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LEADING AUTHENTICALLY, PERFORMING BETTER: UNPACKING THE TALENT MANAGEMENT MECHANISM AND THE ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE IN THE PUBLIC SECTOR

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ABSTRACT

Public sector institutions always require effective leadership and human resource expertise to enhance organizational outcomes. While Authentic Leadership (AL) has been linked to positive organizational outcomes, the mechanisms and contextual factors that explain how leadership is related to performance in the public sector have received less attention. The study examines the mediating role of Talent Management (TM) between AL and Organizational Performance (OP). Furthermore, the study considers the moderating role of the Organizational Culture (OC) for the relationship between AL and OP. The research design used was quantitative, explanatory and cross sectional. Data were collected from 159 administrative officials working in 39 government departments of government of Balochistan, Pakistan through a structured questionnaire. The proposed model was tested with Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) in SmartPLS.4. The analysis examined the direct relationships, mediation effects, moderation effects and moderated mediation relationships between AL, TM, OC and OP. The results indicated that there was a positive relationship between AL, TM and OP. Authentic Leadership influences OP through the adoption of effective TM practices. Talent Management plays a significant mediating role in the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational performance. In addition, the impact of AL on TM is strengthened by the OC, i.e. AL practices are more effective in a supportive cultural environment. The findings of the moderated mediation also show that the indirect effect of AL on OP via TM is higher when the OC provides a supportive environment. This study adds to the leadership and public sector management literature by bringing together AL, TM, and OC in a single moderated mediation model. The findings imply that improving public sector performance requires effective leadership, development of human resource capabilities and supportive organizational environments. The study has practical implications for government institutions and higher officials interested in improving leadership qualities, TM systems, and organizational effectiveness.

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Introduction

Public organizations implement government policies and provide services to the general population. The way these services are performed influences how they are delivered. But many public sector organizations still find it hard to accomplish their work better. This problem is more serious in underdeveloped nations where inadequate management, lack of resources and poor utilization of personnel talents are affecting the performance (World Bank, 2023; UNDP, 2025). Rules and administrative systems may alter, but that is not enough. Leadership, the skills of the employees and working circumstances are also important to improve the performance of an organization.

Leadership has been widely regarded as a critical factor in the effectiveness of organizations, as leaders impact organizational direction, employee engagement, and smoothly ensure decision-making processes and assess internal capabilities (Yukl, 2013; Northouse, 2022). Among modern leadership theories, Authentic Leadership (AL) is of great research interest because of its focus on four dimensions: (SA) Self Awareness, (RT) Relational Transparency, (UP) Unbiased Processing and (AB) Authentic Behavior (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Walumbwa et al., 2008). Moreover, authentic leaders develop trust-based and transparent relationships that could lead to positive employee attitudes and behaviors in organizations (Walumbwa et al., 2008; Gardner et al., 2011).

Earlier research findings have demonstrated that AL have positive relationship with employee engagement, psychological safety, organizational commitment, and proactive conduct. However, the impact of AL on the general Organizational Performance (OP), especially in the public sector, deserves further attention (Liu et al., 2018). Recent literature also explored the relationship of AL with employee motivation and performance. Schwarz et al. (2020) found that leadership can improve public service motivation and job performance in public organizations. Similarly, Kyambade et al. (2024) explained that AL could motivate and improve the performance of public sector organizations personnel. Moreover, the research finding of Ece and Erkmen (2026) also showed that supportive Organizational Culture (OC) mediates the relationship between AL and OP. The results for AL and OP indicate that leadership alone is insufficient to improve employee performance. Leadership also moderates the relationship between the work environment and employee performance.

One of the explanations of AL on OP is through Talent Management (TM). Talent management (TM) refers to the practices organizations use to attract, develop, engaged, and retain employees who have the skills and knowledge needed to achieve organizational goals. (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Cappelli, 2008). From the human-resource perspective, people are considered strategic resources to the business after their knowledge and abilities are developed effectively and linked with the institutional objectives (Barney, 1991). Thus, real leaders affect OP not alone via their own behaviors but also by setting conditions for effective talent-management techniques. While previous studies have examined leadership and TM separately (Avolio et al., 2009; Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2013: Collings and Mellahi, 2009;), there is a lack of attention to understanding TM as a means of how AL contributes to OP.

Recent research studies in the public sector have suggested that outcome of TM is largely dependent on organizational support and managerial engagement. Kravariti et al. (2023) narrated that line-managerial and organizational support are basic keys to the successful implementation of TM in public organizations. Luna Arocas and Lara (2020) also found that approaches to TM increase service performance through employee-related processes. The findings indicate that leadership behavior and TM systems should be considered together in determining OP.

Organizational Culture (OC) is another significant contributor to differences in leadership effectiveness. In essence, OC refers to the "set of shared beliefs, assumptions and expectations about behavior that influence the ways members interpret situations and respond to organizational practices" (Schein, 2017). A culture that fosters trust, learning, cooperation and employee involvement may increase leaders' ability to apply effective talent-management techniques (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Denison, 1990). In contrast, leadership activities are less likely to be effective in organizational cultures that are not open and developmental. Hence, corporate culture may be an important boundary condition that influences when AL is more likely to be transformed into effective TM.

Despite growing scholarly interest in AL, TM, and OC, several gaps remain in the existing literature. Research on leadership, TM and OP in the public sector environment is increasing (Kravariti et al., 2023; Kyambade et al., 2024) but there are big theoretical and contextual gaps. These interactions have been studied separately in previous works. Less consideration has been paid to the impact of leadership on OP via TM approaches across cultures.

