

# The Impact of Employees' Growth Mindset on Organizational Citizenship Behavior in Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs): Focusing on the Mediating Effect of Authentic Leadership

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## [abstract]

More ethical management and authentic leadership have gained its importance recently. The behaviors and attitudes of leaders are more powerful in Korea's Small and Medium-sized Enterprises(SMEs) as the influence of leaders can be significant for other employees. To survive from the competitive market, employees would need to act voluntarily to take extra roles which are beyond their daily roles. Therefore, employees' growth mindset and organizational citizenship behavior are critical for SMEs which have fewer employees but should face diverse challenges. Reflecting the situation that SMEs confront, this study intends to address the relationship among growth mindset, organizational citizenship behavior and authentic leadership for employees in SMEs in Korea. In particular, this study focused on the role of authentic leadership as a mediator. The research questions of this study are composed of 1) What is the relationship among growth mindset, authentic leadership and organization citizenship behavior?, 2) How is the mediating role of authentic leadership for the relationship between growth mindset and organizational citizenship behavior?. To address the research questions of this study, a survey was conducted in SMEs. In total, 203 employees were targeted and the mediation analysis of Baron and Kenny (1986) and Sobel test were implemented to address two research questions. It is found that employees' growth mindset is correlated to organizational citizenship behavior in Korea's SMEs. Also, authentic leadership serves as a mediator for the relationship between growth mindset and organizational citizenship behavior. Growth mindset and authentic leadership are main factors to boost organizational citizenship behavior in SMEs. It is suggested that human resources (HR) departments in SMEs should focus on coaching programs for growth mindset and authentic leadership to enhance employees' organizational citizenship behavior.

**Keyword:** Growth Mindset, Authentic Leadership, Organizational Citizenship Behavior, Small and Medium-sized Enterprise (SME), Coaching

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## I . Introduction

The social atmosphere emphasizing authenticity in the organization has strengthened as social responsibility of business companies is more stressed. Diverse problems from growth-oriented business management and policies cause the lack of ethical awareness of leaders. Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) in Korea have to face these changes and a leadership based on the integrity and morality has been emphasized recently.

Ethical management and authenticity have gained its importance. The behaviors and attitudes of leaders without sincerity would lead to social problems and confusion like Enron and WorldCom where leaders were not ethical and tried to pursue their personal gain and benefits. Therefore, the importance of authenticity with self-awareness and self-regulation has received attentions.

Authentic leaders would bring more transparent and open interaction with employees and employees would be willing to act voluntarily for their companies. This is represented as organizational citizenship behaviors. To survive from the competitive market, employees would need to act more voluntarily to take extra roles which are beyond their daily roles. In this situation, organizational citizenship behavior is critical for SMEs which has fewer employees but should face various issues.

The study of Lee(2021) indicated employees' organizational citizenship behavior was correlated to mindset. There are two mindsets categorized into growth mind set and fixed mindset. First of all, growth mindset helps employees to believe in possibility and employees to interpret their situation more optimistically while fixed mindset would hamper employees' willingness to face difficulties. Growth minded people would and strive for higher achievement without giving up(Dweck & Yeager, 2019). Growth mindset is important for employees

in SMEs as they need to respond effectively and efficiently in their dynamic organizations.

Unlike large corporations, the number of employees in SMEs is small and all of employees need to respond to issues and difficulties effectively. Also, leaders in SMEs interact directly with their employees as their company size is not large. The role of leaders can be more significant for the behaviors of employees in SMEs.

Previous studies like Son, Song & Lee(2018) explored the relationships between organizational citizenship behavior and authentic leadership. In addition, the study of Lee(2018) indicated there was a correlation among growth mindset, authentic leadership and organizational effectiveness. But few studies have focused on growth mindset, organizational citizenship behavior and authentic leadership in the context of Korea's SMEs.

