THE INFLUENCE OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP ON PUBLIC EMPLOYEES ANALYZED THROUGH SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY: A CASE STUDY IN REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA

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ABSTRACT

This study examines the influence of authentic leadership on employees from public organizations analyzed through self-determination theory. Over the years, researchers analyzed different particularities of authentic leadership and its importance in nowadays' society. However, fewer researchers were interested in analyzing the influence of authentic leadership on employees through self-determination theory, especially in the perception of public ethical behavior. The theoretical model of this study proposes that authentic leadership is negatively correlated with public employees' positive attitude toward unethical behavior, namely corrupt acts. Also, authentic leadership and job satisfaction are positively related with public employees' work motivation. This positive relationship contributes to the decrease level of public employees' positive attitude toward corruption acts. The study was realized in different public organizations from Republic of Moldova. The total sample is composed by 98 participants. The hypotheses were tested through Multiple Hierarchical Regression. The study results showed that authentic leadership has a positive impact on work motivation. However, job satisfaction does not have any influence on public employees' perception of corruption acts. By contrast, authentic leadership behavior does have a positive impact on public employees' perception of corruption acts, but only when they perceive these acts as less serious.

Keywords: Authentic Leadership, Work Motivation, Job Satisfaction, Perception of Unethical Behavior, Public Manager, Public Employees.

JEL Classification: M12

1. INTRODUCTION

Nowadays, the main goal of every Government is to ensure that its citizens are satisfied with their policies. Public organizations represent the link between Government and its citizens. Consequently, the quality degree of their public services influences the level of citizen's trust in their Government. If the employees from public organizations will provide high quality of public services, citizens will be satisfied with their Government. Therefore, the level of citizens' trust in their Government will increase. On the other hand, the Government must

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ensure that its employees are satisfied with their job in order to have good job performance and to maintain citizens' loyalty.

Every private and public manager is focused on the promotion of suitable motivation tools in order to ensure an increasing of job satisfaction and work well-being (e.g., Santos, Gonçalves & Gomes, 2013; Mader, Santos & Gonçalves, 2018) and consequently increase performance and work ethical behavior of his employees. However, this human resource strategy does not always work. Often, the results of using motivation tools can be negative. Hence, it is important for every employee to have a worthy person that will be an example to follow. In opposite, unethical and incivility behavior of leader (supervisors, co-workers, clients, etc.) is associated with stress and burnout (Nitzsche, Ribeiro & Laneiro, 2018). As a result, a large number of managers adapt an authentic leadership behavior with the main goal to increase employees' intrinsic motivation level (Rego, Sousa, Marques & Pina e Cunha, 2011). Authentic leader was identified as an individual who is self-aware of his own improvements and activities, promoting high moral values and standards in his organization, contributing to the construction of these social values (see also Whitehead, 2009; Alilyyani, Wong & Cummings, 2018). This definition contains three main elements of an authentic leader: self-awareness; trustworthiness and commitment to organizational success. Thus, authentic leadership behavior creates an ethical working environment that generates and increase level of employees' self-awareness. Different researchers analyzed theoretical framework of authentic leadership. Over the last decades, they were mostly involved in analyzing empirical particularities of authentic leadership. Some researchers realized an investigation with the main goal to identify the influence of authentic leadership on employee's work activities (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004; Ilies, Morgeson & Nahrgang, 2005; Alok & Israel, 2012; see also Zhu, Song, Zhu & Johnson, 2019). Other topics of authentic leadership research were: the impact of authentic leadership and behavioral integrity on employees (see also Leroy, Palanski & Simons, 2011; Alilyyani *et al.*, 2018); the relationship between authentic leadership and job satisfaction and job performance (Wong & Laschinger, 2012); the influence of authentic leadership on team potency and its mediators (Rego, Vitória, Magalhães, Ribeiro & Pina e Cunha, 2013; see also Zhu *et al.*, 2019). In order to fulfill the research of authentic leadership behavior, it was also analyzed the particularities of authentic leadership dimensions and its importance (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing & Peterson, 2008; Leroy *et al.*, 2011; Peterson, Walumbwa, Avolio & Hannah, 2012; Weischer, Weibler & Petersen, 2013). Authentic leadership behavior is especially important in public organizations, in a high moral organizational culture, employees are more likely to adapt an ethical behavior and to avoid the violation of legal rules.

Self-determination theory is focused on explaining the particularities of human needs as motivation stimulus (Deci & Ryan, 2000; for a revision Ryan & Deci, 2019). According to this theory, the basic human needs are: competence, relatedness and autonomy which create an explanation of individual's behavior (Deci, 1972; Deci & Ryan, 2000; Arvanitis, 2017; see also Ryan & Deci, 2019). Those authors considered the motivation has a continuous from amotivation, extrinsic motivation and intrinsic motivation (Vallerand, Blais, Briére & Pelletier, 1989; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Vansteenkiste, Neyrinck, Niemiec, Soenens, Witte & Van den Broeck, 2007). Therefore, this theory explains the individual's behavior according to its main needs. Considering a deep research in authentic leadership theory and self-determination theory, it can be established that both theories mention the human inclination to ensure their psychological growth (Novicevic, Harvey, Buckley, Brown & Evans, 2006). Authentic leadership increases not just followers' intrinsic motivation, but also their trust in organization, their organizational commitment and overall job satisfaction level (Miniotaite & Buciuniene, 2013). Subsequently, authentic leadership behavior is positively related to the organizational development. Moreover, genuine leaders are more likely to be intrinsically

motivated rather than other type of leaders (Miniotaite & Buciuniene, 2013). The high level of intrinsic motivation of authentic leader has a significant positive impact on their followers whose behavior is influenced by their leader. As a result, their activities become lead by high moral standards, which can be fostered through themselves. This leads to the idea that authentic leadership behavior generates positive outcomes from the people. It can be argued that authentic leadership behavior has a positive influence on employees' work motivation level. Moreover, job satisfaction is also positively related to public employees' work motivation. Job satisfaction is linked with high satisfaction level of their own activities and performance which generate a growth of their high moral and ethical behavior. Subsequently, their behavior does imply a negative attitude toward unethical activities.

2. THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 Authentic leadership

Authentic leadership represents various ethical actions and knowingly reflective acts, which are skillfully executed (Begley, 2001). The self-knowledge is an important element of authentic leadership behavior, which suggests that a leader acts according to his beliefs and values. Through authentic leadership, the leader inspires his followers trust and high social values, which contribute to the maintenance of a high degree of self-awareness in themselves.

Authentic leadership behavior can be identified through its four dimensions: (1) self-awareness, (2) balanced processing, (3) internalized moral perspective and (4) relational transparency (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008).

Self-awareness represents awareness of one's own knowledge, values, beliefs, motives and experiences (Ilies *et al.*, 2005). Therefore, it is essential for a leader to know his own potential, to control his own emotions, to act according to his values and to take decisions according to his experience. Self-awareness also relates how often a leader acknowledges his influence on other people (Peterson *et al.*, 2012). Therefore, self-awareness ensures that a leader takes full responsibility for his own actions and he is aware of his impact on people around him. The second dimension of authentic leadership, namely balanced processing was defined as the fact that every leader equitably analyzes all relevant data before making a decision (Peus, Wesche, Streicher, Braun & Frey, 2011). According to this dimension, leaders are interested in encouraging different points of view of their followers (Leroy *et al.*, 2011). Therefore, balanced processing can have a positive influence on authentic leader's activities. In order to have a decision, it is important to analyze all the circumstances and the factors which influence this decision. It should be also considered the alternative decisions and their influence in external environment. Balanced processing secures authentic leaders the capacity of developing themselves through their own decisions. The third dimension of the concept, internalized moral perspective, is a self-regulation process, identified in decisions and behaviors of that leader who is conducted by his moral standards and values (Leroy *et al.*, 2011; Peterson *et al.*, 2012). In a difficult situation, a leader with high moral values will act in a more pro-social and ethical manner (Walumbwa, Christensen & Hailey, 2011). Therefore, his decisions will be done according to his moral values which generate an ethical behavior. The last dimension of authentic leadership is relational transparency. Relational transparency represents a leader's ability to present himself, with his own expressions of beliefs and feelings to his followers, fostering trust and sharing information with them, encouraging them to express their ideas, challenges and opinions (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008; Leroy *et al.*, 2011; Rego *et al.*, 2011; Peterson *et al.*, 2012). Taking into consideration the moral and honest behavior of the leader, relational transparency contributes to the reinforcement of follower's trust and loyalty in his leader. Therefore, it can be argued that this transparent

relationship between authentic leader and his followers will contribute to strengthen the follower's positive outcomes.

Over the years, a large number of researchers have analyzed different aspects of authentic leadership and its influence on organizational activities. Some researchers have found that genuine leadership behavior is positively associated to employees' work engagement (Penger & Černe, 2014). Also, this relationship can be mediated by positive psychological environment which is secured by an authentic leadership behavior (Alok & Israel, 2012). Therefore, authentic leadership has a positive impact on employee's work engagement which subsequently increases their level of organizational commitment (Alok & Israel, 2012). As a result, authentic leadership generates high level of employees' work performance which contributes to the development of a productive working environment.

Other researchers have found that authentic leadership is positively related to group activities (Rego *et al.*, 2013; López, Alonso, Morales & León, 2015). Thus, authentic leadership is positively correlated with group cohesion and identification (López *et al.*, 2015). Also, authentic leadership has a positive impact on team potency. The main mediator in this process is team virtuousness, which increases team potency through the role of team affective commitment (Rego *et al.*, 2013). Thus, authentic leadership has a positive influence on its follower's team activities which increase positive output level of the organization. Authentic leadership has an essential impact in predicting employee's creativity (Rego *et al.*, 2011). This impact can be established directly or through the hope which is identified as an intermediary element in this process (Rego, Sousa, Marques & Pina e Cunha, 2014). So, the positive effect of authentic leadership would be showned on employee's hope, thus, creativity. Job satisfaction and job performance are influenced by authentic leadership behavior through empowerment dimension (Wong & Laschinger, 2012). Consequently, if an employee is authorized to realize new responsible task, the job satisfaction and job performance will increase. Therefore, it can be established that authentic leadership behavior has an important influence on employee's job performance.

2.2 Self-determination theory

Self-determination theory is a general theory of motivation that try to systematically explain the dynamics of human needs (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2019). Nowadays, self-determination theory can be identified as one of the most empirically supported motivation theories (Farah-Jarjoura, 2014). According to this theory, it can be established that every individual has its own personal needs which he is willing to fulfill them. Therefore, if public manager will adapt adequate motivation tools for his employees according to their needs then public employees will be satisfied and their job performance level will increase.