Furthermore, there is still very little evidence from developing country public sector settings. First, some of the previous studies have been focused on employee-level performance such as, job commitment, job satisfaction, job engagement, and individual performance, but very few studies have explored OP as a broader institutional outcome (Gardner et al., 2011;Walumbwa et al., 2008). Second, the way leadership behavior influences organizational outcomes has been generally approached from a restricted perspective (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Ali et al., 2022; Shah et al., 2024). This is because leadership, TM and OC are considered as different variables. Third, there is no data available on public sector organizations of emerging countries particularly, when we analyze the provincial government of Pakistan.

Recently, research studies have focused on the importance of the organizational context for the influence of leadership and overall organizational management strategies on organizational outcomes. The organizational setting influences the effectiveness of performance-management method and its contribution to organizational results (Gomes and Mendes, 2023). Similarly, Kim (2025) explored the outcome of OC on public organizational effectiveness, though the magnitude of the relationship varies in institutional settings. The findings indicate that an understanding of leadership behaviors is incomplete without the consideration of the cultural context in which they are practiced.

These interactions are explored within the significant backdrop of the Balochistan public sector organizations. The efficacy of administration in government Departments depends largely on the quality of leadership, the skill of the employees and the coordination across the many institutional divisions. Recognizing the importance of leadership practices for organizational success through talent-management processes could be effective for boosting public sector management.

To address these gaps in the literature, this study proposes and assesses a moderated mediation model in which AL enhances OP through TM, while OC moderates the relationship between AL and TM. This paper adds three co9ntributions to the existing literature. First, it describes how AL can impact company performance through TM as an intermediary process. Second, it elaborates the OC as a contextual variable that influences the effectiveness of actual leadership. Third, it contributes and will add to the body of understanding of public sector organizations by providing real data from government departments of Balochistan, Pakistan. This study thus aims to:

1. To investigate the relationship between AL and TM.
2. Investigate the association between TM and organizational achievement.
3. The impact of AL on organizational effectiveness: An examination.
4. To examine the mediating effect of TM between AL and OP.
5. This study will also examine the that how OC will result as moderating variable between AL and TM?
6. Finally, the study develops an integrated moderated mediation model to examine the role of OC in the relationships between AL and OP through TM.

Problem Statement

Enhancing OP in the public sector remains a major concern. In developing countries, government departments are expected to increase accountability, administrative effectiveness and the quality of service delivery. More generally, Pakistan has continued to face challenges concerning the effectiveness of its governance and institutional capacities. Pakistan ranked 168 out of 193 countries in the HDI known as Human Development Index (U.N Development Program, 2025). Pakistan was scored 28 out of 100 on Transparency International's (2026) Corruption Perceptions Index.

Though they do not evaluate the performance of individual government departments, these indicators give a sense of broader institutional challenges and point to the need to strengthen administrative capacity, improve leadership effectiveness and refine human-resource practices in public organizations

Previous research has indicated that AL, TM and OC are important predictors of organizational outcomes. However, it remains unclear how their combined contribution can explain performance in the public sector. Recent studies like Kyambade et al, (2024) and Ece & Erkmen (2026) confirmed that AL has positive significant with performance related outcomes. The implication of TM strategies for service performance has been studies in resurch finding of Luna-Arocas & Lara, (2020); Kravariti

et al., (2023) Kyambade et al., (2024) and Ece & Erkmen, (2026) and explained the impact of TM strategies to service performance. However, there is inadequate study on how AL contributes to OP via TM and under what organizational contexts this relationship gets stronger. In particular, evidence from public-sector institutions in Pakistan at the provincial level is scarce. Hence, the present study investigated the mediating effect of TM in the relationship of authentic leadership and perceived OP vs OC as the moderator among administrative officials of the Government of Balochistan.

Literature Review

Authentic Leadership and Organizational Performance

Leadership plays a vital role in OP. Leaders influence organizational goals and strategies, employee behavior, and the development of workplace skills (Yukl, 2013; Northouse, 2022). Leadership is especially important in the public sector, where managers function within formal institutions but are expected to coordinate personnel, implement policies, and reach institutional goals. AL has emerged as a key leadership perspective focusing on four characteristics, namely "self awareness, relational transparency, unbiased processing and authentic behavior" (Walumbwa et al., 2008; Avolio & Gardner, 2005). AL is distinctive from other approaches of leadership in its inhibited characteristics that it prioritizes authentic relationships and moral consistency between leaders and followers, instead of influence and trade processes.

Previous studies in the leadership literature have generally found a positive relationship between AL and OP. These studies further narrated that effective leaders foster climates of trust and openness that can lead to higher levels of staff commitment, engagement and discretionary effort (Gardner et al., 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2008). However, the relationships are not directly established, but this relationship is mediated by the underlying psychological and organizational mechanisms between AL and performance outcomes (Zhang et al., 2022).

Contemporary research increasingly suggests the importance of leadership for public sector effectiveness. Positive associations of distinct public leadership practices with public-service job performance and motivation of employees were found by Schwarz et al. (2020). Likewise, Kyambade et al. (2024) examined AL and OP of public officials and found that motivation is an important explanatory mechanism. In the recent study, AL had a positive association with supportive OC, which had an association with task performance (Ece and Erkmen, 2026) but the relationship between AL and OP was not statistically significant. The findings of research study recommended that the correlation between leadership and performance may be contingent on the organizational and employee processes through which the leadership is delivered. It is a good platform to study the AL regarding TM and OC.

But there is to be a big difference between the employees' performance and the performance of the organization. Whereas most research focuses on individual attitudes and actions, OP is a more general outcome that reflects the aggregate effectiveness of organizational procedures and

capacities. In the public sector, the performance of the organization is a function of individual effort and a function of how leadership techniques are translated into organizational processes and collective action. Hence, the present study is an attempt to investigate the effect of AL on OP within the public sector of Balochistan.

H1: AL has a positive relationship with OP in public-sector organizations in Balochistan.

