

A critical review of conceptualisations of positive leadership: Towards an integrated definition

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Mini-dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements
for the degree *Master of Arts* in Industrial and Organisational
Psychology at the North-West University

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Graduation: May 2018

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COMMENTS

The reader is reminded of the following:

- The editorial style in the first and last chapters of this mini-dissertation follows the format prescribed by the Programme in Industrial and Organisational Psychology of the North-West University (Vaal Triangle Campus).
- The references and page numbers in this mini-dissertation follow the format prescribed by the Publication Manual (6th edition) of the American Psychological Association (APA). This practice is in line with the policy of the Programme in Industrial and Organisational Psychology of the North-West University (Vaal Triangle Campus) to use APA style in all scientific documents.
- This mini-dissertation is submitted in the form of a research article.

DECLARATION

I, Kgomoitso Silvia Malinga, hereby declare that “**A critical review of conceptualisations of positive leadership: Towards an integrated definition**” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete in-text references and reference lists.

I further declare that this work will not be submitted to any other academic institutions for qualification purposes.

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KGOMOTSO SILVIA MALINGA

8 NOVEMBER 2017

DECLARATION OF LANGUAGE EDITING

I hereby declare that I was responsible for the language editing of the mini-dissertation: **A critical review of conceptualisations of positive leadership: Towards an integrated definition** submitted by Kgomotso Silvia Malinga.

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to thank the Almighty God for his mercy upon me and for making it possible for me to successfully reach this wonderful milestone.

I would also like to give thanks to my wonderful supervisors Prof Marius Stander and Prof Werner Nel, for being there for me, being supportive, believing in me and for continuously motivating me. This journey would have not been an easy one without your continued support and guidance.

I would like to thank my husband Mr Malinga for his continued support, understanding and love. I would have not gotten this far if you were not by my side at all times. I Love you and always will. A special thank you to my parents and in-laws for caring, supporting and believing in me.

Thanks Lynelle and Isabel for your assistance with the technical and language editing of my work.

A special thank you to Prof Elrie Botha for always being there for me as a sound board and for not only believing in me but for also going an extra mile just to ensure that I successfully complete my studies. Your continued support is much appreciated.

Lastly, I would also like to thank all my colleagues who supported and motivated me throughout this journey, you really made the journey easy for me. It feels so good to know that I am loved and cared for. A special thanks to Zama, Thapelo and Aysha for their assistance and going an extra mile just to see me completing my studies.

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ABSTRACT

Title: A critical review of conceptualisations of positive leadership: Towards an integrated definition.

Key words: Critical review, Leadership, Positive leadership, Positive leadership behaviours, Thematic analysis.

Positive leadership is needed in dealing with challenges that leaders face in organisations due to the constantly changing world of work. There has been a shift in organisations towards leaders who are positive and able to create positive work environment for followers, as well as build relationships through teamwork and trust. Although there are numerous studies on positive leadership, there is still confusion regarding the conceptualisation of positive leadership in literature.

The aim of this critical review was to identify and synthesise literature on conceptualisations, definitions, descriptions, behaviours, characteristics and principles of positive leadership; to provide an overview of these conceptualisations; as well as to formulate an integrated definition of positive leadership. This critical review considered both quantitative and qualitative articles published in English that contained conceptualisations, definitions, descriptions, behaviours, characteristics, or principles of positive leadership. Only national and international articles published between 1998 and 2016, as well as seminal works published prior to this were considered in this study. Studies that did not conceptualise, define, or describe positive leadership, and that were not written in English, were excluded. Studies that were published before 1998 and that are not regarded as seminal works were also excluded from this critical review. Articles that were not published in the journal databases mentioned below were excluded as well.

The search strategy sought to find published peer-reviewed literature on conceptualisations of positive leadership. Literature was identified via comprehensive searches on the following databases: EBSCOhost; Emerald Insight Journals; Google Scholar; JSTOR; Sabinet Online; SAGE; ScienceDirect; and Web of Science. Articles containing the word “positive leadership” were sourced and later assessed if they met the inclusion criteria. Each article was assessed by the reviewer prior to its inclusion, and then it was recorded in the flow chart of the study selection process.

A total of 21 peer-reviewed papers – experimental, qualitative, quantitative and textual in nature – were included in this review, together with one textbook that was regarded as a seminal work. Due to the diverse nature of these papers and the aim of the review (which was to propose an integrated definition), meta-analysis of the results was not possible. For this reason, this section of the review was presented in a narrative form. Thematic analysis was used to analyse the data. The key themes that were derived from the data included a number of leadership traits such as optimism and a ‘can-do’ mind-set, altruism, an ethical orientation, and motivational characteristics, as well as specific leadership behaviours which include creating a positive work environment, building positive relationships, being results driven, and engaging in positive communication; which all resulted in certain leadership outcomes which were comprised of enhanced follower well-being, increased productivity as well as individual and organisational performance, and increased organisational citizenship behaviour.

As a result of the analysis, the following integrated definition of positive leadership based on the existing literature is proposed:

Positive leadership is an approach towards leadership that is characterised by the demonstration of leadership traits such as optimism and a ‘can-do’ mind-set, altruism, an ethical orientation, and motivational characteristics, as well as leadership behaviours that entail the creation of a positive working environment, the development of positive relationships, a focus on results, and positive communication with followers. These traits and behaviours in turn result in positive leadership outcomes such as enhanced overall productivity and performance levels, improved organisational citizenship behaviour, and enhanced follower well-being.

The results of this study provide the foundation for future research aimed at operationalising the concept of positive leadership.

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, the problem statement, the literature review on positive leadership, the aim of the study, as well as the review protocol for carrying out the study will be discussed, after which the outline of the chapters in this mini-dissertation will be provided.

1.1 Problem Statement

1.1.1 Overview of the Problem

Leadership has been a focus area in organisational behaviour (Barling, Christie, & Hopton, 2010), and social sciences for quite some time (George, 2000; Härtel, Kimberley, & McKeown, 2008, Perryer & Jordan, 2005). According to Tsai, Chen, and Cheng (2009), leadership plays an important role in the organisation; it involves the ability to identify directions for the followers and the ability to influence, persuade and inspire others to follow in that direction (Crafford et al., 2006). Leadership is found to be an important factor in the well-being (Skakon, Nielson, Borg, & Guzman, 2010), motivation and performance of employees (Albrecht, 2005; Crafford et al., 2006, Gallup, 2017). Leadership also assists the organisation and its various stakeholders to achieve their goals and to get where they ought to be (Crafford et al., 2006, Gallup, 2017).

Leaders in organisations experience today's world of work as volatile, uncertain, complex, ambiguous, challenging and overwhelming (Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2015; Gallup, 2017; Youssef-Morgan & Luthans, 2013). According to Luthans and Avolio (2003), leaders in organisations face the challenge of declining hope, optimism and confidence in themselves and their followers, due to the constant advance of technology, globalisation, and an uncertain economic climate. Dealing with these challenges requires a different approach to leadership – in particular, it calls for positive leadership.

Since the 1990s, there has been a transition within organisations towards leaders who are authentic and positive, and who are able to create positive working relationships with their followers in order to create a positive working environment (Härtel et al., 2008). Although there is confusion in literature regarding the concept of positive leadership, numerous researchers have studied positive leadership in organisations (Arakawa & Greenberg, 2007; Cameron, 2008; Cameron, 2013; Dutton & Spreitzer, 2014; Härtel et al., 2008; Kelloway, Weigand, McKee, & Das, 2013; Nel, Stander, & Latif, 2015; Salmi, Perttula, & Syväjärv, 2014; Wijewardena, Samararatunge, & Härtel, 2014; Youssef-Morgan & Luthans, 2013; Zbierowski & Góra, 2014).

Research has shown that positive leadership is important especially in these difficult times (uncertain economic climate and globalisation), because it has been associated with higher management performance in terms of decision making and interpersonal tasks (Youssef-Morgan & Luthans, 2013). In their study, Arakawa and Greenberg (2007) found that managers who adopt a positive leadership approach by means of employing a strengths-based approach, maintaining a positive perspective, and continuously providing recognition and encouragement, contribute to the effectiveness of both their employees and the entire organisation.

Positive leadership was also reported to have a significant positive relationship with psychological empowerment. This means that employees who went through difficult organisational circumstances (such as restructuring and downsizing), benefited from leaders who empowered them and focused on their strengths and talents, regardless of their situation (Nel et al., 2015). However, despite all the existing knowledge about the impact that positive leadership has on the followers and an organisation as a whole, researchers agree that the definition of positive leadership is still ambiguous and fragmented (Arakawa & Greenberg, 2007; Kelloway et al., 2013; Youssef & Luthans, 2012).

As far as could be determined, no reviews have yet attempted to outline an integrated definition of positive leadership. This is in spite of the fact that since the emergence of positive leadership, there has been different conceptualisations of the term, and no single agreed-upon definition or conceptualisation exists (Avey, Avolio, & Luthans, 2011; Avey, Hughes, Norman, & Luthans, 2008; Kelloway et al., 2013; Youssef-Morgan & Luthans, 2013). The lack of a clear

conceptualisation of this construct adversely affects any aims at operationalising it, which in turn renders ineffective attempts at empirically measuring positive leadership or comparing results based on differing conceptualisations. The aim of this critical review is to investigate specific definitions of positive leadership that were proposed between 1998 and 2016, and to formulate an integrated definition, which in turn will address the gap of clarifying the concept of positive leadership in literature.

1.1.2 Literature Review

1.1.2.1 Positive Psychology

Positive psychology was formally introduced at the American Psychological Association convention in 1998 (Donaldson & Ko, 2010). The movement towards positive psychology was inspired by an ideal of scholarship, application and research that is positively oriented. According to Seligman (2002), psychology has focused on human pathology since World War II, which created a perception that human beings are inherently flawed. He emphasised that the time has come to now focus on understanding positive emotions. Positive psychology therefore focuses on the study of positive emotions, positive traits and positive institutions (Seligman, 2002). It is important to note that the development of positive psychology was not meant to replace the existing field of human pathology, but to supplement it with an empirical focus on the positive (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000).

According to Donaldson and Ko (2010), positive psychology is widely studied, both in South Africa and internationally, and the studies involved include a focus on positive forms of leadership (Arakawa & Greenberg, 2007; Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Cameron, 2008; Luthans & Avolio, 2003). In addition, the concept of positive organisational scholarship is concerned with the study of positive outcomes, processes and attributes of organisations and their followers (Cameron et al., 2003). Positive organisational scholarship focuses on enhancing and utilising human strengths in order for persons to prosper and thrive in their organisation, rather than focusing on what is wrong (Zbierowski, 2016).

1.1.2.2 Positivity

Cameron and Caza (2004) define positivity in terms of “elevating processes and outcomes” (p. 731), and Cameron (2008) defines positivity as “affirmative bias in change, or toward an emphasis on strengths, capabilities and possibilities rather than problems, threats and weaknesses” (p. 8). Spreitzer and Sonenshein (2003) furthermore defined positivity as intentional behaviours that depart from the norm of the reference group in honourable ways. Positivity is important in leadership. Crafford et al. (2006) propose that a leader’s role is to persuade others to follow and to provide such followers with direction and motivation for them to achieve high levels of performance, job satisfaction and organisational commitment. Research conducted by Norman, Avolio, and Luthans (2010) shows that leader positivity as characterised by hope, optimism, resilience and self-esteem, resulted in subordinates reporting more trust in their leaders and a higher perception of leader effectiveness. However, according to Kelloway et al. (2013), existing theories on leadership do not fully account for leader positivity.

1.1.2.3 Leadership Behaviours

A leader’s behaviour can either have a positive or negative effect on employees’ experience, and this will ultimately have an impact on employees’ stress levels and well-being (Skakon et al., 2010; Wijewardena et al., 2014). Leaders are required to engage in specific types of leadership behaviours such as communicating, empowering (Gilbreath & Benson, 2004), motivating and holding their followers accountable (Wijewardena et al., 2014). Leaders in organisations are faced with the challenge of ensuring that their employees feel safe and engaged, and that they find meaning in their work (Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2015).

Leaders are not only challenged to ensure that their employees are engaged and empowered, but research has shown that leadership styles and behaviours have a huge effect on employees’ mental well-being (Gilbreath & Benson, 2004). Wijewardena et al. (2014) identified support and ethical behaviour as positive leadership behaviours. Positive leadership behaviours have been linked with enhanced employee well-being, while negative leadership behaviours, on the other hand, are linked with stress and strain (Skakon et al., 2010; Wijewardena et al., 2014).

