THE MEDIATING ROLE OF ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION IN THE EFFECT OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP ON SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY

OTANTİK LİDERLİĞİN SOSYAL SÜRDÜRÜLEBİLİRLİĞE ETKİSİNDE ÖRGÜTSEL ÖZDEŞLEŞMENİN ARACILIK ROLÜ

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Abstract

In the ever-changing and developing world, it is becoming difficult for the service sector to compete. Therefore, leaders can gain competitive advantage by giving importance to development and change and influencing employees. Leadership, sustainability and identification are important issues. Authentic leaders increase their followers' perceptions of social sustainability by influencing them and ensure that they identify with the organization. The purpose of this research was planned to reveal the mediating role of organizational identification in the effect of authentic leadership on social sustainability in the service sector. The research was conducted with 401 participants working in the service sector in Istanbul between 01.08.2024 – 01.12.2024. SPSS was used as the analysis method. At the end of the analysis, a weakly significant relationship was found between authentic leadership and social sustainability. A moderately positive and significant relationship was found between organizational identification and social sustainability. Authentic leadership and organizational identification positively affect social sustainability. Organizational identification has a full mediating role in the effect of authentic leadership on social sustainability. The sample consists of only those working in the service sector living in Istanbul. While the authentic leadership approach can have positive effects on social sustainability, organizational identification also plays an important role in this process. Sustainability is an important factor for the future. It is anticipated that this study will contribute to social sustainability and guide human resources management and managers in creating strategies..

Keywords: Service sector, authentic leadership, organizational identification, social sustainability

JEL Classification: M31, O39

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Öz

Sürekli değişen ve gelişen dünyada hizmet sektörünün rekabet etmesi zorlaşmaktadır. Bu yüzden liderlerin, gelişim ve değişime önem verip çalışanları etkileyebilmesiyle rekabet avantajı sağlanabilir. Liderlik, sürdürülebilirlik ve özdeşleşme önemi konulardandır. Otantik liderler takipçilerini etkileyerek onların sosyal sürdürülebilirlik algılarını artırırlar ve örgüt ile özdeşleşmelerini sağlarlar. Bu araştırmanın amacı, hizmet sektöründe otantik liderliğin sosyal sürdürülebilirliğe etkisinde örgütsel özdeşleşmenin aracılık rolünü ortaya çıkarmak için planlanmıştır. Araştırma 01.08.2024 – 01.12.2024 tarihleri arasında İstanbul'da hizmet sektöründe çalışan 401 katılımcı ile yüz yüze anket yapılmıştır. Analiz yöntemi olarak SPSS kullanılmıştır. Analiz sonunda otantik liderlik ve sosyal sürdürülebilirlik arasında zayıf derecede anlamlı ilişki bulunmuştur. Örgütsel özdeşleme ve sosyal sürdürülebilirlik arasında orta derecede pozitif anlamlı ilişki görülmüştür. Otantik liderlik ve örgütsel özdeşleşme sosyal sürdürülebilirliği pozitif yönde etkilemektedir Otantik liderliğin sosyal sürdürülebilirliğe etkisinde örgütsel özdeşleşmenin tam aracılık rolü bulunmaktadır. Örneklem sadece İstanbul' da yaşayan hizmet sektöründe çalışanlardan oluşmaktadır Otantik liderlik yaklaşımı, sosyal sürdürülebilirlik üzerinde olumlu etkilere sahip olabilirken, örgütsel özdeşleşme de bu süreçte önemli bir rol oynamaktadır. Sürdürülebilirlik gelecek için önemli bir faktördür. Bu çalışmanın sosyal sürdürülebilirliğe katkı sağlayacağı, insan kaynakları yönetiminde ve yöneticilere strateji oluşturmada rehber olacağı öngörülmektedir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Hizmet sektörü, otantik liderlik, örgütsel özdeşleşme, sosyal sürdürülebilirlik

JEL Sınıflandırılması: M31, O39

1. Introduction

Many technological, sociological, economic, political, and cultural developments in the world have affected sustainability. To ensure sustainability, original leaders who can manage rapid change and developments in a healthy way and move the business forward are needed. Since authentic leadership positively impacts sustainability, the social sustainability of businesses increases. Organizational identification ensures the integration of the employee with the enterprise and also supports social sustainability.

When we approach the 21st century and look at corporate moral bankruptcies, it is seen that the problems stem from the leadership style. Therefore, businesses have given importance to their leaders and have begun to choose leaders who can carry the business forward. Leadership styles have also changed and shaped according to environmental changes. Many new leadership styles have emerged (Saylı & Baytok, 2014). One of the leadership styles that addresses the positive aspect of leadership is authentic leadership (Korku & Kaya, 2020). This leadership style creates more self-awareness and increases positive behaviors in leader-member interactions in organizations, and creates positive feelings between the leader and the member (Alparslan & Ekşili, 2016). This leadership style is a leadership style that cares about ethical and moral values (Akyürek, 2020). In service businesses that continue their activities in a fiercely competitive environment, the challenges related to ethics and performance have required a new approach to leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Authentic leadership is a highly preferred leadership style in both business management and academic research and guides managers and researchers (Avolio et al., 2004 George et al, 2007).

