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Article

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Review

Exploring Purpose-Driven Leadership: Theoretical Foundations, Mechanisms, and Impacts in Organizational Context

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Abstract: Leadership has been extensively studied in organizational contexts, with numerous theories examining how leaders influence success and employee engagement. Most recently, integrating organizational purpose—the core reason for an organization’s existence—into leadership has garnered substantial interest, resulting in the underdeveloped concept of Purpose-Driven Leadership. This paper presents a systematic review of Purpose-Driven Leadership in organizations. We employed the PRISMA guidelines and searched WoS and SCOPUS, identifying 58 relevant research papers for inclusion in our review. The success of Purpose-Driven Leadership, as a nexus of individual and organizational purposes, hinges on defining and implementing an organizational purpose that resonates at all levels, based on the inverted pyramid of purpose, from overarching organization to individual roles. Our review suggests several positive outcomes associated with Purpose-Driven Leadership. These include increased work engagement, where employees are more invested in their roles; enhanced organizational commitment, reflecting stronger loyalty to the organization; improved employee performance, demonstrating higher productivity and effectiveness; and overall organizational performance. Additionally, this leadership approach promotes a cohesive and motivated workforce by aligning individual goals with the broader organizational purpose, fostering a culture of collaboration and innovation. Several moderators were also identified, including effective purpose communication, impact perception, autonomy, and balance of work–life.

Keywords: purpose-driven leadership; organizational purpose; leadership; organizational performance; antecedents; attributes; mediators; moderators; measurement; systematic review



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1. Introduction

Leadership has long been a central focus of organizational studies, with numerous theories exploring how leaders can contribute to organizational success and employee engagement (Hallinger and Kovačević 2022; Zhao et al. 2023). Among these theories, Transformational and Transactional Leadership have been extensively studied, highlighting their impact on various organizational outcomes (Dhamija et al. 2023; Piwowar-Sulej and Iqbal 2023). Recently, the incorporation of the organizational purpose, understood as the foundational reason why the organization exists (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Dimitrov 2022; Kaplan 2023), into leadership research and practices, has gained significant attention, leading to the proliferation of terms such as purpose-directed leadership (e.g., Dorasamy 2010), purpose-oriented leadership (e.g., Cavazotte et al. 2020), or purpose-driven leadership (Dimitrov 2022; Enslin et al. 2023; Kaplan 2023; Konadu et al. 2023; Lawson and Weberg 2023).

However, Purpose-Driven Leadership remains an underdeveloped construct in the literature, with limited empirical studies and theoretical frameworks dedicated to exploring its attributes and impacts on organizational performance and related metrics (Aguileta-Clemente et al. 2023; Brendel et al. 2023; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023). Consequently,

understanding this construct is crucial for several reasons. First, by clearly defining and conceptualizing this construct, researchers and practitioners can better distinguish it from other leadership models or frameworks, thereby enhancing its theoretical clarity and practical relevance. Second, comprehending the outcomes of Purpose-Driven Leadership is vital for identifying how aligning leadership practices with organizational purpose can drive performance metrics such as employee engagement, innovation, and overall organizational success. Finally, exploring the mechanisms through which Purpose-Driven Leadership operates can reveal the underlying processes that facilitate these outcomes, providing insights into how leaders can effectively integrate purpose into their strategies and actions.

The purpose of this paper is to address these gaps by systematically investigating the implementation of Purpose-Driven Leadership strategies in organizations. Specifically, this study aims to explore how these strategies influence the understanding, outcomes, mechanisms, and measurements of leadership, with particular attention to the role of potential moderators and mediators. The findings are expected to contribute to the theoretical development of Purpose-Driven Leadership and provide practical insights for leaders seeking to integrate organizational purpose into their leadership practices. Ultimately, this paper aims to advance the research on leadership by highlighting the potential of purpose-driven approaches to enhance organizational performance and foster a motivated and cohesive workforce.

2. Theoretical Perspectives on Leadership: An Evolutionary Analysis

Leadership is a dynamic concept that has been the subject of extensive analysis and theoretical development over the past centuries, evolving reflection on the complexity of human societies and organizations (Hallinger and Kovačević 2022; Zhao et al. 2023). The evolution of theoretical perspectives on leadership has been a continuous process with contributions from multiple perspectives of academic disciplines, including management, psychology, sociology, biology, anthropology, economics, and political sciences (Antonakis et al. 2019; Vugt and Rueden 2020).

One of the earliest perspectives on leadership was the Great Man Theory (Judge et al. 2002; Sarwar et al. 2022), which emphasized the role of singularly outstanding individuals, positing that leaders are exceptional individuals born with innate qualities that predestined them for leadership roles (Judge et al. 2002; Mouton 2019). According to this thesis, which was founded on a hero-centric view of leadership, some “great men” were historically predestined to alter the course of history due to their inherent qualities (Judge et al. 2002; Mouton 2019). Despite its historical influence, this theory has been criticized for its deterministic nature as well as its failure to consider environmental and situational factors (Mouton 2019).