1.1.2.4 Leadership Styles associated with Positive Leadership

Previous research on leadership focused on what leaders do, rather than on who they are (Cameron et al., 2003). Rowley, Hossain, and Barry (2010) suggest that behavioural theories of leadership state that effective leaders need to be task-oriented and relation-oriented. This means that leaders need to ensure that everyone does what they are supposed to be doing in order to get the work done, and that leaders need to develop trust and positive relationships with their followers (Cameron et al., 2003).

According to Youssef-Morgan and Luthans (2013), positive leadership draws from many existing leadership theories. A popular theory of leadership is that of a transformational leadership, which implies that transformational leaders inspire employees to trust them, to do things that contribute to the achievement of organisational goals, and to perform at a high level (Cravford et al., 2006).

Youssef-Morgan and Luthans (2013) argue that although most leadership theories emerging from previous research are positively oriented, none of them provides a specific definition for positive leadership. However, the general positive approach towards leadership was adopted by several scholars and produced numerous studies on different types of positive leadership, namely transformational leadership (Bass, 1999; Braun, Pies, Weisweiler, & Frey, 2013; Munir, Rahman, Malik, & Ma'Amor, 2012; Tsai, 2011; Weberg, 2010); charismatic leadership (Conger & Kanungo, 1994; Glynn & Dowd, 2008; Haney, 2012); authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004; Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008); empowering leadership (Albrecht & Andreetta, 2011; Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow, 2000; Hakimi, Van Knippenberg, & Giessner, 2010; Konczak, Stelly, & Trusty, 2000); spiritual leadership (Panday & Gupta, 2008); and servant leadership (Russel & Stone, 2002; Van Dierendonck, 2011).

These different types of positive leadership share similarities such as concern for others, integrity and role modelling (Brown & Trevino, 2006; Donaldson, Czikszentmihalyi, & Nakamura, 2011). In addition, Lis (2015) mentions that “the concept of positive leadership seems to be inconsistent with the military context which is traditionally associated with the authoritarian

leadership style” (p. 53). From the abovementioned, it is clear that the concept of positive leadership is still somewhat ambiguous and fragmented and that it has thus far eluded any attempts at singular or integrated conceptualisations. As far as could be determined, no review studies have been conducted on the conceptualisation of positive leadership, which is the reason why this study is important.

Based on the problem statement and the information provided above, the following research questions emerged:

- How is positive leadership defined, described, and conceptualised in the literature?
- What would an integrated definition of positive leadership look like?

The following research objectives were set in order to address the aforementioned research questions.

1.2 Research Objectives

The research objectives were divided into general and specific objectives.

1.2.1 General Objective

The general objective of this critical review was to investigate conceptualisations of positive leadership with the aim of formulating an integrated definition of positive leadership.

1.2.2 Specific Objectives

- To identify, compare, contrast and summarise conceptualisations of positive leadership in the literature, and to identify common underlying themes by means of a critical literature review.
- To develop an integrated definition of positive leadership based on the common underlying themes identified from the literature review.

The researcher aimed this review on positive leadership primarily in the work context.

1.3 Expected Contributions to Industrial/Organisational Literature and Organisations

The results of this study hopefully brought clarity with regards to the conceptualisation of positive leadership. An integrated definition of positive leadership is proposed, the lack of which is currently a limitation in the existing literature. The study contributed to the conceptual understanding of positive leadership, and highlighted positive leadership behaviours that can be developed in leaders. The development of an integrated definition of positive leadership hopefully provided the basis for a clearer operationalisation, which in turn paves the way for an equally clearer and more consistent empirical measurement of this construct, which would render findings from different studies more comparable than they currently are.

1.4 Research Method

This section outlines the research design that formed the basis of the study.

1.4.1 Research Design

The purpose of this study was to critically analyse the different conceptualisations and definitions of positive leadership and to propose an integrated definition of the term. In order to achieve this aim, the research method involved a critical review. According to Grant and Booth (2009), a critical review “seeks to identify conceptual contribution to embody existing or derive new theory” (p. 94). According to Terre Blanche, Durrheim, and Painter (2006), a research design is a plan of action that serves as the link between the proposed research questions and the implementation of the research. In order to achieve the proposed research aims within the context of the proposed study, critical literature review was deemed appropriate.

This study strives to demonstrate awareness and transparency in the research process by clearly stating the review protocol that was followed; which also makes it possible for this study to be replicated. Data was collected by means of a critical review; which can be used to evaluate existing theories and to operationalise concepts with a view to informing future studies (Carnwell & Daly, 2001). According to Grant and Booth (2009), a critical review often results in a hypothesis or a model, while Neumann (1997) adds that “a literature review is based on the

assumption that knowledge accumulates and that we construct on the work and research of others” (p. 88).

The current study explored the conceptualisations of positive leadership and proposed an integrated definition of positive leadership that was achieved through a qualitative examination of the themes that emerged from literature. According to Riessman (1993), questionnaires, surveys and quantitative analyses are not sufficient to capture the complexity of meanings and themes.

The aim of this study was achieved by means of a critical review, because it goes beyond merely describing the articles identified in the literature; in fact, a critical review includes a degree of analysis and conceptual innovation (Grant & Booth, 2009). The researcher presented, analysed and synthesised literature on positive leadership from diverse sources. According to Grant and Booth (2009), “under normal circumstances, conceptual innovation develops through a process of evolution or accretion, with each successive version adding to its predecessors” (p. 93). After the researcher reviewed existing literature on how positive leadership is conceptualised, she evaluated what is of value from previous descriptions of positive leadership and compiled an integrated definition of positive leadership by using themes identified in the existing literature.

The disadvantage of a critical review is that it is not systematic in nature (Grant & Booth, 2009); however, this was addressed by following a systematic review protocol as proposed by Centre for Reviews and Dissemination (CRD, 2009), and outlining the steps that were followed during the review.

1.5 Research Procedure / Review Protocol

The research procedure and data collection process give an insight into how the researcher went about collecting and analysing data (Watkins, 2006). A rigorous critical review was conducted in order to identify and synthesise literature on conceptualisations of positive leadership.

References were sourced and the critical review was conducted through following a review protocol that outlined a set of inclusion/exclusion criteria to identify and select relevant sources.

The identified conceptualisations, definitions, descriptions, behaviours and characteristics were subject to thematic analysis. Both qualitative and quantitative data (peer-reviewed articles) on positive leadership were considered in order to ensure that the review is comprehensive. Positive psychology was used as the framework to study the world of work and organisations in a positive manner. The critical review was carried out following the review protocol proposed by CRD (2009), which are outlined below.

1.5.1 Inclusion Criteria

In order to avoid selection bias, a thorough and rigorous search was conducted on published peer-reviewed data of positive leadership. The inclusion criteria for this study were the following: (a) Articles with a focus on positive leadership that were published between 1998 and 2016, as well as any seminal works published before this time frame (i.e. temporal position); (b) National and international studies (i.e. population of interest); (c) Articles written in English (i.e. publication language); (d) Peer-reviewed quantitative and qualitative studies (i.e. types of studies); (e) Psychology and business journal databases (as listed below) (i.e. sources of data); and (f) “Positive leadership” as a search term. These criteria are discussed in more detail below.

1.5.1.1 Temporal Position

The first inclusion criterion for reference screening was published literature of the last 18 years, from 1998 to 2016. The reason for selecting data from 1998 is that positive psychology (the framework for this study) emerged in 1998 (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000) when psychologists started adopting the belief that it was time to move away from focusing on pathology and illness, and instead, to focus on strengths, excellence, flourishing and optimal functioning of individuals in organisations (Donaldson & Ko, 2010).

1.5.1.2 Population of Interest

The critical review included national and international studies, as positive leadership is used in both national and international organisations and positive psychology has been researched both internationally and in South Africa (Donaldson & Ko, 2010).

1.5.1.3 Publication Language

Articles published in English were included, because English is the primary academic language. Where English abstracts of articles published in other languages were available, these were considered for potential inclusion.

1.5.1.4 Types of Studies

Both quantitative and qualitative studies that had been peer-reviewed were included in this critical review. The reason for focusing on peer-reviewed studies is that the published studies were all peer-reviewed by credible scholars in the field of positive leadership.

1.5.1.5 Sources of Data

The researcher searched data on the following journal databases: EBSCOhost, Emerald Insight Journals, Google Scholar, JSTOR, Sabinet Online, SAGE, ScienceDirect, and Web of Science.

1.5.1.6 Search Terms

A single search term, namely “positive leadership” was searched for in peer-reviewed journal articles. All articles that had positive leadership either in the title, abstract, keywords or body were provisionally included in this study. Thereafter the term “positive leadership” needed to be described, defined or conceptualised, for the study to be further considered for inclusion.

1.5.2 Exclusion Criteria

Studies that did not describe, define or conceptualise positive leadership were excluded. Studies that had been published before 1998 and were not regarded as seminal works were also excluded from this critical review. Furthermore, articles not written in English and articles not published in the above-mentioned journal databases were excluded from the review.

Below is the flow chart that was used as a sampling strategy whereby data included in this study was recorded and an audit trail was kept.

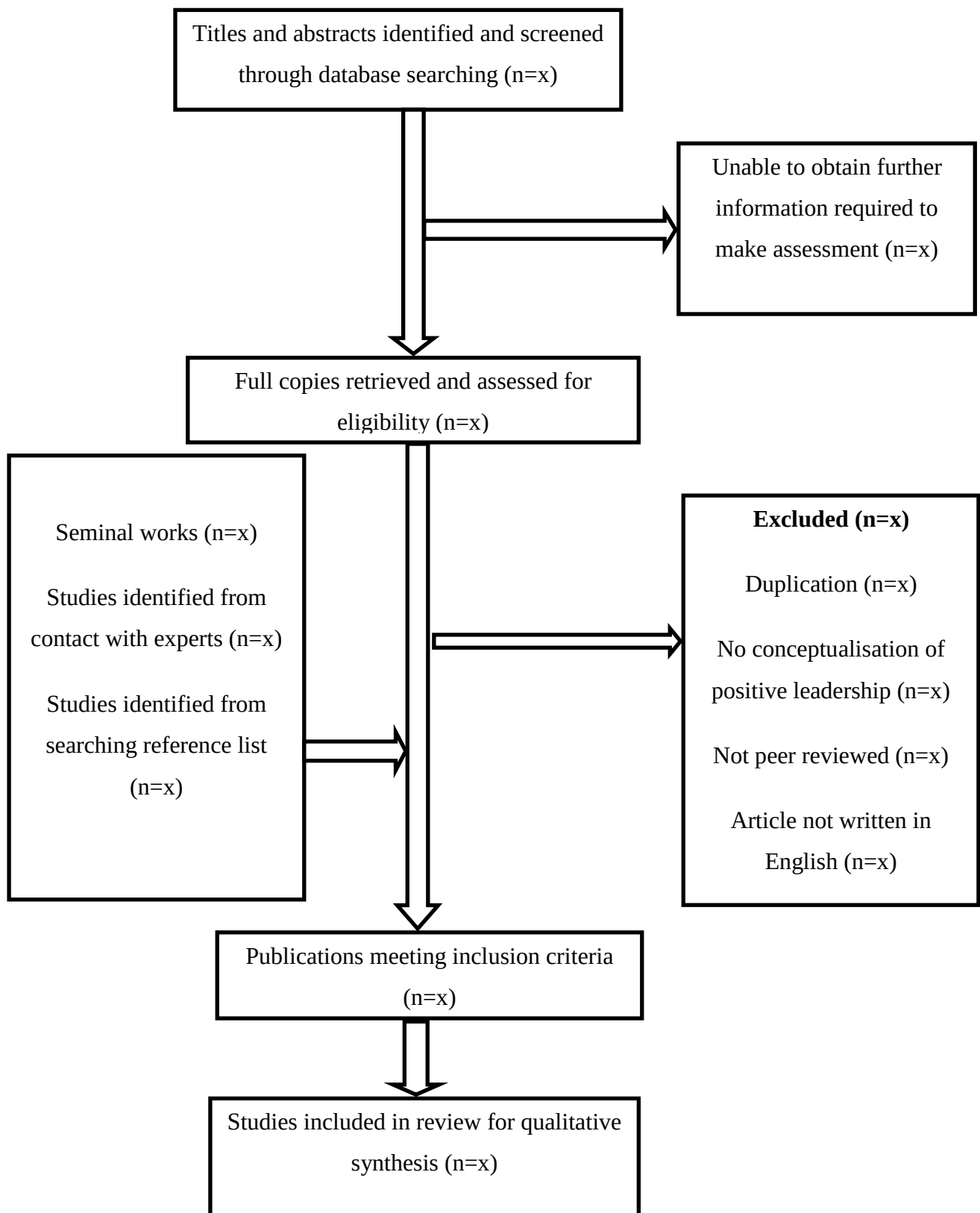


Figure 1. Flow chart of study selection process

1.5.3 Data Synthesis

The critical review was approached from what is available in scholarly literature on the topic of positive leadership. Total articles included in the review for qualitative synthesis were organised in a table that included the authors and title of the article as well as descriptions of positive leadership (refer to Appendix A). Summaries were made of the descriptions of positive leadership and these summaries were subsequently contrasted and analysed thematically.

