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Title: Advancing Positive Leadership: An Integrative Review and Development of the Adaptive Positive Leadership (APL) Model

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Advancing Positive Leadership: An Integrative Review and Development of the Adaptive Positive Leadership (APL) Model

Abstract

Purpose: In response to evolving demands in the modern-day workplace, this study explores the development of positive leadership and addresses its current theoretical fragmentation by proposing the Adaptive Positive Leadership (APL) model. It aims to build upon key insights from transformational, servant, authentic, and ethical leadership theories, and integrate them with psychological and relational dimensions that are relevant to today's complex organisational environments.

Methodology: An integrative literature review was conducted using a structured search across Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Twenty peer-reviewed studies were selected based on clear inclusion and exclusion criteria. An inductive thematic synthesis was then applied to identify conceptual patterns and gaps, with Leader-Member Exchange and Psychological Capital theories guiding the theoretical framework.

Findings: The review reveals four interdependent dimensions of adaptive positive leadership: purpose-driven, resilient, technology-driven, and interpersonal-ethical leadership. These dimensions reflect the growing demand for leaders who can navigate uncertainty, uphold employee well-being, foster inclusion, and drive sustainable performance. The paper also engages critically with recent counter arguments regarding the objectivity and effectiveness of positive leadership as a means of ensuring balance and comprehensiveness.

Originality: This paper introduces the APL model as a conceptual framework that consolidates fragmented theories of positive leadership and aligns them with emerging workplace challenges. It contributes to leadership scholarship by offering a forward-looking, empirically testable model with practical implications for leadership development in present-day organisations.

Keywords: Positive leadership, transformational leadership, servant leadership, authentic leadership, ethical leadership, leader-member exchange, psychological capital

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Introduction

The concept of positive leadership has gained significant interest over the past four decades, particularly as organisations recognise the importance of employee-centric leadership approaches (Kaushal and Mishra, 2020; Marinova *et al.*, 2015). At its core, positive leadership focuses on building strong professional relationships among colleagues and cultivating supportive working environments that help individuals and teams thrive (Cameron, 2012). Over the years, several theoretical frameworks have shaped the development of this concept, including seminal works on servant leadership which prioritises the needs of followers (Greenleaf, 1977), transformational leadership which focuses on inspiring followers (Bass, 1995), and authentic leadership which emphasises self-awareness and transparency (Avolio and Gardner, 2005).

While these theories share a focus on positive organisational outcomes, they differ in emphasis and orientation. Transformational leadership maintains a leader-driven influence model, servant leadership decentralises power and entrusts employees (Kim, 2020; Krishnan, 2004; Tucker and Russell, 2004), and authentic leadership fosters psychological safety (Kark *et al.*, 2003; Liu *et al.*, 2015). As each model has evolved independently, the field of positive leadership remains theoretically fragmented with limited integration across these perspectives (Monzani and Van Dick, 2020). This situation has led to ongoing challenges in fully understanding the overlapping constructs and boundaries between each model (Adams *et al.*, 2020; Fischer *et al.*, 2024). These fragmentations and overlaps provide the basis of this study.

To date, several efforts have been carried out to define and structure positive leadership. The Positive Leadership Action Framework (PLAF) (Redín *et al.*, 2023) builds on a virtue ethics approach, while the Leader Self-Structure Framework (Hannah *et al.*, 2009) focuses on intrapersonal self-complexity. This study adds on these existing efforts by proposing a unified approach that integrates core psychological and relational

components of positive leadership. This effort is also tailored to modern organisational contexts for direct application.

Given the diverse conceptualisations of positive leadership, it is timely to conduct a review of the literature that has led to its current evolution, particularly considering the shifting of workplace conditions following the COVID-19 pandemic. These include remote working challenges, multigenerational workforce, and heightened awareness over employee wellbeing (Franken *et al.*, 2021; Pradhan and Hati, 2022; Singh *et al.*, 2021). With these changes, leaders today must not only inspire and support but also adapt swiftly to uncertainties and foster trust across diverse working environments. There remains a need to better understand how positive leadership can influence outcomes at the individual, team, and organisational levels (Shahid and Muchiri, 2019). Further theoretical development can help clarify these mechanisms and reinforce the relevance of positive leadership in inclusive and values-driven workplaces (Adams *et al.*, 2020).