Self-determination theory argues that there are three main psychological needs for an individual, namely competence, relatedness and autonomy.

Competence supposes that a person should be involved in varied challenges and should experience all aspects from physical and social worlds (Deci & Ryan, 2000). The need of competence is achieved when individuals perceive that they are capable and productive during the fulfillment of their actions (Sheldon, Elliot, Kim & Kasser, 2001). Therefore, every individual must feel competent, because this strengthens his own personality and confidence in himself. As a result, the individual become self-assured and he can try to accomplish challenging tasks. Under an environment where employee will feel competent, he will be more motivated to perform the objectives at high levels.

The second psychological need, namely relatedness, was identified as a wish to be part of a social group, to be connected with its members, to care for others and to understand that they also care for you (Lin, 2016). Therefore, relatedness refers to individual's need

to socialize and to be connected with other individuals. Their communications needs are very important, because the feeling of belongingness to a group reinforces the individual's confidence in himself. Moreover, he becomes more open-minded and sociable. Relatedness is very important for organizations, especially for the public ones, because those employees have direct connections with beneficiaries of public services. Thus, the process of providing public services becomes more improved. A large number of public organizations promote their organizational culture in their work environment in order to consolidate the employee's feeling of security and belongingness.

The last psychological need of self-determination theory is autonomy. Autonomy implies the capacity of an individual to self-organize and regulate his own behavior in the process of achieving his goals based on his regulatory demands (Deci & Ryan, 2000; Ryan & Deci, 2019). Therefore, the need of autonomy is the need of a person to be individual, to act according to his interests and values and to achieve his objectives in his own manner. Subsequently, this behavior becomes individualistic. Employees demonstrate self-control of their behavior that generates a bureaucratic working environment.

2.3 The authentic leadership and the motivation of public organization workers

In public organizations, their managers guarantee the motivation policies. If the public manager adapts an authentic behavior, he is more likely to implement appropriate motivation strategies which affect work motivation of his employees. Job satisfaction, which is positively related to work motivation, can generate a decrease level of public employees' potential to act unethically. Thus, public manager must secure an adequate working environment and he should strengthen organizational culture of his organization in a suitable manner. According to self-determination theory, there are three types of motivation: intrinsic motivation, extrinsic motivation and amotivation.

According to the first type of motivation, namely intrinsic motivation, public employees can be affected by internal factors. Intrinsically motivated public employees want to be involved in challenging tasks and to accomplish actions that increase their self-assurance. Subsequently, it is important that every public employee to be intrinsically motivated. This motivation can be generated by an authentic leadership behavior. Every public manager acts according to his values and beliefs. If the manager adapts an authentic behavior, which supposes promotion of trust, confidence and resilience through its employees, it can be considered that public manager will positively influence the intrinsic motivation of these public employees. According to the second type of motivation, namely extrinsic motivation, individuals can be affected by different external factors. According to these factors, the individual adapts corresponding behavior. Consequently, public employee can be involved in the implementation process of different public projects in order to achieve prestige, status or high income. Authentic public manager will successfully implement suitable motivation strategies in his organization. It can be identified 2 types of external rewards: verbal reinforcement (positive feedback) and pecuniary rewards (Deci, 1972). Consequently, if public manager uses a verbal reinforcement, the level of intrinsic motivation of his employees will increase. By contrast, if public manager will use pecuniary rewards, his employees will perceive that their behavior is controlled. Thus, their level of intrinsic motivation will decrease. As a result, in order to maintain a high level of intrinsic motivation, the authentic public manager will reward his employees with rather verbal reinforcement than with monetary rewards. Amotivation is an individual state without motivation (for a review Ryan & Deci, 2019). Amotivation is identified in the situation where employee is not interested in controlling his desired results. In this case, the authentic public manager must adapt a

suitable behavior (e.g., offering a financial reward or acknowledgement of his employee's past achievements) in order to increase employee's motivation level.

Taking into consideration the influence of authentic leadership behavior on public employees, the following hypothesis can be formulated:

Hypothesis 1: The authentic leadership behavior in public organizations has a positive influence on employees' work motivation level.

A large number of public managers consider that the most appropriate motivation strategies should involve the increase of extrinsic motivation rather than intrinsic motivation level of their employees. However, some researchers found that private employees are more externally motivated than public employees (Rashid & Rashid, 2012). Thus, financial rewards or career development opportunities will produce more effect on private rather than public employees. Authentic leader creates positive psychological environment by promoting self-awareness and transparency within his followers (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008). Consequently, authentic public manager will encourage their employees toward high performance through his beliefs and integrity, rather than external rewards. The creation of honest and reliable working atmosphere causes a raised level of employee's intrinsic motivation.

If leaders will adopt an authentic leadership behavior, then their level of intrinsic motivation will increase (Ilies *et al.*, 2005). Subsequently, authentic leaders' attitude and attachment toward work has a positive impact on employees' intrinsic motivation. Moreover, authentic leaders encourage the followers' self-determination. Taking into consideration that authentic public manager is interested in supporting intrinsic motivation of his employees, he will not just have a positive impact on employee's mood (Hsiung, 2011), but also, he will ensure an increased level of employee's creativity (Rego *et al.*, 2011). Consequently, public employees' job performance and job satisfaction will increase. Taking into consideration the impact of authentic leadership behavior on public employees' work motivation level, it can be formulated the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 2: The increase work motivation level of public employees is positively related to their job satisfaction.

