure the predictor variable, the PCS with an internal consistency that has been reported with a Cronbach’s alpha ranging from .87 to .95 (Chin et al., 1999) to measure the dependent variable (DV) of group cohesion, and the UWES with an internal consistency has been reported with a Cronbach’s alpha ranging from .80 to .90 (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) to measure the other DV of work engagement. In this way, this study used a questionnaire.
that helped measure and analyze the effect of authentic leadership on group cohesiveness and work engagement displayed by the team members. The questionnaire contained a total of 46 items, and it incorporated the ALQ, which has 16 items; the PCS, which has six items; and the UWES, which has 17 items rated, four items to measure the demographic variables and three items to measure control variables. The ALQ and the UWES are already translated into the Spanish language; so the current study invited two professor/experts to examine the PCS to ensure the appropriate translation, vocabulary, and order/structure of the questions of the instrument into the Spanish language.

3.2 AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP

Walumbwa et al. (2008) created the ALQ and used five separate samples from China, Kenya, and the United States to test the theory base of authentic leadership. Avolio and Gardner (2005) initially viewed authentic leadership with five related components: self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized regulation, balanced processing of information, and positive moral perspective. Then, the components of internalized regulation and positive moral perspective were combined into the component of internalized moral perspective. The new construct included four dimensions: (a) self-awareness, (b) balance processing, (c) relational transparency, and (d) internalized moral perspective. Walumbwa et al. initially generated a pool of 35 items—later reduced to 22 items. These 22 items were subjected to content validity, resulting in a final pool of 16 items to measure self-awareness (four items), balance processing (three items), relational transparency (five items), and internalized moral perspective (four items).

Also, the authentic leadership measure has found predictive validity with organizational citizenship behavior, organizational commitment, follower satisfaction with supervisor, job performance, organizational climate (Walumbwa et al., 2008), trust in the leader (Wong & Cummings, 2009; Wong, Laschinger, et al., 2010), job satisfaction (Giallonardo et al., 2010), structural empowerment (Wong & Laschinger, 2012), collective efficacy, group performance (Xiong & Fang, 2014), employee innovation (Zhou et al., 2014), organizational trust (Onorato & Zhu, 2014), and positive psychological capital (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009), work engagement (Alok & Israel, 2012; Bamford et al., 2013; Giallonardo et al., 2010; Wong, Laschinger, et al., 2010), and group cohesion (Garcia-Guiu et al., 2015). The Spanish version of the ALQ has reported
Cronbach’s alphas ranging from .84 to .94 (Garcia-Guiu et al., 2015; Moriano, Molero & Levy, 2011). Therefore, this instrument was used in the current study.

3.3 GROUP COHESION

Bollen and Hoyle (1990) created the PCS to contribute toward the conceptualization and measurement of group cohesion. Bollen and Hoyle proposed a theoretical definition of the new construct of perceived cohesion, which included two dimensions: an individual sense of belonging to a particular group and feelings of morale associated with membership in the group. According to Bollen and Hoyle, the PCS is a brief instrument that is applicable to a broad range of groups. The PCS has six items—three to measure the sense of belonging and three to measure feelings of morale. Bollen and Hoyle presented a confirmatory factor analysis using two different samples. The first samples were 102 undergraduates at a private college, and the second sample were 110 residents of a midsized city. The samples were used to test empirically the correlation of the two dimensions, reporting a .90 in both samples and demonstrating strong psychometric properties of the measure. Besides, the PCS has reported reliability and validity with a returning α of .92 in Gockel and Kerr (2015) and .96 in Decoster, Camps, Stouten, Vandeyyvere, and Tripp (2013). Chin et al. (1999) used the PCS with 70 small groups (four to five members) at a western Canadian university to also assess the reliability and validity of the measure, reporting a high correlation of .92 between the two dimensions. The Cronbach’s alphas in Chin et al. for the sense of belonging and feelings of morale were .95 and .87, respectively. This instrument was useful in the current study because it allowed assessing perceived cohesion in small groups.

