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The influence of authentic leadership on subordinates' satisfaction with remuneration

Tomasz Gigol

Summary

The aim of the paper was to present the results of the study on the relationship between the quality of leadership and employee's satisfaction with remuneration. There was a statistically significant influence of all aspects of authentic leadership (relational transparency, fair conduct, self-awareness, internalised moral perspective) on the employee's satisfaction with their remuneration. It turned out that not only job satisfaction, but also satisfaction with remuneration including recognising remuneration as decent and comparable to similar work in a similar position in other workplaces, depends on the perceived leadership of direct supervisors.

Keywords: satisfaction with remuneration, authentic leadership, job satisfaction

The influence of authentic leadership on subordinates' satisfaction with remuneration

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Abstract

The aim of the paper was to present the results of the study on the relationship between the quality of leadership and employee's satisfaction with remuneration. There was a statistically significant influence of all aspects of authentic leadership (relational transparency, fair conduct, self-awareness, internalised moral perspective) on the employee's satisfaction with their remuneration. It turned out that not only job satisfaction, but also satisfaction with remuneration including recognising remuneration as decent and comparable to similar work in a similar position in other workplaces, depends on the perceived leadership of direct supervisors.

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Introduction

Job satisfaction is one of the frequently studied factors related to human resource management. When individual employees feel job satisfaction, the team works more effectively (Judge et al., 2001; Kulikowski, 2016a). Undoubtedly, satisfaction with remuneration is an important component of job satisfaction (Kulikowski, 2016b; Springer, 2011; Białas, Litwin, 2013) as well as a sense that the amount of received remuneration is fair (Williams et al., 2006; Wu et al., 2013).

Leadership is one of the factors related to job satisfaction. The authors of numerous studies described the impact of authentic leadership on job satisfaction (Jensen, Luthans, 2006; Giallonardo et al., 2010; Wong, Laschinger, 2013; Penger, Černe, 2014). However, little is known about the relationship between leadership and employees' satisfaction with remuneration. Hence, the author of the article decided to answer the following research question: is authentic leadership related to commitment to work and to employee satisfaction? The purpose of the article was, in turn, to present the results of studies of the impact of authentic leadership on the employees' satisfaction with remuneration.

Job satisfaction

Job satisfaction, in the most classic approach, is a positive emotional state resulting from the assessment of work as an activity leading to achieving important professional goals for the employee or facilitating achieving those goals (Locke, 1969). Job satisfaction is therefore defined as the employee's emotional response to work, consisting in comparing desired results with actual results (Cranny et al., 1992). Work satisfaction understood in this way is an internal, subjective feeling of an employee related to his/her perception of work. When the accumulation of unsatisfied expectations becomes large enough, job satisfaction is smaller and a likelihood of withdrawal behaviours or intention to quit work increases (Egan et al., 2004).

It is important to point out that other definitions expand the understanding of satisfaction and define it not only as positive and negative feelings, but also as attitudes that relate to the employee's professional duties (Schultz, Schultz, 2002). In fact, some authors (Vroom, 1964) identified job satisfaction with the attitude towards work. Springer (2011) distinguishes cognitive, emotional and behavioural aspects of job satisfaction as an attitude.

Job satisfaction is considered a multi-faceted structure that includes both internal and external elements of the workplace (Howard, Frink, 1996). Sypniewska (2014) believes that job satisfaction includes factors that can be divided into four areas: economic aspects of work, interpersonal relationships, responsibilities and tasks, and working conditions. Another list of job features related to satisfaction includes: the use of various skills and abilities of an employee, the ability to identify a task, the importance of the task, independence of the employee and information about the work performed (Hackman, Oldham, 1976). Springer (2011) examined the factors shaping employee satisfaction and considered remuneration, employment stability and development opportunities as the most important. The next two positions were

taken by the relations with the supervisor and hid fairness. So, one can see the role of the leader in building job satisfaction.

The study results by Sypniewska (2014) brought slightly different results, where the three most important factors are: stability of employment, good atmosphere and relations with colleagues, as well as good relations and communication with the supervisor. The amount of remuneration as a motivating factor has not been studied. The study was repeated after three years (Sypniewska, 2017), and revealed good relations with colleagues and the work atmosphere as the most important. Białas and Litwin (2013) pointed out that job satisfaction increases with the age, education and the importance of job position held. Other determinants of job satisfaction consist: working conditions, the nature of tasks, promotion opportunities and organisational culture. According to these authors, remuneration is a particularly important variable in explaining job satisfaction.

