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Authentic Leadership Influence on Work Engagement of Remote and Non-Remote Employees Through the Mediating Effect of Work-Family Balance

Catarina Filipa de Oliveira Vicente

Master in Human Resources Management and Organizational Consulting

Supervisor:
PhD Ana Patrícia Pereira Duarte Baltasar, Invited Associate Professor, Iscte-IUL

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BUSINESS SCHOOL

Department of Human Resources and Organizational Behavior

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Abstract

Authentic leadership has been increasingly acquiring the interest of several empirical studies, and the pandemic situation brought by COVID-19 came to reinforce the importance that leadership might have for employees' engagement. The present research aimed to investigate if the perception of authentic leadership by employees in remote and non-remote is related with their work engagement, and if the work-family balance contributes to explain that association.

To analyse the relationship between the variables, an online survey to employees of the consultancy sector was applied. This sector was selected because the growing concern of their organizations with leadership and work-family balance. A sample of 201 participants was obtained.

The results indicate that authentic leadership is positively associated with work engagement, being that relationship mediated by work-family balance. However, the moderation by the job situation was not verified, which means that the positive effect of authentic leadership on the ability to balance professional and family needs is independent of the remote or non-remote situation of the employees.

The present dissertation contributes for the development of literature relative to the relationship between authentic leadership and employees' work engagement, through the perception of work-family balance. The results evidence the benefit of the promotion of this leadership style among organizations of the consultancy sector.

Resumo

A liderança autêntica tem suscitado cada vez mais o interesse de academia e do mundo empresarial e a situação de pandemia trazida pelo COVID-19 veio reforçar a importância que a liderança pode ter para o envolvimento dos colaboradores no trabalho. O presente estudo pretendeu investigar se a perceção de liderança autêntica por colaboradores em trabalho remoto e não remoto está relacionada com o seu envolvimento no trabalho, e se o equilíbrio trabalho-família contribui para explicar essa associação.

Para analisar a relação entre as variáveis, foi aplicado um questionário online a trabalhadores do setor de consultoria, setor selecionado pela crescente preocupação com a liderança e com a conciliação trabalho-família. Obteve-se uma amostra de 201 participantes.

Os resultados obtidos indicam que a liderança autêntica se encontra positivamente relacionada com o envolvimento no trabalho, sendo a relação mediada pelo equilíbrio trabalho-família. No entanto, não se verifica a moderação pela situação de trabalho, o que significa que o efeito positivo da liderança autêntica na capacidade de equilibrar necessidades profissionais e familiares é independente da situação remota ou não remota dos colaboradores.

A presente dissertação contribui para o desenvolvimento da literatura relativa à relação entre liderança autêntica e o envolvimento no trabalho dos colaboradores, através da perceção do equilíbrio trabalho-família. Os resultados evidenciam o benefício da promoção deste estilo de liderança entre organizações do setor de consultoria.

Palavras-chave: liderança autêntica; envolvimento no trabalho; equilíbrio trabalho-família; trabalho remoto

JEL codes: O15 Human Resources; D23 Organizational Behavior

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Acronym List:

Authentic leadership – AL

Common method variance – CMV

Cronbach's alpha coefficient – α

Work engagement – WE

Work-family balance – WFB

CHAPTER 1

Introduction

As a result of a constant organizational change due to the BANI (acronym which stands for "brittleness", "anxiety", "nonlinearity" and "incomprehensibility") world we live in, leadership, work-life balance and work engagement are topics that have been widely studied, both individually and in association.

Along decades, leadership has been adapting to organizational transformation and new leadership styles have emerged, where the concept of authentic leadership (AL) is inserted. This constant evolution in how leadership is exercised has increased the relevance of understanding the different leadership constructs and the links between the different types of leadership and their outcomes (Müceldili et al., 2013), regarding both employees and the organization itself. One individual level outcome is employees' work engagement (Wirawan et al., 2020)

Employees' work engagement (WE) refers to a positive and satisfying mindset towards one's labour, specifically characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002), predicting positive outcomes that support companies achieving goals (Wilkinson et al., 2019). WE is related to an increased job satisfaction and performance, promoting positive behaviours such as job involvement, motivation, effort and even a lower rate of absenteeism (Wilkinson et al., 2019). Hence, the association between AL and WE have been drawing the attention of many researches.

However, how AL influences WE? Is work-family balance (WFB) a mediator of the influence that AL has on employees' WE? Are those outcomes different according to the job situation, remote and non-remote? Despite the already existing results around the relationship of AL with WE and AL with WFB, empirical research testing the association between WE and WFB is scarce, and according to Braun and Peus (2018) there are few studies about the relationships between AL and the WFB.

Although remote work exists for a long time, the Covid-19 pandemic and the consequent lockdowns of 2020 forced a large number of employees to work from home (Kniffin et al., 2021). According to an online survey of Europeans conducted by Eurofound on April 2020 which found that 37% of employed people had started working from home because of the pandemic (Ahrendt et al., 2020), accelerating the urgency of understanding the importance of leadership in this situation (comparing face-to-face with virtual interfaces), as well as the challenges that remote work may produce in balancing both professional and personal demands, with possible consequences to employees' work engagement. Hence, new studies have emerged

focusing home-office and its implications (Oliveira et al., 2020). Oliveira et al. (2020) brought to the discussion the hypothesis that workers in home office might be distracted by other activities not related to their tasks, decreasing their production. For this reason, remote work is an emerging topic, and since most companies had to adapt their strategies, it may be interesting to analyse the impact of different leadership approaches on WE, when employees are working from home, because WE is a relevant predictor of individual performance.

These studies reveal the viability of an association between the constructs, however some authors (e.g., Walumbwa et al., 2010; Braun & Peus, 2018) identify the need of understanding how AL can influence employees' engagement, more precisely the need to provide empirical knowledge on how authentic leaders can create an advantageous influence on employees' work-life balance, increasing their engagement at work.

In the present study, it was decided to study employees from the consultancy sector due to its type of business that enhances and facilitates telecommuting, aligned with its increasing management concern and active communication about work-life balance and quality of work and life (Noury et al., 2016). The link of consultancy with the human resources field may also presuppose a concern of those organizations with the engagement of their employees.

Therefore, the present dissertation has the purpose of exploring the relationships between AL and work engagement, through an analysis of remote and non-remote employees of consultancy companies, taking in consideration the mediating effect of work-family balance. Based on other similar researches, this study might help promoting a healthy and productive work environment among organizations.

In order to answer the research question and objectives mentioned above, the present dissertation is structured as follows. First, the literature review of the study variables and their relationships is presented, which will support the entire study, supporting the construction of the research hypotheses. Then, the description of the methodology used to perform the empirical research is described, presenting the procedure, participants and instrument used. Subsequently, the results obtained and the main conclusions of the investigation will be presented and discussed with the support of literature. Finally, some limitations of the study will be identified along with suggestions for future research.

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical framework

2.1. Authentic leadership

Leadership have been adapting and new styles have emerged, including and emphasizing AL (Müceldili et al., 2013). In organizations' environment in constant change, AL has shown to be a fundamental part of the puzzle by helping employees find meaningfulness and connection at work (Müceldili et al., 2013).

Due to the main role of AL in this research and its increasing importance in the organizational field, it is essential to understand the concept of AL. Even though there are various definitions of AL, the most accepted is from Walumbwa et al. (2008), who described AL as:

> A pattern of leader behaviour that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development (pp. 94).

According to these authors, AL relies on four core components of self-regulation, that differs this type of leadership from others: self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing and internalized moral perspective (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Self-awareness refers to how the leader's understanding and attributed meaning of the world may impact his/her self-perception, in addition to the demonstration of how much the leader is aware of his/her own strengths, limitations or weaknesses and how s/he is capable of impacting others (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Relational transparency refers to the leader's capability of showing an authentic self to others, instead of a fake or distorted identity (Walumbwa et al., 2008), even more, according to Gardner et al. (2005), a relationship foundation based on openness and truthfulness. This authenticity and open sharing in relations promote the development of mutual trust (Kernis, 2003). Balanced processing is a characteristic of leaders who analyse relevant data objectively before making a decision (Walumbwa et al., 2008), which implies a fair and just decision-making procedure (Gardner et al., 2005). And, finally, internalized moral perspective refers that an authentic leader worries about and behaves according to one's beliefs, internal values, ethical and moral principles, in any circumstance, towards a behavioural integrity (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Therefore, this last component consists on a self-regulation that results in a consistency between actions, such as decision-making, and internalized values (Gardner et al., 2005).

All of AL definitions highlight the importance of leader integrity (Neider & Schriesheim, 2014). According to the latter authors, authentic leaders are driven to do what is correct and fair for their employees, due to their characteristic set of core values, such as honesty, fairness, kindness, responsibility and positivism. Authentic leaders align their actions with their values, becoming a role model for the appropriate behaviours that should be adopted in the organization, and showing positivism and encouragement when facing difficulties in achieving work objectives (Neider & Schriesheim, 2014).