3.4 WORK ENGAGEMENT

Schaufeli and Bakker (2003) created the UWES to measure the construct of work engagement, defined as “a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption” (p. 4). Initially, the UWES had 24 items to assess three dimensions of work engagement: nine items for vigor, eight for dedication, and seven for absorption. After a confirmatory factor analysis using two separate samples, seven items were eliminated from the original UWES, leaving only 17 items in the new instrument. According to Schaufeli and Bakker, vigor is measured using three items; it is characterized by high levels of energy and the person’s willingness to
put effort in his or her work. Dedication is assessed using five items and refers “to being strongly involved in one’s work and experiencing a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge” (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003, p. 5). Absorption is measured by six items and refers to being fully concentrated and immersed in one’s work (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2003). The UWES measure has shown internal consistency with a Cronbach’s α between .80 and .90. (Salanova, Schaufeli, Llorens, Piero, & Grau, 2001). Also, the UWES has shown stability coefficients across time for vigor .30, dedication .36, and absorption .46 (Bakker, Euwema, & Van Dierendonck, 2003). The UWES has been used in countries such as Australia, Canada, Finland, France, Germany, Greece, Norway, South Africa, and Spain, reporting Cronbach’s alphas ranging from .88 to .95. This instrument was used in the current study.

3.5 SAMPLE POPULATION AND DATA COLLECTION

The current study worked with a sample of undergraduate students from Universidad de Monterrey who are members and active participants of student organizations and are between 18-29 years old. With the purpose of maintaining a level of randomness in the population, the voluntary participation of the undergraduate students was sought (Kerlinger & Lee, 2000). These undergraduates added evidence and new knowledge about the relationship between authentic leadership, group cohesion, and work engagement.

The current research used a different population than the one used in Spain by Garcia-Guiu et al. (2015). They examined for the first time the relationship between authentic leadership and group cohesion; however, they did this by assessing security and emergency teams. Garcia-Guiu et al. surveyed 221 police officers and firefighters. The current study also used a different sample than the one used by Giallonardo et al. (2010), Wong, Laschinger, et al. (2010), and Bamford et al. (2013) who surveyed nurses for relating authentic leadership with work engagement. According to Hair, Black, Babin, Anderson, and Tatham (2006), 15-20 observations are needed for each independent variable (IV) and each control variable to determine statistical power and generalizability in research. This study had one IV (authentic leadership), two DVs (group cohesion and work engagement), and three control variables (gender of the leader, team type, and time working together as a team). This quantitative investigation required at least 120 participants who are current students and members of student organizations.
Potential participants were invited by email and Facebook through a message that asked them to anonymously respond and complete the questionnaire. This research asked undergraduates to evaluate their team leader using the ALQ. They were asked to evaluate their group cohesiveness and their work engagement to demonstrate if authentic leadership was positively related to group cohesiveness and work engagement. The following ethical considerations were considered: all participants were informed about the research procedure, they had the right to not participate in the research, and they had the right of confidentiality regarding any information they freely gave in this investigation during the data collection process (Creswell, 2009; Winston et al., 2010). During the 2 weeks after the initial email was sent, two other reminders (one per week) were sent to all the possible respondents.

3.6 DATA ANALYSIS
Once sufficient responses were gathered and the data collection period ended, all data from the sample were imported, using dummy codes, into SPSS Statistics 21.0 for analysis. The following steps were used to analyze the data:

1. The demographic variables in the survey were reported, such as student gender, age, education level, and team type.
2. The number of members who did not answer the survey were reported.
3. A descriptive analysis was reported, so the results were graphed into tables that show the frequencies, percentages, and averages.
4. The internal consistency (Cronbach’s alpha scores) of the three scales used in the sample was reported.
5. The variables authentic leadership (IV) with group cohesiveness (DV) and work engagement (DV) were related using the Pearson product-moment correlation to identify if there was a small, medium, or strong correlation among the variables.
6. The assumption of normality and homogeneity of variance was tenable, to respond to Hypothesis 1. A hierarchical multiple regression analysis was run to test the effect of the variables of gender of the leader, team type, and time working together as a team on group cohesiveness (first model). Then, the variable of authentic leadership (IV) was added in the second model to understand if the authentic leadership behaviors displayed by the team leader (IV) had a strong influence and can explain and predict members’ group cohesiveness (DV).
7. Then, to respond to Hypothesis 2, a hierarchical multiple regression was run using the data to analyze the effect of the variables of gender of the leader, team type, and time working together as a team on work engagement (first model). Then, the variable of authentic leadership was added in the second model to test and understand if the authentic leadership behaviors displayed by the team leader (IV) explained and predicted members’ work engagement (DV).