As precursors to this study, previous reviews have expanded on the conceptualisation of positive leadership in its role in enhancing leadership effectiveness (Hannah *et al.*, 2009), distinctiveness from transformational leadership in predicting employee well-being (Kelloway *et al.*, 2013), and influence on organisational engagement both through direct and indirect pathways (Decuyper and Schaufeli, 2020). While most reviews portray positive leadership as beneficial in the workplace, the study of Fischer *et al.* (2024) stands out as a critic that challenges the objectivity and causal suggestions of positive leadership research. This signals the need for more grounded models that address both theoretical coherence and real-world applicability. The counter arguments on positive leadership are also discussed in the findings of this study.

This review is guided by the following research questions: (1) How has positive leadership evolved over the past 40 years? (2) Why is positive leadership particularly important and relevant in today's work environment? (3) What future directions should positive leadership research take? This review contributes to leadership and organisational behaviour research by critically evaluating the boundaries and integration points of transformational, authentic, servant, and ethical leadership theories. In addressing these research questions, this integrative review introduces the Adaptive Positive Leadership (APL) model, a conceptual framework

designed to reflect the increasingly challenging demands of contemporary leadership while outlining priorities for future research and practice.

Methodology

This review adopts an integrative literature review (ILR) approach, which is suitable for a conceptually mature yet fragmented field like positive leadership. This method facilitates the synthesis of a diverse range of leadership theories to generate a cohesive conceptual framework that integrates key elements of positive leadership. The ILR method also enables theoretical development as it incorporates studies with different methodologies while maintaining conceptual relevance to the research focus. In conducting the ILR, a structured literature search was conducted across three major academic databases namely Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Keyword combinations included: “positive leadership”, “transformational leadership”, “authentic leadership”, “servant leadership”, and “ethical leadership”. These terms reflect the core constructs within the positive leadership discourse and were selected to ensure breadth and depth of coverage.

The following inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied across the literature identification and selection process:

Inclusion criteria:

- Peer-reviewed journal articles or book chapters
- Publication between 1985 and 2025, with emphasis on 2014 to 2025 for contemporary developments
- Direct engagement with one or more positive leadership theories
- Theoretical or empirical contribution to leadership or organisational outcomes
- Relevance to workplace or managerial settings

Exclusion criteria:

- Non-peer-reviewed publications
- Articles that addressed leadership only generically
- Studies unrelated to organisational or workplace contexts

From an initial pool of 45 sources, 20 studies were ultimately selected based on the outlined criteria, specifically theoretical relevance and contribution to understanding the evolution and application of positive leadership. Studies were prioritised based on the depth of theoretical engagement and relevance to the research questions. While the sample is selective rather than exhaustive, it is appropriate for the goal of an integrative review which is to develop a conceptual model based on a selected group of literature.

Following article selection, an inductive thematic analysis was undertaken. The selected studies were coded to identify recurring patterns and conceptual linkages across leadership models. These codes were then categorised into broader themes reflecting the historical evolution and arising trajectories of positive leadership theory. Themes were refined through iterative comparison across studies and validated through cross-checking to ensure coherence and consistency. Focus was given to how different leadership approaches articulated individual leadership behaviours (e.g., resilience, authenticity) and interpersonal mechanisms (e.g., trust, empowerment) under varying conditions. The resulting themes form the foundation for the APL model introduced in this review. The model integrates insights from the literature to address current leadership demands including uncertainty, complexity, and the need for inclusive workplace transformations.

While the ILR method was chosen for its flexibility in synthesising diverse perspectives, the potential limitations within the context of this study are duly acknowledged. The final 20 articles selected from an initial pool of 45 were based on their direct theoretical contribution to the dimensions that shape the APL model. These studies provide the grounding for leadership behaviours aligned with psychological mechanisms and provided conceptual depth on developing leadership challenges at the workplace (e.g., crisis, technology, ethics). Additionally, the non-systematic nature of ILR does pose the risks of selection bias as inclusion

decisions were based on theoretical relevance instead of exhaustive coverage. Despite these limitations, the final sample was curated to reflect both foundational and emerging work in positive leadership.

