



Title	Being authentic by sharing team vision : mediating role of strengths use within a team
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Citation	Personnel review, 52(5), 1548-1562 <a href="https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-06-2021-0420">https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-06-2021-0420</a>
Issue Date	2022-10-03
Doc URL	<a href="http://hdl.handle.net/2115/87151">http://hdl.handle.net/2115/87151</a>
Type	article (author version)
File Information	Self-archiving (PR2022).pdf



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# **Being authentic by sharing team vision: Mediating role of strengths use within a team**

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Citation: Matsuo, M. (2022), "Being authentic by sharing team vision: mediating role of strengths use within a team", *Personnel Review*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print.

<https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-06-2021-0420>

## **Abstract**

**Purpose** – Authenticity, or the extent to which individuals act in accordance with their values, beliefs, and characteristics, is recognized as a key component of a fulfilled life. However, little is known about its antecedents in an organizational context. Drawing on goal-setting theory and the broaden-and-build theory, the current study examined the role of team leaders' perceived shared vision in promoting their work authenticity, mediated through strengths use support (SUS) for members as well as leaders' strengths use.

**Design/methodology/approach** – A two-wave questionnaire survey was conducted to test the hypotheses using a sample of 325 middle managers of a manufacturing firm.

**Findings** – The results of structural equation modeling show that perceived shared vision promoted work authenticity, mediated through SUS and strengths use.

**Originality/value** – This study is the first to identify that shared goals can trigger authenticity at work by directing the leader to use their strengths, alongside their team members.

**Keywords** Shared vision, authenticity, strengths use, strengths use support

**Paper type:** Research paper

## **Introduction**

In recent years, the concept of authenticity has attracted increasing attention not only in management but also in social science studies (Cha et al., 2019; Lehman et al., 2019), due to the rise of positive psychology, which regards authenticity as a key concept in its theory (Hewlin et al., 2020; Peterson and Seligman, 2004; Seligman, 2002, 2019; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000). The possession of feelings of authenticity is significant, as such feeling guides individuals to lead a fulfilled life (Rivera et al., 2019). Being authentic is also crucial for managers to be engaged in authentic leadership and career (Ilies et al., 2005; Svejenova, 2005; Weiss et al., 2018).

In previous studies, authenticity, defined as the extent to which individuals act in accordance with their values, beliefs, and characteristics (Harter, 2002; Metin et al., 2016), has been shown to promote subjective well-being (Ariza-Montes et al., 2017), self-esteem (Wood et al., 2008), job satisfaction (Lopez and Ramos, 2016), affiliative and self-enhancing humor (Barnett and Deutsch, 2016), and compassionate interpersonal goals (Tou et al., 2015). Meanwhile, it decreases distress (Boyraz and Kuhl, 2015), work stress (Lopez and Ramos, 2016), and career indecision (White and Tracey, 2011). Using a meta-analysis of 75 empirical studies, Sutton (2020) reported a positive effect of authenticity on well-being and work engagement. These studies indicate the significant role of authenticity in facilitating individual well-being not only in daily life but also in the workplace.

Despite its importance, only a few studies have investigated the antecedents of authenticity (e.g., Boyraz and Kuhl, 2015; Metin et al., 2016), especially in the organizational context (Hewlin et al., 2020). Without knowing the determinants of work authenticity,

managing it at the organizational level is almost impossible. To address this research gap, the present study focused on the influence of team leaders' perceived shared vision on their authenticity, directly and indirectly through strengths use and strengths use support (SUS), drawing on goal-setting theory (Latham and Locke, 2007; Locke and Latham, 2002), as well as the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001). Leaders' perceived shared vision within a team may be critical for their authenticity because individuals are believed to be authentic when their behaviors are congruent with their values and goals (Schmader and Sedikides, 2018; Smallenbroek et al., 2017). Furthermore, this study considered strengths use and SUS as mediators of the relationship between leader's perceived shared vision and their authenticity, since strengths are parts of the true self, and SUS may strengthen "relational authenticity," i.e., followers' personal identification of leader's values and goals (Eagly, 2005).