The purpose of this study is to address if growth-mindset affects employees' organizational citizenship behavior positively and to find whether authentic leadership has a positive influence on employees' organizational citizenship behavior in Korea's SMEs. This study is aimed to provide a new perspective on future entrepreneurship research by verifying the mediating impact of authentic leadership which was not considered as a major factor to influence growth mindset and organizational citizenship behavior in Korea's SMEs. By examining the role of authentic leadership in growth mindset and organizational citizenship behavior in SMEs, this study will prove that authentic leadership among various leadership is needed in SMEs to enhance growth mindset and bring organizational citizenship behavior in the context of Korean SMEs.

The research questions of this study are composed of 1) What is the relationship among growth mindset, authentic leadership and organization citizenship behavior?, 2) How is the mediating role of authentic leadership for the relationship between growth mindset and organizational citizenship behavior?

## II. Literature Review

### 2.1 Growth Mindset

Mindsets are divided into two main categories: fixed mindset and growth mindset (Yeager & Dweck, 2020). People's behaviors are primarily affected by the nature of their mindset. A fixed mindset occurs when an individual's abilities are innate and fixed; in other words, their mindset cannot be changed no matter how hard they try, and they will typically not attempt or pursue difficult tasks (Hochanadel & Finamore, 2015). However, people with a growth mindset recognize that abilities are not fixed and can be continuously developed; consequently, they are always learning and trying new things. People with a growth mindset typically believe that talents can be developed. They are quite positive and active in social activities. Meanwhile, people with a fixed mindset are more negative and less socially active. According to the fixed mindset, individuals understand, feel, and behave differently in the same situations based on their innate, unchanging abilities (Dweck, 2006).

A growth mindset is an individual's ability to grow when challenging changes or facing difficult situations. A growth mindset can affect organizational change and organizational performance positively. People with a growth mindset are more optimistic when faced with difficult situations. Those who possess a high growth mindset are not afraid of failure. They try to learn and grow without fears and can achieve high performance. There was a high tendency to be more focused for their goals (Heslin, 2010). According to Dweck (2006), people with a growth mindset think their talents, intelligence, abilities and strengths are malleable.

### 2.2. Authentic Leadership

According to Walumbwa et al. (2010), authentic leadership is a leadership process which includes the resources of a leader and the supports of their organization. If leaders receive enough resources and supports from their organization, they would show more positive behaviors for their employees. Avolio, Luthans & Walumbwa (2004) define authentic leaders as "those who are deeply aware of how they think and behave and are perceived by others as being aware of their own and others' values/moral perspectives, knowledge, and strengths; aware of the context in which they operate; and who are confident, hopeful, optimistic, resilient, and of high moral character".

Authentic leadership helps team members to find value and meaning through their work and truly feel the organization's goals. Authentic leaders impact their subordinates' psychological behavior and state (Walumbwa et al., 2010). In the long term, they affect the fundamental attitude of team member more negatively.

Authenticity is one's thoughts, feelings and can be gained through the experience of belief. It is a process that generates behaviors, enhances self-regulation and brings positive self-development (Gardner et al., 2005). From an interpersonal point of view, it comes from the interaction between the leader and members. Authentic leadership allows members to change themselves through the example of the leader (Shamir & Eilam, 2005). High authentic leadership is the operational definition of self-awareness, transparency in relationships, and the focus of authentic leadership which can create transparent relationships and leads to trust and commitment of members in a company. It can increase effectiveness (Gardner et al., 2005).

In fact, there are various types of leadership and are influential to organizational citizenship behavior (Bottomley et al., 2016). Transformational leaders, would focus on setting up a vision and inspiring their subordinates to achieve their vision. They are

visionary and innovative. Laissez-faire leaders do not have interests in their responsibilities and are not active for innovation and power remains unconsulted (Avolio & Bass, 2001). In transactional leadership, the leader and follower exchange values to reach their goals (Lucey, 2017). Transactional leaders are goal oriented and are focused on managing and monitoring. Compared to other leadership, authentic leadership is distinctive as authentic leadership stresses ethics and reliability which can be influential to subordinates. Authentic leaders would lead with integrity and are committed to building trust.