Sustainability is the efficient use of resources by today's generation so that future generations can live in prosperity (Porter & Kramer, 2006). Since the existence of humanity, individuals have consumed

scarce resources first individually and then through businesses to meet their needs. The biggest goal of businesses is to develop economically. However, for this growth, it is necessary to protect the resources that will meet the needs of future generations (Ok & Göktaş, 2024). Since the consumption model is not planned with future generations in mind, the sustainability of resources becomes more difficult as time progresses. In this context, social sustainability has emerged to achieve sustainability and has entered every area of life (Özevin, 2022). Social sustainability aims to ensure social balance in many social issues such as the legal system, education, health, justice distribution, etc. by taking into account the quality of life of businesses' employees, customers, the society they are in, and even future generations (Gençoğlu & Aytaç, 2016). Today, sustainability should be achieved in the production sector or the service sector. The service sector is larger than the agricultural and industrial sectors combined (Özgün, 2023). In today's business world where intense competition is experienced, human resources, especially in the service sector, are the most important element of the differentiation strategy of organizations (Durmuş & Özyılmaz, 2024). Therefore, leaders who will manage human resources efficiently are required. Although transformational, authentic, ethical, interactive, servant, etc. leadership styles have been found to date, it is seen that the social responsibility element has not been addressed (Waldman & Galvin, 2008). Since leadership also includes social responsibility, leaders who adopt the social responsibility approach will inevitably emerge today. In this context, studies in the field of sustainability are rapidly increasing (Cavagnora & Zande, 2021). The power of influencing responsible leaders contributes to the positive development of followers, businesses and society In this way, a complex and dynamic balance between a wide range of interest groups can be maintained (Marques et al., 2018). Organizational identification is frequently used in organizational research. There is little difference between the two (Ashforth & Mael, 1989).

Sustainability is important in the globalizing world. It is the leaders who influence organizations and lead them to success or failure. Whether they are product or service businesses, all businesses want to be managed by good leaders and be successful. Therefore, the mediating role of organizational identification in the effect of authentic leadership on social sustainability has been examined. In other words, this study aims to fill the gaps in the literature specified in previous studies by addressing the concepts of authentic leadership, social sustainability and organizational identification with a holistic approach. Therefore, it is thought that the findings of the study will expand the literature and provide important clues for future studies. In the study, authentic leadership, social sustainability and organizational identification issues were investigated in depth. Then, hypotheses were created and data analysis was done according to the literature. Scale validity and reliability and hypothesis test results are contained. Conclusions and recommendations will be stated according to the analysis findings.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Authentic Leadership

As a result of the changes experienced in the world, interest in leaders with optimism, hope, flexibility, and self-awareness has increased. Leaders are necessary for individual/organizational development.

One of the modern management styles that addresses ethical/moral dimensions is authentic leadership. Luthans & Avolio (2003) revealed authentic leadership to solve current complexities, conflicts, and future leadership style demands regarding leadership styles. George (2003), while advocating the for a eadership style, argued that each individual's personal values, life story, professional and personal experiences, and motivational elements are unique to them, and stated that managers should have a single, unique, and authentic leadership style (Küçükyiğit, 2022). Authentic leadership increases the quality of communication between the members of the organization and the leader, facilitates the commitment of employees to the organization, their compliance with ethical and moral rules, and the creation of an organizational culture (Çankaya, 2019).

The word authentic means knowing oneself or being honest with oneself. It originates from Greek civilization (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Authenticity is knowing oneself and expressing oneself correctly (Harter, 2002; Avolio et al., 2004). The essence of authenticity is that a person knows and accepts oneself and is constantly open and certain towards oneself. Walumbwa et al. (2008) divided into 4 dimensions: self-awareness, transparency in relationships, internalized moral feeling and balanced use of information in decision making (Walumbwa et al., 2008; Tabak et al., 2012; Bakan & Doğan, 2013; Taşlıyan & Hırlak, 2016; Erkutlu, 2014; Saylı & Baytok, 2014; Altay, 2020). Rego et al. (2016) defined the dimension of self-awareness as the leader's knowledge of his/her own strengths and weaknesses and using them to influence his/her followers. Transparency in relationships was reported by Hughes (2005) as the leader's ability to clearly express his/her goals, identity, values and feelings (Tabak et al., 2012). The internalized moral sense dimension of authentic leadership is as follows; Kernis (2003) defined it as the individual's behavior in harmony with their values, preferences, and needs (Gül & Alacalar, 2014). Decision making is a good evaluation of information, and internal experiences and external information are impartial and free from exaggeration, distortion and denial (Yücel and Kılıç, 2017). Authentic leadership motivates followers by making their lives easier (Batson et al., 1991). At the same time, authentic leadership is a leadership shape that leads followers to progress in every way and does not think about its own interests while doing this (Twemlow, 2001).

An altruistic leader develops good relationships with his members, ensures justice among his members and treats them equally, develops empathy and does not allow members to be treated unfairly (Konan & Gedik, 2019). Studies in the literature show that the authentic leader helps members without any external incentive or motivation (Weiss et al., 1973). The rapid changes in our age and the changing expectations of employees have made it easier to adopt modern leadership styles instead of classical leadership styles (Uçkun, 2022).