Authentic Leadership and Talent Management

Organizations increasingly recognize the importance of attracting, developing, and retaining skilled employees to maintain their performance. Talent Management (TM) is a strategic human resource management approach and it is present when the employees' competencies are aligned with the objectives of the organization (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Cappelli, 2008). Leadership is a significant factor in translating people management practices into effective organizational capabilities (Collings & Mellahi, 2009; Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007). Although traditional HR systems provide a framework for TM, it is the leaders who influence how employees experience and apply these practices (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007). Transparent, fair, and supportive leaders of employee development create the conditions for effective exploitation of talent (Walumbwa et al., 2008; Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007). Seen from this perspective, AL can be an important foundation for TM. Authentic leaders recognize employees' abilities and support their development through learning opportunities and trusting relationships. Such practices can improve processes related to employee development, engagement and retention.

Moreover, existing public-sector research indicates that management support is essential for translating talent-management policies into practical applications. Line managers typically serve as the link between corporate talent plans and the employee experience, influencing the successful delivery of development and retention measures (Gallardo-Gallardo et al., 2020; Kravariti et al., 2023). However, there is limited research on AL especially as an antecedent of TM. Thus, this study shows that real leadership helps in better TM practices.

H2: AL has a positive relationship with TM in the public sector of Balochistan.

Talent Management and Organizational Performance

Talent management is now viewed as an important organizational practice rather than only a responsibility of the human resource department. If businesses implement strong recruitment, development, engagement and retention processes, they can build human capital that promotes long-term performance (Barney, 1991; Collings & Mellahi, 2009). According to the resource based view (RBV) theory findings, firms can establish sustainable competitive advantages by developing internal resources that are valued and hard to copy. Resources are represented by employees' knowledge, skills and capacities, provided that businesses have adequate processes to develop and retain them (Barney, 1991).

TM is particularly important in public institutions, where employees are responsible for delivering public services and implementing government policies. The literature on public sector people management highlights that organizational practices, leadership interactions, and employee development procedures influence public employee performance and organizational effectiveness (Ali et al., 2021).

Also TM is vital in boosting performance in public enterprises. Organizational commitment acts as a mediator between TM and the service performance of local government personnel (Luna-Arocas and Lara, 2020). Furthermore, Kravariti et al. (2023) indicated that organizational and managerial support is important for the effectiveness of TM strategies in the public sector. The results indicate that TM is not an isolated phenomenon. Employee attitudes and management backing are equally important. Drawing on these studies, the present study investigates the mediating role of TM in the relationship between AL and OP in the government departments.

Other studies have also found a positive association between TM and OP. Kravariti et al. (2023) highlighted that the development of employees and the assistance of managers in public entities can support to excel overall organizational outcomes. Thus, the present study indicates a correlation between improved personnel management methods and higher OP.

H3: TM has a positive relationship with OP in the public sector of Balochistan.

Mediating Role of Talent Management

Although previous research has linked AL with organizational success, the processes behind this relationship require further investigation. However, leadership per se does not necessarily lead to better organizational results as the success of leadership also depends on how organizational practices are enacted and how employees respond to them. Leaders play a key part in developing these behaviors and in creating a work climate that facilitates employee development and success (Purcell & Hutchinson, 2007; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Collings & Mellahi, (2009) and Kravariti et al., (2023) have narrated that the relationship between AL and organizational achievement may be due to TM. Authentic leaders that exhibit justice, honesty and caring for employees may promote behaviors that enhance employee development, motivation and retention. Providing employees with opportunities to improve their competencies and utilize their skills effectively could result in a more positive contribution to the OP. Talent Management and managerial support have been identified as important contributors to enhancing individual and organizational outcomes. Thus, TM can be a bridge between real leadership and success in organizations.

The Resource Based View provides a theoretical foundation for consideration the role of TM in this relationship. Barney (1991) argued that sustainable competitive advantage can result from organizational resources and capabilities. AL can help develop the conditions in which employees

can develop their abilities, and TM offers practices for such development and effective use of those abilities. This finding is consistent with the work of Collings and Mellahi (2009) who emphasized the strategic importance of TM in achieving organizational outcomes.

This relationship deserves more attention in the public sector organizations where the capabilities of employees are critical for policy implementation and public service delivery. AL can improve OP by supporting TM practices that allow employees to perform their responsibilities well and develop themselves. With these arguments in mind, the present study explored the mediating role of TM between AL and OP in the public sector organizations of Balochistan, Pakistan.

H4: TM mediates the relationship between AL and OP in public sector organizations in Balochistan, Pakistan.

Moderating Role of Organizational Culture

Leadership practices may produce different outcomes depending on the organizational environment. The workplace environment can influence how employees respond to leadership decisions and organizational initiatives. Organizational Culture (OC) is a vital factor in this process, as it denotes "the beliefs, shared values and assumptions that affect the behavior and interactions of individuals within the organization" (Schein & Schein, 2017). In public sector companies, the OC can both enable and constrain the effectiveness of leadership techniques, because much of the day-to-day work is dictated by existing processes and administrative traditions (Dull, 2010).

In a supportive workplace culture, real leaders might have more opportunities to identify and develop employee potential. It could become easier for leaders to put procedures in place that help attract, develop, engage and retain talent where trust, collaboration, open communication and learning are promoted. In another study, Kravariti et al. (2023) narrated the significance of organizational and managerial support for TM in the public sector. The findings further suggest that the effectiveness of TM strategies is heavily depends upon the context in which they are implemented and executed.

The literature has provided evidence that effect of the corporate culture may differ from institution to institution. Xanthopoulou et al. (2022) found that there is not at all any consistent positive relationship between cultural strength and OP in Greek public sector organizations. Although their study did not focus on the relationship between AL and TM, it suggests that a positive corporate culture does not always lead to better results. Maybe what matters is whether the dominant cultural values in the society support the practices that leaders are trying to affect. Organizational Culture (OC) also affects the translation of leadership and management approaches into organizational outcomes.