This study makes three main contributions to the literature. First, this study specified the antecedents of authenticity at work from the viewpoint of goal-setting theory (Latham and Locke, 2007; Locke and Latham, 2002) and the broaden-and-build theory (Fredrickson, 2001). Considering the limited studies on the antecedents of authenticity in an organizational context (Hewlin et al., 2020), this study contributes to the literature by demonstrating the mechanisms by which shared vision leads to leaders' authenticity at work. Second, the present study extends research on work authenticity by identifying the mediating roles of strengths use and SUS, which have been emphasized in positive psychology and its related research (Bouskila-Yam and Kluger, 2011; Bowers, 2009; Peterson and Seligman, 2004; Seligman, 2002; Van Woerkom et al., 2016b), in connecting shared vision to authenticity. Third, this study may be the first study to investigate the consequences of leaders' perceived shared vision, considering the limited empirical studies on shared or communicated vision (e.g., Jing et al., 2014; Kohles et al., 2012; Shippers et al., 2008).

The remainder of this paper proceeds as follows. First, previous studies on authenticity,

vision sharing, strengths use, and SUS are reviewed to propose hypotheses. Next, the methods and results are explained. Finally, the implications for theory and practices are discussed.

## **Theoretical background and hypotheses**

### *Authenticity*

Authenticity (i.e., the true self) has been regarded as the most fundamental aspect of an individual's well-being (Wood et al., 2008) and has been found to enhance several positive outcomes (Barnett and Deutsch, 2016; Jongman-Sereno and Leary, 2019; Lopez and Ramos, 2016; Sutton, 2020; Tou et al., 2015; Wang, 2016; Wood et al., 2008). Rivera et al. (2019) argued that feelings of authenticity are important for well-being because they are used as a cue to assess whether they are fulfilling the shared cultural value of a good life. They called perceived authenticity “true-self-as-guide” (Rivera et al., 2019).

Wood et al. (2008) developed one of the most frequently used measures of authenticity. This scale consists of three dimensions with 12-items: (1) authentic living, that is, behaving in accordance with one's values and beliefs, (2) self-alienation, that is, being out of touch with oneself, and (3) accepting external influence, that is, the extent to which one accepts the influence of other people. Among the three dimensions, Vess et al. (2014) stated that authentic living is most closely related to the activation of true self-conceptions, based on empirical analyses. Similarly, Barnett and Deutsch (2016) reported that authentic living had the strongest effect on positive humor among the three dimensions of authenticity.

It should be noted that past researchers, including Wood et al. (2008), have traditionally regarded authenticity as a dispositional concept. In contrast, recent studies have conceptualized authenticity from a situational perspective (Schmader and Sedikides, 2018). Importantly, Lenton et al. (2016) found that there was more variation in the sense of authenticity (authentic living, accepting external influence, and self-alienation) than between

individuals. Authenticity is more changeable across episodes within an individual than between individuals. Additionally, Slabu et al. (2014) reported that state authenticity was more similar than different across cultures regardless of individuals' trait authenticity levels.

Drawing on the state perspective, Van den Bosch and Taris (2014) developed the 12-item scale of "work authenticity," which consists of authentic living, accepting external influence, and self-alienation, based on Wood et al.'s (2008) scale. They stated that perceived work authenticity can be considered as the outcome of a good fit between employees and their work environment. Van den Bosch and Taris (2014) named this scale the "Individual Authenticity Measure at Work," and found that work authenticity measured by the scale promoted work engagement, job satisfaction, and performance. Using this scale, several researchers have reported that work authenticity is associated with positive outcomes such as subjective well-being (Ariza-Montes et al., 2017), work engagement, job satisfaction, and performance (Metin et al., 2016). Considering recent studies that emphasize the importance of state authenticity (Lenton et al., 2016; Rivera et al., 2019; Schmader and Sedikides, 2018; Sedikides et al., 2017; Slabu et al., 2014; Vess et al., 2014), this study conceptualized work authenticity as a state variable.

### *Shared vision*

Insufficient understanding of how authenticity is triggered in an organizational context may have been a significant research problem in the literature (Alilyyani et al., 2018; Hewlin et al., 2020). As a trigger of employee authenticity at work, this study focused on shared vision because individuals are believed to be authentic when they behave in accordance with their goals, visions, and values (Gardner et al., 2011).

Vision refers to a projected mental image of what a leader wants to achieve (Bass and Stogdill, 1990; Baum and Locke, 2004), and such a leader's vision must be communicated and

shared with his/her team members to maximize its effect on inspiration and motivation (Frese et al., 2003; Jing et al., 2014). A shared vision provides followers with a mutual understanding of a collective future-oriented direction (Berson et al., 2016) and a sense of identity and purpose that elicits positive attitudes (Venus et al., 2019). Previous studies have found that communicated or shared vision promotes job satisfaction, affective commitment (Ryu, 2015), venture growth (Baum and Locke, 2004; Baum et al., 1998), and organizational performance (Jing et al., 2014).

