Organizational transparency and employees' organizational perceptions

by

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Abstract

The current study investigated the impact organizational transparency, mediated through authentic leadership, has on employee's perceived organizational support, trust, and cynicism through the lens of sensemaking and identification theory. Path analysis was used to test these key hypotheses. Results indicated transparency was positively related to support and trust, but was negatively related to cynicism with authentic leadership only mediating the latter. The present study also examined how differences in the organizational communications during a crisis (i.e., COVID) are perceived in terms of level of transparency, with the goal of identifying potential efforts organizations can adopt to improve their employee's perceptions of organizational transparency. An ANCOVA was utilized to examine how the differences in a fictitious companies' level of transparency when communicating COVID rates were perceived while controlling for fear of COVID. The results revealed that, in general, ratings of perceived transparency were higher for organizational communication conditions with more elements of transparency present. Overall, the present study provides evidence that organizational transparency does influence employees' perceptions of their organization and sheds light on a potential viable organizational strategy to deal and communicate with their employees about COVID. Future research should explore if these findings translate to communications about other crises such as future pandemics, recessions, company layoffs, and leadership changes.

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

In the past couple of decades, a multitude of organizational crises have occurred in the business world which were brought to the forefront through widespread media coverage. These cover a wide variety of industries and companies, such as Enron, Theranos, FIFA, Volkswagen, Wells Fargo, and Equifax. One similar aspect many of these cases have is deception, or, lack of transparency. Volkswagen’s emission scandal in 2015 was due to the company having not only multiple models of vehicles which were emitting illegally high levels of poisonous nitrogen oxides, but that these vehicles also contained illegal software that could detect when its performance was being tested and would change to pass the emissions test (Ewing, 2015; Parloff, 2018). 11 million vehicles were found to contain this software, with the company being fined 25 billion dollars and reports of an operating loss of 1.77 billion dollars (Ewing, 2015; Parloff, 2018). Similarly, the Wells Fargo account fraud scandal in 2016 found that employees opened more than 2 million unauthorized accounts to reach sales targets and other incentives, resulting in 185 million dollars in penalties and about 5,300 employees being fired (Arnold, 2016; Egan, 2016). While some of these referenced scandals are more well-known than others, all the companies experienced reductions in positive public reception, and in some cases, complete collapse.

This translates even to universal crises that are experienced, such as recessions or COVID-19, where differences in how various companies handled the unique challenges were picked apart in the media. For example, the car industry was scrutinized over differences in workplace COVID reporting between Volkswagen and Toyota (Foldy & Cutter, 2020). The main focus was the difference in transparency between the two companies when communicating with employees about the COVID rates in their operating plants. Specifically, if there was an outbreak at a plant, would close contact employees be notified or not by the company. Notably, Toyota was viewed as less transparent through not communicating this information. Employee interview data revealed feelings of distrust, increased rumors throughout the workplace, and the need to protect themselves and their coworkers through posting their own COVID status on their personal social media sites (Foldy & Cutter, 2020). With the ever-present media, companies more now than ever need to be aware of how they are perceived, and this extends not only to the public eye, but internal perceptions by their employees as well. The aim of the current study is to investigate how differences in organizational transparency internally impacts employees' perceptions of their organization as well as test if differences of transparency can be perceived in organizational communications by utilizing vignettes. This study uses COVID-19 as a salient exemplar as research is showing pandemics are likely to be on the rise and more frequent in the near future (Marani et al., 2021).

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Organizational Transparency

Transparency in general has been defined as “the perceived quality of intentionally shared information from a sender” (Schnackenberg & Tomlinson, 2016, p.1788). It seems as though transparency has become a more prominent concern overtime as demand for openness in businesses by stakeholders has increased. Anecdotally, with the previously described situations such as the collapse of Enron or Wells Fargo and more global issues such as the COVID-19 pandemic, the need to study transparency in organizational situations and its impact has increased. In a conceptual meta-analytical review of the currently available transparency literature, Albu and Flyverbom (2016) found there to be two overall approaches to conduct research in this area which are the performativity and verifiability approaches. Research from the performativity approach is more process focused and highlights how companies’ efforts and action plans to be transparent create complexities with communication and interpretation as well as the issues that can arise from these efforts. The verifiability approach is concerned with how information is disclosed and is used to communicate the state of a situation, being essentially focused on the operation of transparency itself. The verifiability approach is the approach of the current research and will be the focus of covered research that follows on organizational transparency.

According to Albu and Flyveerbom (2016), transparency in the business context did not appear until the 1990s, with organizational transparency research starting to appear largely between 2008 to 2015. A large portion of research on transparency primarily focused on the sender side of the communication process (the organization’s viewpoint) and can often see transparency simply defined as the increased frequency of information disclosure, typically illustrated by the sender providing information about their organization to the public (Bushman et al., 2004; Eijffinger & Geraats, 2006). Additionally, there is research from the receiver's side which primarily has focused on organizational transparency as the relationship between an organization and outside stakeholders, such as consumers. Examples include looking at consumers and the organizational transparency provided on a specific organization's public website (Bernardi & LaCross, 2005; Lee & Joseph, 2013) or how observable the company is to the public in terms of private versus open offices (Bernstein, 2012).

The current research will focus on the receiver's perspective regarding the disclosed information but specifically aims to look at the relationship between organizational transparency and an organization's internal stakeholders (i.e., employees) rather than external stakeholders. Past empirical research on this specific relationship with internal stakeholders has not been as widely investigated as the research that looks at organizational transparency in terms of the overall public perception of an organization. A study by Rawlins (2008) is widely referenced when reviewing literature on organizational transparency with internal stakeholders. The study utilizes a healthcare organization and its employees to explore the relationship between organizational transparency and trust. Support was found for a positive relationship between organizational transparency and trust, illustrating as employee's perceptions of organizational transparency increased, the trust in the organization increased as well (Rawlins, 2008). Additionally, Rawlins (2009) validated two scales regarding organizational transparency, one scale measuring an organization's reputation for transparency as well as a scale measuring the organizations actual efforts to be transparent, the latter of which will be what is considered as organizational transparency in the present study.

For the purposes of the current study, the operationalized definition of organizational transparency is ‘‘the deliberate attempt to make available all legally releasable information—whether positive or negative in nature—in a manner that is accurate, timely, balanced, and unequivocal, for the purpose of enhancing the reasoning ability of publics and holding organizations accountable for their actions, policies, and practices.’’(Rawlins, 2009, p. 75). Based on this, organization transparency is composed of four components, participation, substantial information, accountability, and secrecy. Participation refers to the level of detail of the provided information, the ease of finding the information, and the ability to provide feedback or have involvement with regards to this information (e.g., the organizations allowing employees to request specific types of information, asking for continued updates, etc.). Substantial information refers to characteristics of the provided information such as relevance, clarity, completeness, accuracy, reliability, and verifiability of the provided information (e.g., provided reports use language that is easy to understand, provided information has been put into context and is comprehensive). Accountability deals with how the information addresses not only information which reflects the organization positively, but also information which can reflect negatively on the organization, such as admitting mistakes that are due to the actions of the organization (e.g., provided information such as company performance results should be able to easily be compared to industry standards or previous performance, information should be reported in a timely manner so it is useable for decision making) The last element is secrecy which reflects a lack of openness or an organization's attempts at secrecy. Secrecy can include elements such as the organization using unclear language, only sharing one part of a situation, or only disclosing information when it is required (e.g., financial interests are not disclosed, there are not prompt communications about errors done by the organization and a lack of information provided regarding efforts to address these errors). These elements together and their varying presence or lack thereof, inform an individual's perception of their organizations level of transparency (Rawlins, 2009).

Perceived Organizational Trust

Perceived organizational trust is an important construct to help determine if an organizations' transparency efforts are effective or not. Trust is typically thought of in terms of interpersonal trust (trust between individuals who have direct contact with one another), but trust in an organization can be measured from a variety of levels within an organization which go beyond direct contact (i.e., employee to employee, and employee to direct supervisor), including top management or the organization as a whole. It is important to conduct research regarding all the varying levels as there is evidence these various levels have different antecedents and consequences (Conchie et al., 2006; Hopkins & Weathington, 2006; Tan & Tan, 2000). Importantly, there is research supporting the idea trust in top management can be associated to the organization as a whole (Jeong et al., 2017; McCauley & Kuhnert, 1992) and perceived organizational trust is typically understood from the employee's point of view about the organization as a whole. Trust is often measured as an antecedent in occupational research, so it is important to assess how organizational transparency impacts and predicts perceived organizational trust as trust can influence important organizational outcomes. Research has shown trust predicts organization attitudes and behaviors such as organizational cynicism (Polat, 2013; Serrano Archimi et al., 2018), job satisfaction (Güçer & Demirdağ, 2014; Lee et al., 2013), employee engagement (Heyns & Rothmann, 2017; Hough et al., 2015; Malinen et al., 2013), and organizational citizenship behaviors (Guh et al., 2013; Hansen et al., 2011; Yoon et al., 2016). Moreover, perceived organizational trust can help predict workplace accidents as higher trust predicts lower accident/near misses in the workplace, is positively related to safety climate, and negatively related to injuries (Luria, 2010), making research on trust of high interest to organizations.

Of the extant research, little to none exists investigating organizational transparency with organizational trust. The available research that does investigate these two constructs together is largely focused on the relationship from an external stakeholder perspective. For example, Holland et al. (2018) examined how two types of transparency, an organization's reputation for transparency and its attempts to communicate transparency, impacts the organization's perceived trustworthiness from an outside stakeholder perspective. This was accomplished through the use of faux newspaper articles to communicate various levels of transparency to the participants (who were not employees at the organization). The results indicated both types of transparency were tied to external organizational trust, such that the more transparency that was perceived, the higher the level of trust indicated by external stakeholders (Holland et al., 2018). However, internal organizational trust, trust between an organization and its employees, still needs to be investigated.

The most recent research looking specifically at organizational transparency with organizational trust as an outcome by Lee and Li (2021) is especially relevant as it looked at the situation of COVID-19 but from a public relations perspective in terms of these constructs with organizations like the government and how they relate to the public's perceptions overall. Evidence was found to support organizational transparency, in terms of substantial information, significantly increased the public's trust in the government and health institutes like the CDC. Lee and Li (2021) used a conceptualization of organizational trust by Hon and Grunig (1999) that defines trust as "One party's level of confidence in and willingness to open oneself to the other party." (pg. 3) and operationalizes trust of being comprised of three components which are integrity, (the belief that an organization is fair and just), dependability (the belief that an organization will do what it says it will), and competence (the belief the organization has the ability to do what it says what it will do). The current study adopted this same operationalization, but from the specific viewpoint of an employee to the immediate organization the individual works for rather than from an overall public relations viewpoint.

