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"Unveiling the influence of Aesthetic Leadership: Enhancing Employee Self-Efficacy through Job-Capabilities Matching and the Pygmalion Effect."

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Abstract

Organizations capitalize on proactive and innovative employee behaviors in today's competitive market to secure a sustainable competitive advantage. Employees with high self-efficacy are central to this advantage, believing in one's ability to complete tasks. This study investigates the impact of aesthetic leadership on subordinates' self-efficacy and examines the roles of job-capabilities matching and the Pygmalion effect as mediators in this relationship. Using a cross-sectional design, data were collected from employees at hotels and restaurants in Lahore, Punjab. Of the 500 distributed questionnaires, 303 were returned, representing a 61% response rate. Analysis was conducted using SPSS. The findings indicate that aesthetic leadership positively

influences employee self-efficacy. Additionally, job-capabilities matching and the Pygmalion effect were identified as significant mediators in the relationship between aesthetic leadership and self-efficacy. The study highlights practical implications, explores uncharted areas, and proposes directions for future research.

Keywords: Aesthetic leadership, self-efficacy, Pygmalion effect

1.0 Introduction

In the competitive business landscape, organizations encounter pressures akin to those experienced by athletes in a marathon, where every competitor is equally determined and skilled. In such scenarios, employees' proactive and innovative behavior is crucial for attaining a competitive advantage (Eldor, 2020). Indeed, employees are often regarded as an organization's most valuable asset, capable of providing sustainable competitive advantages (Bashshur & Oc, 2015; Ngwenya & Pelser, 2020; Wright et al., 1994).

The story of the tortoise and the hare serves as a valuable metaphor within organizational contexts. Just as the tortoise's steady and persistent efforts led to unexpected success, employees with high self-efficacy view challenges as opportunities for growth. Self-efficacy, or a strong belief in one's capabilities, drives employees to engage more readily in tasks they believe they can accomplish and, conversely, to shy away from tasks where they lack confidence (Eibl et al., 2020; Chen et al., 2001). Historical figures like Edison and Lincoln exemplify how high self-efficacy can lead to remarkable achievements despite numerous setbacks (Heslin & Klehe, 2006).

Self-efficacy is not a personality trait. Numerous factors can influence an individual's level of self-efficacy (Gaan & Shin, 2023). The current study scrutinized the impact of aesthetic leadership on subordinates' self-efficacy. Aesthetic leadership is "concerned with sensory knowledge and felt meaning associated with leadership phenomena. It entails subjectivist ontology, symbolic interpretive epistemology, and qualitative methods" (Hansen et al., 2007; p. 552). Aesthetic leadership emphasizes the importance of sensory knowledge, which, though challenging to articulate in words, is as important as cognitive knowledge. Prior studies have linked leadership to employee self-efficacy (Bayraktar & Jiménez, 2020; Im & Cho, 2022;

Malodia et al., 2023; Qiu et al., 2020). However, no study has tested how aesthetic leadership relates to employee self-efficacy.

Furthermore, this study also examines the roles of job-capabilities matching and the Pygmalion effect in the relationship between aesthetic leadership and self-efficacy. Because of leaders' direct interaction and close relationships with employees, an aesthetic leader can better ascertain employees' capabilities and assign tasks accordingly. When the task assigned to an employee matches his abilities, he feels more confident in executing it (Rajper et al., 2020). Likewise, through the Pygmalion effect, an aesthetic leader influences the employee's self-efficacy. The Pygmalion effect is the leader's positive expectation regarding a subordinate, believing he has the potential to perform the task successfully. When followers believe their supervisor has high expectations of them, they, in turn, act in ways to fulfil those expectations (Eden, 1990).

This study makes valuable contributions to the literature. First, it sheds light on how leading aesthetically can contribute to developing employees' self-efficacy. Researchers have yet to examine the relationship between aesthetic leadership and self-efficacy. Ample research is available on leadership (Gull et al., 2023), but only some studies account for the aesthetic side of leadership. There is a need to acknowledge knowledge comprehended through senses as it guides individuals when objective planning does not reap good results or has become ineffective. This paper aims to highlight the fundamental aspect of leadership, which is that cognition and aesthetics are equally important. Secondly, by studying the mediating role of job-capabilities matching and the Pygmalion effect, we seek an integrated understanding of how aesthetic leadership may influence employee self-efficacy. Lastly, we contribute to the emerging literature examining the antecedents of employee self-efficacy.

