-RESEARCH ARTICLE-

THE IMPACT OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP AND MINDFULNESS ON EMPLOYEES' WORK HAPPINESS IN THE PRESENCE OF SOCIAL MEDIA USE

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─**Abstract**─

This study explores the influence of authentic leadership on employee work happiness in a social media-driven work environment, focusing on mindfulness as a mediating factor through Social Cognitive Theory (SCT). A survey of 373 employees from the manufacturing sector in the Guangdong-Hong Kong-Macao Greater Bay Area was conducted, with structural equation modelling (SEM) employed to analyse the data. The findings indicate a significant positive relationship between authentic leadership and work happiness, while social media usage negatively impacts employee happiness. Furthermore, when it comes to job satisfaction, the association among social media use and authentic leadership is mediated by mindfulness. This study advances theoretical understanding of leadership and worker well-being and offers helpful suggestions for

company executives looking to increase worker satisfaction through mindful procedures and successful leadership techniques.

Keywords: Authentic Leadership; Work Happiness; Mindfulness; Social Media Use.

INTRODUCTION

Happiness is a fundamental concept in positive psychology and a key area of interest in both academic and professional sectors (Compton & Hoffman, 2013). It is regarded as a primary objective for individuals, with countries worldwide increasingly striving to enhance the happiness of their citizens (Aydin, 2012). Furthermore, happiness is being progressively utilised as a significant metric of national development (Diener et al., 1999). As a leading manufacturing nation, China is also placing emphasis on improving the happiness and sense of fulfilment of its citizens as part of its development strategy (Lu, 2001). In contemporary society and workplace settings, employees' work happiness is becoming widely recognised as an essential indicator of organisational well-being and performance (Fisher, 2010).

With the growing emphasis on employees' work happiness, scholars have increasingly examined the various factors that contribute to it. Employees' work happiness is commonly defined as the overall satisfaction individuals derive from both their work and life (Wesarat et al., 2014). As a significant area of academic inquiry, numerous studies have explored the antecedents of employees' work happiness. At the individual level, work engagement, job satisfaction, and affective organisational commitment are identified as key components (Fisher, 2010). For more than two decades, research on work happiness has predominantly focused on pleasurable assessments, including positive attitudes, and experiences, such as positive emotions, moods, and flow states within occupational contexts. Fernández et al. (2017) linked job satisfaction to increased happiness, suggesting that job fulfilment can boost self-esteem.

Empirical research has shown that organisational culture, work climate, and leadership are key determinants of employees' work happiness (Fisher, 2010; Salas-Vallina et al., 2020), with leadership being particularly critical. Various leadership models, such as transformational and authentic styles, have been widely recognised for promoting positive employee attitudes (Breevaart et al., 2014). Transformational and charismatic leadership, in particular, have been shown to enhance employees' positive emotional responses and job satisfaction (Burns & Ward, 1978). Furthermore, inspirational leadership has been found to positively impact work happiness (Salas-Vallina et al., 2020). Despite these findings, research on authentic leadership remains limited. While studies by Penger and Černe (2014) have noted its positive effects on employee well-being, there is still a gap in exploring its direct influence on job satisfaction (Wang & Hsieh, 2013).

Gardner et al. (2005) asserts that leaders who exemplify these traits instil confidence and satisfaction in their teams, leading to trust and enhanced productivity. This concept aligns with SCT, which posits a dynamic interplay between environmental factors, personal cognition, emotions, and behaviour (Bandura, 1986). The authenticity, optimism, and hope inherent in authentic leadership enable leaders to adapt emotionally to environmental shifts, fostering positive relationships with subordinates and creating a supportive work atmosphere (George et al., 2007). Empirical research confirms that authentic leadership positively influences job satisfaction (Gardner et al., 2005), which enhances workplace engagement—a critical factor in employee happiness (Farid et al., 2022). Leadership behaviours, which significantly shape employee attitudes, are key to promoting proactive employee behaviours (Morrison, 2011). Furthermore, it has been demonstrated that genuine leadership lowers stress and increases job satisfaction, all of which add to general pleasure.

