

# Leader-Member Exchange As An Intervening Variable For Authentic Leadership And Performance

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## ABSTRACT

This study focuses to test the effect of authentic leadership on the performance of middle managers through the leader-member exchange as an intervening variable. This study involved 50 middle managers as the respondents. The data were collected through a survey which was done online and offline. The data analysis method in this study is Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with SmartPLS 3.0 software. The results of this study indicate that authentic leadership shows a significant influence on the performance of middle managers and the leader-member exchange. Moreover, the leader-member exchange is also known to partially mediate the effect of authentic leadership on the performance of middle managers. This is worth investigating because the exchange relationship between leaders and middle managers can be used as a mechanism that connects the influence of authentic leadership and their performance. This study can help middle managers enhance their performance by using an authentic leadership style and build a proper relationship through a leader-member exchange.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Leader-Member Exchange, Job Performance, Decent Job, Psychological Wellbeing

## INTRODUCTION

Leadership style is recognized to influence employee performance. Leadership is described as a process of encouraging subordinates to change to attain corporate goals (Wardani & Eliyana, 2020). When engaging with subordinates, such leaders prefer to employ two types of communication: task and relational. When a supervisor/manager leads by establishing a network of collaborative connections with followers and encouraging a variety of perspectives, they will lead in a style that followers recognize and describe as authentic (Stewart Wherry, 2013). An authentic leadership style will characterize a confident and motivated leader who can allow leaders and employees to work together, and the performance of both can be optimally intertwined. According to (Wang et al., 2014) authentic leaders can draw from their positive psychological resources to contribute and supplement their followers' psychological

capital to improve their performance. That way, employees can improve their performance and at the same time, they will feel psychological well-being.

The quality of the relationship between employees and leaders or commonly referred to as leader-member exchange is important for a company, and is known to also affect employee performance. Leader-member exchanges require aspects related to the extent to which leaders and followers develop relationships of mutual trust, self-direction, and mutually beneficial relationships. Leader-member exchanges are developed based on the fact that leaders are not tied to the average leadership style with subordinates, but are related to the differences between subordinates in forming and directing a relationship that will be established (Eliyana, 2015). It can be concluded that for the leader-member exchange relationship to be well-established, a leader and employees must understand each other how to build good relationships.

The effectiveness and efficiency of leaders in dealing with various problems in the company, of course, are also influenced by the quality of the relationship between leaders and employees. Because employee behavior towards the company plays an important role in organizational success. Treating employees well will motivate them to feel willing and able to make sacrifices for the company. In addition, through positive special treatment, employees can increase their contribution to the company they work for. In general, through the points put forward, it can be stated that there are indications that leader-member exchanges can mediate authentic leadership relationships and employee performance within the company.

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **Authentic Leadership**

There are many definitions of leadership abilities, such as the ability to guide subordinates to achieve common goals in the form of influence exerted. In Wardani & Eliyana, (2020), leadership is defined as a process of influencing leaders to subordinates to achieve organizational goals through change. Such leaders tend to effectively use two different forms of communication when interacting with subordinates, namely task and relational. When a supervisor/manager as a leader builds a network of collaborative relationships with followers and encourages diverse viewpoints, they will lead in a way that followers recognize and describe as authentic (Stewart Wherry, 2013). A leader who presents their real self is known as an authentic leader (Hoch et al., 2018). Authentic leadership is defined as a pattern of leadership behavior that explains positive psychological abilities and a positive moral atmosphere in developing an internal moral outlook, self-awareness, balanced information processing, and transparency of communication with followers (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Or it can be said that authentic leaders are guided by a moral value and standard, as well as behavior with their consistent decisions through internalized values, as opposed to organizational, group, or community pressure (N Ribeiro et al., 2018). Authentic leadership is also stated by Mira & Odeh, (2019) as a form of positive leadership that is used to develop trust and a positive work environment in cultivating employees for higher self-performance.

