School Principals' Authentic Leadership and Teachers' Psychological Capital: Teachers' Perspectives

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Abstract

This study examined teachers' perceptions of principals' authentic leadership and the relationship of authentic leadership to teachers' psychological capital in Taiwan. A total of 1,429 elementary and secondary school teachers were surveyed. The results showed that teachers perceived their principals' authentic leadership as moderate and that the principals' practice of authentic leadership was influenced by culture. Moreover, the principals' authentic leadership was found to be positively and significantly associated with teachers' psychological capital. This study provides empirical evidence to support a theoretical argument suggesting that authentic leadership fosters positive psychological capital among the members of an organization.

Keywords: authentic leadership, leader authenticity, psychological capital

1. Introduction

School principals are currently facing increasing pressures and challenges in their daily lives. Reasons for this include the increasing diversity of society as well as the uncertainty and tension that permeate school leadership. However, there is considerable cynicism and disregard for organizational leaders, and entrenched public perception regards their rhetoric as misaligned with workplace realities (Bhindi, Smith, Hansen, & Riley, 2008). A call for a new type of genuine and values-based leadership, known as authentic leadership, is emerging. Authentic leaders are concerned with ethics and morality, especially as they relate to deciding what is significant, what is right and what is worthwhile (Duignan, 2006, p. 127). According to Begley (2001), authentic leadership is a metaphor for professionally effective, morally sound, and deliberately reflective practices in educational administration. This leadership implies a sincere type of leadership and a hopeful, open, visionary and creative response to social situations. The prerequisites for such authentic leadership in school principals are self-knowledge, a capacity for moral reasoning, and sensitivity to others' intentions (Begley, 2006, p. 570). The concept of authenticity was first applied in the field of education more than three decades ago (Henderson & Hoy, 1983), and a number of conceptual works (e.g., Begley, 2006; Bhindi & Duignan, 1997; Duignan, 2006; Starratt, 2004) have advocated for authenticity in school leaders. However, there is a need for more empirical studies focused on authentic leadership. In addition, school leaders are challenged to be authentic even as they traverse the unsteady terrain created by conflicting internal and external values, structures and expectations (Walker & Shuangye, 2007). Thus, the extent to which principals are willing to pursue authentic leadership requires further exploration.

Making a difference in schools is the primary task of principals; determining how to influence and motivate teachers to be engaged and involved at school is also important. Principals have faced the difficult challenges of dealing with teachers' work stress and burnout. The concept of psychological capital, based on positive psychology, refers to the application of human strengths and psychological capacities to combat stress. The importance of psychological capital is equal to that of financial, human and social capital. Related research supports a link between psychological capital and positive outcomes at the individual (employee behaviors, attitudes, and performances) and organizational levels (organizational change and organizational climate) (Avey, Wernsing, & Luthans, 2008; Luthans, Avolio, Avey, & Norman, 2007). Therefore, it can be inferred that teachers' psychological capital can improve their work performance and influence their schools' academic performance. Authentic leadership is viewed as one method of enhancing employees' psychological capital. Luthans and Avolio (2003) depict authentic leaders as confident, hopeful, optimistic, and resilient (p. 243). Avolio, Gardner,

Walumbwa, Luthans and May (2004) have proposed that authentic leadership can influence employees' attitudes through the psychological processes of identification, hope, positive emotions, optimism, and trust. Leadership is the process of influencing others; developing authentic capacity in others is also a significant function of authentic leaders (Whitehead & Brown, 2011). Therefore, the underlying assumption here is that if the authentic leader displays the characteristics of psychological capital, the follower will potentially also display these characteristics. Principals' authentic leadership could be an influential factor to cultivate teachers' psychological capital. However, confirming this viewpoint requires more empirical research.