The development of strong and lasting relationships, based on trust and openness, helps leaders acquire their employees' respect, through showing empathy, consideration about their needs or concerns, opting for just decisions and treating them in a fair way (Neider & Schriesheim, 2014). As Walumbwa et al. (2008) noted, a fair leader includes the employees in the decision-making process, valuing their thoughts, worries and ideas to decide. This way, authentic leaders create relationships of mutual trust, honesty, shared goals and a concern for employees' well-being and development (Neider & Schriesheim, 2014).

These characteristics promote employees' motivation, increasing their job satisfaction and consequently organizational behaviour and performance (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002). Authentic leaders are more open to change what is necessary, for example in their communication or strategy, to achieve more effective outcomes (Neider & Schriesheim, 2014).

To better understand the concept of AL, it is important to explore other positive leadership styles, such as ethical, virtuous, servant and transformational. AL converges with ethical leadership in the sense that both are characterized by benevolent, fair and trustworthy leader (Neider & Schriesheim, 2014). According to the authors, authentic leaders can acquire some behaviours from other types of leadership, such as ethical leadership enhancing the organizational values and codes, however their employees will still perceive them as authentic in those actions, or not, as those employees are influenced, or not, to adopt those values as well.

Pearce et al. (2006) defined virtuous leadership as the pursuit of righteous and moral objectives for both individuals and organizations. This is the capability to distinguish right from wrong while in the leadership role, influence and enable followers to pursue righteous and moral objectives for themselves and their organizations, take actions to guarantee justice and honesty, while the foundation of AL include leader positive psychological capital and positive moral perspective, self-awareness, and self-regulation.

Servant leaders go beyond self-interest, focusing on the best interests of their followers and on making fair decisions, whereas authentic leaders focus on their personal experiences, their thoughts, emotions, needs, wants, preferences, or beliefs (van Dierendonck, 2011).

According to Piccolo et al. (2012), transformational leaders not only influence their followers behaviors, but also inspire them to perform beyond previous levels. Transformational leadership describe four dimensions of behavior: idealized influence, how the admirable or charismatic behavior of the leaders conduce followers to identify with them; inspirational motivation, how leaders are able to articulate a vision that is appealing and inspiring to followers; intellectual stimulation, how leaders challenge assumptions, take risks, and encourage followers to share their ideas; and individualized consideration, how leaders attend to followers' needs, act as mentors, and listen to their concerns (Piccolo et al., 2012). On AL theory, positive and ethical work outcomes are promoted by the capability of authentic leaders to express their natural selves in an open and honest self (Banks et al., 2016). Banks et al.'s (2016) findings reveal a dominance of AL over transformational leadership in promoting group performance and organizational citizenship behaviors.

George and Sims (2007) described AL considering that "the authentic leader brings people together around a shared purpose and empowers them to step up and lead authentically in order to create value for all stakeholders" (pp. xxxi). In this definition, it is assumed that the leader empowers their followers to become authentic leaders as well. Authentic leaders also have flaws, however, since they are genuine to what they are and what they believe in, they assume their mistakes, giving an example and allowing to connect with employees (George & Sims, 2007).

According to George and Sims (2007), to become authentic, leaders must know and understand who they are, and to become effective, leaders need to take responsibility and dedication for their own development. Therefore, to be authentic leaders depends on the leaders willing to develop themselves towards that goal (George & Sims, 2007).

George and Sims (2007) interviewed and told the inspiring life story of Starbucks founder Howard Schultz. Schultz became an authentic leader due to his past history, seeing his father lose a job due to a labour accident and facing financial difficulties made Schultz desire to create a system where each employee would have the right to a health care system (George & Sims, 2007). As so, he not only founded the first American organization providing health coverage for qualified employees who work only twenty hours per week, but he created an organizational culture of trust, connections and authenticity, where employees could be respected, valued and share equal rights (George & Sims, 2007). Schultz had to understand his own circumstances, his own story and who he was to find motivation and become the leader he wanted to be (George & Sims, 2007). Schultz focus was not on the status that being a leader could bring, but on the genuine wish to make a difference by building a company that treated its employees well,

making Schultz authentic (George & Sims, 2007). This example shows that authentic leaders do not necessarily seek to become leaders, they want to make a difference and inspire their employees to join them in chasing a mutual goal (George & Sims, 2007).

George and Sims's (2007)' research also found that leadership is not based on the leaders' success, but on the success of the employees they empower to lead. To empower employees on their paths, an authentic leader must truly know how to transform an individual on a collective concern (George & Sims, 2007). According to the authors, thinking about the collective, promoting shared visions and a true concern for motivating others to reach their full potential, is what makes a leader become authentic.

According to Tak et al. (2019), employees will follow the authentic leader, whose words and actions have a positive influence on making them feel authentic as well. If the leader makes the right and more ethical choice when facing an important decision, the team will take it as an example and have more trust in their leader (Tak et al., 2019). AL creates a connection between the organizational objectives or tasks and employees, by helping them identifying their strengths and giving them a proper training, which increases employee's psychologic, confidence, hope, optimism and resilience in their job (Tak et al., 2019). The cited authors believe that this contributes for employees to have empathy and a positive feeling about their leaders, building an authentic relationship.

In order to promote their teams' authenticity, leaders must be able to comprehend them as individuals with different characteristics, competencies, strengths, weaknesses, objectives and interests (Neider & Schriesheim, 2014). Neider and Schriesheim propose that leaders' concerns for their employees' achievements and self-perception can conduce to the organizational effectiveness. This concept is strengthened by the logic that the human being acts in ways to comply with their values, avoiding cognitive dissonance (Festinger, 1962), so when a leader tries to conjugate their employees' job demands with their competencies and interests s/he will create a higher sense of fulfilment and a more authentic behaviour from the employees (Neider & Schriesheim, 2014).

With the purpose of enhancing authentic behaviours in all the organizational levels, besides the concern on attributing the job demands to employees according to their characteristics, it is fundamental that the Human Resources Management system creates policies and procedures to reinforce and reward those leadership behaviours (Neider & Schriesheim, 2014). To promote an authentic climate, the authors propose that leaders must feel aligned with the company's goals and mission, and employees must perceive their leader as someone who represents and practice the company's ideals, showing to be authentic. This way, authentic leaders are

promoting a commitment to the organizational purpose (Neider & Schriesheim, 2014). Determination authenticity is another aspect, according to the latter authors, that enhance an authentic climate. This happens when leaders feel empowered by the organization, being able to decide and pursue their own career path and interests with autonomy, having the possibility to become who they aspire to be, promoting their motivation and willing to express their true selves to their employees (Neider & Schriesheim, 2014).

Neider and Schriesheim (2014) distinguished an open and honest communication as another factor that promotes an authentic climate, this is, an authentic communication. Organizations where employees do not feel afraid to express their opinion, concerns or are not hindered from being a part of the decision-making process, are more predispose to generate employees' work engagement, enhancing trust and authenticity between colleagues, supervisors and followers (Neider & Schriesheim, 2014).

The last factor that enhances an authentic climate, according to Neider and Schriesheim (2014), is moral authenticity, where there is a shared moral perception and there is a genuine concern for values and ethics on both supervisors and employees' daily tasks and interactions. Also, the authors claim that authentic leaders influence their employees to become authentic, following the leaders' values, actions and decisions.

Several studies have been gathering evidence on how AL promotes positive attitudes and behaviours in employees, organizational commitment, individual creativity, and individual performance. For instance, a recent study conducted by Duarte et al. (2021), found affective commitment and individual creativity to be associated to a mediation mechanism able to explain the relationship between employees' perceptions of their leaders' authentic behaviour and their individual performance. Accordingly, employees seem to reciprocate their leaders' authenticity with more favourable behaviours and affective commitment (Duarte et al., 2021). Similar results have been reported by previous studies in diverse cultural settings (e.g., Ribeiro et al., 2018; Semedo et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2014).

AL predicts employees' attitudes like affective commitment and job resourcefulness (this is, the capacity to deal with work-related challenges by searching for solutions to problems in order to achieve individual or organizational goals), which, according to Semedo et al. (2016), explains their behaviour at work. Semedo et al.'s (2016) study results suggest that the quality of working conditions created by leaders can have a significant impact on employees' development of better attitudes, creativity and an increased performance. Additionally, the authors refer that authenticity may increase the leaders' capacity to improve the social

environment, to empower employees and to enhance creativity and performance (Semedo et al., 2016).

Ribeiro et al.'s (2018) research reveal that affective commitment mediates the association between AL and employees' performance. Specifically, the authenticity in leaders evolve employees' affective commitment, increasing their individual performance (Ribeiro et al., 2018).

Wang et al. (2014) discovered that AL is positively related to leader–member exchange (this is, the relationship between leaders and their followers), and consequently to followers' performance. According to Wang et al.' (2014) research, the association between AL and job performance is moderated by employees' psychological capital. This is, AL accomplishes complementarity with employees' needs in terms of positive psychological resources (such as psychological capital), which in turn increase their performance (Wang et al., 2014).