### **LMX (Leader-Member Exchange)**

The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) is a leadership theory that differs from many other theories because it is thought to focus on the unique relationship between leader dyads and followers (Stewart Wherry, 2013). Leader-member exchanges require aspects related to the extent to which leaders and followers develop relationships of mutual trust, self-direction, and mutually beneficial relationships. Leader-member exchanges are developed based on the fact that leaders are not tied to the average leadership style with subordinates, but are related to the differences between subordinates in forming and directing a relationship that will be established (Eliyana, 2015). It shows that in a group of superior-subordinate relationships, some are effectively forged, but some cannot be constructed in such a way, leader-member exchanges also have limited personal, social, and organizational resources (for example, energy, time, and personal power). which keeps the leader from interacting in the same pattern with each of his followers. The leader-member exchange process can serve to describe high-quality exchanges based on trust, such as to achieve mutual influence, convey appropriate information, increase self-control, and avoid abuse of other people's loopholes (Yildiz & Yildiz, 2016). In that sense, it can be said that strengthening mutual trust between leaders and followers can lay the groundwork for timely social exchanges. In addition, according to Khorakian & Sharifirad, (2019), the classification of the leader-member exchange quality will be able to distinguish members in the group from members outside the group. Because leader-member exchanges receive more support and resources they have less freedom in role development and have less decision-making power.

### **Employee Performance**

Performance is a stage of achievement in completing certain work or it can be stated as work achievements carried out by individuals from the organization (Eliyana et al., 2019). Whereas employee performance is the result of an employee's work during a certain period compared to various possibilities, through predetermined and mutually agreed standards, targets, or criteria (Muzakki et al., 2019). Employee performance is also said to be a factor that can affect the profitability of the organization. Because employee performance will refer to the level of achievement of the tasks that make up the work of an employee (Banin et al., 2020). So that employee performance is one of the factors that can significantly affect the profitability of an organization, marked by the work results with the best work quality (Banin et al., 2020). One of the simplest definitions of employee performance is the "rate of work performed" (N Ribeiro et al., 2018). Employee performance evaluation is important because it is not only to ensure better company management but also to promote empirical analysis. That way, good employee performance shows that the employee has completed a job that is satisfactory or has a level of responsibility that is expected by the employer of them.

### **Authentic Leadership and Employee Performance**

Leadership style has been considered the most important topic in the management field, especially concerning employee performance (Semedo et al., 2019). Effective leadership behavior is known to improve and encourage organizational performance in facing new challenges, and effective leaders can grow, maintain and maintain a corporate culture, as well as increase employee productivity and performance. According to Hadian Nasab & Afshari,

(2019), there are indications that authentic leadership has a positive effect on employee performance. . Authentic leadership is a form of positive leadership that is used in developing trust and a positive work environment to foster employees towards higher self-performance (Azanza et al., 2015). Authentic leadership will be considered as a pattern of leader behavior that promotes positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate by adopting a moral perspective, self-awareness, the balance of information, and relational transparency between leaders and followers which also leads to higher self-development (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Furthermore, this will refer to achievement in the form of an increase in the employee's self-performance.

Kiyani et al. (2013) cited by Mira & Odeh, (2019) have empirically investigated the relationship between authentic leadership and employee performance and found a positive relationship. In addition, Ribeiro et al., (2018) have also confirmed that followers will reward their authentic leaders with better individual performance. Authentic leaders will develop and influence their followers by strengthening them through positive psychological states and which are conducive to enhancing their performance (Wang et al., 2014). Because organizations that are led by authentic leaders are known to experience the capacity of a positive emotional atmosphere in the relationship between leaders and followers (Hinojosa et al., 2014). Authentic leadership is likely to stimulate employees to perform better because of their need to be owned. This means that individuals will want to feel a sense of belonging to their organization, and they need strong and positive interpersonal relationships so that workers' perceptions of authentic leadership can encourage them to improve their performance (N Ribeiro et al., 2018). That way, it will also provide benefits for the organization.