Although authentic leadership seems to be a universally applicable concept, employees' perceptions are heavily dependent on their underlying cultures (Owusu-Bempah, Addison, & Fairweather, 2014). Confucian doctrine has influenced the thoughts and actions of Taiwanese people throughout their history, although Western culture, to some extent, has also had an impact on Taiwanese thought. According to Confucian values, a school leader is expected to be a superior man (junzi). The superior man values sincerity and must be authentic in his thoughts. Confucian writings state that an authentic man is a sage who chooses what is good and sticks with it ant that what is true in such a man's heart will be revealed in his outward words and actions. These viewpoints are similar to the authentic leadership theory, which argues that leaders should be truthful to themselves and others, match their words with their deeds and have the moral courage to put their professional duties into practice. Whitehead and Brown (2011) found that a theory of authentic leadership is supported as part of the Chinese view of leadership. Therefore, this study aims to explore the relationship between teachers' perceptions of their school principals' authentic leadership and their own psychological capital in Taiwan's cultural context. This paper's research questions are as follows:

1) To what degree do elementary and secondary school teachers perceive authentic leadership among their principals?

2) Do teachers with different demographic characteristics (gender, age, educational level, school level, position and years of teaching) perceive principals' authentic leadership differently?

3) What is the relationship between principals' authentic leadership and teachers' psychological capital?

2. Literature Review

2.1 Authentic Leadership

Authenticity can be traced back to ancient Greek philosophy and instructs individuals: "to thine own self be true." This echoes a similar Chinese phrase: "to square one's words with one's conduct." Authentic leadership is a positive form of leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). The early construct of authenticity within the field of educational leadership focused on inauthenticity. Henderson and Hoy (1983) defined an inauthentic leader as one who complied to an excessive degree with the stereotypes and demands related to the leadership role. Current conceptions of authentic leadership reflect their conceptual roots in positive psychology and adopt a more positive focus on what constitutes authentic leadership development (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Authentic leadership has been defined as a pattern of leadership behaviors that draw upon and promote both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008, p. 94). Authentic leaders are those who act on deep personal values and beliefs, interact with others transparently and reliably, and lead in a manner that followers recognize as authentic. Authenticity is not an either/or construct; it exists on a continuum (Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004). Therefore, authentic leaders must have high self-awareness to conduct themselves authentically. Avolio, Luthans, and Walumbwa described authentic leaders as follows:

> Those who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others' values/moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character. (as cited in Avolio et al., 2004: 802-804)

Reviewing the related literature, the generally accepted framework of authentic leadership consists of four dimensions, including balanced processing, an internalized moral perspective, relational transparency, and self-awareness. A brief description of each dimension of authentic leadership follows below (Walumbwa et al., 2008, p. 95-96). A leader with balanced processing can objectively analyze all relevant information before making a decision. Leaders who are perceived to display balanced processing seek opinions from others that may challenge their own viewpoints. A leader with an internalized moral perspective displays behaviors that are guided by internal moral standards and values rather than by external pressures (Gardner, Avolio, Luthans, May, & Waluma, 2005). Leaders should be role models who match their words with their deeds. A leader with

relational transparency represents his or her authentic self to others, making personal disclosures, such as real thoughts and feelings, and sharing information openly (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Finally, self-awareness refers to the extent to which leaders are aware of their own strengths, weaknesses, and motivations and of others' perceptions of their leadership (Walumbwa, P. Wang, H. Wang, Schaubroeck, & Avolio, 2010).

2.2 Psychological Capital

Drawing from positive psychology, Luthans and Youssef (2004) have conceptually combined dimensions of positive organizational behavior (POB), including self-efficacy, hope, optimism, and resiliency, into their higher-order construct, which they have named "positive psychological capital." Psychological capital is generally viewed as a core psychological factor of positivity that extends beyond human and social capital ("what you know" and "who you know") to provide a competitive advantage through an investment in/development of "who you are" (Luthans & Youssef, 2004; Luthans, Avolio, Walumbwa, & Li, 2005). According to Luthans, Youssef, and Avolio (2007), positive psychological capital is:

> an individual's positive psychological state of development that is characterized by: (1) having confidence (self-efficacy) to take on and put in the necessary effort to succeed at challenging tasks; (2) making a positive attribution (optimism) about succeeding now and in the future; (3) persevering toward goals and, when necessary, redirecting paths to goals (hope) in order to succeed; and (4) when beset by problems and adversity, sustaining and bouncing back and even beyond (resiliency) to attain success. (p. 3)