Satisfaction with remuneration

Satisfaction with remuneration is an important factor related to job satisfaction and employee commitment (Springer, 2011; Kulikowski 2016a; Juchnowicz, Kinowska, 2018). Vaughan-Whitehead (2011) describes in detail determinants of his concept of “fair wage” that have a key impact on satisfaction with remuneration. These include regularity of remuneration and compliance with minimum wage regulations, adequate working time, taking into account variable work intensity, balanced remuneration system, no pay discrimination, communication on remuneration, care for real level of remuneration in relation to prices, no desire to compete using low salaries and salary increases in proportion to the company's sales growth. Attention was drawn to two concepts: fair remuneration (ensuring minimum acceptable living standards) and the comparability of remuneration to similar remuneration in similar organisations in the same sector, which is a key element of employees' system of values and expectations (Juchnowicz, 2018).

Judge and his team in meta-analysis studies showed a relationship between satisfaction with remuneration and its amount (Judge et al., 2010). There is also a correlation between the amount of remuneration and the assessment of fairness of the rules for awarding it (Tekleab et al., 2005). Janssen (2001), in turn, showed a strong relationship between the assessment of remuneration fairness and job satisfaction and satisfaction with a supervisor.

Authentic leadership

Leadership plays an important role in management because it engages people around common goals and values, affecting satisfaction and a sense of meaning in work. A central element of the theory of authentic leadership is the concept of authenticity proposed by Luthans and Avolio (2003). It is based on daily awareness of one's own personal experiences, including thoughts, emotions, needs, desires, beliefs, and acting in harmony with one's true self and expressing what one really thinks and believes in. Elements that have been adapted from other theories, such as transformational leadership (Bass, 1985), and ethical leadership theory (Brown et al., 2005) have also been added to the authenticity component. The self-awareness component was taken from the theory of emotional intelligence (Goleman, 1995). The theory of authentic leadership is in maturation stage, but numerous studies have shown its value and usefulness in explaining processes related to leadership and its impact on employees (Gill, Caza, 2018; Gardner et al., 2011).

Authentic leaders are most often defined as “persons who are deeply aware of how they think, how they behave and how they are perceived by others; aware of their own values, moral perspective, knowledge and strengths, and aware of the context in which they operate; self-confident, full of hope, optimism, resilience and of high moral character” (Avolio et al., 2004, pp. 802–803). The characteristics of authentic leaders relate to the following four areas: relational transparency, internalised moral perspective, balanced conduct and self-awareness (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

- Relational transparency refers to the openness of a leader to exchange information with other people, including his subordinates. Such leaders are ready to express their authentic “me” to others. They are not considered secretive or Machiavellian.
- An internalised moral perspective is about being leaders who are guided by internal morality. They seek for compliance of their actions with their values. They show integrity.
- Sustainable conduct refers to the objective analysis of all relevant data before the leader makes a decision. It manifests, inter alia, in encouraging subordinates to express their opinions and taking them into account.
- Self-awareness is about leaders understanding their strengths and weaknesses and their influence on others. This is the basic component of emotional intelligence.

Based on the four areas of activity presented above, respondents themselves described the leaders behaving as authentic (Gill, Caza, 2018; Leroy et al., 2015). The behavioural dimensions described above complement each other and have optimal explanatory power when taken together (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

There was a clear positive impact of authentic leadership on subordinates, the leader and the team in terms of performance, satisfaction and commitment, ethical and pro-social behaviour and other important aspects of work. A more comprehensive summary of individual studies is found in review articles (Gill, Caza, 2018; Gardner et al., 2011). Authentic leadership is positively related to the sense of basic needs being met by employee groups (Leroy et al., 2015). A relationship of authentic leadership with satisfaction with the supervisor has also been reported (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Gigol and Sypniewska (2017) described the results of their research, in which they demonstrated the significant impact of all components of authentic leadership on the work commitment of subordinates. Gill and Caza (2018), basing on the research, concluded that the positive effect of interaction between the authentic leader and his subordinates is fostered in employee groups through the effect of social learning.

The relationship between authentic leadership and job satisfaction and satisfaction with remuneration

Analysis of the literature discussing research on authentic leadership leads to the conclusion that it is related to the job satisfaction of subordinates. A strong impact of the authentic leadership of young SME entrepreneurs on employees' commitment and job satisfaction has been reported (Jensen, Luthans, 2006). Other research results showed that 20% of variance in job satisfaction among new employees was explained by authentic leadership of supervisors and commitment to work (Giallonardo et al., 2010). New employees in relations with managers showing a high level of authentic leadership, displayed greater commitment and felt more satisfied with their work.

A positive relationship has also been demonstrated between authentic leadership, employee satisfaction and work commitment. The relationship between authentic leadership and job satisfaction is fully moderated by perceived supervisor support (Penger, Černe, 2014). Supportive supervisor who is an authentic leader affects employee's satisfaction with work. Černe, Dimovski, Marič, Penger and Škerlavaj (2014) noticed that the authentic leadership of supervisors perceived by employees was positively related to their job satisfaction. Authentic leaders with their balanced behaviour, relational transparency and consistency of values, words and behaviour contribute to the fact that subordinates experience a higher level of support for their individual development plans. Authentic leaders harmoniously develop the authentic personality of subordinates, allowing employees to meet their own needs, develop and achieve their own individual goals.