Theoretical Framework

This study builds upon Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and Psychological Capital (PsyCap) theories to provide an understanding of how positive leadership operates at individual and organisational levels. LMX theory (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995) is a relationship based model of leadership that accounts for leader-follower dynamics at multiple levels. Leadership is classified into three domains, namely leader-based, follower-based, and relationship-based where LMX is categorised. Thus, high-quality LMX relationships correlate positively with job satisfaction, commitment, and lower turnover which are outcomes of strong leader-follower relationships. Within the existing literature, among the calls for further research is on how LMX relationships evolve over time and how they integrate into broader leadership theories. Positive leadership aligns with high-quality LMX in the way leaders invest time and attention on staff development and psychological safety. These aspects impact task performance positively and relate negatively to counterproductive work behaviours (Martin *et al.*, 2016). LMX explains how leadership can be distributed unequally across followers and how high-LMX relationships create a more inclusive and engaging leadership dynamic.

PsyCap (Luthans *et al.*, 2007) refers to an individual's positive psychological state namely hope (i.e., ability to set goals and pathways), efficacy (i.e., confidence to take on challenges), resilience (i.e., capacity to recover from setbacks), and optimism (i.e., positive outlook towards future success). Positive leadership plays a critical role in developing the PsyCap of employees across multiple dimensions as leaders directly influence employee motivation. Authentic leadership fosters self-efficacy by encouraging employees to embrace personal growth (Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Gardner *et al.*, 2011; Shahid and Muchiri, 2019). Meanwhile, transformational leadership enhances hope by providing a compelling vision (Krishnan, 2004; Tucker and Russell, 2004). Through the integration of positive leadership with PsyCap, this study highlights how leadership fosters resilience and high-performance mindsets in employees. Both LMX and PsyCap collectively serve as the

foundation for the APL model which introduces relational and psychologically driven leadership practices suited for the modern workplace.

Findings

Tracking Down the Evolution of Positive Leadership

The starting point of this integrative review is the emergence of transformational leadership in the 1980's which marked a shift from traditional and transactional approaches that focused on rewards and penalties to one that inspires performance. This idea was documented in the work of Bass (1985) which expanded on the model of Burns (1978), and defined transformational leadership as a process where leaders use charisma and individualised consideration to motivate followers beyond their self-interest (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Transformational leadership played a pivotal role in shaping positive leadership theories, as it emphasised empowering employees and driving organisational change through vision and motivation. However, critics argue that such models often overlook how inspirational leadership may reinforce dependency on leaders or set unrealistic expectations around performance outcomes (Fischer *et al.*, 2024). This overreliance on individual leaders can come both from senior leadership who may set unrealistic goals, or from direct reports who could fall into complacency arising from the assurance of competent leadership at the top. This situation risks unmanageable strain or burnout on the leaders themselves.

As a contemporary to transformational leadership, the idea of servant leadership was introduced by Greenleaf (1977) which emphasised service to others, ethical responsibility, and personal growth over authority and control. While transformational leadership aims to energise followers, servant leadership prioritises community building and participative decision-making towards enabling employee autonomy (Liden *et al.*, 2008; Spears, 1996). Greenleaf's assessment of servant leadership is on whether followers become healthier and wiser, which promotes a cycle of ethical leadership (Spears, 1996). Together with transformational leadership, servant leadership has since influenced the development of authentic and ethical leadership theories. Yet, the assumption that servant leadership universally leads to better outcomes has been challenged

in high-pressure environments where efficiency and clear direction may be prioritised over empowerment (Eva, Robin, *et al.*, 2019). Lack of clarity at the workplace may impair progress or operational excellence, especially as servant leaders struggle in trying to please stakeholders surrounding them.

Following these developments, authentic leadership emerged as a model that emphasises self-awareness and relational transparency, which position leaders as role models who cultivate authenticity to foster trust with followers (Avolio and Gardner, 2005). This approach is considered as a higher order multidimensional model which can predict work related attitudes, behaviours, and supervisor rated performance (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008). That said, scholars have noted the lack of a universally accepted definition of ‘authenticity’ and have questioned whether perceived authenticity always reflects effective leadership or whether it sometimes masks poor judgement or inaction (Fischer *et al.*, 2024; Gardner *et al.*, 2011). This challenge gets exacerbated when actions that are deemed as authentic by the individual leader are perceived differently within workplaces that prioritise other sets of values. This clash of culture may occur during mergers of organisations operating across different regional settings.