Luthans and Avolio (2003) argued that the positive psychological capacities of confidence, optimism, hope and resiliency are authentic leaders' personal resources. Recent research in positive psychology, positive organizational behavior, and positive psychological capital suggests that possessing these positive psychological capacities makes leaders open to development and change, both theoretically and psychometrically. Thus, these leaders can play a crucial role in developing individuals and organizations such that they flourish and prosper (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, p. 324). Additionally, recent studies have demonstrated that psychological capital has implications for combating stress (Avey, Luthans, & Jensen, 2009). Cheung, Tang, and Tang (2011)'s study demonstrated that psychological capital moderated the association between emotional labor and burnout among school teachers in China. Thus, teachers' psychological capital could be a key to improving their work attitudes and performances.

2.3 Authentic Leadership and Psychological Capital

Authentic leadership can be one way of developing followers' positive psychological capital through leaders' behavioral modeling (e.g., Gardner et al., 2005; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). Gardner and Schermerhorn (2004) indicated that authentic leaders apply knowledge of their beliefs, values, motives, and positive psychological capital to set challenging but attainable standards for personal conduct through positive self-regulation. An authentic leader has an inner confidence, displays psychological capital, and promotes resilience in himself and others (Whitehead & Brown, 2011). Ilies, Morgeson, and Nahrgang (2005, p. 385) note that leaders serve as positive behavioral models to the extent that they are viewed positively by followers. Followers can learn to behave and act authentically by observing authentic leaders' behaviors and by processing information that is relevant to them. Authentic leaders who use active, adaptive, and positive approaches toward problem solving may cultivate higher levels of optimism in followers (Walumbwa, Luthans, Avey, & Oke, 2011). In addition, authentic leaders build transparent relationships with followers and openly analyze and share all relevant information with them. Leaders also adopt their followers' views to overcome difficulties and challenges together, which contributes to followers' confidence and self-esteem and promotes their self-efficacy and hope. Moreover, authentic leaders have higher self-awareness, and they may recover quickly from difficulties and adjust the goals that they want followers to accomplish, thus influencing group members' resilience. Additionally, authentic leaders' authentic relationships with followers likely enhance their modeling effects on followers' social learning and further facilitate their authentic leadership development.

A review of related research shows that empirical studies reveal that principals' authenticity is positively related to teacher trust (Hoy & Kupersmith, 1984; Tschannen-Moran & Hoy, 1998), teacher engagement (Bird, Wang, Waston, & Murray, 2009; Wang & Bird, 2011) and teachers' intentions to return (Bird, Wang, Watson, & Murray, 2012) As well as positively related to the organizational climate, health, and perceived leadership effectiveness (Henderson & Brookhart, 1996). Shapira-Lishchinsky and Tsemach (2014) also found psychological empowerment could be a mediator between teachers' perceptions of authentic leadership and their citizenship behaviors, but no mediating relationship was found for psychological empowerment on authentic leadership and the withdrawal behaviors of lateness and intent to leave. Shapira-Lishchinsky and Levvy-Gazenfrantz (2015)

found that the influential mentors who were perceived as authentic leaders by teacher-mentees acted within four dimensions: self-awareness, balanced processing, relational transparency and internalized moral perspective. They had also contributed to the mentees' development of leadership strategies that included envisioning, engaging, evaluating, reflecting and monitoring. However, most studies that have examined the mediating role of psychological capital and its relationship to authentic leadership have been conducted in a business context (Clapp-Smith, Vogelgesang, & Avey, 2009; Rego, Sousa, Marques, & Cunha, 2012). Collective psychological capital and trust have been repeatedly shown to mediate the relationship between authentic leadership and work groups' desired outcomes (Walumbwa, Luthans, Avey, & Oke, 2011), and authentic leadership has been shown to predict employees' creativity through the mediating role of employees' psychological capital (Rego, Sousa, Marques, & Cunha, 2012). Woolley, Caza and Levy (2011) highlighted the need to consider the influence of employees' characteristics in understanding leadership outcomes. It is believed that principals affect student achievement through their positive influence on the beliefs and psychological states of teachers. However, teachers' psychological capital, which is associated with authentic leadership, appears to receive scarce consideration in the field of education.