Importantly, Shippers et al. (2008) reported the positive effect of shared vision on team performance mediated through team reflexivity, suggesting that a frame of reference based on shared vision enables team members to effectively reflect on their functioning. Following Shippers et al. (2008), this study focused on leaders' perceived shared vision because leaders' individual perceptions may be more influential in terms of their feeling of authenticity than shared vision perceived by team members. Thus, the unit of analysis in the present research is not the team but the individual. This is the first study to explore how leaders' perceived shared vision influences their authenticity.

According to goal-setting theory (Latham and Locke, 2007; Locke and Latham, 2002), goals direct individuals' attention and effort toward goal-related activities, and challenging goals enhance satisfaction with one's performance. As visions are idealized goals that the leader wants the organization or team to achieve in the future (Conger, 1999), most visions are considered challenging. If the vision is to be shared within the team, it should be integrated into leaders' personal values or goals to guide their behavior at work. Notably, vision is believed to lead individuals to create an 'ideal possible self' (Kohles et al., 2012; Stam et al., 2010), whereas authentic leaders are effective in conveying their values and visions to followers (Ilies et al., 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Moreover, considering that authenticity is conceptualized as the extent to which individuals act in accordance with their values, beliefs,

and characteristics (Harter, 2002; Metin et al., 2016), shared vision may promote congruency between employees' values and behaviors. Similarly, Schmader and Sedikides (2018) stated that goal fit between norms in the environment and employees' idealized goals should enhance their authenticity. Smallenbroek et al. (2017) also found that employees' value congruent behavior promoted their state authenticity. Based on the theories and evidence, the following hypothesis is generated.

*H1. Perceived shared vision has a positive effect on work authenticity.*

#### *Strengths use and SUS*

Goal-setting theory (Latham and Locke, 2007; Locke and Latham, 2002) postulates that high and challenging goals enhance satisfaction with performance, mediated through greater efforts and use of task-relevant strategies. Based on the theory, leaders are likely to use strengths within a team to achieve visions because personal strengths enable individuals to perform well or at their personal best (Wood et al., 2011). That is, it is an effective strategy to use strengths within a team to achieve team visions. Considering the directive and motivating functions of goals and visions (Kohles et al., 2012; Locke and Latham, 2002; Stam et al., 2010, 2014), the following hypotheses were generated.

*H2. Perceived shared vision has a positive effect on strengths use.*

*H3. Perceived shared vision has a positive effect on SUS.*

Although previous studies have reported that organizational SUS and transformative leadership have positive influences on employees' strengths use (Ding and Lin, 2020; Ding et al., 2020; Van Woerkom et al., 2016b), the present research examined the role of team leaders'

SUS in facilitating their own strengths use for two reasons. First, the main task for team leaders is to support members' strengths use to achieve the team vision, emphasizing their managerial roles in "getting things done through people" (Knoontz, 1980). Thus, team leaders may prioritize SUS before using their own strengths. Second, individuals can learn by teaching or helping others, as educational research has suggested that teaching others produces a more enriching experience than learning by oneself (Duran, 2017; Fiorella and Mayer, 2014). Mentoring research has also indicated that mentors enhance their managerial skills through formal mentoring, which encourages mentors to reflect on their own skills (Eby and Lockwood, 2005). For these reasons, team leaders who support members' strengths are likely to be motivated to use their own strengths to achieve team vision. To ensure a causal relationship, SUS was measured one month before measuring strengths use in the present study. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H4. SUS has a positive effect on strengths use.*

With regard to the consequences of strengths use, past research found that strengths use enhanced vitality, positive affect (Wood et al., 2011), self-efficacy (Douglass and Duffy, 2015; Van Woerkom et al., 2016b; Van Woerkom and Meyers, 2019), work engagement (Bakker et al., 2019), the presence of calling (Allan and Duffy, 2014), helping behavior (Kong, and Ho, 2016), harmonious passion (Forest et al., 2012), and job performance (Van Woerkom et al., 2016a). These studies suggest that strengths use promotes employee well-being, positive behaviors, and performance.