8. Tables that show if the results are statistically significant or not were reported. Inferential statistics were used to assess the reliability of the findings to validate the two hypotheses and to refuse the null hypotheses. The minimum acceptable alpha to validate the research was .05 (two-tailed) in order to declare the study to be statistically significant.

10. Interpretations of the data were exposed—how the results supported or did not support the two hypotheses of this study.

11. Finally, possible implications of the results for practical considerations and for future research were discussed and explained.

4 RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This study used a sample of undergraduate students from Universidad de Monterrey who are members and active participants of student organizations. The sample of participants was between 18-29 years old and answered the study’s 46-question survey. The survey gathered data through a web-based program hosted by SurveyMonkey.com. With the help of the Student Leadership Center of Universidad de Monterrey, an email of invitation with the Internet link to the survey was sent to all the participants of student organizations who are enrolled in the undergraduate degree programs of this Mexican university. The researcher, under the advice of one of the members of the committee, visited some courses that students who participate in student organizations attend. The researcher visited those courses in order to explain in detail the purpose and potential of this study. Data were gathered over a 2-week period and resulted in 251 volunteer participants.

4.1 SAMPLE POPULATION

This research only required 120 surveys to achieve the statistical power and potential generalizability of the study’s findings (Hair et al., 2006). This sample size
represents a good and robust sample for a study of three independent variables (IVs) and three control variables. In the present study, 251 surveys were gathered, but 25 cases were discarded given that the survey was not answered in a complete manner by the participants. So, the final sample for examination was a total of 226 surveys.

The sample was made up of 154 females (68%) and 72 males (32%) who indicated having 147 females team leaders (65%) and 79 male team leaders (35%). Regarding the age, 95% of participants (214 cases) were between 18-21 years of age, and only 5% respondents (12 cases) were between 22-25 years old. Table 1 details the participants’ gender, team leaders’ gender, and age of respondents of participants in the university.

Table 1: Gender, Team Leaders’ Gender, and Age of Study Participants (N = 226)

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<th>Variable</th>
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<td>Gender</td>
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<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team leaders’ gender</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>147</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18-21</td>
<td>214</td>
<td>95</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22-25</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Created by the authors using the results from the study.

Regarding the tenure of the undergraduates who were part of the sample, 51% were freshmen (116 cases), 33% were juniors (75 cases), 11% were sophomores (25 cases), and only 5% were seniors (10 cases). Table 2 details the tenure of participants in the university.

Table 2: Tenure and Residence of Study Participants (N = 226)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tenure in the university</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freshman</td>
<td>116</td>
<td>51.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Junior</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>33.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sophomore</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>11.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Senior</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Created by the authors using the results from the study.

A diverse type of teams or student organizations was represented in the sample; 176 respondents indicated being part of student societies who represent their academic programs in student government (78%); 28 respondents from student associations (12.4%); 10 respondents from the Student Government Association (4.4%); 9 respondents from the Student Senate (4%); 1 respondent from the Electoral Committee (0.4%); 1
respondent from student clubs (.4%), and 1 respondent from cultural teams (.4%). Table 3 exhibits the variable type of teams.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of teams</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Student societies</td>
<td>176</td>
<td>78.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student associations</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>12.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Government Association</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>4.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student Senate</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electoral Committee</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Student clubs</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cultural teams</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0.4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Created by the authors using the results from the study.

Regarding the time working together as teams, 163 respondents indicated having working as a team less than 5 months (72%), 48 respondents have worked as a team between 6-11 months (21%), 13 respondents have worked between 1-2 years (6%), and only 1 respondent has worked more than 2 years in the team (1%). Table 4 exhibits the variable time working together as a team.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Time working as teams</th>
<th>n</th>
<th>%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0-5 months</td>
<td>163</td>
<td>72.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6-11 months</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>21.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1-2 years</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>6.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>&lt; 2 years</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>1.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Created by the authors using the results from the study.

4.1.1 Reliability Analysis

Cronbach’s alpha was used to examine the reliability and internal consistency of the three instruments used in this study. The following alphas were found: .93 for ALQ (Walumbwa et al., 2008), .90 for PCS (Bollen & Hoyle, 1990), and .94 for UWES (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Table 5 shows the three instruments’ alpha coefficients.