3. Method

3.1 Hypothesized Model

According to our literature review, the authentic leadership of principals will likely influence teachers' psychological capital directly. The interaction between teachers and their principal may vary depending on teachers' characteristics, and leadership is related to individuals' perceptions. In this study, authentic leadership and psychological capital have been measured at the individual level. Figure 1 displays the hypothesized research model to be tested.
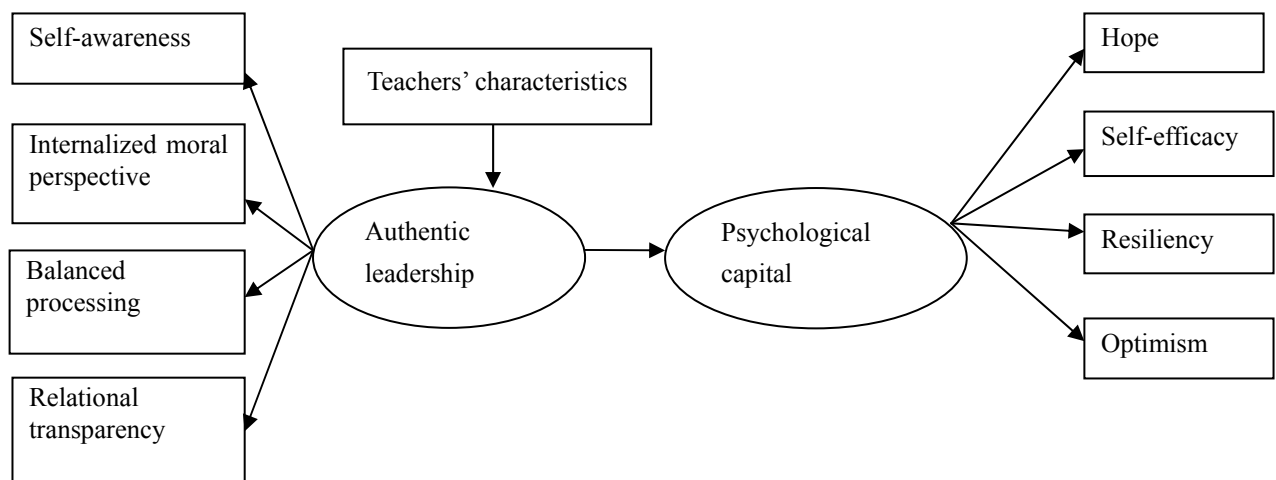

Figure 1. Hypothesized model

3.2 Sample

The population for this study included all full-time elementary, junior high, and senior high school teachers in Taiwan. Using school statistics from the Ministry of Education website, 97 schools were selected as a stratified random sample. A total of 1,600 schoolteachers were surveyed, and 1,429 completed questionnaires were collected, resulting in an effective response rate of 89.31%. The sample included 33.4% male teachers and 66.4% female teachers, which sufficiently reflects the gender distribution in the real population of Taiwan's schoolteachers (32. 52% and 67.48%, respectively). Of these respondents, 44.90% were between 31 and 40 years of age, and 55.80% reported having a bachelor's degree. In this sample, 51.80% of the respondents worked at an elementary school. Most respondents (88%) were schoolteachers, and their years of teaching experience varied: 17.10% had fewer than 5 years' experience; 29.30% had between 6 and 10 years' experience; 21.10% had between 11 and 15 years' experience; and 31.6% had 16 years' experience or more. A detailed profile is summarized in Table 1.

