

The Influence Of Altruistic Leadership On Positive Emotions And Work-Life Balance

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Abstract

This study aims to examine the impact of altruistic leadership on employees' work-life balance and to investigate the mediating role of positive emotions in this relationship. In an organizational climate increasingly characterized by emotional strain and rising work-family conflict, understanding how leadership behavior influences psychological well-being has become imperative. This quantitative study employed a causal-explanatory design with a sample of 167 civil servants and contract employees at the Secretariat Office of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) of Indragiri Hilir Regency, Indonesia. Respondents were selected using proportional stratified random sampling. Data were collected through structured questionnaires measuring altruistic leadership, positive emotions, and work-life balance using validated Likert-scale instruments. Structural Equation Modeling–Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS) with SmartPLS 3.2.9 was used to test both direct and indirect relationships. The results revealed that altruistic leadership positively and significantly influences both positive emotions and work-life balance. Additionally, positive emotions have a significant effect on work-life balance and mediate the relationship between altruistic leadership and work-life balance. This study contributes to the literature on leadership and organizational behavior by positioning positive emotions as a psychological mechanism linking altruistic leadership and work-life integration. Unlike previous studies that primarily explored direct relationships, this research offers an affective perspective grounded in the Broaden-and-Build and Affective Events theories. Given the findings, managers and policymakers, particularly in the public sector, are encouraged to foster altruistic leadership practices and emotional well-being programs to enhance employee balance and performance.

Keywords : Altruistic Leadrship, Positive Emotions, Public Sector, Structural Equation Modeling, Wor

I. Introduction

In today's fast-evolving work environment marked by rapid technological innovation and organizational transformation, leadership has become a critical determinant of employee well-being and organizational effectiveness. The increasing complexity of professional demands and personal responsibilities has led to an urgent need for leadership styles that do more than merely direct and control. Instead, contemporary organizations require leaders who can inspire, empathize, and foster a supportive emotional climate. One such emerging leadership paradigm is *altruistic leadership*, a leadership approach grounded in selflessness, empathy, and genuine concern for the well-being of subordinates. Altruistic leadership, by prioritizing others' needs above personal gain, creates a nurturing environment where employees can thrive both professionally and personally (Abdillah, 2021; Salas-Vallina & Alegre, 2018).

Previous studies have established the positive role of altruistic leadership in enhancing job satisfaction, employee engagement, and interpersonal trust (Sari et al., 2022; Luvi Juliandi, 2023). However, a significant research gap remains in understanding the psychological mechanisms through which altruistic leadership influences *work-life balance* (WLB), a concept increasingly recognized as essential for employee mental health, retention, and productivity. Work-life balance refers to an individual's perceived ability to maintain harmony between professional responsibilities and personal commitments (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Inadequate balance often leads to emotional exhaustion, decreased job performance, and heightened stress, especially in high-pressure public sector environments.

While many leadership styles have been studied in relation to organizational outcomes, few studies have explored the indirect pathways linking leadership behaviors to psychological states that support WLB. Among the psychological variables with significant explanatory potential is *positive emotion*, defined as an individual's experience of feelings such as happiness, enthusiasm, and contentment in the workplace (Fredrickson, 2001). Positive emotions, according to the *Broaden-and-Build Theory*, enable individuals to build personal resources, cope effectively with stress, and develop better adaptive strategies in managing work and personal life domains. Despite this theoretical foundation, empirical investigations that integrate altruistic leadership, positive emotions, and work-life balance into a comprehensive model remain scarce in current literature.

This study seeks to fill this void by investigating the mediating role of positive emotions in the relationship between altruistic leadership and work-life balance. Specifically, the study builds on *Affective Events Theory* (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), which posits that workplace events such as interactions with altruistic leaders trigger affective responses that subsequently shape attitudes and behaviors. Within this framework, altruistic leadership can be understood as a contextual factor that triggers positive emotional responses in employees, which in turn facilitate greater perceived balance between work and non-work domains.