Subsequently, leadership research has focused on traits, known as Trait Theory (Zaccaro 2007). According to this theory, people are born with some personal traits, such as confidence, intelligence, and social skills, that make them natural leaders (Judge et al. 2002). These traits, when complemented with the right skills and knowledge, can lead to leadership that adds significant value to an organization (Caldwell and Hayes 2016; Judge et al. 2002). However, critics argue that Trait Theory does not consider the impact of situational factors and interactions between leaders and followers (Zaccaro 2007), leading to new theories’ development.

Emerging as a counterpoint, Behavioral Theories suggest that leadership is not exclusively about inherent traits, but about learned behaviors and actions (Brower et al. 2000). In opposition to the Classical Theories, Behavioral Theories argue that leaders are made, not born, and anyone can learn to become a leader through learning and observation (Lord et al. 2016). A key behavioral theory is the Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) theory, which focuses on the relationship between leaders and members in an organization (Brower et al. 2000; Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995). It suggests that leaders develop unique

relationships with each member, which can significantly impact organizational outcomes and dynamics (Graen and Uhl-Bien 1995).

The subsequent development in leadership theory marked a shift from leader-centric views to a more contextual outlook (Sarwar et al. 2022). This led to the introduction of Contingency or Situational Theories, which suggest that leadership is dependent on how well their approach fits the needs of the circumstance (Fiedler 1964). Therefore, as per these theories, there is no one-size-fits-all leadership style; rather, the appropriate approach depends on factors such as team members' abilities, task characteristics, and organizational context (Hersey et al. 1979). An important model within this framework is Fiedler's Least Preferred Co-worker (LPC) theory. According to this theory, task-oriented leaders excel in unfavorable situations, while relationship-oriented leaders thrive in moderately favorable situations (Fiedler 1964). Other notable contingency theories include Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Model, which emphasizes the alignment between leadership styles and follower readiness (Hersey et al. 1979; Itzkovich et al. 2020; Thompson and Glasø 2018), Path-Goal Theory, which accentuates the leader's role in elucidating the road to success for their team members (Salhieh et al. 2023), and the Vroom-Yetton Decision Model, which offers a framework for leaders to determine the extent of subordinate involvement in decisions, taking into account various situational factors like the quality of the decision, level of subordinate commitment, and potential conflicts (Pate and Heiman 1987).

In the subsequent development of leadership research, Burns (1978) introduced the concepts of Transactional and Transformational Leadership, which were later expanded upon by Bass (1985). Transactional Leadership involves an exchange process where followers comply with their leaders' instructions in exchange for rewards like salary increases or promotions (Abbas and Ali 2023; Martinez and Leija 2023). On the other hand, Transformational Leadership goes beyond Transactional Leadership and motivates followers to go beyond their interests for the benefit of the organization (Martinez and Leija 2023; Pulido-Martos et al. 2023). This type of leadership relies on charisma and intellectual stimulation (Martinez and Leija 2023). However, while Transformational Leadership can generate motivation and performance (Abbas and Ali 2023; Pulido-Martos et al. 2023), it can also foster a reliance on the leader and stifle creativity and independent thinking among followers (Magasi 2021).