Table 1. Respondents' profiles

Variables	Categories	Number	Percentage
Gender	Male	478	33.4
	Female	949	66.4
	Missing	2	0.1
Age	30 and younger	241	16.9
	31 to 40	641	44.9
	41 to 50	442	30.9
	51 and older	98	6.9
	Missing	7	0.5
Educational level	College	7	0.5
	Bachelor's degree	797	55.8
	Master's degree	616	43.1
	Doctorate	6	0.4
	Missing	3	0.2
School level	Senior high school	362	25.3
	Junior high school	311	21.8
	Elementary school	740	51.8
	Missing	16	1.1
Position	Director	162	11.3
	Teacher	1,258	88.0
	Missing	9	0.6
Years of teaching	Under 5 years	244	17.1
	6-10 years	418	29.3
	11-15 years	301	21.1
	16 years or more	451	31.6
	Missing	15	1.0
Total		1,429	100

3.3 Instruments

Data for this study were collected through a questionnaire survey. The first part of the questionnaire gathered the respondents' demographic information. The second part was the authentic leadership scale, which was developed based on a literature review of authentic leadership theory and development (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008). The items consisted of four factors: self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing. The participants were asked to rate their perceptions of their principals' authentic leadership practices on a 5-point Likert-type scale, ranging from 0 ("never") to 4 ("always"). For the final section, a scale used to measure teachers' psychological capital was developed according to Luthans, Youssef, and Avolio's (2007) psychological capital theory and their questionnaire (PCQ) (pp. 237-238). The items included four components: hope, resiliency, optimism and self-efficacy, and they were rated on a 7-point scale Likert-type scale, ranging from 1 ("strongly disagree") to 7 ("strongly agree").

However, because of potential differences in contextual factors, including educational organization and national culture, 10 school practitioners, including principals and teachers, were asked to review the initial questionnaire and to provide suggestions for content, phrasing and item revisions to validate the instrument. A pilot survey was then conducted in a sample of schoolteachers ($N = 164$) from elementary, junior high and senior high schools in Taiwan. According to the results of an item analysis, 3 items with poor reliability were discarded from the

psychological capital scale. The final Cronbach's alpha coefficient of the authentic leadership scale was 0.95, and the Cronbach's alphas of the subscales ranged from 0.75 to 0.92. The internal consistency estimate (alpha coefficient) of the psychological capital scale was 0.94, and the subscales ranged from 0.82 to 0.88. Therefore, our results showed that both scales were quite reliable.

Moreover, a confirmatory factor analysis (using LISREL with the maximum likelihood estimation method) was used to examine the factorial validity of the models. The authentic leadership model had an acceptable fit with the data ($\chi2$ = 719.6, df = 96, p < .001; GFI = 0.94; CFI = 0.99; RMSEA = 0.06; and SRMR=.028), suggesting that authentic leadership as a second-order factor consisting of self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing was appropriate. In addition, the model of psychological capital was appropriate ($\chi2$ =28.01, df = 3, $p,$ 001; GFI = 0.99; CFI = 0.99; RMSEA = 0.07; and SRMR = .014), supporting this study's construct of psychological capital as a second-order factor consisting of hope, resiliency, optimism and self-efficacy.

4. Results

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the study variables. Compared with the midpoint (i.e., 2) of the scale, which ranged from 0 to 4, the teachers perceived their principals' authentic leadership as moderate (M = 2.63), and the results of a one-way ANOVA showed that teachers perceived the "internalized moral perspective" of their principals' authentic leadership as significantly higher than their "self-awareness," "balanced processing," and "relational transparency."

T-tests and ANOVA were used to examine the differences in demographic variables, and the results indicated that gender, age, school level, position and years of teaching significantly related to teachers' perceptions of principals' authentic leadership. Male teachers seemed to have slightly stronger perceptions of authentic leadership than did their female counterparts (t = 5.708, p < .001). Authentic leadership perceptions were higher for senior high and elementary school teachers than for junior high school teachers (t = 12.615, p < .001). School directors had higher perceptions of authentic leadership than did teachers (t = 28.709, p < .001). Teachers with more than 16 years of teaching experience perceived higher authentic leadership than did those with fewer than 16 years of experience.

Table 2. Means and standard deviations for principals' authentic leadership (n = 1,428)

Variable	Mean	SD	F-value	Post-Hoc
Self-awareness	2.625	.739		
Internalized moral perspective	2.689	.740	21.261***	Internalized moral perspective > Self-awareness; Balance processing > Relational transparency
Balance processing	2.610	.862		
Relational transparency	2.577	.861		

***p < .001.

Table 3 shows that teachers exhibited high psychological capital, as their mean score was 4.58 (a neutral rating equaled 4). Dependent sample t-tests revealed that teachers seemed to have higher psychological capital in "self-efficacy," followed by "hope," "resiliency" and "optimism."