The link between authentic followership and in task performance was also investigated by Leroy et al. (2012), finding that group authentic leadership creates an impact on this association. This means that authentic leaders may create such an impact on their employees' authenticity, capable of increasing their work performance. Moreover, Clapp-smith et al. 's (2009) conclusion that the connection between AL and group performance is mediated by trust, led Walumbwa et al. (2011) to build a study proving that the link between AL and group performance is mediated equally by group trust and collective psychological capital. Walumbwa et al. (2011) proved that AL promotes the team members to also be authentic, leading to an improved team work and performance. Meantime, Peus et al. (2012) found that the connection between AL, supervisor satisfaction and team effectiveness is partially mediated by the perceived predictability of the leader.

At the individual level, Peterson et al. (2012) found that the link between AL and job performance is mediated by employees' psychological capital (composed of efficacy, hope, optimism and resilience). When an authentic leader provides the needed emotional support, listening, showing to be reliable and honest, followers will be more likely to see a reduction in negative emotions (Peterson et al., 2012). Furthermore, Walumbwa et al. (2010) discovered that employees' identification with their supervisors and empowerment mediates the relationship between AL, individual work engagement and organizational citizenship behaviours. Walumbwa et al.'s (2010) results demonstrated that AL was significantly related with WE.

2.2. Work engagement

Schaufeli et al. (2002) defined work engagement as a positive and satisfying mindset towards one's labour, specifically characterized by vigour, dedication and absorption. According to the cited authors, vigour refers to high levels of energy and mental resilience, as to a disposition and capability to devote to work; dedication represents commitment, inspiration, excitement, challenge and gratification to be a part of that job; and finally, absorption refers to a state of complete focus and happiness that leads the person to not notice the time passing and to a perception of being carried away by work. This definition englobes a pervasive and persistent engagement, being regarding vigour, dedication or absorption, instead of a perception focused on a particular event or in short-term experiences (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

To engage in their jobs, employees need to feel predictability from their organizational environment, trustworthy and security, and this factor is related with the work environment, englobing social interactions, types of leadership and the organizational norms and culture (Wilkinson et al., 2019). Kahn (1990) mentioned two important aspects of work engagement (WE), employees' feeling of safety, allowing to be themselves and to express without fearing self-image, status or career consequences; and psychological, emotional and physical availability. Availability assumes that it is necessary an alignment between work environment and personal capacity to invest in those functions and to decrease the lack of resources to do so (Wilkinson et al., 2019).

According to Bakker and Demerouti (2008), WE affects directly and improves employees' performance, following the *Work Engagement Theoretical Model*. This model suggests that WE receives a stimulation by the existence of job resources (such as performance feedback, social support, supervisory coaching), which comes from the organization, and also of personal resources (such as self-efficacy, resilience, self-esteem), that comes from the individual psychologic factor.

Another theory to consider when studying WE, JD-R model (Demerouti et al., 2001), defends that job demands and job resources determine both WE and burnout. According to the authors, job demands refer to the job aspects that require physical, cognitive or emotional effort from the employee, such as role ambiguity or workloads; while job resources refer to the work environment' elements, such as leader support, feedback, autonomy and even personal characteristics. JD-R model presupposes that the more job resources available and the less job demands there is, the more employees engage in their work, although job resources are more connected with a higher work engagement while job demands are more linked to higher levels of burnout (Wilkinson et al., 2019).

Furthermore, Christian et al. (2011) discovered WE to be positively associated with the importance of tasks, feedback about employees' performance, autonomy to perform their functions and the complexity of the job (characterized by different tasks instead of only one). Consequently, WE might be strongly related to the job aspects that drive to a meaningfulness perception of one's work (Christian et al., 2011). Following this line, it may be correct to conclude that professional meaningfulness can be achieved when employees' functions, roles, work environment and interactions give them a sense of worth and value in their jobs, making them commit to their tasks.

Several researches have investigated and revealing empirical support on the association between leadership and WE. Decuypere and Schaufeli (2020) distinguished an indirect and a direct way in which leaders may impact their employees' WE. Indirectly, engagement may be encouraged through changing job demands and job resources, as well as through increasing their psychological needs' satisfaction, which can be achieved by developing interventions to increase autonomy, competence, and connexion (Decuypere & Schaufeli, 2020). Directly, leaders may increase their own levels of engagement, impacting employees' engagement through emotional influence, role modelling, and social exchange processes (Decuypere & Schaufeli, 2020).

Concerning specifically AL, a research conducted by Walumbwa et al. (2010) established that AL has a positive influence on employees' engagement, being those relationships mediated by the degree of identification with the supervisor along with the perception of the job' specificities.

Wang et al.'s (2014) findings showed that direct leaders have a significant influence on employees' commitment and engagement to an organization, suggesting the higher the leadership authenticity the more the followers develop positive attitude towards their work. According to the authors, authentic leaders support employees defining their goals, organizing their work, highlighting disadvantages, taking a strong interest in their professional and career development, and offering advice as needed; and these characteristics are positively related to WE. Leaders who are seen as transparent, acting according to their values, develop trusting relationships with their employees, contributing to positive employees work outcomes such as work engagement (Wang et al., 2014).

Wilkinson et al. (2019) analysed that work engagement leads to an increased job satisfaction and performance, promoting positive behaviours such as job involvement, motivation, effort and even a lower rate of absenteeism. Additionally, work engagement has

showed to be related with positive outcomes, helping to reach the organizational goals (Wilkinson et al., 2019).

A more recent study from Wirawan et al. (2020) supported the premise that AL has a direct impact on job satisfaction, which in turn has a significant effect on WE. These researches are relevant as they sustain the suggestion of a possible impact of AL on employees' WE.

In order to consolidate the effect of AL on employees, and also to enable greater scientific knowledge about the predictors of their work engagement, it is presented the first study hypothesis:

Hypothesis 1: *Authentic leadership is positively related to employees' work engagement.*

2.3.   Work-family balance

The potential conflict between work and family life is a subject extensively studied in organizational behaviour (Netemeyer et al., 1996). Managers have been increasing their concern in managing the balance between work and family responsibilities, as the interference from work to home cause a mutual incompatibility of both job position and home life demands (Montgomery et al., 2003). Given the significance of this topic, the present dissertation aimed to study the mediating effect of work-life balance on the influence exerted by AL on WE.

Work-family balance (WFB) is conceptualized as the conciliation between the different areas, roles and goals in life that are set to achieve and its actual realization (Syrek et al., 2011).This balance between professional and family demands can be influenced by various factors and also create an impact on employees' work or personal life, impacting their organizations. Work demands may create a conflict with personal life when it interferes with family time, with leisure activities, or when employees struggle to mentally leave work outside working hours (Brockner et al., 2006). Brockner et al. (2006) mentioned as an example, long meetings or excessive workload that extend after dinner time, technological devices (such as e-mail or firm's cell phone) that interrupt a movie night with friends, leading employees to think about work during resting time. Hereupon, work-life conflict has an impact on employees' turnover, organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Brockner et al., 2006).

A more recent research from Cowart et al. (2014) also revealed that WFB may lead to work-related outcomes, such as WE, job satisfaction, turnover, organizational citizenship behavior or job performance. As for family-related outcomes of WFB, Cowart et al. (2014) included family satisfaction, family functioning, and family performance. Accordingly to the previously mentioned impact of technological devices, the authors raised the important argument that due to the recent technological developments employees can be permanently availability, as they

can easily access emails on their cell phones at any time of the day or night, interfering with the boundaries between work and family, which become progressively indistinct, and neglecting the benefits of work downtime and rest (Cowart et al., 2014).

Chan et al. (2017) revealed that WFB mediates the relationships between both work and family demands and employees' perception of WE. According to Chan et al. (2017), the relationships between work demands and WE are stronger than the relationships between family demands and WE. A researched conducted by Brummelhuis and Bakker (2012) suggested that personal resources, such as emotional support from the partner, can enhance employees' self-esteem, promoting a vigorous and resilient attitude at work and improving work performance. Consecutively, Chan et al. (2017) also stated that personal characteristics, such as self-efficacy (increased self-beliefs to achieve goals), seem to have an effect on how employees perceive their WFB as acceptable, experiencing positive work-related outcomes.

Several results on the influence of positive leadership and WFB have been reported by previous studies (e.g., Cowart et al., 2014; Poohongthong et al., 2014; Haar et al., 2017; Syrek et al., 2013). Studying ethical leadership, Cowart et al. (2014) suggested that employees from generation X forward are more interested in WFB as well as being treated individually, and that the leader is a key factor in establishing WFB. The authors believe that by building programs to support WFB, leaders demonstrate that their employees' individual needs are valued, promoting trust between leader and follower and creating the basis for an ethical culture (Cowart et al., 2014). Additionally, Poohongthong et al. (2014) confirmed that organizational citizenship behavior (meaning, voluntary actions of employees willing to perform their roles) can be predicted by both ethical leadership and directly by WFB.

Haar et al. (2017) investigated the influence of servant leadership on employees' WE, finding that WFB mediates the effect of servant leadership, having a consequently strong impact on WE. The authors believe that, in order to foster WE among employees, organizations must encourage leaders to focus on developing their followers and on employees' WFB (Haar et al., 2017).