Social media has become an integral technological tool in the workplace, attracting increasing scholarly attention. Individuals spend approximately 27% of their online time on social media, surpassing the time allocated to entertainment, email, and news combined (Tatham et al., 2013). While social media platforms have revolutionised communication and information sharing, their impact on employee productivity, focus, and overall happiness must be carefully considered. Some scholars have found that social media usage at work negatively impacts employee satisfaction and productivity. Additionally, research suggests that social media engagement can affect subjective well-being and mental health (Zhang et al., 2023).

Central to this process is mindfulness, defined as "an awareness of one's internal experiences that does not involve judgment" (Keng et al., 2011). Social media addiction has been linked to emotional exhaustion, mediated by mindfulness (Sriwilai & Charoensukmongkol, 2016). Excessive social media use may distract individuals from their immediate environment, reducing mindfulness. Research has also shown that high levels of social media use contribute to distraction and decreased job satisfaction (Speier et al., 1999). Practicing mindfulness has the potential to counteract the adverse impacts of social media usage by improving concentration and promoting emotional stability (Hülsheger et al., 2013). Research by Ruedy and Schweitzer (2010) shows that mindfulness training improves self-regulation and attention control, helping employees manage social media distractions and maintain work happiness.

This study offers insights into organizational management and leadership development by proposing a theoretical framework for understanding employee work happiness. It incorporates mindfulness as a mediating variable, enhancing the exploration of authentic leadership's influence on work happiness, especially regarding challenges from social media. The findings contribute significantly to leadership theories, emphasizing authentic leadership's crucial role in promoting employee well-being.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND AND HYPOTHESIS

Authentic Leadership and Work Happiness

Research on authentic leadership, which combines positive psychological capacities with a strong ethical foundation, is still relatively limited (Martin et al., 2013). Further research conducted by (Fisher, 2010; Lyubomirsky et al., 2005) emphasises the critical role of job satisfaction and emotional well-being in enhancing employee productivity and organisational commitment. Within this body of literature, leadership style—especially authentic leadership—emerges as a key factor affecting employee happiness. According to SCT, authentic leaders who demonstrate exemplary values and traits can adjust their emotional responses to environmental changes and engage harmoniously with their subordinates, thereby promoting a positive and optimistic organisational climate (George et al., 2007). This leadership style fosters favourable perceptions of the leader among employees, resulting in stronger organisational identification, as evidenced by improved work attitudes and performance. Moreover, extant research indicates that leadership styles can have considerable positive or negative effects on employees' psychological well-being, work attitudes, and behaviours. Happiness, often synonymous with psychological health, underscores the importance of authenticity, purpose, and leading a resourceful, advantageous, and meaningful life (Waterman et al., 2010). Therefore, it is posited that authentic leadership enhances employees' work happiness, which leads to the formulation of hypothesis H1.

H1: *Authentic leadership has a positive effect on work happiness.*

Social Media Use and Work Happiness

At present, platforms such as Facebook and TikTok have fundamentally altered global communication, interaction, and social engagement. In addition to facilitating everyday communication, social media is widely employed in workplace environments, enabling both for-profit and non-profit organisations to cultivate strong connections with their target audiences (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Individuals across the globe consistently check their social media accounts, regardless of the time or location. Research in academia regarding the integration of social media within professional environments has been expanding, concentrating on both its advantages and disadvantages. The effects of social media engagement have produced inconsistent findings; some studies highlight its benefits, while others emphasise its adverse impacts. For instance, although certain research suggests that social media use provides numerous advantages, an increasing number of individuals are reported to be becoming addicted to these platforms (Koc & Gulyagci, 2013).

In the workplace, social media facilitates the rapid exchange of information and interaction, enabling employees to efficiently collect data and address challenges.

However, research also highlights the negative consequences of excessive use, including distraction, cognitive load, and diminished operational effectiveness, which can heighten professional stress and reduce job satisfaction. Moqbel (2018) found that excessive engagement with social media contributes to cognitive overload and fatigue, negatively impacting job satisfaction and psychological well-being. Furthermore, Gaudreau et al. (2014) confirmed that simultaneous engagement in work tasks and social media use leads to decreased productivity, while increasing stress and dissatisfaction. SCT posits that distractions arising from social media usage in the workplace can impair employees' focus, resulting in reduced task engagement, with some individuals struggling to resist the allure of social media platforms (Karaiskos et al., 2010). Accordingly, we propose research hypothesis H2.