### **Authentic Leadership and LMX (Leader-Member Exchange)**

Leaders in an organization are required to be fully responsible for creating results for the group, accept resource constraints such as time and ability that cannot be avoided, and related that close relationships between members will be formed and are an important task given to an employee (Yang & Kwon, 2015). Authentic leaders will behave by their values and beliefs in building credibility and in gaining trust and respect from followers (Stewart Wherry, 2013). When a supervisor/manager as a leader builds a network of collaborative relationships with followers and encourages diverse viewpoints, they will lead in a way that followers recognize and describe as authentic (Stewart Wherry, 2013). That way, the right relationship will be established between leaders and followers in a company. According to Yang & Kwon, (2015) the theory of leadership with authentic leadership which has recently been highlighted, can find an important factor in leader-member exchange.

Leader-member exchanges focus on benefits in a high-quality individual relationship between leader and follower. The quality of the leader-member exchange will illustrate how effective leadership relationships improve between binary “partners” among organizations (eg, leaders and followers, team members and teammates, employees and their network of competencies (Yildiz & Yildiz, 2016). Through authentic leadership, the leader-member exchange relationship will be well-established. Employees have defined awareness of the sincerity of the leader's thoughts as the awareness of authentic leaders. Because authentic leaders are leaders who are honest with themselves through self-awareness and self-regulation (Yang & Kwon,

2015). continue to seek identity as a leader who is fostered in the organization and find his identity through self-awareness and self-regulation. Therefore, the efforts of such a leader are expected to enable members to recognize the authenticity of the leader for the work given to him and lead to leader-member exchange.

### **LMX (Leader-Member Exchange) Mediates Authentic Leadership and Employee Performance**

Research of Hui Wang et al. (2014) explained that in addition to the relationship between authentic leader and follower exchange leader-member, the positive relationship between leader-member exchange and follower performance is based on the idea that followers have been obliged to reciprocate with good performance in return for their treatment originating from the exchange relationship. with the leader. Then according to Graen & Uhl-Bein in Hui Wang, et al. (2014) the high quality of leader-member exchanges can affect superior performance in relations from the economy to social exchange which is characterized by mutual respect, mutual trust, and carrying out mutual obligations. In addition, according to Wang et al., (2014), the relational process (i.e., leader-member exchange or LMX) can be used as a mechanism that connects authentic leadership and follower performance. In short, authentic leadership will be positively related to the quality of exchange relationships with followers, and leader-member exchanges ultimately predict the task performance of followers of Hui Wang, et al. (2014). From this statement, it can be seen that there is a positive relationship between authentic leadership, leader-member exchange, and employee performance. Authentic leadership will treat individuals with authenticity, and have the characteristics of interacting with its members individually appropriately (Han & Woo, 2018). Authentic leadership will focus on paying attention to the psychological capital of their followers, which is the emotional state that has been accumulated by members and includes leader-member exchanges in organizations that can influence positive work attitudes or performance. Understanding leader-member exchange is an important part of the organization because it becomes an important management strategy for operating the organization effectively through the results of improving employee performance.

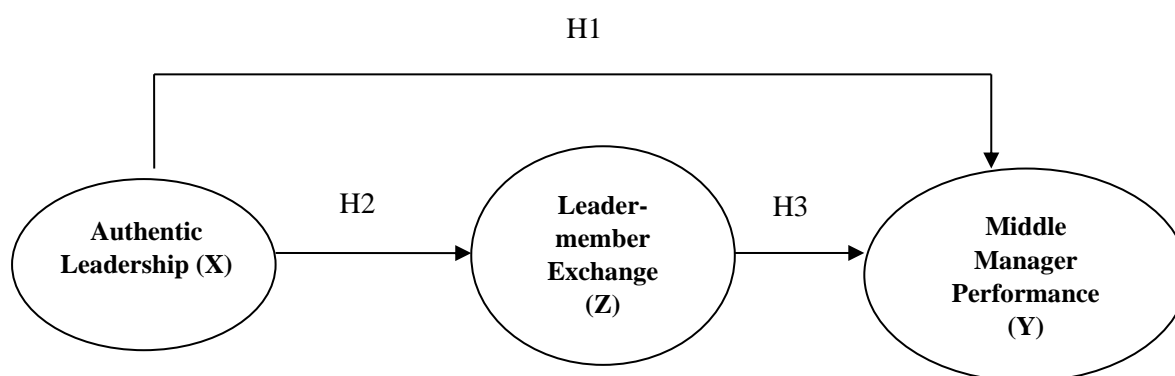
Therefore, the present study aims to assess the indicators of authentic leadership, leader-member exchange, and middle manager performance, test the role of authentic leadership on middle manager performance and leader-member exchange and analyze the mediating role of leader-member exchange on the relationship between authentic leadership and middle manager performance.