Transformational leadership has also proved to have an impact on employees' WFB, working as a moderator factor in the relationship between stressor and strain (Syrek et al., 2013). Syrek et al. (2013) investigated the impact of time pressure on exhaustion and WFB, being this impact less strong under high transformational leadership, suggesting that the damage generated by time pressure decrease when employees perceive their leader as transformational.

According to Braun and Peus (2018), employees' perception of professional and personal life balance occurs when employees recognise themselves as effective and satisfied in their

several roles. The authors argued that authentic leaders are able to promote their own and their employees' work-life balance, with reference to self-reflective capacities, moral values and individual growth through interpersonal consideration.

Finally, and in line with Haar et al. (2014), who specified that a positive WFB leads to a set of necessary outcomes, among them job and life satisfaction, Braun and Peus (2018) confirmed an important indirect link between AL and employees job satisfaction through employees' perceptions of their leaders' and their own work–life balance. Braun and Peus (2018) conducted a research revealing that AL is able to create a real impact on employees' WFB and job satisfaction, highlighting that these variables promote a healthy environment and organizational well-being. The study indicated that participants with high level of AL presented higher perceptions of their leaders' work-life balance, a higher work-life balance and higher job satisfaction than participants with lower levels of AL. This means that authentic leaders are capable of transmitting a positive perspective of how they balance their work and home life demands, motivating employees to also accomplish a work-life balance, which consequently increases their job satisfaction (Braun and Peus, 2018). Furthermore, according to Wirawan et al. (2020), AL predict work engagement through job satisfaction, meaning that the impact of AL on WE is completely mediated by job satisfaction.

Taking into consideration the theoretical basis previously presented, it is expected that the balance between work-family and family-work will act as a mediator of the relationship between AL and work engagement. Thus, the following study hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2: *Work-family balance mediates the relationship between authentic leadership and work engagement.*

This hypothesis intended to confirm that employees' perception of their leaders' authentic leadership style creates a positive impact on their own WE.

2.4.   Remote and non-remote work

Remote work constitutes a professional practice in which the employee perform his/her labour tasks outside the workplace (at home, for instance), using any means of communication to keep in touch with the organization (Silva, 2004). This job situation might create a positive impact on the use of resources, since it allows the employee to save time, that can be used in working, and to decrease pollution on the traffic normally used on the way to work and back home (Nilles, 1997).

However, globalization of work systems and new technologies have been increasing the 24/7 availability to work, for example through high control of the time employees spend

working, exemption from working hours or communication outside working time, making employees work more than the conventional 40 hours per week (Wilkinson et al., 2019). In fact, work pressure and hours increased significantly, especially for managers, professionals and technical employees in several industries, including consultancy, achieving frequently 70 hours per week (Hewlett & Luce, 2006).

Remote employees who receive more authority and autonomy perform their tasks with more satisfaction and apply more meaning on their work (Steil & Barcia, 2001). Moreover, if the work environment offers favourable conditions available to employees, they will become more committed to the organization, leading to a better professional performance, whether on the traditional platform or in the home office (Steil & Barcia, 2001).According to Howell et al. (2005), when working at a physical distance, even though followers observe their leaders with less frequency, they attribute more meaning to their leaders behaviours. On the contrary, Howell et al. (2005) argument that the opportunities for transformational leaders to reinforce their messages, to engage employees in creative behaviours and to build relationships with them, may be reduced due to distance.

Regarding WE, it is possible to find empirical research that suggests a positive relationship between telework and employee's engagement, and also evidence that contrasts with this statement revealing a negative relationship between the variables, for instance when mediated by isolation (Beauregard et al., 2019). Mann and Holdsworth (2003) found that teleworking has negative effect on employees feeling of loneliness as a consequence of the isolation of working outside the office, apart from the colleagues. A study conducted by O'Neill et al. (2009) showed that employees' engagement can increase or decrease both in remote and non-remote situations, depending on several factors. Aspects as the relationship with the leader, the extra time spent on working (neglecting the balance with the personal life) or the extra time gained, and social conditions (such as isolation), impacts employee's engagement and, consequently, outcomes (O'Neill et al., 2009).

Taking into account the previous literature and the lack of empirical researches linking AL with job situation, it is presented the third hypothesis:

Hypothesis 3: *Job situation (remote/non-remote/hybrid) moderates the relationship between authentic leadership and work engagement such that it is stronger for remote than for hybrid and non-remote.*

This hypothesis has the purpose of confirming that job situation creates a moderator effect between the mentioned variables. Therefore, the premise assumes that remote employees with

authentic leaders have a stronger work engagement than non-remote employees with authentic leaders.

Adding the mediator WFB to the equation, empirical research reveal a lack of agreement when comparing employees working at the office or from home (Charalampous et al., 2019). Gajendran and Harrison's (2007) research found a favourable association between remote work and the relationship between employee and supervisor, also with a reduced stress and work-family conflict, and with job satisfaction, an aspect known to be linked to employees' engagement as mentioned previously. Furthermore, Allen et al.'s (2000) research determined that higher levels of work-life conflict led to lower job satisfaction, organizational commitment, job performance and even an increased turnover.

On the opposite side, working long hours can interfere and create a conflict between work and personal life, including not only family but also other activities that adds to the employees' well-being and confidence to even improve their work performance (Wilkinson et al., 2019). Analysing Giga et al.'s (2009) research, it was possible to understand that employees who worked longer hours had negative physical and mental health consequences, such as fatigue or depression, also higher stress related to the job and psychological strain. As so, Giga et al. (2009) consider important that policy makers at governmental and organisational levels take into consideration the impact that remote-work might create on work-life balance and working hours.

Moreover, Spagnoli et al. (2021) explored the role of leadership in remote working employees' WFB, supporting the importance of examining both the positive and negative outcomes according to different types of leadership (such as authentic or transformational), referring that WFB may be result of the perceived support, which reduces the conflicts.

Consequently, it was proposed the following hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: *Job situation moderates the relationship between authentic leadership and work-life balance such that remote compared to hybrid and non-remote will strengthening this relationship.*

According to Xanthopoulou et al. (2009), employees are more likely to show higher levels of WE when they receive autonomy, support and opportunities for development. However, even though remote employees are more autonomous, and taking into consideration that working longer hours might happen in both remote and non-remote situations, remote workers are more likely to work more intensively and for longer hours, including nights and weekends (Dimitrova, 2003), along with exchanging emails during non-working hours (Chesley, 2014). Therefore, this characteristic autonomy of remote workers may presuppose an interference on

the work and home life boundaries (Charalampous et al., 2019). Nevertheless, Dimitrova's (2003) research also discovered that the participants did not find it a significant aspect, since the acquired flexibility compensated the extra effort.

Therefore, it emerges the last hypothesis:

Hypothesis 5: Job situation moderates the indirect relationship between authentic leadership and work engagement (through work-life balance) such that remote compared to hybrid and non-remote will strengthening this relationship.

The previously mentioned empirical researches allows to conclude that there is no consensus regarding the effect that remote work has on WE, being it direct or indirect. While some studies consider it to be a positive relationship, others disagree proving otherwise. However, a significative number of findings highlight the negative impact of remote work on employees' engagement and work-life balance, among other components.

This conclusion motivates the last hypothesis, with the purpose of proving that, when employees are working remotely, authentic leaders are even more capable of enhancing employees' WE, using their own work-life balance as a positive role model.

2.5. Consultancy sector

Consulting companies are characterized by having the customer's needs as the core business, with solid interactions between provider and consumer (Cesário et al., 2015). These organizations are characterized by their knowledge-intensiveness (Nordenflycht, 2010), defined by the exceptional and valuable expertise (Starbuck, 1992).

According to Noury et al. (2016), consultancy organizations have increased their management concern and an active communication about work-life balance and quality of work and life. Noury et al.'s (2016) research on knowledge-intensive organizations revealed that WFB was one of the main reasons for consultants to quit their jobs, since service delivery is the priority. There is a concern with particular demands, being heavy workloads, work flexibility (either in terms of time or space), the un predictability of the work in accordance to the different clients and projects assignment, preventing consultants from organizing their personal time (Noury et al., 2016).

Lustri and Miura (2004) conducted a study about leadership on Consulting companies, discovering that the leadership style has a significant impact on employees' behaviour. Leaders who involve employees on projects' planning and responsibilities attribution promote their engagement and commitment (Lustri & Miura, 2004). Another research on a management

Consulting company, from Persson (2010), revealed satisfaction with the leader to be an important dimension that conditions WE.

A study from Res et al. (2014) on work-life balance of employees from a consultancy company reinforced that WFB requires an increasing concern, enhanced by global changes, such as technological advances that allows employees to be connected all the time. Res et al. (2014) encourage organizational work-life programs incorporated that provide the flexibility and support for employees to conciliate their different priorities, including dimensions such as child or elder care, ensuring the quality of work and life, and creating a beneficial situation for both organizations and employees.

