The Application of Cameron's Positive Leadership Model in a New Zealand Law Enforcement Organisation

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Abstract

This study explored the implementation of Cameron's (2008) positive leadership model. The model consists of four strategies: fostering a positive climate, developing positive relationships, engaging in positive communication, and reinforcing positive meaning. Two practices were added as adaptions to the model: setting an Everest goal, and conducting personal management interviews. Journals were kept by each leader, and individual interviews were held with leaders and officers to capture their lived experience of implementing the model. Operational data were collected to indicate achievement of the Everest goal. The experience of implementing the model challenged existing leadership practices, but overall it was a valuable exercise, in terms of positively influencing performance.

Key words
Positive leadership, positive behaviours, Cameron's positive leadership model, law enforcement

Introduction

This study explores the experiences of leaders in their implementation of Cameron's Positive Leadership Model ([CPLM]; Cameron, 2008; 2013) in a law enforcement organisation. Responding to the call from Cameron, Mora, Leutscher, and Calarco (2011) noting the limited research on how to assist organisations in implementing positive practices, we traverse the lived experiences of those leaders who implemented the model, as well as those they led. Leaders' behaviours can have a substantial effect on employees and organisational outcomes (Waldman, Ramirez, House, & Puranam, 2001). Therefore, exploring the practical *application* of CPLM provided a rare opportunity to work with leaders to understand their experiences of implementing positive leadership in their organisation. Through the application of a qualitative phenomenological approach, the aim of the research was to elicit the lived experiences as the model was implemented. We contribute to the literature by providing empirical data related to the implementation of CPLM, and add practical value for human resource practitioners on how to engage with, and implement, positive leadership strategies and practices.

As the foundation for this study, positive leadership is defined as "the ways in which leaders enable positively deviant performance, foster an affirmative orientation in organisations, and engender a focus on virtuousness and eudemonism" (Cameron, 2008: 1). Cameron (2008)

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contends positive leadership does not imply that "leaders should just smile and that everything will be fine" (p. 104). Rather, positive leadership necessitates 'positively deviant performance'; that is, more rigorous standards of performance than normal expectations. Positive leadership shares a common intellectual ancestry with authentic leadership in that both have emerged from studies on transformational leadership. However, underpinning positive leadership are the concepts embedded with positive organisational scholarship, which has an explicit focus on understanding flourishing in organisational contexts, and builds on individual and collective strengths. Positive leadership has a clear focus on positivity: on achievement of results, and on enabling positively deviant outcomes (e.g. human flourishing, achieving excellence). Flourishing refers to being in an optimal range of human functioning and is indicated at the individual level (generativity, growth) and at the organisational level (e.g. group creativity, innovation, growth, or other markers that a collective is healthy and has 'positively deviant' performance). Positive leadership is criticised as being a North American cultural approach with critics claiming that most of the benefits are actually for the enhancement of leaders and organisations, rather than to the employees (Fineman, 2006). Other criticisms are that there is little evidence that positivity is beneficial, and could actually be harmful to organisations (Ehrenreich, 2009). However, much of the writing on positive leadership is conceptual, with very little empirical work to support or refute its claims (for a full review of positive leadership see Martin, 2015).

The CPLM has four key strategies that can be used to implement positive leadership in the workplace: fostering positive climate (cultivating compassion, forgiveness, and gratitude in the workplace), developing positive relationships (leader modelling of positive energy, encouraging high quality relationships), engaging in positive communication (a critical enabler of positive leadership, occurs when affirmative and supportive language replaces negative and critical language), and reinforcing positive meaning (engendering and nurturing purpose and meaning into the work that employees do). To support the practical application and implementation of positive leadership and provide concrete actions for the CPLM strategies, Cameron suggests a number of positive practices, including the Everest goal (Cameron & Levine, 2006) and the personal management interview ([PMI] Boss, 1983; Goodman & Boss, 2002).

To harness the energy of the positive leadership strategies, Cameron and Levine (2006) recommend leaders should set Everest goals. They contend that such goals represent an ultimate achievement, an extraordinary accomplishment, or a positively deviant outcome. The concept is one method of providing both a foundation and a focus for the outcomes sought in the CPLM, and for shaping and driving performance towards those outcomes. Personal management interviews (PMI; Boss, 1983) are regular face-to-face meetings between a leader and a direct report. The PMIs are not appraisal sessions; rather they are opportunities to clarify expectations and support operational goals. One differentiating attribute of positive leaders is they provide opportunities for others to receive developmental coaching so that employees feel encouraged (Cameron, 2013). Previous research provides indirect support for implementing PMIs in tandem with positive leadership; Czech and Forward (2013) found employees seek clear role expectations, and when these are met employees are often more effective and satisfied with their jobs (Snow, 2002). Although limited literature exists on the practical application of PMIs, Latif (2003) advocates for the incorporation of supportive communication principles into regularly scheduled PMI sessions.