Expanding on authentic leadership, ethical leadership refines the moral dimension of leadership by promoting appropriate conduct through role modelling and reinforcement mechanisms (Brown and Treviño, 2006). It extends beyond personal integrity and values-based inspiration where leaders actively use communication and reward systems to reinforce ethical behaviour (Treviño *et al.*, 2003). Ethical leadership positively influences follower outcomes such as perceived fairness and ethical behaviour while also being closely linked to transformational leadership and the contingent reward dimension of transactional leadership (Bedi *et al.*, 2016). Nonetheless, the effectiveness of ethical leadership is often shaped by organisational context. What is seen as ‘ethical’ may vary culturally and over-emphasis on rule enforcement can undermine flexibility and trust (Redín *et al.*, 2023). This contrast may surface more distinctively when teams of varying business cultures (i.e., eastern, western) engage with each other.

By the 2010s, leadership research began shifting from performance driven models to focus towards employee well-being as it integrates insights from positive psychology (Seligman, 2018). Leaders began to recognise

how psychological safety and resilience were critical to long-term success (Graen *et al.*, 2020; Liu *et al.*, 2015; Wibowo and Paramita, 2022). Additionally, crisis leadership became a central theme particularly during global financial crises and large-scale disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic (Abbas Khan, 2021; Heyden *et al.*, 2020). Studies demonstrated that leaders who exhibited positive leadership behaviours during crises (i.e., emotional intelligence, adaptability) helped sustain employee morale and organisational performance (Goleman, 2005; Ma *et al.*, 2024). Some researchers do warn that overly optimistic leadership may unintentionally mask structural issues such as workload imbalance, job insecurity, or burnout; problems that cannot be solved through leadership style alone (Fischer *et al.*, 2024).

These developments signal the evolution of positive leadership from being performance focused to becoming more holistic and encompassing of vast psychological dimensions (Cameron, 2012; Hannah *et al.*, 2009; Kelloway *et al.*, 2013). Nevertheless, the integration of these diverse streams remains contested as scholars debate whether positive leadership constitutes a distinct model or simply rebrands existing styles under a universal and affirmative label. In this regard, Table I summarises the key constructs and practical implications of transformational, servant, authentic, and ethical leadership. This comparative synthesis highlights areas of overlap and boundaries across these theories of interest.

Leadership Model	Core Emphasis	Key Construct	Differentiating Focus
Transformational	Inspiring performance through vision and charisma	Inspirational motivation, individualised consideration, influence	Leader driven motivation, organisational transformation
Servant	Empowering others by prioritising follower needs	Humility, stewardship, community, ethical responsibility	Focus on follower growth, ethical service, shared power
Authentic	Leading with self-awareness and integrity	Self-awareness, transparency, balanced moral perspectives	Emphasis on leader's transparent and ethical behaviour
Ethical	Reinforcing moral standards through leader behaviour	Moral management, ethical role modelling, fairness in action	Operationalising ethics through reinforcement and behavioural standards

Table I: Comparative Summary of Leadership Models

Contemporary Relevance of Positive Leadership

In response to rapid organisational changes globally and evolving workforce expectations, the role of positive leadership has become increasingly crucial in the present-day workplace. Recent research highlights how leaders who demonstrate positive leadership foster greater employee engagement and organisational performance (Cameron, 2012; Decuyper and Schaufeli, 2020; Shahid and Muchiri, 2019). This section explores the contemporary significance of positive leadership based on the literature reviewed. This commentary is framed in relation to employee well-being, crisis leadership, and hybrid work.

The increasing prevalence of burnout and mental health challenges in the workplace has led to greater focus on leadership approaches that prioritise employee well-being (Brassey *et al.*, 2022; Kelloway *et al.*, 2013; Pradhan and Hati, 2022). Research within the literature shows how leaders who exhibit authenticity and servant leadership create psychologically safe environments. Positive leadership is associated with improved

perceptions of inclusion while mitigating experiences of discrimination in the workplace (Adams *et al.*, 2020). Further, Decuyper and Schaufeli (2020) highlighted how positive styles contribute to employee work engagement through shared mechanisms, suggesting that multiple leadership styles operate through similar pathways to enhance motivation and performance. However, these mechanisms may not always produce uniform outcomes as contextual factors such as industry type, team size, and regional culture can influence how such leadership is perceived and whether it delivers the intended benefits (Redín *et al.*, 2023). The outcome of positive leadership is heavily reliant on the ecosystem within which it exists.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the need for leaders who are adaptive and resilient (Abbas Khan, 2021; Brown and Crawford, 2022). The literature reviewed indicates how organisations led by transformational and ethical leaders are better able to navigate uncertainty and maintain employee morale which are critical especially amidst crises. Ethical leadership involves active communication and reinforcement mechanisms (Treviño *et al.*, 2003), which are significant to enable employees in adhering to ethical standards and maintain stability during uncertain times. Similarly, given the transparency and self-awareness of authentic leaders (Walumbwa *et al.*, 2008), there is higher likelihood to sustain morale and commitment in volatile environments. Resilience among leaders in withstanding workplace challenges can also influence and inspire team members to emulate as followers.