Gomes and Mendes (2023) researched these management strategies in their institutional context by analyzing the relationship between organizational environment, performance management

techniques and OP. In addition, Kim (2025) observed a positive association between group culture and organizational effectiveness in Korean public organizations. The findings suggest that organizational conditions may affect the operation of management techniques in public organizations. Therefore, this study proposes the moderating influence of OC between AL and TM. In other words, an enriched supportive culture is likely to improve the relationship.

Based on these results, this study argues that the relationship between AL and TM is stronger when there is a supportive OC. Authentic leaders may be more effective in developing staff and implementing TM techniques in open, fair, cooperative and professionally developed corporate environments.

H5: OC moderates the relationship between AL and TM in public sector organizations of Balochistan.

Moderated Mediation Framework

By employing a moderated mediation model, this study further examines the relationships among TM, AL, and OP. The study also investigates the role of OC in this relationship. Conditions that support the development of authentic leaders can help in the retention of skilled employees and in improving their performance. TM is critical to organizational effectiveness (Collings and Mellahi 2009). Kravariti et al. (2023) emphasized the need for organizational and administrative support in public institutions as well. But leadership may not work the same way in every company. Employees' values, attitudes and work habits can affect how they respond to leadership (Schein & Schein, 2017). This positive work environment may help managers to develop people and improve practices in TM. Dull (2010) also addressed the relationship between leadership and OC within the framework of public administration. The results show that the OC could moderate the effects of leadership on TM and OP.

The extant studies have reported inconsistent findings on the linkage between AL and OP. Kyambade et al. (2024) explored the mediating effect of motivation between AL and public sector employees OP. However, Ece and Erkmen (2026) found no statistically significant direct effect of AL on task performance. But they found a significant indirect link through a supportive OC. These differences might be due to organizational contexts, performance measurements and other contextual factors. This study indicated that TM is an important factor in explaining the relationship between AL and organizational achievement. It also found significant direct relationship between AL and perceived OP. The results also show the importance of TM techniques and OC in public organizations.

Rasul et al., (2021) demonstrated the link between management methods and work completion in Ghana's public service. However, these associations varied by task clarity and management practice type. Gomes and Mendes (2023) also researched the relationship between organizational conditions, performance management and organizational results. The present investigation supports this line of

inquiry. The result confirms a significant positive correlation between TM and OP. The results further found that OC enhances the relationship between AL and TM. The findings stress the need to evaluate personnel development, leadership and OC concurrently when analyzing the performance of public enterprises.

H6: OC positively moderates the indirect relationship between AL and OP through TM in public sector organizations of Balochistan.

Research Gap and Contribution

Prior research has gathered useful knowledge on AL, TM and OC. However, there are some limits. First, a lot of the current research on leadership is at the human level of outcomes, and less research is on how leadership affects the organizational level of outcomes. Second, despite increased attention on TM, limited research has examined it as a mechanism to account for the effects of AL on OP. Third, literature on public sector organizations in developing countries is still scarce, particularly when considering a country like Pakistan. Most studies focus on private sector enterprises or in developed country settings.

To address these research gaps, the present study examines a moderated mediation model using data from government departments in Balochistan, Pakistan. It adds value by explaining whether AL is important for OP and how and under what conditions the relationship takes place.

Theoretical Foundation

This study is anchored in the complementary theoretical perspective of the Resource Based View theory. It offers a valuable account of how AL impacts OP through TM and how OC impacts this process.

According to the RBV theory, firms can achieve sustainable competitive advantages by developing valuable and inimitable internal resources and competencies (Barney, 1991). As opposed to external elements, which may be easily copied, internal skills like leadership quality, employee knowledge, and organizational processes are strategic resources for long-term effectiveness.

The study is based on RBV to understand AL and TM as organizational competencies. Authentic Leadership (AL) is a vital leadership asset that may build trust, enable ethical decisions, and foster employee development. However, leadership alone may only contribute to OP if it is translated into effective organizational practices. TM symbolizes this transformation process through the capacity of companies to attract, develop, engage and retain employees having competencies that support institutional objectives.

Conceptual Model of the Study

This study presents an integrated conceptual model developed from theoretical justifications and empirical evidence to explain the relationship between AL, TM, OC and OP. The notion implies that AL is a major antecedent of TM and OP. AL is expected to impact OP through the mediation of TM. Further, OC is also regarded as a boundary condition that can strengthen the relationship between authentic leadership and TM via the development of a supportive environment for employees' development and organizational practices. The proposed model explains how public-sector organizations perform by integrating leadership behavior, human-resource competence and organizational context. The conceptual model is shown in the figure 1 and figure 2.



Figure 1. Conceptual Model of the Study

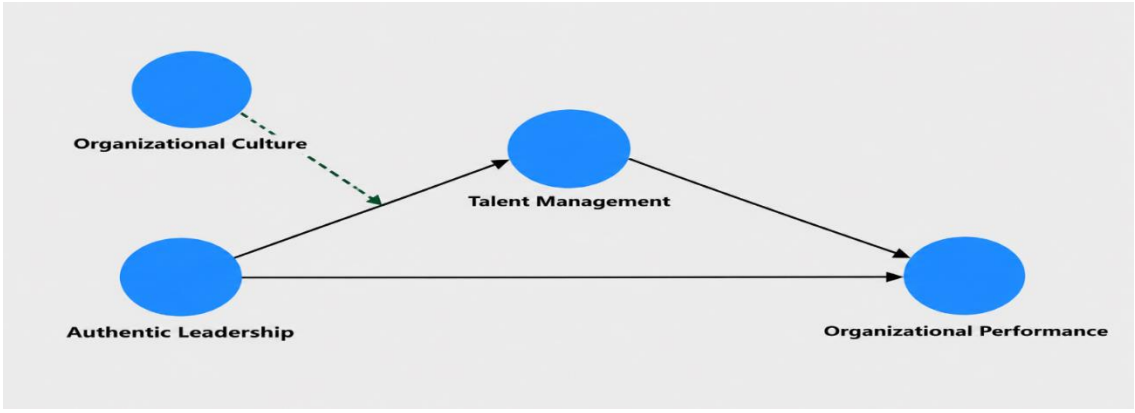


Figure 2. Conceptual Model of the Study

The conceptual model illustrates the proposed relationships among AL, TM, OC, and OP. The model suggests that AL influences OP directly and indirectly through TM. Talent management acts as a mediating mechanism, while OC is proposed as a moderating factor that strengthens the relationship between AL and talent-management practices.