We now describe the study we undertook to understand the lived experiences of the leaders who implemented the CPLM, and the experiences of Customs officers. To assist practitioners, we also provide detail on the implementation process and context of the study.

Research Approach

An inductive, interpretative approach was chosen because it sits within the interpretivist philosophical paradigm adopted by the authors, and is in keeping with the exploratory nature of seeking to understand the lived experiences of the participants. The approach supported the research objective of understanding unique interactions in a specific setting (Patton, 2002) and enabled a focus on interpretation of phenomena in their natural settings (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This research approach aligned with the researchers' value system of *doing-with-not-to* philosophy, which essentially means working *with* people to make changes rather than *imposing* changes on them. In hindsight, the choice of an interpretative phenomenological approach was advantageous, because of the unfolding context resulting from natural disaster events that occurred during the study, and the ability of this method to help contextualise the impact from these disasters.

During the research, particularly throughout the analysis process, the researchers adopted a conscious awareness of the importance of bracketing, or *epoché* (Tufford & Newman, 2010), meaning to refrain from judgement. This process is central to phenomenology and involves the researcher consciously suspending their presuppositions, prejudgements, and interpretations so that they can be open to the aspects of meaning that belong to the phenomena of the lived experience of the participant (Creswell, 2007; Moustakas, 1994). We explored and discussed preconceptions we had about the research topic, the participants, and later, about the emerging data. A number of self-management strategies, such as staying aware of personal biases, were noted and discussed during the research process.

Context of the Study

The research was conducted within the Customs offices at Christchurch International Airport, New Zealand, employing 10 leaders and 75 Customs officers (21 work on a contingent basis). All participants worked rostered 10-hour shifts, six days on, four days off. The officers were divided into four teams, each led by two front-line leaders. Their responsibilities included the processing of arriving and departing international passengers, profiling, collecting duty, and protecting the border from importation of illicit substances, prohibited items, and prohibited persons. Over the duration of the study, a total of 803,222 passengers were processed.

The motivation for the study was the desire by a number of Customs leaders to increase performance in a number of critical operational areas. These leaders had been introduced to the positive leadership approach through the Customs in-house leadership development programme. After the first researcher gave a presentation to a Customs leadership forum detailing the knowledge acquired from participating in the University of Michigan positive leadership programme, several of the leaders requested assistance to implement Cameron's positive

leadership model in the airport to work on improving operational performance. This presented the opportunity to take the positive leadership approach further through the application of this conceptual model.

Three days after the study began the region experienced a high magnitude earthquake, followed by several months of significant aftershocks. The fatal earthquakes devastated buildings and infrastructure throughout the region. During this period, each significant aftershock resulted in the closure of the airport for runway inspections. Customs staff also managed the influx of international rescue teams and facilitated the departure of victims and their families throughout the duration of the study. The disrupted operational environment also increased the likelihood of international criminal activity by those attempting to bring in prohibited substances and/or attempting to enter the country illegally under various guises of earthquake recovery activities.

The ethical dilemma following the initial earthquake event was the desire to continue with the study against the reality that all leaders would need to focus their energies in leading in this unprecedented environment. The dilemma was resolved through advising the leaders that it was their decision to continue, delay, or abandon the implementation of the CPLM. The leaders made an independent and unanimous decision to continue with the implementation.

Method

Participants

The 10 participants in this study represented the entire leadership team for the regional Customs service. Leaders were e-mailed personalised invitations to participate and all accepted. The average age of the leaders was 58 years, with the average time working for Customs being 22 years. All had considerable leadership experience averaging 15.5 years across the group. There were eight men and two women leaders; gender-neutral language is used to prevent identifying individual participants. As part of the implementation design, leaders chose 20 officers to be involved in the positive management interview program. At the conclusion of the implementation, 10 officers were chosen randomly to participate in an individual semi-structured interview with the first author. All 10 accepted the invitation. Six of the 10 were female, averaged 37.6 years, and averaged 5.3 years of service at Customs.

Research Process

The study consisted of three interrelated phases: pre-implementation planning, field implementation (six-months duration), and post-implementation individual interviews with leaders and followers (officers). Three data sources contributed to the qualitative analysis in this study: semi-structured face-to-face interviews with leaders, leader e-journals, and face-to-face officer interviews who participated in the PMI process.