2.0 Literature Review

2.1 Self-efficacy

The concept of self-efficacy, introduced by Albert Bandura, refers to an individual's perceived ability to execute actions necessary to perform a job (Bandura, 1977). This belief in one's capabilities is foundational to one's actions (Bandura, 2006; Gundlach et al., 2003). Self-efficacy

is distinct from self-esteem, the judgment of one's self-worth, and locus of control, which is how individuals believe they can control events affecting them (Bandura, 2006).

The research underscores self-efficacy's importance in organizational settings, positively impacting performance and job satisfaction (Aftab et al., 2023; Na-Nan & Sanamthong, 2020; Wattoo et al., 2020). At its core, self-efficacy influences cognitive processes and motivation, significantly affecting one's behavior and ability to change.

Bandura's social cognitive theory suggests that internal and external factors shape behavior, with self-efficacy as a critical internal factor. It determines how individuals assess their capabilities, set goals, and respond to challenges (Bandura, 1986). High self-efficacy leads to setting challenging goals and persisting in the face of setbacks, while low self-efficacy tends to avoid complex tasks and lower overall performance (Yang et al., 2023).

Self-efficacy is developed from four primary sources: personal accomplishments, vicarious experiences, verbal persuasion, and physiological states (Bandura, 1977). Mastery experiences are the most vital source, boosting confidence through success. Observing others perform tasks successfully, receiving encouraging feedback, and managing physiological responses to stress also enhance self-efficacy (Bandura, 2006).

Prior studies suggest that self-efficacy is not a universal trait (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017) but is easily influenced by the external environment (Gaan & Shin, 2023). People with high self-efficacy are more likely to embrace learning opportunities, manage stress effectively, and recover from setbacks more swiftly, setting progressively higher goals for themselves as they succeed (Bandura, 1991).

2.2 Aesthetic Leadership

Aesthetic leadership moves beyond traditional management by incorporating sensory knowledge and emotional intelligence. This leadership style recognizes the power of aesthetics—beyond art—to influence organizational dynamics and decision-making. Vico (1744) and Baumgarten (1750), viewed as the father of aesthetics, distinguished intellectual knowledge from logic and sensory knowledge. Aesthetic experiences involve deep sensory engagement, challenging conventional logical approaches and leading to innovative solutions in complex situations (Strati,

1996; Taylor & Hansen, 2005). Aesthetic leadership emphasizes the importance of 'felt meanings' and aesthetic judgment, enabling leaders to inspire and guide their teams through more intuitive and emotionally resonant methods (Hansen et al., 2007).

Furthermore, aesthetic leaders possess the ability to perceive and integrate diverse perspectives, which is crucial in navigating the complexities of modern organizational life (Howard, 1996; Iandoli et al., 2020). They prioritize emotional and cognitive components of leadership, encouraging a collective and individual knowledge of complex reality, which is especially useful during times of uncertainty (Palus & Horth, 1996). Bathurst, Jackson, and Statler (2010) demonstrate how aesthetic leaders can use emotional and intellectual talents to supplement rational decision-making, increasing responsiveness and adaptability in crises. In essence, aesthetic leadership entails a deep involvement with both the sensory and emotional components of organizational life, which enriches standard leadership paradigms.

2.3 Job-capabilities matching

Organizations require employees whose abilities match job demands and goals align with organizational values (Chung & Sackett, 2005; Kim et al., 2020). Analyzing person-job fit is crucial when assigning roles, ensuring the right individual undertakes the appropriate tasks (Guo & Hou, 2022; Hsu, 2011). Person-job fit includes demand-abilities fit, where an individual's knowledge, skills, and abilities meet job requirements, and needs-supplies fit, where the job provides what an individual desires (Edwards, 1991; Kristof, 1996). This thesis focuses on demand-abilities fit due to its significant impact on building employee self-efficacy (Hsu, 2012; To, Martínez, Orero-Blat & Chau, 2020).

Job analysis determines the essential tasks and necessary competencies for effective performance (Sekiguchi, 2004), and a good job fit exists when an individual's skills are adequate for the job (Kristof-Brown et al., 2002). Leaders assess employee capabilities and job complexity to ensure success and prevent failure, matching individuals with tasks they are best suited to perform (Hitt et al., 2005).

2.4 Pygmalion effect

The Pygmalion effect is rooted in Greek mythology, where Pygmalion's love brings his sculpture, Galatea, to life. This concept, also depicted in George Bernard Shaw's 1912 play, where Professor Higgins transforms Eliza Doolittle from a flower girl to a lady, exemplifies expectations shaping outcomes. In 1957, Robert Merton termed this phenomenon a self-fulfilling prophecy: "A false definition of the situation evokes a new behaviour which makes the original false conception come true" (p. 423).