The novelty of this research lies in its integrative approach, combining leadership theory, positive psychology, and organizational behavior to explain work-life dynamics in the public sector. Unlike prior studies that have focused primarily on direct effects, this study explores a mediated pathway in which altruistic leadership enhances positive emotions, which then promote work-life balance. While studies such as Abdillah et al. (2025) have identified *psychological capital* as a mediator in the leadership-WLB relationship, and Sari et al. (2022) explored *positive emotions* as a mediator between WLB and performance, the present research uniquely positions positive emotion as a mediator between altruistic leadership and WLB in an under-explored configuration with strong theoretical grounding and practical relevance.

The setting of this study, the Secretariat of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) of Indragiri Hilir Regency, Indonesia, offers a particularly compelling context. Preliminary observations and informal interviews indicate that employees within this institution often struggle with emotional fatigue, work-related stress, and difficulty maintaining work-life balance conditions exacerbated by rigid, transactional leadership approaches. These findings underscore the need for a more humanistic leadership model that supports emotional well-being and personal flourishing. Altruistic leadership, with its emphasis on empathy and moral concern, is ideally suited to address these challenges. To this end, this study poses the following research questions:

1. Does altruistic leadership have a significant positive effect on work-life balance?
2. Does altruistic leadership significantly influence employees' positive emotions?

3. Do positive emotions significantly affect work-life balance?
4. Do positive emotions mediate the relationship between altruistic leadership and work-life balance?

To answer these questions, a quantitative, causal-explanatory design was adopted. The research population comprises civil servants and contract staff at the DPRD Secretariat of Indragiri Hilir Regency. Using Slovin's formula, a sample of 167 respondents was selected from a total population of 420. Data were collected through structured questionnaires, which assessed perceptions of altruistic leadership, positive emotions, and work-life balance using validated Likert-scale items. The variables were operationalized based on prior literature, with altruistic leadership measured through dimensions such as self-sacrifice, service orientation, and empathetic concern (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006), while positive emotions were assessed through indicators of happiness, energy, enthusiasm, and comfort (Lee, 2008). Work-life balance was measured using the four-dimensional model proposed by Fisher et al. (2009), which includes work interference with personal life (WIPL), personal life interference with work (PLIW), personal life enhancement of work (PLEW), and work enhancement of personal life (WEPL).

The data were analyzed using *Structural Equation Modeling – Partial Least Squares (SEM-PLS)* with SmartPLS 3.2.9 software. This method was selected due to its ability to handle complex models involving mediation and its robustness with smaller sample sizes. The analysis included testing of the outer model (to assess reliability and validity), the inner model (to evaluate structural relationships), and hypothesis testing using bootstrapping procedures.

This article is organized into five main sections. The first section presents the introduction, including the justification of the research problem, the theoretical framework, the research gap, the novelty and contribution, and the research objectives. The second section provides a comprehensive literature review on altruistic leadership, positive emotions, and work-life balance, along with the development of hypotheses and conceptual framework. The third section details the methodology used in the study, including the research design, population and sample, variable operationalization, data collection instruments, and statistical techniques. The fourth section presents the research findings and discussion, focusing on both direct and mediated effects among variables. Finally, the fifth section concludes the article with a summary of key findings, implications for theory and practice, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

By addressing the psychological pathways through which leadership influences employee well-being, this study makes a significant theoretical and practical contribution to the fields of organizational behavior, leadership studies, and public sector human resource management. It sheds light on the potential of altruistic leadership to create emotionally healthy workplaces and promote sustainable work-life integrationan increasingly critical concern in modern organizations.

2. Literature Review and Hypotheses Development

2.1 Altruistic Leadership: Concept and Relevance

Altruistic leadership, as a leadership style, emphasizes selflessness, empathy, and a deep concern for the well-being of subordinates (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). This approach stands in contrast to more transactional or autocratic styles, offering a more human-centered leadership paradigm. According to Abdillah (2021), altruistic leaders willingly sacrifice personal gains to benefit others, and often act without expecting rewards, which creates a meaningful and emotionally safe work environment. Existing literature has explored altruistic leadership in various contexts. For example, Chong et al. (2020) highlighted its potential to foster psychological safety and positive interpersonal dynamics, thereby improving employee well-being. Similarly, Van Dierendonck and Patterson (2015) showed that altruistic leadership enhances employee trust and morale, which subsequently reduces workplace stress and fosters commitment. In the Indonesian context, the study by Abdillah et al. (2025) indicated that altruistic leadership significantly enhances employees' work-family balance through the mediating role of psychological capital. However, there remains a substantial gap in empirical research regarding the psychological mechanisms that explain how altruistic leadership influences work-life balance (WLB), particularly through emotional pathways such as positive emotions.

