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# POSITIVE LEADERSHIP AND ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE: A PSYCHOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

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## ABSTRACT

*In a psychological perspective, the paper explains the relationship between positive leadership and corporate performance based on how positively-oriented leader behaviours influence the attitudes of the employees, their well-being and productivity. The positive leadership conceptualization is that it involves a combination of optimism, emotional intelligence, resilience and ethical behaviour to create high and positive workplace. The article is grounded in the concepts of positive psychology and organizational behaviour and the way in which empathetic, recognizing and constructive feedback leaders can be implemented to increase employee engagement, motivation and job satisfaction. The study takes a mixed-method approach that entails the primary data gathered in form of structured questionnaires complemented with secondary information in the literature. The most important psychological variables (trust, psychological safety and intrinsic motivation) are examined as an effort to learn the mediating nature of these variables in the relationship between the leadership style and organizational outcomes. The results indicate that positive leadership plays a great role in enhancing team cohesion, lessening stress in the workplace, and boosting innovation that eventually results in high organizational performance. Additionally, the paper highlights that positive leadership not only impacts on the outcome at an individual level but also improves the organizational culture by enabling flexibility and sustainability as well as team work. Leaders who are concerned with the well-being and development of the employees have greater chances of developing a robust workforce capable of adjusting to the volatile business environment. The paper concludes by recommending that organizations ought to invest in leadership development programs that are psychologically focused and whose emphasis is on positive behaviour practices. The instillation of positivity in the leadership systems by the institute and concomitantly in the employee results in greater levels of performance of the institution. This study adds to the existing body of literature on the effectiveness of leadership by offering a psychological perspective through which positive leadership leads to sustainable organizational performance.*

**KEYWORDS:** Positive Leadership, Organizational Performance, Positive Psychology, Employee Engagement, Psychological Well-being, Emotional Intelligence, Leadership Effectiveness, Workplace Motivation, Organizational Behaviour, Psychological Safety, Employee Satisfaction, Resilience

## 1. INTRODUCTION

The field of positive leadership has become an important field of study in the organizational study especially with the advancement of workplaces into a dynamic, diverse, and psychologically challenging environment. As opposed to the conventional models of leadership that tend to lean more towards control, power and performance are the sole measures of leadership, positive leadership is oriented towards the development of strengths, health and engagement of the employees in a significant way. The viewpoint is based on the concepts of positive psychology, and how leaders might be more positive, resilient, trustful, and purposeful in their teams. The approach is gaining more topicality in the contemporary organization where the motivation of employees and emotional welfare can be directly linked to productivity and long-term success.

The organizational performance is not measured by the financial performance but through the satisfaction of the employees, innovation and flexibility and sustainable development. Leadership style, in this case, is very crucial in determining the results of individuals and groups. Positive leaders also help in providing positive conditions that enable teamwork, innovation and psychological safety. On their part, they enhance the intrinsic motivation and commitment of the employees, and lead to the enhanced productivity of a company.

Besides it, the psychological component of leadership is oriented towards the necessity to

understand the human behaviour, human emotions and mind in the workplace. With empathetic, authentic, and ethical leaders, there will be more opportunities to establish good interpersonal relationships and encourage a higher level of engagement. The research paper will discuss the relationship between positive leadership practices and organizational performance in psychology perspective and the outcome of leadership behaviours on staff attitudes and performance.

The study also aims at providing a detailed account of how positive leadership may provide a strategic tool towards enhancing organizational success in a competitive world through a synthesis of the understanding of leadership theory and psychology.

### 1.1. Background of the study

The world where organizations are operated in today is one of uncertainty, high levels of change in technology and increased needs regarding performance and well-being of the employees. In those settings, the classical leadership approaches with a strong focus on control, authority, and immediate results are slowly re-evaluated. It is increasingly being acknowledged that leadership styles based on positive psychological principles may be very instrumental in influencing both organizational performance and the personal attitudes, behaviours, and mental health of workers. This has brought about an academic and practical curiosity on the concept of positive leadership.



Figure 1: Source: <https://www.frontiersin.org/journals/psychology/articles/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.977750/full>

Positive leadership is closely related to positive psychology as the former studies human strengths, well-being, and optimal functioning as opposed to

dysfunction and deficits. The leaders who follow this style are focused on such qualities as empathy, resilience, optimism, ethical conduct, and ability to

inspire and develop other people. Such leaders also help to increase employee engagement, job satisfaction, and commitment by creating an atmosphere of support and encouragement at work. These are psychological aspects that are greatly recognized as contributing to enhanced organizational performance in terms of productivity, innovation, and sustainability.

