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Perceived Supervisor Accessibility and its Effects on Authentic Leadership

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Perceived Supervisor Accessibility and its Effects on Authentic Leadership

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Abstract

The present study explores Authentic leadership as it is experienced by remotely located employees versus on-site employees, in relation to the direct supervisor's perceived accessibility. Data is sourced from two departments; Distribution, with predominantly on-site employees and leadership, and Facilities, with a relatively centralized leadership team, and remote employees located across several buildings and shifts.

Though both departments contain on-site and remote employees, as well as on-site and remote leaders. The survey compares the departments on several key variables using the internally validated by Walumba et. al (2008) Authentic Leadership Questionnaire, which measures; transparency, moral and ethics, balanced processing, self-awareness. Building on the original ALQ, four questions relating to supervisor accessibility were added as a key variable. The sourced data within departments is split between on-site and remote employees, remote employees ranked their leader as more authentic, despite interacting less frequently in person, and more frequently via electronic means. This important finding suggests that for a leader to relate better to their employees, it is crucial to implement multiple modes of communication in addition to the traditional face-to-face interactions.

Methodology

- Two-part Survey
 - Part 1: Demographics and Leader/Employee communication questions
 - Part 2: Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (Walumba et. al 2008) with the addition of 4 original Accessibility questions
- Facilities: 130 paper surveys distributed, 70 returned, 7 leader surveys
- Distribution: 198 paper surveys distributed, 52 returned, 3 leader surveys

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Research Question

Central Research Question: How does leadership proximity and perceived leadership accessibility affect the perception of Authentic Leadership in remote versus on-site employees at a Maine-based mid-size retailer?

Table 1
Leader/Employee Interactions by department

Descriptive Averages	Interpersonal Interactions	Phone Call Interactions	Email or Skype Interactions	Text Message Interactions
Facilities Leadership	1.857	4.71	2.14	4.14
Facilities Personnel	2.157	3.83	2.76	3.41
Distribution Leadership	1.333	4.67	3.67	6
Distribution Personnel	2.214	5.96	4.21	5.78

- Employees and Supervisors in the Facilities Department communicated more frequently across all mediums.
- Employees with an on-site leader communicated more frequently across both departments.

Table 2
Leader/Employee Interactions On-Site Leader vs. Off-Site Leader

I talk to my supervisor:	In person	Over the phone	Email or Skype	Text message
Facilities Personnel On-Site Leader	1.84	3.64	2.68	3.34
Facilities Personnel Off-Site Leader	2.65	4.00	2.78	3.41
Distribution Personnel On-Site Leader	1.98	5.96	4.13	5.76
Distribution Personnel Off-Site Leader	4.50	6.00	5.00	6.00

Legend for Table 1 & Table 2

1 Daily	2 2 or 3 times a week	3 Once a week	4 Every other week	5 Once a month	6 Less than once a month
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Table 3
Department ALQ Results Leadership & Personnel

Descriptive Averages	Transparency	Moral/Ethical	Balanced Processing	Self-Awareness	Accessibility
Facilities Leadership	3.26	3.36	3.05	2.82	3.71
Facilities Personnel	3.23	3.12	3.01	2.97	3.66
Distribution Leadership	2.90	3.38	1.67	3.00	2.63
Distribution Personnel	3.05	3.03	2.71	2.67	3.41