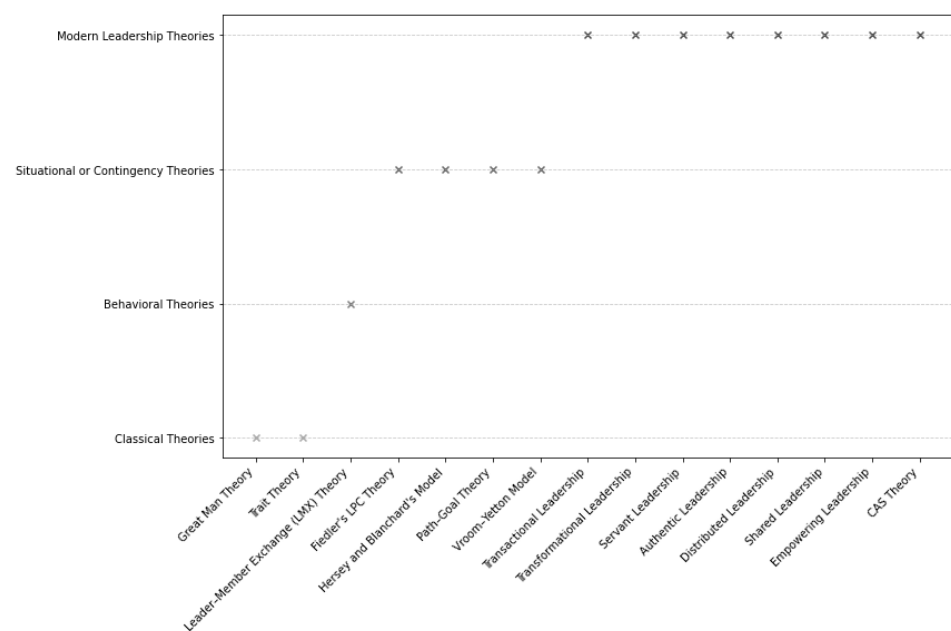
Other developments in leadership research have highlighted more holistic aspects of leadership. The Servant Leadership theory proposed by Greenleaf (1977) postulates that the essence of genuine leadership is anchored in an intrinsic desire to serve others (Amah and Oyetuunde 2020; Martinez and Leija 2023). Leaders adhering to this paradigm prioritize the holistic welfare and developmental trajectory of their followers and emphasize the cultivation of a cohesive community (Bai et al. 2023; Martinez and Leija 2023), which can lead to enhanced team cohesion (Christensen-Salem et al. 2021), heightened job satisfaction (Anshori et al. 2023; Gil et al. 2023), and a more engaged (Anshori et al. 2023; Canavesi and Minelli 2022) and motivated workforce (Anshori et al. 2023; Hartnell et al. 2023). Complementing this perspective, Ethical Leadership underscores the importance of leaders guiding their actions based on moral and ethical principles (Kim et al. 2022). Such leaders foster integrity within the organization, leading to the enhancement of the organization's reputation and stakeholder trust (Nguyen et al. 2021), and promoting sustainable organization practices (Nguyen et al. 2021; Ogunfowora et al. 2023). In a closely related vein, the theoretical framework of Authentic Leadership emphasizes leader authenticity and transparency. This involves self-awareness, genuine interactions, and transparency in decision-making (Lewis and Aldossari 2022; Sarwar et al. 2023; Tate et al. 2023), which can significantly influence followers' trust, work engagement, and wellbeing (Baquero 2023).

The turn of the 21st century saw a remarkable shift in leadership research, emphasizing Shared and Distributed Leadership. These paradigms acknowledge leadership as a collective phenomenon, transcending traditional hierarchies and embracing multiple sources of influence within an organization (Hickey et al. 2022; Zhu et al. 2018). Distributed Leadership views leadership as an emergent property of a group or network of interacting

individuals (Cordoba et al. 2022). This concept underscores that leadership roles and functions are dispersed throughout the organization rather than being the sole domain of formally appointed leaders (Cordoba et al. 2022; Hickey et al. 2022). It promotes a system of open collaboration, fostering innovation (Berraies 2023; Fu et al. 2018), shared responsibilities (Xhemajli et al. 2022), and organizational learning (Fu et al. 2018). Shared Leadership, closely related to Distributed Leadership, contends that leadership activities and influence are conjointly exercised by team members rather than centralized in a single leader (Cristofaro et al. 2023). This model thrives in teams where members cyclically and dynamically engage in leading each other. Research has shown that Shared leadership can lead to improved team performance (Shoukat et al. 2023), decision quality (Cristofaro et al. 2023), and innovation (Singh et al. 2022). Similarly, Empowering Leadership, which focuses on enhancing followers' self-efficacy, autonomy, and capacity for independent action (Hoang et al. 2021; Shahab et al. 2018), complements these contemporary leadership paradigms. By actively delegating authority and promoting self-leadership within teams, empowering leaders facilitates a more agile and adaptive organizational environment (Hoang et al. 2021; Shahab et al. 2018). This approach not only enhances individual empowerment but can also align with the principles of Distributed and Shared leadership, contributing to a holistic and integrated leadership framework (Jönsson et al. 2021).

Lastly, a significant framework that has gained popularity in recent years is the Theory of Complex Adaptive Systems (CASs). This framework provides a unique perspective on leadership in environments that are characterized by VUCA (Castillo and Trinh 2019). According to this theory, organizations are not entities; instead, they are systems that can adapt to their surroundings. In the CAS framework, leadership is not limited to individuals or hierarchical positions. Is seen as an emerging property of the system itself (Adobor et al. 2021; Olin et al. 2023). Leaders within a CAS act as facilitators who empower the system to self-organize and adjust in response to changing circumstances (Adobor et al. 2021). They foster a culture of experimentation learning and adaptability (Crabtree et al. 2020; Lin and Yi 2023).