The selected literature was read to gain insight into the views, viewpoints and current knowledge and conceptualisations regarding positive leadership. The collected data was subjected to thematic analysis in accordance with Braun and Clarke's (2006) definition of thematic analysis as a qualitative analytical method for identifying, analysing and reporting themes or patterns within the data.

Thematic analysis was appropriate for this study (Alhojailan, 2012) because the aim of the critical review was to analyse the themes that had been identified from the existing literature on definitions, characteristics, conceptualisations and descriptions of positive leadership, and to subsequently develop an integrated definition of positive leadership. The following phases were completed while conducting thematic analysis: (a) Becoming familiar with the data; (b) Generating initial codes; (c) Searching for themes; (d) Reviewing themes; (e) Defining and naming identified themes; (f) Reporting the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

According to Attride-Stirling (2001), it is important for researchers to state what they are doing, why, and how the data was analysed to ensure both transparency and the successful replication and evaluation of the study (Attride-Stirling, 2001; Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Braun and Clarke (2006) and Ruggunan (2014) suggested that a researcher has to immerse him/herself in the data and re-read it many times, in order to become familiar with it. As such, this was the first step that the researcher followed. Even though this was time consuming, once she became familiar with the data, ideas on possible codes to be used started to emerge. The next step involved generating codes in order to organise the data into meaningful groups (Javadi & Zarea, 2016; O'Connor & Gibson, 2003; Tuckett, 2005). During this stage the researcher worked

systematically and rigorously by giving attention to each definition and grouping similar elements according to certain codes. This means that she gave each element a code and later grouped together the elements with similar meaning. As is typically the case, this process was not straightforward and had to be done more than once. To ensure that the study could be replicated, the researcher reported on the exact process followed when coding and recording the identified elements of positive leadership.

After all the data had been coded, the researcher identified possible themes that could be used to group the codes together. At this stage, the researcher had identified overarching themes and sub-themes. The next stage involved reviewing these themes to see if any could be merged together and whether all the codes actually belonged to the themes that they were assigned to. If this was not the case, the researcher needed to create new themes in order to accommodate the remaining codes. Next, the researcher followed the suggestion by Braun and Clarke (2006) and Onwuegbuzie and Frels (2016), which is to define and name the themes by outlining the essence of each theme.

Lastly, the researcher wrote a report on the findings of the critical review and listed all the different authors' conceptualisations of positive leadership. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the findings of the analysis should "provide a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive, and interesting account of the story the data tell within and across themes" (p. 23). After the critical analysis and insight had been obtained (as discussed in the previous paragraph), an integrated definition of positive leadership was proposed.

1.6 Trustworthiness

The principles that were used to increase the study's validity and to ensure trustworthiness were: providing an audit trail, providing a thick description of the analysis and themes, and the use of peer debriefing and peer examination (Anney, 2014). The aim of this research report was to present a clear and coherent research process by providing an audit-trail to present the theoretical rigor of the study.

According to Anney (2014), thick description involves the researcher clearly describing research processes that include the research question, design and method, data collection, data analysis procedures and how the findings were interpreted. By providing a thick description of the research processes employed, the replicability of the study is enhanced.

The researcher made use of peer debriefing and peer examination to improve the quality of the review interpretations and findings (Anney, 2014). During the peer debriefing and peer examination sessions the researcher's way of thinking was challenged, and alternative approaches were proposed, taking the provided thick description into consideration.

1.7 Ethical Considerations

Ethics is concerned with what is considered acceptable in human behaviour (Naidoo, 2014) – i.e. what is wrong or right, good or bad in human conduct – in order to achieve goals and objectives. According to Levin and Buckett (2011), professional ethics is concerned with moral issues that arise due to the specialised knowledge that professionals obtain, and ways in which the use of this knowledge should be governed when providing a service to the public.

The professional activities of psychologists are controlled by law and various controlling bodies in South Africa. The Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA), through the Professional Board for Psychology, stipulates clear ethical guidelines for psychology professionals and for the publication of research findings (Bergh & Theron, 2005). The HPCSA - prescribed ethical guidelines were followed in this study, as discussed below:

1.7.1 Internal Review Boards

Prior to the commencement of the study, ethical approval was obtained from the Optentia Research committee. Thereafter, a critical review was conducted in a rigorous manner. The authors on existing literature on positive leadership were acknowledged and all references were made available to the reader in case there was a need for replication of this study at a later stage.

1.7.2 Protection from Harm and Right to Privacy

This study did not pose any risk or harm to any human subjects, because it was conducted through reviewing the existing published literature within the public domain. The results of the study were presented in an academic dissertation, as well as at the International Business Conference in Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, and may in time be submitted for publication in a peer-reviewed scientific journal.

1.8 Chapter Division

The chapters in this mini-dissertation are presented as follows:

Chapter 1: Research proposal and problem statement.

Chapter 2: Research article – A critical review of conceptualisations of positive leadership:
Towards an integrated definition.

Chapter 3: Conclusions, limitations and recommendations.

1.9 Chapter Summary

The purpose of this chapter was to describe the proposed study, which aimed at investigating the conceptualisation of positive leadership and proposing an integrated definition of positive leadership. The chapter also provided an introduction to the study, a statement of the research problem, objectives of this review, the review protocol followed in carrying out the study, the research design and ethical considerations. Chapter 1 concluded by presenting an outline of the chapters in the study.

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CHAPTER 2

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Critical review of conceptualisations of positive leadership: Towards an integrated definition

ABSTRACT

Objectives: The objective of this critical review was to identify and synthesise literature on conceptualisations, definitions, descriptions, behaviours, characteristics and principles of positive leadership; to provide an overview of these conceptualisations; and to formulate an integrated definition of positive leadership.

Inclusion criteria: This critical review considered both quantitative and qualitative articles published in English that contained conceptualisations, definitions, descriptions, behaviours, characteristics, or principles of positive leadership. Only national and international articles published between 1998 and 2016 were considered in this study.

Exclusion criteria: Studies that did not conceptualise, define or describe positive leadership, and were not written in English, were excluded. Studies that are older than 1998 and not regarded as seminal works were also excluded from this critical review. Articles that were not published in the journal databases mentioned below were excluded as well.

Search strategy: The search strategy sought to find published peer-reviewed literature on conceptualisations of positive leadership. Literature was identified via comprehensive searches on the following databases: EBSCOhost, Emerald Insight Journals, JSTOR, Sabinet Online, SAGE, ScienceDirect, Google Scholar and Web of Science. Articles containing the word “positive leadership” were sourced and then later assessed if they met the inclusion criteria.

Methodological quality: Each article was assessed by the reviewer prior to its inclusion and subsequently recorded in the flow chart of the study selection process.

Results: A total of 21 peer-reviewed papers of an experimental, qualitative, quantitative or textual nature as well as one textbook, were included in this review. Due to the diverse nature of these papers and the aim of the review, which was to propose an integrated definition, this

section of the review was presented in a narrative form. Thematic analysis was employed in analysing the data. Optimism and a 'can-do' mind-set, altruism, ethical orientation, creating a positive work environment, building positive relationships, being results driven, engaging in positive communication, enhanced follower well-being, increased individual and organisational performance and organisational citizenship behaviour, are the identified key themes.

Key words: Critical review, Leadership, Positive leadership, Positive leadership behaviours, Thematic analysis.

INTRODUCTION

Leaders are feeling challenged and overwhelmed in organisations due to the constantly changing world of work which is characterised by volatility, uncertainty, complexity and ambiguity (Rodriguez & Rodriguez, 2015; Youssef-Morgan & Luthans, 2013). Similarly, Luthans and Avolio (2003) report that leaders in organisations are facing the challenge of declining hope, optimism and confidence in themselves and their followers, due to the constantly advancing technology, globalisation, and uncertain economic climate (Basson, 2008; Gallup, 2017; Meyer, 2007) that calls for positive leadership. Additionally, Rodriguez and Rodriguez (2015) argue that leaders in organisations have the duty of making sure that their followers find meaning, are engaged, and feel safe at work.

According to Gauthier (2015), leaders influence the behaviours of their followers and the environment in which they work, be it in a negative or positive manner. The behaviour of the leader has an impact on the followers' well-being and levels of stress (Skakon, Nielsen, Borg, & Guzman, 2010; Wijewardena, Samaratunge, & Härtel, 2014), and in particular, positive leadership behaviours such as support and ethical behaviour were shown to have a positive effect on employee well-being (Wijewardena et al., 2014). Positive leaders focus on positively influencing their followers and encouraging them to flourish in their work (Gauthier, 2015). Positive leadership was born when researchers started to apply the elements of positive psychology to leadership (Gauthier, 2015).

Positive leaders should portray leadership behaviours such as empowerment (Gilbreath & Benson, 2004), communication, motivation and keeping their followers accountable (Wijewardena et al., 2014). In addition, emotional intelligence and optimism are identified by Tombaugh (2005) as the leadership traits that leaders can develop to enable them to deal with the constantly changing world of work, and subsequently to keep their followers motivated at all times. Positive leadership is needed in the development of positive organisations that focus on strengths-based approaches. Further emphasising the importance of positive leadership, Clifton and Harter (2003) report that top-performing managers focus their energies on developing their followers' strengths. Leaders who employ strategies to develop and utilise follower's strengths have the potential to improve follower productivity (Gallup, 2017). According to Tombaugh

(2005), managers who are interested in developing positive leadership skills need to study the literature available on the subject. At the same time, Gladis (2013) and Zbierowski (2016) point out that little research has been done in the field of positive leadership, because the concept is relatively new.

Not only is the concept of positive leadership relatively new, but the current existing conceptualisations differs a lot (Arakawa & Greenberg, 2007; Avey, Avolio, & Luthans, 2011; Avey, Hughes, Norman, & Luthans, 2008; Blanch, Gil, Antino, & Rodríguez-Muñoz, 2016; Cameron, 2008; Kelloway, Weigand, McKee, & Das, 2013; Youssef-Morgan & Luthans, 2013) which makes it difficult to measure (Antino, Gil-Rodríguez, Rodríguez-Muñoz, & Borzillo, 2014), study and develop positive leadership (Blanch et al., 2016).

A need arise to study the current differing conceptualisations of positive leadership and to formulate an integrated definition of positive leadership, which will be used as a basis to measure, study and develop positive leadership.

Literature Review

Positive Psychology

Although positive psychology was first introduced by Abraham Maslow in 1954 (Snyder & Lopez, 2009), it only gained popularity 44 years later, when it was reintroduced by Martin Seligman at the 1998 American Psychological Association convention (Donaldson & Ko, 2010). Psychology used to focus on illness, weaknesses and flaws ever since World War II (Seligman, 2002) and it was concerned mainly with finding ways and tools to heal illnesses; the focus was never on the positives and how to enhance human potential.

As a result, a perception was created that psychology only focuses on human pathology (Seligman, 2002). Before positive psychology was introduced, researchers felt that there was a lack of information regarding how and what would “make life worth living” (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000, p. 5). Furthermore, as much as psychology made it possible to understand what is wrong with individuals and how to fix it, there was a need to understand what

is right with individuals (Gable & Haidt, 2005) and how to optimise it – which is the main focus of positive psychology. Over time, this positive approach towards human behaviour spilled over to the workplace.