Based on the arguments above, this study proposes the following hypotheses:

H1: Authentic Leadership has a positive effect on Middle Manager Performance.

H2: Authentic Leadership has a positive effect on Leader-Member Exchange.

H3: Leader-Member Exchange mediates the relationship between Authentic Leadership and Middle Manager Performance.



**Figure 1. Conceptual Framework**

## RESEARCH METHODS

Based on the formulation of the problems that have been determined in this study, the research approach used is quantitative. This approach begins with creating an analytical model which is then followed by making hypotheses, identifying variables, collecting the necessary data, and conducting an analysis. The process of calculating the data obtained from the questionnaire will be carried out using statistical methods used to help answer the hypothesis. The independent variable in this study is authentic leadership (X), while the dependent variable in this study is employee performance (Y), and the intervening variable in this study is the Leader-Member Exchange (Z). To conduct research on authentic leadership variables, employee performance, and leader-member exchange, an agreement scale was used with a determination of 1-5 points through Strongly disagree / satisfied (STS) = score 1, Disagree / satisfied (TS) = score 2, Neutral / doubtful (N) = score 3, Agree / satisfied (S) = score 4, and strongly agree / satisfied (SS) = score 5.

This study measures Authentic Leadership (X) using items based on research by Walumbwa et al., (2008), for the measurement of the Leader-Member Exchange (Z) variable, the items used to refer to the study by Liden & Maslyn (1998), while for Performance variable (Y) refers to a study by Manik (2016). The population in this study was the middle managers of a transportation company. Considering that the number of middle managers is not too many, the sample used is 50 middle managers who are willing to fill out the questionnaire. In addition, the analytical technique used in this study is SEM-PLS with SmartPLS 3.0 software. It is used because the data does not have to be normally distributed multivariate and the sample size does not have to be large.

## RESULTS

The PLS method is considered appropriate in this study because it is very flexible for research that does not require a large sample. The use of PLS requires passing two evaluations in the form of an Outer Model and an Inner Model. In the outer model, validity and reliability tests are carried out, while the Structural/inner model is measured by looking at the R-Square model value which shows how much influence between variables in the model.

The demographics of the respondents used in this study are male with a total of 50 people or 100%, then it is known that the majority are 41-45 years old with a total of 21 people or 42%,

while the last education is the majority of undergraduate graduates with a total of 45 people or 90%, and the majority have worked for more than 25 years with a total of 24 people or 48%.

**Table 1**

Variables	Code	Factor Loading	$\alpha$	CR	(AVE)
Authentic Leadership	KO1	0.83	0.848	0.913	0.679
		2			
	KO2	0.79			
		1			
	KO3	0.88			
	7				
	KO4	0.71			
		9			
	KO5	0.88			
		0			
Leader-Member Exchange	LMX1	0.876	0.909	0.932	0.733
	LMX2	0.733			
	LMX3	0.906			
	LMX4	0.915			
	LMX5	0.885			
Employee Performance	KK1	0.861	0.915	0.937	0.749
	KK2	0.834			
	KK3	0.870			
	KK4	0.868			
	KK5	0.847			

Note: KO (Authentic Leadership), LMX (Leader-Member Exchange), and KK (Employee Performance). Based on Table 2, it is known that the loading factor value of the Authentic Leadership (X), Leader-Member Exchange (Z), and Employee Performance (Y) variables can be said that the indicators represent these latent variables because the convergent validity (loading factor) is above 0, 5. The results of the Validity Test show that all indicators have met the research requirements, and it is stated that all indicators affect the latent variables. Because these results have met the validity and reliability requirements for research.