Perceived Organizational Support

Perceived organizational support can be defined as the developed general beliefs employees have concerning the degree to which the organization values their contributions and cares about their well-being (Eder & Eisenberger, 2008). Perceived organizational support is based on social exchange theory which contends that if an entity (person, organization, etc.) does a good action or favor for another, then the receiver will feel the need to reciprocate that back in some manner in the future. In terms of an organization and perceived organizational support specifically, if an employee is high in their perceived organizational support, they see the organization as being there and caring for them. Due to this, they are more likely to reciprocate that back to the organization as an employee (Eisenberger et al., 1986; Eisenberger et al., 1990). For the organization this can be especially important during times of crisis, such as the experience of a pandemic where there is a need to adjust to new procedures and protocols in the workplace and the need to receive help or cooperation from the employees to properly enact these adjustments.

Unfortunately, there is no widely available research on organizational transparency and perceived organizational support specifically. Perceived organizational support research indicates it is an antecedent to various important organizational constructs and outcomes. For example, past research has shown perceived organizational support influences employees' safety knowledge and behaviors (Credo et al., 2010), and influences how effective organization/management safety promotion and efforts are (Credo et al., 2010; Hofmann & Morgeson, 1999) which can be especially relevant when it comes to health and safety regarding COVID in the workplace. Additionally, perceived organizational support has also been shown to have a positive relationship with safety commitment and safety citizenship behaviors (Reader et al., 2017) and a negative relationship with absenteeism and turnover intentions (Eder & Eisenberger, 2008).

Despite the lack of research on these two variables together, there may be a potential relationship between organizational transparency and perceived organizational support because transparent communication could be perceived as a type of social support. Social support has identified four forms: emotional, appraisal, informational, and instrumental support (House, 1981). Transparent communication from an organization may be perceived as a type of informational support to the employee. Wills (1985) contends that informational support would be most relevant to individuals who are highly stressed because under normal circumstances, most individuals have the information required to effectively work. However, when there are new environmental changes and stresses that occur, additional information is needed to effectively move forward and adapt to these changes and the informational support provided would be invaluable (Willis, 1985). This could easily apply to the dynamic between an organization and its employees during a time of crisis, such as pandemic. Transparent communication from an organization could be perceived by an employee as a type of social support, thus potentially leading to an increased perception of organizational support.

Investigating the relationship between organizational transparency and perceived organizational support can provide vital information and open the door to a new area of research.

Furthermore, there is research focusing on perceived organizational support and the other constructs of interest for the current study of perceived organizational trust and organizational cynicism (which is described in the following subsection). Research that includes both perceived organizational support and trust has found evidence increased support often leads to higher levels of perceived trust from the organization (Keskinkılıç Kara et al., 2015; Polat, 2010) as well as research indicating trust has a mediating role on perceived organization support in regards to the outcome variables such as knowledge sharing among employees (Shateri & Hayat, 2020), in-role performance (Biswas & Kapil, 2017), and job embeddedness (Tabak & Hendy, 2016). With these constructs impacting important organizational outcomes and each other, studying these two constructs together helps create a more realistic and bigger picture of how the employees perceive and are impacted by the organization they work for. Therefore, it seems especially prudent to study how differences in organizational transparency influences these constructs in times of crisis such as a COVID-19 pandemic which directly impacts the workplace and workforce.

Organizational Cynicism

Organizational cynicism can be defined as “a negative attitude toward one’s employing organization” (Dean et al., 1998, p. 345), where the negative attitude leads the employee to have negatives experiences towards their organization on three dimensions: cognitive, affective, and behavioral. For the cognitive dimension, the negative attitude leads to the employee’s belief the organization lacks integrity and those high in organizational cynicism for this dimension will not take organizational statements seriously, believe people employed by the organization are overall deceitful, selfish, lazy, lie, do fraudulent activities, and engage in immoral behavior. The affective dimension deals with the negative affect the employee feels toward the organization such as disrespect, anger, resentment, and frustration. This leads to the behavioral dimension, where the negative cognitive and affective dimensions can lead to the employee exhibiting insulting and critical behaviors towards the organization such as making cynical comments about the work environment, their job description, and the aims of the organizations as well as not defending their organization when negative comments are made by others (Dean et al., 1998).

When considered alone, organizational cynicism has shown to have great impacts organizational employee outcomes. In two meta-analyses, it was found higher levels of cynicism related to lower job performance, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational citizenship behaviors, and higher turnover intentions (Akar, 2019; Chiaburu et al., 2013). These illustrate the importance of investigating organizational cynicism as it tends to have a negative relationship with positive organizational variables most organizations desire to have and improve.

Organizational cynicism is important not only alone, but also can have significant impacts through mediation on other organizational attitudes and behaviors. Typically, those high in perceived organizational support find that their organization cares for their well-being and values their contributions at work, but those high in organizational cynicism can actually perceive the opposite of this in terms of support. Byrne and Hochwarter (2007) found evidence those high in organizational cynicism perceived organizational support as a manipulation rather than the organizations true attempts to cultivate a better relationship with its employees and this in turn lead to lower performance for these individuals. Additionally, evidence supports that organizational cynicism mediates the relationship between psychological capital on unsafe work behaviors (Stratman & Youssef-Morgan, 2019) as well as the relationship between authoritarian leadership on unsafe work behaviors (Jiang et al., 2019). Moreover, Tolga (2020) found while perceived organizational support and organizational cynicism by themselves predict counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs), their predictive power is stronger when consider together and showed individuals who are more likely to engage in CWBs have low organizational support along with higher levels of organizational cynicism, compared to those who are simply low in organizational support or high in organizational cynicism alone.

Additionally, organizational cynicism and perceived organizational trust are often studied together in research. There is evidence employees' cynicism towards their organization negatively impacts their trust in their organization (Abraham, 2000; Akin, 2015). Research has found cynicism is closely tied together with perceived organizational trust, along with other concepts such as exhaustion, organizational support, and organizational justice (Biswas & Kapil, 2017; Polat, 2013; Simbula & Guglielmi, 2010). One might argue studying perceived organizational trust and organizational cynicism are redundant, as it can be viewed the two constructs are the same thing on opposite ends where organization trust implies a presence of trustworthiness and organizational cynicism implies a lack of it. However, the research literature considers them different because even though they both contain a cognitive component, cynicism has two extra dimensions of affect and behavior which trust does not have, so cynicism can account for aspects not included when measuring trust (Dean et al., 1998). Furthermore, a meta-analysis conducted by Chiaburu et al. (2013) showed these two constructs are often studied together, but can differentially predict organizational outcomes and are distinct constructs, showing the value of studying both simultaneously.

Despite a wide range of research on organizational cynicism, there is currently no available literature on the relationship between organizational cynicism and organizational transparency. The majority of research focuses on organizational cynicism as an outcome. When looking at antecedents, organizational cynicism research has shown a negative relationship with organizational trust, support, and justice and these three can help to reduce it the level of cynicism in organizations (Chiaburu et al., 2013). On the other hand, psychological contract violation and perceived organizational politics have a strong, positive relationship and psychological strain has a moderate, positive relationship with organizational cynicism which can increase an employee's level of cynicism in their employing organization (Chiaburu et al., 2013). The current research can help add to the literature in this area by investigating another possible antecedent of organizational cynicism, organizational transparency,

While there is no research currently on the relationship between these two, organization transparency may be associated with organizational cynicism. Research specifically focusing on safety cynicism illustrated how this specific type of cynicism develops due to lack of sincerity or ability by the organization or its leaders concerning the employee's safety (Duncan, 2016) and this could be potentially translated into overall organizational cynicism. Based on this, organizational transparency may reflect the opposite of what Duncan (2016) described. If an organization has transparent communications with its employees, this could be perceived as the organization being sincere or having the capacity to deal with the issue at hand. This potential in consideration with the impact organizational cynicism can have on organizational outcomes by itself along with the other variables of interest of the present study, points to the importance of investigating and better understanding the relationship between organizational cynicism and organizational transparency in order to address this gap in the literature.

Theoretical Background and Hypotheses

The current study adopted sensemaking theory and identification theory facilitated by authentic leadership to comprehensively cover how employees' perceptions of their company could be impacted by organizational transparency during a crisis, using COVID as an exemplar. Sensemaking theory claims individuals use relevant contextual information to give meaning to their experiences through social interaction and information processing (Weick et al., 2005). According to the theory, this is an ongoing process where shared perceptions are created regarding what are accepted values, beliefs, and behaviors in a given situation. It is important to note and place emphasis that this process is ongoing, because if one encounters a new situation or a situation that goes against the previously held shared values/beliefs or mental models, the individual will make adjustments based on the noted changes experienced in the given new context, such as experiencing situations in a continually changing pandemic.

Schultz and Wehmeier (2010) discuss utilizing sensemaking theory in terms of an organization's communications, specifically in terms of an organizations attempt at institutionalizing corporate social responsibility (CSR). CSR is a company's responsibility to do good by applying social and ethical standards to their business; these responsibilities are often communicated by the business's stakeholder (Lindgreen & Swaen, 2010). Lindgreen and Swaen illustrate how at a micro level (internally within the organization), sensemaking would start with the organization communicating to employees the new CSR initiatives, goals, or values. Then the organization will create and disseminate policies/procedures for the employees in order to reach and align with these new communicated CSR principles. The sensemaking process includes the employees interpreting these responses with what was publicly communicated and actually practiced internally in the organization regarding the CSR guidelines. This continual, cyclical process will create the new work environment which (hopefully) aligns with the organizations stated CSR initiatives (Schultz & Wehmeier, 2010). This idea is similar to the current study, but instead of CSR, the study will investigate organizational transparency and how varying levels of organization transparency in the organization's internal communication impacts employees' perceptions of the organization's trust, support, and cynicism.

Additionally, the present study utilized a synthesized framework of authentic leadership and identification theory as it may help to facilitate organizational transparency. Authentic leadership theory suggests that leaders who demonstrate self-awareness, genuineness, transparency, and ethical conduct can foster trust, respect, and commitment among their followers, ultimately resulting in positive organizational outcomes (Anita et al., 2020). Authentic leadership is defined by 4 dimensions: self-awareness, balanced processing, internalized moral perspective, and relational transparency (Anita et al., 2020; Neider & Schriesheim, 2011). Self-awareness is how aware leaders are of their values, beliefs, and ideas and how their understanding of these and their actions will impact those who follow them. Balanced processing is the way leaders try to objectively evaluate and include all relevant information (good and bad) in order to come to a decision. Internalized moral perspective is viewed as leaders who stay true to themselves, ignoring social pressures or potential punishments and are guided by their own personal moral standards and values in their behavior/decision making. Finally, relational transparency is how leaders act in their relationships with others through being honest, open, and accountable to help create mutual trust and intimacy with their subordinates (Anita et al., 2020; Neider & Schriesheim, 2011).

Identification theory posits that individuals form their sense of self by internalizing the values, beliefs, and norms of their social groups, with group membership and identification influencing their attitudes, behaviors, and self-concept. Identification theory argues not all forms of identification influence an individual to the same degree and that a given identity may be more salient and frequently activated than others (Mallin et al., 2022). There are different types of identification, most of which require a reciprocal relationship. However, personal identification does not require a reciprocal relationship and depends mainly on the focal person's observation and reflection of a different, specific individuals attributes. Personal identification is defined as "an individual's intrapersonal perception of oneness with another individual, is distinct from other forms of social identification, which involve a comparison to an entire group, workgroup, or interpersonal relationship" (Mallin et al., 2022, pg. 243). This study focuses on personal identification specifically as it can occur in situations where employees observe their supervisors in the workplace.