Positive Organisational Scholarship

Positive psychology is “the study of the conditions and processes that contribute to the flourishing or optimal functioning of people, groups, and institutions” (Gable & Haidt, 2005, p. 103), whereas positive organisational scholarship is concerned with the study of positive outcomes, processes and attributes of organisations and their followers (Cameron, Dutton, & Quinn, 2003). Positive organisational scholarship focuses on enhancing and utilising human strengths in order for employees to prosper and thrive in their organisations, rather than focusing on what is wrong (Zbierowski, 2016). In order to ensure the success of organisations, today’s leaders need to focus on what works for the organisation, to identify and recognise followers’ strengths, and to find ways of continuously empowering their followers. Collectively, such behaviours are seen as representing positive leadership (Arakawa & Greenberg, 2007; Blanch et al., 2016; Gilbreath & Benson, 2004; Wong & Cummings, 2007).

Positive Leadership

Positive leadership has become a focal point for studying leadership in organisations (Blanch et al., 2016). From the 1990s, organisations have been moving towards leaders who have the ability to build positive working relationships among team members, leaders who are true to themselves, and leaders who are positive (Härtel, Kimberley, & McKeown, 2008).

The results of the study conducted by Arakawa and Greenberg (2007) have shown that leaders who possess positive leadership behaviours such as focusing on the strengths of their followers, staying positive in the face of difficulty, and frequently recognising the good work of their followers, contribute to the success of the organisation as a whole. In addition, Youssef-Morgan and Luthans (2013) allude that positive leadership is crucial in organisations, particularly in trying times, and based on their study they report that high management performance (in terms of decision making and interpersonal tasks) are associated with high levels of positive affect.

To further emphasise the importance of positive leadership, Nel, Stander, and Latif (2015) reported that positive leadership has a significant positive relationship with psychological empowerment, which means that employees appreciated leaders who encouraged them and who focused on their strengths during trying times.

Even though it is noted that positive leadership is important and needed in organisations, it is clear from the literature that positive leadership is still not defined in a consistent and clear manner – regardless of the effect that positive leadership has on employees and organisations (Arakawa & Greenberg, 2007; Kelloway et al., 2013; Youssef & Luthans, 2012) and the numerous studies done on positive leadership (Arakawa & Greenberg, 2007; Cameron, 2008; Cameron, 2013; Dutton & Spreitzer, 2014; Härtel et al., 2008; Kelloway et al., 2013; Nel et al., 2015; Salmi, Perttula, & Syväjärvi, 2014; Wijewardena et al., 2014; Youssef-Morgan & Luthans, 2013; Zbierowski & Góra, 2014).

Positive leadership has been defined in different ways since its emergence and no single integrated definition or conceptualisation exists (Avey et al., 2011; Avey et al., 2008; Kelloway et al., 2013; Youssef-Morgan & Luthans, 2013). Furthermore, Antino et al. (2014) argue that although positive leadership has been widely researched, there is still a lack of relevant contributions relating to how to measure positive leadership. In contrast, Zbierowski (2016) argues that there is a lack of literature in the field of positive leadership and the field is “characterised by high degree of complexity and disorder” (p. 81). Blanch et al. (2016) also suggest that there is a “need to generate research that determines how to accelerate the emergence and development of positive leadership” (p. 173).

Notably there is still confusion around the conceptualisation of positive leadership. Against this background, this critical review is important as it aims to address the identified gap and conceptualise positive leadership within the time frame of 1998 to 2016, with the intention of formulating an integrated definition. Subsequently, the proposed integrated definition will make it possible to investigate ways in which positive leadership can be measured and developed in the future.

CRITICAL REVIEW PROTOCOL

Objectives

The overall objective of this critical review was to investigate conceptualisations, definitions, descriptions, behaviours, characteristics and principles of positive leadership with the aim of formulating an integrated definition of positive leadership.

The review specifically sought to:

- Identify, compare, contrast, and summarise conceptualisations of positive leadership in the literature, and identify common underlying themes by means of a critical literature review.
- Develop an integrated definition of positive leadership based on the common underlying themes identified from the literature review.

Inclusion Criteria

A thorough and rigorous search was conducted on published and peer-reviewed data of conceptualisations of positive leadership, and care was taken to ensure that selection bias was avoided during this process. Articles and chapters in specialist books were eligible for inclusion if they were (a) peer-reviewed with a focus on positive leadership published between 1998 and 2016, as well as any seminal works published before the stated time frame; (b) national and/or international studies; (c) articles written in English; (d) peer-reviewed quantitative and qualitative studies; (e) contained in psychology and business journal databases as listed below; and (f) retrievable via the key search term of “positive leadership”. The inclusion criteria are discussed in greater detail in the following sections:

Temporal Position

The inclusion criteria for reference screening limited the search to literature published between 1998 and 2016. The reason for selecting data from 1998 was that positive psychology, which

emerged in 1998 (Seligman & Csikszentmihalyi, 2000), was used as the framework for this study.

Population of Interest

Positive psychology and positive leadership were researched locally and abroad (Donaldson & Ko, 2010), therefore the critical review included both national and international studies. This review was important because it helped with the conceptualisation of positive leadership. Youssef-Morgan and Luthans (2013) also stated that regardless of numerous national and international studies on positive leadership, the conceptualisation of positive leadership still remains unclear and ambiguous.

Publication Language

Since English is the primary academic language, articles published in English were included in the review. Articles published in other languages but with English abstracts were considered for potential inclusion.

Types of Studies

Quantitative and qualitative peer-reviewed articles on positive leadership were considered in order to ensure that the review is comprehensive. Peer-review ensured that the published studies were reviewed by credible scholars in the field of positive leadership.

Search Terms

“Positive leadership” was the key search term utilised to search for peer-reviewed journal articles. Articles that had “positive leadership” in the title, abstract or body were provisionally included in the study. Thereafter, the term “positive leadership” also had to either be described, defined, characterised or conceptualised, for the study to be further considered for inclusion.

Exclusion Criteria

Articles that did not contain descriptions, definitions, conceptualisations, behaviours, characteristics, or principles of positive leadership, were excluded. Articles that had been published prior to 1998, and were not seminal works, were also excluded. Finally, articles not written in English and not published in the identified journal databases were excluded from this critical review.

Search Strategy

The search strategy sought to find published and peer-reviewed articles on positive leadership in the following journal databases:

- EBSCOhost (1998 to December 2016)
- Emerald Insight Journals (1998 to December 2016)
- Google Scholar (1998 to December 2016)
- JSTOR (1998 to December 2016)
- Sabinet Online (1998 to December 2016)
- SAGE (1998 to December 2016)
- ScienceDirect (1998 to December 2016)
- Web of Science (1998 to December 2016)

The word “positive leadership” was used as a keyword to search for relevant articles in these databases. In addition to the data that was identified through these databases, the reference lists of the articles that met the inclusion criteria were screened to see whether any of the sources referenced also met the inclusion criteria for this study. All articles that were identified through the databases were assessed for relevance in the study. Firstly, the researcher excluded all the results that did not provide enough information to make a further assessment. Thereafter, the researcher looked for any duplications and excluded such articles. Full copies of the data that met the inclusion criteria were retrieved and assessed for eligibility. Further selection was made based on the exclusion criteria outlined previously.

All the articles that met the inclusion criteria were again assessed for relevance and applicability to the study. For these articles, the researcher used the 'search' function to find the word "positive leadership" and scanned through the articles to see whether positive leadership was either described, defined, or conceptualised. This was due to the fact that the term "positive leadership" was often not contained in the title, abstract or keywords, but was defined, described or conceptualised in the body of the article.

RESULTS

Study Selection

Eight databases were used for identifying relevant papers, and the search covered the time period between January 1998 and December 2016. The search resulted in 1108 articles. Of this number, 120 studies were excluded because no further information could be obtained. This resulted in 988 studies to be assessed for eligibility, of which 941 were removed for either being duplicates, not written in English or not having been peer reviewed. Only 47 were found to be eligible for inclusion and assessment based on the conceptualisation of positive leadership, and one textbook by Cameron (2008) was regarded as a seminal work. The one textbook and 47 articles that met the inclusion criteria were critically appraised and, in order to reach the final number of articles, the researcher critically asked three questions when assessing and reading each article: (a) "Will positive leadership be a focal point in this article if it is not included either in the title, abstract or keywords?", (b) "Does the article study positive leadership in the work context?" and (c) "Does the article conceptualise, define, describe, highlight behaviours, characteristics and principles of positive leadership?".

Eventually, only 21 articles and one textbook were found to be eligible for qualitative synthesis. The flow chart outlined below reflects the sampling strategy that was followed and serves as an audit trail to record the articles retrieved.

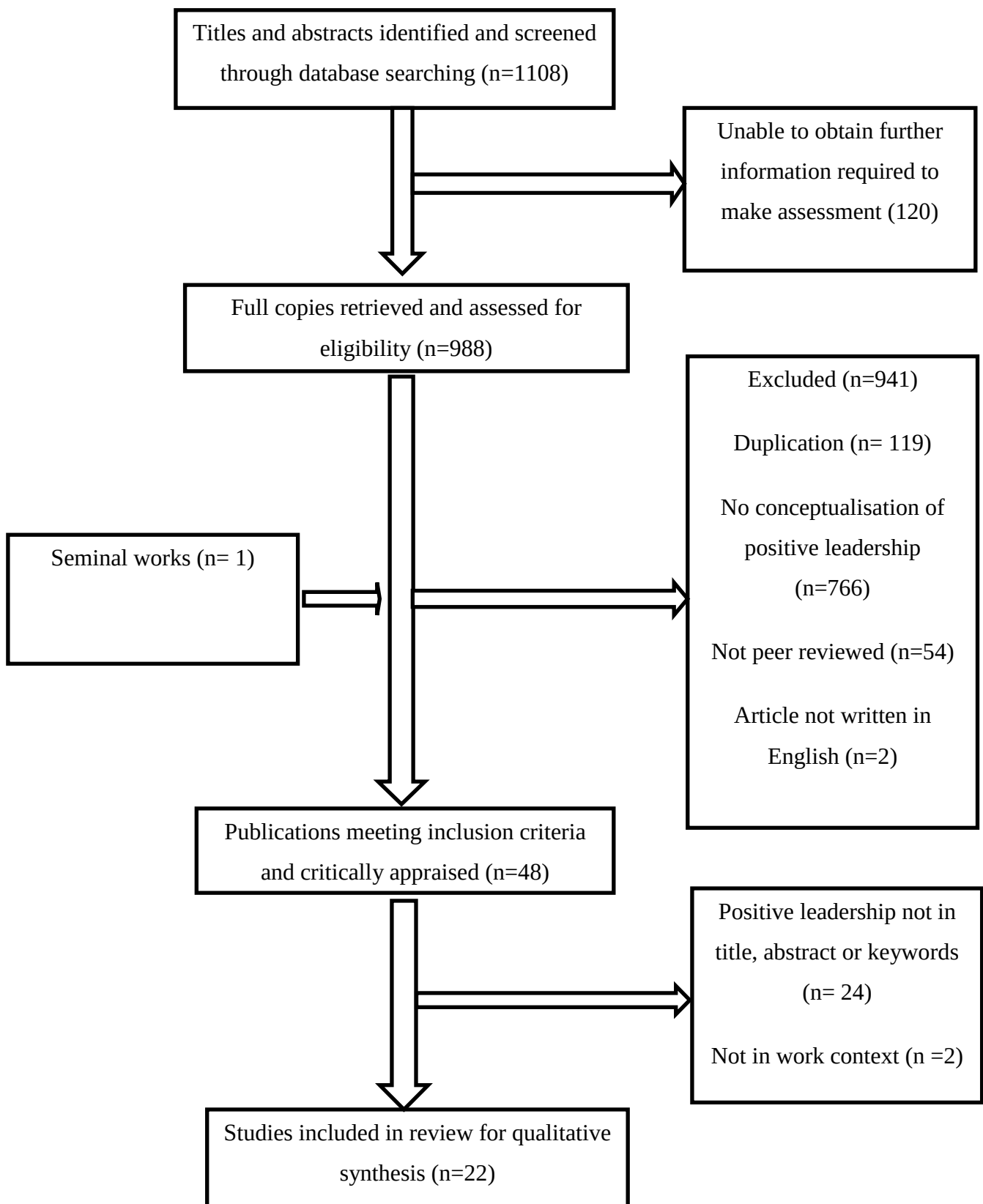


Figure 2. Flow chart of study selection process

The critical review was approached from what is available in the literature and the work that has been done on positive leadership. The total of 21 articles and one textbook that were eligible for full review and qualitative analysis, were organised in a table that included the authors and title of the article as well as descriptions of positive leadership (refer to Appendix A). Summaries of descriptions of positive leadership were made before being contrasted and analysed thematically.