Table 3. Means and standard deviations for teachers' psychological capital (n = 1,428)

Variable	Mean	SD	F-value	Post-Hoc
Hope	4.582	.616		
Self-efficacy	4.757	.571	179.906***	Self-Efficacy > Hope; Resiliency > Optimism
Resiliency	4.576	.625		
Optimism	4.420	.748		

***p < .001.

This study also examined the correlations between principals' authentic leadership and teachers' psychological capital. LISREL 8.80 statistical software was used to conduct path analyses with latent variables. Analytical models included the measurement models of authentic leadership and psychological capital as well as the structural model. The maximum likelihood estimation method was used in all the LISREL analyses. In the model data fit assessment, $\chi2 = 59.47$ (df =17, p < .0001) meant that a difference possibly existed between the proposed model and the data; however, this outcome could have resulted from our large sample size (n=1429). Therefore, other indices were used to ensure that the model showed a good fit with the data: the RMSEA (.042) and SRMR (.029) estimates were below .05; the GFI, AGFI, IFI, NFI, and NNFI estimates were greater than .90. All met the criteria for a good model fit. Therefore, the proposed model fit the data well and adequately represented the theoretical relationships between authentic leadership and psychological capital.
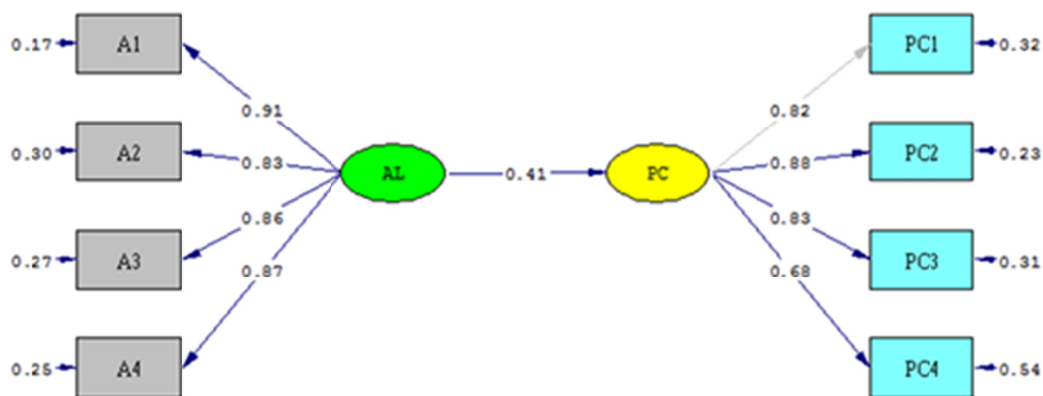

Figure 2. Correlations between authentic leadership and psychological capital

In the measurement model, the standardized parameter estimates of the four dimensions— self-awareness (A1), internalized moral perspective (A2), balanced processing (A3) and relational transparency (A4)—were all above .83. The t-values of the factor loadings for each dimension were higher than 1.96, and all were statistically significant. These results offer evidence that self-awareness, internalized moral perspectives, balanced processing and relational transparency can explain principals' authentic leadership. In addition, the standardized parameter estimates of four dimensions, including hope (PC1), self-efficacy (PC2), resiliency (PC3), and optimism (PC4) ranged from 0.68 to 0.88 in the fitted model, and the factor loadings of these dimensions were all statistically significant (with t-values greater than 1.96), offering evidence that hope, self-efficacy, resiliency, and optimism contribute to the measurement of psychological capital.

As Figure 2 shows, the results for the structural equation model support this study's hypothesis. A positive relationship exists between teachers' perceptions of authentic leadership and their psychological capital (standardized path coefficient=0.41). Therefore, principals' authentic leadership seems to influence teachers' psychological capital. In Taiwanese schools, teachers who perceive a higher level of authentic leadership in principals have more positive psychological capital.