Research using personal identification has been conducted when specifically looking at authentic leadership (Leroy et al., 2012; Liu et al., 2015; Mallin et al., 2022). In this case, an employee can identify with an authentic leader. Once this has occurred, the employee will start to internalize the characteristics and attributes they witness in an authentic leader (i.e., the four dimensions covered previously) and they aim to emulate these themselves. Evidence in support of this idea has been found by Leroy et al. (2012), where they demonstrated when the employee personally identifies with an authentic leader, the employee will be more likely to tell the truth and disclose the wrongdoing following their core moral values.

Furthermore, research has pointed to this identification with authentic leaders to impact followers' behaviors and perceptions. Vogelgesang et al. (2013) found that identification with authentic leadership, specifically investigating the dimension of relational transparency, lead to increased levels of followers' work engagement and performance. Furthermore, research has been done on testing the relationship between transparency and relational transparency along with informational justice. It was found that these two concepts have a positive relationship with transparency, but they were conceptually distinct as relational transparency and informational justice where more concerned about source authenticity and fairness, while transparency is more focused on the aspects of the information itself (Schnackenberg et al., 2021). Additionally, authentic leadership has been shown to help promote ethical and prosocial behaviors (Hannah et al., 2011), and facilitate moral perspectives in employees (Gardner et al., 2005). Based on these ideas, it is possible authentic leadership can impact other organizational perceptions as well. Utilizing sensemaking theory and identification theory together will aide in the attempt to identify how and if differences in organizational transparency will impact employees in terms of their perceptions of the organization's trust, support, and cynicism as well if these potential relationships will be mediated by authentic leadership.

Despite the potential for integration between authentic leadership and organizational transparency, there is minimal research on the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational transparency. There have been two empirical studies conducted regarding authentic leadership and transparent organizational communication. Men (2014) found that authentic leadership helped facilitate an organization's transparent communication which led to an increased view of the overall internal reputation of the organization from the employee's perspective. Additionally, Jiang and Men (2017) found evidence that authentic leadership had a direct, positive relationship with perceived transparent organizational communication. Both of these were found to be related with work-life enrichment, but only transparent communication had a significant, positive relationship with employee engagement. With only two studies currently available on the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational transparency, the present study will be able to provide valuable additional information regarding this relationship, along with the other focal constructs to the current body of available research.

While there is not a lot of research regarding authentic leadership and transparency, there is extant literature investigating the relationship between authentic leadership and trust. Specifically, past studies have found support for the positive relationship between authentic leadership and trust (Avolio et al., 2004; Farid et al., 2020; Jeong et al., 2017; Onorato & Zhu, 2014; Tabak et al., 2013). In these studies, trust both facilitates and enhances the effect of authentic leadership on organizational outcomes. For example, trust positively mediated the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational citizenship behaviors (Farid et al., 2020) and negatively mediated the relationship between authentic leadership and employee burnout (Jeong et al., 2017). Meanwhile, the present study postulated that employees are likely to interpret any espoused and enacted organizational transparency as signs of their organization's trustworthiness based on the sensemaking theory (Weick et al., 2005). At the same time, this relationship would be viable when leaders adequately facilitate the sensemaking process through a series of sense-giving actions such as displaying sincerity and communicating a clear and compelling benefit of transparency. Additionally, when leaders are perceived as authentic, employees are more likely to identify themselves with their leaders and more willing to accept and comply with the leadership behavior, thereby enhancing trust in their leaders, as suggested by the interrelation between authentic leadership and personal identification. Based on this and the previously noted literature regarding organizational transparency, the following hypothesis is proposed to address this gap (See Figure 1 which summarizes the following three hypotheses listed below):

Hypotheses 1: There will be a significant, positive relationship between employee's organizational transparency perceptions and perceived organizational trust, which will be mediated by authentic leadership.

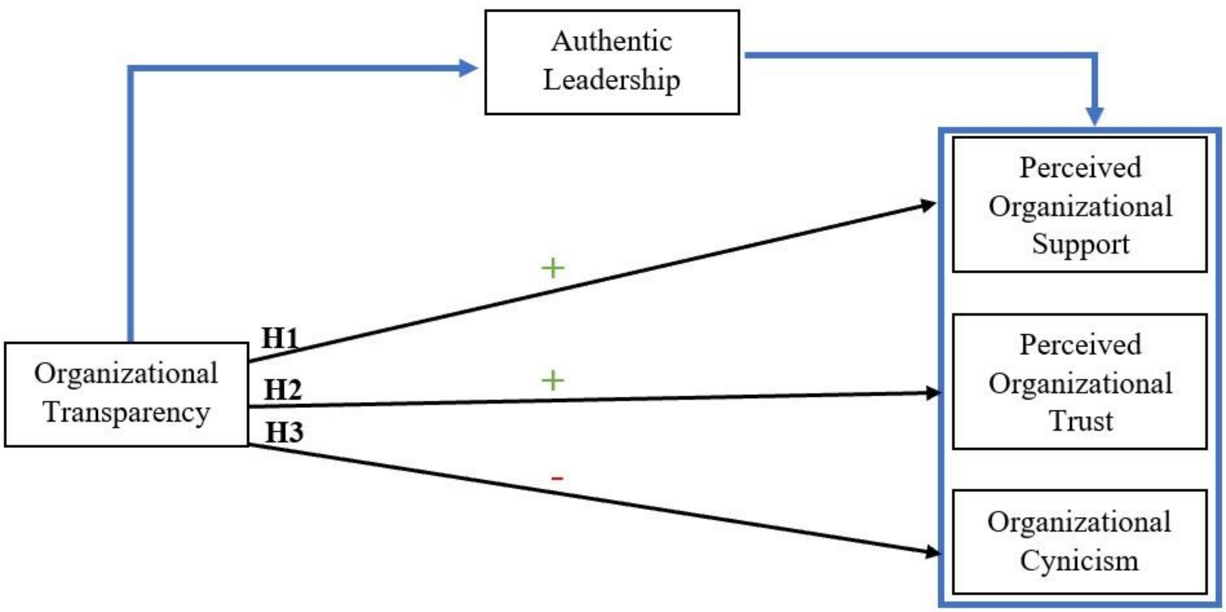
Additional research has found a positive relationship between authentic leadership and perceived organizational support (Kim et al., 2021), but most of the research focuses on this relationship in terms of mediation/moderation with perceived organizational support being the antecedent to authentic leadership. For example, authentic leadership has been found to be a mediator between perceived organizational support and psychological capital (Bilgetürk & Baykal, 2021), and a moderator between perceived organizational support and turnover intention (Arici, 2018). However, there was one study conducted on the relationship between authentic leadership and organizational commitment where the relationship was mediated by perceived organizational support (Baykal, 2020). The current research aims to investigate how authentic leadership can mediate the relationship between organizational transparency and perceived organizational support. It is possible that authentic leadership could nurture the communication in the organization and lead to increased levels of perceived organizational support based on sensemaking and identification theory (Weick et al., 2005; Mallin et al., 2022). Organizational transparency can aide the enhancement of employees' situational awareness to help them prepare and cope with changes or challenges in the organization. This organizational transparency could facilitate employees' sensemaking as the organization's transparent actions can illustrate they truly care about the employees' well-being. These efforts would be fostered even further when their leaders promote this sensemaking through authentic actions such as displaying sincerity or offering informational support such as clarifying organizational actions to increase transparency. Furthermore, when leaders are viewed as authentic, employees are more likely to identify with their leaders leading to them paying closer attention to the behaviors of their leaders and having a greater understanding of their motivations as supported by authentic leadership and identification theory (Leroy et al, 2012; Mallin et al., 2022). Based on this and the previously summarized literature regarding organizational transparency, the following hypothesis is proposed:

Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant, positive relationship between employee's organizational transparency perceptions and perceived organizational support, which will be mediated by authentic leadership.

It is worth noting that there is little empirical evidence on authentic leadership and organizational cynicism, but the research supports a negative relationship between the two variables (Megeirhia et al., 2018; Tabak et al. 2013). There has been more research supporting this relationship but in terms of cynicism in general (Laschinger et al., 2013) or cynicism regarding organizational change (Bakari et al., 2019; Williams et al., 2012), highlighting the need to provide more research on this relationship. In consideration of sensemaking theory, the current study suggests employees who perceive the organization to act in a transparent manner will view this as signs of the organization's trustworthiness and support, ultimately leading to reduced organizational cynicism. As acts of transparency help the organization communicate to its employees, they are sincere and care about their employees, this should help facilitate their sensemaking about their employees' values. Simultaneously, authentic leaders should help nurture this even further through their sincere actions and additional clear communication to further support this transparency is a true value of the organization and not just for show. Furthermore, based on identification theory, when leaders are perceived as authentic, employees are more likely to identify with their leaders, bolstering the acceptance of the transparency from the organization as being genuine which would reduce perceptions of organizational cynicism. This leads to the following hypothesis to provide more empirical evidence regarding this possible relationship:

Hypothesis 3: There will be a significant, negative relationship between employee's organizational transparency perceptions and perceived organizational cynicism, which will be mediated by authentic leadership.

Figure 1. Visual Representation of the Proposed Model for Hypotheses 1 -3



Finally, currently available research has not tested ways in which to develop and improve organizational transparency within organizations. The relationships between organizational trust, support, and cynicism have been widely researched, and investigation into the relationships of these variables with organizational transparency is growing. In an effort to address this gap, the current study proposes to test a potential way an organizational can increase its perceived organizational transparency through communications with its employees. This will be done by manipulating the level of transparency (based on the dimensions of organizational transparency previously described) in a message sent to employees from a faux organization regarding the current COVID rates, which should serve as a salient exemplar of a crisis situation for participants. Systematically testing different levels of transparency will allow the opportunity to learn at what magnitude transparency in an organization may theoretically need to be at to have an impact of these organizational perceptions. This will help determine the optimal level of transparency that is needed to produce the desired effect of change on organizational outcomes, while also minimizing the potential negative side effects such as an increased level of organizational cynicism if the transparency in these communications are not viewed as bona fide. This leads to the final hypothesis:

Hypothesis 4: There will be a significant difference between the organizational communication conditions, such that those with more elements of transparency present will be rated higher on organizational transparency than those with less elements of transparency present.

Chapter 3 - Methods

Participants

The current study was conducted using a Qualtrics survey and participants were recruited using snowball sampling. A Qualtrics link was circulated to Kansas State University's daily announcements page (K-State Today) and SONA systems, as well as to individuals through the principal investigators personal network and social media accounts. Participants were compensated by being entered into a raffle where they have a chance to win one of 18 prizes: One $100 award, two $50 awards, and fifteen $20 awards (a total of $500 in prizes). Participants could have increased the number of entries in the raffle by sending the survey link out to their network and having the referred participant acknowledge who sent them the link when they take the survey. Participants were required to be currently employed to participate in the survey and be employed at the same current organization for at least two years. Based on a power analysis, it was determined around 200 participants would be needed for the current study. A total of 315 participants were collected, after data cleaning there was a total of 210 participants, meeting the identified amount of the power analysis.