2.2 Positive Emotions at Work

Positive emotions are affective experiences such as joy, enthusiasm, gratitude, and contentment that arise from favorable circumstances (Fredrickson, 2001). In organizational settings, they have been found to enhance creativity, resilience, interpersonal relationships, and overall job satisfaction (Cameron et al., 2003). Fredrickson's Broaden-and-Build Theory posits that positive emotions expand cognitive and behavioral repertoires, enabling individuals to build enduring personal resources such as social support and psychological resilience. The link between leadership style and employee emotions is well-documented. Leaders who are supportive, empathetic, and altruistic are more likely to evoke positive emotions among their subordinates (Ilies et al., 2007). These emotions, in turn, affect how employees perceive and manage their roles, including how they balance professional and personal demands. The research conducted by Oh et al. (2022) supports this notion, demonstrating that altruistic leadership behaviors such as active listening, emotional support, and self-sacrifice can significantly reduce employee stress and increase job satisfaction through enhanced positive affect. Despite these insights, very few studies have explicitly investigated the mediating role of positive emotions between altruistic leadership and work-life balance, especially in bureaucratic or public-sector contexts such as government offices.

2.3 Work-Life Balance and Its Psychological Determinants

Work-life balance (WLB) refers to an individual's ability to successfully manage and fulfill both work and non-work roles without undue stress or conflict (Greenhaus & Allen, 2011). Effective WLB contributes to improved employee performance, reduced burnout, and greater organizational commitment (Lockwood, 2003). Achieving balance requires not only organizational support and policy flexibility but also internal psychological resources, including emotion regulation. Multiple studies have linked WLB with various leadership behaviors. For instance, Kelloway et al. (2012) found that supportive leadership positively correlates with employees' perceptions of WLB. However, leadership's influence on WLB may be indirect, occurring through changes in affective states or psychological capital. This insight is crucial, as it suggests that leadership styles like altruistic leadership might facilitate WLB by generating emotional conditions conducive to balance. Recent research has explored such mediating mechanisms. For example, Sari et al. (2022) demonstrated that positive emotions mediated the relationship between WLB and job performance, while Hu et al. (2021) found that job crafting influenced WLB through positive emotional states. These findings underscore the need to understand emotions as critical mediators in leadership-outcome relationships.

2.4 Positioning the Present Study

Although prior research has investigated the influence of altruistic leadership on various employee outcomes, much of the focus has been limited to dimensions such as job satisfaction (Sari et al., 2022), organizational commitment, or workplace happiness (Luvi Juliandi, 2023). Some studies such as those conducted by Abdillah et al. (2025) and Chanko & Rahmat (2022) have introduced mediating variables like psychological capital or leader-member exchange to account for the connection between altruistic leadership and employee performance. Nevertheless, there remains a gap in the literature regarding the role of positive emotions as an intermediary mechanism, particularly in the context of Indonesian public sector organizations. Addressing this gap, the present research proposes an integrative model that links altruistic leadership to work-life balance (WLB) through the mediating function of positive emotions. Grounded in Affective Events Theory (Weiss & Cropanzano, 1996), the study posits that leadership behaviors serve as significant affective stimuli that shape employees' emotional experiences and, in turn, their work-related attitudes and behaviors. The theoretical foundation is further reinforced by the Broaden-and-Build Theory (Fredrickson, 2001), which offers insight into how positive emotional states cultivated by altruistic leaders can enhance employees' capacity to navigate both professional and personal roles more effectively.

2.5 Development of Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical and empirical background, the following hypotheses are developed to guide the current investigation:

Hypothesis 1 (H1):

Altruistic leadership has a positive and significant influence on work-life balance.