Studies across education (Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1968; Friedrich et al., 2015; Gentrup et al., 2020; Muenks et al., 2020) and organizational settings (Duan et al., 2017; Kierein & Gold, 2000) demonstrate that high expectations positively impact performance and self-efficacy. Leadership plays a crucial role in this dynamic, where effective communication of high expectations can enhance performance (Eden, 1990; White & Locke, 2000).

3. 0 Hypotheses Development

3.1 Aesthetic leadership and employee self-efficacy

A leader is an "interpreter of followers' feelings and thoughts" (Howard, 1996; p. 26)' and can transform the ordinary into the extraordinary (Guillet de Monthoux, 2004; Guillet et al., 2007). By understanding employee situations, an aesthetic leader convinces employees of their capabilities, which, in turn, enhances employee confidence. If an employee struggles with a task, the aesthetic leader demonstrates efficient methods, allowing the employee to learn standards vicariously by observing others. Rather than assigning repetitive tasks, the aesthetic leader introduces variety into the workload, facilitating diverse learning experiences. Thus, we hypothesize.

H1: Aesthetic leadership positively influences employee self-efficacy level

3.2 Job-capabilities matching, aesthetic leadership and employee self-efficacy.

A leader defines what tasks need to be done, how these tasks should be executed, who will perform the task, and sets precise deadlines (Hersey et al., 1996). Aesthetic leaders uniquely

assign tasks to followers by leveraging sensory experiences. A leader is better positioned to place each employee in the proper job by accurately assessing individuals' capabilities.

Furthermore, an aesthetic leader motivates an employee to undertake the task by highlighting the rewards of good performance and stimulating him to expand his capacity and ability to perform (Kirkpatrick & Locke, 1996; Locke, 2001). The leader then provides the necessary assistance to help the employee carry out the task successfully, which is instrumental in enhancing the employee's self-efficacy. Delegating tasks based on capabilities enhances the employee's belief that he can accomplish the assigned task. Thus, we hypothesize.

H2: Job-capabilities matching mediates the relationship between aesthetic leadership and employee self-efficacy.

3.3 Pygmalion effect, aesthetic leadership and employee self-efficacy

Verbal persuasion is a powerful tool for increasing employee self-efficacy, which involves convincing individuals that they can succeed in specific tasks. Aesthetic leaders communicate their high expectations to employees, create the Pygmalion effect, motivating employees to meet and potentially exceed these expectations (Eden, 1990; 1992; Whiteley et al., 2012; Fransen et al., 2015). Livingston (1969) argues that a manager's expectations and the treatment of employees are significant predictors of career progress and performance.

H3: Pygmalion effect mediates the relationship between aesthetic leadership and employee self-efficacy.

4.0 Methods

4.1 Sample and Procedures

Data were collected from employees working in a hotel or restaurant in Lahore, Pakistan. Employees were assured that their anonymity and confidentiality would be strictly maintained and that their information and responses would be used solely for research as per the prior study of Hassan et al. (2023), Gull et al. (2023) and Sultana & Sultana (2015). Questionnaires were distributed to 500 employees. The questionnaire used in this study was close-ended, simplifying coding, standardized responses, and reduced ambiguity for respondents.

The questionnaire has been divided into two sections per the earlier study of Gull et al. (2023). The initial section obtained demographic information about participants to understand the sample's characteristics. The second section included questions about the study variables to explore the relationships between these variables.

Of the 500 questionnaires, 330 were deemed suitable for the study, resulting in a response rate of 61%. Among the respondents, 48% worked in the hotel industry, while 52% were in restaurants. 87% were male, and 72% had non-managerial jobs. Furthermore, 68% of the respondents were aged between 21 and 30.

4.2 Measures

4.2.1 Aesthetic Leadership

This study defines aesthetic leadership as a multi-dimensional construct comprising four dimensions: sensory engagement, openness to experience, cognizance of timing, and unconventional behavior. Nine items from the M5 scale developed by McCord (2002) are employed to measure openness to experience. Additionally, six items from Conger and Kanungo's (1998) scale are utilized to assess a leader's unconventional behavior. Five items have been specifically created to evaluate sensory engagement, and another six items have been crafted to measure cognizance of timing. These newly developed items were pre-test and pilot tests and supported by 12 experts in the focus group who were not involved in the initial item generation. These experts selected items they believed most accurately represented the definitions of each dimension. Cronbach α was 0.81.