Measures and Materials

Organizational Transparency

The organizational transparency scale (Rawlins, 2009) was comprised of 23 items (α = .97) and had four subdimensions which are described below. The response scale was a seven-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). CFA results have supported a four-factor model structure with adequate fit (Rawlins, 2009). CFA results were confirmed for the current study, which indicated adequate fit CFI = .93, TLI = .92, RMSEA = .08 [90% CI: .07 - .10], and SRMR = 0.05 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). The entire scale can be seen in Appendix A.

The subdimension of participation was made up of six items (α = .92). Example items included “asks for feedback from people like me to help identify the information I need.” and “Takes the time with people like me to understand who we are and what we need.” The subdimension of substantial information was made up of seven items (α = .92), with example items such as “provides information that is relevant to people like me” and “provides information that is easy for people like me to understand”. The subdimension of accountability was made up of five items (α = .86). Example items included “is forthcoming with information that might be damaging to the organization” and “freely admits when it has made mistakes”. The subdimension of secrecy is a reverse construct that was made up of five items (α = .78). Example items included “only discloses information when it is required.” and “provides only part of the story to people like me.” (Rawlins, 2009).

Perceived Organizational Trust

The organization trust scale was comprised of 9 items (Hon & Grunig, 1999). Example items included “This organization can be relied upon to keep its promises” and “I believe that this organization takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions”. The response scale was a 5-point Likert scale 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The entire scale can be seen in Appendix B.

Perceived Organizational Support

The perceived organizational support scale was comprised of 16 items (Eisenberger et al., 1986). Example items included “The company really cares about my well-being.” and “The company strongly considers my goals and values.”. The response scale was a 7-point Likert scale from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*). The entire scale can be seen in Appendix C.

Organizational Cynicism

The organizational cynicism scale was comprised of 13 items (Brandes et al., 2000 as cited in FitzGerald, 2002). Example items included "When I think about my organization, I experience irritation" and "I criticize my organization's practices and policies with others". The response scale is a 5-point Likert scale from 1 (*never*) to 5 (*always*). The entire scale can be seen in Appendix D.

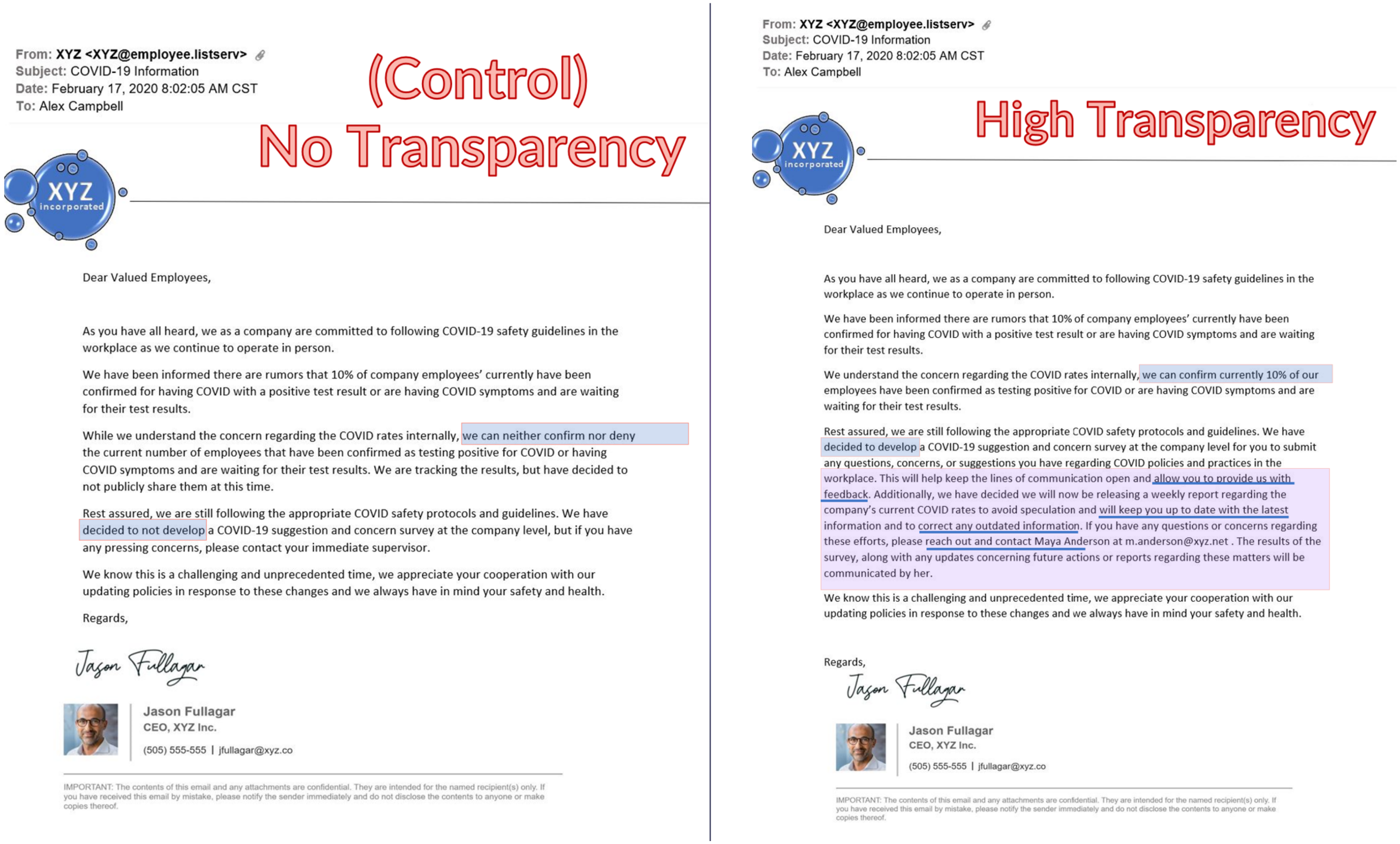
Authentic Leadership Inventory

Authentic leadership was measured with the Authentic Leadership Inventory (ALI) which is a 14-item scale (Neider & Schriesheim, 2011). Examples items included "My leader uses his/her core beliefs to make decisions." and "My leader openly shares information with others." Where 'My leader' refers to the participants direct supervisor. The response scale was a seven-point Likert scale all answers are made on a 7-point scale that ranges 1 (*Not True*) to 7 (*Very True*). The full scale is available in Appendix E.

The Organizational Transparency Vignettes

The survey randomly assigned the participant to one of six vignettes. Each vignette was written as if it were a faux email sent out to the company employees. Each vignette represents a different level of transparency (from not present to high), which is based on the four factors that make up organizational transparency as described in Rawlins (2009) of participation, substantial information, accountability, and secrecy. An example illustrating the differences in manipulating transparency for these organizational communications can be seen in Figure 2. The complete vignettes for all six conditions can be seen in Appendix F.

Figure 2. Two Vignette Conditions with Highlighted Differences Regarding Organizational Transparency



From: XYZ <XYZ@employee.listserv>
Subject: COVID-19 Information
Date: February 17, 2020 8:02:05 AM CST
To: Alex Campbell

(Control)
No Transparency

XYZ incorporated

Dear Valued Employees,

As you have all heard, we as a company are committed to following COVID-19 safety guidelines in the workplace as we continue to operate in person.

We have been informed there are rumors that 10% of company employees' currently have been confirmed for having COVID with a positive test result or are having COVID symptoms and are waiting for their test results.

While we understand the concern regarding the COVID rates internally, we can neither confirm nor deny the current number of employees that have been confirmed as testing positive for COVID or having COVID symptoms and are waiting for their test results. We are tracking the results, but have decided to not publicly share them at this time.

Rest assured, we are still following the appropriate COVID safety protocols and guidelines. We have decided to not develop a COVID-19 suggestion and concern survey at the company level, but if you have any pressing concerns, please contact your immediate supervisor.

We know this is a challenging and unprecedented time, we appreciate your cooperation with our updating policies in response to these changes and we always have in mind your safety and health.

Regards,

Jason Fullagar

Jason Fullagar
CEO, XYZ Inc.
(505) 555-555 | jfullagar@xyz.co

IMPORTANT: The contents of this email and any attachments are confidential. They are intended for the named recipient(s) only. If you have received this email by mistake, please notify the sender immediately and do not disclose the contents to anyone or make copies thereof.

From: XYZ <XYZ@employee.listserv>
Subject: COVID-19 Information
Date: February 17, 2020 8:02:05 AM CST
To: Alex Campbell

High Transparency

XYZ incorporated

Dear Valued Employees,

As you have all heard, we as a company are committed to following COVID-19 safety guidelines in the workplace as we continue to operate in person.

We have been informed there are rumors that 10% of company employees' currently have been confirmed for having COVID with a positive test result or are having COVID symptoms and are waiting for their test results.

We understand the concern regarding the COVID rates internally, we can confirm currently 10% of our employees have been confirmed as testing positive for COVID or are having COVID symptoms and are waiting for their test results.

Rest assured, we are still following the appropriate COVID safety protocols and guidelines. We have decided to develop a COVID-19 suggestion and concern survey at the company level for you to submit any questions, concerns, or suggestions you have regarding COVID policies and practices in the workplace. This will help keep the lines of communication open and allow you to provide us with feedback. Additionally, we have decided we will now be releasing a weekly report regarding the company's current COVID rates to avoid speculation and will keep you up to date with the latest information and to correct any outdated information. If you have any questions or concerns regarding these efforts, please reach out and contact Maya Anderson at m.anderson@xyz.net . The results of the survey, along with any updates concerning future actions or reports regarding these matters will be communicated by her.

We know this is a challenging and unprecedented time, we appreciate your cooperation with our updating policies in response to these changes and we always have in mind your safety and health.

Regards,

Jason Fullagar

Jason Fullagar
CEO, XYZ Inc.
(505) 555-555 | jfullagar@xyz.co

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Note. On the left is an example of the No Transparency (Control) Condition where the blue highlights aspects that are different from the right, which is the High Transparency, 10% of COVID confirmed condition. The condition of the right has additional information provided to mimic increased organizational transparency which is highlighted in purple.

Demographic/Control Variables

Demographic information and individual differences that are potentially confounded with the variables of interest were measured in the current study in order to control for them. These were collected after the participants have read their randomly assigned vignette and answered the variables of interest scales. Participants were asked to answer how long they have worked in their current job (tenure), their education level, age, gender, and marital status. While collected for demographic information, these also potentially needed to be controlled for as research has shown that employees vary on their levels of organizational cynicism due to education level, gender, and tenure (Alanoglu & Karabatak, 2021; Işik, 2014). Additionally, organizational trust has been shown to be impacted by tenure, age, and marital status (Brown et al., 2006; Gilbert & Tang, 1998) which is why these control variables need to be measured and accounted for.