Research Methodology

The present study adopted a quantitative research design and aimed to examine and discover the relationships among AL, TM, OC, and OP in the public sector setting. The methodology was designed to validate the proposed theoretical model and to study the direct, indirect, mediating and moderating relationships between the study variables.

The research adopted a positivist philosophical approach, which views social phenomena as measurable and suitable for systematic investigation using objective observations and quantitative methods (Saunders et al., 2019). The study used an explanatory cross sectional quantitative and deductive approach to test the theoretically derived hypotheses about the relationships between AL, TM, OC and OP.

The study was conducted within the Government of Balochistan covering 38 departments working across provincial government departments working under the umbrella of the government of Balochistan and listed on the website www.balochistan.gov.pk. The public-sector context was chosen because OP in government institutions depends on leadership practices, employee capability development, and effective administrative processes.

The population of the study was administrative officials engaged in leadership responsibilities, policy implementation, management decisions and activities related to OP. The respondents were selected based on their roles and responsibilities since the study was performed among officials with knowledge of organizational practices.

Stratified purposive was the sampling technique. This strategy helped ensure representation from several government departments in the selection of individuals with the right expertise and understanding of leadership, TM, and OP issues.

A priori power analysis was performed in to determine the sample size required to test the proposed moderating effect using G-Power 3.1 The test was performed with an F-test (linear multiple regression) with fixed model (R^2 increase). For the current study, the effect size used in sampling size analysis f^2 is 0.05 as we considered a modest interaction effect possible. For the analysis, it was calculated that a minimum sample of 159 respondents would be needed, at $\alpha = 0.05$, with a power of 0.80, with one predictor being tested (the AL × OC interaction) and three predictors in the full model. Thus, data were gathered from 159 administrative officials with leadership responsibilities, who were engaged in TM approaches and accountable for the OP in government departments.

Primary data were collected by a already developed questionnaire with given measurement scales that have been validated previously in well recognized research studies. The questionnaire was constructed based on previous measuring scales of AL (Kernis & Goldman, 2006), OC (Van den Berg & Wilderom, 2004), OP (Northcott & Taulapapa, 2012), and TM (Mujtaba et al., 2022). Data were acquired from the qualified government officials using a self administered questionnaire. To make participation easier and increase accessibility, the questionnaire was distributed through the physical and online Google Forms platform.

Data Analysis and results

The data were analyzed using SmartPLS 4, employing Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM). This technique was selected because it is suitable for examining complex models involving multiple constructs and assessing direct, mediating, moderating, and moderated mediation effects.

The analysis proceeded in two stages. In the first stage, the measurement model was evaluated to establish the reliability and validity of the constructs. This assessment covered indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, convergent validity, and discriminant validity.

In the second stage, the structural model was examined to evaluate the proposed hypotheses. The assessment included path coefficients, effect sizes (f^2), the coefficient of determination (R^2), and predictive relevance (Q^2 predict). The statistical significance of the hypothesized relationships was determined through bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples.

We conducted a mediation analysis to test for the mediating effect of TM on the relationship between AL and OP. The moderating role of OC was tested by the interaction between AL and OC on TM. Finally, the conditional indirect effect was tested to test the proposed moderated mediation model.

Respondent Profile

The demographic profile of the respondents was analyzed to determine the characteristics of the study participants. The majority of the respondents were males (84.9%) with 15.1% females of the sample. Regarding educational background, most of the respondents had a Master's degree (78.6%), indicating that the sample was highly qualified. In terms of professional experience, about two-thirds of the participants had 11-20 years of experience (66.0%) indicating that the respondents had considerable exposure to administrative processes and organizational practices.

Furthermore, most of the respondents were holding administrative (44.0%) and managerial (37.7%) positions, and most of them were from senior government grades (BPS-18, BPS-19 and BPS-20). These characteristics suggest that the participants were appropriate for assessing leadership practices, TM, OC, and perceived OP.

Table 1. Sociodemographic Composition of the Study Sample

Demographic Variable	Classification	n	%
Gender	Male	135	84.90
	Female	24	15.10
Age (years)	Less than 30	75	47.20
	31 to 40	49	30.92
	41 plus	35	22.00
Qualification	Master	125	78.60
	MPhil	15	9.40
	PhD/Other	19	12.00
Experience (years)	6 to 10	40	25.20
	11 to 20	105	66.0
	21plus	14	8.80
Responsibility	Administrative	70	44.00
	Managerial	60	37.70
	Policy/Technical	29	18.20

Measurement Model Assessment

The measurement model was initially evaluated to determine whether the study constructs demonstrated satisfactory reliability and validity. The evaluation focused on the strength of individual indicators, their outer loadings, the consistency of the measurement scales, and the xtent to which the indicators adequately represented their respective constructs.