The evolution of leadership theories, reflected in Figure 1, has been extensive, reflecting the complex dynamics of human societies and organizations (Hallinger and Kovačević 2022; Zhao et al. 2023). Over time, leadership thought has progressed from Classical Theories that champion inherent leadership qualities, like the Great Man Theory and Trait Theory (Judge et al. 2002; Sarwar et al. 2022; Zaccaro 2007), to those that consider learned behaviors and context, such as Behavioral and Contingency Theories (Brower et al. 2000; Lord et al. 2016; Sarwar et al. 2022). More modern theories, like Transactional and Transformational Leadership, focus on motivational aspects (Abbas and Ali 2023; Martinez and Leija 2023), while others like Servant, Ethical, and Authentic Leadership prioritize moral and genuine guidance (Amah and Oyetuunde 2020; Kim et al. 2022; Lewis and Aldossari 2022). The 21st century has brought about theories that emphasize Shared and Distributed leadership, recognizing leadership as a collective process beyond traditional hierarchies (Hickey et al. 2022; Zhu et al. 2018). Additionally, another contemporary perspective is the Theory of Complex Adaptive Systems, which views leadership in fluid and adaptive systems rather than fixed entities, especially in VUCA environments (Castillo and Trinh 2019; Lin and Yi 2023; Olin et al. 2023). Understanding the progression and diversity of these leadership theories is essential for addressing modern organizational challenges.



Source: Created by the authors.

Figure 1. Leadership theories.

3. Purpose-Driven Leadership: A New Perspective on Leadership

While different theories on leadership provide various perspectives on the complex nature of leading, one important aspect is the role of purpose in leadership (Enslin et al. 2023). A nascent but growing body of studies suggests that Purpose-Driven Leadership stands as a critical cornerstone for contemporary organizations (Bunderson and Thakor 2022; Enslin et al. 2023), particularly in today's socio-economic landscape, characterized by unprecedented challenges and opportunities (Lawson and Weber 2023; Ocasio et al. 2023). Purpose-Driven Leadership goes beyond leaders and becomes a guiding force that shapes the actions, values, and culture of an organization, as a whole (Almandoz 2023; Bunderson and Thakor 2022; Rindova and Martins 2023).

The rationale for selecting the term “Purpose-Driven Leadership” over other similar terms, such as “purpose-directed” and “purpose-oriented” leadership, lies in its broader and more dynamic approach to integrating organizational purpose into leadership practices. While “purpose-directed” and “purpose-oriented” leadership suggest a focus on purpose, “purpose-driven” implies a more active and continuous process of leading with purpose at the core.

Under the lens of Purpose-Driven Leadership, the central tenet is that an organization's purpose, defined as a reason for its existence (Enslin et al. 2023; Fleischer 2021; LaVoi and Haley 2021), serves as a compass for leadership decisions and practices (By 2021; Handa 2023). Rather than solely focusing on short-term goals, such as immediate profitability or performance metrics, this form of leadership places importance on a long-term purpose aligned with the organization's values, ethical guidelines, and societal impact (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Gavarkovs et al. 2023; Hurth and Stewart 2022; Kempster and Jackson 2021). This overarching purpose acts as a “north star” and offers a unifying thread that connects the myriad activities, objectives, and stakeholders of an organization (Ingen et al. 2021; Rocha et al. 2021), enhancing coherence in decision-making processes (Hurth and Stewart 2022).

The intrinsic value of purpose in leadership is multifaceted. From an organizational behavior standpoint, a purpose-centered leadership approach serves as an antecedent to enhanced employee cohesion (Enslin et al. 2023; Trachik et al. 2020), engagement (Ingen et al. 2021; Tuin et al. 2020), satisfaction (Almandoz 2023; Ingen et al. 2021), and motivation (Gavarkovs et al. 2023; Tuin et al. 2020). When employees perceive that their roles are aligned with a purpose, they are more likely to invest additional effort, exhibit

resilience in the face of challenges, and exhibit lower turnover intentions (Bunderson and Thakor 2022; Crane 2022; Knippenberg 2020). This linkage between purpose and employee outcomes can be attributed to the basic human desire for meaningful work (Ingen et al. 2021; Nazir et al. 2021). When individuals understand the significance of their tasks and see a clear connection between their daily responsibilities and the broader organizational purpose, they experience a heightened sense of purpose and belonging (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Cavazotte et al. 2020; Trachik et al. 2020).

On the other hand, from an operational standpoint, organizations led by Purpose-Driven Leadership tend to exhibit more agile and adaptive structures (Gavarkovs et al. 2023; Tan and Antonio 2022). A clear purpose serves as a guiding framework that allows for greater flexibility in strategy execution (Ocasio et al. 2023; Qin et al. 2022). This agility proves particularly advantageous in VUCA environments where traditional forms of leadership may falter (Dimitrov 2022; Tuin et al. 2020). Moreover, from a macro-level standpoint, Purpose-Driven Leadership has implications for society at large (Hurth and Stewart 2022; Ingen et al. 2021). Organizations that are successful in integrating purpose into their operations may be better positioned to address Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) in a manner that transcends mere compliance (Fleischer 2021; Nazir et al. 2021). They can actively contribute to the broader societal goals, going beyond the boundaries of their immediate organizational interests (LaVoi and Haley 2021). The genuine integration of purpose into leadership promotes a holistic view of societal progress where organizations are seen not just as immediate profit-generating entities but as key actors in shaping a sustainable and equitable future (Ocasio et al. 2023; Tuin et al. 2020).