Additionally, participants were given a fear of COVID scale to control for as COVID is a unique situation and personal experience at work or during personal time throughout the ongoing pandemic could lead to differences as well and need to be accounted for. The fear of COVID-19 scale (Ahorsu et al., 2020) was made up of 7 items ($\alpha = .86$). Example items included "It makes me uncomfortable to think about coronavirus-19" and "I am afraid of losing my life because of coronavirus-19.". The response scale was a 5-point Likert scale 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The scale in its entirety can be seen in Appendix G.

Attention Checks

To make sure participants were paying attention to the actual content during the survey, attention checks in the form of bogus items were included to account for careless responding or the potential use of bots (Mead & Craig, 2012). Two items were used in the survey. They were "All my friends say I would make a great poodle" and "I am paid biweekly by leprechauns" with the correct response being “strongly disagree” in both cases. If the wrong response was chosen, the attention check was considered failed, and the participants’ responses were removed during data cleaning.

Procedure

After the informed consent, participants were instructed to answer the randomized variables of interest scales in reference to the current organization they are employed with. After this, they were told to imagine themselves as an employee of a fictional company and then they were randomly assigned a vignette to read. After reading the vignette, they were presented just the organizational transparency scale and asked to answer from the perspective of being employed at the company in the vignette. This was followed by basic demographic information (e.g., sex, age) and the fear of COVID scale.

After that was completed, they were thanked for their time and will also be given the option to click a link which will take them to another survey to input their information if they wanted to enter the raffle. If they chose to not participate in the raffle, this completed their participation in the survey. If they selected that they wanted to enter the raffle, the follow-up survey asked them to input their email, provide the email of who sent them the link if applicable, and directions with the main survey link to distribute to others if they wanted to have the chance to receive additional entries in the raffle. After this was done, their participation in the survey was complete.

Chapter 4 - Results

Add content here. The correlations, means, and standard deviations for all the main study variables are presented in Table 1[1]. The average age of the sample was 40 years (SD = 14) with the majority identifying as female (80%), married (63%) and in education services for job industry (40%). The average job tenure was 10 years (SD = 10), and the largest education level group held a four-year degree (39%).

Using path analysis in R (R Core Team, 2023), Hypotheses 1-3 were tested. A model was created made up of the predicted pathways between organizational transparency to the three outcome variables of perceived organizational trust, perceived organizational support, and organizational cynicism, all mediated by authentic leadership while controlling for job tenure and education. Results supported the model with an excellent fit, $\chi^2(2) = .26$, $p = .88$, comparative fit index (CFI) = 1.00, Tucker-Lewis (TLI) = 1.02, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .00 (90% CI = .00 - .07), standardized root mean square residual (SRMR) = .01 (Hu & Bentler, 1999). Figure 3 displays the model paths.

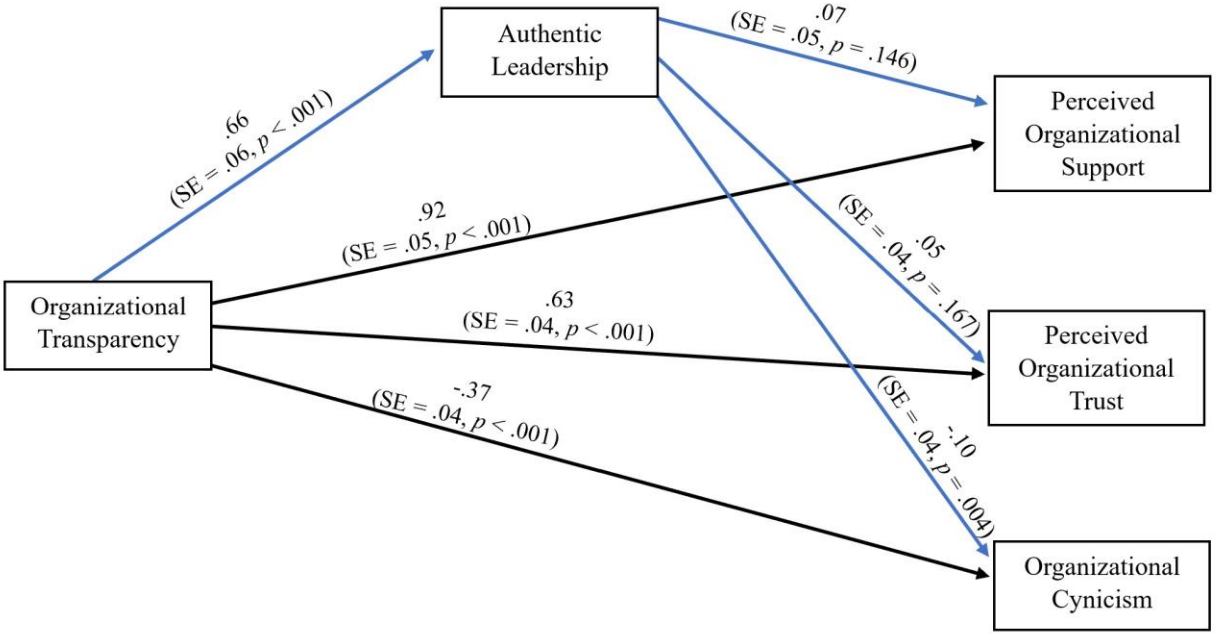
[1]Due to the high correlation between the focal variables, the measurement model was tested. Results indicated that the proposed model fit the data better than any of the other alternative models which can be seen in Appendix H.

Table 1 ***Correlation Matrix with Means and Standard Deviations***

Variable	M	SD	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.
1.Perceived Organizational Trust	3.36	1.02	-									
2.Percieved Organizational Support	4.33	1.46	.89***	-								
3. Organizational Cynicism	2.36	.82	-.80***	-.80***	-							
4.Organizational Transparency	4.22	1.32	.88***	.88***	-.75***	-						
5.Authentic Leadership	4.85	1.39	.60***	.61***	-.61***	.62***	-					
6.Fear of COVID	1.94	1.86	-.02	.01	-.03	-.01	.07	-				
7.Job Tenure	10.67	9.60	-.09	-.12	.09	-.09	-.02	-.10	-			
8.Age	42.29	13.63	-.12	-.17*	.12	-.13	-.08	-.09	.71***	-		
9.Education Level	5.04	1.25	.03	-.02	-.04	-.01	.00	-.05	-.10	-.05	-	
10.Gender	1.92	.52	.08	.04	-.12	.09	.18*	.24***	-.04	-.15*	-.04	-

Note. *p <.05, **p <.01, ***p <.001; Education level was coded as 1(less than high school), 2(high school graduate), 3(some college), 4(2-year degree), 5(4-year degree), 6(professional degree), and 7(doctorate); Gender was coded as 1(male), 2(female), 3(non-binary), and 4(prefer not to say).

Figure 3. Diagram of Path Analysis Model



Note. Blue lines visually indicate the mediation pathways of the model

Partial support was found for Hypotheses 1 as a significant, positive relationship was found between organizational transparency and perceived organizational trust, (B = .63, SE = .04, $p < .001$) but authentic leadership did not mediate the relationship with an indirect effect coefficient of .04 (SE = .02, Bootstrapped 95% CI = -.00 - .08, $p = .059$). Partial support was found for Hypotheses 2 as a significant, positive relationship was found between organizational transparency and perceived organizational support (B = .92, SE = .05, $p < .001$), but authentic leadership did not mediate the relationship with an indirect effect coefficient of .06 (SE = .03, Bootstrapped 95% CI = .00 - .13, $p = .054$). Hypothesis 3 was supported as there was a significant, negative relationship between organizational transparency and organizational cynicism (B = -.37, SE = .04, $p < .001$), which was mediated by authentic leadership with an indirect effect coefficient of -.08 (SE = .03, Bootstrapped 95% CI = -.15 - -.04, $p = .002$). These results can be seen in Table 2 and Figure 3. Additionally, the control variables of job tenure and education were not significant. A separate path analysis without the control variables produced an identical pattern of results, but the control variables were needed in the reported model to ensure enough degrees of freedom to report model fit statistics, so the two deemed most relevant based on the literature were included to achieve this while being the simplest model possible.

Table 2 ***Path Analysis Model Results***

Variable	B	SE	*z*	*p*
Perceived Organizational Trust (POT)	-	-	-	-
Authentic Leadership (AL)	.05	.04	1.38	.167
Organizational Transparency (OT)	.63	.04	17.07	**<.001**
Indirect Effect of OT → AL →POT	.04	.02	1.89	.059
Job Tenure	-.00	.00	-.71	.480
Education	.03	.03	.99	.322
Perceived Organizational Support (POS)	-	-	-	-
Authentic Leadership (AL)	.07	.05	1.45	.146
Organizational Transparency (OT)	.92	.05	18.51	**<.001**
Indirect Effect of OT →AL →POS	.06	.03	1.92	.054
Job Tenure	-.01	.01	-1.39	.164
Education	.00	.04	.09	.930
Organizational Cynicism (OC)	-	-	-	-
Authentic Leadership (AL)	-.10	.04	-2.87	**.004**
Organizational Transparency (OT)	-.37	.04	-9.69	**<.001**
Indirect effect of OT→AL→OC	-.08	.03	-3.10	**.002**
Job Tenure	.00	.00	.35	.729
Education	-.01	.03	-.35	.728
Authentic Leadership (AL)	-	-	-	-
Organizational Transparency (OT)	.66	.06	10.45	**<.001**

Note. $p \leq .05$ are bolded

To test Hypothesis 4, an ANCOVA was conducted to determine a statistically significant difference between the six different organizational communications on organizational transparency while controlling for fear of COVID. The overall model was found to be significant, $F(6,194) = 17.71$, $p < .001$. The covariate, fear of COVID, was significant with a small effect size, $F(1,194) = 15.88$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2p = .08$. (Effect sizes were determined using the following guidelines: small = 0.2, medium = 0.5, and large = 0.8; Cohen, 1988). The main effect of condition was significant with a small effect size on participant's perceived organizational transparency, $F(5, 194) = 19.04$, $p < .001$, $\eta^2p = .33$. These results can be seen in Table 3.

Table 3 ***ANCOVA Overall Model Results***

Variable	Sums of Squares	*df*	Mean Square	*F*	*p*	η^2p
Overall Model	105.70	6	17.62	17.71	**<.001**	-
Condition	90.59	5	18.12	19.04	**<.001**	.33
Fear of COVID	15.11	1	15.11	15.88	**<.001**	.08
Residuals	184.57	194	0.95	-	-	-

Note. $p \leq .05$ are bolded; Effect sizes were determined using the following guidelines: small effect = .01, medium effect = .06, and large effect = .14 (Cohen, 1988).

Hypothesis 4 was supported as significant differences were found between various conditions. Post hoc tests revealed that there was no significant difference between the three high transparency organizational communication conditions (5%, 10%, & 15% COVID rates) and there were no significant differences between the medium high and no transparency conditions, and the medium low and no transparency organizational communication conditions. However, there were significant differences between the three high transparency organizational communication conditions (5%, 10%, & 15% COVID rates) and the medium high, medium low, and no transparency organizational communication condition and between the medium high and no transparency condition.