The above review led to the formulation of the research hypothesis.

H1: Authentic leadership of a supervisor has a positive impact on job satisfaction of subordinates.

Kulikowski (2017) examined the relationship between remuneration and employee satisfaction and found that it is very weak. At the same time, the amount of remuneration was definitely more related to the assessment of its fairness than with job satisfaction assessment. As the remuneration of the respondents increases, their subjective assessment of remuneration as fair also increases. In turn, Wu, Sturman and Wang (2013) suggest that the employee's perception of remuneration's fairness is related to the way the manager informs about changes in the remuneration system and the quality of employee-manager relations. It can be assumed that leaders who have good relations with their subordinates influence employees' perception of their remuneration as fair.

The results of research published by Kinowska (2018) indicate that employees with net incomes below PLN 3500 are guided by quite different criteria in the assessment of remuneration fairness (remuneration system and the belief that it is justified to differentiate remuneration) from employees with net income above PLN 3500 per month (own commitment and need for development and independence). The only evaluation criterion common to all respondents is the supervisor's concern. The results of these studies suggest that the assessment of supervisor's leadership may translate into employee's satisfaction with his remuneration.

Jones, Scarpello and Bergmann (1999) distinguished five factors related to the assessment made by employees of fairness of remuneration procedures. Table 1 compares the above with the corresponding components of authentic leadership.

Table 1. Factors related to assessing remuneration fairness and the corresponding components of authentic leadership

Factors related to the assessment of remuneration fairness	Authentic leadership components
To what extent is the manner in which the supervisor informs about the remuneration fair and honest?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relational transparency • Internalised moral perspective
How is work evaluated?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honest conduct
To what extent is the employee able to express his opinions on the procedures for awarding remuneration?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honest conduct
To what extent does the organisation answer employees' questions about remuneration and how does it justify the remuneration procedures?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Not applicable
To what extent is the supervisor neutral, basing on objective information and does not favour anyone in decisions regarding remuneration?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Honest conduct

Source: own study based on Jones, Scarpello, Bergmann (1999) and Walumbwa et al. (2008).

As shown in Table 1, three out of four components of authentic leadership account for four of the above five factors in assessing remuneration fairness. Authentic leadership can therefore affect employees' perceptions of remuneration fairness, and consequently their satisfaction with remuneration.

This led the author to formulate the second research hypothesis.

H2: Authentic leadership of superiors has a positive impact on the satisfaction of subordinates with the remuneration.

Examining the impact of leadership on job satisfaction

Research methodology

We proposed conducting a survey as part of a research method and a research questionnaire was created consisting of three parts – metrics: questions on job satisfaction, satisfaction with remuneration and authentic leadership. Respondents were asked to comment on the following three statements regarding satisfaction with remuneration:

- *My remuneration does not satisfy me.*
- *My remuneration is good compared to the labour market.*
- *I think my remuneration is fair.*

Variants of answers have been arranged according to the following scale: from 1 – *I totally disagree*, up to 10 – *I fully agree*.

Authentic leadership was tested using the Polish version of Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (Avolio et al., 2007). It has Polish validation (Sierpińska, 2013). Example statement: *My immediate supervisor admits to his mistakes*. Answers on a five-point Likert scale, from 0 – never up to 4 – very often. The studies were then subjected to statistical analysis.

Research sample

The study was conducted by the author of this article and B.A. Sypniewska in 2015–2016. Respondents included working students of extramural and postgraduate studies at Warsaw Universities. Sample was not randomly selected. The criterion for selecting respondents was their availability. 786 people were examined. Most of the respondents are people aged 20–29. Table 2 presents the frequency distribution for the age of the subjects. Study covered 522 women and 264 men.

Table 3 presents the frequency distribution for the positions occupied by the subjects. Most respondents worked as specialists.

Table 2. Frequency distribution – age of the respondents

Age	N	%
20–29 years old	574	73.0
30–39 years old	134	17.0
40–49 years old	61	7.8
50–60 years old	15	1.9
60 and more	2	0.3
In total	786	100

n – number of people; % – sample percentage

Source: own study.

Table 3. Frequency distribution – positions occupied by respondents

Position	N	%
Managerial	144	18.3
Specialist	198	25.2
Blue-collar worker	102	13.0
White-collar worker	182	23.2
Trader	108	13.7
Other	50	6.4
No data	2	0.3
In total	786	100

n – number of people; % – sample percentage

Source: own study.