4.2.2 Job Capabilities Matching

Job capabilities matching was measured using two dimensions: demand abilities fit and person-job fit. Demand abilities fit was assessed using Cable and DeRue's (2002) scale. An example item is "The match is perfect between the demands of my job and my skills". At the same time, a four-item scale was used to measure person-job fit (Kim et al., 2020; Singh & Greenhaus, 2004). An example item is "I have a good fit with my job". Cronbach α was 0.89.

4.2.3 Pygmalion effect

Pygmalion effect was measured using four items developed by Priyabhashini and Krishnan (2005). An example item is "My manager feels I have the capabilities to perform my work activities". Cronbach α was 0.84.

4.2.4 Self-efficacy

Self-efficacy was measured using eight items that Chen, Gully and Eden (2001) developed. An example item is "When facing difficult tasks, I am certain I will accomplish them." Cronbach α was 0.91.

5.0 Results

5.1 Reliability Estimates and Bivariate Correlations

The results presented in Table 1 highlight item intercorrelations and reliabilities of the variables examined. The findings indicate a positive association between aesthetic leadership and employee self-efficacy, having a coefficient correlation $r = 0.55$ significant at $p < 0.01$ level. Additionally, the Pygmalion effect ($r = 0.623$, $p < 0.01$) and job capabilities matching ($r = 0.581$, $p < 0.01$) also have a significant relationship with employee self-efficacy.

Table 1 Reliability Estimates and Bivariate Correlations

	1	2	3	4
1. Job Capabilities Matching	(0.89)			
2. Pygmalion Effect	.571**	(0.84)		
3. Self-efficacy	.581**	.623**	(0.91)	
4. Aesthetic Leadership	.689**	.651**	.545**	(0.81)

N = 330. Cronbach's alphas are reported along the diagonal. * $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$

5.2 Hypotheses Testing

Correlation is adequate for assessing the relationships between variables, yet it does not reveal any causal relationships. Hence, we utilized regression analysis to explore the structural relationships among the variables.

Hypothesis 1: Aesthetic leadership has a positive influence on employee self-efficacy.

Table 2 indicates aesthetic leadership significantly impacts employee self-efficacy (p-value, $\beta = 0.30$). The value of R square indicates that 30% of variations in self-efficacy are due to aesthetic leadership.

Table 2 Aesthetic Leadership as independent and self-efficacy as dependent variable

REGRESSION	B	Sig.	R	R Square	F	Sig
(Constant)	14.292	.000	0.545	0.297	127.145	0.000
Aesthetic Leadership	0.300	.000				

Dependent Variable: Self-efficacy

Predictors: (Constant), Aesthetic Leadership

H2: Job-capabilities matching mediates the relationship between aesthetic leadership and employee self-efficacy.

The Baron and Kenny criteria (1986) will investigate the mediating hypothesis. The mediation exists if three conditions are met). In the first equation, the predictor must influence the mediator. b) the predictor must affect the dependent variable in the second equation. c) The mediator must influence the dependent variable. If all of these conditions are met, the influence of the predictor on the dependent variable will be less in the third equation than in the second equation (Baron & Kenny, 1986; p. 1177).

As shown in Table 3, the first condition of the Baron and Kenny (1986) model is satisfied, indicating that aesthetic leadership significantly influences job-capabilities matching ($\beta = 0.189$, p-value < 0.001) with a correlation coefficient of 0.689. Additionally, the relationship between Aesthetic leadership and employee self-efficacy is confirmed via linear regression ($\beta = 0.300$, p-value < 0.001) with a correlation coefficient of 0.545, thus fulfilling the second condition. The

third condition of the Baron and Kenny model also adheres to job capabilities matching with self-efficacy significantly when aesthetic leadership is controlled using multiple regression analysis. Furthermore, the influence of aesthetic leadership on self-efficacy is notably reduced in the third equation compared to its effect in the initial equation (from $\beta = 0.300$ to $\beta = 0.151$). This reduction signifies that matching job capabilities mediates aesthetic leadership and employee self-efficacy.

Steps	IV	DV	R	R square	Regression equation	p-value
1	AL	SE	0.545	0.297	SE = 14.292+ 0.300 (AL)	0.000
2	AL	JCM	0.689	0.475	JCM = 0.170 + 0.189 (AL)	0.000
3	AL & JCM	SE	0.614	0.378	SE = 14.159 + 0.151(AL) + 0.785(JCM)	0.000

H3: Pygmalion effect mediates the relationship between aesthetic leadership and employee self-efficacy.