Pre-implementation Planning

The first phase involved the preparation of leaders for the implementation of CPLM, with workshops being facilitated by an external consultant. The reason for the workshops was to discuss the practical aspects of implementing CPLM and resulted in an agreement between the leaders to add the Everest goal and PMI practices into the model. The rationale for this was that having a goal with a set of operational measures to indicate achievement supported the leaders' desire to improve operational performance. In the pre-implementation workshops, the notion of actively identifying and working with both high-achieving employees and under-achieving employees had an immediate accord with all of the leaders. This was in contrast to the opportunity to participate in an exercise using the reflective best-self tool, (Roberts, Dutton, Spreitzer, Heaphy, & Quinn, 2005) which was unanimously rejected by the leaders, as primarily a '*North American approach*' (Leader F). The majority of leaders considered soliciting feedback on their best-self was not an approach they were comfortable with. Additionally, the notion of keeping a gratitude journal and/or expressing gratitude was considered by the majority of leaders as unnecessary. On the other hand, the notion of using descriptive and supportive communication to address poor operational performance found favour with the leaders, as did managing inappropriate behaviour such as incivility (Sguera, Bagozzi, Huy, Boss, & Boss, 2016) and habitual under-performance of some officers.

The final workshop was self-facilitated by the leadership team to encourage ownership over the implementation, and to finalise the Everest goal, the data needed to measure this goal, and the process for implementation. It is important to note that the researchers did not facilitate the implementation of the CPLM. Rather, it was the leaders who navigated the practical implementation with their staff, with the researchers' providing resources and support when needed.

Rather than informing staff of the Everest goal and the decision to work with positive leadership, it was agreed that leaders would introduce their own team(s) to the goal, the eight measures that would indicate achievement of the goal, and the PMI process. Each leader quietly worked at implementing positive strategies.

Implementation and Resources

During the planning phase, the leaders were given Cameron's (2008) book to read. Additionally, there was a need for practical information to facilitate implementation of the CPLM. To meet this need, a guide was created for the current study giving examples of positive leadership behaviours that are inherent in each of the four strategies in CPLM (see Table 1). Monthly sessions between the leaders and the officers provided an opportunity to have a structured conversation regarding their work, the work environment, and their career. A template was created to help leaders direct the conversation on team climate and wider work environment, work relationships, communication, meaning/contribution in the workplace, feedback on job performance, progress towards performance goals, accountability, and training requirements. Together these resources provided the '*how'* for the leaders in implementing CPLM, who may have floundered without guidance, and provided more standardised data for the study. A

potential disadvantage in providing leaders with templates is that it narrowed their focus to only the items within those templates.

Table 1 Guide to positive leadership behaviours developed for the study

Positive climate	Positive relationships	Positive communication	Positive meaning
Positive noticing and expressing verbal or written thanks/appreciation to others for their actions	Actions towards others that build positive workplace relations	Have descriptive and supportive conversations	Reinforce the overall contribution the work makes to others and the strategic outcomes of the organisation/Everest goal
Encouraging and reinforcing positive performance through verbal or written feedback	Leader facilitation of and modelling of positive energy	Describe what was observed and/or what behaviour is expected, rather than passing judgement	Reinforce meaningfulness of the work individuals do, and the team does
Expressing empathy and responding with empathy, and providing support for issues	Recognizing and addressing poor performance. Reinforce those modelling good performance.	Describe observation rather than make assumptions about behaviour	Encourage the generation of ideas and support for implementation
Strengths based approach – recognising and building on strengths observed in others	Focus on strengths and give time to strongest performers	Use more positive words than negative words in communication with others	
	Make opportunities for what people do best		

Data Collection

Leader Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were held between the first author and the 10 leaders during the implementation and post-implementation. All interviews were held onsite at the Customs' offices within the airport. The interviews focused on in-depth exploration of their experiences of implementing CPLM in applying positive strategies/practices in their workplace, their perceptions of the Everest Goal, what went well/not so well, and whether they noticed any changes to their leadership practices/style.

Leader e-journals

Collecting data from journals for phenomenological analysis has been advocated by Creswell (2013). A template helped guide the leaders to reflect daily on their use of positive strategies, the

positive behaviours (see Table 1), the CPLM model, the measures for the Everest goal, and the PMIs. The degree of journal completeness varied from one line entries to comprehensive narratives that included validating evidence, such as emails from officers in response to leader actions. Leader e-journal data provided rich data about the day-to-day implementation of the model.

Officer Interviews

Semi-structured interviews were conducted post-implementation to explore officer experiences of having an Everest goal and being involved in PMI sessions, as well as their observations on any differences they noticed in the workplace over the past six months. All interviews were recorded and transcribed.

Everest Goal Measures

Leaders agreed on eight operational measures that would indicate achievement of their Everest goal (*recognition of* [the] *International Airport as being the model airport in the country by end of the study period;* 'model' being defined as exceeding national operational performance requirements). Six of these measures related to increasing quality, productivity, and timeliness of processing procedures, and two measures related to reducing sick and vacation leave balances (see Table 2). Data were obtained from the Customs electronic operational management system at the commencement and conclusion of the study.