One of the major problems in public organizations is unethical behavior of public employees. The most important element of unethical behavior is corruption acts. Corruption can be defined as a specific behavior of an individual, through which he makes abuse of his work position in favor of another person or institution (Rabl, 2011). Corruption can be identified through different forms, such as bribery, theft, fraud, favoritism, nepotism and others. However, in public organizations more often can be established the phenomena such as bribery, favoritism, gift-giving, nepotism and clienteles. One of the most important consequences of corruption in organizations is the discredit of the working environment and of the organization's reputation (Santos, Guevara, Amorim & Ferraz-Neto, 2012). Acts of corruption encourage the public employee's unethical behavior and promote low moral standards. It is important for every public manager to identify suitable motivation tools in order to avoid corruption acts in public organizations. Also, he must encourage ethical behavior in order to ensure that his employees will adapt a negative attitude toward corruption acts.

Some researchers (e.g., Van Rijckeghem & Weder, 2001) found that higher public employee's salaries (relative to manufacturing wages) are associated with less corruption. By contrast, others (e.g., Barr, Lindelow & Serneels, 2009) established strong arguments that service providers do not realize their job better when they have higher wages. Authentic

leadership behavior contributes to the increased level of employee's intrinsic motivation. Subsequently, public employees will be reserved from acting in a corrupt manner and they will adapt a negative attitude toward it. The corruption in public organizations can be consolidated by unsatisfied public employees. The factors which can contribute to a high level of public employees' job dissatisfaction are: low level of job security, bad working environment and low level of socialization in the public organization. These elements consolidate the growth of employees' acts of corruption. Therefore, the higher is job satisfaction of public employees the lower is their positive perception of corruption. As a result, it can be formulated the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: The increase level of public employees' job satisfaction increase their negative attitude toward corruption acts from public organizations.

3. METHOD

3.1 Sample

The sample was collected from seven public organizations from Republic of Moldova. All its participants are actively involved in different domains (educational field, health field and administrative field). Only completed correctly questionnaires were considered. The sample is comprised of 98 participants, were 19,4% are male (N = 19) and 80,6% are female (N = 79). Taking into consideration that the age range of participants is between 22 and 61 years (Mean (M) = 37.12, Standard Deviation (SD) = 12.47), it can be determined that the vast majority of respondents are middle aged public employees. In terms of work experience, it can be established that the majority of participants are involved in their job between 2 and 15 years (M = 12.22, SD = 12.63). With reference to the marital status, it can be identified that most of participants are married (74,5 %), followed by those who are single (19,4 %), divorced/widowed (6,1%).

3.2 Measures

Instruments used for data collection were: Authentic Leadership Inventory questionnaire, Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic motivation scale, Global Job Satisfaction scale and one questionnaire realized by Haberfeld, Kutnjak Ivkovich, Klockars and Pagon (2000) in order to establish the public employees' attitude toward corruption. All these questionnaires were translated into Romanian language.

Authentic Leadership Inventory. Measure developed by Neider and Schriesheim (2011) used to measure the degree of manager's authenticity during the accomplishment of their work. This is a 16-item questionnaire comprising the measurement of four dimensions of authentic leadership: self-awareness; relational transparency; internalized moral perspective and balanced processing. The Cronbach alpha for this scale is .918.

Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (short version, 18 items). Originally developed by Blais, Brière, Lachance, Riddle and Vallerand (1993) but adopted by Tremblay, Blanchard, Taylor, Pelletier and Villeneuve (2009) in English version. This instrument was used to measure the degree of employees' work motivation level. This 18-item tool is a multidimensional measure that includes six factors of motivation: intrinsic motivation; integrated regulation; identified regulation; introjected regulation; external regulation and amotivation. The Cronbach alpha for Work Extrinsic and Intrinsic Motivation Scale (18-items) is .871.

Global Job Satisfaction. Warr, Cook and Wall (1979) realized this instrument. Includes 15 items used for the measurement of job satisfaction level. The Cronbach's alpha for Global Job Satisfaction scale (15-items) is .885.

Attitude of public employees toward unethical behavior. This instrument, realized by Haberfeld *et al.* (2000) was used to identify the attitude of public employees toward unethical behavior, namely their position toward corruption. This instrument contains 10 situational questions for the establishment of individual's attitude toward acts of corruption. The scale Perception of Corruption (10-items) has a Cronbach's alpha of .836.

All the questionnaires were rated according to a Likert-type scale from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 7 (Strongly Agree), except the Perception of Corruption survey, which was rated on a 5-points Likert-type scale, with alternative ranging from 1 (Totally disagree) to 5 (Totally agree).

3.3. Procedure

The data collection was carried out in seven public organizations, from Republic of Moldova, during a period of three months.

All participants were asked to answer a complex questionnaire, composed by four parts (authentic leadership inventory; work intrinsic and extrinsic motivation scale; global job satisfaction scale and establishment of public employees' corruption attitude through 10 situational questions). The tools used for the data collection were the interview and individual fulfillment of the questionnaire. The interview and the fulfillment of the questionnaire for each person were realized between 20 and 35 minutes. In order to respect the ethical criteria, the questionnaires were voluntary and anonymous.

4. RESULTS

4.1 Mean and standard deviations

The mean scores and standard deviations for all the variables under study are displayed on Table 1.