The selected literature was read to gain insight into the views, viewpoints and current knowledge and conceptualisations of positive leadership. In line with Braun and Clarke's (2006) definition of thematic analysis as a qualitative analytical method for identifying, analysing and reporting themes or patterns within the data, the collected data were subjected to thematic analysis.

Thematic analysis was appropriate for this study because the aim of the critical review was to analyse the themes that were identified from the existing literature on conceptualisations, definitions, characteristics and descriptions of positive leadership, and to develop an integrated definition of positive leadership. The phases for conducting a thematic analysis included the following: (a) becoming familiar with the data; (b) generating initial codes; (c) searching for themes; (d) reviewing themes; (e) defining and naming identified themes; (f) reporting the findings (Braun & Clarke, 2006). According to Attride-Stirling (2001), it is important for the researcher to be transparent at all times so as to ensure the replicability of the study, and as such these phases are briefly discussed next.

The researcher immersed herself in the data and re-read the data over and over again. As the researcher became familiar with the data, ideas on possible codes to be used emerged. The next step involved generating codes with the idea of organising the data into meaningful groups (Tuckett, 2005). During the coding stage, the researcher gave each segment of data a code and later grouped the elements with similar meaning together. However, as is typical in thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), this process was not a single linear one and was conducted in several iterations.

Once the data was coded, possible overarching themes and sub-themes were identified that were used to group the codes together. According to Braun and Clarke (2006), the next important stage involves reviewing the identified themes to see if any themes could be merged together and

whether all codes belonged to the themes to which they had been assigned. Once this was achieved by the researcher, the themes were named and defined by outlining the essence of each theme.

FINDINGS

As a prelude to discussing the main themes that emerged from the thematic analysis of existing conceptualisations of positive leadership, an overview is given below of a number of these definitions in order to illustrate the various ways in which this construct has been conceptualised in existing literature.

Lloyd and Atella (2000) suggest that the major elements comprised in a vision of positive leadership are “commitment, courage, dignity, healthy control, choice, decision, will to action, responsibility, freedom, challenge, personal meaning, authentic community, communication, activism, social support, and faith” (p. 156–157).

Fry and Matherly (2006) define positive leadership as “leadership that develops higher level, universal moral values and character, enhances follower meaning and connection and maximises both follower well-being and sustained performance excellence” (p. 11). Antino et al. (2014) agree and allude that positive leadership “focuses its actions on what is good and on encouraging human potentialities, motivations and capacities; it refers to the way leaders encourage outstanding performance by centring on virtue and eudemonism, which justifies what a person does if their goal is to attain happiness and positive leadership behaviour shows a bias towards the positive end” (p. 590). This means that positive leadership is concerned with excellent performance and improving followers’ sense of meaning.

Arakawa and Greenberg (2007) define positive leadership as “employing a strengths-based approach, maintaining a positive perspective, and frequently providing recognition and encouragement which increases the engagement and productivity of followers” (p. 2). Additionally, Robison (2007) is of the opinion that the role of the positive leader is not merely to focus on followers’ weaknesses, but rather to focus on followers’ strengths and find ways of leveraging these strengths to the benefit of the follower and the organisation at large. Hence,

positive leadership is seen as a process of focusing on the followers' strengths and recognising good work that will result in followers being more productive and engaged at work.

Cameron (2008) believes that positive leadership refers to “an emphasis on what elevates individuals and organisations (in addition to what challenges them), what goes right in organisations (in addition to what goes wrong), what is life-giving (in addition to what is problematic or life-depleting), what is experienced as good (in addition to what is objectionable), what is extraordinary (in addition to what is merely effective), and what is inspiring (in addition to what is difficult or arduous)” (p. 3–4). In this case, positive leadership is described as a process of considering the good and the bad in individuals as well as in the organisations.

Hannah, Woolfolk, and Lord (2009) define positive leadership as “the activation of a set of cognitions, affects, expectancies, goals and values, and self-regulatory plans that both enable and direct effective leader behaviours” (p. 270). Hannah et al. (2009) further argue that positive leadership is a self-regulatory process that focuses on a leader's self-construct – something that will later benefit both the leader and the follower.

Smith, Koppes Bryan, and Vodanovich (2012) define positive leadership as “either transformational or authentic leadership” (p. 176) and remark that “positive leadership features motivational and ethical characteristics and behaviours of leaders that result in positive follower outcomes and increased performance” (Smith et al., 2012, p. 175). From this definition one can highlight that according to Smith et al. (2012), positive leadership is conflated with either transformational or authentic leadership.

Youssef and Luthans (2012) define positive global leadership by taking into account the antecedents and outcomes of positivity as “the systematic and integrated manifestation of leadership traits, processes, intentional behaviours and performance outcomes that are elevating, exceptional and affirmative of the strengths, capabilities and developmental potential of leaders, their followers and their organisations over time and across contexts” (p. 541). One can argue that even though this definition might seem comprehensive, it still lacks some aspects that might explain positive leadership, such as enhancing positive emotions, and recognising and encouraging good work.

Kelloway et al. (2013) define positive leadership as “leadership behaviours that result in followers’ experiencing positive emotions” (p. 108). This definition only focuses on the behaviours of the leader and how they should affect the followers’ positive emotions.

De Cremer, Van Dijke, and Bos (2004) argue that “positive leadership styles like self-sacrifice will have a stronger impact on followers’ attitudes and judgments when organisational outcomes are perceived and experienced as unfavourable or more negative” (p. 466). In particular, here the emphasis is on the positive leader’s ability to sacrifice his own needs to ensure the success of the organisation.

Tombaugh (2005) alludes that “positive leaders must move beyond worn out military models or fictional characters, developing new skills and traits that support a strengths-based organisational culture” (p. 16). Additionally, Blanch et al. (2016) conceptualise positive leadership into three components, namely “(1) it places the focus on people’s strengths and abilities that reaffirm their human potential, (2) it emphasizes results and facilitates above average individual and organisational performance, and (3) its field of action is concentrated on the components that can be seen as essential virtues of the human condition” (p. 173). It can be noted that the emphasis in this definition is on adopting a strengths-based approach whereby positive leaders should create a culture where followers’ strengths will be continuously developed and utilised, leading to improved performance.

According to Wong and Cummings (2007), “positive leadership behaviours (transformational, empowering, and supportive) may be associated with outcomes through facilitation of more effective teamwork” (p. 517). Furthermore, Wijewardena et al. (2014), in their study of creating better followers through positive leadership behaviour in the public sector, examined “two positive leadership behaviours, namely, support and ethical behaviour and their impact in aiding followers experience positive emotions and increasing social well-being, organisational citizenship behaviour, and individual and organisational performance” (p. 290). This means that positive leaders will be able to achieve organisational goals through empowering and supporting their followers.

“Positive leadership emphasises the need for positive climate, positive relationships, positive communication and positive meaning” (Oades, Crowe, & Nguyen, 2009, p. 34).

Positive leadership is a relatively new approach to leadership and positive leadership it is based on the concept that workers are happier and more productive when they work in a positive environment. Positive leadership is an approach where the leader uses positive strategies within five major areas to influence his/her followers to achieve the goals and objectives of the organisation. The five dimensions that surround and influence the organisation include (a) building a positive structure, (b) operating with a positive purpose, (c) establishing a positive climate, (d) developing positive relationships, and (e) engaging in positive communications. Positive leadership is more than just a leadership style; it is a leadership approach, it is a mind-set. Positive leaders have high expectations for their followers, the quality of their products, and the quality of their customer service. They just approach their expectations with a positive, can do, attitude (Gauthier, 2015, p. 7).

Liu, Siu, and Shi (2010) argue that “positive leadership, which comprises positive attitudes of passion, skills, and confidence to inspire followers, has the potential to elevate followers in the long term in areas such as trust, commitment, and well-being” (p. 456). This means that organisations that employ positive leaders will witness increased levels of follower trust, follower commitment and follower well-being.

In their article, James, Wooten, and Dushek (2011) loosely characterised positive leadership “as abnormally positive behaviour relative to that would be expected for the crisis circumstances” (p. 459).

Positive leadership means entrepreneurial mind-set of managers who are entrepreneurially alert – monitor the environment searching for opportunities, recognize them and utilize them even where competitors perceive threats; leadership based on trust between managers and followers; fair management that creates the perception of justice among followers in terms of following clear rules of appraisal, salaries and promotions; and lastly looking into the future with hope and optimism (Zbierowski, 2014, p. 59).

In the above case, positive leadership focuses on hope, optimism, trust relationship and fairness. In contrast, Lam and Roussin (2015) argue that

...effective positive leadership is not unerringly optimistic in all moments and in all things. Instead, it is a responsibility to create a positive work environment for everyone working in your company. This means that managers have to not only keep their people happy, but also eliminate the negative, which can be the wrong people, the wrong process, the wrong equipment, or other processes that should be eliminated. In the elimination of this negative, sometimes critical (or focused-negative) behaviours are required of the positive leader (p. 29).

According to Davenport, Allisey, Page, LaMontagne, and Reavley (2016), “positive leadership styles consist of managers making an effort to involve followers in problem solving and decision making, and managers aiming to provide negative feedback in a positive way ensuring that the follower feels validated by using statements that emphasise flexible, two-way problem solving” (p. 420). This implies that positive leaders should involve followers in decision-making and problem-solving processes.

Categories and Themes

Various categories and themes that emerged from the thematic analysis of the above conceptualisations of positive leadership found in the literature, as well as the inter-relationships between these themes, are visually depicted in Figure 3 below.

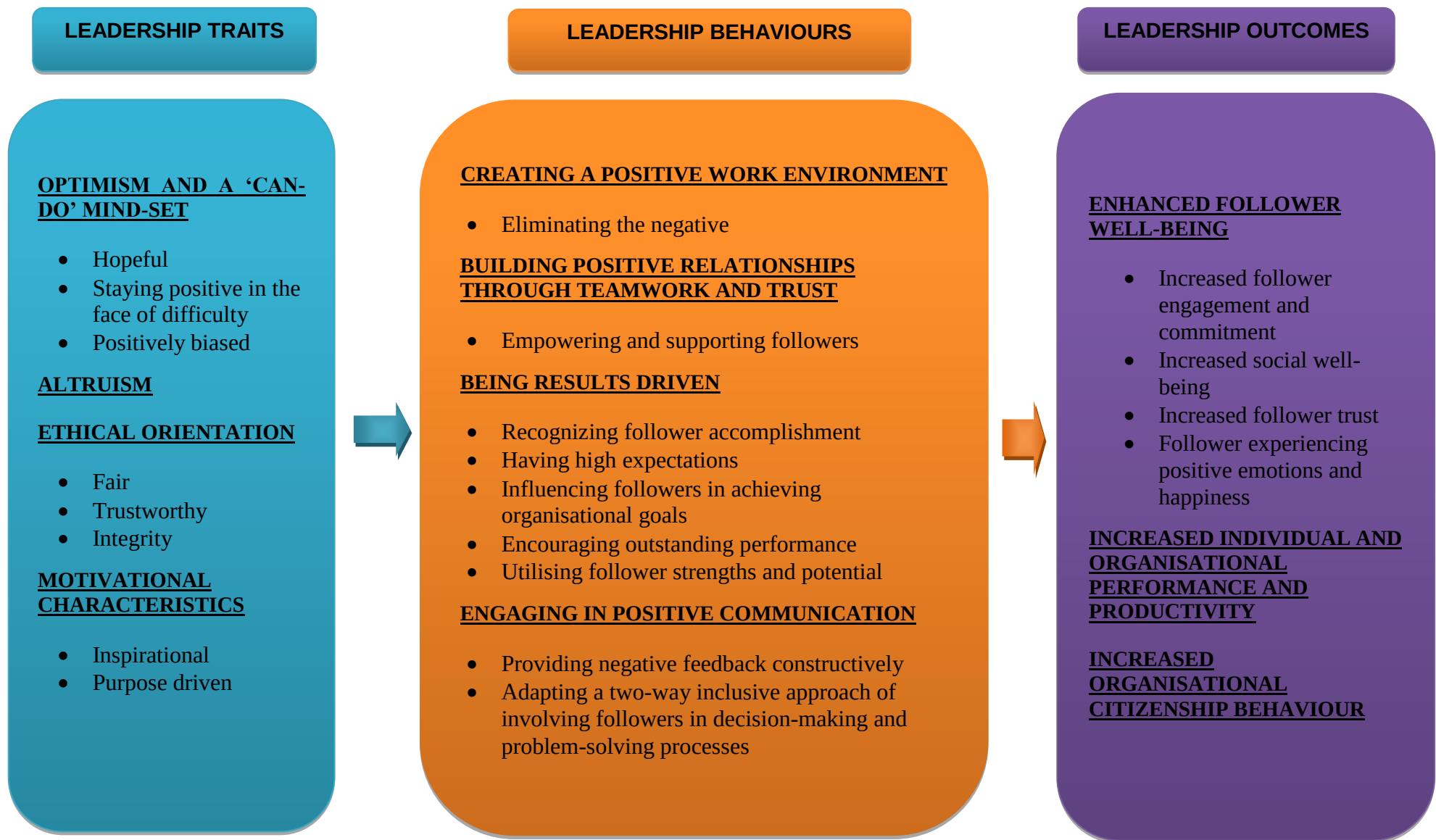


Figure 3. Categories and themes of positive leadership

As reflected in Figure 3, thematic analysis of existing definitions of positive leadership suggests that this construct can be conceptualised in terms of certain leadership *traits* that the positive leader should possess, as well as certain leadership *behaviours* demonstrated by the leader, which will result in certain leadership *outcomes*. In turn, such leadership outcomes will then benefit the followers, the leader, and the organisation as a whole. The relevant categories and themes are discussed in greater detail below.