2.2. Social Sustainability

Social, environmental and economic sustainability influence and complement each other. The most fundamental reason for this is that environmental resources are greatly affected by the human factor. As people continue to use natural resources unconsciously, the pressure that scarce resources will create on society will also increase. As a result of this pressure, conflicts will increase and both public health and public safety will be at risk. In this context, the chaos that occurs in an unsustainable social

system will trigger environmental degradation (Blewitt, 2014). Harris & Goodwin (2001) stated that social sustainability is the use of scarce resources and their distribution being equal and fair, health and education being generally free to the public, the duration of social services appropriate to the public, not making gender information, preserving political appearances and distributing accounts. sustainability also includes carrying out all kinds of activities to ensure the welfare of the society and to live a life in prosperity (Palich & Edmonds, 2013).

The point that should be considered in sustainability studies is that individuals and organizations should also be examined socially (Goel & Sivam, 2015). In this context, sustainability is not only related to economic and technological developments but also to social change and developments, and the social dimension of sustainability should also be analyzed (Bilgili, 2017). Social sustainability is the right of all people to equal enjoyment of physical spaces and social opportunities (Woodcraft et al., 2011). Institutional sustainability is intertwined with social sustainability. It is the responsible behavior of businesses towards the whole society in all production processes and during the accounting of these processes (Yavuz, 2010). Institutional sustainability shows the growth and profitability of the business, while at the same time serving social purposes such as environmental protection, contribution to the country's economy, social rights, and justice (Wilson, 2003).

The social dimension of sustainability can be examined in three main items. These are; the development of sustainability, commitment to sustainability, and protection of sustainability. In order to improve sustainability, every individual in society must be accepted equally. Commitment to sustainability is the formation of behavioral changes in to achieve environmental goals. Achieving sustainability requires preserving socio-cultural factors during change (Vallance et al., 2011).

2.3. Organizational Identification

Porter et al., (1974-1979) examined identification as an element of emotional commitment (Riketta, 2005). Ashforth & Mael (1989) added a different dimension to organizational identification with social identity theory. Since then, organizational identification has been explained based on social identity theory (Ashforth & Fred, 1989). Identification is the employee's feeling of being one with the organization, belonging to the organization, and seeing the success of the company as his/her own success (Mael and Ashforth, 1992; Dutton et al., 1994). Identification is the employee's seeing himself/herself within the whole (Rousseau, 1998). Organizational identification is the individual's association of himself/herself with the goals of the organization (Edwards, 2005). Organizational identification is known as the employee's adaptation and integration between the goals and the business goals (Asforth & Mael, 1989; Hall et al. 1970). If employees' commitment to the company is high, their level of organizational identification will be high. When this membership is at the center of the individual's self and transcends other social group memberships, identification with the business occurs (Karabey & İşcan, 2007). As this adaptation increases, individuals become more and more emotionally attached to their roles and organizations (Buchanan 1974; Edwards & Peccei, 2007).

3. Hypothesis Development

3.1. Authentic Leadership with Social Sustainability

Today, in the study conducted of corporate responsibility and sustainability, responsible leadership is given great importance and the relationship between leadership and sustainability is widely researched. Thanks to the interest in social sustainability, a theoretically and conceptually rich research area has emerged at different levels of analysis. Compared to other leadership approaches, it focuses more on social and environmental goals. (Miska & Mendenhall, 2018). The focus of responsible leadership is on mutual relationship and responsibility with stakeholders in a universal and interdisciplinary sense (Kempster et al., 2019). Especially modern organizations create a suitable infrastructure for leaders to exhibit altruistic behaviors.

Authentic leaders are individuals who try to communicate and interact with the organization, stakeholders, and society with a common purpose and approach, and while doing this, they volunteer to help those in need (Weiss et al., 1973). Innate morality and focus on development reveal the important and noticeable elements of the authentic leadership approach. Some researchers state that advanced moral development is needed to achieve authentic leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2008). The Authentic Leadership approach includes the elements of self-awareness, flow experience, self-esteem, and self-expression (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Social sustainability between leaders and members increases the level of well-being with positive emotions. Social sustainability motivates leaders and followers to show positive behaviors, which in turn enables them to improve themselves. Leaders with authentic leadership are aware of social responsibility and fulfill this by developing positive relationships with their followers, peers, and stakeholders (Ilies et al., 1005; Wei et al., 2016). Chen and Sriphon (2022) attributed the rapidity of trust and social change to authentic leadership. As a result of the research, the following hypotheses were established.

H_1. Authentic leadership has a significant positive impact on social sustainability.

H_{1a}.Transparency in relations has a significant positive impact on social sustainability.

H_{1b}. Balanced evaluation of information has a significant positive impact on social sustainability.

H_{1c}. Internalized morality has a significant positive impact on social sustainability

H_{1d}. Self-awareness has a significant positive impact on social sustainability

H_2. There is a positive relationship between authentic leadership and social sustainability.

3.2. Organizational Identification with Social Sustainability

The success of businesses depends on having employees who are loyal, committed, and reliable to the organization (Karabey & İşcan, 2007). Organizational Identification occurs with the desire and initiative to communicate in the business and society (Kreiner & Ashforth, 2004). Identification facilitates the individual to feel close to social contexts and to be in cooperation and solidarity

(Sammara & Biggiero, 2001). Organizational identification increases the performance of the business and the employee by ensuring loyalty between the employee and the business. Therefore, research on the subject is increasing (Baş & Kesen, 2023).