According to this table, the overall mean score for authentic leadership is 5.42, with the internal moral perspective dimension having the highest mean (M = 5.51, SD = .847) and relational transparency dimension presenting the lowest mean (M = 5.28, SD = 953). Regarding work motivation, mean score range from the lowest score 3.65 (SD = 1.39) for amotivation to the highest score of 6.06 (SD = .808) for intrinsic motivation. The overall mean score for work motivation is 5.40 (SD = .748). The mean score for global job satisfaction is 5.36 (SD = .788) while for perception of corruption is 2.24 (SD = .672).

Table 1. Mean and Standard Deviation for authentic leadership's dimensions, work motivation factors, job satisfaction and perception of corruption

	Mean	SD	
Authentic leadership inventory			
Self-awareness	5.47	.990	**Mean** = 5.42 **SD** = .844
Relational transparency	5.28	.953	
Internalized moral perspective	5.51	.847	
Balanced processing	5.42	.966	
Work extrinsic and intrinsic motivation scale			
Intrinsic Motivation	6.06	.808	**Mean** = 5.40 **SD** = .748
Extrinsic motivation	5.67	.884	
- External regulation	5.20	1.35	
- Introjected regulation	6.03	.768	
- Identified regulation	5,78	1.05	
- Integrated regulation	5.68	1.17	
Amotivation	3.65	1.39	
Global job satisfaction scale	5.36	.788	
Corruption Perception			
- Perception of corruption more serious	1.68	.666	**Mean** = 2.24 **SD** = .672
- Perception of corruption less serious	3.08	.965	

Source: Own Elaboration

Table 2. Mean and Standard Deviation for measurement of corruption perception according to the respondents' conception of seriousness of corruption acts

	Mean	SD	
Perception of corruption more serious			**Mean=** 1.68 **SD=**.666
Incidents of bribery	1.97	1.08	
Theft 1	1.50	.87	
- Violating organizational rules 1	1.83	1.08	
Theft 2	1.45	.72	
- Violating organizational rules 2	1.46	.73	
- Readiness to report an offender	1.89	.87	
Perception of corruption less serious			**Mean=**3.08 **SD=**.965
Conflict of interest	3.70	.99	
Small gifts receiving	3.22	1.32	
Holidays gifts receiving	2.52	1.24	
Receipt of kickback	2.90	1.39	

Source: Own Elaboration

However, according to the Table 2, it can be established that the lower level of seriousness perception of corruption has the conflict interest, small and holiday gifts receipt and kickback

receipt (M = 3.08, SD = .965). By contrast, the level of corruption seriousness' perception become higher in bribery and theft acts, readiness to report an offender and violation of organizational rules (Mean = 1.68, SD = .666).

4.2 Regression and comparative analysis

In order to find a model predictive of authentic leadership behavior and job satisfaction, a multiple linear regression was performed. Various models were carried out to determine the influence of these variables on the dependent variables (work motivation level and perception of corruption).

4.2.1 Work intrinsic/extrinsic motivation level Measurement – Regression

The predictive effect of authentic leadership and its dimensions on work motivation is presented in Table 3.

According to this table, it can be determined that authentic leadership has a significant contribution to work motivation (β = .287, *p* = .004), especially through balanced processing dimension (β = .306, *p* = .002). This means that the higher is authenticity of a behavior, the higher is the work motivation of an individual. However, analyzing the predictive effect of authentic leadership behavior and its dimensions on each factor of work motivation, it can be determined the following facts. Authentic leadership behavior has a significant contribution to extrinsic motivation (β = .341, *p* = .001) and its external regulation (β = .323, *p* = .001) and identified regulation (β = .342, *p* = .001) factors. By contrast, this significance decreases for the rest of work motivation factors (e.g., for intrinsic motivation, β = .266, *p* = .008; for integrated regulation, β = .257, *p* = .011; for introjected regulation, β = 142, *p* =.062), especially for amotivation, where authentic leadership behavior contributes negatively to it (β = -.095, *p* = 353).

Table 3. Hierarchical regression for the prediction of work motivation and its six factors

	Work motivation			**Intrinsic motivation**			**Extrinsic motivation**		
	β	**t**	*p*	β	**t**	*p*	β	**t**	*p*
Authentic leadership Inventory	.287	2.93	**.004**	.266	2.70	**.008**	.341	3.55	**.001**
Self-awareness dimension	.283	2.89	.005	.261	2.65	.009	.350	3.66	**.000**
Relational transparency dimension	.279	2.84	.005	.224	2.24	.027	.292	2.98	.004
Internalized moral perspective dimension	.149	1.48	.142	.152	1.50	.136	.202	2.01	.046
Balanced processing dimension	.306	3.15	**.002**	.309	3.18	**.002**	.367	3.87	**.000**
Job satisfaction	.532	6.15	**.000**	.468	5.18	**.000**	.624	7.82	.000
	External Regulation			**Introjected Regulation**			**Identified Regulation**		
	β	**t**	*p*	β	**t**	*p*	β	**t**	*p*
Authentic leadership inventory	.323	3.34	**.001**	.142	1.41	**.062**	.342	3.56	**.001**
Self-awareness	.351	3.67	**.000**	.147	1.45	.150	.332	3.45	**.001**
Relational transparency	.190	1.89	.061	.199	1.99	.049	.322	3.33	**.001**
Internalized moral perspective	.222	2.22	.028	.055	.536	.593	.229	2.30	.024
Balanced processing	.387	4.11	**.000**	.103	1.01	.313	.336	3.49	**.001**
Job satisfaction	.534	6.18	**.000**	.381	4.03	**.000**	.589	7.14	**.000**