The study of Hwang (2021) indicated the importance of authentic leadership to influence knowledge sharing intention and knowledge management which can be a great asset for the current industrial paradigm. Authentic leadership may have a better quality as authentic leaders would possess transparency and morality that would be necessary to manage SMEs in Korea. Still, the organizational culture of SMEs in Korea is hierarchical and group oriented. The leadership of SMEs is quite strict and tries to avoid uncertainty and has low future orientation. In the past, leaders and employees of SMEs were expected to work efficiently and to show numerical performance. Their ethics, values, mindset, attitude or behavior were not regarded seriously. Currently, the industrial paradigm has been changed and the importance of ethical behavior and positive mindset share is growing. Rather than collective and strict leadership, ethical leadership like authentic leadership could be useful in the context of Korean SMEs now.

### III. Research Method

#### 3.1 Sample and Data Collection

The questionnaires with paper-based survey forms were sent to 250 respondents and were distributed

in two SMEs in Korea. It was a convenience sampling and had a voluntary participation of employees who wanted to participate in this survey. In total, 203 responses from employees were confirmed after removing incomplete answers. Questions were rated on a 5-point Likert scale and were changed into composite variables to be evaluated. We implemented Harman's single-factor test to check if there was common method variance. We found 23.61% of the extraction common method variance. It was confirmed that there was no specific common method variance based on the result of Harman's single-factor test.

#### 3.2 Measurement scale

The measurement of organizational citizenship behavior was taken using Podsakoff et al. (1990). It was evaluated in a total of six items, including "I help others who have heavy workloads", "I take steps to try to prevent problems with other workers" and "I propose new ideas to improve our products and services". Regarding its reliability for measuring organizational citizenship behavior, its Cronbach's alpha is .82 and shows a relatively high reliability. For authentic leadership, questions were modified from the perspective of employees towards their supervisors with the scale of Neider & Schriesheim (2011). It consists of 12 items including "I demand ideas that challenge my own core values". Regarding its reliability for evaluating authentic leadership, its Cronbach's alpha is .80 and indicates a high level of reliability. Growth mindset scale by Dweck (1999) as the "Theories of Intelligence Scale-Self Form For Adults" (p. 178). was taken. 8 items including "You can always substantially change how intelligent you are" and "You can learn new things, but you can't really change your basic intelligence" were measured. Its Cronbach's alpha is .83 and shows a high reliability.

### 3.3 Research Model

In this research model, the dependent variable is organizational citizenship behavior and the independent variable is growth mindset and the mediator is authentic leadership. Based on these ideas, we present the following Figure 1.

The following Figure 1 indicates the anticipated research model to examine the hypotheses of this study (See Figure 1).



<Figure 1> Research Model

### 3.4 Hypothesis Setting

#### 3.4.1 The relationship among growth mindset, organizational citizenship behavior and authentic leadership

Mindset influences our perspective about our motivation and towards the world, behaviors and attitudes(Cseh, Davis & Khilji, 2013). In fact, growth mindset can result in positive outcomes for employees in terms of more intrinsic motivation than fixed mindset(Zhao et al., 2018). When individual with growth mindset face difficulties and setbacks, they can be resilient and optimistic(Blackwell, Trzesniewski & Dweck, 2007). It is clear that growth mindset can be related to health, postoperative pain and anxiety(Kain et al., 2021). Growth mindset can bring better outcomes and outputs of employees. Growth mindset would be able to reduce employees' work stress(Zhao & Chen, 2021) and to enhance employees' work engagement(Zeng et al., 2020). Also, the study of Özduran & Tanova(2017) indicated there is a strong correlations between growth mindset and

organizational citizenship behaviors. Organizational citizenship behaviors can be improved by growth mindset.

Authentic leadership motivates employees to actively support organizational citizenship behavior. Authentic leadership can improve employees' altruistic behavior and their cooperation. The study of Jung, Kim & Youn(2018) demonstrated the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational citizenship behavior. In particular, the study of Lee (2021) indicates there is a correlation among growth mindset, authentic leadership and organizational effectiveness. Both of growth mindset and authentic leaders can be significant factors to influence organizations.