Despite these promising perspectives, the construct of Purpose-Driven Leadership remains underdeveloped in the literature. There is a notable lack of empirical studies and theoretical frameworks dedicated to exploring its attributes (Aguileta-Clemente et al. 2023; Brendel et al. 2023; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023). The current literature fails to create a clear conceptualization of Purpose-Driven Leadership, leaving many aspects of this construct unexplored. Additionally, while several studies point to the positive outcomes associated with Purpose-Driven Leadership, there is a significant gap in understanding the mechanisms through which these outcomes are achieved. The literature does not adequately address how Purpose-Driven Leadership operates and the roles of potential mediators and moderators in influencing its outcomes. This lack of detailed exploration limits our ability to fully grasp the impact of Purpose-Driven Leadership on organizational performance and employee engagement.

Purpose-Driven Leadership emerges as a transformative approach that redefines the essence of leadership in contemporary organizations (Dimitrov 2022). By anchoring decision-making, operational strategies, and organizational culture in purpose, leaders drive improved organizational outcomes (Ocasio et al. 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023). As challenges in today's complex socio-economic landscape continue to evolve, leadership that is deeply rooted in purpose offers a resilient and forward-thinking path (Bunderson and Thakor 2022; Crane 2022; Knippenberg 2020). These multifaceted benefits and implications lead to the necessity for a systematic review of Purpose-Driven Leadership. A systematic review will clarify how Purpose-Driven Leadership influences leadership understanding, outcomes, mechanisms, and measurements, considering possible moderators and mediators.

4. Methodology

To perform a comprehensive systematic literature review on Purpose-Driven Leadership, we adopted the PICOS (Population, Intervention, Comparison, Outcomes, and Study Design) framework for formulating our research question (Methley et al. 2014; Schiavenato and Chu 2021). The rationale behind using the PICOS framework lies in its structured approach, aiding in narrowing the scope of the review, providing a clear comparison baseline, ensuring a holistic understanding of outcomes, and improving the efficiency of our literature search (Methley et al. 2014; Schiavenato and Chu 2021).

The elements of the PICOS framework utilized in this research are as follows:

1. **Population (P):** Leaders and organizations adopting purpose-driven approaches.
2. **Intervention (I):** Implementation of Purpose-Driven Leadership strategies.
3. **Comparison (C):** Examination of how possible moderators and mediators influence the effectiveness of Purpose-Driven Leadership.
4. **Outcomes (O):**
 - Conceptualization of Purpose-Driven Leadership.
 - Importance of Purpose-Driven Leadership in contemporary research and practice.
 - Theoretical foundations of Purpose-Driven Leadership.
 - Mechanisms and impacts of Purpose-Driven Leadership.
 - The role of purpose in navigating times of VUCA.
 - Measurement approaches for purpose in leadership.
5. **Study design (S):** Theoretical and empirical studies.

Based on this framework, our research question was formulated as follows: “How does the implementation of Purpose-Driven Leadership strategies in organizations (I) influence the understanding, outcomes, mechanisms, and measurements of leadership (O), considering the role of possible moderators and mediators (C), as investigated in various study designs (S) among leaders and organizations (P)?”.

To conduct this systematic review, we employed the PRISMA (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic reviews and Meta-Analyses) guidelines (Moher et al. 2009; Page et al. 2021). We conducted a search on Thomson Reuters’ Web of Science (WoS) and SCOPUS search engines, which are widely recognized for their coverage of academic literature (Kumpulainen and Seppänen 2022; Vandagriff 2023), to identify studies that discuss Purpose-Driven Leadership. The search was conducted using the following Boolean search strings in the title, keywords, and abstract: “purpose” AND “lead*”. We included the term “purpose” to highlight the aspect of leadership we were interested in. This helped us narrow down studies that specifically focus on leadership driven by a sense of purpose rather than other types like Transactional, Transformational, or Charismatic Leadership. To make sure we captured all variations of the word “lead”, such as leader, leadership, leading, and leaders, we used an asterisk (*) as an operator after the term “lead”. This inclusive approach reduces the risk of missing articles that may use different forms of the word. By combining “purpose” AND “lead*” we ensured that our search results only included research papers discussing both “purpose” and “leadership”. The search was limited to research papers published in academic journals from 1 January 2018, to 31 December 2023. This approach allowed us to focus on the most recent and up-to-date research on Purpose-Driven Leadership, to ensure that the studies included in the review reflect the latest developments, to avoid outdated or irrelevant research. Furthermore, proceeding papers and books were not included, due to the possibility of lack of peer review.