Leadership Traits

Thematic analysis of existing definitions indicates that positive leadership is associated with specific leadership traits, which include optimism and a ‘can-do’ mind-set, altruism, an ethical orientation, and motivational characteristics.

Optimism and a ‘can do’ Mind-set

Research has shown that positive leaders who are optimistic (Lam & Roussin, 2015; Zbierowski, 2014) and hopeful about the future (Zbierowski, 2014) have a positive impact on leadership outcomes, such as increased follower engagement and increased follower productivity (Arakawa & Greenberg, 2007). According to the literature, a positive leader must have a ‘can-do’ mind-set (Gauthier, 2015), which means that a positive leader should generally have a positive attitude and be able to stay positive in the face of difficulty (Arakawa & Greenberg, 2007).

Altruism

Not only should a positive leader be optimistic, but he/she should also be able to put the needs of others before his/her own to ensure that the organisational goals are achieved. According to De Cremer et al. (2004), a positive leader is able to make self-sacrifices, and such a leader (compared to self-benefiting leaders) has been reported to be more effective in motivating followers. Choi and Mai-Dalton (1998) agree and propose that self-sacrifice is related to followers' organisational citizenship behaviour.

Ethical Orientation

A positive leader should display ethical characteristics (Smith et al., 2012; Wijewardena et al., 2014) and has to be fair towards his/her followers (Zbierowski, 2014). A leader who is ethical and has integrity (Antino et al., 2014; Zbierowski, 2016), and who acts in a manner that is trustworthy and fair towards followers, will have a positive impact on leadership outcomes. For instance, his/her followers will experience positive emotions (Wijewardena et al., 2014), increased social well-being, increased organisational citizenship behaviour, and enhanced individual and organisational performance (Smith et al., 2012; Wijewardena et al., 2014).

Motivational Characteristics

A positive leader should not only function with a positive purpose (Gauthier, 2015) and meaning (Lloyd & Atella, 2000; Oades et al., 2009), but should also be able to motivate (Antino et al., 2014; Smith et al., 2012) and inspire his/her followers (Liu et al., 2010). A positive leader has

the ability to make followers feel appreciated and find meaning in their work. Positive leaders believe in their followers, they focus on positives rather than negatives, and they refrain from discouraging their followers. Such leaders will likely elicit a variety of positive emotions and other positive outcomes from followers, for instance increased performance (Smith et al., 2012).

Leadership Behaviours

Thematic analysis of conceptualisations of positive leadership indicates that it is associated with a number of positive leadership behaviours that may be categorised under three themes: creating a positive work environment, being results driven, and engaging in positive communication.

Creating a Positive Work Environment

A positive leader should strive towards creating a positive work environment in order to ensure that followers work in harmony, are able to achieve the organisational goals and feel empowered. Research has also shown that followers tend to be happier and more productive when they operate in a positive work environment (Gauthier, 2015). A positive leader is able to create a positive work environment by eliminating the negative, which may take the form of the wrong people, the wrong processes and/or the wrong equipment (Lam & Roussin, 2015). By eliminating the negative, the positive leader is able to focus on the positives and ensure that the working environment is conducive to all. A positive leader continuously builds positive structures (Gauthier, 2015) through appointing the right talent, sharing the organisational vision and goals, and focusing on organisational effectiveness.

Building Positive Relationships

A positive leader is regarded as a leader who can be trusted and is able to cultivate trust among his/her followers (Liu et al., 2010; Zbierowski, 2014). A positive leader also has the ability to develop positive relationships (Gauthier, 2015; Oades et al., 2009) through teamwork and trust (Liu et al., 2010; Zbierowski, 2014). A positive leader generally empowers (Wong & Cummings, 2007) and supports his/her followers (Lloyd & Atella, 2000; Wijewardena et al., 2014; Wong & Cummings, 2007) to increase organisational citizenship behaviour, social well-being, individual and organisational performance. All of this results in followers experiencing positive emotions (Wijewardena et al., 2014).

Being Results Driven

Positive leaders are “results driven” in that they encourage outstanding performance (Blanch et al., 2016; Wijewardena et al., 2014; Youssef & Luthans, 2012; Zbierowski, 2016). They also have high expectations of their followers (Gauthier, 2015; Hannah et al., 2009), and encourage them to achieve organisational goals (Gauthier, 2015; Hannah et al., 2009). A positive leader who pursues success, continuously boosts and develops followers’ strengths and potential, and generally recognises followers’ accomplishments (Antino et al., 2014; Arakawa & Greenberg, 2007; Blanch et al., 2016; Tombaugh, 2005; Youssef & Luthans, 2012) – thereby promoting increased follower engagement and productivity (Arakawa & Greenberg, 2007). It is important for leaders to be results driven because in this way they will encourage their followers to perform exceptionally and function optimally in the organisation.

Engaging in Positive Communications

Positive leaders engage in positive communication with their followers by showing appreciation for good work. They also take care to provide negative feedback constructively or in a positive manner (Davenport et al., 2016). They furthermore adopt a two-way inclusive communication approach in which they involve followers in the processes of decision making and problem solving (Davenport et al., 2016). Positive leaders generally communicate in an empowering and supportive manner (Cameron, 2008).

Leadership Outcomes

In the literature, positive leadership is associated with a number of leadership outcomes. The three main themes that emerged in this regard centre on follower well-being, increased organisational performance and productivity, and increased organisational citizenship behaviour.

Follower Well-being

Positive leaders, via their leadership traits and leadership behaviours, are reported to have an impact in terms of increased follower engagement (Arakawa & Greenberg, 2007), increased follower social well-being (Wijewardena et al., 2014), increased follower trust (Liu et al., 2010), and increased follower commitment (Liu et al., 2010; Lloyd & Atella, 2000). When followers regard their leaders as positive leaders, they experience positive emotions at work (Kelloway et al., 2013; Wijewardena et al., 2014). Lastly, positive leaders have the ability to keep their

followers happy (Gauthier, 2015). Thus, by appointing positive leaders, organisations contribute towards the overall follower well-being.

Increased Individual and Organisational Performance and Increased Productivity

Positive leadership traits such as optimism and a ‘can-do’ mind-set, motivational characteristics, and ethical orientation, have been reported to result in increased follower (individual and organisational) performance (Smith et al., 2012; Wijewardena et al., 2014), and increased productivity (Arakawa & Greenberg, 2007; Gauthier, 2015). Likewise, positive leadership behaviours such as being results driven and creating positive work environment also result in increased follower productivity (Arakawa & Greenberg, 2007; Gauthier, 2015) and increased (individual and organisational) performance (Smith et al., 2012; Wijewardena et al., 2014). This means that organisations that appoint positive leaders will witness an increase in follower productivity levels and follower performance levels.

Organisational Citizenship Behaviour

Research shows that positive leadership traits such as an ethical orientation, as well as positive leadership behaviour such as creating a positive work environment, result in increased organisational citizenship behaviour (Wijewardena et al., 2014). This means that followers who regard their leaders as positive leaders are more likely to relate to the organisation, and they tend to give to their organisation more than what is expected of them.

DISCUSSION

The main objective in conducting this study was to identify and synthesise literature on conceptualisations, definitions, descriptions, behaviours, characteristics and principles of positive leadership, to provide an overview of these conceptualisations, and to formulate an integrated definition of positive leadership. Conceptualisations of positive leadership from the literature were identified, compared, contrasted and summarised, and thereafter common underlying themes were identified, which informed the development of an integrated definition of positive leadership.

According to Youssef-Morgan and Luthans (2013), most leadership theories such as authentic leadership and transformational leadership are positively oriented but none of those leadership theories provided a specific definition of positive leadership. Although many studies have examined positive leadership (Arakawa & Greenberg, 2007; Cameron, 2008; Cameron, 2013; Dutton & Spreitzer, 2014; Härtel et al., 2008; Kelloway et al., 2013; Nel et al., 2015; Salmi et al., 2014; Wijewardena et al., 2014; Youssef-Morgan & Luthans, 2013; Zbierowski & Góra, 2014), there still exists much confusion and varied opinions regarding the nature of the construct of positive leadership in the literature.

No reviews aiming to investigate and provide an integrated definition of positive leadership could be found. Moreover, the lack of a clear conceptualisation of this construct adversely affects any efforts aimed at operationalising it. This in turn undermines any attempts at empirically measuring and comparing positive leadership, given that such measurements are often derived from differing (and therefore non-comparable) conceptualisations.

It is important to study positive leadership because the previously noted studies found that positive leadership contributes to the development of healthy organisations (Antino et al., 2014). In addition, the study conducted by Arakawa and Greenberg (2007) showed that positive leadership contributes to the effectiveness of the organisation and its employees. The significance of studying positive leadership is further emphasised by Nel et al. (2015) who argue that positive leadership has a positive relationship with psychological empowerment.

Yet, the concept of positive leadership remains unclear, and there is no single agreed-upon and integrated definition of positive leadership, which makes it difficult to study, operationalise and measure positive leadership. By proposing an integrated definition of positive leadership, it is hoped that this will support efforts to operationalise positive leadership and develop a measurement tool for positive leadership.

An analysis of this study (see Figure 4) reveals that positive leadership comprises of leadership traits that the positive leader should possess (i.e. traits), and of leadership behaviours that the positive leader should demonstrate (i.e. behaviours). Both of these will promote certain leadership outcomes that are beneficial to the leader, his/her followers and the organisation as a whole.



Figure 4. Proposed model of positive leadership

Based on the themes identified via the thematic analysis of available literature on the subject, the following integrated definition of positive leadership is proposed:

Positive leadership is an approach towards leadership that is characterised by the demonstration of leadership *traits* such as optimism and a ‘can-do’ mind-set, altruism, an ethical orientation, and motivational characteristics, as well as leadership *behaviours* that entail the creation of a positive working environment, the development of positive relationships, a focus on results, and positive communication with followers. These traits and behaviours in turn result in positive leadership *outcomes* such as enhanced overall productivity and performance levels, improved organisational citizenship behaviour, and enhanced follower well-being.

From the above proposed integrated definition of positive leadership it can be noted that positive leadership is indeed a combination of a number of other leadership styles such as transformational (Bass, 1999; Braun, Pies, Weisweiler, & Frey, 2013; Crafford et al., 2006; Munir, Rahman, Malik, & Ma’Amor, 2012; Tsai, 2011; Weberg, 2010); ethical (Ahmad, Gao, & Hali, 2017; Moorhouse, 2002); servant (Russel & Stone, 2002; Van Dierendonck, 2011); empowering (Albrecht & Andreetta, 2011; Arnold, Arad, Rhoades, & Drasgow, 2000; Hakimi, Van Knippenberg, & Giessner, 2010; Konczak, Stelly, & Trusty, 2000); and authentic leadership (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Avolio, Gardner, Walumbwa, Luthans, & May, 2004; Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008). Positive leadership also employs strength based approach as well as empowering leader behaviours (Konczak et al., 2000).