Table 2 Outcomes of the Everest goal measures

Everest goal measures	*Baseline measures*	*Results - post implementation*
Reduce average sick days per officer by 1.2 from 9.2 to 8 average sick days per officer	9.2 average days per officer	14% reduction to 7.9 average days per officer = measure exceeded
Reduce vacation leave balances by 1 average day per officer from 24.2 to 23.2 average days per officer	24.2 average days per officer	10% increase to 26.6 average days per officer = measure not achieved
Quality assurance check 50% of officer notebooks	30% quality assurance checked	80% quality assurance checked = measure exceeded
80% of officer notebooks checked are at accuracy standard	66% of notebooks checked are at accuracy standard	81% of officer notebooks checked were at accuracy standard = measure exceeded
50% of activity and alert reports are quality assurance checked	30% currently quality assurance checked	67% of activity and alert reports quality assurance checked = measure exceeded
Reduce outstanding activity and alert report on work queue by 20%	78 reports on work queue	60 reports on work queue = 23% reduction, measure exceeded
Decrease data mismatch to intervention by 2%	7% data mismatch	5% data mismatch = 2% decrease, measure achieved
Decrease non-accuracy of officer primary processing by 2%	18% non-accuracy primary processing	21% non-accuracy = 3% net increase measure, not achieved

Data Analysis

The aim of interpretative phenomenological analysis is to explore in detail the experience of phenomena from the perspective of the participants, and to make sense of that experience through an interpretative process (Patton, 2015). Under this paradigm, data analysis followed the six-step process suggested by Smith, Flowers, & Larkin (2009: 79-107) and Creswell (2007: 159). The process involved first analysing the data for each participant, then moving to analysing the data across each participant group, then working with the overall data set seeking emergent patterns and themes. The officer interview transcripts were processed separately from the leader data.

The first three steps focused on the individual participant experience, and included reading and re-reading, initial noting observations in each data source (reflective engagement conducted several times for each data item, e.g. interview transcript, e-journal entry), and developing emergent themes from initial noting, annotations and patterns within each data item. The fourth step was to bracket each data item before moving onto the final steps of assessing the key emergent themes for the group of data as a whole. These final steps involved searching for connections across the leader and officer data through clustering themes, collating findings, and interpreting patterns and reflecting on the data through re-reading literature.

Results and Discussion

Four consistent themes were central to the stories that emerged as the essence of the participants' experiences: (1) structure and focus in chaos, (2) working with positive strategies, (3) compassion and connectivity, and (4) affecting performance for the better. These themes, along with the addition of leadership behaviours, the Everest goal and PMIs are shown in the adapted version of the CPLM (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Adapted Version of Cameron's Positive Leadership Model to include positive behaviours.
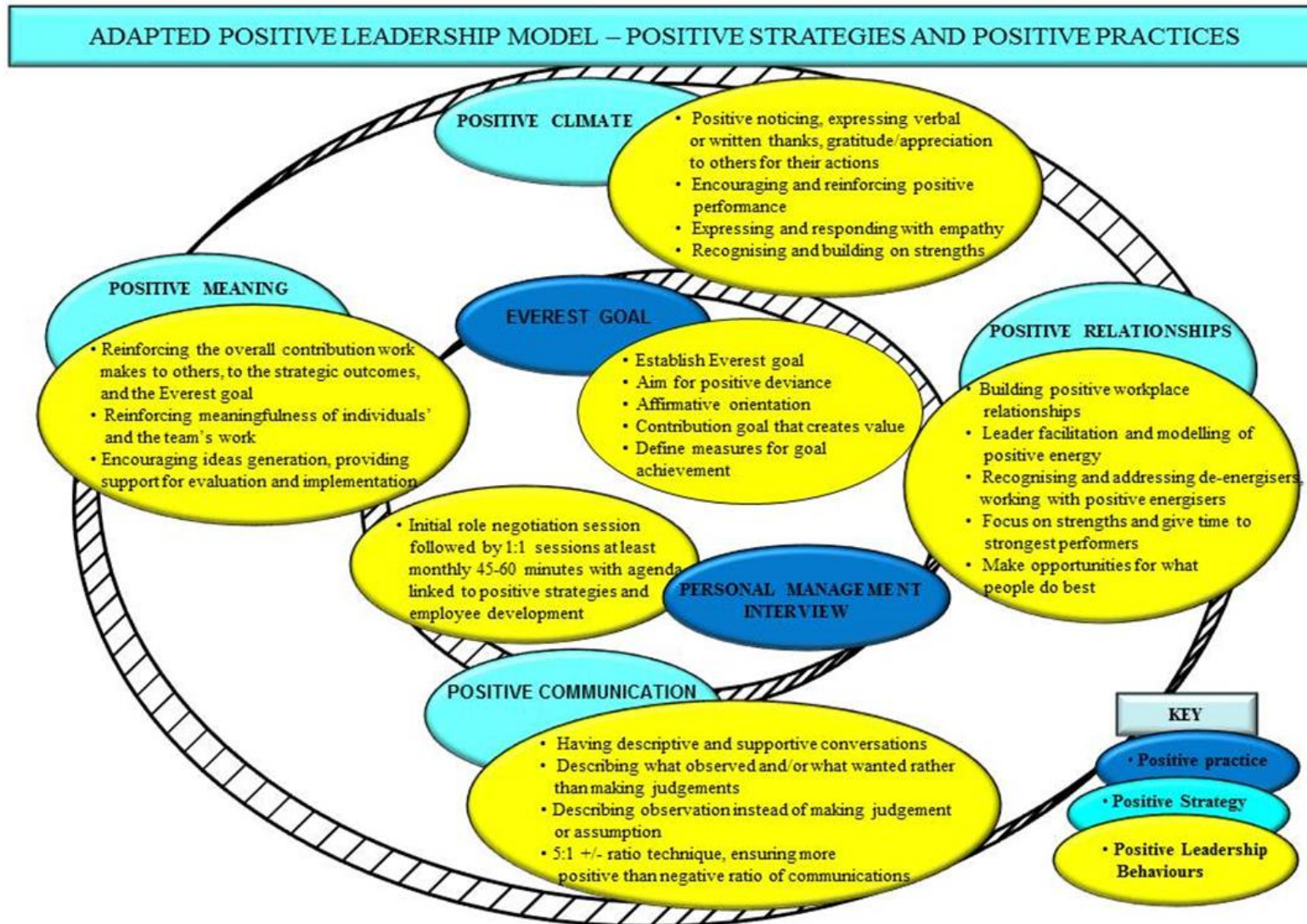
Theme 1: Structure and Focus in Chaos