4.2 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND CORRELATIONS

Descriptive statistics and bivariate correlation statistical procedures were run on the three study’s variables of authentic leadership, perceived group cohesion, and work engagement. The Pearson correlation analysis was conducted; its results showed that authentic leadership and perceived group cohesion have a significant and positive correlation ($r = .56, p < .000$). Also, after conducting the Pearson correlation analysis between the variable of authentic leadership and work engagement, a significant and
positive correlation was found \( (r = .54, p < .000) \). Likewise, the two DVs of perceived group cohesion and work engagement were also found to have a significant and positive relationship \( (r = .81, p = .000) \). Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics and the correlations for the three study’s variables.

Table 5: Construct Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations Among Independent and Dependent Scale Variables \( (N = 226) \)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale variables</th>
<th>M</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Authentic leadership</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>.65</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceived group cohesion</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>.68</td>
<td>.56**</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work engagement</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>.67</td>
<td>.54**</td>
<td>.81**</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**p < .000.

Source: Created by the authors using the results from the study.

4.3 HIERARCHICAL MULTIPLE REGRESSION

The present study seeks to answer the following two research questions:

RQ1: Is there a relationship between authentic leadership, group cohesion, and work engagement in a Mexican organization?

RQ2: Does authentic leadership predict group cohesion and work engagement in a Mexican organization?

To test the first hypothesis, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was conducted. It was found that the three control variables of gender of the leader, team type, and time working together as a team that were included in the first model revealed and explained only 6% of the variance in perceived group cohesion \( (R^2 = 0.06, F = 4.80, p < .003) \). When the predictor variable of authentic leadership entered into the regression, the three control variables and authentic leadership accounted for 32% of the variance in perceived group cohesion \( (R^2 = 0.326, F = 86.47, p < .000) \). Furthermore, the authentic leadership variable was a significant independent predictor of perceived group cohesion, showing the following standardized beta coefficients \( (\beta = .54, t = 9.29, p < .000) \).

To test the second hypothesis, a hierarchical multiple regression analysis was also conducted. It was found that the three control variables of gender of the leader, team type, and time working together as a team, which were included in the first model, explained only 5% of the variance in members’ work engagement \( (R^2 = 0.05, F = 4.19, p < .006) \). When the predictor variable of authentic leadership entered into the regression, the three control variables and authentic leadership accounted for 32% of the variance in members’ work engagement \( (R^2 = 0.319, F = 85.25, p < .000) \). Furthermore, the authentic leadership variable was a significant independent predictor of members’ work engagement, showing
the following standardized beta coefficients (β = .54,  t = 9.23,  p < .000). The statistical results and the hierarchical multiple regression analyses conducted in this study revealed and provided a strong support for the two research’s hypotheses:

H₁: There is a positive relationship between authentic leadership behaviors of the leader and members’ perceived group cohesion.

H₂: There is a positive relationship between authentic leadership behaviors of the leader and members’ work engagement.

Tables 6 and 7 show the hierarchical multiple regression analysis summaries for the study’s variables.

Table 6: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Summary for Variable Authentic Leadership Predicting Perceived Group Cohesion (N = 226)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Perceived group cohesion</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>R²</td>
<td>ΔR²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team leader’s gender</td>
<td>-.218</td>
<td>.001*</td>
<td>.061</td>
<td>.048</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time working together as team</td>
<td>-.024</td>
<td>.710</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team type</td>
<td>.093</td>
<td>.159</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>R²</td>
<td>ΔR²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team leader’s gender</td>
<td>-.051</td>
<td>.387</td>
<td>.326</td>
<td>.314</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time working together as team</td>
<td>-.058</td>
<td>.301</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team type</td>
<td>.066</td>
<td>.236</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic leadership</td>
<td>.544</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p ≤ .05.

Source: Created by the authors using the results from the study.

Table 7: Hierarchical Multiple Regression Analysis Summary for Variable Authentic Leadership Predicting Members’ Work Engagement (N = 226)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Predictor</th>
<th>Work engagement</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Model 1</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>R²</td>
<td>ΔR²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team leader’s gender</td>
<td>-.185</td>
<td>.006*</td>
<td>.054</td>
<td>.041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time working together as team</td>
<td>-.070</td>
<td>.285</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team type</td>
<td>.106</td>
<td>.111</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model 2</td>
<td>β</td>
<td>p</td>
<td>R²</td>
<td>ΔR²</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team leader’s gender</td>
<td>-.017</td>
<td>.768</td>
<td>.319</td>
<td>.307</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time working together as team</td>
<td>-.104</td>
<td>.065</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team type</td>
<td>.079</td>
<td>.161</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Authentic leadership</td>
<td>.544</td>
<td>.000*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p ≤ .05.