Notably, through a literature review, Sedikides et al. (2017) indicated that individuals are authentic when they feel good or competent. This corresponds to the view of positive psychology, which suggests that authentic happiness comes from identifying and using one's

strengths (Peterson and Seligman, 2004; Seligman, 2002). It also corresponds to the broaden-and-build theory, which assumes that experiencing positive emotions enables individuals to build their personal and social resources (Fredrickson, 2001). Considering that individuals' strengths are considered to be part of their perceived true self, and that authenticity requires a high level of self-awareness (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Peus et al., 2012), employees who use their strengths tend to be authentic at work. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H5. Strengths use has a positive effect on work authenticity.*

Although past research has found that organizational SUS promotes employees' strengths (Ding et al., 2020; Van Woerkom et al., 2016b), work engagement (Keenan and Mostert, 2013; Meyers et al., 2020) and satisfaction with life (Meyers et al., 2019), few studies have explored the effect of leaders' SUS on their own authenticity at work. This study predicted that SUS may promote work authenticity because authenticity involves relational orientation, such as valuing openness and truthfulness in one's close relationship (Kernis, 2003). Michie and Gooty (2005) suggested that self-transcendent values, such as concern for others, are important determinants of authentic leadership. These arguments correspond to the empirical findings that mentors gain personal satisfaction through helping mentees (Allen et al., 1997). Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:

*H6. SUS has a positive effect on work authenticity.*

As per the hypotheses mentioned above, it is hypothesized that strengths use and SUS partially mediate the effect of perceived shared vision on work authenticity. These mediation effects can be substantiated by goal-setting theory, assuming that the use of task-relevant

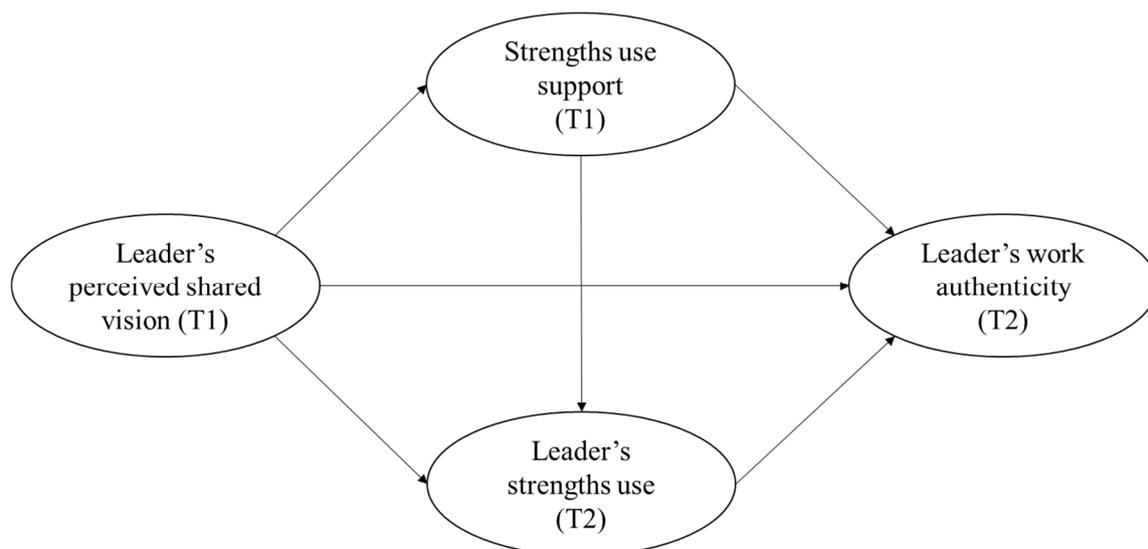
strategies mediates the relationship between goals and satisfaction with performance (Latham and Locke, 2007; Locke and Latham, 2002). Mediation effects can also be substantiated by broadening and building theory which postulates that positive emotions stimulate individuals to build personal and social resources (Fredrickson, 2001). Thus, the following mediation hypotheses were generated.

*H7a.* Perceived shared vision has a partial indirect effect on work authenticity through SUS.

*H7b.* Perceived shared vision has a partial indirect effect on work authenticity through strengths use.

*H7c.* Perceived shared vision has a partial indirect effect on work authenticity through SUS, and subsequently through strengths use.

Figure 1 shows the research model based on the proposed hypotheses.



**Figure 1.**

Research model.