Implementing CPLM was a major undertaking for the leaders. In channelling their attention toward leadership behaviours, all of the leaders noted they had more focus on people. Most considered that this focus made a difference to how their leadership team operated in that they had a clear goal that gave focus to their activities. '*… [there was] more emphasis on our common purpose*" (Leader J). Most described how other leaders were listening more in meetings and there was more communication between the leaders.

Having an Everest goal and a set of measures on which they had collectively decided acted as a central pillar. On this foundation, they could then focus their own and their teams' behaviour, especially in the midst of a chaotic environment. The centrality of the goal and the meaning it provided for the leadership team as well as for the officers is a consistent theme articulated by the leaders.

> *… timely in some ways that we had that* [the Everest goal] *when the earthquakes were going on. We still managed to fit it in in a very demoralising time and situation that we were living in. We still knew how important it was so everybody was still focusing on achieving what we set out to do. It was very positive from our own management team, and having a goal uplifted each team as a whole* (Leader J).

All 10 officers articulated high awareness and importance of the Everest goal and measures in their interview. Officers considered that it had made a difference to how their leaders worked. In their view, having the goal provided opportunities for officers to become involved in the generation of ideas for productivity and workflow improvements.

> *I think it* [having an Everest goal] *was of use because it gave us something to aim towards. I know that* [leader] *was right on top of it all the time. Then I started looking at it too and it became something that I'm aware of to keep an eye on…it gave us something to aim towards. I thought it was great because it, um – otherwise you just walk in walk out…* (Officer C).

Together, the Everest goal and the structured PMI sessions provided a common purpose, gave a degree of legitimacy, and provided structure and focus for the leaders in a chaotic environment. These findings emerged from interpretation of the references by both leaders and officers as to the experiences of implementing CPLM at such a chaotic time, and to the focus that this provided for them.

> *I think certainly for us when dealing with a lot of negative issues … using positive leadership stuff made the going a lot easier to stay out of the doom spiral, and concentrating on what you are contributing to the overall bigger picture to improve the overall environment* (Leader A).

These findings concur with those of other researchers such as Locke and Latham, (1990; 2002), Kelloway and Barling (2000a; b), and Kelloway, Weigand, McKee, & Das (2013), who contend that goal setting and goal clarity are important features of ongoing high performance. Where

there is a strong contribution goal toward results (such as the Everest goal), a higher degree of meaning has been found to be present, compared to when self-interest goals predominate (Niiya & Crocker, 2008). This contributes to positive meaning and was a key strategy used by the leaders in this study. In addition, Cameron (2008; 2013) contended that, in the implementing his model, leaders who enable meaningfulness and emphasise contribution goals are more likely to experience higher individual and organisational performance. Additionally, leaders have an important role to play in influencing subordinates' beliefs about the worth of a goal and about their ability to achieve that goal (Jackson & Parry, 2011).