This hypothesis is grounded in the premise that altruistic leaders provide emotional and instrumental support that helps employees manage multiple life domains (Chong et al., 2020; Kelloway et al., 2012).

Hypothesis 2 (H2):

Altruistic leadership positively and significantly influences employees' positive emotions.

Research supports that altruistic leadership behaviors foster feelings of appreciation, gratitude, and optimism (Oh et al., 2022; Fredrickson, 2001), which collectively define positive emotions at work.

Hypothesis 3 (H3):

Positive emotions have a positive and significant effect on work-life balance.

This hypothesis is derived from Broaden-and-Build Theory, which posits that positive emotions expand cognitive flexibility and help individuals build adaptive coping strategies, thereby enhancing their WLB (Fredrickson, 2001; Culbertson et al., 2012).

Hypothesis 4 (H4):

Positive emotions mediate the relationship between altruistic leadership and work-life balance.

This hypothesis is informed by research showing that leadership styles impact WLB indirectly through affective states (Ilies et al., 2007; Sari et al., 2022). It posits that the psychological pathway between altruistic leadership and WLB is partially or fully explained by the level of positive emotions experienced by employees.

3. Method

This research adopted a quantitative methodology with a causal-explanatory design to examine how altruistic leadership influences work-life balance, both directly and through the intermediary role of positive emotions. The study was carried out within the Secretariat Office of the Regional People's Representative Council (DPRD) in Indragiri Hilir Regency, Indonesia. This design was selected to systematically analyze the cause-and-effect pathways linking leadership behaviors with employee psychological outcomes and life balance. The research population encompassed all personnel employed at the institution, including both permanent civil servants (Aparatur Sipil Negara or ASN) and contract-based staff, totaling 420 individuals⁶³ of whom held permanent positions and 357 served under contractual terms. To calculate the sample size, the Slovin formula was utilized with a 6% margin of error, yielding a sample requirement of 167 participants. A proportional stratified random sampling technique was applied to ensure that the distribution of respondents accurately reflected the composition of the entire workforce across employment categories.

Primary data were gathered through a structured questionnaire distributed directly to respondents. The questionnaire consisted of two main sections: demographic information and constructs related to the research variables. All measurement items were derived from previously validated instruments and were rated using a seven-point Likert scale ranging from 1 ("Strongly Disagree") to 7 ("Strongly Agree"). The use of a 7-point scale allowed for greater response variability and sensitivity in assessing perceptions and attitudes. The research focused on three key variables:

1. Altruistic Leadership (exogenous variable), measured through indicators such as leaders' tendency to prioritize subordinates' needs, self-sacrifice, willingness to help beyond formal duties, and offering assistance without expecting rewards.
2. Positive Emotions (mediating variable), which included feelings of happiness, enthusiasm, energy, and comfort at work.
3. Work-Life Balance (endogenous variable), assessed through four dimensions: work interference with personal life (WIPL), personal life interference with work (PLIW), personal life enhancement of work (PLEW), and work enhancement of personal life (WEPL).

To ensure the credibility of the measurement tools, the study conducted a rigorous outer model evaluation, encompassing tests of convergent validity, discriminant validity, and composite reliability. Data analysis was performed using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) through the SmartPLS software version 3.2.9. This analytical technique was selected due to its effectiveness in addressing complex conceptual frameworks that include mediating variables, as well as its robustness when working with relatively small sample sizes. The inner model assessment involved evaluating R-square (R^2) values to measure the model's explanatory strength, examining path coefficients to validate the proposed hypotheses, and applying Q-square (Q^2) to determine the model's predictive capability. The hypothesis testing process employed bootstrapping procedures to generate t-statistics and p-values, applying a 5% threshold for statistical significance. Through this comprehensive approach, the research was able to investigate both the direct impact of altruistic leadership on work-life balance and the mediating role played by positive emotional experiences in the unique context of a public-sector organization.