As workplaces embrace hybrid and remote work models, positive leadership plays a key role in maintaining engagement and productivity. Organisations embracing positive leadership practices (e.g., compassion, integrity, optimism) achieve better performance which is particularly relevant for remote teams that require strong organisational culture (Cameron *et al.*, 2017). In these situations, the psychological capital of leaders is transferred to employees (Youssef-Morgan and Luthans, 2013), which can reinforce engagement and reduce the stress of remote work conditions. Positive leadership integrates both ethical leadership and high-performance mindsets (Cameron *et al.*, 2017) which are crucial in managing hybrid workforces effectively. The goal is to not only deliver work performance, but to also sustain employee morale over time.

The findings highlighted in this study largely point to the advantages of adopting positive leadership. As organisations face complex and unpredictable environments, positive leaders are seen to be best positioned to drive long-term success. However, these outcomes are not guaranteed and the effectiveness of positive leadership is contingent on multiple factors including workplace and organisational support. In this regard, Fischer et al. (2024) argued that the subjectivity of positive leadership constructs may lead to misleading causal claims. The authors demonstrated how perceived leadership styles are influenced by non-behavioural factors (e.g., prior knowledge of leader's success, value alignment with followers) rather than actual leadership behaviours. This perspective broadens the range of definitions that might depict positive leadership, both from the lenses of leaders, peers, and followers. As one of the few contrasting perspectives on the topic, this critique adds depth to the discussion on positive leadership and calls for further empirical research to establish a stronger balance.

The historical and contemporary perspectives on positive leadership signal how it remains a compelling framework for modern workplaces. Its conceptualisation and application, however, must be sensitive to context so that its perceived benefits translate into measurable organisational outcomes. Seminal works and key research papers on positive leadership analysed in this study are presented in Table II.

Study	Leadership Style	Key Findings
(Bass, 1985; Bass and Riggio, 2006)	Transformational Leadership	Transformational leadership inspires performance through charisma and individualised consideration to motivate employees beyond self-interest
(Greenleaf, 1977; Spears, 1996)	Servant Leadership	Servant leadership prioritises follower growth, ethical responsibility, and well-being towards psychological safety and trust at the workplace
(Avolio and Gardner, 2005; Walumbwa <i>et al.</i> , 2008)	Authentic Leadership	Authentic leadership emphasises self-awareness, relational transparency, and moral integrity, to facilitate trust and ethical decision-making
(Brown and Treviño, 2006; Treviño <i>et al.</i> , 2003)	Ethical Leadership	Ethical leadership extends beyond personal integrity to include active communication and reward systems to reinforce ethical behaviour
(Bedi <i>et al.</i> , 2016)	Ethical Leadership	Ethical leadership is positively linked to employee fairness perceptions, ethical behaviour, and overlaps with transformational leadership
(Eva, Wolfram Cox, <i>et al.</i> , 2019)	Servant Leadership	Servant leadership requires further empirical validation due to gaps in cross-disciplinary integration and its context-specific effectiveness
(Seligman, 2018)	Positive Psychology, Positive Leadership	Positive leadership aligns with psychological well-being models, integrating resilience and engagement
(Decuyper and Schaufeli, 2020)	Positive Leadership	Positive leadership enhances employee engagement through shared pathways e.g., emotional contagion, social exchange
(Adams <i>et al.</i> , 2020)	Positive Leadership, Inclusive Leadership	Positive leadership styles improve employee perceptions of inclusion while reducing discrimination
(Abbas Khan, 2021; Heyden <i>et al.</i> , 2020)	Crisis Leadership	Transformational and ethical leadership are crucial in maintaining morale and stability during crises, such as COVID-19