Theme 2: Working Differently with Positive Strategies

All of the leaders described, in varying degrees, that they had a higher awareness of self and increased the range of leadership behaviours they used in the workplace. Initially, many found the change in behavioural orientation challenging. Many reflected that they were more aware of their own behaviours and, therefore, more conscious of giving positive feedback as well as expressing appreciation and empathy.

> *It has made a difference, I am more aware of myself. I know myself that I'm more aware of what the officers are doing and conscious to pat them on the back when they have done a good job* (Leader C).

I'm not terribly empathetic…I learned to be a lot more empathetic with people… (Leader D).

The majority noticed that implementing CPLM had made a difference to how they managed their respective teams. Where leaders considered they had not noticed a positive change in their behaviour, colleagues and officers noted that in fact they had changed.

It was different to get our ideas out and be asked for what we think and then getting it done (Officer G).

All leaders were able to describe how they used positive strategies, suggesting they learned new leadership behaviours. Verification came mostly from the leaders' journals and the officer interviews, with examples of positive leader behaviours. These findings corroborate a point of convergence between Cameron (2008; 2013), and Youssef-Morgan and Luthans (2013) who contend that positive leadership behaviours can be learned. Overall, the leaders' implementation approach was to establish a positive frame of thinking and to model positive leadership behaviours in their interactions with others. In doing so, the leaders' approach influenced positivity in others. This supports other research suggesting that, when leaders establish a frame of thinking, it can influence the self-construct in followers (Hannah, Woolfolk & Lord, 2009), and that leaders can affect the self-strategies of followers through the modelling of behaviours (Gardner & Avolio, 1998; Lord & Brown, 2004). Furthermore, the implementation structure (e.g. behavioural focus, structured PMI sessions, Everest goal) provided the leaders with a degree of individual and team psychological safety (Edmondson, 1999; Park, Kim, Yoon & Joo, 2017) to risk working differently from workplace norms; and learning different interpersonal modes that accentuated psychological capital (Luthans, Avey, Avolio, Norman, & Combs, 2006). This is consistent with research that high quality relationships contribute both directly and indirectly to

psychological safety, which is associated with facilitating learning behaviours (Carmeli, Brueller, & Dutton, 2009).

The data showed a consistent trend of leaders applying positive strategies that fostered positive interactions with officers, which was noticed as being different from their usual interaction with leaders. They also used positive strategies to encourage increased performance and express appreciation. When officers described these changes, they noticed "*just little things like giving us a comment when we were working*" (Officer J). Officers also described having more contact with their leaders and having increased opportunities to work in different areas of the workplace. Leaders were "*definitely checking on how we all are, letting us do things more.* [Name of leader]*sorted for me to do some time in the control room, had been wanting to have that for ages*" (Officer G).

One of the most visible indicators that leaders were working differently was their implementation of the PMI practice. The addition of the PMI practice to the CPLM was a core enabler to implement positive strategies directly with their teams. A positive response regarding PMIs was evident from all 10 officers in terms of the positive impact it had on their motivation, job satisfaction, and career development.

> *To be able to sit down and have [*leader*] show an interest in what you're doing kind of motivates you more to think, oh, well I could be doing this, or I could be applying for these jobs, or I should go on this course, rather than just forgetting about those sort of things and just carrying on with your normal* [work routine] (Officer D).

The consistent leader and officer statements relating to the PMI strongly suggest that this practice was a positive addition to CPLM, in that they fostered positive workplace interactions. Leaders received feedback from officers that acted as positive reinforcement for them to continue the sessions, despite the time constraints. Prior to the implementation, this type of regular meeting did not occur. The structure of the meetings, the focus on development and goal achievement, as well as the opportunity to receive and give timely feedback, was considered by all who participated, especially the officers, as different and valuable.

> *…by using those strategies, constantly using them, I could see the positive reaction from the troops, their behaviours – they were more professional in their approach to their job. They were taking ownership. I think it gave them more confidence when they realised that they could achieve and it also made them realise that they had to do the full job rather than rely on their* [leaders] *to do part of it for them. That was different than before* (Leader F).

The data suggest the leaders did view leadership differently and, in so doing, acted differently. Taking such a perspective assists with understanding how to unlock potential, reveal possibilities, and move along a more positive course of human and organisational functioning (Spreitzer, Lam & Quinn, 2012).