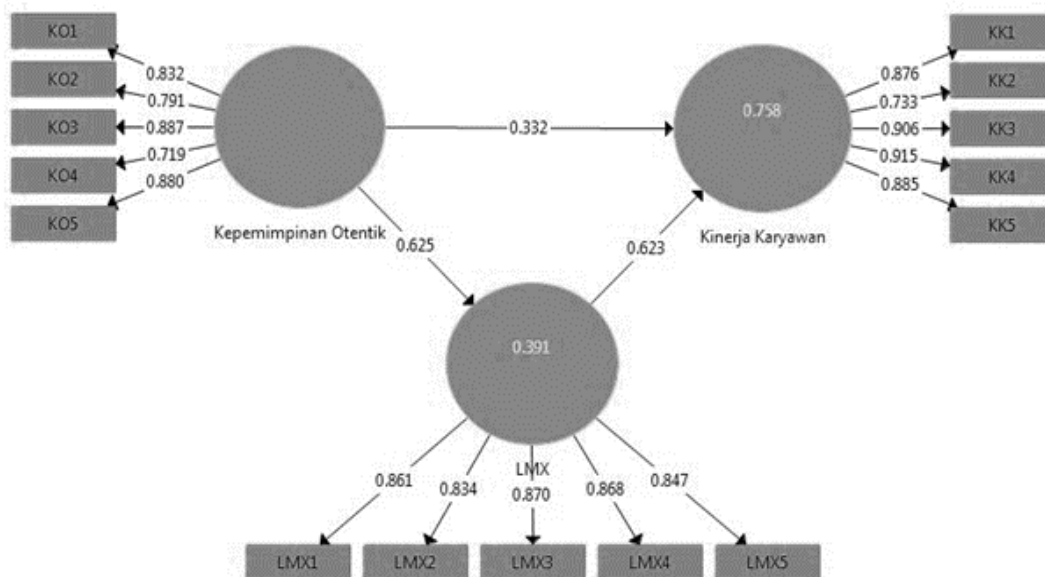


Figure 2. Outer Model Results

Table 2 Results Analysis Description

Indicator	Mean	Category
<b>Authentic Leadership</b>		
My boss asks for opinions to increase interaction with employees.	3,74	High
My boss is honest.	3,78	High
My boss is willing to admit mistakes.	3,78	High
My boss has the confidence to carry out duties	3,58	High
My boss is willing to accept and filter several opinions before making a decision.	3,66	High
<b>Total Mean</b>	<b>3,71</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Leader-Member Exchange</b>		
My boss has a good personality	3,62	High
My boss is fun to work with	3,50	High
My boss motivates my actions at work.	3,48	High
My boss would defend me against others when I make a mistake.	3,46	High
I work for my boss beyond what is specified in the job description.	3,40	Moderate
<b>Total Mean</b>	<b>3,49</b>	<b>High</b>
<b>Employee performance</b>		
Employees work according to the number of jobs given in a month.	3,40	Moderate
Employees work according to company SOP	3,56	High
Employees understand the job descriptions they do at work.	3,54	High
Employees can work together well with their colleagues.	3,60	High
Employees have the self-awareness to get a job done well.	3,58	High
<b>Total Mean</b>	<b>3,54</b>	<b>High</b>



Note: Table 2 shows a description of the respondent's answer to the Authentic Leadership, Leader-Member Exchange, and Employee Performance variables that have high categories.

**Table 3 Result of R-Square Value**

Variable	Original Sample – R-Square
Leader-Member Exchange (Z)	0.391
Employee Performance (Y)	0.758

Note: Based on Table 3, Leader-Member Exchange has an R-Square value of <0.50 which means it is a moderate model, and Employee Performance has an R-Square value of > 0.50 which means it is a good model.

**Prediction Relevance Test**

In addition to looking at the R-square value, the PLS model is also evaluated by looking at the Q-Square Predictive Relevance for the constructed model. From these calculations, the Q-square predictive relevance value of this study is 0.853, where the value is > 0. This indicates that this research model has 85.3% predictive relevance that can explain the model.