## **Method**

### *Data collection and procedures*

The participants were middle managers of a global automotive component manufacturer in Japan. Middle managers were chosen because they are required to create visions and supervise their subordinates as team leaders. The author asked the firm to conduct a two-wave questionnaire survey in exchange for a feedback research report of diagnosing the organization; then, the human resource department agreed to implement the survey for middle managers. In the survey, perceived shared vision and SUS were measured at time 1, whereas strengths use and work authenticity were measured one month later at time 2, considering the causality of the research model. Of the 547 questionnaires delivered, 325 valid responses were collected after eliminating missing values (the response rate was 59.4%). Males comprised 96.3% of the sample. The high percentage of male managers is a typical feature of Japanese manufacturers. The respondents' age distribution was as follows: 30s (22.5%), 40s (59.1%), and 50s (18.5%), with an average tenure of 5.47 years ( $SD = 7.77$ ). The sample was drawn from sales (3.7%), administrative office (9.8%), engineering (48.6%), R&D (11.1%), production (16.9%), and others (9.9%).

### *Measures*

As the questionnaires were in Japanese, back-translation of the questionnaire items was performed based on Cascio (2012) to minimize discrepancies between the original and translated items. Perceived shared vision, strengths use support, and work authenticity were assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree), while strengths use was assessed using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never) to 5 (always).

Perceived shared vision (T1) was assessed using a five-item scale by Shippers et al.

(2008). Sample items are: “Team members are acquainted with the vision,” and “Team members agree on the team’s vision.”

SUS (T1) was measured using an eight-item scale of organizational support for strengths use developed by Keenan and Mostert (2013). Since SUS relates to support from a supervisor, “This organization” in the original scale was changed to “I” while “my strengths” was changed to “subordinate’s strengths” in the items. Sample items are: “I ensure that subordinates’ strengths are aligned with their job tasks,” and “I allow subordinates to use their talents.”

Strengths use (T2) was measured using a four-item scale developed by Van Woerkom et al. (2016b). As this study adopted an interval of one month, “This week” in the original scale was changed to “This month” in the items. Sample items are: “This month I have conducted tasks that suit my strengths well,” and “This month I have applied my personal qualities in my job.”

Work authenticity (T2) was assessed using a 4-item scale of authentic living developed by Van den Bosch and Taris (2014). Reis et al. (2016) adopted the same approach to measure work authenticity. Sample items are, “I behave in accordance with my values and beliefs in the workplace,” and “I am true to myself at work in most situations.”

As control variables, this study measured age (1 = 20s; 2 = 30s; 3 = 40s; 4 = 50s), gender (1 = female, 2 = male), and tenure (years of experience in the organization). Age and gender were included based on a previous study (Boyraz and Kuhl, 2015).

**Table 1**

Comparison of CFAs.

Models	$\chi^2$	<i>df</i>	$\Delta\chi^2$	CFI	SRMR	RMSEA
4-Factor model	235.16	183		.969	.043	.030
3-Factor model (Shared vision + SUS)	491.99	186	256.83 ***	.816	.086	.071
2-Factor model (Shared vision + SUS + Strengths use)	851.81	188	359.82 ***	.600	.108	.104
1-Factor model	926.81	189	75.00 ***	.556	.115	.110

Note. 4-factor model: each variable was loaded on a single factor; In the 3-factor model, shared vision and strengths use support (SUS) were combined; In the 2-factor model, shared vision, SUS, and strengths use were combined; In the 1-factor model: all variables were combined in a single factor.

**Table 2**

Descriptive statistics and correlations.

Variable	M	SD	CR	1	2	3	4	5	6	
1. Gender	1.96	0.19	-							
2. Age	2.96	0.64	-	.09						
3. Tenure	5.47	7.77	-	.04	.17 **					
4. Perceived shared vision (T1)	3.75	0.54	.88	.03	.01	.03	(.88)			
5. Strengths use support (T1)	3.89	0.40	.84	-.02	-.07	-.01	.43 ***	(.84)		
6. Strengths use (T2)	3.24	0.69	.91	-.04	-.17 **	-.07	.36 ***	.40 ***	(.91)	
7. Work authenticity (T2)	3.64	0.49	.74	-.11	-.04	.01	.30 ***	.38 **	.46 ***	(.73)

Note: Gender (1 = female; 2 = male). Age (1 = 20s; 2 = 30s; 3 = 40s; 4 = 50s). Tenure (years). \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . CR = Composite reliability. Cronbach's alphas are presented on the diagonal.