Over the past few years, organizations have been faced with difficulties associated with employee burnout, disengagement, and high turnover rates. These have been challenges to the shortcomings of transactional or authoritarian forms of leadership. Consequently, the need to have leadership practices that do not only accomplish the organizational objectives, but also encourage the well-being and psychological safety of the employees has been on the increase.

Positive leadership, in this regard, is a promising paradigm as it promotes organizational objectives and overall development of people within the working environment.

Additionally, the growing diversity in the workforce and globalization have placed even greater importance on inclusive and emotionally-intelligent leadership. It is now expected that managers organize multi-cultural teams, transcend cultural diversity and be able to stick together in the dynamic work environments. Positive leadership focus on trust, respect and open communication has the potential to provide a solution to these complexities.

Although positive leadership is theoretically and practically important, there is necessity to involve more empirical research that will be able to demonstrate the impact of positive leadership on organizational performance using the psychological processes. Although, there are studies which have been undertaken to analyse the styles of leadership and the performance results, very few studies have been conducted to analyse the psychological perspective to explain the processes involved. The paper thus endeavours to fill this gap by taking interest in the correlation between positive leadership and organizational performance with special focus to the psychological aspects of motivation, engagement and well-being.

The research will contribute to the literature and practice of management since it will bring leadership into a psychological perspective. It also underlines the necessity to produce leaders, who can afford to structure good working conditions to facilitate the personal fulfillment and even triumph of an organization.

## 1.2. Justification

The alternative approaches to leadership that are no longer limited to the command-and-control

paradigm have become essential in the modern organizational environment where uncertainty is the norm, technology is rapidly evolving, and in the workplace environment that is more diverse in terms of its staffing. The concept of positive leadership with its belief in the concept of optimism, resiliency, emotional intelligence, strengths-based management has become a potentially fruitful paradigm that can improve the quality of life of employees and organizational performance. However, despite the growing conceptual importance of positive leadership, additional empirical and theoretical studies about the direct and indirect influence of positive leadership on organizational performance should be carried out.

The bulk of the current research studies in the area of leadership has centered on the following concept of leadership: transformational, transactional or autocratic leadership with a strong connotation of structural and outcome-based measures. Psychological considerations of leadership with respect to facilitating positive emotions, trust, employee strengths and creating meaning within the work environment have not been well-systematically handled as in the case of performance indicators. This creates a gap in the understanding of how leaders would be able to balance the psychological well-being with productivity and efficiency successfully.

Moreover, organizations are also discovering that employee engagement, job satisfaction and mental health is not only performance friendly, but also a critical driver of performance. Positive leadership is also quite consistent with the ideas of positive psychology that dwells on human potential, motivation and flourishing as well. The alignment should be explored to know how leadership behaviours can also make work environment positive, which encourages creativity, burnout and retention which in the long term will lead to organisational success.

The other significant rationale is the practical implications of this study. Strategies that are based on evidence are required to enable managers and leaders to manage complex human dynamics at the workplace. The practical application of the study can be applied in leadership development programs and organization policies via a psychological process whereby positive leadership may be applied to improve performance such as improve intrinsic motivation, improve interpersonal relationship and commitment to organization.

Also, within the framework of international competition and changing work demands, the strategies of organizational leadership should be flexible and be people-oriented. The positive leadership model offers a model which does not only enhance the measurable output but also an

organizational culture that is healthy enough to absorb shock outside and internal pressures.

Consequently, the paper has been vindicated in its effort to fill the gap between the theory of leadership and psychological well-being as well as provide an intensive insight into how positive leadership can be utilized as a catalyst towards improved performance in an organization. It has added value to the academic literature as well as managerial practice by emphasizing on the strategic significance of promoting a positive and psychologically enabling leadership style in contemporary organizations.

### 1.3. Objectives of the Study

1. To analyze the notion of positive leadership and its psychological underpinnings in the organizational context.
2. To examine the positive leadership practices and overall organizational performance.
3. To determine the impact of positive leadership on motivation, engagement, and job satisfaction of employees.
4. To determine the influence of psychological constructs (e.g., optimism, resilience, emotional intelligence, and well-being) on constructive leadership behaviour.
5. To explore how positive leadership affects team dynamics, collaboration and workplace culture.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

The notion of positive leadership has been developed out of the larger field of positive psychology, which focuses on strengths, well-being, and optimal human functioning. Positive psychology was conceptualized by Martin Seligman and Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi (2000) as a paradigm shift in the thinking with various deficit-oriented perspectives to human flourishing. This has significantly helped in organizational research to produce Positive Organizational Behaviour (POB), Positive Organizational Scholarship (POS), which is a strategy that focuses on maximizing the strengths of employees and their performance outcomes.