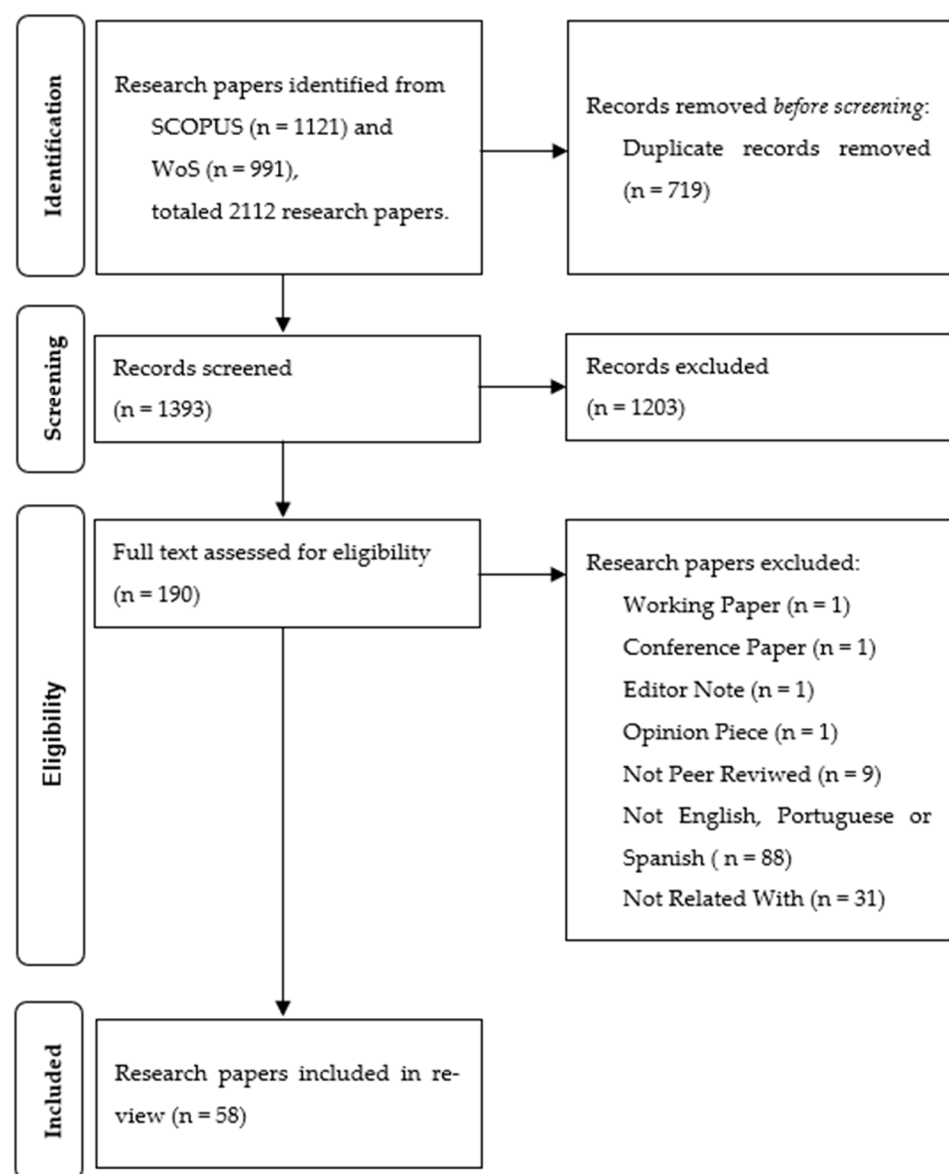
The search conducted retrieved a total of 2112 research papers (1121 from SCOPUS and 991 from WoS). A total of 719 research papers were identified as duplicated. We implemented a multi-stage screening process. All 1393 research papers were screened based on their titles and abstracts, and 1203 research papers were removed. This initial assessment was crucial for eliminating studies irrelevant to our defined research scope, ones which referenced the term “purpose” solely in the context of the paper’s objective or as the intended function of a particular aspect, rather than addressing the concept of organizational purpose. Modifying the search criteria was deemed inadvisable, as it risked omitting significant research paper contributions.

After the preliminary screening, the research papers were downloaded for a full-text review. At this stage, the research papers were evaluated based on their relevance to the study, methodological quality, and depth of content. To conduct the review, we established specific criteria for including and excluding research papers. We included papers that directly addressed Purpose-Driven Leadership, such as studies providing data-driven

or theoretical insights offering new frameworks or perspectives. Additionally, we also considered research papers that explored the attributes, benefits, challenges, and outcomes associated with organizational purpose or sense of purpose in a leadership view, which indirectly contribute to the understanding of Purpose-Driven Leadership.

We also excluded opinions or commentaries that did not offer original research findings, not-reviewed papers, and papers not written English, Portuguese, or Spanish. The quality of the research papers was also assessed based on the design method, conceptual clarity, logical consistency, contribution, relevance to the field, and practical implications. At this stage, all scientific articles underwent an acceptable level of quality assessment, with none being excluded due to quality concerns.

Based on the inclusion and exclusion criteria identified, 58 research papers were included in the review. The detailed breakdown of the criteria applied and the resultant selected papers for this review can be visualized in the PRISMA flowchart provided below (Figure 2).