Authentic leadership would require introspection and self-sacrifice of employees and leading by example would be significant. The characteristics of authentic leadership can bring employees' organizational citizenship behavior. The leader's sacrifice would affect other employees of their organization. The authentic behavior can directly influence organizational citizenship behavior. Previous studies like Podsakoff et al.(2000) have shown that leadership behaviors can predict organizational citizenship behavior.

This study predicts that there are correlations among leaders' authentic leadership perceived by employees, growth mindset and organizational citizenship behavior and suggests following hypotheses:

**Hypothesis 1.** Growth mindset will influence authentic leadership positively.

**Hypothesis 2.** Growth mindset will influence organizational citizenship behavior positively.

**Hypothesis 3.** Authentic leadership will influence organizational citizenship behavior positively.



### 3.4.2 The mediating role of authentic leadership

Peterson & Luthans(2003) found that authentic leadership is related to the change of both of leaders and employees. Authentic leadership can serve as a predictor for employees' organizational citizenship behavior in SMEs in Korea.

Kim(2022) indicated the moderating role of authentic leadership in Korea's workplaces. Also, the study of Milon & Shapira-Lishchinsky(2021) proved that authentic leadership serves as a mediator between citizenship behavior and other organizational factors. In addition, a leader's authentic leadership bring more positive attitude and loyalty to employees. Authentic leadership serves as a mediator for the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational citizenship behavior in Korea's SMEs. Based on these discussion, the following hypothesis was suggested:

**Hypothesis 4. Authentic leadership will mediate the relationship between growth mindset, and organizational citizenship behavior.**

## IV. Results

### 4.1 Demographic Information

As found from Table 1, males are 121(60%) and females are 82(40%). The largest age group of employees are 30-39 which shares 37% of the total and the second large age group of employees are 40-49 which has 31%. Employees aged between 20-29 is 52 and share 26% of the total. Employees between 50-59 is only 13 and is composed of 6%.

High school graduates are 62 and its portion is 31%. Two-year college graduates are 50 and has 25% of the total. Four-year university graduates are 52 and its portion is 26% of the total population. More than master's degree holders are

39 and has 19%. The number of general staff is 113 which shares 56%. Assistant managers are 55 and has 27% of the total. Managers are 25 which shares 12%. Senior managers are 10 which is composed of 5% of the total population.

<Table 1> General Characteristics of Survey Participants

Variable	Items	Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	20-29	52	26
	30-39	75	37
	40-49	63	31
	50-59	13	6
Gender	Male	121	60
	Female	82	40
Education Background	High school	62	31
	Two-year college	50	25
	Four-year university	52	26
	More than Master's degree	39	19
Position	Staff	113	56
	Assistant Manager	55	27
	Manager	25	12
	Senior manager	10	5
Total		203	100

### 4.2. Results of correlation analysis

According to the result of correlation analysis, growth mindset has a significantly positive correlation with organizational citizenship behavior( $r = .54$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Also, authentic leadership has a strong correlation with organizational citizenship behavior( $r = .58$ ,  $p < .01$ ), growth mindset( $r = .54$ ,  $p < .01$ ).

Using a correlation analysis, Table 2 shows how each variable are correlated and can be efficient in deciding the relationships.

&lt;Table 2&gt; Results of Correlations

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7
Organizational citizenship behavior	1						
Growth Mindset	.54**	1					
Authentic leadership	.58**	.54**	1				
Age	.05**	.13**	.05**	1			
Gender	.13**	.15	.07*	.05*	1		
Education	.05**	.06**	.08*	.09**	.05**	1	
Position	.03**	.05**	.08**	.04**	.03*	.03*	1