## Results

### Measurement validation

To assess scale reliability, Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability (CR) were evaluated. Table 2 shows that the alphas and CR of all constructs (.88 and .88 for perceived shared vision; .84 and .84 for SUS; .91 and .91 for strengths use; and .73 and .74 for work authenticity, respectively) were above 0.70 (Nunnally, 1978). Discriminant validity was evaluated by comparing the fit indices of the four-factor model with those of the alternative models. Table 1 shows that the fit indices indicated acceptable scores ( $\chi^2 = 235.16$ ,  $df = 183$ ,  $\chi^2/df = 1.29$ , CFI = .969, SRMR = .043, and RMSEA = .030). Additionally, the four-factor model fit the data

significantly better than the three-factor model, which combined shared vision and SUS, suggesting the discriminant validity of the constructs.

Common method variance was evaluated using Harman's single-factor method and partial correlation procedure (Lindell and Whitney, 2001). First, an exploratory factor analysis (maximum likelihood with no rotation) of all items generated six factors, in which the first factor comprised 27.1 % of the variance. Next, an item of the revised UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell et al., 1980) was used as the theoretically unrelated marker variable to partial out from the relationships between the studied constructs. The original correlation matrix between variables was found to be similar to that of the partial correlation matrix. These results suggest that the common method bias was not significant in this study.

### *Hypotheses testing*

To test the hypotheses, a structural equation model (SEM) was used. Control variables (gender, age, and tenure) were included to predict SUS, strengths use, and work authenticity. Table 3 shows that leaders' perceived shared vision was positively related to strengths use (.25,  $p < .01$ ) and SUS (.49,  $p < .001$ ), while it was not significantly related to work authenticity (.08, *ns*). Thus, Hypotheses 2 and 3 were supported, but Hypothesis 1 was not supported. Table 3 also shows that SUS was positively related to strengths use (.33,  $p < .001$ ) and work authenticity (.19,  $p < .05$ ), whereas strengths use was positively related to work authenticity (.45,  $p < .001$ ), supporting Hypotheses 4, 5, and 6.

To test the mediation hypotheses, bootstrap analyses were conducted using 2000 random samples. As shown in Table 4, the indirect effects of perceived shared vision on work authenticity through SUS (indirect effect = .09,  $p < .05$ ; 95% confidence interval [.03, .17]), and through strengths use (indirect effect = .11,  $p < .01$ ; 95% confidence interval [.05, .18]) were significant. It was also shown that the indirect effect of perceived shared vision on work

authenticity through SUS, and subsequently through strengths use was significant (indirect effect = .07,  $p < .01$ ; 95% confidence interval [.04, .11]). The results support Hypotheses 7a, 7b, and 7c.

**Table 3**

Results of SEM.

Structural path		Standardized estimate	<i>t-value</i>
Perceived vision sharing	=> Strengths use support	.49	7.58 ***
Perceived vision sharing	=> Strengths use	.25	3.34 **
Strengths use support	=> Strengths use	.33	4.00 ***
Perceived vision sharing	=> Work authenticity	.08	1.04
Strengths use support	=> Work authenticity	.19	2.34 *
Strengths use	=> Work authenticity	.45	6.71 ***
<i>Control variables</i>			
Gender	=> Strengths use support	-.04	-.72
Age	=> Strengths use support	-.07	-1.44
Tenure	=> Strengths use support	-.01	-.24
Gender	=> Strengths use	-.02	-.52
Age	=> Strengths use	-.13	-2.17 *
Tenure	=> Strengths use	-.04	-.73
Gender	=> Work authenticity	-.11	-1.92
Age	=> Work authenticity	.03	.61
Tenure	=> Work authenticity	.03	.62