Specifically, post hoc tests showed there was a significant difference with a strong effect size was found between the high transparency, 15% COVID rate organizational communication condition and the medium high transparency organizational communication condition ($t(194) = 2.95$, $p = .041$, $d = .76$) such that the high transparency, 15% covid organizational communication condition ($M = 4.64$, $SE = .19$) had a higher level of perceived organizational transparency compared to the medium high transparency organizational communication condition ($M = 3.90$, $SE = .17$). A significant difference with a strong effect size was found between the high transparency, 15% COVID rate organizational communication condition and the medium low transparency organizational communication condition ($t(194) = 5.17$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.33$) such that the high transparency, 15% covid organizational communication condition ($M = 4.64$, $SE = .19$) had a higher level of perceived organizational transparency compared to the medium low transparency organizational communication condition ($M = 3.35$, $SE = .17$). A significant difference with a strong effect size was found between the high transparency, 15% COVID rate organizational communication condition and the no transparency organizational communication condition ($t(194) = 5.72$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.45$) such that the high transparency, 15% covid organizational communication condition ($M = 4.64$, $SE = .19$) had a higher level of perceived organizational transparency compared to the no transparency organizational communication condition ($M = 3.23$, $SE = .16$).

A significant difference with a strong effect size was found between the high transparency, 10% COVID rate organizational communication condition and the medium low transparency condition ($t(194) = 5.20$, $p <.001$, $d = 1.24$) such that the high transparency, 10%

covid organizational communication condition (*M* = 4.56, *SE* = .16) had a higher level of perceived organizational transparency compared to the medium low transparency organizational communication condition (*M* = 3.90, *SE* = .17). A significant difference with a strong effect size was found between the high transparency, 10% COVID rate organizational communication condition and the no transparency organizational communication condition ($t(194) = 5.80$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.37$) such that the high transparency, 10% covid organizational communication condition (*M* = 4.56, *SE* = .16) had a higher level of perceived organizational transparency compared to the no transparency organizational communication (*M* = 3.23, *SE* = .16) However, there was not a significant difference between the high transparency, 10% COVID rate organizational communication condition and the medium high transparency condition ($t(194) = 2.81$, $p = .060$).

A significant difference with a strong effect size was found between the high transparency, 5% COVID rate organizational communication condition and the medium high transparency condition ($t(194) = 4.59$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.12$) such that the high transparency, 5% COVID organizational communication condition (*M* = 5.00, *SE* = .17) had a higher level of perceived organizational transparency compared to the medium high transparency organizational communication condition (*M* = 3.90, *SE* = .17). A significant difference with a strong effect size was found between the high transparency, 5% COVID rate organizational communication condition and the medium low transparency organizational communication condition ($t(194) = 6.94$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.69$), such that the high transparency, 5% COVID rate organizational communication condition (*M* = 5.00, *SE* = .17) had a higher level of perceived organizational transparency compared to the medium low organizational communication condition (*M* = 3.35, *SE* = .17). A significant difference with a strong effect size was found between the high transparency 5% COVID rate organizational communication condition and the no transparency organizational communication condition ($t(194) = 7.56$, $p < .001$, $d = 1.81$) such that the high transparency, 5% COVID organizational communication condition ($M = 5.00$, $SE = .17$) had a higher level of perceived organizational transparency compared to the no transparency organization communication condition ($M = 3.23$, $SE = .16$).

Finally, there was a significant difference with a moderate effect size, between the medium high transparency organizational communication condition and the no transparency organization communication condition ($t(194) = 2.90$, $p = .048$, $d = .69$), such that the medium high transparency organization communication condition ($M = 3.90$, $SE = .17$) had a higher level of perceived organizational transparency compared to the no transparency organization communication condition ($M = 3.23$, $SE = .16$). All the results for the post-hoc tests can be seen in Figure 4 and Table 4.

Figure 4. Mean Differences of Organizational Transparency for the Six Transparency Conditions

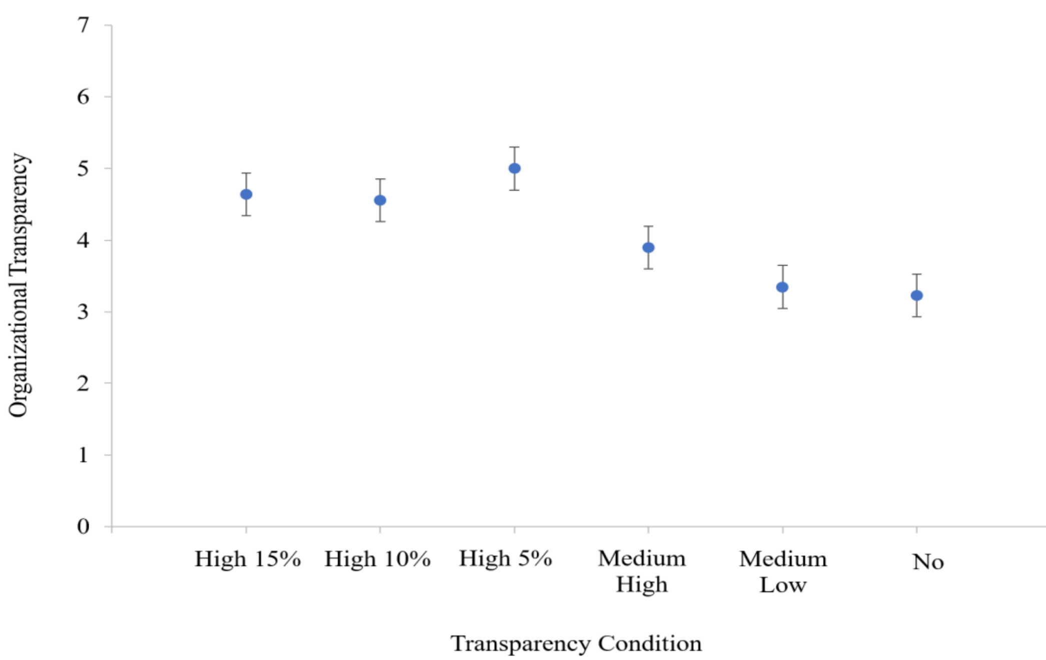


Table 4 ***ANCOVA Post-hoc Test Results***

Condition Comparison		*t*	*p*	*d*	Mean Difference	*SE*
High Transparency, 15%	High Transparency, 10%	.32	1.00	.15	.08	.25
	High Transparency, 5%	-1.40	.728	-.29	-0.36	.25
	Medium High Transparency	2.95	**.041**	.79	.76	.25
	Medium Low Transparency	5.17	**<.001**	1.46	1.33	.25
	No Transparency	5.72	**<.001**	1.54	1.45	.25
High Transparency, 10%	High Transparency, 5%	-1.83	.446	-.44	-.45	.24
	Medium High Transparency	2.81	.060	.64	.68	.24
	Medium Low Transparency	5.20	**<.001**	1.31	1.24	.23
	No Transparency	5.80	**<.001**	1.40	1.37	.23
High Transparency, 5%	Medium High Transparency	4.60	**<.001**	1.08	1.12	.24
	Medium Low Transparency	6.94	**<.001**	1.75	1.69	.24
	No Transparency	7.56	**<.001**	1.83	1.81	.23
Medium High Transparency	Medium Low Transparency	2.35	.181	.67	.57	.24
	No Transparency	2.90	**.048**	.75	.69	.23
Medium Low Transparency	No Transparency	.52	.996	.08	.12	.23

Note. $p \leq .05$ are bolded; Effect sizes were determined using the following guidelines: small = .2, medium = .5, and large = .8 (Cohen, 1988). High Transparency, 15% condition (n = 27), High Transparency, 10% condition (n = 35), High Transparency, 5% condition (n = 33), Medium High Transparency condition (n = 34), Medium-Low Transparency condition (n = 35), and No Transparency condition (n = 37).

Chapter 5 - Discussion

If you need more chapters, follow these steps: Overall, the present study aimed to assess how differences in organizational transparency impacts employees' perceptions of perceived organizational trust, perceived organizational support, and organizational cynicism. To this end, this study was twofold – an investigation between the relationship between organization transparency and the aforementioned organizational perceptions as mediated by authentic leadership and an examination of transparency in terms of organizational communications by utilizing vignettes to simulate an organization's emails to their employees regarding COVID in the workplace. COVID was selected to use as a timely and salient example not only for the vignettes, but for the participants to easily imagine themselves in the created situation due to the ongoing pandemic. The results found that organizational transparency was significantly and positively related to perceived organizational support and trust, but neither of these were mediated by authentic leadership, while having a significant, negative relationship with organizational cynicism which was mediated by authentic leadership. The results of this study add new and important information regarding the relationship between organizational transparency from an internal stakeholder's perspective in regards to important organizational attitudes which have been in turn linked to valuable organizational outcomes. Furthermore, the study found that organization communications that had more elements of transparency present in them were perceived higher in organizational transparency, pointing to a viable method that can employed by an organization to increase their organizational transparency.

Theoretical Implications

This research has important theoretical contributions. The findings of this study provide additional empirical evidence for organizational transparency as a construct and utilizing the sensemaking perspective to account for the relationship from the organization down to the level of the employees and how these interactions impact employee perceptions. It indicates when organizations provide clear and transparent, employees are more likely to perceive the organization as trustworthy and supportive and not be as cynical towards their organization. This aligns with the sensemaking process, where employees make sense of their organizational environment based on the cues or information they receive.

Furthermore, this study adds to the theoretical knowledge regarding the impact of authentic leaders on these organizational perspectives through the lens of identification theory. The results demonstrate organizational transparency has a direct, positive impact on perceived organizational trust and support, indicating that when leaders are authentic in their communication, employees are more likely to trust and identify with their organization. Additionally, authentic leadership was found to be important for mediating the relationship between organizational transparency and organizational cynicism, but not for perceived organizational support or trust. This suggests when authentic leaders are present, employees will be less cynical and helps to facilitate organizational transparency. Future research could use these perspectives that combine sensemaking and identification theory to investigate if the findings can be replicated for a specific organization with its own employees as well as if it can influence the behaviors of the employees in the workplace such as safety behavior. Furthermore, transparency facilitated by authentic leaders could help shape employee's perceptions of organizational justice. A subfactor of organizational justice is procedural justice which is about fairness in terms of how procedures in the organization are based on adequate criteria (e.g., accurate info, correctability, consistency, etc.) and employee's voice (Colquitt, 2001), which aligns with the subfactors of organizational transparency. Authentic leadership has been shown to be positively relating to employee's perceptions of organizational justice, including procedural justice specifically (Cheng et al., 2022). Transparency can provide a way to think about how to model these behaviors at an individual leader level as well as at the overall organizational level in order to promote organizational justice for employees. When authentic leaders are transparent, they can help their employees feel like they are able to participate, have substantial information, and there is accountability, ultimately promoting their sense of organizational justice. Additionally, this study adds to the body of research regarding organizational transparency with internal stakeholders compared to the more frequently investigated relationship with external stakeholders. Understanding the relationships organizational transparency has with perceived organization trust, support, and cynicism opens the door for future research in this area.