(Goleman, 2005; Ma <i>et al.</i> , 2024)	Emotional Intelligence in Leadership	Leaders with emotional intelligence foster employee resilience and organisational adaptability during crises
(Fischer <i>et al.</i> , 2024)	Critical Perspective on Positive Leadership	Positive leadership may be influenced by subjective perceptions rather than actual behaviours, requiring stronger methodological rigour
(Cameron <i>et al.</i> , 2017; Youssef-Morgan and Luthans, 2013)	Positive Leadership in Hybrid Work	Positive leadership promotes engagement and well-being in hybrid work environments by reinforcing trust and motivation

Table II: Summary of Key Research on Positive Leadership

Discussion

Building upon the synthesis of past and present positive leadership theories reviewed within this study, the APL model emerges. This framework proposes an approach to applying positive leadership to weather the evolving complexities of leading teams within the modern workplace. As standalone frameworks, existing leadership theories (i.e., transformational, servant, authentic, ethical) contribute significantly to positive leadership research. The APL model introduces an integrative approach that builds upon these theories and the theoretical grounding of this study (i.e., LMX, PsyCap) for consideration of organisational application. It is structured around four interdependent dimensions that reflect the evolving nature of leadership namely purpose-driven leadership, resilient leadership, technology-driven leadership, and interpersonal and ethical leadership. The APL model is visualised in Figure I.

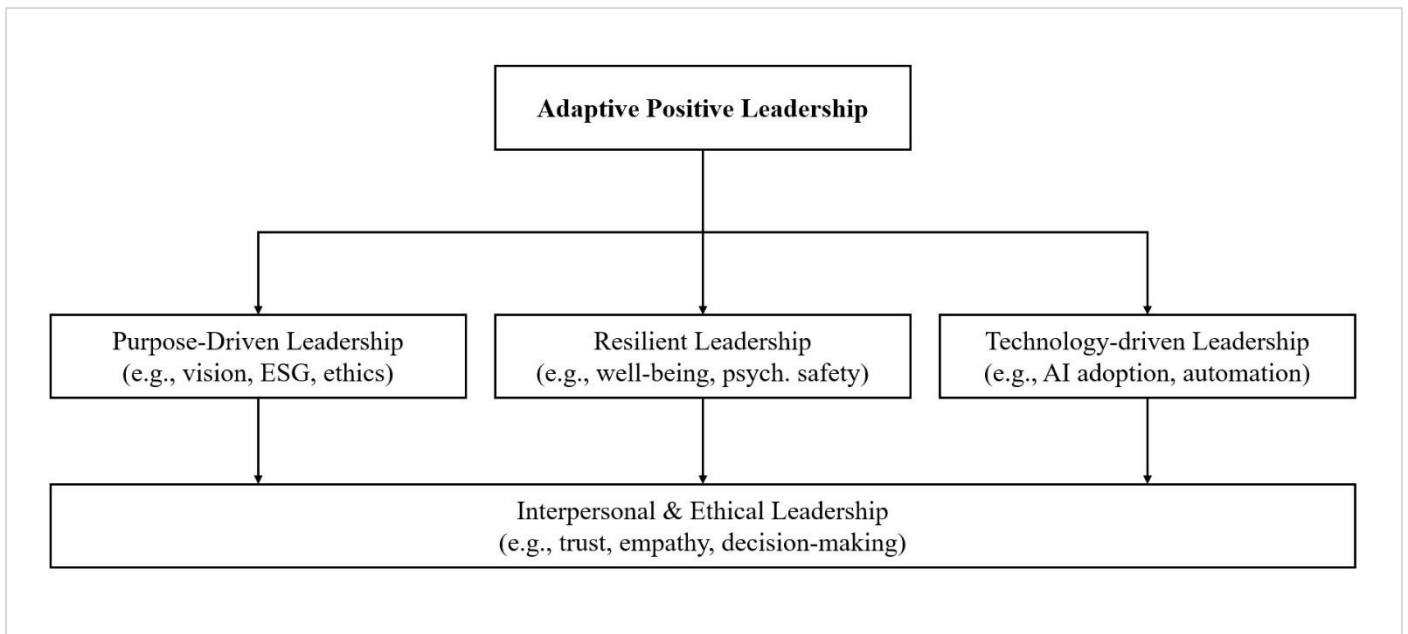


Figure I: Adaptive Positive Leadership Model

Within purpose-driven leadership, leaders align themselves with organisational vision to ensure that leadership serves both business and societal goals. This outlook extends beyond traditional focus areas such as financial and operational performance, and recognises the broader impacts of environmental, social, and governance (ESG) initiatives. This consideration facilitates a continued assessment of the way positive leadership influences long-term strategies while maintaining organisational agility. Adjacent to purpose-driven leadership, the resilient leadership dimension highlights the ability of leaders to navigate crises and uncertainty while fostering psychological safety in the workplace. Drawing from PsyCap (Luthans *et al.*, 2007), resilient leadership promotes optimism and emotional regulation to mitigate burnout and mental health challenges that are becoming more common at the workplace today. The challenge is in adopting positive leadership to prevent burnout and enhance resilience in volatile environments.