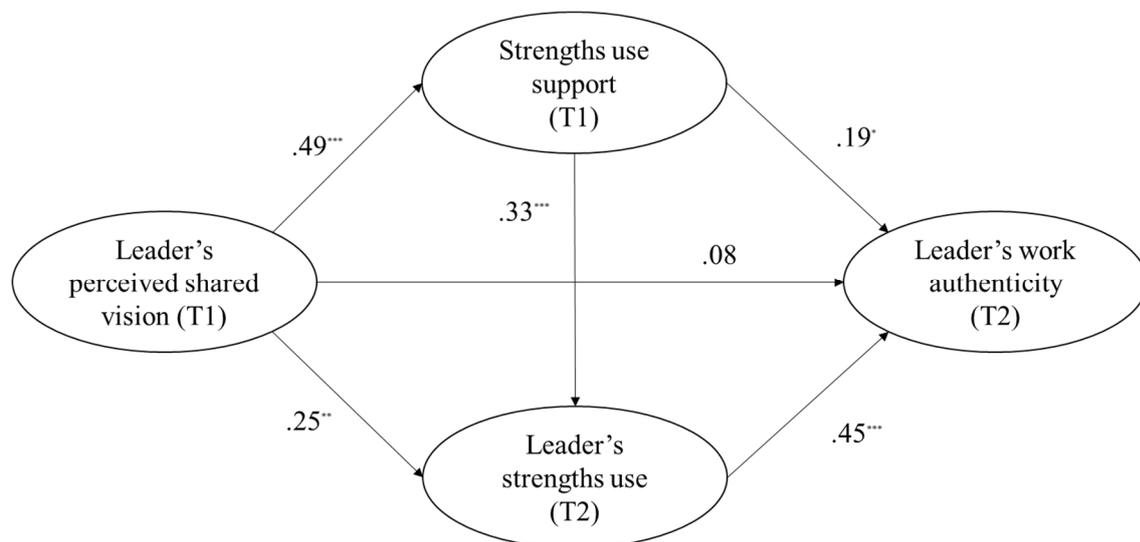
Note: \*  $p < .05$ ; \*\*  $p < .01$ ; \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . CFI = .96; SRMR = .042; RMSEA = .040.

**Table 4**

Results of bootstrapping analyses.

Indirect effects	Estimate	SE	<i>p</i>	corrected 95% CI		Hypothesis
				Lower	Upper	
PSV => SUS => Work authenticity	0.09	0.04	*	0.03	0.17	H7a
PSV => Strength use => Work authenticity	0.11	0.04	**	0.05	0.18	H7b
PSV => SUS => Strengths use => Work authenticity	0.07	0.02	**	0.04	0.11	H7c

Note: PSV = perceived shared vision. SUS = strengths use support. Standardized estimates are reported. Bootstrap sample size = 2000. \* $p < .05$ ; \*\* $p < .01$ .

**Figure 2.**

Summary of SEM results.

## Discussion

In addition to positive psychology (Peterson and Seligman, 2004; Seligman, 2002, 2019; Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), authenticity has attracted attention in various fields (Cha et al., 2019; Lehman et al., 2019), although few studies have investigated the antecedents of authenticity in the organizational context (Hewlin et al., 2020). Drawing on goal-setting

theory (Latham and Locke, 2007; Locke and Latham, 2002) and broaden and build theory (Fredrickson, 2001), this study provides initial evidence that team leaders can enhance their authenticity at work by sharing team visions mediated through strengths use within the team.

### *Theoretical implications*

The present study has several theoretical implications. First, the results show that leaders' perceived shared vision enhances work authenticity, mediated through SUS or strengths use. As goal-setting theory suggests (Latham and Locke, 2007; Locke and Latham, 2002), shared goals or visions may lead to satisfaction with performance by directing efforts and strategies within a team. Since the strengths of leaders and members can be regarded as parts of their "true-selves" (Sedikides et al., 2017), any activated positive emotions generated by such strengths may broaden leaders' personal and social resources (Fredrickson, 2001), which results in authenticity at work. Although past research has reported the positive effects of communicated or shared vision on members' attitudes (Ryu, 2015), team reflexivity (Shippers et al., 2008), and organizational performance (Baum and Locke, 2004; Baum et al., 1998; Jing et al., 2014), this study is the first to show that shared vision plays a triggering role in boosting leaders' work authenticity by utilizing strengths within the team.

Second, it was found that leaders' authenticity was enhanced not only by using their strengths but also by supporting team members' strengths. Notably, the influence of SUS on leaders' work authenticity has not been examined in previous research. The results may be due to the characteristics of authenticity, which include the value of open and truthful relationships with others (Kernis, 2003; Michie and Gooty, 2005). As team leaders who are responsible for getting things done through others (Knoontz, 1980), managers are likely to be authentic when they help subordinates use their strengths because such support leads to a trustworthy relationship for achieving shared team vision. The findings suggest that strengths-based

appraisal and goal setting (Bouskila-Yam and Kluger, 2011; Kluger and Nir, 2010) can benefit both subordinates and leaders. The present research contributes to the literature on authenticity by demonstrating the relational antecedents of work authenticity.