Table 4 shows the frequency distribution for the period of employment of respondents. Mostly they have been working for a period of 1–3 years.

Table 4. Frequency distribution – the period of employment of the respondents

Work experience	N	%
No data	3	0.4
Less than a year	219	27.9
1–3 years	294	37.4
3–5 years	121	15.4
5–10 years	99	12.6
10 years and longer	50	6.4
In total	786	100

n – number of people; % – sample percentage

Source: own study.

There were 381 people with secondary education (48.5%) and 405 people with higher education (51.5%) in the studied sample, while among managers and specialists there were more people with higher education than in other groups, including among white-collar workers.

Leadership and job satisfaction

Table 5 presents Spearman's correlation coefficients ρ between job satisfaction and results on the leadership scale. Statistically significant correlations were determined.

Table 5. Correlation coefficients between job satisfaction and results on the leadership scale

Leadership	Job satisfaction	
	ρ	P
Relational transparency	0.196**	0.001
Internalized moral perspective	0.246**	0.001
Balanced conduct	0.240**	0.001
Self-consciousness	0.209**	0.001
Authentic Leadership	0.260**	0.001

ρ – Spearman's correlation coefficient; p – two-sided statistical significance; ** – $p < 0.01$

Source: own study.

Statistically significant positive correlations were found between job satisfaction and all scales of authentic leadership.

Leadership and satisfaction with remuneration

Table 6 pictures Pearson's correlation coefficients r between satisfaction with remuneration and results on the leadership scale. Statistically significant correlations were determined.

Table 6. Pearson's correlation coefficients between satisfaction with remuneration and results on the leadership scale

Leadership	Satisfaction with remuneration	
	r	P
Relational transparency	0.133**	0.001
Internalised moral perspective	0.143**	0.001
Balanced conduct	0.116**	0.001

cont. table 6

Leadership	Satisfaction with remuneration	
	r	P
Self-consciousness	0.130**	0.001
Authentic Leadership	0.156**	0.001

r – Pearson's r correlation coefficient; p – two-sided statistical significance; ** – $p < 0.01$

Source: own study.

Statistically significant positive correlations were found between satisfaction with remuneration and all scales of authentic leadership.

Discussion

As was shown in Table 5, the Spearman's correlation coefficient ρ for authentic leadership was 0.260. The study did not provide grounds for rejecting the first hypothesis. Authentic leadership increases subordinates' satisfaction from work. This is in line with earlier research on authentic leadership (Jensen, Luthans, 2006; Giallonardo et al., 2010; Penger, Černe, 2014; Černe et al., 2014). Relational transparency has the lowest relationship with job satisfaction. This seems to be because of the component's ethical neutrality. It is a kind of morality without content (Grzegorzcyk, 1983). In an extreme case, an amoral person can be authentic and cynically transparent in his actions.

The second hypothesis should also not be rejected on the basis of a study. Authentic leadership has a positive effect on subordinates' satisfaction with remuneration. The correlation between authentic leadership and satisfaction with remuneration (Table 6) is slightly smaller than the correlation between authentic leadership and job satisfaction (Table 5). However, if one considers the objective and specific amount of remuneration, it would seem that the amount of remuneration should be the only factor significant for the respondents. And yet this does not happen. The quality of leadership is a statistically significant factor affecting satisfaction with remuneration.

Internalised moral perspective of the superior was the most important, among all the components of authentic leadership, for the satisfaction with remuneration. When a leader acts in accordance with his beliefs, the subordinate expects fair treatment in the area of remuneration. This can be called a care for subordinates, which corresponds to Kinowska's research (2018). Surprising for the author of the study was lower than expected impact of leader's balanced conduct on satisfaction with remuneration. The superior who takes into account different points of view in his decisions should be seen as fair or objective when determining remuneration (Table 6).

Conclusions

It turns out that the attitude of the leader has an impact not only on job satisfaction, but also, but to a lesser extent, on employee's satisfaction with remuneration. This is another study showing a discrepancy with the colloquial thinking about the role of remuneration in shaping job satisfaction. It seems that research on remuneration should focus more on leadership and less on technical aspects of remuneration. The theory of authentic leadership seems to fit into this task because it contains explicit ethical components.

Job satisfaction is a desirable state of modern employees, and authentic leadership is positively associated with it. It is worth introducing them to training programs in various workplaces. Perhaps paying attention to leadership will give employees greater satisfaction than complex remuneration systems.

Analysis of the results obtained leads to the conclusion that subsequent research on employee satisfaction and commitment should include components of authentic leadership. The limitations of the research presented in the article are the small diversity of the research group and non-random sample. It results, among others, in over-representation of respondents with short work experience (Table 4), which causes caution in the formulation of categorical conclusions. It is worth continuing the research on determinants of satisfaction with remuneration in wider and randomly selected groups.

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