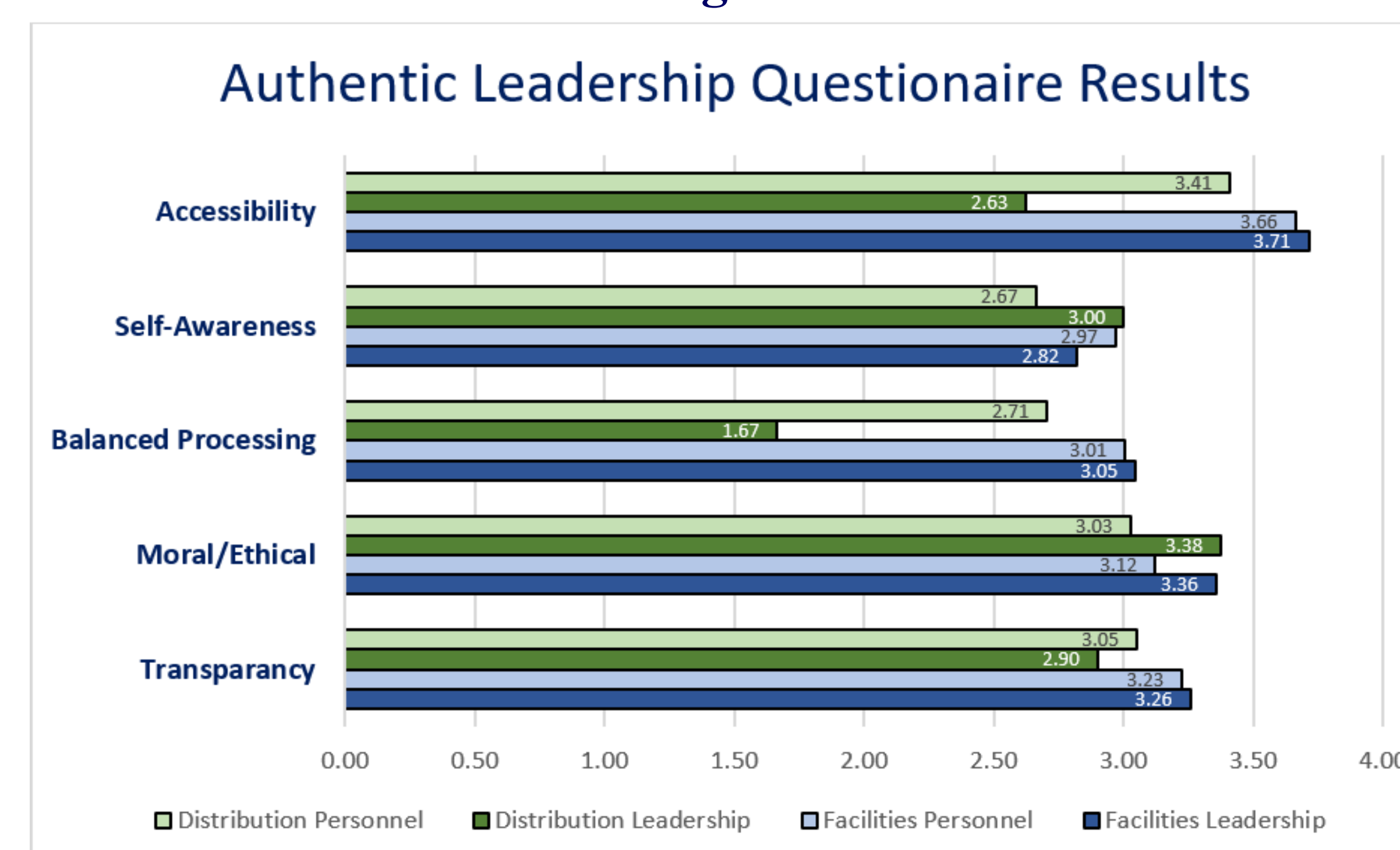
- High Accessibility in Facilities both Leadership and Personnel
- Significant difference in the Distribution Leadership and Personnel

Table 4
ALQ Results On-Site Leader vs. Off-Site Leader

Descriptive Averages	Transparency	Moral/Ethical	Balanced Processing	Self-Awareness	Accessibility
Facilities Personnel Leader On-Site	3.18	3.18	2.96	2.95	3.73
Facilities Personnel Leader Off-Site	3.33	3.02	3.13	3.07	3.62
Distribution Personnel Leader On-Site	3.00	3.00	2.69	2.61	3.42
Distribution Personnel Leader Off-Site	3.55	3.42	2.94	3.19	3.31

- Employees with off-site leaders felt their supervisor displayed more Authentic behaviors despite feeling they were less Accessible. Exceptions highlighted in red

Figure 1



- On-Site Leaders: More accessible
- Off-Site Leaders: Outsourcing on-site leaders in all measures
 - Exception Facilities Moral/Ethical

Conclusion

- Employees with an off-site leader reported communicating with their leaders less frequently than employees with on-site leaders.
- Despite less frequent communication, employees with an off-site leader rated their leader as more Authentic than employees with on-site leaders
- Suggests that off-site employees have more quality interactions.
- Employees in the Facilities department are more likely to use technology to communicate.
 - Subsequently, Facilities employees rated their leader higher on the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire.
 - Suggests that using multiple forms of communication is the key to being considered an Authentic Leader.