\*p&lt;.1. \*\*p&lt;.01, \*\*\*p&lt;.001

### 4.3. Results of hierarchical regression analysis

To examine the role of authentic leadership as a mediator, the mediation analysis of Baron & Kenny (1986) were implemented. Model 1 explored the relationship mainly between growth mindset and organizational citizenship behavior and their relationship is statistically significant. Model 2 address the relationship mainly between authentic leadership and organizational citizenship behavior and the result is positive and significant. Model 3 explored the relationship between authentic leadership and growth mindset. Our results show a positive and significant impact of growth mindset of authentic leadership. Model 4 addressed the relationship if authentic leadership meditates the relationship between growth mindset and organizational citizenship behavior. In fact, the overall values of  $\beta$  are diminished, Moreover, the significance in the fourth model was lower than the first model. Authentic leadership is served as a mediator( $p<.001$ ) and it shows a partial mediation (See Table 3).

&lt;Table 3&gt; Results of hierarchical regression analysis

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Age	.04**	.03**	.03**	.02**
Gender	.06**	.03**	.03**	.02**
Education	.13**	.13**	.13**	.12**
Position	.05*	.05*	.04*	.03*
Growth Mindset	.56***		.57***	.52**
Authentic leadership		.55***		.53**
R2	.53	.55	.52	.57
Adjusted R2	.52	.54	.52	.56
$\Delta R^2$	.53	.02	.03	.04
F	111.21	112.35	108.13	118.92
N	203	203	203	203

\*p&lt;.1. \*\*p&lt;.01, \*\*\*p&lt;.001

In order to examine the mediating effect further, the Sobel test was implemented. If the Z value is greater than 1.96 and less than -1.96, the mediating effect is considered to be significant. The Z value of this study between and among mindset, authentic leadership and organizational citizenship behavior in SMEs in Korea is 17.89. It is higher than 1.96(Sobel, 1982). Therefore, the mediating effect of authentic leadership is statistically significant.

&lt;Table 4&gt; Sobel Test for Mediating Effects

Path of Variable	Z	p
Growth Mindset ⇒ Authentic Leadership ⇒ Organizational Citizenship behavior	17.89	p<.001

The following <Table 5> shows that all of the hypotheses are confirmed and accepted based on the results of this research.

&lt;Table 5&gt; Results of Hypothesis Test

Hypothesis		Results
Hypothesis 1	Growth mindset will influence authentic leadership positively.	Accepted
Hypothesis 2	Growth mindset will influence organizational citizenship behavior positively.	Accepted
Hypothesis 3	Authentic leadership will influence organizational citizenship behavior positively.	Accepted
Hypothesis 4	Authentic leadership will mediate the relationships and growth mindset and organizational citizenship behavior	Accepted

The results of this research show growth mindset affects authentic leadership and organizational citizenship behavior positively. In addition, it is found that authentic leadership is influential on organizational citizenship behavior positively and mediates the relationship between growth mindset and organizational citizenship behavior in SMEs in Korea. It means there is a need to stress the importance of authentic leadership and growth mindset to improve the organizational citizenship behavior of employees in SMEs in Korea.

## V. Conclusion

From the findings of this study, it is clear that there is a correlation among employees' growth mindset, authentic leadership and organizational citizenship behavior in SMEs in Korea. The results of this study proved the mediating effect of authentic leadership between growth mindset and organizational citizenship behavior of employees. Also, the result of this study is lined with that of Özduran & Tanova(2017) as employees' mindset and organizational citizenship behavior are

correlated. Furthermore, this study is in lined with the study of Son, Song & Lee(2018) which showed the role of authentic leadership in SMEs.

It is found organizational citizenship behavior is enhanced by growth mindset through authentic leadership. Growth mindset and authentic leadership can affect organizational citizenship behavior in SMEs and authentic leadership plays as a mediator for the relationship between growth mindset and organizational citizenship behavior. Authentic leadership can help employees become more sincere and committed in SMEs and it will provide positive outcomes for the overall performance and success of SMEs in Korea.