Practical Implications

The present study has significant practical implications as well. Organizational transparency was found to influence perceived organizational trust, support, and cynicism which is important for organizations to know and consider. If unprecedented events or crises occur, from pandemics to layoffs or leadership changes, organizations can use this information to help craft their response to their employees. Knowing what components to consider regarding organizational transparency when developing messages and communications to their employees regarding the new situation could be vital in ensuring they maintain or even improve the organizational trust and support they have or to reduce the amount of organization cynicism in their employees. Additionally, in consideration of organizational cynicism, authentic leadership can be leveraged by companies to help facilitate the relationship between organizational transparency and cynicism. While this study focused on a crisis situation for testing the organizational communications, a crisis is not required, and it is important to note if a company is low in organizational transparency this information can potentially help improve the transparency in the current organization-employee relationship. However, with the potential of pandemics occurring with higher frequency in the future (Marani et al., 2021), organizations knowing how to improve their organizational transparency with their employees is vital, emphasizing the practicality and need for further research in this area.

Limitations

Limitations of the current research are that the participants need to take on the perspective of being an employee at the fictitious company described in the vignette and not reference their own experiences with COVID in the workplace. We do attempt to control for some personal experience with COVID through the inclusion of the fear of COVID scale, but the personal experience of working and living through the pandemic could still be having some influence which is not accounted for. Additionally, while COVID did provide a salient example for the present study, it is possible it could not be generalizable as it is possible it does not extend to other organizational crises which could benefit from knowing how their organizational transparency is impacted and ways to improve it. Future research would be needed to investigate more deeply the different facets of organizational transparency and which aspects aid the most in improving employee's perception of their organization's transparency outside of the context of COVID. For example, do different facets of organizational transparency work better for different situations such as an organization trying to adjust to new protocols when trying to address or recover from a workplace scandal or corruption (i.e., Enron, Wells Fargo, etc.) or companywide layoffs or downsizing during a financial crisis compared to COVID in the workplace.

Another limitation is the use of vignettes which may lack ecological validity. The vignettes were utilized in the current study because we could not otherwise systematically control the organizational transparency the participants experience before measuring it, along with the amount of COVID present in their workplace. The vignettes enabled this control, but vignettes are not the same as real experiences of the participants in the workplace during times of COVID, so the results may not generalize to reality and need to be interpreted with caution. Future research can be conducted in real companies with their employees to address this limitation in the future by either looking at a company in isolation or by comparing different companies to each other on their organizational transparency efforts and how it impacts the employees.

Future Directions

Future research is needed on organizational transparency as a whole regarding internal stakeholders. Continuing this research to see how organizational transparency can differ depending on how the message is delivered (digital company correspondence such as email vs. in-person) as well as by whom (direct supervisor vs. top management such as a VP or CEO) would be avenues of research which could provide insight on organizational transparency. Also, the present study found no difference between the conditions in terms of if this information was more positive or negative in nature (the amount of COVID being more/less than rumored), more research is needed on the nuances of employee reactions to the nature of information being communicated. Employee reactions could vary depending on if the information being provided is more obvious in its positive/negative nature. It is possible transparency in organization communications could be a double-edged sword. If the information released is only ever positive, it could be seen an insincere, being too good to be true even if it is the truth and could potentially have negative impacts. If the information is extremely negative, while knowing the information could increase transparency, employees may wish they did not know the information or it could greatly lower other organizational perception, especially if there is no communicated plan to help mitigate any unease. How to balance the transparency of communications in a way that is beneficial for both the organization and its employees needs to be researched further. Additionally, future research utilizing longitudinal design could be conducted to probe what factors impact and are important to the longevity of organizational efforts done for transparency. For example, do certain aspects of organizational transparency having a more lasting impact if they are violated compared to others, or do certain aspects need to be communicated more regular to employees than others to maintain their effectiveness would be beneficial to know to add to the currently available literature and benefit organizations trying to improve or maintain their level of organizational transparency.

Furthermore, future research could extend the present study by examining how organizational transparency impacts safety behaviors in the workplace. Since the current study found support for organizational transparency having an impact on perceived organizational trust, support, and organizational cynicism, it would be beneficial to see if this extends to the important organizational outcome of safety behaviors and if transparency has any direct effects on safety behaviors. Past research conducted has found evidence in support of trust, support and cynicism being predictive of safety behaviors (Credo et al., 2010; Jiang et al., 2019; Luria, 2010; Reader et al., 2017; Stratman & Youssef-Morgan, 2019). Finding ways to improve worker safety and health is valuable for the organization and its workers. Furthermore, this research can be done in terms of general safety behaviors as well as COVID specific behaviors such as social distancing and mask wearing.

Conclusion

The current study speaks to the significant impact organizational transparency can have on employee's perceptions of their organization. Specifically, it was found that organizational transparency was positively related to perceived organizational support and trust, but negatively related to organizational cynicism with authentic leadership only mediating the latter. Additionally, this study found that ratings of perceived transparency were higher for organizational communication conditions with more elements of transparency present. This information can potentially be used by organizations to help craft their messages to employees to increase their perceived transparency and in turn, their perceived support and trust while reducing cynicism. Further investigation into organizational transparency is needed to fully understand the influence it can have on an organization and its employees, such as if it can influence important organizational outcomes like safety behaviors beyond the specific case of COVID. Overall, the current research supports the importance of organizational transparency in the workplace.

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Appendix A - Organizational Transparency Scale (Rawlins, 2009)

Directions: Listed below are statements that represent possible opinions that YOU may have about working at [your current company or XYZ Inc]. Please indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each statement by selecting the option that best represents your point of view about [your current organization or XYZ Inc].

1. The organization asks for feedback from people like me about the quality of its information.
2. The organization involves people like me to help identify the information I need.
3. The organization provides detailed information to people like me.
4. The organization makes it easy to find the information people like me need.
5. The organization asks the opinions of people like me before making decisions.
6. The organization takes the time with people like me to understand who we are and what we need.
7. The organization provides information in a timely fashion to people like me.
8. The organization provides information that is relevant to people like me.
9. The organization provides information that can be compared to previous performance.
10. The organization provides information that is complete.
11. The organization provides information that is easy for people like me to understand.
12. The organization provides accurate information to people like me.
13. The organization provides information that is reliable.
14. The organization presents more than one side of controversial issues.
15. The organization is forthcoming with information that might be damaging to the organization.
16. The organization is open to criticism by people like me.
17. The organization freely admits when it has made mistakes.
18. Provides information that can be compared to industry standards.
19. The organization provides only part of the story to people like me. (reverse-coded item)
20. The organization often leaves out important details in the information it provides to people like me. (reverse-coded item)
21. The organization provides information that is intentionally written in a way to make it difficult to understand. (reverse-coded item)
22. The organization is slow to provide information to people like me. (reverse-coded item)
23. The organization only discloses information when it is required. (reverse-coded item)

Note. Items 1-6 measure the subdimension participation, 7-13 measure substantial information, 14-18 measure accountability, and 19-23 measure secrecy.

Appendix B - Perceived Organizational Trust (Hon & Grunig, 1999)

Directions: The following questions ask you to consider your thoughts and beliefs regarding your organization. Please indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each statement by selecting the option that best represents your point of view about your organization.

1. This organization treats people like me fairly and justly
2. Whenever this organization makes an important decision, I know it will be concerned about people like me
3. This organization can be relied upon to keep its promises
4. I believe that this organization takes the opinions of people like me into account when making decisions
5. I feel very confident about this organization's skills
6. This organization has the ability to accomplish what it says it will do
7. Sound principles seem to guide this organization's behavior
8. This organization does not mislead people like me
9. I am very willing to let this organization make decisions for people like me.

Appendix C - Perceived Organizational Support (Eisenberger et al., 1986)

Directions: Listed below are statements that represent possible opinions that YOU may have about working at your organization. Please indicate the degree of your agreement or disagreement with each statement by selecting the option that best represents your point of view about your organization.

(R) indicates the item is reverse scored.

1. My organization values my contribution to its well-being.
2. If my organization could hire someone to replace me at a lower salary it would do so.
3. My organization fails to appreciate any extra effort from me. (R)
4. My organization strongly considers my goals and values.
5. My organization would ignore any complaint from me. (R)
6. My organization disregards my best interests when it makes decisions that affect me. (R)
7. Help is available from my organization when I have a problem.
8. My organization really cares about my well-being.
9. Even if I did the best job possible, my organization would fail to notice. (R)
10. My organization is willing to help me when I need a special favor.
11. My organization cares about my general satisfaction at work.
12. If given the opportunity, my organization would take advantage of me. (R)
13. My organization shows very little concern for me. (R)
14. My organization cares about my opinions.
15. My organization takes pride in my accomplishments at work.
16. My organization tries to make my job as interesting as possible.

Appendix D - Organizational Cynicism (Brandes et al., 2000 as cited in FitzGerald, 2002)

Directions: The following questions ask you to consider your thoughts and beliefs regarding your organization. For each question, please select one number (1, 2, 3, 4 or 5) from the scale of 1(*never*) to 5 (*always*).

1. When I think about my organization, I experience irritation.
2. When I think about my organization, I experience aggravation.
3. When I think about my organization., I experience tension.
4. When I think about my organization, I experience anxiety.
5. I believe that my organization says one thing and does another.
6. My organization's policies, goals, and practices have little in common.
7. When my organization says it's going to do something, I wonder if it will really happen.
8. My organization expects one thing of its employees, but rewards another.
9. I see little similarity between what my organization says it will do and what it actually does.
10. I complain about how things happen at my organization to friends outside the organization.
11. I exchange "knowing" glances with my co-workers.
12. I talk to others about way things are run at my organization.
13. I criticize my organization's practices and policies with others.

Appendix E - Authentic Leadership Inventory (ALI) (Neider & Schriesheim, 2011)

Directions: Please select on a scale of strongly agree to disagree, what represents your current direct supervisor:

1. My leader clearly states what he/she means. (R)
2. My leader shows consistency between his/her beliefs and actions. (M)
3. My leader asks for ideas that challenge his/her core beliefs. (B)
4. My leader describes accurately the way that others view his/her abilities. (S)
5. My leader uses his/her core beliefs to make decisions. (M)
6. My leader carefully listens to alternative perspectives before reaching a conclusion. (B)
7. My leader shows that he/she understands his/her strengths and weaknesses. (S)
8. My leader openly shares information with others. (R)
9. My leader resists pressures on him/her to do things contrary to his/her beliefs. (M)
10. My leader objectively analyzes relevant data before making a decision. (B)
11. My leader is clearly aware of the impact he/she has on others. (S)
12. My leader expresses his/her ideas and thoughts clearly to others. (R)
13. My leader is guided in his/her actions by internal moral standards. (M)
14. My leader encourages others to voice opposing points of view. (B)

Note. What dimension each item is associated with is noted at the end of each item. S- Self-Awareness, R – Relational Transparency, B – Balanced Processing, and M – Internalized Moral Perspective.

Appendix F - Vignettes

Prompt for Vignettes:

Imagine you are a factory employee at a large, blue-collar company. You have been hearing rumors that 10% of the company's employees currently have been confirmed for having COVID or are having COVID symptoms and are waiting for test results. On Monday, you receive the following email at the beginning of your workday.