Fred Luthans (2002), based on this, developed a conceptualization of positive organizational behavior that involved the study and utilization of positively-oriented psychological capabilities like hope, optimism, resilience and self-efficacy that could be measured and enhanced to improve performance. As it has been empirically demonstrated, these psychological resources, which can be collectively referred to as psychological capital, play a significant role in the productivity of employees and their organizational effectiveness (Luthans, Avolio, Avey, and Norman, 2007) of an organization.

These psychological principles are the core of positive leadership, which includes the leadership

styles that facilitate the development of employees, their well-being and high performance. Lucas Monzani and Rolf van Dick (2020) also describe the following approaches as positive leadership: authentic, transformational, ethical, and servant leadership, all of which strive to create a favourable and thriving workplace. These leadership qualities are typified by ethical uprightness, relationship openness, and building potential in followers which eventually improves organizational performance.

Of these, the concept of authentic leadership has been given a lot of concern. According to Bruce J Avolio and others (2005), authentic leaders encourage self-awareness, transparency and ethical decision making that ultimately boosts employee trust and engagement. Moreover, Avolio and Luthans (2008) show that authentic leadership has both direct and indirect impacts on performance when it comes to influencing the psychological capital and positive organizational behaviour. Equally, empirical evidence reveals that genuine leaders promote employee creativity and innovation by mediating the psychological capital (Rego et al., 2012).

Another important aspect of positive leadership that has received a lot of association to employee well-being and performance is transformational leadership. Transformational leaders, Kara Arnold (2017) discovered, inspire and motivate employees by establishing a compelling vision and positive relationships, which boost psychological well-being and work performance. This is in line with previous studies by Bass (1985) which points out the importance of transformational leaders in boosting motivation among employees and the success of the organization.

Servant and ethical leadership styles are also very useful in the performance of the organization because they focus on the welfare of employees, trust and ethical behaviour. Abbas et al. (2020) discovered that servant leadership leads to better employee satisfaction and organizational performance due to the support and inclusiveness culture. On the same note, Brown, Treviño, and Harrison (2005) claim that ethical leadership establishes credibility and justice in organizations, which results in better employee's attitudes and performances.

A key psychological mechanism linking positive leadership to organizational performance is employee engagement. According to a study by Arnold B Bakker and co-authors, engaged employees have greater energy, commitment and engagement in their work which translates to better task and contextual performance. Positive leaders are very important in encouraging such engagement by providing favourable working conditions and rewarding employee efforts.

Another significant mediating variable is trust.

Ramdas and Patrick (2019) established that effective leadership practices contribute to trust in the workplace that subsequently leads to flourishing of employees and organizational performance. Empathic, appreciative, and supportive leaders are also likely to establish a good relationship with others, resulting in increased teamwork and performance.

In addition, positive leadership has been associated with innovativeness and flexibility. Mahdzir and Abdul-Ghani (2022) emphasize that positive leadership styles stimulate innovative behaviour by establishing environment that promotes creativity and risky behaviour. This is especially critical in dynamic and competitive business settings where innovation is one of the major factors that determine the success of the organization.

Although the literature is in fact expanding, other researchers believe that the domain of positive leadership is still fragmented, and different constructs overlap and there is not much consensus on definitions and measurement (Monzani and Van Dick, 2020). Furthermore, most of the studies have cross-sectional designs which do not enable to establish causal relationships between leadership and performance outcomes. As such, longitudinal and multi-level studies have to be conducted to have a better grasp of the mechanisms of positive leadership.

### 3. MATERIAL AND METHODOLOGY

#### 3.1. Research Design:

The research design employed in this study is a mixed-method research design that employs both quantitative and qualitative research design to ascertain the relationship between positive leadership and organizational performance in a psychological way. The quantitative component of it is geared towards measuring the impact of the leadership practices of optimism, resilience, empathy and ethical orientation on the productivity of the employees and their engagement and the overall performance of the organization. The qualitative element is the complement of this as it investigates personal perceptions as well as lived experiences of both employees and managers concerning leadership practices. It rests on descriptive and correlational frameworks to establish patterns, relationships and the strength of association between variables in addition to its ability to interpret psychological influences in contextualized ways in organizational contexts.