**Table 4 Path Coefficients Results**

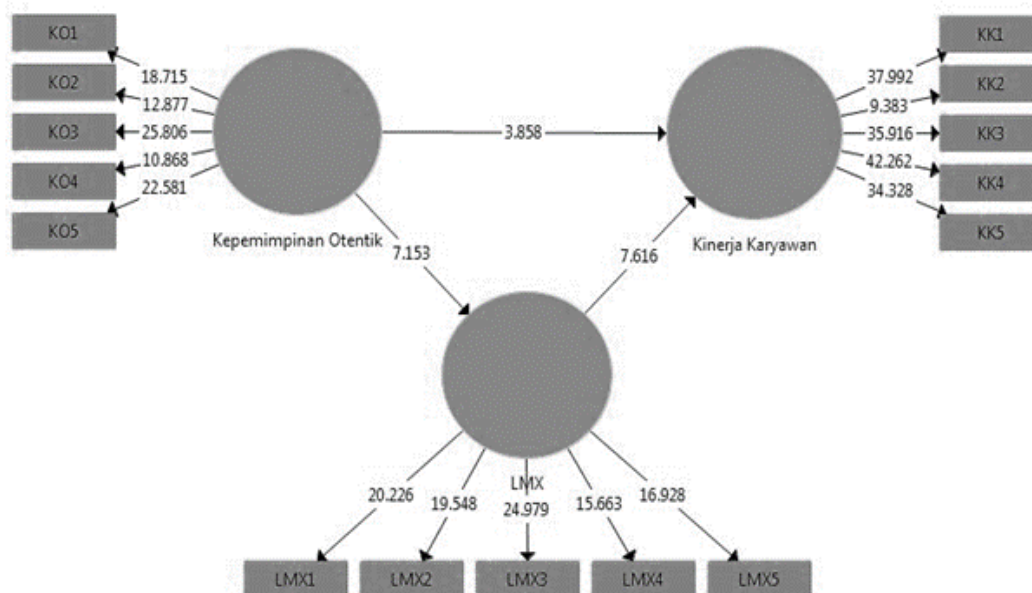
Direct Effect	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics ( O/STERR )	P Values	Information
Authentic Leadership (X) -> Employee Performance (Y)	0.332	3.426	0.001	Significant
Authentic Leadership (X) -> Leader-Member Exchange (Z)	0.625	6.805	0.000	Significant
Leader-Member Exchange (Z) -> Employee Performance (Y)	0.623	6.985	0.000	Significant

Note: Table 4 shows that if the original sample value shows a positive value, then between variables have a positive relationship effect (and vice versa). The value of T-statistics is expected to be > 1.96 (5% significance) with a p-value <0.05 to conclude that the relationship between the variables being tested is stated to have a significant effect.

**Table 5 Indirect Effect Results**

Indirect Effect	Original Sample (O)	T Statistics ( O/STERR )	P Values	Information
Authentic Leadership (X) -> Leader-Member Exchange (Z) -> Employee Performance (Y)	0.390	5.852	0.000	Significant

Note: As shown in Table 5, if the original sample value shows a positive value, then between variables have a positive relationship effect (and vice versa). The value of T-statistics is expected to be  $> 1.96$  (5% significance) with a p-value  $< 0.05$  to conclude that the relationship between the variables being tested is stated to have a significant effect.