4. Result and Discussion

4.1 Direct Influence of Altruistic Leadership on Work-Life Balance

The findings of this study indicate that altruistic leadership has a positive and statistically significant effect on work-life balance. This suggests that employees who perceive their leaders as selfless, caring, and prioritizing employee welfare above personal interests are more likely to experience a better balance between their work and personal lives. Leaders who demonstrate genuine concern for their subordinates' well-being foster a supportive work environment that enables employees to manage both professional and personal responsibilities more effectively. These findings are consistent with the theoretical framework proposed by Greenhaus and Allen (2011), who assert that leadership styles that promote psychological safety and empathy contribute to improved work-life integration. Furthermore, the results align with research by Kelloway et al. (2012), who found that supportive leadership behaviors are strongly associated with employee perceptions of work-life balance. In the specific context of government institutions, where bureaucratic pressure and workload tend to be high, the role of altruistic leadership becomes even more crucial in creating humane organizational climates that value holistic employee welfare.

4.2 Direct Influence of Altruistic Leadership on Positive Emotions

The analysis further confirms that altruistic leadership significantly enhances positive emotions among employees. Leaders who are altruistic tend to exhibit kindness, empathy, and readiness to sacrifice personal benefits for the good of their team. These behaviors contribute to employees feeling valued, understood, and psychologically safe, which, in turn, triggers emotional responses such as happiness, enthusiasm, and optimism. This outcome resonates strongly with Fredrickson's (2001) Broaden-and-Build Theory, which posits that positive emotions expand an individual's cognitive and behavioral repertoire, enhancing their resilience and social connections. The findings also corroborate the work of Chong et al. (2020), who noted that altruistic leadership is positively associated with increased employee emotional well-being, primarily through the perception of meaningful work and interpersonal warmth. When leaders offer voluntary assistance, express appreciation, and model selflessness, employees respond with emotional positivity, which reinforces their motivation and engagement.

4.3 Direct Influence of Positive Emotions on Work-Life Balance

The study also identifies a positive and significant relationship between positive emotions and work-life balance. Employees who experience elevated levels of positive affects such as joy, calmness, and enthusiasm are more capable of managing the demands of work and family roles. This is consistent with Fredrickson's (2001) assertion that positive emotions foster psychological resources that assist in coping with life's challenges, including work-family conflict. Culbertson et al. (2012) provided empirical evidence supporting this notion, showing that individuals who frequently experience positive emotions possess better coping strategies and adaptability in balancing life domains. Moreover, Ilies et al. (2007) demonstrated that workplace-induced positive emotions tend to spill over into home life, improving relationship quality and supporting personal well-being.

The present study reinforces these perspectives by showing that emotional upliftment serves as an internal resource that enables employees to navigate dual responsibilities with greater ease and satisfaction.

4.4 The Mediating Role of Positive Emotions

One of the most noteworthy contributions of this study is the confirmation that positive emotions mediate the relationship between altruistic leadership and work-life balance. This mediating effect implies that the influence of altruistic leadership on employees' ability to maintain work-life harmony is partially channeled through the emotional state cultivated by such leadership. In other words, altruistic leaders contribute not only directly to work-life balance by providing flexibility and empathy but also indirectly by fostering emotions that empower employees to manage life's demands. This finding offers substantial theoretical implications, particularly for leadership and organizational behavior literature. It confirms the psychological mechanism proposed by the Broaden-and-Build Theory, where emotional states act as conduits through which leadership behaviors exert influence on broader life outcomes. It also aligns with the work of Chong et al. (2020) and Ilies et al. (2007), who posited that emotional well-being serves as a bridge between leadership styles and employee outcomes, including job satisfaction and family harmony. From a practical standpoint, this suggests that organizations aiming to enhance employee well-being should invest not only in leadership development but also in emotional intelligence training. Promoting a leadership style rooted in altruism could yield a dual benefit: creating emotionally supportive climates and enabling employees to achieve a more harmonious balance between work and life.