H2: *Social media use has a negative effect on work happiness.*

Authentic Leadership and Mindfulness

Mindfulness, rooted in Buddhist meditation, is recognized as focused attention (Jacobs & Blustein, 2008). Langer (1989) defines it as a cognitive state where individuals let go of established mental frameworks to concentrate on the present moment while remaining aware of new stimuli and their environment. This intentional observation enhances one's connection to the present, sensitivity to surroundings, and improves work performance. Mindfulness involves deep engagement, acute awareness of internal and external realities, and an accepting stance toward these perceptions (Baer et al., 2004). Research consistently shows that mindfulness positively impacts employee engagement, job performance, and overall well-being (Coo & Salanova, 2018). Walumbwa et al. (2008) argues that authentic leadership fosters open communication, present-focused engagement, and fair feedback evaluation, characterized by self-awareness and equitable decision-making. However, the empirical link between authentic leadership and mindfulness remains underexplored, and the effectiveness of leadership development programs in promoting mindfulness is yet to be proven (Baron, 2016). According to SCT, authentic leaders instil qualities like hope, optimism, and sincerity in their subordinates, enhancing work engagement and emotional expression. Consequently, authentic leadership is seen as a model that positively influences mindfulness in organizations, with highly mindful individuals more likely to exhibit authentic behaviours (Leroy et al., 2013). This leads to our research hypothesis H3.

H3: *Authentic leadership positively affects mindfulness.*

Social Media Use and Mindfulness

In the workplace, employees are interrupted by social media an average of 6 to 8 times per day, consuming approximately 28% of their daily time (Geynisman, 2015). Social media use disrupts around 40% of employees' work time, diverting attention from primary tasks. Following an interruption, it takes individuals about 25 minutes to regain

their original focus. Such disruptions hinder mental concentration and effort. Clinical studies indicate that employees may develop a dependency on social media, characterised by an intense urge to engage with these platforms, which significantly impairs their ability to concentrate on professional tasks and manage other responsibilities.

According to Jones et al. (2022), individuals experiencing social media addiction may find it challenging to engage in mindfulness practices. Regular engagement with social media during work can detract from immediate tasks and reduce environmental awareness. Despite the common belief that social media use might hinder mindfulness, investigations into this relationship remain limited. According to SCT, frequent interruptions or habitual checking of social media can significantly impair concentration on current activities, as the compulsion to access these platforms leads to substantial distraction. Furthermore, evidence indicates that individuals with a strong reliance on social media may experience anxiety when they are unable to access or update their profiles (Andreassen et al., 2012). Consequently, this leads to the formulation of research hypothesis H4.

H4: *Social Media Use Negatively Impacts Mindfulness.*

Mindfulness and Work Happiness

Research indicates that mindfulness practices positively impact both hedonic (Didonna, 2009) and eudaimonia well-being (Brown et al., 2007). Employees who are engaged demonstrate elevated energy levels, strong commitment, and intense participation in their activities (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004; Schaufeli et al., 2006). This heightened engagement not only contributes to individual happiness Bakker and Demerouti (2008) but also bolsters overall organisational effectiveness (Rich et al., 2010). Mindfulness, regarded as a stable trait and an essential human quality, can be developed to improve an individual's awareness of their thoughts, behaviours, and emotions (Mellor et al., 2016). This heightened engagement promotes positive emotions, which subsequently enhance personal resources and overall life satisfaction (Fredrickson, 2001). Drawing on these findings, we propose research hypothesis H5.

H5: *Mindfulness has a positive effect on work happiness.*

The Mediating Effect of Mindfulness Between Authentic Leadership and Work Happiness

Mindfulness involves a deep connection to the present, marked by acute awareness and non-judgmental acceptance of experiences (Baer et al., 2004; Brown et al., 2007). Research shows that mindfulness improves job performance, engagement, and well-being (Coo & Salanova, 2018; Schaufeli et al., 2006). Social Cognitive Theory (SCT) highlights the dynamic interaction between personal and environmental factors

(Bandura, 1986). Walumbwa et al. (2008) emphasize that traits linked to authentic leadership, such as self-awareness, are crucial for cultivating mindfulness in the workplace, which can enhance job satisfaction and overall well-being (Brown et al., 2007). Reb et al. (2014) bolster this argument by arguing that mindfulness exercises at work can enhance emotional control, stress reduction, and job satisfaction. In light of this, we would like to suggest the following study hypothesis H6a.