Considering the hypotheses presented throughout this theoretical framework, it was proposed the research model presented in Figure 1.1, a graphic representation created to provide a better understanding of each hypothesis. The methodology carried out to test the research model is presented in the following section.
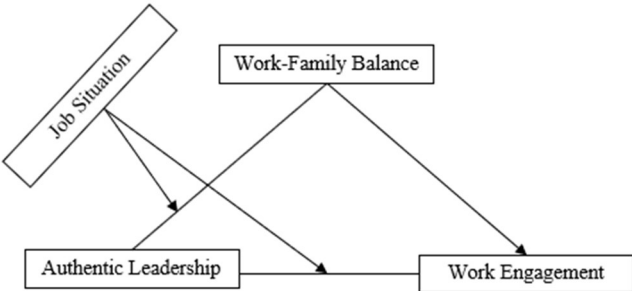

Figure 2.1 – Research model

CHAPTER 3

Method

3.1. Procedure

Taking into consideration the mentioned research questions and the interest in the perception of employees from the consulting sector, the present study adopted a quantitative correlational methodology, seeking to access their real experience through an online individual questionnaire built on *Qualtrics* platform, with support of the literature review. The application of the questionnaire was made electronically through the divulgation of a link that allowed participants to access and fulfilling it. The questionnaire was distributed through the informal network and the social networks Facebook and LinkedIn, between January 29th and March 27[th,] 2021.

This research followed a highly structured positivist paradigm, suggestive of quantitative methods (Saunders et al., 2009). As it was first composed by existing theory, to support and create a research strategy to collect the data and to develop hypotheses, which were tested and then confirmed or refuted, allowing to develop further theory (Saunders et al., 2009).

In line with Saunders et al. (2009) theory, the sampling techniques in this study were non-probability samples, meaning the sample was selected non-randomly, since the target population was people employed in Consulting companies. It was also applied the snowball technique, where it was chosen some employees to start answering the questionnaires and then those employees were asked to identify further colleagues to answer, and so on until the sample was large enough to manage (Saunders et al., 2009).

Since data on the different variable were collected at the same tome from the same source, common method variance (CMV) was a concern. To investigate a possible CMV in the study, besides a marker variable, it was used Exploratory Factor Analysis with no rotation (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The results indicate a KMO of .92, a Bartletts Test with a p value <.001 and Communalities values >.400. As the first factor explains only 34% of variance in a total of 71.54%, it appears that CMV is not a serious concern in the present study.

3.2. Participants

The target population for this research consisted in employees of the consulting sector, including consulting, recruiting and auditing companies in Portugal. To be able to participate, those employees should have a manager to whom to report and have been working in that same

company for at least 3 months, in order to have greater knowledge and involvement in the organization and in the relationship with their leaders. To guarantee variability on the answers, the study targeted employees from several companies and different leaders. This enabled to correlate the perception of leadership with the response to other variables, in the expectation that, as participants consider their leaders more authentic, they report higher levels of WFB and work engagement.

In total, the data collection obtained 362 participations. However, after eliminating the participants who did not complete the questionnaire in full or did not meet the inclusion criteria, the final sample was composed by 201 valid participations.

The sample presents ages between 21 and 65 years old ($M = 31.38$; $SD = 8.99$), being the majority of participants female (63.20%). Regarding the education level, most of the participants have higher education or equivalent (96.00%), followed by only 3.50% with schooling between the 10th and 12th grade and .50% up to the 9th grade. Household varies between 0 and 6 members ($M = 2.69$; $SD = 1.19$), and most of participants does not have dependents at their charge (77.60%).

Concerning the professional situation, the majority of participants does not exercise a leadership position (79.60%). Job situation was represented by 65.70% of the participants in remote, 19.40% mainly in remote and sometimes at the office, 8.00% full hybrid, 3.00% mainly at the office and sometimes in remote, and 4.00% entirely at the office. After being recategorized into two components, one including employees "100% remote" and the other including both hybrid and working at the office ("other modalities"), the moderator variable still revealed that the majority of employees were working remotely ($M = .66$; $SD = 0.48$). Seniority in the organization varies between three months and 32 years ($M = 3.72$; $SD = 5.36$), and, given the contractual situation, 74.60% have a permanent employment contract, 13.90% a fixed-term contract, 5.50% have an internship, 4% a services provision contract, 1.00% a temporary work contract, and also 1.00% are in layoff. As for the organizational characteristics, most of the participants work in companies with more than 250 employees (47.30%), 18.90% in companies with 50 to 250 employees, 20.90% in companies with 10 to 49 employees, and only 12.90% in companies up to 9 employees.

Regarding the relationship with the leaders, the time working with the same leader varies between three months and 30 years ($M = 2.26$; $SD = 3.12$), being the majority of those leaders (by little) male (51.20%) and working from home (64.70%), followed by 25.90% of the leaders in hybrid situation and only 9.50% working at the office. As for the support of interaction, most participants are interacting virtually with the leader (72.10%), 24.4% are interacting in a mixed

job situation and 3.50% are interacting in person. Finally, regarding the frequency of interaction, the majority of participants are interacting with the leader on a daily basis (67.70%), followed by a weekly interaction (23.40%), a biweekly interaction (5.00%) and a monthly interaction (4.00%).

3.3. Instrument

The questionnaire was composed by the cover sheet with the study presentation and informed consent (Appendix A), followed by three groups with the measure questions concerning the study variables, another group dedicated to a marker variable and a last block with the sociodemographic questions.

3.3.1. Authentic leadership (predictor variable)

To measure AL, it was requested, and accepted, a license to the copyright holder to reproduce the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ; Walubwa et al., 2008) for this study's survey. The ALQ questionnaire was measured through the 16 items that cover the four components of AL: self-awareness (e.g.: "My leader knows when it is time to re-evaluate his or her position on important issues"; $\alpha = .88$), relational transparency (e.g.: "My leader says exactly what he or she means"; $\alpha = .91$), internalized moral perspective (e.g.: "My leader makes difficult decisions based on high standards of ethical conduct"; $\alpha = .89$) and balanced processing ("My leader listens carefully to different points of view before coming to conclusions"; $\alpha = .89$). The participants were asked to rate the responses on a 5-point Likert scale from *never* (1) to *frequently, if not always* (5). It was chosen the ALQ due to its wide use in several researches and its high reliability (Saunders et al., 2009). In the present sample, a composite indicator was computed for each participant ($\alpha = .92$).

3.3.2. Work engagement (criterion variable)

Work Engagement was measured through the Portuguese adaptation of the 9-item (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES; Scaufeli & Bakker, 2003) by Simães and Gomes (2012). UWES-9 was composed by questions regarding the three constituting dimensions of WE (Schaufeli et al., 2006): vigor ("At my work, I feel bursting with energy"; "At my job, I feel strong and vigorous"; and "When I get up in the morning, I feel like going to work"), dedication ("I am enthusiastic about my job"; "My job inspires me"; and "I am proud on the work that I do") and absorption ("I feel happy when I am working intensely";

"I am immersed in my work"; and "I get carried away when I'm working"). The participants were asked to rate the responses on a 7-point Likert scale from *never* (1) to *always* (7) (Appendix C). It was chosen this shorter version of UWES because it is one of the most recommended by the authors (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004) and due to its high reliability. The set of items revealed a very good reliability in the present sample ($\alpha = .96$), and therefore a composite indicator was computed for each participant.

3.3.3. Work-family balance (mediator variable)

Participants' perception of their work-family balance was measured through the 10-item Work-Family Conflict (WFC) and the Family-Work Conflict (FWC) scales from Netemeyer et al. (1996). Data revealed a high consistency ($\alpha = .89$). Since the scales were developed to the study the conflict but in the current study the purpose was studying the mediating effect of work-family balance, the items were re-written to express the conciliation of Work-Family life ("The demands of my work coexist with my home and family life"; "The amount of time my job takes up makes it easy to fulfil family responsibilities"; " Things I want to do at home coexist with the demands my job puts on me"; "The strain that my job produces do not prevent me from fulfilling family duties"; and "Beside my work-related duties, I am able to keep my plans for family activities") and of Family-Work life ("The demands of my family or spouse/partner coexist with work-related activities"; "I am able to conclude my work even with the demands on my time at home"; "I still do the things I want to do at work even with the demands of my family or spouse/partner"; "My home life coexists with work responsibilities such as getting to work on time, accomplishing daily tasks, and working overtime"; and "Family-related strain do not interfere with my ability to perform job-related duties"). The participants were asked to rate the responses on a 5-point Likert scale from *totally disagree* (1) to *totally agree* (5) (Appendix D).

3.3.4. Solitary work preferences (marker variable)

As the questionnaire was applied to the same source without a temporal separation, the marker variable was introduced in this research with the purpose of assessing potential bias, with the mandatory characteristic of being theoretically unrelated to the constructs of interest of the study (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

It was chosen the Portuguese adaptation of the 3-item Solitary Work Preferences scale (Ramamoorthy & Flood, 2004) by Pimenta (2020), since this scale could be integrated in the context of this research without being associated with the core variables and because of its

consistency (α = .86). The participants were asked to rate the responses on a 5-point Likert scale from *totally disagree* (1) to *totally agree* (5) (Appendix E).

Despite the previous results of Factor Analysis on common method variance, the marker variable revealed an association with three of the construct variables in study, in specific a significant association with AL (*rho* = .23, *p* = .001), and a weak association with both WFB (*rho* = .14, *p* = .045), and WE (*rho* = .15, *p* = .037), with exception of the moderator Job Situation (rho = .05, p = .504). Even though the associations are not strong, taking into consideration that the marker variable should be unrelated to the constructs of interest of the study in order to avoid bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003), a possible existence of a common method variance in this study has to be considered.