Sustainability is important in the economic, social and strategic activities of businesses. (Baş & Kesen, 2023). Although the main purpose of businesses is to make a profit, they should focus on addressing economic, social, and environmental issues holistically by expanding their profit-oriented perspectives to a broader perspective (Kesen, 2016). Corporate social responsibility instills positive communication and trust with stakeholders. Institutions and organizations that fulfill this duty reduce costs and generate more income. In addition, fewer complaints are received from society and environmental concerns are reduced. Thus, businesses can develop their relationships with stakeholders such as employees, investors, bankers, and the state (Stuebs & Sun, 2011). Social sustainability is the fulfillment of moral responsibilities of businesses towards their employees, consumers, local people, and suppliers within the environment in which they operate, in addition to legal requirements (Aksak et al., 2016). Social sustainability is also defined as voluntary services that will be beneficial to society (Adeneye & Ahmed, 2015). There are many studies on organizational identification and social sustainability. Altaş (2021), organizational behavior and organizational identification among healthcare workers were investigated. Fettahlıoğlu et. al., (2024), analyzed the moderating effect of organizational support on the relationship between organizational identification and organizational citizenship. Afşar & Coşkun (2024) investigated the effect of organizational support on organizational identification in public institutions and organizations.

Akçalı, (2022) evaluated public spaces in residential areas in terms of social sustainability. Varolgüneş (2021) evaluated social sustainability performance in permanent disaster housing. Yıldız, (2021) examined the historical kemeraltı bazaar from the perspective of social sustainability. Cömertler & Cömertler (2021) examined the dimensions of sustainability in smart cities. Kumbalı et al., (2022) compared European Union countries and Turkey to reveal environmental and social sustainability in SMEs. Keyvan, (2022) investigated gender equality and corporate social responsibility in terms of social sustainability. Doğanalp and Kaplan, (2018) found that corporate social responsibility and its sub-dimensions positively affect organizational identification. Kaplan, (2018) revealed that corporate social responsibility and its sub-dimensions positively affect organizational identification. The following hypotheses were produced in line with the field text.

H_3. Organizational identification significantly and positively affects social sustainability.

H_4. There is a positive relationship between organizational identification and social sustainability.

3.3. Authentic Leadership with Organizational Identification

Authentic leaders develop positive relationships with their followers by communicating effectively with them. In this context, they are effective in achieving organizational goals (Kiersch & Peters, 2017). These leaders set a good example for their subordinates because they can demonstrate values and rules through their behavior. The positive behaviors of the authentic leader will strengthen

the organization as the employee will feel valuable and attractive. Ersöz & Çiftçi, (2022) compared the characteristics of employees with organizational identification. The basis of this leadership is effective communication and responsibility with stakeholders (Kempster et al., 2019). Especially modern organizations create a suitable infrastructure for leaders to exhibit altruistic behaviors.

There is no research examining authentic leadership and organizational identification. However, Sakal (2018) investigated servant leadership, safety and organizational identification together with management factors. He found that leadership increases organizational identification and psychological safety. Fettanoğlu et al., 2024 examined the effect of paternalistic leadership style on organizational identification. Ünal (2015). Investigated the relationship between authentic leadership behaviors of secondary school principals, teachers' voices, and organizational identification. Artar & Adıgüzel, (2017). According to the literature review, the following hypotheses were determined.

H_5: There is a positive significant relationship between authentic leadership and organizational identification.

H_{5a}. There is a positive significant relationship between transparency in relations and organizational identification.

H_{5b}. There is a positive significant relationship between the balanced evaluation of ınformation in relations and organizational identification.

H_{5c}. There is a positive significant relationship between Internalized morality balanced in relations and organizational identification.

H_{5d}. There is a positive significant relationship between self-awareness relations and organizational identification

3.4. The Relationship between Authentic Leadership, Organizational Identification and Social Sustainability

Because people are social beings, they are attached to the workplace they work in. (Milton et al., 2016). One of the elements that affect the bond between the organization and the employee is leadership. Organizational identification also provides personal and social meanings to employees (Brammer et al., 2015). Organizational identification is a social and psychological bond formed between the organization and the individual as a social being. The individual's identification with the organization occurs by actively participating in organizational processes and integrating with the goals and values of the organization (Öncer & Yıldız, 2012). Transparency, honesty, and openness can promote trust and occur between employees and authentic leaders. Authentic leadership can motivate the emotional and cognitive-based trust of employees (Chen et al., 2022). authentic leaders can provide awareness about social sustainability by guiding followers. The following hypothesis was created in line with the literature.

H_6. Organizational identification has a mediating role in the effect of authentic leadership on social sustainability.