H6a: *Mindfulness serves as a mediator in the relationship between authentic leadership and work happiness.*

The Mediating Effect of Mindfulness Between Social Media Use and Work Happiness

According to Keng et al. (2011), mindfulness is an attitude of non-judgment towards one's thoughts and feelings as well as environmental awareness. Research indicates that mindfulness not only mitigates symptoms of depression but also enhances levels of happiness (Kircaburun et al., 2019). The pervasive use of social media fosters improved connectivity among family, friends, and colleagues, thereby creating new opportunities for interaction in both professional and personal contexts. However, its negative psychological effects are extensively documented, particularly its association with increased rates of depression (Twenge et al., 2018). The excessive use of social media, often perceived as addictive, is correlated with emotional exhaustion, a relationship in which mindfulness appears to play a significant role (Sriwilai & Charoensukmongkol, 2016). Furthermore, heightened engagement with social media typically distracts individuals from their immediate environment, subsequently diminishing their levels of mindfulness (Jones et al., 2022). Additionally, lower levels of mindfulness have been linked to decreased happiness, which may contribute to greater dependence on mobile devices. Based on SCT and the evidence discussed, it is clear that social media usage affects happiness by impacting mindfulness. Consequently, the following research hypothesis H6b is put forth,

H6b: *Mindfulness mediates the relationship between social media use and work happiness.*

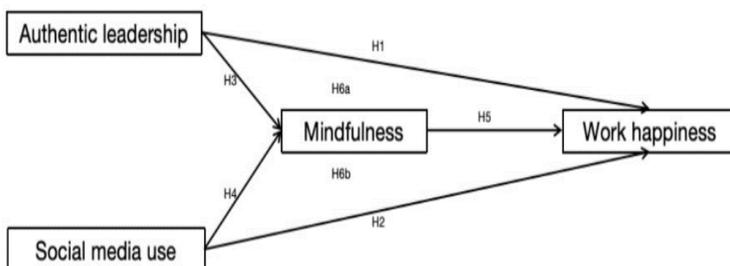Figure 1 depicts the conceptual framework that emerged from the analysis.

Figure 1: The Conceptual Framework

METHODOLOGY

Research Context

In recent years, China has placed increasing emphasis on improving the happiness of its citizens. Within the context of enterprise management, there exists a close relationship between the happiness index of the organisation and that of its employees, serving as a "barometer" for timely assessments of internal management conditions. The long-term viability of a company is contingent upon achieving high efficiency and performance, which, in turn, rely on employees' job satisfaction. A discussion published in the Harvard Business Review in 2012 articulated the widely acknowledged perspective that "the higher the employees' job satisfaction, the greater their work efficiency." Additionally, the 2023 China Employee Happiness Research Report quantifies this relationship, reporting a happiness index of 3.95 out of 5 for Chinese employees, representing an increase of 0.05 from the previous year. This statistic indicates a growing recognition among Chinese company executives of the significance of employee satisfaction in both personal and professional contexts.

Sample and Data Collection

This study employs a survey questionnaire as a quantitative research instrument, targeting personnel within the Chinese manufacturing sector. The distribution of the questionnaire was conducted in Zhuhai and Guangzhou, two cities located in southern China. The data collection period extended for two months, from May to July 2024. This research employed a multi-stage simple random sampling procedure. According to the Guangdong Bureau of Statistics, approximately 100,000 large enterprises were operating in Guangdong as of 2022. Drawing upon the methodologies outlined by Baumgartner (2013) and Babin et al. (2008), it is recommended that the minimum acceptable ratio of valid questionnaires to sample items be maintained between 5:1 and 10:1. Given that this survey comprises 37 questions, adhering to a 10:1 ratio necessitated a minimum of 370 valid responses. To enhance reliability and reduce potential errors, the final sample size was determined to be 420. This study collected 373 valid questionnaires, achieving a 90% response rate. All Cronbach's Alpha coefficients were above 0.7, indicating that the instruments were valid and reliable, according to data analysis performed with SPSS 25.0. Factor analysis was deemed appropriate with a KMO score of 0.968, and the Bartlett's test yielded a significant chi-square of 13,383.678 ($P < 0.01$).