Positive leadership is similar to transformational leadership in such a way that both leaders inspire and motivate followers in achieving organisational goals and in performing exceptionally, and they also invest energy in followers’ development and growth (Crafford et al., 2006). Positive leadership is also similar to ethical and servant leadership as some of the traits identified in positive leadership is that of being ethical and altruistic, whereby the positive leader is perceived as being fair towards his/her followers and tends to put the needs of others before his/her own needs (De Cremer et al., 2004). A positive leader utilises empowering leader

behaviours and continuously identifies, develops and utilises follower strengths and potential in achieving organisational goals.

Although existing definitions of positive leadership do not explicitly state that authentic leadership traits such as self-awareness, authenticity and genuineness (Walumbwa et al., 2008) are important for positive leadership, it is nonetheless implied via the other traits (such as ethical orientation, motivational characteristics and altruism) that a positive leader is supposed to possess.

Implications

This study provides an integrated definition of positive leadership that addresses a gap in the current literature, and it is hoped that this will contribute to an enhanced and integrated understanding of positive leadership. Previous research highlighted that there is lack of contributions with regard to the acceleration, emergence and development of positive leadership (Blanch et al., 2016; Zbierowski, 2016), as well as to how positive leadership should be measured (Antino et al., 2014). As such, the proposed integrated definition of positive leadership provides a basis for clearer operationalisation, which would consequently make it possible to draw comparisons between different studies.

It is recommended that the proposed integrated definition of positive leadership be operationalised and used as a basis for studying and developing positive leadership in organisations. It is also recommended that this definition be used together with the measurement developed by Cameron (2008) when seeking to develop a reliable and valid measure of positive leadership.

Limitations of this Study and Recommendations for Future Study

The study provided an integrated definition of positive leadership but did not develop a measure for positive leadership, as this was not part of the original aims of the study. It is therefore recommended that future studies attempt to draw on the integrated definition proposed above to

develop a valid and reliable measure for positive leadership. Since the scope of the current study did not make provision for it, future studies should attempt to empirically test the relationship between the identified leadership traits, leadership behaviours and leadership outcomes in order to identify their interrelationships. The study only considered published data that has been peer reviewed by credible scholars in the field of positive leadership. However, future studies may include unpublished or grey data and textbooks. The study also considered only articles published in English; thus future studies should include articles published in other languages in order to account for conceptualisations of positive leadership that may have been created in non-English speaking contexts.

CONCLUSION

Based on the absence of a clear conceptualisation of positive leadership, a critical literature review of 22 identified publications between 1998 and 2016 on the topic was conducted with the aim of identifying and synthesising common thematic elements of these conceptualisations in order to arrive at an integrated definition of positive leadership. The findings of this study suggest that positive leadership consist of leadership traits (optimism and a ‘can-do’ mind-set, altruism, an ethical orientation, and motivational characteristics) that a positive leader should possess and leadership behaviours (creating a positive working environment, developing positive relationships, focusing on results, and engaging in positive communication with followers) that the positive leader should demonstrate, which in turn will enhance certain leadership outcomes (enhanced overall productivity and performance levels, improved organisational citizenship behaviour, and enhanced follower well-being) that are beneficial to the leader, his/her followers and the organisation as a whole.

It is hoped that the proposed integrated definition of positive leadership could be used as the starting point to develop a valid and reliable measure of positive leadership in an organisational context. This definition can also be used to identify positive leadership behaviours that can be taught to and developed among the leaders of organisations.

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CHAPTER 3: CONCLUSIONS, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The aim of this study was to identify and synthesise literature on conceptualisations, definitions, descriptions, behaviours, characteristics and principles of positive leadership, to provide an overview of these conceptualisations, and to formulate an integrated definition of positive leadership. In this last chapter, a summary is provided and conclusions are drawn based on the findings that emerged from the critical literature review. The limitations of the study are highlighted and possible recommendations and implications for organisations and future research are presented.

3.1 Summary

The first objective of this study was to identify, compare, contrast, summarise and provide an overview of the conceptualisations of positive leadership that are found in the literature and to identify underlying themes by means of a critical literature review. The second objective was to develop an integrated definition of positive leadership based on the common underlying themes identified from the literature review.

3.1.1 Conceptualisations of Positive Leadership

Literature indicates that the terms authentic leadership and transformational leadership have been used interchangeably (Antino, Gil-Rodríguez, Rodríguez-Muñoz, & Borzillo, 2014; Luthans & Avolio, 2003; Smith, Koppes Bryan, & Vodanovich, 2012) to describe forms of positive leadership. Some authors stated that positive leadership is concerned with enhancing follower well-being, meaning, and excellent performance (Antino et al., 2014; Fry & Matherly, 2006) while other maintains that positive leadership is a process of providing followers with frequent recognition and encouragement, as well as developing and utilising followers' strengths. This, in turn, results in increased follower engagement and increased productivity (Arakawa & Greenberg, 2007; Robison, 2007; Tombaugh, 2005).

As far as Cameron (2008) is concerned, positive leadership focuses on what causes the individuals and the organisation to perform optimally, together with the challenges faced by

individuals and the organisation, and also on what goes right in the organisation together with what goes wrong. Furthermore, some authors conceptualise positive leadership in terms of leadership traits such as confidence to inspire followers (Liu, Siu, & Shi, 2010) and leadership behaviours such as empowering followers and being supportive (Wijewardena, Samaratunge, & Härtel, 2014; Wong & Cumings, 2007). They also consider positive impact that such leadership traits and leadership behaviours have on followers' positive emotions, increased social well-being, organisational citizenship behaviour, and individual and organisational performance.

For Zbierowski (2014), positive leadership focuses on trust relationships, fairness, hope and optimism. Lastly, Oades, Crowe, and Nguyen, (2009) as well as Gauthier (2015) view positive leadership as an approach whereby leaders should strive to build positive relationships (Dutton & Spreitzer, 2014; Härtel, Kimberley, & McKeown, 2008), create positive working environments (Lam & Roussin, 2015), engage in positive communication with followers (Davenport, Allisey, Page, LaMontagne, & Reavley, 2016), and enhance positive meaning for followers.

The aim of the study was to thematically analyse definitions such as those outlined above in order to identify common underlying themes in an attempt to arrive at an integrated definition of positive leadership. It is hoped that such a conceptualisation would be used as a basis for developing a valid and reliable measure of positive leadership.

3.1.2 Integrated Definition of Positive leadership

The study in hand provides an integrated definition of positive leadership that addresses a gap in the current literature and is hoped to contribute to an enhanced and integrated understanding of positive leadership. Previous research highlighted a lack of contributions with regard to the acceleration, emergence and development of positive leadership (Blanch, Gil, Antino, & Rodríguez-Muñoz, 2016; Zbierowski, 2016), as well as on how positive leadership should be measured (Antino et al., 2014). As such, the proposed integrated definition of positive leadership provides a basis for clearer operationalisation, and makes it possible to draw comparisons between different studies.

The findings of this study as depicted in Figure 5 show that positive leadership comprises of leadership *traits* that the positive leader should possess and leadership *behaviours* that the positive leader should demonstrate, which in turn will enhance certain leadership *outcomes* that are beneficial to the leader, his/her followers and the organisation as a whole.



Figure 5. Proposed model of positive leadership

Based on these findings an integrated definition of positive leadership is proposed:

Positive leadership is an approach towards leadership that is characterised by the demonstration of leadership traits such as optimism and a ‘can-do’ mind-set, altruism, an ethical orientation and motivational characteristics, as well as leadership behaviours that entail the creation of a positive working environment, the development of positive relationships, a focus on results, and positive communication with followers. These traits and behaviours in turn result in positive leadership outcomes such as enhanced overall productivity and performance levels, improved organisational citizenship behaviour, and enhanced follower well-being.

3.2 Conclusions

3.2.1 Theoretical Implications

The lack of a clear conceptualisation of this construct adversely affects any aims at operationalising it, which in turn renders ineffective attempts at empirically measuring positive leadership or comparing results based on differing conceptualisations. The theoretical implication of this study is that it contributes to the literature on positive leadership by synthesising the existing definitions and providing an integrated definition of positive leadership. The implication of this is that the integrated definition of positive leadership would enable more uniform operationalisation of the construct. This then implies that it will be possible to empirically assess positive leadership in a more comparable way.

3.2.2 Practical Implications

Implicit in the integrated conceptualisation of positive leadership are several of practical implications. Foremost among these are that the traits and behaviours of positive leaders as outlined in the definition could serve as useful guidelines for organisations in relation to recruiting, selecting and retaining leaders. In particular, when seeking positive leaders, organisations should seek leaders who:

- *Have an ethical orientation* - When a positive leader is perceived to be ethical and fair towards his/her followers, such a leader will cause followers to experience positive emotions, and higher organisational citizenship, while individual and organisational performance will also be enhanced. Mayer (2014) noted that followers who are led by ethical leaders reported higher levels of organisational commitment and job satisfaction, and they were less likely to be involved in unethical behaviours. To ensure that leaders maintain an ethical orientation, organisations can guide them through developing practice notes regarding ethics, ethical conduct and ways in which leaders should deal and manage unethical behaviour. Organisations can also create an environment where confidentiality is maintained and employees are able to report unethical behaviour freely.
- *Have motivational characteristics* - Dutton and Spreitzer (2014) and Grant (2014) believe that positive leaders should inspire and motivate their followers - not only with words, but by exposing them to the clients who appreciate and benefit from their work. They propose that this will not only increase followers' motivation levels but will also "boost productivity by more than 400 percent" (Dutton & Spreitzer, 2014; Grant, 2014). Followers tend to be engaged and committed to their work when they perceive their leaders to have motivational characteristics (such as being inspirational and purpose driven). Positive leaders should set clear goals and key performance indicators (KPIs) for their followers, as well as state ways in which followers' performance will be measured during performance appraisals days. In this way, followers will be motivated to achieve the clearly outlined goals and KPIs. Leaders should ensure that there is alignment between organisational strategy, organisational outcomes and the employees' role in achieving the organisational outcomes and supporting the organisational strategy.
- *Are altruistic* - Positive leaders who put the needs of others before their own needs (De Cremer, van Dijke, & Bos, 2004) will be in a position to motivate their followers (Antino et al., 2014), which will likely enhance follower performance. Followers will also be prepared to go the extra mile (Pickford & Joy, 2016) in an attempt to achieve organisational goals. Not only will these followers make more effort than is expected, but their morale will also increase, which will result in followers requiring less supervision from their leaders when performing tasks (Pickford & Joy, 2016). An example of a leader who puts the needs of his/her followers before his/her own is somebody who will

sacrifice his/her own performance bonus at the end of the year just so that his/her followers can receive performance bonuses.

- *Are optimistic and hopeful about the future* - “Optimism is a positive explanatory style that attributes positive events to personal, permanent, and pervasive causes, and interprets negative events in terms of external, temporary, and situation-specific factors” (Luthans & Youssef-Morgan, 2017 p. 342). When followers perceive their leaders to be optimistic and hopeful about the future (Lam & Roussion, 2015; Zbierowski, 2014) they will more likely be engaged at work and their productivity levels will increase.