3.5. The Mediating Role of Organizational Identification in the Effect of Authentic Leadership on Social Sustainability Research Model

The model in Figure 1 was created in line with the literature to reveal the mediating role of organizational identification in the effect of authentic leadership on social sustainability.
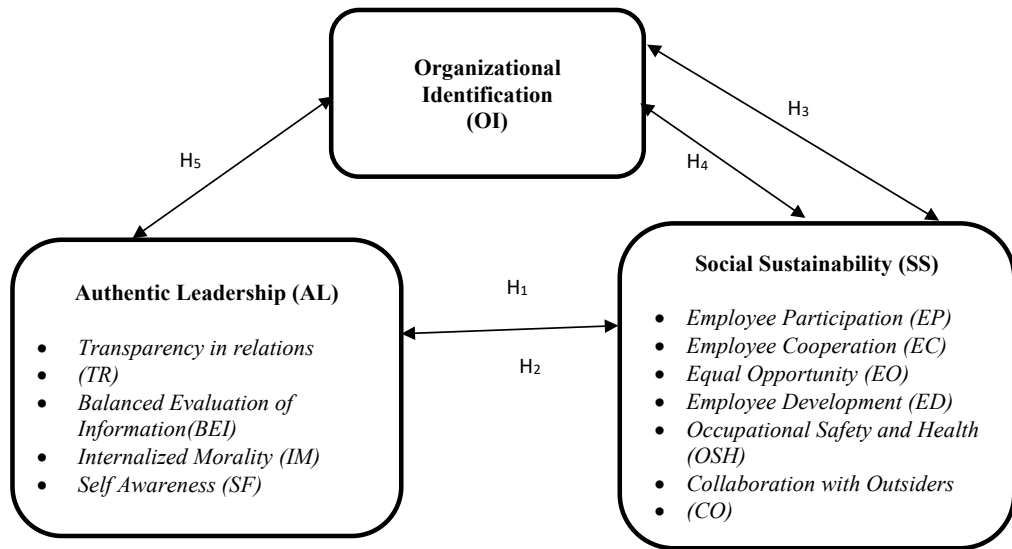
Figure 1: Research Model

4. Methodology

4.1. Purpose and Importance of the Research

This research was planned to reveal the effect of authentic leadership on social sustainability and to examine whether organizational identification has a mediating role in this relationship. The research aims to provide important results for human resource managers, executives and academics who want to understand the effects of sustainable leadership approaches on organizational structures.

4.2. Data Collection Tools and Sample

To test the hypotheses of the research were obtained from employees working in the service sector in Istanbul province between 01.08.2024 and 01.12.2024 through a face-to-face questionnaire

method. The research was conducted with 401 employees working in different sectors. The research questionnaire w consists of 4 parts; the first part consists of demographic characteristics. In the second part, the authentic leadership scale developed by Walumbwa et al. and adapted to Turkish by Tabak et al. (2012) was used to measure authentic leadership. The scale consists of a total of 16 5-point Likert-type questions. In the second part, the scale developed by Staniskiene and Stankeviciute in 2018, consisting of 6 dimensions and 31 statements and adapted to Turkish by Görmezoğlu Gökçen (2019) was used. In the fourth part, the organizational identity scale consisting of 6 questions developed by Mael and Ashforth (1992) and adapted to Turkish by Tüzün (2006) was used.

4.3. Ethics Committee Approval

Approval for the research was received from the Istanbul Gelişim University Ethics Committee with the decision dated 31.05.2024, meeting number 2024-08, and number 2024-08-08.

4.4. Sample Characteristics and Demographics

The universe consists of people working in the service sector in Istanbul, Türkiye. 500 people were reached for the sample. 457 people agreed to participate in the survey, but the survey of 401 people was considered valid. When the demographic characteristics of the participants constituting the sample were examined, it was seen that 259 people, (64.6%) were male and 142 people (35.4%) were female. 241people (60.1%) of them were married and 160 people (49.9%) were single. When the age range of the participants was evaluated, it was seen that a maximum of 104 people (25.9%) were 31-35. This is followed by 78 people (19.5%) between 36-40 years of age. It is seen that 76 people (19%) are over 41, 70 people (17.5%) are 21-25, 64 people (16%) are 26-30, and 9 people (2.2%) are 18-20 years of age, respectively. When the educational backgrounds are evaluated, it is seen that a maximum of 175 people (43.5%) are bachelor's graduates. This is seen that 80 people (20.0%) have an associate degree, 60 people (15.0%) have a high school, 51 people (12.7%) have a primary school and 35 people (8.7%) have postgraduate degrees. It is seen that the participants have been working for a maximum of 21-25 years with 170 people (42.4%). This is followed by 3-5 years with 73 people (18.2%). Respectively, it is seen that 71 people (%17.7) have worked for 11-15 years, 45 people (%11.2) have worked for 16-20 years, 18 people (%4.5) have worked for 0-2 years, 16 people (%4.0) and 8 people (%2) have worked for over 26 years. It is seen that the service sector in which the participants work the most is the health sector with 95 people (%23.7). This is followed by the education sector with 88 people (%21.9), the finance sector with 68 people (%17.0), the textile sector with 58 people (%14.5), the markets, shopping malls, etc. with 54 people (%13.5) and the others with 38 people (%9.5).

4.5. Normality Test of Research Scales

The Skewness Kurtosis test was used to measure whether the research scales provided normal distribution. Social sustainability scale Skewness = – 0.76 Kurtosis = 0.425, authentic leadership scale Skewness = – 0.401 and Kurtosis = – 0. 557 and organizational identification scale Skewness = – 0.757 and Kurtosis = 0.27 were found. George and Mallery (2010) stated that if the skewness and kurtosis values are between – 2 and +2, the data can be considered to be normally distributed.