Theme 3: Compassion and Connectivity

When the CPLM implementation process commenced, the leaders' primary focus was to increase operational performance to achieve their Everest goal. However, the earthquakes, in conjunction with learning positive leadership behaviours, resulted in them having to deliberately focus on demonstrating compassion and optimism in the workplace. In so doing, leaders had to balance workplace compassion with their prime legislative responsibilities of ensuring continuity and rigor of operational delivery.

> *I have become much more conscious of learning what their* [the officers] *personal circumstances are. I can … anticipate when they are becoming stressed because of their family circumstances. It can dictate what jobs I put them on. So if I think they are stressed, I'm not going to put them into a public role, so I might put them in the control* [room] *role where they are away from the public and their patience is not being tested and that sort of thing. It* [implementing CPLM] *has raised the consciousness of people's circumstances…I made an effort to know what their individual circumstances were* (Leader D).

The findings suggest leaders consciously paid attention both to responding to officer needs and to positively reinforcing the reciprocal nature of the situation for everyone in the workplace, for example, "*I just keep saying the value that they add through turning up*" (Leader J). Officers noticed and appreciated the consideration: *Checking in with us to be sure we were okay and thanking us for coming on shift when we had quakes and aftershocks happening and would rather be at home*" (Officer J).

In times of trauma, experiences of compassion at work are likely to influence deeper affective commitment to the organisation and engender positive emotions (Lilius, Worline, Maitlis, Kanov, Dutton, & Frost, 2008). If compassion is accepted as being the empathetic reaction to observed suffering (Lazarus, 1991) and the actions taken to alleviate the pain (Frost, Dutton, Worline, & Wilson, 2000) then the conditions for compassionate responding to emerge (Madden, Duchon, Madden, & Plowman, 2012) in this study were opportune.

Leaders also made particular efforts to provide opportunities for officers to come together for social events (e.g. "[Name of leader] *appeared and shouted[1] coffee for all those working. Good spirit of goodwill, camaraderie, and cooperation exists*" (Leader D). This consideration of collegial social interaction increased connectivity in the workplace. The commonality of the earthquake experience and the implementation of the positive strategies in CPLM provided the opportunity for a mutually reinforcing workplace environment that strengthened and intensified caring, compassion, and optimism. In essence, in the chaotic external environment, the workplace became a '*safe haven*' for leaders and officers. This intensified the likelihood of reciprocal positivity which, in turn, had the propensity to absorb and, to a degree, protect or distract people, from the trauma of the constant natural disaster events while in the workplace. This acted as a 'buffer' between the people in the workplace and the constantly occurring natural disaster events. This sense of support contributed to resilience, social connection, and a sense of belonging in the workplace.

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[1] The word *shouted* is local dialect meaning to have bought something for someone else with no gain to oneself

Theme 4: Influencing Performance for the Better

Leaders deliberately emphasised the meaning and importance of the work their teams were doing. The data, particularly from the leader e-journals and officer interviews, indicates that leaders used positive communication strategies in a number of different ways to create a link between performance and meaning. "*Our work is important and everyone has a role to play, we have different roles but they are all important in doing what we do. I really emphasised that for the guys*" (Leader J).

All officers noticed increased focus on people and achievement. Data indicate that, for many leaders, there was a fundamental change in how they recognised and endorsed performance and in how they addressed non-performance. The focus was on using descriptive rather than evaluative statements describing the performance or behaviours desired, rather than stating what they did not want (which was the cultural norm). Surprisingly, all of the leaders described instances of applying supportive and descriptive communication to address performance issues and inappropriate behaviours. "[Name of officer] *is quite a de-energiser in the team, so over the last couple of months I have focused on the positive with this officer and given her positive feedback about work undertaken and also discussed future opportunities with her in a positive manner. There have been noticeable changes in the officer's attitude since that time, however, it will be important to maintain the positive leadership principles otherwise I suspect that the attitudes may revert back*" (Leader B).

The findings indicate that the leaders applied positive communication strategies to reinforce the importance and meaning of the work to encourage high performance and to address non-performance. When positive behaviour is modelled by leaders, it impacts on interactions with others at work (Cross, Baker & Parker, 2003; Gerbasi, Porath, Parker, Spreitzer, & Cross, 2015) and is associated with changes in follower job engagement and job performance (Owens, Baker, McDaniel Sumpter, & Cameron, 2015).

Everest Goal Measures

In implementing CPLM, the leaders had set an Everest goal of being a model international airport, and agreed on eight operational measures they would use as an indication of whether or not that they had achieved their goal. Departing from the interpretivist paradigm, the data gathered here are included as they provide additional information to support the participants' description of their experiences in relation to performance outcomes.