The results of this study can make a theoretical contribution by demonstrating the relationship among growth mindset, authentic leadership and organizational citizenship behavior for employees in SMEs. Practically, the results of this study provide implications for SMEs to enhance authentic leadership development programs and help more leaders to possess authenticity and to influence employees' growth mindset and organizational citizenship behaviors. SMEs in Korea need to provide regular authentic leadership development programs intensively. In Korea's SMEs, leaders are significant because hierarchical culture is still strong and leaders can easily influence other employees. If leaders in SMEs have more authenticity, other employees will have more citizenship oriented behavior which can bring positive outcomes.

It is believed that growth mindset, authentic Leadership and organizational citizenship behavior should be of interest to entrepreneurship research. Because these are significant factors for the success of entrepreneurs lead their own ventures. The results of this study can offer a good example for the better management and operation of entrepreneurs for their ventures and can make a contribution to entrepreneurs.

Furthermore, HR (Human Resources) officers in SMEs should implement strategies and coaching programs about growth mindset of employees and



authentic leadership to enhance organizational citizenship behavior. The study of Lee and Kim (2021) indicates coaching would be effective particularly for young employees who regards the value of individual development and growth highly. As young employees share a significant portion in SMEs, coaching need to be implemented more extensively. According to Hong et al.(1999), growth mindset can be enhanced with the surrounding environment and continuous education and training. Therefore, growth mindset can be improved with relevant education and training like coaching. In addition, there is a need to focus on building more transparent organizational atmosphere for employees' organizational citizenship behaviors in SMEs. Promoting ethical culture with more fairness and ethics can be useful(Kim & Park, 2021).

The limitation of this study is that this study focused only on Korea's SMEs and did not consider the working context of other countries. Therefore, the results of this study will be difficult to generalize to other countries. Future studies would need to compare with the cases of other countries. By comparing the differences between Korea's case and other countries' case, better understanding about the relationship among growth mindset, organizational behavior and authentic leadership will be possible.

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[국문요약]

## 중소기업 근로자들의 성장마인드셋이 조직시민행동에 미치는 영향: 진성 리더십의 매개효과를 중심으로

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최근 윤리경영과 진성 리더십의 중요성이 증가하고 있다. 특히 국내 중소기업에서는 리더의 영향이 다른 직원들에게 더 강력할 수 있기에 리더의 행동과 태도는 큰 의미를 가질 수 있다. 경쟁 시장에서 살아남기 위하여 중소기업의 직원들은 본인의 일상적인 역할을 넘어서는 추가적인 역할을 맡기 위한 자발적 행동이 필요하다. 따라서 적은 직원수로 다양한 도전에 직면해야 하는 중소기업에 있어 직원들의 성장 마인드셋과 조직시민행동은 매우 중요하다. 이러한 상황을 반영하여 본 연구는 국내 중소기업 직원을 대상으로 성장마인드셋, 조직시민행동, 진정성 리더십 간의 관계를 살펴보고자 하였다. 특히 본 연구는 진성 리더십의 매개적 역할에 초점을 맞추었다. 본 연구의 연구문제는 1) 성장 마인드셋, 진성 리더십, 조직시민 행동 간의 관계는 무엇인가?, 2) 성장 마인드셋과 조직시민행동 간의 관계에서 진성 리더십의 매개역할은 어떠한가?로 구성되었다. 본 연구는 국내 중소기업에서 설문조사를 실시하여 총 203명의 직원을 대상으로 Baron과 Kenny(1986)의 매개효과 검증과 Sobel 테스트를 실시하였다. 분석 결과, 임직원의 성장마인드는 조직시민행동에 영향을 주는 것으로 나타났다. 또한 진성리더십은 성장마인드셋과 조직시민행동의 관계를 매개한다는 사실이 증명되었다. 본 연구는 성장 마인드셋과 진성리더십이 중소기업의 조직시민행동을 고양시키는 주요 요인임을 입증하였다. 또한 본 연구는 국내 중소기업의 인사 (HR) 담당자들은 조직시민행동을 촉진하기 위하여 성장마인드셋과 진성 리더십을 향상시킬 수 있는 코칭 프로그램 실시할 것을 제언하였다.

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