Source: Created by the authors.

Figure 2. PRISMA flowchart: selection process for Purpose-Driven Leadership studies.

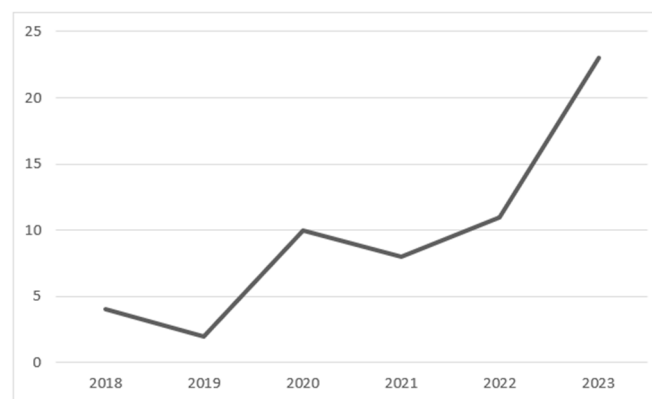
Given the volume of studies identified, we conducted a structured data extraction process. For each research paper, we collect the authors, title, year, source (journal), Digital Object Identification (DOI), abstract, study design, central thesis/findings (main results, findings, arguments, or proposition presented by the authors), key concepts (important terms, ideas, or constructs introduced or discussed), theoretical framework (theories, models, or conceptual frameworks the authors present or introduce), and level of analysis (the focus of the analysis: Society, Organization, Group/Team, and Individual). The data extracted are provided in the Supplementary Material. This process provided us with an overview of the landscape of the existing literature on Purpose-Driven Leadership and, to facilitate the organization, synthesis, and interpretation of the vast amount of information, we employed MAXQDA, version 24 (VERBI Software 2022), a qualitative data analysis software. Through this software, we were able to categorize and code data based on themes, patterns, and relationships emerging from the literature (Consoli 2021; Geisler 2018). Our coding framework was established using both inductive and deductive approaches. The inductive approach allowed us to identify novel themes or patterns not initially anticipated, while the deductive approach ensured that our codes were in alignment with our research question (Azungah 2018; Elo and Kyngäs 2008).

5. Findings

5.1. Purpose-Driven Leadership Research Landscape

This section presents an analysis of the current state of Purpose-Driven Leadership-related research, as discerned through a comprehensive analysis of research paper publications and citations. The exploration focuses on the evolution of interest in this field over time, as reflected in the quantity and impact of academic contributions.

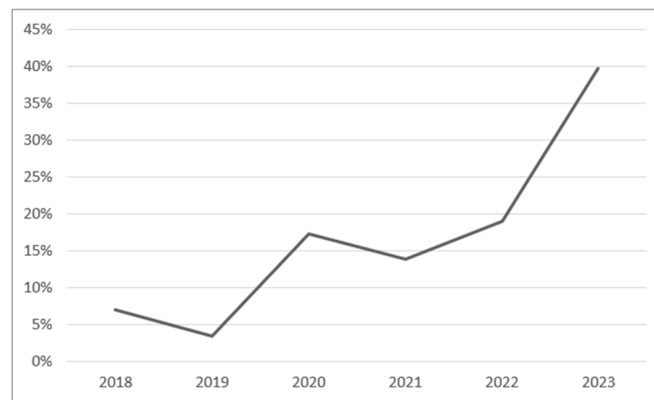
Figure 3 provides a chronological visualization of the volume of academic publications dedicated to Purpose-Driven Leadership, while Figure 4 provides the proportion of publications compared to the total. These figures indicate a fluctuating yet overall upward trend in the number of publications related to Purpose-Driven Leadership from 2018 to 2023. The total number of publications over this period amounts to 58, with a notable increase in recent years, particularly in 2023, which represents 40% of the total of publications in this period.



Source: Created by the authors.

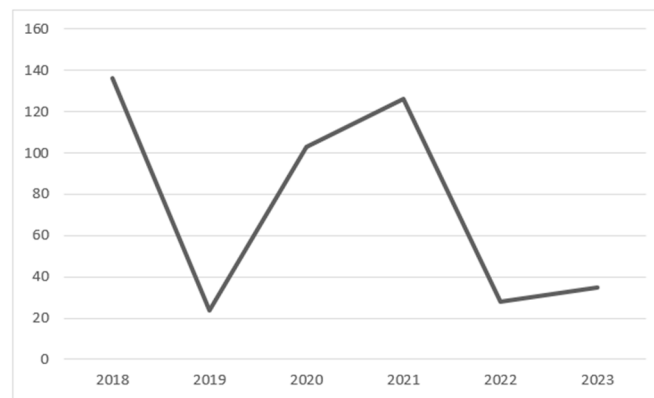
Figure 3. Number of publications per year.