	Integrated Regulation				Amotivation		
	β	t	*p*		β	t	*p*
Authentic leadership inventory	.257	2.60	**.011**		-.095	-.934	**.353**
Self-awareness	.258	2.61	.010		-.128	-1.26	.208
Relational transparency	.243	2.45	.016		.028	.275	.784
Internalized moral perspective	.112	1.10	.270		-.118	-1.16	.246
Balanced processing	.295	3.02	**.003**		-.124	-1.22	.223
Job satisfaction	.492	5.54	**.000**		-.142	-1.40	**.163**

Source: Own Elaboration

Regarding the authentic leadership dimensions, it can be determined a significant influence of self-awareness and balanced processing dimensions on extrinsic work motivation (β = .350, *p* = .000, β = .367, *p* = .000) and on its external regulation factor (β = 351, *p* = .000; β = 387, p = .000). Similar to extrinsic motivation factor, self-awareness, relational transparency and balanced processing dimensions of authentic leadership have a significant contribution to identified regulation factor (β = .332, *p* = .001; β = 322, *p* = .001; β = .336, *p* = .001). Balanced processing dimension of authentic leadership has a significant influence on intrinsic motivation (β = .309, *p* = .002) and on integrated regulation (β = .295, *p* = .003) factors.

Job satisfaction is positively related to work motivation (β = .532, *p* = .000) and its three dimensions, except amotivation, where job satisfaction negatively associated to it (β = -.142, *p* = .163). Separately, authentic leadership behavior explains about 8% of work motivation (R^2 = .082, *p* = .004) while job satisfaction shows about 28% explanation of work motivation (R^2 = .283, *p* = .000).

4.2.2 Perception of corruption level Measurement – Regression

The predictive effect on corruption perception is presented on Table 4. There are few dimensions with significant contributions.

Authentic leadership behavior and its dimensions have no predictive effect on perception of corruption, except only in the case when perception of corruption' seriousness is low. Subsequently, in this case, authentic leadership behavior has a significant contribution on it (β = .332, *p* = .001). Its two dimensions, namely self-awareness and balanced processing have also a significant contribution to low seriousness of corruption perception (β = .394, *p* = .000, β = .230, *p* = .004). Job satisfaction has no predictive effect on perception of corruption.

Table 4. Hierarchical regression for the prediction of corruption perception and its two levels

	Corruption Perception			Perception of corruption more serious			Perception of corruption less serious		
	β	t	*p*	β	t	*p*	β	t	*p*
Authentic leadership inventory	.247	2.49	.014	.094	.925	.357	.332	3.44	**.001**
Self-awareness	.265	2.69	.008	.066	.650	.517	.394	4.19	**.000**
Relational transparency	.182	1.81	.072	.092	.903	.369	.222	2.23	.028
Internalized moral perspective	.243	2.45	.016	.136	1.35	.180	.281	2.87	.005
Balanced processing	.197	1.96	.052	.050	.495	.622	.290	2.96	**.004**
Job satisfaction	.057	.562	.575	-.125	-1.23	.218	.230	2.31	.023

Source: Own Elaboration

5. CONCLUSION

Authentic leadership behavior was studied by a large number of researchers (e.g., Avolio *et al.*, 2004; Gardner *et al.*, 2011). Its empirical aspects underline its importance in nowadays society (e.g., Azanza, Moriano & Molero, 2013; Hinojosa, Davis McCauley, Randolph-Seng & Gardner, 2014). However, fewer researchers analyzed the relationship between self-determination theory and authentic leadership behavior (Miniotaite & Buciuniene, 2013). The purpose of this study was to determine to what extend authentic leadership behavior influence employees' work motivation and what kind of relationship there is between work motivation and job satisfaction. Also, one of the main goals was to identify if there is a relationship between job satisfaction and employees' willingness to act unethically during their work performance and what is the role of authentic leadership behavior in this process.

In order to guarantee a detailed analysis, it was examined the differences between the variable's dimensions. The regression analysis showed that authentic leadership behavior has a strong influence on public employees' work motivation, especially through its balanced processing dimension. Therefore, it can be mentioned that the first hypothesis of this research was supported. Authentic leadership behavior creates a supportive working environment, where employees' self-determination is encouraged (Ilies *et al.*, 2005). Thus, they are motivated, especially when their manager (under a fair decision-making process) takes suitable decisions for his public organization. A fair decision-making process increases public employees' work motivation and loyalty in their manager. Moreover, authentic managers, through their own behavior example, motivate their followers to achieve high performance (Toor & Ofori, 2008). Therefore, employees become more motivated in performing their job at a high level, increasing their group performance and collective efficacy (Xiong & Fang, 2014).