5. Discussion

The findings of this paper illustrate that teachers moderately perceive principals' authentic leadership as predominantly related to, in descending order, "internalized moral perspective," "self-awareness," "balanced processing" and "relational transparency." According to some scholars, authentic leadership is fairly generic and represents a "root construct," which forms the foundation for other forms of positive leadership; therefore, authentic leadership can incorporate transformational, charismatic, servant, spiritual and other forms of positive leadership (Avolio et al., 2004; Avolio & Gardner, 2005). If this generalization is true, the extent to which teachers perceive principals' authentic leadership should be higher than that illustrated in our findings. Thus, it could be inferred that principals' jobs are indeed full of challenges and pressures that impede them in their practice of authentic leadership.

The results show that teachers expect principals' words and deeds to be moral, as morality is listed as an important criterion in recruiting and selecting Taiwanese principals. Moreover, Confucian ethical values that

emphasize the importance of being a person with virtue (junzi) strongly influence Taiwanese school principals. In Confucian ethics, a morally cultivated leader should be a moral model, conveying ethical rules and educating others. Therefore, principals usually emphasize their moral images and show themselves as highly self-disciplined individuals to meet the aforementioned expectations. This emphasis may explain why teachers perceive principals' "internalized moral perspectives" more than they do other dimensions of authentic leadership. Teachers perceived principals' "relational transparency" less than they did other dimensions. Our results indicate that teachers' perceptions of principals' authentic leadership differ significantly based on their gender, age, school level, position and years of teaching. These findings provide evidence that interpersonal interactions between teachers and principals are partly influenced by the patriarchal culture in Taiwan, including the guanxi of the pecking order and patriarchal leadership, which are emphasized in Confucian ethics. Schools are viewed as symbolic families. The principals are regarded as the moral heads, and respecting the elderly and seniors seems a common rule in most schools. To maintain their images of patriarchal authority, principals rarely disclose their true feelings or appear vulnerable in front of school members, although principals do usually ask their school directors and senior teachers' advice regarding school affairs. School directors are principals' deputies and have to help principals to perform administrative duties. These directors also open communication channels between teachers and principals. Senior teachers have more opportunities to join school committees than do younger colleagues. The social distance that principals maintain will thus influence their relationships with teachers. The larger the school, the more apparent its hierarchical structure.

In addition, the results show that gender may influence teachers' perceptions of authentic leadership; this finding is similar to the findings of Woolley et al. (2011). Male teachers usually have more chances to participate in administrative work compared with female teachers because females are typically less willing to join in public affairs. This difference is influenced by Taiwan's patriarchal culture. Furthermore, teachers' perceptions of authentic leadership need time to develop. Taiwanese school principals have four-year terms and can lead a school for eight years. However, in Taiwan, more and more principals quit or retire after one term because they feel dissatisfied with their working conditions. Furthermore, given that the contexts of elementary and secondary schools are different, elementary and high school teachers, interestingly, have higher perceptions of principals' authentic leadership than junior high school teachers. The reasons behind this finding should be explored.

Finally, the results suggest that principals' authentic leadership positively affects teachers' psychological capital. This study supports the findings of Rego et al. (2012) and Woolley et al. (2011), who argue that authentic leadership relates positively with followers' psychological capital. This evidence also supports the theoretical viewpoint that authentic leaders can model and promote the development of positive psychological states in others (Gardner et al., 2005); they can also influence followers' attitudes and behaviors through key psychological processes (Avolio et al., 2004).