4.6. Validity and Reliability of Research Scales

Cronbach's Alpha, Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy KMO, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were used to measure the validity and reliability of the scales. The authentic leadership scale was found to be Cronbach's Alpha=0. 928 and KMO=0.837 sigma=0.000, n= 16, the social sustainability scale was found to be Cronbach's Alpha=0. 898 and KMO=0. 800 sigma=0.000, n= 31, and the organizational identification scale was found to be Cronbach's Alpha=0.838 and KMO=0. 691 sigma=0.000, n=6. As can be understood from this, the validity and reliability of the like scales are quite high. In particular, Cronbach's Alpha coefficient is widely used to measure reliability. A coefficient of 0.70 and above indicates that internal consistency is sufficient (Nunnally & Bernstein, 1994).

Table 1: Factor Analysis of Research Scales

No	(EP)	(EC)	(EO)	(ED)	(OSH)	(CO)	(TR)	(BEI)	(IM)	(SF)	(OI)
1	,910										
2	,940										
3	,931										
4	,872										
5	,810										
6		,871									
7		,860									
8		,779									
9		,890									
10		,793									
11		,851									
12			,727								
13			,722								
14			,791								
15			,869								
16			,810								
17			,794								
18				,753							
19				,835							
20				,715							

21	,781							
22		,873						
23		,803						
24		,876						
25		,838						
26		,795						
27		,846						
28			,795					
29			,840					
30			,868					
31			,776					
32				,840				
33				,897				
34				,821				
35				,880				
36				,840				
37					,816			
38					,730			
39					,793			
40					,743			
41						,817		
42						,912		
43						,840		
44							,868	
45							,786	
46							,860	
47							,665	
48								,739
49								,837
50								,745
51								,815
52								,778
53								,757

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.
Rotation Method: Promax with Kaiser Normalization

Table 1 shows the factor analysis of the research scales. The authentic leadership scale was divided into four sub-dimensions' transparency in relations, balanced evaluation of ınformation, ınternalized morality, and self-awareness. The organizational identification scale was examined in one dimension. The social sustainability scale was examined in six sub-dimensions' employee participation, employee cooperation, equal opportunity, employee development, occupational safety, and health collaboration with outsiders.

Table 2: Correlation Analysis of Research Variables

Scale		(SS)	(TR)	(BEI)	(IM)	(SF)	(AL)	(OI)
(SS)	(PC)	1						
	Sig. (2-tailed)							
	n	401						
(TR)	(PC)	,162**	1					
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,001						
	n	401	401					
(BEI)	(PC)	,090	,703**	1				
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,072	,000					
	n	401	401	401				
(IM)	(PC)	,261**	,737**	,656**	1			
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000				
	n	401	401	401	401			
(SF)	(PC)	,291**	,691**	,678**	,778**	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000			
	n	401	401	401	401	401		
(AL)	(PC)	,230**	,879**	,856**	,910**	,886**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000		
	n	401	401	401	401	401	401	
(OI)	(PC)	,557**	,375**	,198**	,224**	,326**	,311**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	
	n	401	401	401	401	401	401	401

**. Correlation significance is meaningful at the level of 0.01 (2-tailed)

*. Correlation is significant and meaningful at the level of 0.05 (2-tailed)

Pearson Correlation: (PC)

Table 2 shows the correlation analysis between variables. It is seen that there is a weakly significant relationship between authentic leadership and social sustainability with Pearson Correlation = 0.230 and sigma = 0.000. Hypothesis H_2 is accepted. There is a weakly significant relationship between transparency in relations, which is a sub-dimension of authentic leadership, and social sustainability as Pearson Correlation= 0.162 and sigma= 0.001. There is no significant relationship between balanced evaluation and social sustainability, which are sub-dimensions of authentic leadership, as Pearson Correlation= 0.090 and sigma= 0.072. There is a weakly significant relationship between internalized morality, which is a sub-dimension of authentic leadership, and social sustainability as Pearson Correlation= 0.261 and sigma= 0.000. There is a weakly significant relationship between self-awareness, which is a sub-dimension of authentic leadership, and social sustainability as Pearson Correlation= 0.291 and sigma= 0.000.

There is a moderately significant relationship between organizational identification and social sustainability; Pearson Correlation = 0.557 and sigma = 0.000. Hypothesis H_4 is accepted

There is a moderately significant relationship between authentic leadership and organizational identification as Pearson Correlation= 0.311 and sigma= 0.000 H_5 was accepted. There is a moderately significant relationship between transparency in relations, which is a sub-dimension of authentic leadership, and organizational identification, since Pearson Correlation= 0.375 and sigma= 0.000. Hypothesis H_{5a} was accepted. There is a weak positive relationship between balanced evaluation, which is a sub-dimension of authentic leadership, and organizational identification, since Pearson Correlation= 0.198 and sigma= 0.000. Hypothesis H_{5b} was accepted. There is a weakly significant relationship between internalized morality, which is a sub-dimension of authentic leadership, and organizational identification, since Pearson Correlation= 0.224 and sigma= 0.000. Hypothesis H_{5c} was accepted. There is a moderately significant relationship between self-awareness, which is a sub-dimension of authentic leadership, and organizational identification, since Pearson Correlation= 0.326 and sigma= 0.000. Hypothesis H_{5d} was accepted.