3.3.5. Socio-demographic questions

Finally, the questionnaire ended with socio-demographic and professional situation questions (Appendix F), in order to obtain the sample characterization and to provide an opportunity of understanding the impact of those characteristics on the results. This section including questions about age, gender, education, existence of dependents, household, seniority, type of employment situation, job situation, having a leadership position and the size of the organization considering the number of workers.

CHAPTER 4

Results

The data collected through the questionnaire were analysed using the *IBM SPSS Statistics 26* software, for the descriptive analysis and correlations between variables, and through version 3.5 of the macro PROCESS (Hayes, 2021), for the hypotheses testing.

4.1.   Descriptive analysis and correlations between variables

For an initial analysis, the means, standard deviations, internal consistency, and Spearman's correlation coefficients of the variables under study were calculated, the results of which are observable in Table 4.1.

Regarding the descriptive analysis, it appears that on average participants have a high perception of their leaders' authentic leadership, since the values are above the midpoint of the scale ($M = 3.84$; $SD = 0.81$). Participants revealed a moderate engagement in their work and a greater variability of positions comparing to the other variables of the model ($M = 4.90$; $SD = 1.12$). As for professional and personal life conciliation, results also revealed a moderated perception from participants ($M = 3.53$; $SD = 0.71$).

Due to the existence of nominal and ordinal variables, Spearman correlation coefficient was chosen, instead of Pearson, to investigate the possible association between the variables under study.The correlation analysis between the variables under study revealed that participants' perception of their leaders' authenticity has a positive and moderated relationship with participants' engagement in their work ($rho = .41$, $p < .001$), and with participants perception of their WFB ($rho = .30$, $p < .001$). The association between participants' perception of their WE and WFB also revealed to be moderated ($rho = .41$, $p < .001$).

Lastly, the association between sociodemographic characteristics and both the moderator and the criterion was analysed, in order to understand if the variables would have to be controlled in the research model as covariates. The mediator, WFB, did not reveal any significant association with any of the sociodemographic characteristics. As for the criterion variable, participants' perception of their WE revealed a positive association, although weak, with the working time with the leader ($rho = .15$, $p = .037$), in addition to a marginally significant association with the existence of dependents ($rho = .13$, $p = .073$) and with the support of interaction with the leader ($rho = .13$, $p = .061$). Oppositely, respondent's perception of their WE revealed a negative association with the exercise of a leadership position ($rho = -.16$, $p = .020$). For this reason, besides the predictor variable (AL), the criterion variable (WE),

the model mediator (WFB), the model moderator (job situation) and the marker (Solitary Work Preferences), there were analysed the participant's leadership position, working time with the leader, frequency of interaction with the leader, support of interaction with the leader, and existence of dependents.

Table 4.1. | Means, SDs, Spearman's correlations between variables and internal consistencies

	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Existence of Dependents [a]	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
2. Leadership Position [b]	-	-	-.26**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
3. Working time with Leader	2.26	3.12	.21**	-.24**	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
4. Frequency of Interaction with Leader [c]	1.45	0.77	.02	-.18**	.13	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
5. Support of Interaction with Leader [d]	1.31	0.54	.22**	-.13	.10	-.17*	-	-	-	-	-	-
6. Solitary Work Preferences	3.69	0.95	-.01	.04	.04	-.06	.04	(.86)	-	-	-	-
7. Modality of Work [e]	-	-	-.14*	.05	-.08	.15*	-.63**	.05	-	-	-	-
8. Authentic Leadership	3.84	0.81	.02	-.02	.00	-.16*	-.03	.23**	.11	(.92)	-	-
9. Work-Family Balance	3.53	0.71	-.01	-.01	.02	-.02	.09	.14*	.01	.30**	(.79)	-
10. Work Engagement	4.90	1.12	.13	-.16*	.15*	-.05	.13	.15*	.01	.41**	.41**	(.96)

Notes:

*$p < 0.05$; **$p < 0.001$; Cronbach's α in parentheses;

[a] 0 – Does not have dependents 1 – Has dependents

[b] 0 – Exercises a leadership position 1 – Does not exercise a leadership position

[c] 1 – Daily to 4 – Monthly

[d] 1 – Virtual to 3 – Presential

[e] 0 – Other modalities of work 1 – 100% remote work

4.2. Hypotheses Testing

PROCESS macro v3.5 (Hayes, 2021) was used to explore mediation and moderation effects, with resort to Model 8 and also Model 4 for the Total Effect. Respondent's existence of dependents, seniority with their leader, support and frequency of interaction with the leader, and the marker variable were set as covariates. The results can be seen in Table 242.

Hypothesis 1 proposed a positive relationship between AL and WE. The results confirmed that the perception of authentic leadership's total effect on employees work engagement is statistically significant ($B = .56$; $p < .001$), which indicated that the perception of their leaders' authenticity increases employees' engagement. Therefore, H1 was confirmed.

Hypothesis 2 proposed that WFB mediates the association between AL and employees' WE. Comparing the total effect ($B = .56$; $p < 0.01$) with the direct effect ($B = .45$; $p < 0.01$) of AL on WE when the mediating variable is considered in the analysis, the visible reduction indicates a probability of mediation. The results revealed that AL significantly predicts employees' WFB ($B = .32$; $p < 0.01$), as the perception of the leader authenticity changes the professional and personal life conciliation increases by .32, meaning that authentic leaders contribute to employees' WFB. In turn, WFB revealed to predict employees' WE ($B = .46$; $p < .001$), the more respondents are able to conciliate their professional and personal life the greater their levels of WE. Furthermore, the conditional indirect effect of the perception of AL on participant's WE through WFB is statistically significant ($B = .15$; 95% $IC = .05, .27$), confirming a partial mediation effect. Thus, Hypothesis H2 received empirical support.

Hypothesis 3 proposed that job situation (remote/others) moderates the relationship between AL and WE such that it is stronger for remote than for hybrid and non-remote. Moderation is analysed by the significance of interaction effect (Field, 2008), and results demonstrated that both interaction ($B = .02$; $IC = -.32, .37$) and job situation ($B = .11$; $IC = -.25 .48$) were not statistically significant, for there was no direct effect of the job situation nor an interaction effect. This indicates that job situation does not change the relationship between the perception of AL and WE, evidencing the inexistence of a significant moderation effect. Thus, hypothesis H3 was not empirically supported.

Hypothesis 4 proposed that job situation moderates the relationship between AL and WFB, such that remote compared to hybrid and non-remote will strengthening this relationship. The interaction of AL with job situation did not reveal a significative impact on WFB ($B = -.17$; $IC = -.42, .77$). Hence, H4 did not receive empirical support.

Finally, hypothesis 5 proposed that job situation moderates the indirect relationship (through WFB) between AL and WE, such that remote compared to hybrid and non-remote will strengthening this relationship. Analysing the table of conditional direct effect, there is non significant difference between both job situations, "other modalities" (B = .45; IC = .17, .73) and "a 100% remote" (B = .48; IC = .25, .70). This outcome is reinforced by the analysis of the index of moderated mediation (this is, the difference between conditional indirect effects), which confirms that the mediation is not moderated (B = -.08; IC = -.21, .04). Also, there is not an exponential increase between the 23% of WE explained from the total effect and the 30% explained from the direct effect, indicating that, while WFB has a mediator influence on WE, job situation does not have the expected moderator effect. Therefore, H5 also did not receive empirical support.

Table 4.2. Total, direct and indirect effects for hypotheses testing of the research model

	WFB (mediator)		WE (criterion variable)	
	B	LLCI; ULCI	B	LLCI; ULCI
Total effect				
constant			2.21	1.08; 3.33
Perceived AL			.56**	.38; .75
Modality of work [b]			.15	-.22; .53
Solitary Work Preferencies			.06	-.09; .22
Working time with the leader			.02	-.03; .07
Leadership Position [a]			-.33*	-.70; -.03
Support of Interaction with the Leader [c]			.28	-.06; .64
Frequency of Interaction with the Leader [d]			.01	-.19; .20
Existence of Dependents [e]			.64	-.30; .43
			$R^2 = .23$	
			$F(8,19) = 7.02, p < .001$	
Direct effect				
constant	3.19	2.54; 3.83	2.91	1.81; 4.02
Perceived AL	.32*	.13; .52	.45*	.17; .73
WFB	-	-	.46**	.26; .66
Modality of work	.08	-.19; .34	.11	-.25; .48
Interaction AL x Modality	-.17	-.42; .08	.02	-.32; .37
Solitary Work Preferencies	.05	-.06; .15	.04	-.10; .19
Working time with the leader	-.01	-.04; .03	.02	-.02; .07
Leadership Position	-.07	-.32; .18	-.31	'-.66; .05
Support of Interaction with the Leader	.17	-.07; .41	.21	-.13; .54
Frequency of Interaction with the Leader	-.02	-.15; .11	.02	-.17; .20
Existence of Dependents	.01	-.24; .26	.06	.29; .41
	$R^2 = .10$		$R^2 = .30$	
	$F(9,19) = 2.37, p < .001$		$F(10,19) = 8.27, p < .001$	
Conditional Indirect effect				
Perceived AL -> WFB -> WE			.15, 95% *BootIC* = -.05; .27	
Index of moderated mediation				
Perceived AL -> Modality of Work -> WFB -> WE			-.07, 95% *BootIC* = -.21; .04	

Notes:
*p <0.05; **p < 0.001
[a] 0 – Exercises a leadership position 1 – Does not exercise a leadership position
[b] 0 – Other modalities of work 1 – 100% remote work
[c] 1 – Virtual to 3 – Presential
[d] 1 – Daily to 4 – Monthly
[e] 0 – Does not have dependents 1 – Has dependents

CHAPTER 5

Discussion and Conclusions

The present research served the purpose of deepening the investigation of authentic leadership's outcomes. More specifically, the study focused on authentic leadership's impact on employees' work engagement in remote and non-remote job situation, through the mediating effect of work-family balance.