Measures

In accordance with Brislin (1970) procedure, the metrics were translated from English to Chinese and then back-translated to English to maintain the original scale's conceptual integrity.

Authentic Leadership

Four components of authentic leadership—self-awareness, relational transparency, internalised moral perspective, and balanced information processing—help to foster positive psychological qualities and ethical awareness (Walumbwa et al., 2008). The present research employed the eight-item (two per dimension) Authentic Leadership Questionnaire developed by (Walumbwa et al., 2008), which has been used by other researchers.

Social Media Use

In this study, the definition of social media use encompasses engagement with personal social media platforms during work hours, with a particular focus on its effects on workplace productivity. To effectively measure social media use, the research integrated components from two established scales: three items from the Information Overload Scale developed by (Karr-Wisniewski & Lu, 2010) and two items from the Social Media Use Intensity Scale created by (Ellison et al., 2007). This approach resulted in a comprehensive five-item evaluation tool.

Mindfulness

The ability to maintain a concentrated, nonjudgmental awareness of the current moment is known as mindfulness (Bishop et al., 2004). The "Workplace Mindfulness Scale," developed by Zheng Xiaoming and colleagues at Tsinghua University, was used to evaluate this construct. This 18-item scale measures Awareness, Attention, and Acceptance, and has been shown to significantly impact employees' psychological well-being and workplace attitudes and behaviours.

Work Happiness

Previous research defines work happiness as an individual's contentment with both their professional responsibilities and personal life (Carleton et al., 2009). This idea comprises components like hedonism, enjoyment, activation, and general well-being and covers satisfaction with the job itself, employment qualities, and a sense of belonging within the organisation (Xanthopoulou et al., 2012). Numerous scales have been employed in prior studies to measure work happiness. In this research, the Employee Happiness Scale developed by Professor Zheng Xiaoming and Professor Liu Xin from Tsinghua University, China (Zheng & Liu, 2016), was utilised, taking into account the characteristics of Chinese employees. This scale consists of three dimensions—life happiness, work happiness, and psychological happiness—and comprises a total of eighteen items. For this study, the six-item dimension focusing on pleasure at work was selected, as it primarily addresses employees' job satisfaction.

Control Variables

Four demographic factors—gender, age, marital status, and years of service—that are significant to workers in Chinese businesses were taken into account during the investigation. The following was the encoding for gender and marital status: Male = 0, female = 1; married = 0 and single = 1. Years were used to record age and years of service.

Analytical Strategy

Descriptive statistical analysis was first performed using SPSS 25.0, which involved calculating means, standard deviations, internal consistency coefficients, and Pearson correlations. Following this, confirmatory factor analysis and SEM were conducted using AMOS 25.0 to test the proposed hypotheses, examine interrelationships within the theoretical model, and identify mediating effects through bootstrapping techniques (Edwards & Lambert, 2007). Furthermore, all coefficients, including indirect effects, were estimated using 10,000 bootstrapping iterations and a 95% confidence interval (CI).

RESULTS

Descriptive Statistics

The means, standard deviations, and correlations between the variables are displayed in Table 1's quantitative data. Authentic leadership and mindfulness have a substantial positive correlation ($r = 0.434$, $P < 0.01$), while social media use and mindfulness have a negative correlation ($r = -0.420$, $P < 0.01$). Additionally, social media use has a negative correlation ($r = -0.444$, $P < 0.01$) with work happiness, but mindfulness has a positive correlation ($r = 0.466$, $P < 0.01$) with work happiness.