Table 3 Analysis of proposed mediating variable - job capabilities matching

Note: JCM = Job Capabilities Matching, SE = Self-efficacy and AL = Aesthetic Leadership

As indicated in Table 4, the first condition of the Baron and Kenny (1986) model is fulfilled, demonstrating a significant impact of aesthetic leadership on the Pygmalion effect ($\beta = 0.157$, p-value < 0.001) with a correlation coefficient of 0.651. Additionally, the anticipated relationship between aesthetic leadership and employee self-efficacy is confirmed via linear regression ($\beta = 0.300$, p-value < 0.001) with a correlation coefficient of 0.545, thus satisfying the second condition. The third condition of the Baron and Kenny model is also achieved, as the Pygmalion effect is significantly related to self-efficacy when controlling for aesthetic leadership through multiple regression analysis. Furthermore, the influence of aesthetic leadership on self-efficacy is significantly diminished in the third equation compared to its initial impact (from $\beta = 0.300$ to β

Steps	IV	DV	R	R square	Regression equation	p-value
1	AL	SE	0.545	0.297	SE = 14.292+ 0.300 (AL)	0.000
2	AL	PE	0.651	0.424	PE = 0.672 + 0.157 (AL)	0.000
3	AL & PE	SE	0.650	0.422	SE = 13.159 + 0.133(AL) + 1.066(PE)	0.000

= 0.133). This reduction highlights that the Pygmalion effect mediates the relationship between aesthetic leadership and employee self-efficacy.

Table 4 Analysis of proposed mediating variable – Pygmalion effect

Note: PE = Pygmalion Effect, SE = Self-efficacy and AL = Aesthetic Leadership

6.0 Discussion

This cross-sectional study investigated the relationships between artistic leadership and employee self-efficacy in the hospitality business in Lahore, Pakistan. A survey of hotel and restaurant employees explored the relationship between job-capabilities matching and the Pygmalion effect.

After reviewing the literature, five hypotheses were developed and supported by evidence, with varying degrees of link strength. The study found a positive association between artistic leadership and employee self-efficacy. Job capabilities matching had a significant mediating influence on the relationship, with a correlation coefficient of 0.614. The Pygmalion effect strongly mediated the link between artistic leadership and employee self-efficacy. Previous research has shown that the Pygmalion effect is high.

6.1 Managerial Implications

The study provides valuable insights for managers looking to improve organizational performance through strategic human resource management. Employees' self-efficacy varies greatly, significantly impacting their work behavior and overall performance (Bandura, 1991).

Managers should prioritize increasing self-efficacy among employees, particularly those who need clarification on their skills. It can be accomplished through thorough job-capabilities matching, which ensures individuals are assigned responsibilities that match their skills, creating confidence through task completion. Such activities not only increase self-efficacy but also improve work satisfaction, organizational commitment, and performance (Aftab et al., 2023; Greguras & Diefendorff, 2009; Na-Nan & Sanamthong, 2020; Wattoo et al., 2020).

Furthermore, the study emphasizes the value of artistic leadership in creating a work climate that fosters high self-efficacy. Aesthetic leaders are better positioned to instil confidence in their teams because they are more aware of their surroundings and subordinates. They are encouraged to use verbal and nonverbal cues to reinforce their conviction in the employees' talents, so utilizing the Pygmalion effect improves performance (Druskat & Pescosolido, 2002).

6.2 Limitations and Future Research Directions

While the study provides significant insights, it faces limitations in scope and methodology. Lahore's hospitality sector's focus on frontline employees may only sometimes represent other contexts. Future research should expand to other regions and sectors to enhance the generalizability of the findings.

Additionally, the predominantly young and less experienced respondents' demographic suggests a potential bias that future studies might address by including a more diverse participant pool. Longitudinal research could provide deeper insights into the evolution of employee self-efficacy over time.

Future studies might also explore how aesthetic leadership integrates with other leadership theories, such as leader-member exchange theory, and its impact on organizational outcomes, such as commitment and citizenship behaviors. Future researchers should conduct a systematic

review, as in the prior research study of Gull et al. (2022), to examine more explanatory and buffering factors that affect employee self-efficacy in diverse contexts.

6.3 Conclusion

This study reaffirms the critical role of aesthetic leadership in enhancing employee self-efficacy. Aesthetic leaders can facilitate an environment where challenges are viewed as opportunities, fostering a resilient and highly efficacious workforce. The mediating roles of job-capabilities matching and the Pygmalion effect are instrumental in this process, emphasizing the need for leaders to engage with employees' professional development proactively.

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