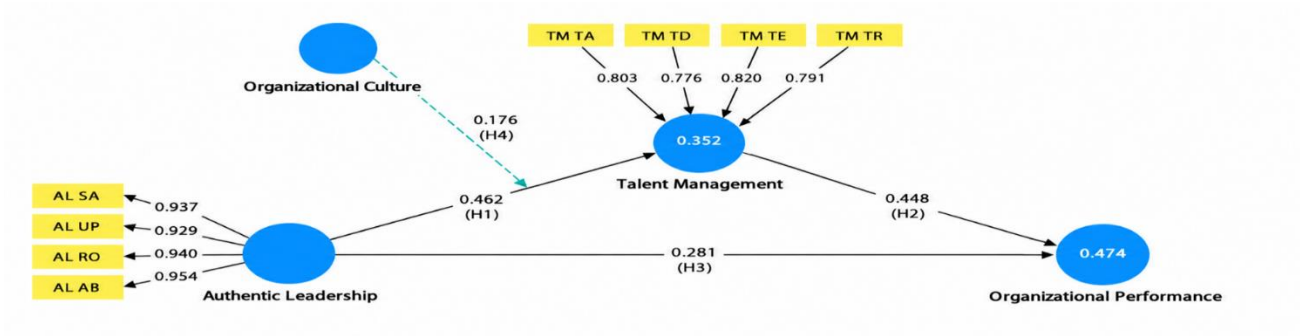


Figure 3. PLS-SEM Results Showing Measurement Model Loadings and Structural Relationships

The measurement model was tested for indicator reliability, internal consistency reliability, and convergent validity. Table 2 illustrates that all indicator loadings were above the suggested threshold of 0.708, with values ranging from 0.845 to 0.925. Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability were higher than 0.70, indicating good internal consistency. Similarly, the AVE values

were between 0.761 and 0.807, which is higher than the threshold value of 0.50 recommended by Hair et al. (2022), and, therefore, it indicates a satisfactory convergent validity. However, some composite reliability values were higher than 0.95, which indicated that the redundancy of measurement items should be explored.

Table 2. Outer loading Reliability and Convergent Validity and AVE

Construct	Dimensions	Outer Loading Range	Cronbach's α	rho_A	CR	AVE
AL	Authentic Behavior	.875–.925	.920	.921	.944	.807
	Relational Transparency	.870–.900	.908	.909	.936	.785
	Self-Awareness	.864–.908	.907	.907	.935	.782
	Unbiased Processing	.878–.900	.911	.911	.937	.789
TM	Talent Attraction	.868–.894	.926	.927	.944	.773
	Talent Development	.888–.907	.937	.938	.952	.800
	Talent Engagement	.856–.885	.922	.922	.941	.761
	Talent Retention	.865–.890	.944	.944	.955	.780
OC		.845–.901	.967	.975	.971	.771
OP		.854–.917	.956	.958	.963	.766

Discriminant Validity Assessment

Discriminant validity was verified through the heterotrait–monotrait ratio (HTMT) criterion proposed by Henseler et al. (2015). From Table 3, it was found that all the HTMT values were in the range of 0.155 to 0.658 which was lower than the recommended value of 0.85 . The highest value was between AL and OP (HTMT = 0.658). These findings provide evidence of satisfactory discriminant validity, indicating that the four constructs are empirically distinct and supporting further evaluation of the structural model.

Table 3 Discriminant Validity Assessment

Construct	AL	TM	OC	OP
AL	—			
TM	0.572	—		
OC	0.155	0.342	—	
OP	0.658	0.622	0.204	

Collinearity Assessment (Inner VIF Values)

Collinearity statistics (VIF) results in Table 4 shows the reported VIFs were 1.000 and below the recommended threshold of 3.0 (Hair et al., 2022). These results suggest that multicollinearity was not

a problem in the reported evaluation of the model and thus, justify the interpretation of the structural relationships.

Table 4. Collinearity Assessment

Predictor Construct	Endogenous Construct	VIF
AL	TM	1.000
OC	TM	1.000
AL × OC	TM	1.000
AL	OP	1.000
TM	OP	1.000

Structural Model Assessment

The coefficient of determination (R^2) was used to measure the explanatory power of the structural model, and effect size (f^2) was used to assess the contribution of individual predictors according to the recommendations of Cohen (1988). The model accounted for 45.2% of the variance in TM (R^2 = 0.452) and 49.6% of the variance in OP (R^2 = 0.496), as shown in Table 5, suggesting that the model has a moderate explanatory power. Based on Cohen's (1988) effect size guidelines, AL had a large effect size on TM (f2 = 0.453) whereas OC had a medium effect size on TM (f2 = 0.162). The interaction between AL and OC had a small effect (f2 = .130). AL (f2=0.259) and TM (f2=0.176) had a medium effect on OP. These findings suggest that AL makes a meaningful contribution to explaining variations in TM and that OC and its interaction with AL contribute additional explanatory value.

Table 5. Structural Model Assessment: Explanatory Power (R^2) and Effect Size (f^2)

Endogenous Construct	R^2	Adjusted R^2	Predictor Construct	f^2	Effect Size
TM	0.452	0.442	AL	0.453	Large
			OC	0.162	Medium
			AL × OC	0.130	Small
OP	0.496	0.490	AL	0.259	Medium
			TM	0.176	Medium

Predictive Relevance Assessment

PLSpredict was used for assessing the predictive ability of the model. Both endogenous constructs had positive Q^2_predict values, indicating predictive relevance. The result for TM was Q2_predict of 0.428 and for OP it was 0.409. These results suggest that the model has relevant predictive capability to explain both constructs.

Table 6 PLS Predict Results

Construct	Q^2_predict	RMSE	MAE	Predictive Relevance
TM	0.428	0.766	0.619	High
OP	0.409	0.780	0.603	High

Model Fit Assessment

The overall model fit was assessed by standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) and normed fit index (NFI) and these indices provide additional support for the adequacy of the proposed model. The SRMR value was 0.013 (Table 7) which was below the recommended cut off value of 0.08 indicating good fit of the model. This implies a small difference between the observed and model implied correlations. The NFI value was also 0.982 which was higher than the accepted value of 0.90 indicating a good fit of the model.