Measurement Model Analysis

Confirmatory factor analyses performed using AMOS 25.0 addressed concerns regarding discriminant validity stemming from the reliance on single-source data. As shown in Table 2, the four-factor model exhibited a satisfactory fit ($\chi^2 = 768.406$, DF = 623, $\chi^2/\text{DF} = 1.233$, CFI = 0.983, TLI = 0.982, RMSEA = 0.025). Both fit indices and chi-square difference tests confirmed that this model—comprising Authentic Leadership, Mindfulness, Work Happiness, and Social Media Use—was more accurately aligned with the data compared to alternative models. To address potential biases from common method variance (CMV) in self-reported measures, Harman's single-factor test was conducted, revealing that the principal factor explained only 39.23% of the variance. Additionally, a single-factor model showed poor fit ($\chi^2 = 3451.860$, DF = 630, CFI = 0.670), indicating CMV does not significantly affect the study's findings. This lends credence to the idea that the four variables are separate

conceptual entities.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics, and Correlations among Variables (N=373).

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Gender	1.617	0.487	1						
Age	2.625	0.838	-0.011	1					
Marital Status	1.322	0.552	0.08	-0.395**	1				
Years of Experience in the Unit	2.877	0.992	-0.054	0.429**	-0.394**	1			
Authentic Leadership	3.543	0.870	-0.015	-0.01	0	0.049	1		
Social Media Use	3.558	0.872	-0.075	0.026	-0.01	0.019	-0.373**	1	
Mindfulness	3.553	0.821	0.009	0.015	0.001	0.013	0.434**	-0.420**	1
Work Happiness	3.565	0.672	0.015	0.037	0.018	0.055	0.461**	-0.444**	0.466**

Note：*P<0.05 **P<0.01(Two-Tailed).

Table 2. Comparison of Measurement Models.

Model	X²	DF	X²/DF	CFI	TLI	RMSEA
Four-Factor Model	468.406	623	1.233	0.983	0.982	0.025
Three-Factor Model	2162.963	625	3.461	0.820	0.808	0.081
Two-Factor Model	2590.082	627	4.131	0.770	0.756	0.092
One-Factor Model	3451.860	630	5.479	0.670	0.651	0.110

Note: Four-Factor Model：Authentic Leadership, Mindfulness, Work Happiness, Social Media Use；Three-Factor Model：Authentic Leadership, Mindfulness, Work Happiness, Social Media Use；Two-Factor Model：Authentic Leadership, Mindfulness, Work Happiness，Social Media Use；One-Factor Model：Authentic Leadership, Mindfulness, Work Happiness, Social Media Use.

Table 3. CMV Test

Component	Initial Eigenvalues			Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings			Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings		
	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %	Total	% of Variance	Cumulative %
1	14.513	39.226	39.226	14.513	39.226	39.226	10.688	28.887	28.887
2	4.075	11.013	50.239	4.075	11.013	50.239	5.431	14.679	43.566
3	2.570	6.947	57.186	2.570	6.947	57.186	3.494	9.442	53.008
4	1.794	4.849	62.034	1.794	4.849	62.034	3.340	9.026	62.034
Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.									

Hypothesis Testing

The purpose of SEM is to investigate the interrelationships among latent, observable, disturbance, and error variables by integrating various statistical analysis methods. This approach serves both analytical and measurement functions. In this study, SEM analyses were conducted with AMOS 25.0 to assess the sample data, validate hypotheses, and examine variable interactions. Model validity was evaluated using RMSEA, IFI, CFI, and chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio. Results, indicating compliance with SEM criteria, are detailed in Table 4.

Table 4: Model Fit

	X^2	Df	X^2/Df	RMSEA	CFI	IFI
Fit Result	768.406	623	1.233	0.025	0.983	0.983
Fit Standard			<5	<0.08	>0.9	>0.9