The findings of the study also imply that organisations should also employ interventions to train and coach current leaders to do the following:

- *Building positive relationships with their teams* – Dutton and Ragins (2007) refer to positive relationships as “generative source of enrichment, vitality and learning” (p. 5) for leaders, followers and the organisation as a whole. This implies that positive relationships should involve more than just getting along with one another (Cameron, 2008). Dutton (2014) suggests that positive relationships can be built through trust and respect, and through empowering (Wong & Cummings, 2007) and providing support (such as mentorship) to followers. Positive relationships have been reported to have an effect on motivation, engagement, and well-being of followers (Spreitzer & Porath, 2014) and in followers experiencing positive emotions (Wijewardena et al., 2014). According to Dutton and Spreitzer (2014) leaders are ought to get the work done through positive relationships. Positive leaders can build positive relationships by introducing programs such as on-the-job coaching, job shadowing and buddy systems where followers are encouraged to work in pairs in order to achieve organisational goals. These pairs should be selected by taking into account followers’ strengths and potential.
- *Be results driven* – When leaders are results driven they continuously recognise followers’ accomplishments (Antino et al., 2014; Arakawa & Greenberg, 2007; Blanch et al., 2016; Tombaugh, 2005; Youssef & Luthans, 2012), they encourage outstanding performance (Blanch et al., 2016; Wijewardena et al., 2014; Youssef & Luthans, 2012; Zbierowski, 2016), and they identify, develop and utilise followers’ strengths and potential (Antino et al., 2014; Arakawa & Greenberg, 2007; Blanch et al., 2016;

Tombaugh, 2005; Youssef & Luthans, 2012), which in turn results in increased follower engagement and productivity (Arakawa & Greenberg, 2007). According to Clifton and Harter (2003) top-performing managers spend their time and energy on developing followers strengths. Positive leaders must set clear end-results, and KPIs, clarify expectations and manage the execution of activities. Followers must have clarity on their roles, outcomes and what is expected from them in the organisation, while positive leaders should allow followers to be held accountable for their actions. Positive leaders should also make use of on-the-spot recognition, whereby followers' accomplishments and outstanding performance are recognised immediately, and not only at the end of the year.

- *Engage in positive communication with the followers and provide constructive feedback to followers* – According to Spreitzer and Porath (2014) constructive feedback allows followers to thrive as it gives them the opportunity to review their skills, competencies and areas of development, and to seek ways on how to improve their performance. Leaders need to communicate with their followers in ways that are empowering and supportive. They also need to give constructive positive and negative feedback to followers when discussing with them their personal development plan (PDP), performance management (PM) and performance appraisals (PA).
- *Involve followers in decision making* - When leaders include followers in decision-making and problem-solving processes, the followers will feel that their inputs are taken into consideration. They will therefore find it easier to be loyal to their leaders and the organisation. According to Cruzat (2014) followers are likely to stay engaged when they are given the opportunity to participate in decision-making processes. Spreitzer and Porath (2014) also suggest that not only will the followers be engaged, but they will thrive when they are involved in making-decision that involve their work. Positive leaders need to value their followers' input by making them part of the decision making process, through informing, consulting, and asking for suggestions from followers whenever decisions need to be made in the organisation.
- *Creating positive work environment* - Positive leaders should strive to create a positive work environment - where negative people, lack of resources, and inappropriate systems are eliminated, and provide followers with sufficient support, right equipments, and

suitable training that will allow the followers to perform their tasks effectively and optimally, achieve organisational and personal goals, feel empowered and work in harmony.

3.3 Limitations of this Study and Recommendations for Future Research

As in any other investigation, the current study was found to have limitations, many of which are suggestive in relation to opportunities for future research. Given that it was not the aim of the study, the researcher did not develop a measure of positive leadership, and as such, it is recommended that future studies attempt to use the integrated definition proposed in Section 3.1.2 to develop a valid and reliable measure for positive leadership. This will add value in the current literature in terms of how positive leadership can and should be measured and thereafter be developed.

Furthermore, attempts should be made to standardise positive leadership measures to allow for a systematic investigation into the impact of positive leadership on individual and organisational performance, follower well-being, and followers' organisational citizenship behaviour. It is also recommended that organisations utilise guidelines provided in Section 3.2.2 when recruiting and selecting new leaders, as well as when employing interventions to train and coach current leaders.

Secondly, since it did not fall within the scope of the current study, future studies should attempt to empirically test the relationship between the identified leadership traits, leadership behaviours and leadership outcomes. This will allow for conclusions to be drawn regarding how and which leadership traits and leadership behaviours significantly enhance individual and organisational performance, follower well-being and follower organisational citizenship behaviour. A fruitful avenue for future research would be to focus on the extent to which the leadership traits predict the leadership behaviours and outcomes noted in this study, and how (if at all) these relationships might be mediated by these or other variables.

Thirdly, it is important to note that the study deliberately focused on and considered published data that has been peer-reviewed by credible scholars in the field of positive leadership. However, it is acknowledged that there may be some literature such as unpublished data, book chapters and scholarly books that did not meet the inclusion criteria, but that might add value to the study of positive leadership. Therefore it is recommended that future studies consider inclusion of unpublished or grey data, book chapters and scholarly books.

Lastly, reporting bias might have existed, as the study only considered articles published in English. To address this limitation, it is therefore recommended that future studies should include articles published in other languages. This will also ensure that articles that conceptualised positive leadership in languages other than English, are taken into account.

3.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter, provided a summary and reported on conclusions that were drawn based on the findings of the critical literature review. The limitations of this study were highlighted, possible recommendations for future research were made and some implications for organisations were outlined.

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APPENDIX A: LIST OF PUBLISHED DATA THAT MET THE INCLUSION CRITERIA

Authors	Title	Description of positive leadership
Lloyd and Atella (2000)	Positive leadership that inspires: Theoretical and empirical perspectives from positive psychology, existential theory, and hardiness research.	Suggest that the major elements comprised in a vision of positive leadership are “commitment, courage, dignity, healthy control, choice, decision, will to action, responsibility, freedom, challenge, personal meaning, authentic community, communication, activism, social support, and faith”.
De Cremer et al. (2004, p. 466)	Distributive justice moderating the effects of self-sacrificial leadership.	Argue that “positive leadership styles like self-sacrifice will have a stronger impact on followers’ attitudes and judgments when organisational outcomes are perceived and experienced as unfavourable or more negative”.
Tombaugh (2005, p. 16)	Positive leadership yields performance and profitability	Alludes that “positive leaders must move beyond worn out military models or fictional characters, developing new skills and traits that support a strengths-based organisational culture”.

Fry and Matherly (2006, p.11)	Spiritual leadership as an integrating paradigm for positive leadership development.	Define positive leadership as “leadership that develops higher level, universal moral values and character, enhances follower meaning and connection and maximises both follower well-being and sustained performance excellence”.
Arakawa and Greenberg (2007, p. 2)	Optimistic managers and their influence on productivity and employee engagement in a technology organisation: Implications for coaching psychologists.	Define positive leadership as “employing a strengths-based approach, maintaining a positive perspective, and frequently providing recognition and encouragement which increases the engagement and productivity of followers”.
Robison (2007)	The business benefits of positive leadership: Finding the connection between productivity and positive management behaviour.	Is of the opinion that the role of the positive leader is not merely to fix followers’ weaknesses, but rather to focus on followers’ strengths and find ways of leveraging these strengths to the benefit of the follower and the organisation at large.
Wong and Cummings (2007, p. 517)	The relationship between nursing leadership and patient outcomes: A systematic review.	According to Wong and Cummings (2007), “positive leadership behaviours (transformational, empowering, and supportive) may be associated with outcomes through facilitation of more effective teamwork”.
Cameron (2008, p. 3-4)	Positive leadership: Strategies for extraordinary performance.	Believes that positive leadership refers to “an emphasis on what elevates individuals and organisations (in addition to what challenges them), what goes right in organisations (in addition to what goes wrong), what is life-

		giving (in addition to what is problematic or life-depleting), what is experienced as good (in addition to what is objectionable), what is extraordinary (in addition to what is merely effective), and what is inspiring (in addition to what is difficult or arduous)".
Hanna et al. (2009, p. 270)	Leader self-structure: A framework for positive leadership.	Define positive leadership as "the activation of a set of cognitions, affects, expectancies, goals and values, and self-regulatory plans that both enable and direct effective leader behaviours". Hanna et al. (2009) further argue that positive leadership is a self-regulatory process that focuses on a leader's self-construct – something that will later benefit both the leader and the follower.
Oades et al. (2009, p. 34).	Leadership coaching transforming mental health systems from the inside out: The Collaborative Recovery Model as person-centred strengths based coaching psychology.	According to Oades et al. (2009), "positive leadership emphasises the need for positive climate, positive relationships, positive communication and positive meaning".
Liu et al. (2010, p. 456)	Transformational leadership and employee well-being: The mediating role of trust in the leader and self-efficacy.	Argue that "positive leadership, which comprises positive attitudes of passion, skills, and confidence to inspire followers, has the potential to elevate followers in the long term in areas such as trust, commitment, and well-being".

James et al. (2011)	Crisis management: Informing a new leadership research agenda.	Loosely characterised positive leadership “as abnormally positive behaviour relative to that would be expected for the crisis circumstances”.
Smith et al. (2012, p. 176)	The counter-intuitive effects of flow on positive leadership and employee attitudes: Incorporating positive psychology into the management of organisations.	Define positive leadership as “either transformational or authentic leadership” and remark that positive leadership features motivational and ethical characteristics and behaviours of leaders that result in positive follower outcomes and increased performance”.
Youssef and Luthans (2012, p. 541)	Positive global leadership	Define positive global leadership by taking into account the antecedents and outcomes of positivity as “the systematic and integrated manifestation of leadership traits, processes, intentional behaviours and performance outcomes that are elevating, exceptional and affirmative of the strengths, capabilities and developmental potential of leaders, their followers and their organisations over time and across contexts”.
Kelloway et al. (2013, p.108)	Positive leadership and employee well-being.	Define positive leadership as “leadership behaviours that result in followers’ experiencing positive emotions”.

Antino et al. (2014, p.590)	Evaluating positive leadership: Pilot study on the psychometric properties of a reduced version of the Positive Leadership Assessment Scale	Allude that positive leadership “focuses its actions on what is good and on encouraging human potentialities, motivations and capacities; it refers to the way leaders encourage outstanding performance by centring on virtue and eudemonism, which justifies what a person does if their goal is to attain happiness and positive leadership behaviour shows a bias towards the positive end”.
Wijewardena et al. (2014, p 290)	Creating better employees through positive leadership behaviour in the public sector.	Described “two positive leadership behaviours, namely, support and ethical behaviour and their impact in aiding followers experience positive emotions and increasing social well-being, organisational citizenship behaviour, and individual and organisational performance”.
Zbierowski (2014, p. 59)	Towards the integrated concept and measurement of organisational positivity.	According to Zbierowski (2014), positive leadership means entrepreneurial mind-set of managers who are entrepreneurially alert – monitor the environment searching for opportunities, recognize them and utilize them even where competitors perceive threats; leadership based on trust between managers and followers; fair management that creates the perception of justice among followers in terms of following clear rules of appraisal, salaries and promotions; and lastly looking into the future with hope and optimism.

Gauthier (2015, p. 7).	A multi-dimensional model for positive leadership	Describes Positive leadership as “a relatively new approach to leadership and positive leadership it is based on the concept that workers are happier and more productive when they work in a positive environment. Positive leadership is an approach where the leader uses positive strategies within five major areas to influence his/her followers to achieve the goals and objectives of the organisation. The five dimensions that surround and influence the organisation include (a) building a positive structure, (b) operating with a positive purpose, (c) establishing a positive climate, (d) developing positive relationships, and (e) engaging in positive communications. Positive leadership is more than just a leadership style; it is a leadership approach, it is a mind-set. Positive leaders have high expectations for their followers, the quality of their products, and the quality of their customer service. They just approach their expectations with a positive, can do, attitude”.
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Lam and Roussin (2015, p.29)	Reconciling negativity with positive leadership: A practical application.	Argue that "...effective positive leadership is not unerringly optimistic in all moments and in all things. Instead, it is a responsibility to create a positive work environment for everyone working in your company. This means that managers have to not only keep their people happy, but also eliminate the negative, which can be the wrong people, the wrong process, the wrong equipment, or other processes that should be eliminated. In the elimination of this negative, sometimes critical (or focused-negative) behaviours are required of the positive leader".
Blanch et al. (2016, p.173)	Positive leadership models: Theoretical framework and research.	Conceptualise positive leadership into three components, namely "(1) it places the focus on people's strengths and abilities that reaffirm their human potential, (2) it emphasizes results and facilitates above average individual and organisational performance, and (3) its field of action is concentrated on the components that can be seen as essential virtues of the human condition".
Davenport et al. (2016, p 420)	How can organisations help employees thrive? The development of guidelines for promoting positive mental health at work.	According to Davenport et al. (2016) "positive leadership styles consist of managers making an effort to involve followers in problem solving and decision making, and managers aiming to provide negative feedback in a positive way ensuring that the follower feels validated by using statements that emphasise flexible, two-way problem solving".