In technology-driven leadership, leadership must be open to and adapt to technological advancements while upholding ethical leadership values. This is especially critical when organisations go through digital transformation and grapple with long-standing organisational cultures. One example is the way leaders manage their engagements with followers amidst the widespread adoption of artificial intelligence (AI) at the workplace which is prevalent today. As for interpersonal and ethical leadership, APL emphasises trust, empathy, and ethical decision-making as fundamental leadership capabilities. These elements consolidate

insights from LMX theory which suggests how high quality leader-follower relationships enhance engagement (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). One critical component of this dimension is the role of emotional intelligence in enabling ethical leadership and inclusive organisational cultures.

Across the APL model, each dimension is anchored in relational and psychological mechanisms that contribute to measurable leadership outcomes. Purpose-driven leadership aligns individuals with organisational values, enhancing commitment and ESG integration. Resilient leadership supports emotional stability, reducing burnout and increasing psychological safety. Technology-driven leadership enables agile adaptation and signals digital competence which can foster trust in leader readiness during transformation. Interpersonal and ethical leadership promotes fairness and inclusion, reinforcing belonging and moral credibility. Ultimately, the APL model advocates for leadership as a collective process that builds upon traditional theories and focuses on individual traits and behaviours. This aligns with contemporary demands for participatory decision-making and co-creation of organisational vision. The APL model also offers a flexible framework suited to current organisational challenges and for testing in future scenarios. Among earlier integrative efforts on positive leadership, the PLAF (Redín *et al.*, 2023) offers a notable contribution grounded in virtue ethics. It highlights the leader's moral development as central to fostering organisational virtuousness. In line with this effort, the APL aspires to expand on the range of considerations available across the literature for practical consideration.

Building from these developments, future research can empirically test the APL model's applicability across different industries and cultural contexts. This may include testable propositions for each of its four dimensions. For instance, resilient leadership may be positively associated with reduced burnout in crisis-prone industries such as healthcare or emergency services. Technology-driven leadership could be examined in startups to evaluate its effect on trust and change readiness. Mixed method approaches that combine surveys and interviews would help uncover how interpersonal and ethical leadership builds inclusion and psychological safety at the workplace. Further, longitudinal studies could track how purpose-driven leadership enhances ESG alignment and strategic agility over time. These applications offer opportunities to validate and refine the APL model across diverse organisational contexts.

Conclusion

The findings of this systematic review affirm the increasing relevance of positive leadership in contemporary organisational settings. It demonstrates how positive leadership applications that prioritise employee well-being and engagement can drive sustainable performance. Through the integration of recent findings from the literature and the LMX and PsyCap theories, the APL model presents a framework that addresses contemporary leadership challenges. The model contributes to the discourse by introducing purpose-driven, resilient, technology-driven, and interpersonal-ethical leadership dimensions, while recognising the evolving nature of leadership. In doing so, the APL model provides a foundation for future research to explore how leadership must adapt to unpredictable organisational landscapes. This study also acknowledges critical perspectives that caution against overgeneralisation. The work of Fischer *et al.* (2024), for example, raises important questions about the subjectivity of leadership perceptions and the need for rigorous methodological approaches to validate the presumed benefits of positive leadership.

The APL model also carries implications for leadership development in broader societal and policy contexts. In public sectors, the model's emphasis on ethical decision-making and trust building offers a guiding framework for promoting transparency, accountability, and social impact. Leadership development programmes may also draw on the APL dimensions to support sustainable governance, given its focus on ESG as a key component. Additionally, the model's relational foundations make it applicable across cultures, where inclusive and contextualised leadership is vital. As organisations navigate an increasingly uncertain and complex future, leaders must not only inspire but also adapt to ensure long-term success.

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Declaration of Interest Statement

The author reports no competing interests to declare.

Data Availability Statement

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