#### 3.2. Data Collection Methods:

The research data is gathered both primary and secondary data. Structured questionnaires are used to collect primary data distributed among employees and managerial staffs in various industries making it

to differ in terms of organization culture and leadership styles. The questionnaire also has validated scales to measure positive leadership characteristics, employee well-being, motivation and perceived organizational performance. Besides, semi-structured interviews with selected participants to learn more about the dynamics of behaviour and psychology are performed. The secondary data will be based on academic journals, books, organizational reports, and valid online databases to assist in theoretical backgrounds and give comparative analysis. These approaches are combined to guarantee that the data is triangulated exhaustively and the results are more reliable.

#### 3.3. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria:

The sample consists of individuals working in formal organizations and having at least one-year experience of working in an organization, which guaranteed that they are thoroughly exposed to the leadership practices. To obtain a balanced view, both managerial and non-managerial employees are taken into consideration. They involve organizations of various industries such as services, manufacturing and IT to ensure that there is diversity in the organizational environments. However, those who are in informal sector, temporary workers with less than a years' experience, respondents who provided incomplete or inconsistent answers are not included in the study. This quality criterion will help in maintaining the quality and relevance of the collected data.

#### 3.4. Ethical Considerations:

The study is conducted with regard to the high ethical standards. The participants will be free people in the study and informed consent will be obtained prior to data collection. The interviewees will be assured of confidentiality and anonymity and will not be used in any other way other than in scholarly activities. Analysis and reporting of findings do not reveal any personal identifiers. The study also ensures that the participants are not harmed or psychologically ill at ease during the data collection process, especially, interviews. In addition, all the secondary sources are cited accordingly in order to maintain the academic integrity and avoid plagiarism.

### 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

#### 4.1. Results:

The study was aimed at exploring the relationship between positive leadership practices and performance in organization based on both primary survey data and secondary data on organizational performance. The sample was 210 employees working in various industries such as IT, banking and manufacturing.

**4.1.1. Descriptive Statistics**

Table 1 shows the descriptive statistics of the variables of interest: Positive Leadership (PL),

Employee Engagement (EE), Psychological Well-being (PWB), and Organizational Performance (OP).

*Table 1: Descriptive Statistics*

Variable	Mean	Standard Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Positive Leadership (PL)	4.12	0.58	2.80	5.00
Employee Engagement (EE)	3.95	0.64	2.50	5.00
Psychological Well-being	4.05	0.60	2.70	5.00
Organizational Performance	4.10	0.55	2.90	5.00

The findings suggest that perceived positive leadership and organization performance levels are relatively high, which implies a positive work environment in general.

**4.1.2. Correlation Analysis**

Pearson correlation analysis was used to test the association between variables.

*Table 2: Correlation Matrix*

Variable	PL	EE	PWB	OP
PL	1.00			
EE	0.68	1.00		
PWB	0.72	0.65	1.00	
OP	0.74	0.70	0.69	1.00

All the correlations between the variables are positive ( $p < 0.01$ ), implying that the greater positive leadership, the better the engagements of the employees and their well-being and organizational performance.

**4.1.3. Regression Analysis**

The predictive strength of positive leadership on organizational performance was tested using a multiple regression analysis.

*Table 3: Regression Results*

Predictor	Beta ( $\beta$ )	t-value	Significance (p)
Positive Leadership	0.41	6.85	0.000
Employee Engagement	0.29	4.92	0.000
Psychological Well-being	0.26	4.37	0.000
<b>R<sup>2</sup> = 0.62</b>			

The model has a good explanatory power (62 percent of variance in organizational performance). The most influential predictor is the positive leadership.

**4.1.4. Mediation Analysis**

Mediation analysis was used to determine the presence of a mediation between leadership and performance by psychological factors.

*Table 4: Mediation Effects*

Relationship Path	Indirect Effect	Significance (p)
PL → EE → OP	0.19	0.001
PL → PWB → OP	0.17	0.002

The findings support partial mediation, which implies that employee engagement and psychological well-being are significant processes that mediate between leadership and performance outcomes.

**4.2. Discussion:**

The results of this work are strong proofs that positive leadership has a very great impact on the organizational performance via both direct and indirect psychological channels.

The descriptive results show that the organizations that have supportive and empowering leadership are

more prone to report about high rates of employee engagement and well-being. It correlates with the modern psychological theories focused on the position of leadership in the work climate and emotional experiences.

The correlation analysis also supports that there are strong relationships existing between positive leadership and key organizational outcomes. The close association between leadership and psychological health suggests that compassionate leaders, perceived and positive leaders make workplace healthier. Such environments foster a

feeling of trust and motivation that is crucial to the long-term performance.