Hypothesis testing revealed that hypothesis 1, which proposed a positive relationship between AL and WE, was empirically supported. This finding allows to conclude that authentic leaders create a positive influence on employees' engagement, in agreement with previous studies (e.g., Walumbwa et al., 2010; Wirawan et al., 2020). These results may indicate that factors such as the employees' identification with their supervisor authenticity (Walumbwa et al., 2010), the direct impact that AL has on job satisfaction discovered by Wirawan et al. (2020), also taking in consideration that engagement is related to an increased job satisfaction (Wilkinson et al., 2019), mediate the impact on employees' WE.

Hypothesis 2, predicted that WFB mediates the association between AL and employees' WE, was also empirically supported. In agreement with the previous studies, authentic leaders are able to contribute to employees' WFB, and by its turn WFB influence employees' WE, being WFB a significant mechanism through which AL impacts WE. These results suggest that the mediation impact may arise from employees' perceptions of their authentic leaders' and their leaders' work–life balance, meaning that the perspective of how authentic leaders conciliate their professional and personal life inspire employees to also achieve a work-life balance, increasing their job satisfaction (Braun & Peus, 2018). Consequently, AL has a direct impact on job satisfaction, being job satisfaction is a factor that promote WE (Wirawan et al., 2020).

Regarding hypothesis 3, which proposed that job situation (remote/non-remote/hybrid) moderates the relationship between AL and WE such that it is stronger for remote than for hybrid and non-remote, the premise was empirically refuted. These results indicate that job situation does not interfere in the relationship between AL and employees' WE. In other words, having an authentic leader is relevant for employees' WE independently of their job situation.

Hypothesis 4, which proposed that job situation moderates the relationship between AL and WFB, such that remote compared to hybrid and non-remote will strengthening this relationship, also did not receive empirical support. Previous research revealed a lack of agreement on the mediating impact of WFB when comparing employees working at the office

or from home (Charalampous et al., 2019). While studies such as the one by Gajendran and Harrison (2007) found a favourable association between remote work and the relationship between employee and leader with a WFB, others such as Spagnoli et al.'s (2021) linked different types of leadership styles in remote work with work-family conflict. The results from this dissertation suggest that the job situation does not moderate the relationship between AL and WFB, this is remote and non-remote employees with authentic leaders revealed a similar WFB. In other words, having an authentic leader is relevant for employees' capacity of balance family and work demands, independently of their job situation.

Finally, hypothesis 5, which proposed that job situation moderates the indirect relationship between AL and WE (through WFB) such that remote compared to hybrid and non-remote will strengthening this relationship, was also empirically refuted. From the previous research, there is no consensus regarding the effect of remote work on both WE and WFB. From Wilkinson et al. (2019)'s findings, it was predictable that remote employees would reveal a conflict between work and personal life, due to working longer hours, affecting their well-being. However, it was supposed that authentic leaders would be able to promote WE of remote employees by using their own WFB as a positive role modelling, based on studies as Gajendran and Harrison (2007) that found a favourable relationship between remote work and the relationship employee-leader, with a WFB and with job satisfaction, associated to WE as mentioned previously. The current study seems to indicate that AL is a relevant factor for both WFB and WE, independently of the job situation employees have.

Those empirical rejections may be explained by external or temporal factors. Anderson et al. (2015) discovered that personality characteristics have an impact on individual emotions, being an indicator that not all employees benefit in the same degree from remote work. Also, home situation and strain from work interfering with family constitutes another aspects that influence employees' emotions, such as anxiety and drained energy (Golden, 2012). While studying the effects of job situation and work-life balance, it is important to have in consideration that there might be several factors influencing employee's engagement besides AL.

5.1. Theoretical and Practical Contributions

From a theoretical point of view, the present dissertation sought to deepen the research of the relationship between AL and WE, following empirical requests, for instance from Walumbwa

et al. (2010), with the purpose of achieving a better understanding of how AL can influence employees' engagement, alone or through other important factors.

The relationship between authentic leadership and follower's work-life balance was investigated, as suggested by Braun and Peus (2018), in order to provide empirical knowledge on how authentic leaders could create an advantageous influence on employees' WFB, increasing subsequently their engagement.

Furthermore, and following studies such as Klug (2016) and Spagnoli et al. (2021)'s that requested future investigations to analyse the most favourable leadership style for home-office, and specifically to enhance WFB of those employees, the present dissertation attempted to investigate the impact of AL on WE of employees on remote work, comparing with other modalities.

On a practical perspective, the present dissertation enhances the importance of authentic leaders among organizations, specifically Consulting companies, to promote employees' engagement. Moreover, the research reinforces that by adopting an authentic approach of leadership able to promote work-life conciliation, organizations are increasing employees' engagement. To promote AL, companies should adopt initiatives among their leaders such as training/coaching sessions to develop the four key behaviors of AL (self-awareness, relational transparency, balanced processing and internalized moral perspective), organizing team buildings to increase trust, creating surveys or focus groups for employees to evaluate their leader's authenticity in order to identify possible improvement opportunities.

As it was deepened previously, significant levels of engagement have a direct impact on the improvement of employees' job satisfaction and performance, decreasing the rate of absenteeism (Wilkinson et al., 2019). These emotional and behavioural effects of WE are highly positive for organizations, as it has been proved to be a good support in achieving positive results and, consequently, companies' goals (Wilkinson et al., 2019).

Concerning work-life conciliation, the authentic leaders' capacity to manage their own work and life domains proved to be a valuable strategy to develop employees' work-life balance. A positive work–life balance promotes employees' job and life satisfaction (Haar et al., 2014), aspects that, as mentioned, previously are impactful and beneficial to organizational outcomes.

5.2. Limitations and Future Research

When building an empirical study, it is important to acknowledge that every research has limitations that may be related with the data collection or with the outcomes. One limitation is that it was used a non-probability sampling technique, with the restriction of participation to Consulting employees, which conditioned the generalisation of results. Future research should apply a similar questionnaire to a more representative sample of consultancy workers, to achieve more generalizable results. Another possibility is to apply the study to employees from other business areas.

Another limitation, is the fact that the marker variable used revealed an association with the interest variables, and considering that the data was collected from the same instrument (the questionnaire) from only one source (employees' perspective) and at one single moment, indicates that there might have been bias from the common method variance. Future studies should consider using a different marker variable, other instruments (since there might be other factors such as personality or personal issues influencing the results; e.g., interviews or focus groups), two sources (for instance collecting data also from the leaders' perspective), or a time-lagged strategy to collect the data in different moments.

The data was collected during the confinement and repercussions from COVID-19 originated several dimensions that may have affected the results. As a large number of employees were forced to work from home, many of them faced the challenges of not having space at home to work, for instance due to living with others, individual personality, and other possible moderation factors that might also interact with employees' socioeconomic or their health status (Kniffin et al., 2021).

Different dimensions and its impact on employees' work-life balance and their engagement could be studied. The data revealed that the majority of employees were working remotely, raising the question of people being working remotely out of obligation rather than preference. In conformity with Kniffin et al. (2021), the possibility that some of the respondents could be working at home alone and focused on their work, while others could be working with other family members or children at home, may have affected the results. The conjuncture marked at the time of data collection may also have affected the results due to higher levels of anxiety, concern and a decreased well-being related to the pandemic itself.

Concluding, the results may have been biased by external factors, as employees were experiencing a home-office situation strongly different from conventional and voluntary remote work (Bailey & Kurland, 2002). For this reason, it is noteworthy to have in consideration that remote work in previous studies was not necessarily comparable to the mandatory remote work during the lockdown. Future researches should consider a similar study after COVID-19

pandemic, when the new normality is established, and both organizations and employees have reached a new stability.

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Appendix

Appendix A

Informed Consent

Caro/a participante,

Sou aluna do Mestrado em Gestão de Recursos Humanos e Consultoria Organizacional no ISCTE - Instituto Universitário de Lisboa e, nesse sentido, venho solicitar a sua participação num trabalho de investigação que estou a realizar. Em tempos de pandemia causados pelo COVID-19, nos quais muitas empresas e colaboradores tiveram que se adaptar a novas modalidades de trabalho, este estudo pretende compreender a perceção dos trabalhadores do setor da consultoria, ao longo do último ano, face às suas chefias, nomeadamente em termos de práticas de envolvimento do trabalhador e de conciliação trabalho-família.