Figure 2 and Table 5 show how the study factors interact with one another. According to the analysis, work satisfaction is favourably influenced by authentic leadership (β = 0.285, SE = 0.044, P < 0.001), which is consistent with hypothesis H1. On the other hand, social media use has an adverse effect on job satisfaction (β = -0.293, SE = 0.049, P < 0.001), supporting hypothesis H2. Social media use has a detrimental impact on mindfulness (β = -0.321, SE = 0.061, P < 0.001), validating hypothesis H4, but authentic leadership also has a positive impact on mindfulness (β = 0.325, SE = 0.055, P < 0.001), supporting hypothesis H3. Lastly, the hypothesis H5 is supported by the positive correlation between mindfulness and job happiness (β = 0.262, SE = 0.045, P < 0.001).
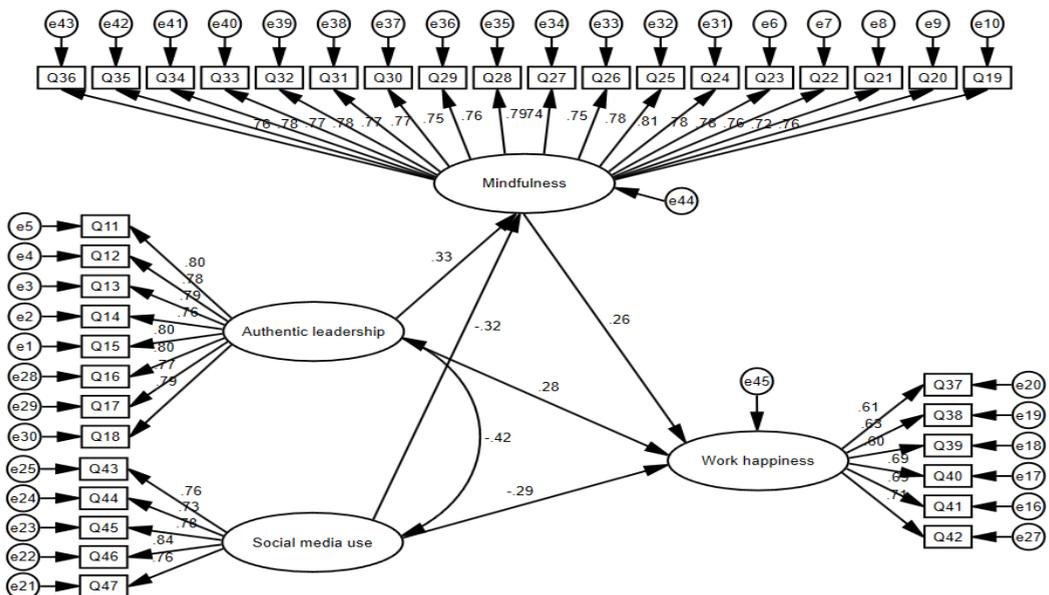

Figure 2: Research Hypothesis Testing Path Coefficient

Table 5: Test for Indirect Effects

Hypothesis	Path Relationships	Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Results
H1	Authentic Leadership → Work happiness	0.285	0.044	4.733	<0.001	Support
H2	Social Media Use → Work happiness	-0.293	0.049	-4.698	<0.001	Support
H3	Authentic Leadership → Mindfulness	0.325	0.055	5.814	<0.001	Support
H4	Social Media Use→ Mindfulness	-0.321	0.061	-5.575	<0.001	Support
H5	Mindfulness → Work happiness	0.262	0.045	4.362	<0.001	Support

To investigate the mediating role of mindfulness, this study utilized the bootstrap technique, analysing 5,000 samples to produce a 95% CI. The results, presented in Table 6, demonstrate that authentic leadership positively affects work happiness through mindfulness, yielding an indirect effect of 0.085 with a CI ranging from 0.031 to 0.109, which does not include zero. This finding supports Hypothesis H6a. Conversely, the results indicate an indirect effect of social media use on the relationship between mindfulness and work happiness of -0.084, with a CI spanning from -0.116 to -0.034, also excluding zero, thereby confirming Hypothesis H6b. These outcomes underscore the significant mediating roles of social media use and mindfulness within the frameworks of work happiness and leadership.

Table 6: Test for Indirect Effects

Parameter	Estimate	SE	95%CI	P
Total Effect				
Authentic Leadership →Work Happiness	0.370	0.045	[0.188,0.369]	<0.001
Direct Effects				
Authentic Leadership →Work Happiness	0.285	0.044	[0.126,0.3]	<0.001
Indirect Effects				
Authentic Leadership → Mindfulness →Work Happiness	0.085	0.019	[0.031,0.109]	<0.001
Total effect				
Social Media Use→ Work Happiness	-0.377	0.059	[-0.417,-0.184]	<0.001
Direct Effects				
Social Media Use → Work Happiness	-0.293	0.059	[-0.348,-0.112]	<0.01
Indirect Effects				
Social Media Use → Mindfulness → Work Happiness	-0.084	0.02	[-0.116,-0.034]	<0.001

DISCUSSION

This study uses SCT to investigate the impact of social media on the interaction between 373 workers in the Chinese manufacturing industry and job satisfaction and authentic leadership. The findings show that genuine leadership and work happiness are

significantly positively correlated, with mindfulness serving as a critical mediating factor. Additionally, the detrimental impact of using social media at work on job satisfaction is mitigated by mindfulness. The theoretical and practical ramifications of these findings are discussed in the section that follows.