Source: Created by the authors using the results from the study.

4.3.1 Comparison of Means of Control Variable Team Leader’s Gender

Independent t tests were used in this quantitative study to compare the means of team leader females and team leader males regarding to the respondents’ perception of group cohesion and work engagement. First, independent-sample t tests were conducted
to compare the group cohesion scores for teams with female leaders and teams with male leaders. A significant difference was found in the scores for female leaders ($M = 4.48, SD = .63$) and male leaders ($M = 4.16, SD = .70$) conditions, $t(224) = 3.51, p = .001$ (two-tailed). Nevertheless, the magnitude of the difference in the means (mean difference = .32, 95% CI: .14 to .50) represented a small effect (eta squared = .05). When another independent-sample $t$ test was run to compare the work engagement scores for teams with female leaders and teams with male leaders, a significant difference was discovered in the scores for females ($M = 4.07, SD = .61$) and males ($M = 3.79, SD = .75$) conditions, $t(223) = 2.98, p = .003$ (two-tailed). However, the size of the difference in the means (mean difference = .27, 95% CI: .09 to .46) represented a small effect (eta squared = .04). The findings of these statistical tests are included in Table 8.

Table 8: Comparison of Means, Standard Deviations, and Mean Differences in $t$ Tests of the Control Variable Team Leader’s Gender ($N = 226$)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale variables</th>
<th>$M$</th>
<th>$SD$</th>
<th>$t$</th>
<th>$p$</th>
<th>MD</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Perceived group cohesion</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team’s female leaders</td>
<td>4.48</td>
<td>.63</td>
<td>3.51</td>
<td>.001</td>
<td>.32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team’s male leaders</td>
<td>4.16</td>
<td>.70</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Work engagement</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2.98</td>
<td>.003</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team’s female leaders</td>
<td>4.07</td>
<td>.61</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team’s male leaders</td>
<td>3.79</td>
<td>.75</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Created by the authors using the results from the study.

### 4.3.2 Simple Linear Regressions Controlling the Variable Team Leader’s Gender

After controlling the variable of team leaders’ gender, standard linear regressions were conducted to assess the impact of the IV authentic leadership to predict group cohesion and work engagement displayed by team members. On one hand, the authentic leadership of female leaders revealed and explained 28% of the variance in perceived group cohesion ($R^2 = .282, F = 57.0, p < .000$). Additionally, the authentic leadership behaviors of female leaders were a significant independent predictor of perceived group cohesion, showing the following standardized beta coefficients ($\beta = .53, t = 7.55, p < .000$). On the other hand, the authentic leadership behaviors of team male leaders explained 28% of the variance in perceived group cohesion ($R^2 = .285, F = 30.6, p < .000$). Also, the authentic leadership behaviors of male leaders were a significant independent predictor of perceived group cohesion, showing the following standardized beta coefficients ($\beta = .53, t = 5.53, p < .000$).

The authentic leadership of female leaders accounted for the 29% of the variance in members’ work engagement ($R^2 = .288, F = 58.1, p < .000$). As well, the authentic
leadership behaviors of female leaders were a significant independent predictor of members’ work engagement, showing a standardized beta coefficient (β = .53, t = 7.62, p < .000). The authentic leadership behaviors of team male leaders explained 26% of the variance in members’ work engagement (R² = .261, F = 27.2, p < .000). Also, the authentic leadership behaviors of male leaders was a significant independent predictor of the DP work engagement, showing the following standardized beta coefficients (β = .51, t = 5.21, p < .000). Tables 9 and 10 show the simple linear regression analyses for the study’s variables after controlling the variable team leaders’ gender.

Table 9: Simple Regression Analysis Summary for Variable Authentic Leadership Predicting Perceived Group Cohesion Controlling the Variable Team Leaders Gender (N = 226)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control variable</th>
<th>Perceived group cohesion</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team female leaders</td>
<td>.531</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team male leaders</td>
<td>.534</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p ≤ .05.

Source: Created by the authors using the results from the study.

Table 10: Simple Regression Analysis Summary for Variable Authentic Leadership Predicting Work Engagement Controlling the Variable Team Leaders Gender (N = 226)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Control variable</th>
<th>Work engagement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>β</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team female leaders</td>
<td>.536</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team male leaders</td>
<td>.511</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p ≤ .05.