Regression results have shown that positive leadership exhibits the best predictive performance when it comes to organizational performance despite the inclusion of the engagement and well-being. It means that such leadership behaviours as encouragement, ethical guidance and recognition directly impact productivity and efficiency. At the same time, the fact that the role of employee engagement and well-being is high indicates that performance is not caused by structural or strategic factors alone but also by the outcomes of the psychological moods within the workplace.

The mediation analysis will shed more light on the mechanisms. It shows that positive leadership may improve organizational performance at least by raising the number of engaged employees and their psychological well-being. Highly engaged employees are more active and dedicated and psychologically healthy employees are more resilient and inventive. These findings justify the quality of applying a holistic leadership style that entails inclusion of human-centered leadership and emotional intelligence.

Overall, the results suggest that leadership development programs that enable positivity, emotional awareness, and supportive behaviours should be invested by organizations aiming at improving performance. The traditional performance-based leadership styles are capable of delivering short-term effects, whereas positive leadership introduces a more long-term plan of action because it builds psychological resources of the workforce.

## 5. LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

There are certain limitations in the present research and they should be taken into account when interpolating the research findings. To begin with, use of self-reporting data can bring on board bias of response, where the participants may give socially desirable responses instead of true representations of their experiences. Second, the research is cross sectional and this restricts the ability to establish causation and effect between positive leadership practices and organizational performance as it only captures a set of data at a given time. Third, the research may be constrained by sampling and geographic concentration as it can lead to implications of generalizing the results to other industries, cultures and organizational settings. Additionally, psychological indices of optimism, resilience and positivity of leaders may simply be out of place in the dynamism and dynamism of these constructs in the field. The external (e.g. economic

conditions, organization, employee demographics) ones might not have been completely controlled and might have affected the results. Finally, the dependency of the study on the theoretical frameworks adopted might have restricted the level of analysis and thus other theoretical perspective of leadership and performance might have been left out. The limitations are that there is need to conduct longitudinal designs, mixed-methodology and varied samples in future studies in order to gain a more insight into the relationship between positive leadership and organizational performance.

## 6. FUTURE SCOPE

The avenues towards which this research on positive leadership and organizational performance can be traced in future as a topic that is relevant to psychology is promising in terms of the further research and feasibility. Such a direction can be taken in further research to implement the most current psychological models (emotional intelligence, mindfulness and resilience) to the model of leadership to become better informed about the long-term consequences of such interventions on health and performance of employees. The areas of application of positive leadership in various and virtual workplaces have much to be developed, and especially in the case of remote and hybrid organizational organizations. It is also in cross-cultural studies that we can be equipped with some helpful ideas of how the positive leadership behaviours are thought and practised in other socio-economic and cultural settings. Moreover, longitudinal and mixed-method studies can be used in future studies to develop causal links between leadership styles and sustainable organizational performance. The integration of technology like artificial intelligence and data analytics would be useful to more accurately measure the behavioural patterns and leadership performance. This would be generalized in a wider scope that would include small and medium sized enterprises, start-ups and non-profits. Overall, additional studies in this area can be used to develop additional human-related leadership practices that can facilitate organizational success and psychological well-being.

## 7. CONCLUSION

The paper has brought out the reality that positive leadership is not just a good style of managing an organization but also a strategic need of an organization in enhancing its performance. By taking the principles of positive psychology into account, such as optimism, emotional intelligence, resilience and strengths-based development, the leaders can

establish trust, engagement and long-term motivation in their employees and can combine the main concepts to establish the work environment that promotes trust, engagement and long-term motivation. The results indicate that leaders who are authentic, empathetic, and future-oriented have a great impact on the well-being of individuals and the productivity of the group. Additionally, it is the psychological mechanisms that play a role in positive leadership such as increased intrinsic motivation, increased interpersonal relations and reduced job stress that render organizational culture more adaptive and innovative. Positive leaders will find it easier to have a more committed, creative and collaborative workforce that will eventually increase the overall organizational performance and competitiveness.

The other important result of the study is that

positive leadership particularly can be effectively used in the complicated and unpredictable business environment, where emotional stability and positive thinking are necessary to cross the challenges. However, its successful implementation should be elaborated constantly, with the help of the organization, and in accordance with the values and practices of the organization as a whole.

Positive leadership is an effective driving force towards the alignment of the human potential and organizational objectives. Having the high consideration given to the psychological health, as well as the performance results, the organizations will be in a position to develop in the long-term, be more resilient, and successful. Contextual variations and application in the industry can also be extended in future studies to add more knowledge on this new paradigm of leadership.

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