6. Limitations and Implications

This study has several limitations that should be noted. In schools, principal-teacher interactions and relationships both shape attitudes and define the school climate. Particular attention is paid to the roles of principals in these relationships because of their centrality and leadership positions (Price, 2012). It seems plausible to hypothesize that principals' authentic leadership may influence teachers' psychological capital. The findings of this study show that teachers' perceptions of authentic leadership are either an antecedent or outcome of psychological capital, although teachers' psychological capital is initially supposed to be a potential consequence of authentic leadership. If so, the findings of this study provide reasonable support for this theory. Teachers' psychological capital, however, may have an influence on their perceptions of authentic leadership. When teachers have high levels of positive psychological capital, they may be already accustomed to a positive method of interacting with others, and they may describe their leaders in positive terms. In addition, teachers with positive outlooks may also influence principals' attitudes and behaviors, thereby pushing them to be more authentic with teachers. Further research could use longitudinal and quasi-experimental methods to clarify the causal relationship. Second, this study's sample only includes teachers. Future studies could use a sample with principals to conduct paired sample surveys to situationally explore the relationships between principals' authentic leadership and teachers' psychological capital in different leader-follower dyads. Third, personal leadership authenticity depends on teachers' interpretations of what makes sense to them and others. Qualitative research methods, such as interviews, may be used to collect in-depth information to supplement quantitative research findings. Finally, this study indicated that the relationship between principals' authentic leadership and teachers' psychological capital did not seem to be strong. This finding implies that teachers' psychological capital may be explained by other variables. Future research should consider and examine other school-focused variables, such as school climate and leader-follower social distance, as variables relevant to teachers'

psychological capital. In addition, teachers' psychological capital was examined as an outcome variable in this research, and teachers' work commitment or work performance could be studied in future research.

Despite these limitations, this study contributes to the educational leadership literature by exploring the relationship between authentic leadership and teachers' psychological capital; it also provides practical implications for principals, educators and educational authorities. The results of the current study indicate that principals' authentic leadership may indeed be a very important ingredient in enhancing teachers' psychological capital. It also provides the evidence that principalship can have a positive demonstration effect on teachers. Many Taiwanese principals consider themselves powerless and feel highly stressed. They are responsible for their school's accountability but also maintain harmonious relationships with the school community as they look ahead to their second term of office. However, principals neglect the power of authenticity to help their school communities feel connected to the school's goals through leadership. This study shows that the extent to which teachers are aware of principals' authentic leadership is limited and is influenced by demographic variables. Therefore, principals are encouraged to practice authentic leadership, including self-awareness and self-regulation, balanced information processing, self-discipline based on moral standards, and authentic and open-hearted interactions with school teachers, especially those who are quiet and maintain a distance from their principals. Our results may also indicate that principals are insufficiently willing to implement authentic leadership. A retirement wave of compulsory-school principals has emerged gradually in Taiwan. Many principals retired in their fifties in response to the difficulties of dealing with diverse requirements from stakeholders and the frustrations of external and internal school pressures. In short, principals did not dare to practice authentic leadership because of the challenging educational contexts in which they worked. Therefore, educational authorities must overcome the institutional barriers that principals currently face in running their schools. This should be accomplished through building a secure culture that fosters authentic leadership by principals. Moreover, the practice of authentic leadership depends on leaders having high self-awareness of their values; this helps ensure that they act in alignment with their convictions. A deeply structured process of self-reflection is one way of increasing principals' explicit self-knowledge (Branson, 2007).When designing preparation and professional development programs for principals, faculty must consider how to strengthen the link between personal consciousness and professional practice and also enhance their principals' moral courage to overcome any hindrances to authentic leadership.

7. Conclusions

At a time when an atmosphere of distrust and despair is gradually permeating schools, there is a growing expectation that authentic school leadership can build rich, engaging and productive learning environments for students, based on the collective efforts of all school stakeholders, thereby achieving high-quality outcomes for students (Duignan, 2014). Authentic leaders not only clarify and stand by their personal beliefs, they also develop authentic interactions with others through self-reflection and adjustment, thus improving students' lives and learning within the given educational context (Walker & Shuangye, 2007). The results of this study demonstrate that authentic leadership seems to influence teachers' psychological capital. High psychological capital in teachers is believed to translate into more positive attitudes, which can affect students' learning and self-image. Principals, therefore, play an important role in practicing authentic leadership to sustain teachers' psychological capital regardless of the context, although this article shows that authentic school leadership needs to be understood and interpreted within particular cultural contexts. However, the findings of this study also remind outside stakeholders, such as policymakers, to reassess educational environments. More research is needed to better understand why the development and practice of authentic leadership is so difficult for current principals.

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