Para participar no estudo basta que se encontre a trabalhar há, pelo menos, três meses sob a supervisão da mesma chefia numa empresa de consultoria e auditoria. As suas respostas são importantes uma vez que permitirão um aprofundamento do conhecimento sobre esta temática. Quanto mais pessoas participarem na pesquisa, mais robustos serão os resultados encontrados.

A sua participação é voluntária, pelo que poderá desistir a qualquer momento. O preenchimento deste questionário demora aproximadamente 10 minutos. Não existem respostas certas ou erradas, é apenas procurada a sua opinião pessoal e sincera. Todas as respostas são anónimas e confidenciais, sendo os dados utilizados apenas para fins académicos.

Cada questão tem instruções que auxiliam no preenchimento. É importante que responda a todas as questões, para que o seu questionário possa ser considerado para o estudo.

Muito obrigada pela sua participação,
Catarina Vicente

Ao carregar no botão para Continuar, está a indicar que compreendeu esta informação e a concordar em participar neste estudo.

Appendix B

Authentic Leadership Perception Scale

Na sua atividade profissional, reporta a alguma chefia direta, isto é, existe uma pessoa que supervisiona o seu trabalho?

Sim	Não
○	○

Há quantos anos trabalha com esta chefia? (se trabalha há menos de 1 ano, use casas decimais; por exemplo, 3 meses = 0.25; 6 meses =0.5; 9 meses = 0.75)

[   ]

Qual a frequência de interação com a sua chefia direta?

○ Diária

○ Semanal

○ Quinzenal

○ Mensal

Ao longo do último ano, qual o suporte mais utilizado na interação com a sua chefia?

○ Virtual

○ Misto

○ Presencial

Tendo em consideração o último ano, em que modalidade trabalha maioritariamente a sua chefia?

○ Em casa

○ Misto

○ Nas instalações da empresa

A sua chefia directa é:

○ Do sexo masculino

○ Do sexo feminino

Authentic Leadership Questionnaire Sample Items

É agora pedido que reflita sobre as atitudes e comportamentos da sua chefia e refira a frequência com que cada uma das afirmações se aplicam à mesma.

	Nunca	Uma vez por outra	Por vezes	Com alguma frequência	Frequentemente, se não sempre
Self-Awareness					
Procura obter informação (feedback) das pessoas para melhorar as interações com elas.	○	○	○	○	○
Tem uma noção clara do modo como os outros encaram as suas (dele/a) capacidades.	○	○	○	○	○
Relational Transparency					
Diz exatamente o que pensa.	○	○	○	○	○
Assume os erros que comete.	○	○	○	○	○
Internalized Moral Perspective					
As suas ações são consistentes com as suas crenças.	○	○	○	○	○
Toma decisões baseado(a) nos seus valores fundamentais.	○	○	○	○	○
Balanced Processing					
Solicita-me pontos de vista que questionem as suas (dele/a) posições mais profundas.	○	○	○	○	○
Ouve cuidadosamente os diferentes pontos de vista antes de tirar conclusões.	○	○	○	○	○

Mantendo a reflexão sobre as atitudes e comportamentos da sua chefia, indique em que medida concorda com as seguintes afirmações:

	Discordo totalmente	Discordo	Não concordo nem discordo	Concordo	Concordo totalmente
A minha chefia compreende as minhas exigências familiares.	○	○	○	○	○
A minha chefia ouve-me quando falo sobre assuntos familiares.	○	○	○	○	○
A minha chefia reconhece que apresento obrigações como membro de uma família.	○	○	○	○	○
A minha chefia trabalha com os seus colaboradores de maneira a resolver, criativamente, os conflitos entre a vida profissional e pessoal.	○	○	○	○	○
A minha chefia é um bom exemplo de um colaborador que consegue conciliar tanto a sua vida profissional como pessoal.	○	○	○	○	○
A minha chefia pergunta sugestões de como facilitar o trabalho dos seus colaboradores com o equilíbrio das suas vidas profissionais e pessoais.	○	○	○	○	○

Appendix C

Work Engagement Perception Scale

Abaixo são apresentadas afirmações que indicam sentimentos que pode ter em relação à sua atividade profissional. Por favor, leia atentamente cada afirmação e indique com que frequência se sente assim relativamente ao seu trabalho.

	Nunca	Quase Nunca	Raramente	Às Vezes	Frequentemente	Muito Frequente	Sempre
No meu trabalho, sinto-me cheio(a) de energia	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
No meu trabalho, sinto-me com força e vigor	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Quando me levanto pela manhã, tenho vontade de ir trabalhar	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Estou entusiasmado(a) com o meu trabalho	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
O meu trabalho inspira-me	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Eu tenho orgulho no trabalho que faço	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Eu sinto-me feliz quando estou a trabalhar intensamente	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sinto-me envolvido(a) com o meu trabalho	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
"Deixo-me levar" pelo meu trabalho	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Appendix D

Work-Family Balance Perception Scale

As questões que se seguem dizem respeito ao balanço entre vida profissional e familiar/pessoal. Indique em que medida concorda ou discorda com os itens listados.

	Discordo totalmente	Discordo	Não concordo nem discordo	Concordo	Concordo totalmente
As exigências do meu trabalho coexistem com a minha vida familiar/pessoal.	○	○	○	○	○
O tempo que dispenso no meu trabalho faz com que seja fácil responder às responsabilidades familiares/pessoais.	○	○	○	○	○
Tarefas que pretendo realizar na esfera pessoal coexistem com as exigências que o meu trabalho requer.	○	○	○	○	○
As dificuldades que o meu trabalho produz não me impedem de responder às responsabilidades familiares/pessoais.	○	○	○	○	○
Apesar do meu trabalho, consigo manter os planos familiares/pessoais.	○	○	○	○	○
As exigências da minha vida familiar/pessoal coexistem com a minha vida profissional.	○	○	○	○	○
Concluo o meu trabalho mesmo com o tempo exigido pela minha vida familiar/pessoal.	○	○	○	○	○
Mantenho as atividades da minha vida profissional apesar das exigências da minha vida familiar/pessoal.	○	○	○	○	○
A minha vida familiar/pessoal coexiste com as minhas responsabilidades no trabalho, como cumprir tarefas diárias, trabalhar fora de horas e ter o trabalho realizado a tempo.	○	○	○	○	○
Os meus problemas familiares/pessoais não interferem com a minha performance no trabalho.	○	○	○	○	○

Appendix E

Solitary Work Preferences Scale

Tendo em conta as suas preferências na realização do seu trabalho, indique o grau em que concorda ou discorda das seguintes afirmações.

	Discordo totalmente	Discordo	Não concordo nem discordo	Concordo	Concordo totalmente
Prefiro trabalhar com outros a trabalhar sozinho/a.	○	○	○	○	○
Trabalhar com um grupo é melhor do que trabalhar sozinho/a.	○	○	○	○	○
Podendo escolher, preferia trabalhar sozinho/a.	○	○	○	○	○

Appendix F

Sociodemographic Questions

Para terminar, é pedido que indique alguns dados pessoais que serão utilizados para fins estatísticos. É importante relembrar que as suas respostas são anónimas e confidenciais. Escolha a opção que mais se adequa à sua situação atual.

Idade (em anos):

[   ]

Género:

○ Masculino

○ Feminino

○ Prefere não responder

Escolaridade (último nível concluído):

○ Até ao 9° ano

○ Entre o 10° e 12° ano

○ Licenciatura

○ Pós-gradução

○ Mestrado

○ Doutoramento

Têm familiares dependentes a seu cargo?

○ Não

○ Sim, menores de idade

○ Sim, maiores de idade

○ Sim, maiores e menores de idade

Indique o número de elementos do seu agregado familiar (pessoas que coabitam na sua residência, incluindo você):

[   ]

Professional Situation Questions

Há quantos anos trabalha na sua organização atual? (se há menos de 1 ano, utilize casas decimais - ex. 6 meses = 0,5)

[   ]

Considerando as exigências do último ano, qual a sua situação contratual atual perante a sua organização atual?

○ Efetivo/a

○ Contrato de trabalho a termo

○ Trabalho temporário

○ Estagiário/a

○ Suspensão de contrato/lay-off

○ Licença sem vencimento

○ Prestação de serviços

○ Outra situação. Qual?

[   ]

Tendo em consideração o último ano, em que modalidade trabalha maioritariamente?

○ Em casa

○ Maioritariamente em casa e algumas vezes nas instalações da empresa

○ Misto

○ Maioritariamente nas instalações da empresa e algumas vezes em casa

○ Instalações da empresa

○ Outra situação. Qual?

[   ]

Exerce um cargo de chefia?

○ Não

○ Sim

Qual a dimensão da sua organização (número aproximado de trabalhadores)?

○ mais de 250 trabalhadores

○ 50 a 250 trabalhadores

○ 10 a 49 trabalhadores

○ até 9 trabalhadores