Third, the findings indicate that SUS promoted the use of leaders' strengths, which resulted in higher work authenticity. Supporting members' strengths use may enable leaders to use their own strengths because individuals can reflect on their knowledge and skills by teaching and mentoring others (Duran, 2017; Fiorella and Mayer, 2014). Specifically, leaders can understand the importance of using their own strengths by helping subordinates use their strengths to achieve shared vision, as suggested by mentoring research (Eby and Lockwood, 2005). The reverse causal relationship, that is, from strengths use then SUS, may also be possible, yet it is inappropriate to test the alternative model since SUS was measured one month before measuring strengths use in this study. While past studies reported the positive effect of organizational SUS on employees' strengths use (Ding et al., 2020; Van Woerkom et al., 2016b), the present study contributes to the literature by finding that leaders come to use their strengths by identifying "learning through supporting" effect in a strengths-based approach.

Fourth, contrary to the hypothesis, there was no direct effect of leaders' perceived shared vision on work authenticity. The results indicate that perceived share vision did not enhance leaders' work authenticity without behavioral mediators, such as SUS or strengths use. As authenticity refers to the extent to which individuals act in accordance with their values, beliefs, and characteristics (Harter, 2002; Metin et al., 2016), shared vision needs to be linked to leaders' behaviors to enhance their authenticity. The findings correspond to Smullenbroek et al. (2017) reporting that employees' value congruent behavior enhanced their state authenticity. This study identifies how perceived shared vision promotes leaders' authenticity in a strengths-based approach.

### *Practical Implications*

This study has several practical implications. First, organizations need to be aware that team leaders can be authentic at work by sharing visions within the team, yet shared vision does not automatically enhance leaders' work authenticity. Team leaders need to utilize the strengths of both themselves and their members to achieve the visions. When discussing and sharing visions within a team, leaders must identify members' strengths that are useful for realizing the visions and encourage members to make use of their strengths. The development of visioning programs (O'Connell et al., 2011) is recommended so that participants learn how to share visions and achieve them by using members' strengths. Such programs may be beneficial for improving not only members', but also leaders' authenticity.

Second, HR managers must understand that team leaders tend to feel their true selves by helping them use their strengths. To support team members' strengths, organizations may adopt strengths-based performance appraisals or interviews, in which managers encourage subordinates to identify and use their strengths at work (Bouskila-Yam and Kluger, 2011; Kluger and Nir, 2010). Considering that authentic leaders tend to be concerned about developing followers' strengths (Ilies et al., 2005), a strengths-based approach can also be an effective tool for authentic leadership development.

Third, HR managers need to be aware that team leaders use their strengths more frequently when they support members' strengths. Similar mechanisms, such as "learning by teaching" (Duran, 2017) or "learning by mentoring" (Eby and Lockwood, 2005) can be seen in educational or organizational contexts. That is, supporting, teaching, and helping others to learn are the best ways to learn something. Therefore, HR managers need to emphasize the mutual learning benefits in developing strengths-based support programs, which may motivate both leaders and followers to be engaged in the programs, and hence enhance leaders' authenticity at work.

### *Limitations and future research*

Some limitations of this study should be discussed when interpreting the findings. First, the research model of this study regarded SUS as an antecedent of strengths use, while the reverse causal effect is possible, suggesting that team leaders who use their strengths may understand the importance of strengths use, and then they are likely to help team members use their strengths. Although it is not appropriate to test the alternative model, as SUS was assessed before assessing strengths use in this study, future research needs to test the effect of strengths use on SUS using longitudinal survey data.

Second, this study examined the influence of perceived shared vision on SUS at the individual level using data from a single source. The findings are considered important in terms of the psychological mechanism of how leaders' perception of shared vision promotes supporting behaviors for strengths use, yet it is also necessary to investigate how shared vision at the team level affects SUS perceived by team members. Thus, multi-level analyses must be performed using survey data that includes both team leaders and members in the future.

Third, common method variance was assessed using Harman's single-factor method and partial correlation procedure (Lindell and Whitney, 2001) in this study. It may be desirable to use more advanced methods such as the CFA marker technique (Williams et al., 2010) to evaluate common method variance in future research.

Fourth, the data of this study were mainly collected from male middle managers. To improve the generalizability of the current conclusion, future research needs to test the model using data collected from a more gender-balanced sample or senior managers.

Finally, the sample was managers of a large-scale auto component manufacturer in Japan. Considering that Japan is believed to have a "shame culture" (Benedict, 1946), it is notable to find the positive influence of strengths use on work authenticity in this study.

Although previous studies have reported that state authenticity is similar among different cultures (Slabu et al., 2014), it is possible that the characteristics of industry, position, or national culture might affect the results. Therefore, future research needs to replicate the findings of the present study using data from different industries, occupations, positions, and cultures.

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