Source: Created by the authors using the results from the study.

The aim to understand leadership has been strong (Parks, 2005). Leaders are seen as people who face crisis and unfamiliar situations by using new approaches (Heifetz & Linsky, 2002); people who develop and communicate a vision (Bennis, 1989); people who model the way, enable others, and promote credibility (Kouzes & Posner, 2013); emotionally intelligent people (Goleman, Boyzatis, & McKee, 2002); charismatic persons (Conger, 1989); and individuals who display courage and humility at the same time (Collins, 2001). Nevertheless, it is important to be aware that leadership often occurs within a small group context (Bennis 1997; Donnellon, 2006; Lencioni, 2002; Northouse, 2013; Steward et al., 1999).

Leadership is a process where people within small groups accomplish goals (Blanchard, 2007; Northouse, 2013); however, it involves gaining the members’ cohesion and their engagement for achieving great results (Donellon, 2006; Hughes, Ginnett & Curphy, 2010; Northouse, 2013; Ulrich, Zenger, & Smallwood, 1999; Yukl, 2006).
Leadership can be seen as a process of influence within a small group in order to achieve outstanding results (Blanchard, 2007; Maxwell, 2000; Northouse, 2013). An excellent place to exercise leadership within small groups is student organizations (Miles, 2011; Reese, 2011). A student organization fits in the term small group:

a collection of individuals from three to fifteen in number, who meet in face-to-face interaction over a period of time, generally with an assigned or assumed leader, who possess at least one common characteristic, and who meet with a purpose in mind. (Barker et al., 2001, p. 7)

Also, a student organization is a collection of people who are together by one same interest; they can be a cluster of people with complementary skills who are committed to one another and who consider themselves as being responsible for achieving common goals (Salcedo & Guajardo, 2009).

The question is, How do leaders within student organizations have to behave in order to gain the people’s trust and to achieve great results? Recently, the authentic leadership theory has caught researchers’ attention, and it has positioned itself in leadership studies because of its capacity to predict organizational citizenship behavior, organizational commitment, follower satisfaction, job performance, organizational climate (Walumbwa et al., 2008), trust in the leader (Wong & Cummings, 2009; Wong, Laschinger, et al., 2010), job satisfaction (Giallonardo et al., 2010), structural empowerment (Wong & Laschinger, 2012), collective efficacy, group performance (Xiong & Fang, 2014), employee innovation (Zhou et al., 2014), organizational trust (Onorato & Zhu, 2014), and positive psychological capital (Clapp-Smith et al., 2009).

Authentic leaders exemplify four components: self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective (George, 2003; Giallonardo et al., 2010; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

The current study desired to investigate the relationship and to discover more quantitative evidence for the relationship between authentic leadership, group cohesion, and work engagement. The opportunity to carry out this investigation in Mexico adds knowledge and new understandings about the cross-cultural application of the authentic leadership theory. Therefore, the purpose of this study was to develop an empirical investigation and to assess if the four authentic leadership behaviors are related and can predict the group cohesion and work engagement within student organizations in Mexico.
This chapter presented implications of the study’s findings, strengths and limitations of the study, ideas for future research, and conclusions.

5 CONCLUSIONS

This study represents one of the first investigations of authentic leadership in Mexico and Latin America, and it has some leadership implications within teams and small groups. First, the study’s findings support the two hypotheses of this research and exhibiting that leaders’ authentic leadership behaviors are positively related and predict perceived group cohesion and work engagement among members. In Mexico, according to the literature review, a fundamental factor is that an effective leader is a person who practices and promotes team-oriented leadership (Javidan et al., 2006). The results indicate that, if team or small group leaders behave and emphasize the four authentic leadership behaviors of self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing, and internalized moral perspective (George, 2003; Giallonardo et al., 2010; Walumbwa et al., 2008), perceived group cohesion and work engagement among team members can be enhanced.