Theoretical Contributions

The theoretical contributions of this study are articulated across three principal domains:

First and foremost, the goal of this study is to improve and broaden the theoretical framework that describes the factors that influence workers' job satisfaction. The significance of a healthy work environment for businesses and their employees has been underscored by historical analyses (Fisher, 2010; Simmons, 2014). However, there remains a paucity of studies specifically examining employees' work happiness within organisations (Fisher, 2010; Hosie et al., 2012). Existing research suggests that work happiness yields significant advantages for organisations (Seligman, 2018). Employees exhibiting higher levels of happiness tend to perform better and display greater willingness to collaborate. Consequently, this study primarily investigates the factors influencing work happiness, thereby enriching the existing literature in this area. This study extends leadership theories by showing how real leadership affects employee satisfaction. Authentic leadership boosts individual and organisational productivity (Bailey et al., 2017; Duarte et al., 2021; Semedo et al., 2018). Authentic leaders improve employee satisfaction, but research on their benefits on well-being is scarce (Wang & Hsieh, 2013).

Third, this study emphasises the important part that mindfulness plays in explaining how true leadership leads to happiness at work, especially when it comes to using social media. Being mindful, which means accepting and not judging the current moment (Bishop et al., 2004), helps people control their thoughts, feelings, and interactions, whether they happen all the time or sometimes (Hölzel et al., 2011; Mellor et al., 2016). However, mindfulness has only recently been added to business practices (Dane, 2011). This study provides strong empirical evidence in favour of adding mindfulness to business management strategies.

Practical Implications

This research offers practical implications, highlighting how internal and external factors—such as social media use, authentic leadership, and mindfulness—significantly influence employees' work happiness. Many employees in Chinese enterprises experience low work happiness, resulting in diminished motivation, insufficient attention, and weak organisational identification, which can impede innovation and adaptability. Given the substantial benefits of work happiness for both individuals and organisations, as noted by (Fisher, 2010), this study provides managers with actionable

strategies to enhance workplace happiness.

This study highlights that authentic leadership significantly enhances job satisfaction and workplace morale by fostering trust through honesty and ethical conduct, ultimately boosting work efficiency. Organizations should cultivate leaders who embody authentic, optimistic behaviours to motivate employees and promote happiness. By creating an environment where employees can express their authentic selves, this leadership style enhances self-efficacy, engagement, and alignment with organizational goals, thereby reducing stress and increasing job satisfaction. Additionally, the study underscores the importance of mindfulness in the workplace, demonstrating its positive correlation with work happiness. Organizations should promote mindfulness awareness, as training can improve mindfulness levels and positively influence behaviour, even with short-term interventions (Leroy et al., 2013). Implementing mindfulness practices, both informally and through structured courses, can enhance employee well-being (Hülsheger et al., 2013). Thus, organizations should develop training programs that promote authentic leadership behaviours alongside mindfulness training.

Limitations and Future Directions

Although this study provides seminal findings, it recognises numerous limitations. First and foremost, the focus has been on specific industries and regions, which might limit the generalisability of findings. Future research should look to expand the sample size and increase geographic diversity. Second, this study centres only on authentic leadership without looking at overlaps with other styles of leadership. Further study in the differences of other forms of leadership styles and extraneous variables that might shape the relationship between leadership and worker happiness is needed. Such an extension would give a more overall view of what constitutes the factors to play in different organizational settings. In conclusion, using survey-based data collection is susceptible to various errors and biases, including social desirability bias and common method bias.For example, future studies could more strongly strengthen their methodologies by including multiple methods of data collection that entail interviews and third-party evaluations.

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