Table 3: Regression Analysis of Variables (Social Sustainability)

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square		F	Sig.
Regression	42,640	5	8,528	49,984	,000[b]	
Residual	67,392	395	,171			
Total	110,031	400				
Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error		
1	,623[a]	,388	,380	,41305		
Model		Coef.				
	Unst. Coef.	Std. Error	Std Coef.Beta	t	sig	
(Constant)	3,457	,121		28,600	,000	
(OI)	,362	,027	,577	13,211	,000	
(TR)	-,207	,045	-,311	-4,557	,000	
(BEI)	-,070	,036	-,117	-1,929	,054	
(IM)	,164	,036	,327	4,605	,000	
(SF)	,095	,046	,143	2,065	,040	
(AL)	,141	,036	,195	3,963	,000	

a. Dependent Variable: (SS)
b. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), (OI), (TR), (BEI),(IM),(SF),(AL)

Table 3 shows the regression analysis of dependent and independent variables. Authentic Leadership has a significant positive effect on social sustainability since t= 3.963; Beta= 0.195; sigma= 0.000. H_1 is accepted. Organizational identification has a significant positive effect on social sustainability since t= 13.211; Beta= 0.577; sigma=0.000. H3 is accepted. Transparency in relations, which is a sub-dimension of authentic leadership, has a significant negative effect on social sustainability since t=

– 4.557; Beta= – 0.311; sigma=0.000. Hypothesis H_{1a} is rejected. Balanced Evaluation of Information, which is a sub-dimension of authentic leadership, has significant social sustainability since t= – 1.929; Beta= – 0.117; sigma=0.054. H_{1b} is rejected. Internalized, which is a sub-dimension of authentic leadership, has significant social sustainability since t= 4.605; Beta= – 0.327; Since sigma is=0.000, it affects social sustainability significantly positively. H_{1c} is accepted. Self-awareness internalized, which is a sub-dimension of authentic leadership, affects social sustainability significantly positively since t=2. 065; Beta= – 0.143; sigma is= 0. 040. H_{1d} is accepted. When the effect of the independent variables of authentic leadership and organizational identification on the dependent variables of social sustainability is evaluated, the degree of explanation of the model is found to be 38.8%. H_6 hypothesis is given in the image below.

Figure 2: Mediating Effect Model (H_6)
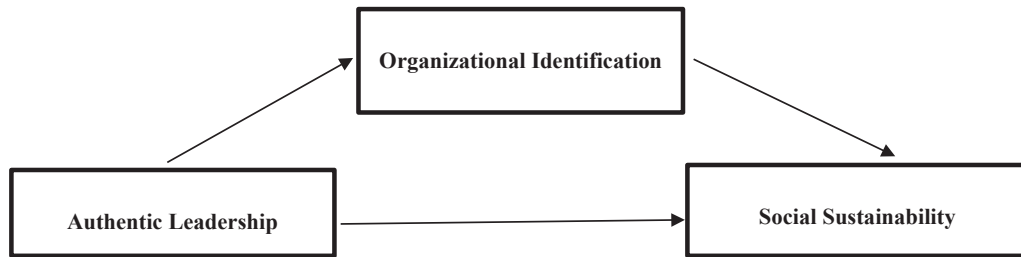
Figure 2 shows the research model.

Table 4: Mediation Effect of Variables

Scales	Un. B	Coefficients Std. Error	Std Coefficients Beta	t	Sigma
Authentic Leadership Social Sustainability $\rightarrow$	,141	,036	,195	3,963	,000
Organizational Identification Social Sustainability $\rightarrow$	,385	,027	,586	14,453	,000
Authentic Leadership + Organizational Identification Social Sustainability $\rightarrow$	,005	,031	,007	,156	,876
	,384	,028	,584	13,617	,000
Authentic Leadership Organizational Identification $\rightarrow$	,355	,052	,322	6,788	,000

Table 4 investigates the mediation effect of the model. The mediation effect was carried out in four stages. In the first stage, the effect of authentic leadership on social sustainability was examined

and t = 3.963; Beta = 0.195; sigma= 0.000 was found. Authentic leadership positively affects social sustainability. In the second stage, the effect of organizational identification on social sustainability was examined and t 14.453; Beta = 0.586; sigma= 0.000 was found. Organizational identification positively affects social sustainability. In the third stage, authentic leadership and organizational identification were evaluated together. While organizational identification continued to positively affect social sustainability t = 13.617; Beta = 0.584; sigma= 0.000), the effect of authentic leadership on social sustainability sigma= 0.876) disappeared. In the fourth stage, the effect of authentic leadership on organizational identification was examined t = 6.788; Beta = 0.322; sigma= 0.000. In this context, while the effect of organizational identification on social sustainability was significant, the effect of authentic leadership on social sustainability disappeared and since authentic leadership positively affected the mediating variable, Organizational ıdentification has a full mediating role in the effect of authentic leadership on social sustainability. the H_6 hypothesis was accepted.