Second, using hierarchical multiple regressions to determine the positive relationship of authentic leadership with group cohesion and work engagement, Hypotheses 1 and 2 were supported by this quantitative study. The study’s results demonstrate that the construct of authentic leadership has a positive relationship with group cohesion (Garcia-Guiu et al., 2015). In this way, the findings of this study support previous investigations, such as the study of Garcia-Guiu et al. (2015), which showed the direct and positive relationship with group cohesion (β = .53, p = .01). The present study, using a different sample in a different country, found a similar result and indicates that authentic leadership has a positive relationship with group cohesion (β = .54, p = .000). Likewise, the study’s results showed the positive relationship between the construct of authentic leadership and work engagement (β = .54, p = .000). In this way, these findings support previous empirical studies, such as the study of Giallonardo et al. (2010), which showed the direct and positive relationship between authentic leadership and work engagement (β = .21, p = .01), and the study of Wong, Laschinger, et al. (2010) that indicated a similar positive effect between authentic leadership and work engagement (β = .56, p = .000).
Third, the authentic leadership behaviors of both male and female leaders were a significant independent predictor of perceived group cohesion and work engagement. Even though gender is relatively unexplored in authentic leadership studies (Liu, Cutcher, & Grant, 2015), the independent t tests showed a small difference in the scores for female leaders ($M = 4.48, SD = .63$) and male leaders ($M = 4.16, SD = .70$). This small difference in the results may be explained because two thirds of the respondents mentioned having team female leaders. Also, after conducting simple regressions, the authentic leadership of both female and male leaders revealed and explained 28% of the variance in perceived group cohesion. However, the study only found a 2% difference between team female leaders and team male leaders regarding the variance on the dependent variable of members’ work engagement. As a result, the authentic leadership behaviors of female leaders accounted for the 29% of the variance in members’ work engagement, meanwhile the authentic leadership behaviors of team male leaders explained 26% of the variance in members’ work engagement. This small difference of 2% between team female leaders and team male leaders in the present study seems to show that authenticity is gender neutral (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004), and authentic leadership is something that leaders do rather than something they are (Liu et al., 2015).

This quantitative research presents important findings that other colleagues, researchers, and scholars might consider when exploring and analyzing authentic leadership and its relationship with group cohesion and work engagement. First, taking as a foundation this study and how authentic leadership has positive effects on group cohesion and work engagement, scholars and future researchers should continue to explore and assess authentic leadership in the Mexican context using other samples such as business, healthcare organizations, and government. These samples might give the opportunity to compare the present study’s results with future findings that emerge from these diverse and robust samples. Second, this study focused on assessing the effect of authentic leadership on two variables—group cohesion and work engagement. Future researchers in Mexico and Latin America might have a wide look exploring and relating the effects of authentic leadership on other variables such as organizational citizenship behavior, organizational commitment, follower satisfaction, job performance, organizational climate, trust in the leader, job satisfaction, structural empowerment, collective efficacy, group performance, employee innovation, organizational trust, and positive psychological capital. Future researchers also could use qualitative or mixed
approaches in order to get a more in-depth look regarding the effects of authentic leadership in Mexico. Lastly, due to the need for more empirical results about authentic leadership and its outcomes in Mexico and Latin America, a future researcher who wants to assess in Mexico the effects of authentic leadership on other constructs using a quantitative method should continue using reliable and validated instruments to increment the knowledge and understanding of authentic leadership in our country.

This study is only one evidence about the positive effects of authentic leaders on the group cohesion and work engagement displayed by team members. The study of authentic leadership is in the early stages in the Mexican and Latin American cultures. This study was initiated with the purpose of adding empirical knowledge regarding the outcomes of authentic leadership in a context and with a sample that had not been used before by researchers. The study’s findings answered two research questions:

RQ1: Is there a relationship between authentic leadership, group cohesion, and work engagement in a Mexican organization?

RQ2: Does authentic leadership predict group cohesion and work engagement in a Mexican organization?

Taking as a foundation the literature review, previously reliable and validated instruments were chosen and used to explore the effects of authentic leadership on group cohesion and work engagement in student organizations in Mexico. Using a robust sample at Universidad de Monterrey and a statistical analysis of the data, both of the study’s hypotheses were supported. As a result, the findings clearly demonstrated that there is a positive relationship between the authentic leadership behaviors of the leader and the members’ group cohesion, and there is a positive relationship between the authentic leadership behaviors of the leader and the members’ work engagement. However, there is a need to continue examining and adding empirical data about the outcomes associated with this new approach to leadership studies called authentic leadership. Thus, it is sought that the present study and its findings might encourage future investigations about the effects of authentic leadership in the Mexican and Latin American countries.
REFERENCES