4.5 Integration with Prior Literature

The overall results of this study are consistent with and extend findings from previous research in several key ways. First, they build upon Abdillah et al. (2025), who identified psychological capital as a mediating mechanism between altruistic leadership and work-family balance. This study, however, offers a novel lens by highlighting positive emotion as the mediating factor, enriching the understanding of how affective experiences facilitate the leadership-wellbeing link. Second, the current findings echo those of Sari et al. (2022), who demonstrated that positive emotion mediates the relationship between work-life balance and performance. By placing emotion at the center of the leadership and balance equation, this study emphasizes the centrality of affective states in organizational psychology. Finally, this research complements Luvi Juliandi's (2023) study, which showed that trust in leadership mediates the relationship between altruistic leadership and workplace happiness. Taken together, these studies suggest that emotional and psychological factors are critical to understanding the efficacy of altruistic leadership in complex organizational settings.

4.6 Implications and Contributions

The implications of these findings are multifaceted. For academic discourse, the study provides empirical validation of the role of emotions in mediating leadership effects, particularly in a public-sector context. For organizational leaders and policymakers, the research suggests that fostering altruistic leadership is not merely a matter of ethics or values, but also a strategic approach to enhancing employee well-being and performance sustainability. Leadership development programs should therefore integrate modules on empathy, emotional intelligence, and servant leadership principles to cultivate environments where employees feel both valued and emotionally supported. In contexts such as regional government offices, where work stress and political dynamics can challenge psychological resilience, the presence of altruistic leadership can serve as a buffer against burnout and dissatisfaction. Moreover, as work-life conflict continues to rise globally due to digitization and remote work pressures, understanding the emotional mechanisms through which leadership influences balance becomes increasingly vital.

5. Conclusion

This study has provided comprehensive empirical insights into the relationship between altruistic leadership, positive emotions, and work-life balance within the public sector context. The findings affirm that altruistic leadership has a significant and positive impact on employees' perceived work-life balance, both directly and indirectly through the mediating role of positive emotions. Leaders who demonstrate empathy, selflessness,

and concern for others create emotionally enriching environments that enable employees to manage work and non-work responsibilities more harmoniously. Furthermore, the research substantiates the theoretical proposition of the Broaden-and-Build Theory by illustrating how positive emotional states enhance individuals' capacity to cope with dual-role demands, thus reinforcing their overall life balance.

From a practical standpoint, these results offer valuable implications for public sector organizations, especially those struggling with high levels of employee stress and emotional fatigue. Government institutions and HR departments should prioritize the development of leadership competencies that emphasize altruism, emotional sensitivity, and servant-oriented behavior. Structured training programs aimed at cultivating empathetic leadership skills and emotional intelligence may serve as a strategic intervention to improve not only employee well-being but also institutional performance. Moreover, organizations are encouraged to promote work cultures where leaders model prosocial behavior and create spaces for open emotional expression. These efforts can translate into more resilient and emotionally stable workforces capable of maintaining productivity while preserving their quality of life.

Despite the robustness of the findings, this research is not without limitations. First, the study was conducted within a single public institution, which may limit the generalizability of the results to other organizational contexts, particularly in the private sector or different cultural settings. Second, the data relied exclusively on self-reported questionnaires, which may be subject to social desirability bias or respondent mood at the time of completion. Additionally, the cross-sectional design of the study restricts the ability to infer long-term causal relationships between the variables. These limitations highlight the need for cautious interpretation and call for replication studies in diverse organizational and cultural environments.

For future research, scholars are encouraged to adopt longitudinal designs to examine how the influence of altruistic leadership and emotional states evolve over time and across various organizational transitions. Expanding the scope to include additional mediators such as psychological capital, resilience, or organizational trust could further enrich the understanding of the mechanisms through which leadership styles influence work-life outcomes. Comparative studies across public and private sectors, or across different hierarchical levels within institutions, may also yield meaningful variations that deepen insights into context-specific dynamics. Lastly, incorporating qualitative methods such as interviews or focus groups could offer richer, more nuanced perspectives on the lived experiences of employees under altruistic leadership.

In sum, this study makes a significant contribution to the growing body of knowledge on leadership and employee well-being by elucidating the emotional pathway that connects altruistic leadership to work-life balance. It calls attention to the vital role of emotions in organizational life and affirms that leadership styles grounded in care and selflessness can serve as powerful levers for fostering both individual fulfillment and institutional sustainability. Organizations that seek to thrive in the modern work environment would do well to recognize and operationalize these insights in their leadership development strategies and human resource policies.

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