Order of Vignettes Conditions Below:

No transparency Condition – All 4 elements of transparency not present

Medium-low transparency – 2 elements of transparency not present

Medium-high transparency – 1 element of transparency not present

Highest transparency Condition – All 4 elements of transparency present; provided info is correct (confirm 10% COVID present in company)

Highest transparency Condition – All 4 elements of transparency present; corrected lower info (correct to 5% COVID present in company)

Highest transparency Condition – All 4 elements of transparency present; corrected, higher info (correct 15% COVID present in company)

Figure 1. Vignette for the No Transparency Condition.

From: XYZ <XYZ@employee.listserv>
Subject: COVID-19 Information
Date: February 17, 2020 8:02:05 AM CST
To: Alex Campbell

XYZ incorporated

Dear Valued Employees,

As you have all heard, we as a company are committed to following COVID-19 safety guidelines in the workplace as we continue to operate in person.

We have been informed there are rumors that 10% of company employees' currently have been confirmed for having COVID with a positive test result or are having COVID symptoms and are waiting for their test results.

While we understand the concern regarding the COVID rates internally, we can neither confirm nor deny the current number of employees that have been confirmed as testing positive for COVID or having COVID symptoms and are waiting for their test results. We are tracking the results, but have decided to not publicly share them at this time.

Rest assured, we are still following the appropriate COVID safety protocols and guidelines. We have decided to not develop a COVID-19 suggestion and concern survey at the company level, but if you have any pressing concerns, please contact your immediate supervisor.

We know this is a challenging and unprecedented time, we appreciate your cooperation with our updating policies in response to these changes and we always have in mind your safety and health.

Regards,

Jason Fullagar

Jason Fullagar
CEO, XYZ Inc.
(505) 555-555 | jfullagar@xyz.co

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Figure 2. Vignette for the Medium-low Transparency Condition.

From: **XYZ <XYZ@employee.listserv>**
Subject: COVID-19 Information
Date: February 17, 2020 8:02:05 AM CST
To: Alex Campbell

XYZ incorporated

Dear Valued Employees,

As you have all heard, we as a company are committed to following COVID-19 safety guidelines in the workplace as we continue to operate in person.

We have been informed there are rumors that 10% of company employees' currently have been confirmed for having COVID with a positive test result or are having COVID symptoms and are waiting for their test results.

We understand the concern regarding the COVID rates internally, we can confirm currently 10% of our employees have been confirmed as testing positive for COVID or are having COVID symptoms and are waiting for their test results. While we are tracking the results and have addressed the current speculation, we will not be releasing a weekly report regarding company COVID rates.

Rest assured, we are still following the appropriate COVID safety protocols and guidelines. We have decided to not develop a COVID-19 suggestion and concern survey at the company level, but if you have any pressing concerns, please contact your immediate supervisor.

We know this is a challenging and unprecedented time, we appreciate your cooperation with our updating policies in response to these changes and we always have in mind your safety and health.

Regards,

Jason Fullagar

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Figure 3. Vignette for the Medium-high Transparency Condition.

From: **XYZ <XYZ@employee.listserv>**
Subject: COVID-19 Information
Date: February 17, 2020 8:02:05 AM CST
To: Alex Campbell

XYZ incorporated

Dear Valued Employees,

As you have all heard, we as a company are committed to following COVID-19 safety guidelines in the workplace as we continue to operate in person.

We have been informed there are rumors that 10% of company employees' currently have been confirmed for having COVID with a positive test result or are having COVID symptoms and are waiting for their test results.

We understand the concern regarding the COVID rates internally, we can confirm currently 10% of our employees have been confirmed as testing positive for COVID or are having COVID symptoms and are waiting for their test results.

Rest assured, we are still following the appropriate COVID safety protocols and guidelines. We have decided to not develop a COVID-19 suggestion and concern survey at the company level, but if you have any pressing concerns, please contact your immediate supervisor. However, we have decided we will now be releasing a weekly report regarding the company's current COVID rates to avoid speculation.

We know this is a challenging and unprecedented time, we appreciate your cooperation with our updating policies in response to these changes and we always have in mind your safety and health.

Regards,

Jason Fullagar

Jason Fullagar
CEO, XYZ Inc.
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Figure 4. Vignette for the High Transparency 10% Condition.

From: **XYZ <XYZ@employee.listserv>**
Subject: COVID-19 Information
Date: February 17, 2020 8:02:05 AM CST
To: Alex Campbell

Dear Valued Employees,

As you have all heard, we as a company are committed to following COVID-19 safety guidelines in the workplace as we continue to operate in person.

We have been informed there are rumors that 10% of company employees' currently have been confirmed for having COVID with a positive test result or are having COVID symptoms and are waiting for their test results.

We understand the concern regarding the COVID rates internally, we can confirm currently 10% of our employees have been confirmed as testing positive for COVID or are having COVID symptoms and are waiting for their test results.

Rest assured, we are still following the appropriate COVID safety protocols and guidelines. We have decided to develop a COVID-19 suggestion and concern survey at the company level for you to submit any questions, concerns, or suggestions you have regarding COVID policies and practices in the workplace. This will help keep the lines of communication open and allow you to provide us with feedback. Additionally, we have decided we will now be releasing a weekly report regarding the company's current COVID rates to avoid speculation and will keep you up to date with the latest information and to correct any outdated information. If you have any questions or concerns regarding these efforts, please reach out and contact Maya Anderson at m.anderson@xyz.net . The results of the survey, along with any updates concerning future actions or reports regarding these matters will be communicated by her.

We know this is a challenging and unprecedented time, we appreciate your cooperation with our updating policies in response to these changes and we always have in mind your safety and health.

Regards,

Jason Fullagar

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Figure 5. Vignette for the High Transparency 5% Condition

From: **XYZ <XYZ@employee.listserv>**
Subject: COVID-19 Information
Date: February 17, 2020 8:02:05 AM CST
To: Alex Campbell

Dear Valued Employees,

As you have all heard, we as a company are committed to following COVID-19 safety guidelines in the workplace as we continue to operate in person.

We have been informed there are rumors that 10% of company employees' currently have been confirmed for having COVID with a positive test result or are having COVID symptoms and are waiting for their test results.

We understand the concern regarding the COVID rates internally, we can confirm currently 5%, not 10%, of our employees have been confirmed as testing positive for COVID or are having COVID symptoms and are waiting for their test results.

Rest assured, we are still following the appropriate COVID safety protocols and guidelines. We have decided to develop a COVID-19 suggestion and concern survey at the company level for you to submit any questions, concerns, or suggestions you have regarding COVID policies and practices in the workplace and plan to have it distributed by the end of this week, 2/17/2020. This will help keep the lines of communication open and allow you to provide us with feedback. Additionally, we have decided we will now be releasing a weekly report regarding the company's current COVID rates to avoid speculation and to correct any outdated information. If you have any questions or concerns regarding these efforts, please reach out and contact Maya Anderson at m.anderson@xyz.net . The results of the survey, along with any updates concerning future actions or reports regarding these matters will be communicated by her.

We know this is a challenging and unprecedented time, we appreciate your cooperation with our updating policies in response to these changes and we always have in mind your safety and health.

Regards,

Jason Fullagar

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Figure 6. Vignette for the High Transparency 15% Condition

From: **XYZ <XYZ@employee.listserv>**
Subject: COVID-19 Information
Date: February 17, 2020 8:02:05 AM CST
To: Alex Campbell

XYZ incorporated

Dear Valued Employees,

As you have all heard, we as a company are committed to following COVID-19 safety guidelines in the workplace as we continue to operate in person.

We have been informed there are rumors that 10% of company employees' currently have been confirmed for having COVID with a positive test result or are having COVID symptoms and are waiting for their test results.

We understand the concern regarding the COVID rates internally, we can confirm currently 15%, not 10%, of our employees have been confirmed as testing positive for COVID or are having COVID symptoms and are waiting for their test results.

Rest assured, we are still following the appropriate COVID safety protocols and guidelines. We have decided to develop a COVID-19 suggestion and concern survey at the company level for you to submit any questions, concerns, or suggestions you have regarding COVID policies and practices in the workplace and plan to have it distributed by the end of this week, 2/17/2020. This will help keep the lines of communication open and allow you to provide us with feedback. Additionally, we have decided we will now be releasing a weekly report regarding the company's current COVID rates to avoid speculation and to correct any outdated information. If you have any questions or concerns regarding these efforts, please reach out and contact Maya Anderson at m.anderson@xyz.net . The results of the survey, along with any updates concerning future actions or reports regarding these matters will be communicated by her.

We know this is a challenging and unprecedented time, we appreciate your cooperation with our updating policies in response to these changes and we always have in mind your safety and health.

Regards,

Jason Fullagar

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Appendix G - Fear of COVID-19 (Ahorsu et al., 2020)

Directions: Please respond to each item by selecting one of the five responses that reflects how you feel, think or act toward COVID-19.

1. I am most afraid of COVID-19.
2. It makes me uncomfortable to think about COVID-19.
3. My hands become clammy when I think about COVID-19.
4. I am afraid of losing my life because of COVID-19.
5. When watching news and stories about COVID-19 on social media, I become nervous or anxious.
6. I cannot sleep because I'm worrying about getting COVID-19.
7. My heart races or palpitates when I think about getting COVID-19.

Appendix H - Measurement Model Results

Table 1

Overall Measurement Model Fit Comparisons

Variable	χ2(df)	CFI	SRMSR	RMSEA (90% CI)
Overall Model	4323.11(2695)	.87	.05	.06 (.05, .06)
Factors 1 & 2 Merged	4481.46(2696)	.86	.06	.07 (.06, .07)
Factors 1 & 3 Merged	4609.73(2696)	.85	.06	.07 (.06, .07)
Factors 1 & 4 Merged	4647.31(2696)	.85	.06	.07 (.07, .07)
Factors 1 & 5 Merged	5339.13(2696)	.79	.07	.07 (.07, .07)
Factors 2 & 3 Merged	4418.30(2696)	.86	.06	.07 (.06, .07)
Factors 2 & 4 Merged	4451.74(2696)	.86	.05	.07 (.06, .07)
Factors 2 & 5 Merged	5152.60(2696)	.81	.1	.08 (.07, .08)
Factors 3 & 4 Merged	4536.11(2696)	.84	.06	.07 (.06, .07)
Factors 3 & 5 Merged	5369.00(2696)	.77	.07	.08 (.08, .08)
Factors 4 & 5 Merged	4920.91(2696)	.80	.09	.08 (.07, .08)
All 5 Factors Merged	6014.43(2700)	.71	.08	.09 (.09, .09)

Note. Overall model contains all five factors of the model separately. The number by each factor here reflects the number in the table to describe what variables are combined for model comparison, 1 = transparency, 2 = perceived organizational trust, 3 = perceived organizational support, 4 = organizational cynicism, and 5 = authentic leadership. *n* = 190; CFI = comparative fit index; SRMR = standardized root mean square residual; RMSEA = root mean square error of approximation; CI = confidence interval; For CFI the model is considered good if $\geq$.95 and for SRMR $\leq$ .08 is considered good fit (Hu & Bentler, 1999); for RMSEA $\leq$ .01 is considered excellent fit (MacCallum et al., 1996).