**Figure 3. Inner Model Results**

## DISCUSSION

Based on the tests that have been carried out in this study, it is known that Authentic Leadership has a positive and significant effect on Employee Performance. This can be shown based on the T-statistic value of  $3,426 > 1.96$  with a p-value  $< 0.05$ . The existence of a positive influence on authentic leadership on employee performance is shown in the original sample value which shows a positive direction of 0.332, which means that the higher the level of authentic leadership, the higher the performance of the employees. The results of this study are in line with or supported by a study conducted by Hui Wang, et al. (2014) which suggests that authentic leadership has a positive and significant effect on subordinates' performance. It is also in line with Kiyani et al. (2013) quoted by Mira & Odeh, (2019) who have empirically investigated the relationship between authentic leadership and employee performance and found a positive relationship. Ribeiro et al., (2020) have also confirmed that followers will reward their authentic leaders with better individual performance. The results of this study indicate that effective leadership behavior can improve and encourage organizational performance in facing new challenges, and these leaders can grow, maintain and maintain a corporate culture, as well as increase productivity and performance of middle managers. The behavior pattern of authentic leaders will promote positive psychological capacity and a positive ethical climate by adopting a moral perspective, self-awareness, the balance of information, and relational transparency between leaders and their subordinates which also leads to higher self-development and matters. This will refer to achievement in the form of an increase in subordinate performance.

Moreover, it is known that Authentic Leadership has a positive and significant effect directly on leader-member exchanges. This can be shown based on the T-statistic value of  $6.805 > 1.96$  with a p-value  $< 0.05$ . The existence of a positive influence of authentic leadership on the leader-member exchange is shown in the original sample value which shows a positive direction of 0.625 which means that the higher the level of authentic leadership, the more leader-member exchange will increase. The results of this study are in line with the study conducted by Hui Wang, et al. (2014) which suggests that authentic leadership towards leader-member exchanges has a positive and significant effect. In addition, it is also supported according to Yang & Kwon, (2015) in leadership theory which states that with authentic leadership which has recently been highlighted, one can find important factors in leader-member exchanges. The results of this study will show that through authentic leadership the leader-member exchange relationship will be well established. The middle managers have defined awareness of the leaders' sincerity as the awareness of authentic leaders. Through authentic leaders, they will show leaders who are honest with themselves through self-awareness and self-regulation, and also these leaders will continue to seek identity as leaders who are fostered in organizations and find their identity through self-awareness and self-regulation.

The last result shows that authentic leadership through leader-member exchange mediation has a partially significant positive effect on middle manager performance. This can be shown based on the T-statistic value of  $5.852 > 1.96$  with a p-value  $< 0.05$ . Hence, it can be said that the leader-member exchange mediates the influence of authentic leadership on employee performance. This is in line with the research conducted by Hui Wang, et al. (2014) stated that leader-member exchange mediates the effect of authentic leadership on middle managers positively and significantly. In addition, according to Wang et al. (2014), the relational process (i.e., leader-member exchange or LMX) can be used as a mechanism that connects authentic leaders and their subordinate performance. Although authentic leadership can directly affect the performance of middle managers, the results will be stronger if the influence of authentic leadership on the performance of middle managers is through the mediation of the leader-member exchange.

## CONCLUSIONS

The goal of the research is to see how authentic leadership affects middle manager performance and leader-member interaction. It also tries to figure out how leader-member exchange affects the link between authentic leadership and middle management performance. Based on the results of research and discussion in this study, it can be concluded that Authentic Leadership has a significant positive effect on middle manager performance and leader-member exchange, and leader-member exchange partially mediates the influence of Authentic Leadership on employee performance. This study supports the statement of Hadian Nasab & Afshari, (2019) that effective leadership is the most important pillar of an organization, where employees can be motivated towards high-level performance that leads to the success of the organization. In this study, it is known that to get to a high level of performance that leads to organizational success, it takes the influence of authentic leadership with leader-member exchange mediation. When authentic leadership is applied properly, it will affect the leader-member exchange

effectively as well. With leader-member exchange as an intervening variable, this study may be utilized as a suggestion by the company's management in assessing the influence of authentic leadership on subordinates' performance. It is also recognized that LMX may affect behavior by explaining positive psychological talents and a favorable moral climate in the development of internal moral beliefs, self-awareness, balanced information processing, and transparency of communication with followers. Based on the average results on the employee performance variable, the smallest is 3.40 in terms of the opinion of employees who work according to the number of jobs given in a month, it is suggested that these employees need to properly produce or create jobs according to the organization's direction. It can also be influenced by authentic leadership factors when the employee is working. That way, it will motivate employees to improve their performance and trust their superiors.

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