According to the research results of this study, it can be established that genuine behavior has a strong impact on extrinsic motivation, especially through self-awareness and balanced processing dimensions. Taking into consideration these results, it can be argued that public employees are motivated by their public manager's behavior in acknowledging his strengths and weaknesses, especially during decision-making process. Consequently, public manager's decisions which generate changes in organization are accordingly to his employees' expectations. Thus, public employees' extrinsic motivation is moderately increased. External regulation which represents a subtype of controlled motivation (Broeck, Lens, Witte & Coillie, 2013) is positively influenced by authentic leadership behavior. Public employees' behavior, being externally regulated, is lead by the desire to obtain benefits or to avoid punishments. Authentic leadership behavior has an important impact on public employees' identified regulation, the third factor of extrinsic motivation, through all its dimensions (except internalized moral perspective dimension). In comparison with external regulation, identified regulation is an autonomous type of motivation (Vandercammen, Hofmans & Theuns, 2014). Thus, public employee is performing his tasks according to his values, because he has internalized his work value. Individuals with a raised level of identified regulation are motivated to fulfill a task because it is important and valuable for them (Li, Tan & Teo, 2012). Authentic managers promote individual identification between their employees, in order to influence their values (Avolio *et al.*, 2004). Therefore, authentic leadership behavior maintains a strong relationship with identified regulation factor of public employees, as the research results of this study have shown.

Authentic leadership behavior does not have a strong impact on public employees' intrinsic motivation, except through its balanced processing dimension. Intrinsically motivated individuals, based on their desire to receive enjoyment or to meet an obligation (such as his ethic values), perform an activity in order to obtain satisfaction, without being

influenced by external factors (Li *et al.*, 2012). Subsequently, the influence of authentic leadership in this case is low. According to the research results of this study, it can be argued that authentic leadership behavior has a stronger influence on public employees' extrinsic motivation than on intrinsic one. These results can be explained by the fact that extrinsic factors, used by authentic managers during their leadership, affect the public employees' accomplishments during their job performance. Thus, financial rewards and recognitions of public employees' successes create a supportive environment for employees which become extrinsically motivated. Public employees' intrinsic motivation is increasing because of individual factors, such as pleasure for fulfillment of tasks, desire to achieve success and personal respect.

Job satisfaction is positively related to employees' work motivation and all its factors (except amotivation factor). This leads to the idea that an increased level of job satisfaction generates a raising level of public employees' work motivation. Hence, the second hypothesis of this research was supported. Previous studies confirm the research results of this study (e.g., Pool, 1997; Fanimehin & Popoola, 2013). However, extrinsic factors (which affect extrinsic motivation) have also a positive relationship with job satisfaction (Shah, Musawwir-Ur-Rehman, Akhtar, Zafar & Riaz, 2012; Mafini & Dlodlo, 2014). Consequently, when work motivation increases, job satisfaction's level raises as well. By contrast, when work motivation decreases, job satisfaction's level drops off (Singh & Tiwari, 2011).

Authentic leadership behavior does not have any influence on public employees' corruption perception, except the case when they perceive the corruption less serious. For example, public employees from Republic of Moldova consider that the conflict of interest, small and holiday gifts and kickback receipt are accepted behaviors as a part of their activities. In this case, it can be determined that authentic leadership behavior is positively correlated with employees' acceptance of small bribe and conflict of interest or kickback if situation requires. This can be argued through existentialist theory, which mentions that the concept of authenticity does not mandatory contain ethical notions (Guignon & Pereboom, 1995; Algera & Lips-Wiersma, 2012). Therefore, authentic leadership behavior can positively influence some aspects of corruption through its individualistic characteristics. This behavior does not mandatory include ethical values and it can be positively associated with corruption. By contrast, authentic leadership behavior does not have any influence on employees' perception of corruption when they perceive the corruption more serious. Employees from Moldavian public organizations do not accept bribery, theft acts and violation of organizational rules as general behaviors at their workplaces. Also, they agree with the idea of necessity in reporting an offender if the situation requires. However, it is acknowledged the fact that it is more likely that employees will take unethical decisions if they will be tempted to take these decisions (Cianci *et al*, 2014). Thus, it is important for public manager to take all necessary measures for eliminating unethical behavior's opportunities of public employees. However, previous studies have shown that high moral leadership behavior is positively correlated with employees' ethical behavior. For instance, a raised level of authenticity in a manager's behavior can generate a decrease level of employees' intentions to act immorally during their job activities (Tang & Liu, 2011). Hence, public employees under an authentic leadership will maintain an ethical behavior and they will create a high moral working environment.

Job satisfaction does not have any influence on public employees' perception of corruption. Authentic leadership behavior has an essential impact on employees' job satisfaction. Therefore, genuine management creates a supportive working environment which increases the level of public employees' job satisfaction (Peus *et al.*, 2011; Wong & Laschinger, 2012; Men & Stacks, 2014). This strong relationship can be explained by the positive characteristics of authentic leadership (such as promotion of high moral values, encouragement of organizational culture and participative working environment) which

are fostered through public organization. As a result, public employees are satisfied with their working conditions which lead them to perform better their job and to improve their outcomes.

5.1 Practical Implications and Contributions

Authentic leadership behavior has an essential role in every public organization. Its positive aspects increase the level of employee's job satisfaction which is positively related to employee's work motivation. The main objective of every organization is to decrease their employees' unethical behavior (e.g., corruption acts) which can be influenced by a genuine leadership behavior. In order to achieve this goal, public organizations increase their attention toward leadership style of their manager. As a result, a large number of public organizations promote authenticity in their leader's activities which results in high organizational outcomes.