At the conclusion of the six-month CPLM implementation period, the leaders had achieved six of the eight operational measures (see Table 2), aligning with the qualitative data suggesting a greater focus on people and performance during the implementation period. Although we cannot determine causality, given the seismic circumstances encountered in this study it is reasonable to conclude that an outcome of increased operational performance and decreased absenteeism is an extraordinary outcome, particularly when performance, wellbeing, and absenteeism usually suffer following a traumatic event (Alexander, 2005; Goodman & Mann, 2008; Mercer, Ancock, Levis, & Reyes, 2014; Pearson & Clair, 1998; Qin & Jiang, 2011; Sanchez, Korbin, & Viscarra,

1995). The enhanced focus on people and performance through communication and positive workplace climate may have come about because of the earthquake commonality. However, the earthquakes also presented significant stressors into the work environment and had the potential to increase interpersonal conflict and damage the workplace climate. We argue that the implementation of the CPLM strategies practices gave the leaders a set of alternative behaviours during this time, which corresponded with an increase in operational performance. The combination of strategies with the Everest goal enabled different behaviours to be learned and practised, and provided a tangible focus in the chaos of ongoing seismic events. The combination of positive strategies with every day practices enables the development of psychological capacities to be learned, which can predict performance, satisfaction, and absenteeism in the workplace (Youssef-Morgan & Luthans, 2010; Tombaugh, 2005).

Two measures were not achieved: outstanding vacation leave balances, and processing errors. Under the circumstances, the increased leave balances could be explained by the ongoing earthquakes and the reluctance of most people to take a vacation in the unpredictable environment. An explanation for increased processing errors could be the intensified volume and complexity of processing passengers following the earthquake (e.g. response teams entering the country without adequate entry requirements). Another is the significant amount of pressure officers had to deal with in both their personal and professional environment, which possibly affected their concentration. Most probable is a combination of these factors contributing to the increase in processing errors. Disasters are complex events likely to challenge the coping, concentration, accuracy, and memory abilities of most people. In such circumstances, there are a range of normal reactions, including impaired memory and concentration (Alexander, 2005), that may explain the increase in officer processing errors. Given the continuous nature of the disaster, there is also the probability of personal and professional stress affecting concentration and memory (Van der Kolk & McFarlane, 2012).

Conclusions

The main contribution of this study is the finding that leaders learned and applied strategies that fostered positive meaning, positive climate, positive relationships and positive communication over the six month period. They used these behaviours to influence officer performance, foster relationships, express appreciation, and to demonstrate empathy in the workplace.

An important contribution of this study to the applied HRM literature is that leaders who are implementing positive strategies should focus on applying all of the positive strategies, rather than focusing on one fragment of the model. In doing so, this has the potential to support the conceptualisation of the wholeness of the model and supports the concept of leadership being "purpose-driven not targets-driven" (Jackson & Smolović Jones, 2012: 37). This reduces the risk of the Everest goal becoming the *only* focus for the implementation and, consequently, minimising the application of the positive strategies in the process. Additionally, the PMI practice facilitates positive interactions between leaders and their direct reports. In this study, both leaders and officers valued the PMI practice because of the opportunities it provided for supportive communication. In the implementation, the Everest goal and the PMI each have a role to play. But together they act as core enablers for the leaders in implementing the CPLM

strategies. Literature on goal setting, psychological capital, psychological safety, and participative safety support the contention that there is value in adding the Everest goal and PMI practices to the model (see Figure 1). Adapting the CPLM by adding these two positive practices augments the model and provides structure, centrality, and purpose to the implementation.

Another contribution resulting from this study is the finding that implementing the adapted positive leadership model in adverse conditions has the potential to lead to positive results. As previously reviewed, other studies indicate that performance and attendance declines as a result of traumatic events. This study supports the notion that the implementation of positive strategies during traumatic events can have a positive influence on performance and attendance, in situations where one would expect both to decline. However, what cannot be concluded is the degree to which the continuous sequence of natural disaster events influenced emotions which consequently had the potential to influence behaviours and outcomes. External validity of this study is, therefore, constrained, as is the ability to generalise the research findings. This is because the context of the study was within a rank-structured law enforcement organisation in a natural disaster environment.

Finally, this study highlights that leaders are able to independently implement the adapted version of this model with minimal support. This is a key finding for HRM practitioners, in that many potential benefits may be gained through supporting frontline leaders to take responsibility for the practical implementation of the adapted positive leadership model within their own workplaces. The few studies that have looked at the implementation of positive practices have all done so through implementing from a centralised head office rather than through frontline leaders. With a centralised approach, where the majority of the pre-planning and monitoring of the implementation sits with others, there is the potential for frontline leaders to take less ownership of the implementation. Regardless of the good intentions of those leading a centralised approach, there is the possibility for a '*do to*' as opposed to a '*do with*' attitude emerging. Encouraging and enabling leaders to plan and lead the implementation in their own workplace has a higher potential to engender ownership and positively deviant outcomes.

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