Table 7. Model Fit Assessment

Index	Saturated Model	Estimated Model	Recommended Criterion
SRMR	0.013	0.013	< 0.08
NFI	0.982	0.982	> 0.90

Hypothesis Testing

The proposed hypotheses were tested by bootstrapping with 5000 resamples using SmartPLS 4. Table 8. All six hypotheses were supported statistically. AL was significantly related to OP (β = 0.437, t = 7.286, p < 0.001) and TM (β = 0.505, t = 8.675, p < 0.001). TM was also positively and significantly related to OP (β = 0.360, t = 5.960, p < 0.001).

To find out whether TM explains the relationship between AL and OP, mediation analysis was done. As shown in Table 8, the indirect effect of AL on OP through TM was positive and statistically significant as β = 0.182, t = 4.794, p < 0.001. These results provide support for a mediating relationship. Organizational Culture (OC) was also significantly and positively associated with OP via TM as β = 0.110, t = 3.726, p < 0.001).

The moderation effect of OC between AL and TM was positive and statistically significant as β = 0.245, t = 4.389, p < 0.001. The results demonstrate that OC moderated the relationship between AL and TM. The results indicate that the indirect effect of AL on OP through TM is stronger as the OC increases.

Additionally, the moderated mediation analysis indicated a significant positive interaction based on the indirect effect β = 0.088, t = 3.437, p = 0.001. The result indicates that the indirect relationship

of AL to OP through TM is more positive as OC increases. Results broadly point to TM as a mediating mechanism and OC as a factor that influences the strength of the relationship.

These findings are generally support the hypothesized relationships and emphasize the significance of investigating leadership, TM and OC simultaneously when considering OP in the public sector.

Table 8 Structural Model Path Coefficients and Hypothesis Testing

Hypothesis	Relationship	B	t-value	p-value	Supported nor not
H1	AL → OP	0.437	7.286	<0.001	Yes
H2	AL → TM	0.505	8.675	<0.001	Yes
H3	TM → OP	0.360	5.960	<0.001	Yes
H4	AL → TM → OP	0.182	4.794	<0.001	Yes
H5	AL × OC → TM	0.245	4.389	<0.001	Yes
H6	AL × OC → TM → OP (Moderated Mediation)	0.088	3.437	<0.001	Yes



Figure 4. Interaction Effect of Organizational Culture on the Relationship between Authentic Leadership and Talent Management

Discussion

The present study explored the relationship between AL and OP in government departments of Balochistan, Pakistan. The study focused a special emphasis on TM and OC. The results showed that leadership affects not only decision making but also how people are supported and management practices are influenced. There is a positive correlation between AL and TM and OP. Talent Management had a positive relationship with company performance. Also, the results suggest the importance of OC as a factor influencing these relationships. Taken together, these results add to a wider insight of the relationship between AL, TM (employee related practices) and the OC in public institutions or departments.

One of the prominent conclusions of this study is that AL has a positive relationship with TM. Honest and open leaders who have the qualities of self-awareness and are consistent in their decisions might be better able to recognize employees' abilities and support their professional development. Public organizations generally have strict formal human-resource policies, but these policies do not always translate into meaningful opportunities for employees. Much depends on how managers communicate with staff, encourage participation, and meet employee needs. This finding is similar to the general understanding of AL as developed by Avolio and Gardner (2005) and Walumbwa et al. (2008). The findings of Kravariti et al. (2023) also pointed out the necessity of managerial and organizational support for TM in the public sector. The finding in the setting of Balochistan highlights the role of leadership to make the employee-development practices more meaningful within well-established administrative systems.

The positive association between AL and OP observed in present study is consistent with recent evidence in the public organizational sector context. The findings of Kyambade et al. (2024) revealed that AL positively affects public servants' performance by boosting employee motivation. The results indicate that leadership influences performance through employee oriented mechanisms. Also, Schwarz et al. (2020) emphasized the need for public leadership to improve public-service motivation and job performance. But recent evidence also points to the fact that the influence of AL is conditional on the organizational context in which leaders are functioning.

Moreover, Ece and Erkmen (2026) in their research findings, have discovered an association between AL and supportive OC affecting task performance. Their findings indicated that leadership does not always influence performance outcomes directly but can affect them indirectly through organizational processes and contextual factors. In line with this, the current study findings are in favor of this view suggesting that TM is an important mechanism through which AL is linked with company performance in the public-sector context of Balochistan.

TM was positively related to OP too. This demonstrates that the manner in which public institutions attract, develop, engage and retain employees is relevant to the functioning of the institutions as a whole. Government departments rely on employees who are familiar with administrative procedures, have the required skills and can adjust to shifting institutional responsibilities. The

development and retention of such capabilities may better enable organizations to fulfill their responsibilities. The relevance of strategic TM for OP was stated by Collings and Mellahi (2009) and Luna-Arocas and Lara (2020) highlighted the relevance of TM for performance-related outcomes in local government. The current results provide some support for these arguments and suggest that management practices related to employees merit more attention in discussions of public-sector effectiveness. They also base it on the Resource Based View that stresses the importance of valuable organizational resources and capabilities (Barney, 1991).

Another prominent finding was that AL was positively related to OP. This finding is based on the argument that organizational functions are associated with leadership characteristics such as transparency, ethical consistency, and receptiveness to alternative perspectives. In government institutions, employees usually work within a well-defined administrative structure. The quality of leadership is determined by how it affects people's perceptions regarding their responsibilities and their collaboration. Leaders who have the qualities of openness and fair decision making create an organizational setting in which employees are more enthusiastic to work together and honestly contribute to the goals of the organization. These findings have resemblance with the findings of Gardner et al. (2011) and Zhang et al. (2022) who emphasize the role of AL as a positive influence on followers and enhanced organizational outcomes. In this study we contribute to this debate by showing that AL is positively related to OP, even when TM is included in the same model.