Self-determination theory argues that every individual has three main psychological needs: competence, relatedness and autonomy. According to the first need, every individual should be implicated in various challenges in order to experience all elements from social worlds (Deci & Ryan, 2000). One of the main characteristics of authentic manager is the empowerment of his employees and the support of their ideas (Rego *et al.*, 2011). As a result, he contributes to the encouragement of his employees' competence. This encouragement generates an increased level of employees' organizational commitment and performance (Leroy *et al.*, 2011). Another psychological need of employees is relatedness. According to this psychological need, every individual wants to be part of a team and to interact with his members (e.g., Lin, 2016). Previous studies have shown that authentic manager is positively correlated with group cohesion and identification (López *et al.*, 2015) which has a positive impact on group potency (Rego *et al.*, 2015). Thus, authentic manager creates supportive working environment for his employees. Authentic managers encourage his employees to act autonomously and assist them in implementation process of their ideas. According to the authentic manager' support for his employees, it can be sustained that authentic leadership positively benefits his employees' self-determination. Thus, employees became more motivated in working process and they try to achieve excellence (Hinjosa *et al.*, 2014). The research results of this study have shown that authentic leadership behavior has a positive influence on public employees' work motivation, especially on extrinsic motivation. Thus, genuine behavior creates all conditions for a productive working environment that generates opportunity for organizational development.

Authentic leadership behavior has a positive influence on employees' work engagement (e.g., Alok & Israel, 2012; Penger & Černe, 2014; Abidin, 2017) and on job satisfaction (Peus *et al.*, 2011; Wong & Laschinger, 2012; Men & Stacks, 2014). Job satisfaction significantly influences the quality of public services (e.g., Budiyanto & Oetomo, 2011). Organizations under a genuine leadership behavior assure an active and efficient working environment for its employees. These organizational conditions generate a growth level of public employees' work motivation level. Taking into consideration the research results of this study, it can be argued that job satisfaction is positively related with work motivation. Subsequently, the higher is employee's job satisfaction level, the higher is his work motivation (e.g., Pool, 1997).

According to the three types of work motivation provided by self-determination theory, it can be argued that every authentic manager must promote suitable human resources strategies in order to increase motivation level of his employees (except amotivation level). The results of this research study pointed out that job satisfaction has a significant impact on employees' work motivation level. The studies of other researchers also have shown

that job satisfaction has a positive influence on employees' work motivation level, namely on extrinsic motivation (Mafini & Dlodlo, 2014) and on intrinsic motivation (Shah *et al.*, 2012). Also, according to the research results of this study, it can be established that public employees are more intrinsically than extrinsically motivated. Therefore, public employees are less influenced by extrinsic factors than intrinsic ones (e.g., monetary rewards) (Abdullah, Ahsan & Alam, 2009; Rashid & Rashid, 2012). By contrast, other researchers argued that public employees are influenced by external factors, because they are willing to have good working conditions, friendly co-workers, task rotation or monetary rewards (e.g., Wright, 2001). Taking into consideration that authentic manager encourages a productive working environment, it can be sustained that employees will be both intrinsically and extrinsically motivated with their job.

Neither authentic leadership nor job satisfaction have any influence on employees' attitude toward unethical behavior, namely corruption acts, when they perceive these acts as more serious. However, the research results of this study have shown that public employees have a significant negative attitude toward corruption acts especially thefts, bribery and violation of organization' rules. Individuals with high moral values do not commit themselves in unethical behavior, including corruption acts. Also, public employees are willing to report an offender if situation requires, especially when public managers encourage this behavior (Zipparo, 1999). Subsequently, it can be argued that public employees are engaged in their job mostly because they are intrinsically motivated in performing their job.

Authentic leadership behavior is positively correlated with unethical behavior, namely corruption acts, but only when public employees perceive these acts as less serious. Subsequently, small and holiday gifts, receipt of kickback and conflict of interest are accepted behaviors by public employees. Taking into consideration the existentialist theory (Guignon & Pereboom, 1995), it can be mentioned that genuine behavior can negatively influence public employees' perception of ethical behavior. Unethical behavior of public employees negatively influences the process of providing public services (Dorasamy, 2010). Thus, corruption jeopardizes the activities of public organizations. Overall, authentic leadership is moderately correlated with corruption acts. Consequently, the roots of corruption acts can be found in public employees' themselves and partially, in their manager's activities.

Despite the efforts to increase rigor, this research has several limitations. The sample used for this study is quite small. Also, the sample is composed by majority female participants. Therefore, it is important to exercise caution in the process of generalizing the findings of the present study to other context. For this research it was used convenience sampling. Also, this study is applicable only on public organizations from Republic of Moldova and it was limited only in three districts from Republic of Moldova. This can be an inherent disadvantage for representativeness of this study.

In order to realize an extended study, it can be proposed to take into consideration the following suggestions. Firstly, it is important to be taken into account the demographic consideration. Hence, future studies should enlarge its sample and use a large number of public organizations from different districts of Republic of Moldova. Secondly, future research should use a longitudinal design in order to strengthen the causal relationships examined between variables. Using longitudinal design will ensure a better understanding of trends between the relationships examined which will refine the research results. Thirdly, the studies may be carried for public institutions and public authorities separately. The same research can be realized individually for central public administration and local public administration. Finally, it can be conducted a comparative study for public organizations from Republic of Moldova (as a country with the main goal to integrate in European Union) and other European countries.

Authentic leadership behavior has a positive influence on employees' work motivation. Job satisfaction, which is positively correlated with authentic leadership and work motivation, contributes to the maintenance of an effective working environment. As a result, authentic leadership behavior ensures development of organizational culture that secures the progress of the organization itself.

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