5. Discussion and Conclusion

Social sustainability brought by globalization has attracted the attention of both manufacturing and service businesses. Today, rapidly developing technological developments, global competition and changes in customer expectations deeply affect the service sector. Service businesses also make various strategic decisions in order to compete globally. The most important competitive resource of service businesses is people, and this valuable resource needs to be shaped by leaders. If leaders can integrate employees into the organization, the business can compete. Service businesses can achieve success when they understand the value of human resources and manage them effectively. Today, the concept of sustainable leadership has emerged. While the authentic leadership approach can positively affect social sustainability, organizational identification is important in this process.

This research was conducted to determine the mediating role of organizational identification in the effect of authentic leadership on social sustainability among employees working in various service sectors. First of all, according to the research findings, there is a weakly significant relationship between authentic leadership and social sustainability. A weakly significant relationship was found between authentic leadership, transparency in relationships, internalized morality and self-awareness sub-dimensions and social sustainability. No significant relationship was found between authentic leadership, balanced evaluation and social sustainability sub-dimensions. A moderately significant relationship was found between authentic leadership and organizational identification. There is a moderately significant relationship between organizational identification and social sustainability. Yilmaz (2023) developed the sustainable leadership scale. Kim et al., (2018). Examined how organizational identification mediates the employee performance link in various companies in South Korea and how authentic leadership mediates the performance link between corporate social sustainability and organizational identification. As can be understood from this, the authentic leadership approach directs followers to identify with the organization and achieve social sustainability. Almasradi vd., (2024) found that authentic leadership in Saudi Arabia service does not directly affect socially responsible behavior but rather through psychological empowerment and psychological capital. Malik and Mahmood (2022) found that authentic leadership has a

significant impact on both economic and social performance through organizational learning in the manufacturing sector of Pakistan. Yeşiltaş et al. (2013) stated that authentic leadership significantly increases co-workers' customer-focused, role-defined and role-extra-prosocial behaviors. Rauniar and Cao (2025) found that authentic leadership has a positive effect on organizational sustainability and business performance, and authentic leadership also has a mediating effect.

Another important issue in service businesses is the behavior of employees. Leaders who can positively affect the behavior of employees and motivate them in every way lead the business to success. Service businesses can gain value in the eyes of customers when they contribute to social sustainability.

Secondly, authentic leadership was found to have a positive and significant effect on social sustainability. Organizational identification significantly affects social sustainability. Both independent variables of the research can positively affect the dependent variable, social sustainability. The explanation rate of the research model was found to be 38.8%. No studies were found on authentic leadership and social sustainability. Fallatah (2020) found the effect of authentic leadership on identification in young nurses. Robertson and Barling (2015) examined psychology in green organizations and found that organizational identification is important in employees' acceptance of environmental responsibilities. Mael and Ashforth (1992) showed that individualization with the organization, feeling similarity, and social responsibility and sustainability behaviors. There is no tangible output in the service sector and employee performance varies. Each customer evaluates service quality differently. Therefore, authoritarian leaders can positively increase productivity and efficiency by managing differences well.

Third, a full mediating role of organizational identification was found in the effect of authentic leadership on social sustainability among service sector employees. In other words, authentic leadership exerts its influence on social sustainability through identification.

In particular, service businesses should evaluate their human resources well in order to continue their activities and compete in an intensely competitive environment. Effective leaders are needed to ensure sustainable development. In order to be a preferred business in the market, leaders should quickly perceive environmental changes and create customer value by transforming them into opportunities that create value for themselves. When managers or leaders do not perceive environmental changes as risks but rather see them as opportunities, they can achieve more success by reducing costs. Authoritarian leaders who value their employees, manage them with their differences and make the most of them can achieve success and compete with the best companies in the field. In this study, the effect of authentic leadership on social sustainability was examined and the mediating role of organizational identification in this effect was evaluated. The findings revealed that authentic leadership behaviors significantly affect employees' perceptions of social sustainability. Authentic leadership contributes to employees developing a higher sense of social responsibility at both individual and organizational levels. The research results showed that with the inclusion of organizational identification, the direct effect of authentic leadership on social sustainability

ceased to be statistically significant. This situation reveals that organizational identification plays a full mediating role in this relationship. In other words, authentic leadership does not directly affect social sustainability; this effect occurs entirely through employees' identification with the organization. This finding shows that authentic leadership style increases employees' organizational affiliation and this affiliation shapes attitudes and behaviors towards social sustainability. In line with this result, in order for authentic leadership practices to increase social sustainability, employees' organizational identification must be ensured. In other words, authentic leadership does not have a significant effect on social sustainability without organizational identification. This finding is striking both theoretically and for practitioners, and shows that organizations should develop strategies that increase organizational commitment and affiliation together with their leadership policies. As a result, it is recommended that organizations adopt authentic leadership practices and focus on strategies that will strengthen employees' organizational identification in order to increase social sustainability. Human resources, in particular, should evaluate employees according to their perceptions of social sustainability and organizational identification. However, it has been noticed that there is not much empirical research in the literature on the concept of sustainable leadership. Although this research has important contributions for leaders both theoretically and practically, it also has several limitations. The first of these is that the research was conducted only with employees in the service sector in Istanbul. In future studies, a similar research model can be tested with data obtained from employees or goods-producing businesses in different cities. Second, a cross-sectional research design was used in this research, and different models are suggested for future studies. In addition, it is suggested that sustainability be examined together with economic and environmental sustainability variables in future studies so that humanity and future generations can live in prosperity.

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Resume

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