The findings further show that TM is a significant mediating variable between AL and OP. This means that when leadership is supportive, employee opportunities to build skills and make meaningful contributions to their institutions can benefit OP. This relationship is explained by the resource-based view that considers human resources as valuable assets to the organization which if managed well can lead to performance (Barney, 1991). Similarly, Social Exchange Theory posits that trust and support in workplace relationships can promote cooperation and commitment among employees (Blau, 1964). Although these are not studied directly in this study, such employee reactions provide a useful background in understanding the results from both perspectives.

Other studies done in public sector organizations have arrived at similar conclusions. Kravariti et al. (2023) state that one of the main factors that drives the improvement of TM practices is the support of both organizations and management. Furthermore, Luna-Arocas and Lara (2020) in their studies finding associated TM with better service performance through employees' related processes. This present study on the relationship between AL and business success, building on these previous researches, highlights TM. These findings further highlight the significance of a work environment that enhances the professional development of employees and increases their capabilities to attain organizational goals.

The study also revealed that OC plays an important role. The results showed that there is a significant positive relationship between OC and TM. The results also argue that a supportive culture strengthens the relationship between AL and TM. This suggests the significance of the workplace environment in the implementation of leadership practices. It is hard for leaders to foster employee

development in organizations without communication, learning, and participation. But a culture that encourages openness, collaboration and professional development can lead to a better environment for effective TM. Schein and Schein (2017) clarified how OC influenced employees' perception and reaction to organizational practices, and Dull (2010) highlighted the relationship between leadership and OC in public administration. The present results are consistent with these views and illustrate why leadership practices need to be understood in their organizational context.

Previous research results also exhibited that OC as important factor in OP in the public sector. Gomes and Mendes (2023) highlight the significance of the organizational context in the implementation of the effectiveness of the performance management practices. Likewise, Kim (2025) study findings reveals that the relationship between group culture and organizational effectiveness varies in terms of public sector policy. These studies suggest that the impact of OC may be contingent on the institutional context. The present results extend this knowledge by showing that a supportive OC creates more favorable conditions for AL to be related to better talent-management practices. This underscores the significance of developing an OC that supports the alignment between leadership style and employee development initiatives.

The results of the moderated mediation add a further dimension to these findings. The significant interaction-based indirect effect shows that the relationship between AL and OP through TM is different in different OCs. In more specific terms, the positive finding indicates that this indirect relation is stronger at higher levels of the measured OC. This is an important distinction because leadership practices may not be equally effective across institutions. An organization where similar values are already present in working practices will be more supportive of ideas of openness and the development of employees by a leader who wishes to foster them. The findings in this respect integrate three often separately studied areas: leadership behavior, talent-management practices and OC. They also draw on prior research on TM in the public sector and OC (Kravariti et al., 2023; Xanthopoulou et al., 2022).

Theoretical Implications

The present study contributes to the existing literature by explaining the relationship between AL and OP through TM and the moderating role of OC. The results extend the Resource-Based View (Barney, 1991) by identifying TM as an organizational capability through which leadership related resources may influence performance. They are also consistent with Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964) which suggests that trust and supportive relationships may lead to positive employee responses, but these were not directly examined in this study. The study combines leadership, TM and OC for a better understanding of public sector performance and also offers empirical evidence from government departments in Balochistan, Pakistan.

Practical Implications

The results suggest that government departments should pay more attention to leadership development, talent-management practices and the work environment of employees. Leadership development should encourage transparency, ethical decision making, self-awareness and open communication. Meanwhile, departments could improve the mechanisms they use to identify employee potential, provide professional development, engage employees and retain talented officials. The findings also emphasize the significance of work culture encouraging trust, cooperation and learning as these factors may improve the relationship between AL and TM.

Policy Implications

The findings also underscore the potential benefits for public-sector policymakers of incorporating leadership development and strategic TM into administrative reform efforts. Government departments should seek to improve their recruitment, training, career development and retention practices rather than relying primarily on formal procedures. "Policies to support opportunities for development through merit, supportive leadership and organizational learning may help strengthen administrative capabilities and contribute to better institutional performance in the Government of Balochistan.

Conclusion, Limitations and Future Research

Conclusion

The present study aims to investigate the relationship between AL and OP, with the mediating role of TM and the moderating role of OC in government departments of Balochistan, Pakistan. The results revealed that there are positive relationships between AL and TM and organizational achievement. TM was found as an important mediating variable. The mediating relationship suggests that the relationship between AL and OP is partially mediated by practices that foster employee attraction, development, engagement and retention. The results further show that OC mediates AL and TM, which further enhances the indirect relationship with business performance.

The findings indicate that leadership practices need to be understood in relation to the organizational structures and cultural settings in which they are embedded. The study simultaneously assesses these associations to offer a more integrated understanding of leadership and perceived OP in the public sector.

Limitations of the Study

There were several limitations acknowledged in conducting this study. First, the cross sectional design limits the possibility of finding causal links between the variables under study. Second, reliance on self-reported questionnaire responses may have exposed the findings to common method

bias and social desirability bias, as OP was measured based on respondents' subjective assessments. Third, the generalizability of the results to other administrative settings is limited by the use of stratified purposive sampling with a group of 159 administrative personnel from government departments in Balochistan. These limitations do not detract from the results but rather indicate that the findings should be interpreted in the context and bounds of the study.

Future Research Directions

Future research may utilize longitudinal studies with larger sample sizes to further investigate the relationship between AL and organizational effectiveness. The proposed model can be used in the public and private sector organizations to detect the difference between the two. Future research may also compare AL with other types of leadership, for example, transformative, servant, and ethical leadership. In addition, it provides a window for researchers to investigate the roles of psychological safety, employee resilience, AI readiness, and organizational agility in this relationship. Future research could further examine the impact of TM and OC on these correlations in other organizational contexts.

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