Figure 5 offers an analysis of the academic impact of Purpose-Driven Leadership literature, measured through the number of citations these publications have received each year, totaling 452 over the six years. Figure 6 shows the average number of publications per year after publication. These metric offers insight into the academic impact and relevance of the research in this field.



Source: Created by the authors.

Figure 4. Number of publications compared to the total.



Source: Created by the authors.

Figure 5. Total number of citations until 2023.

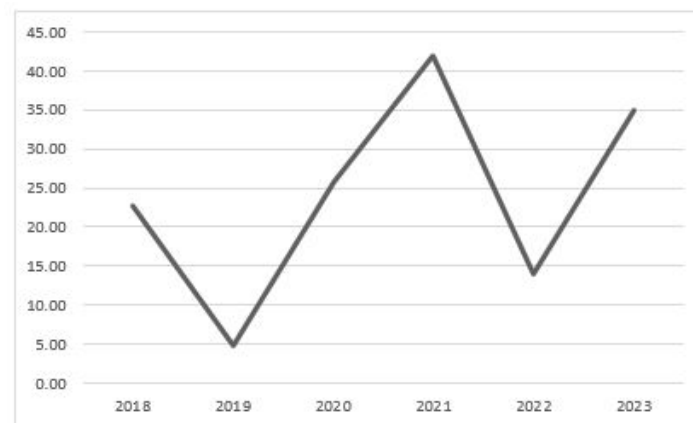


Figure 6. Average number of citations per year after publication.

The data from Figures 3–6 collectively suggest a growing interest and engagement in Purpose-Driven Leadership research within the academic community. The increasing number of publications, coupled with the substantial number of citations, indicates that this area is gaining momentum and recognition for its relevance in the broader field of leadership studies.

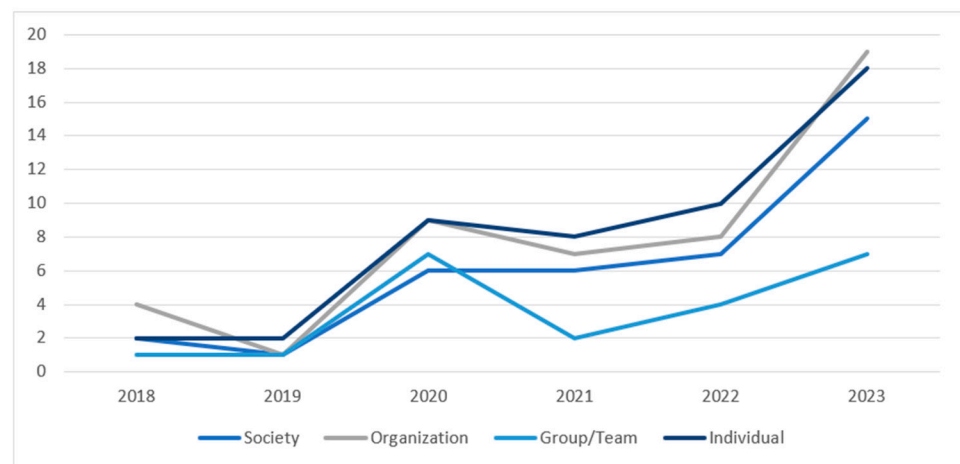
Of the 58 research papers included in this review, 29 are theoretical, illustrating a robust engagement with conceptual analysis and framework development within the field

of Purpose-Driven Leadership. The remaining 29 papers are empirical in nature, with 10 of these adopting qualitative methodologies. Table 1 lists the five journals that are prominent in the domain of Purpose-Driven Leadership in terms of publications and citations.

Table 1. Top 5 leading journals in Purpose-Driven Leadership research: publications and citations.

Journal	Publications per Journal	Journal	Citations per Journal
<i>Strategy Science</i>	4	<i>Frontiers in Psychology</i>	143
<i>Frontiers in Psychology</i>	3	<i>Journal of Change Management</i>	49
<i>Journal of Change Management</i>	2	<i>Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management</i>	44
<i>New directions for student leadership</i>	2	<i>Organizational Psychology Review</i>	24
<i>Purushartha</i>	2	<i>Service Industries Journal</i>	24

Figure 7 provides a comprehensive view of the scope and focus of Purpose-Driven Leadership research over six years, from 2018 to 2023. Based on the different organizational levels at which this leadership approach operates and its external aspect, it categorizes the research based on the level of analysis into four categories: society, organization, group/team, and individual.



Source: Created by the authors.

Figure 7. Temporal distribution of Purpose-Driven Leadership research by level of analysis (number of research papers).

Figure 7 indicates that the level of analysis related to society fluctuates over the years. It starts at a moderate level in 2018 (2), drops in 2019 (1), and then steadily increases in subsequent years, reaching its highest point in 2023 (15). This suggests an increasing focus on societal aspects in research or studies during these years. The level of analysis related to organizations is the highest over the years. It steadily increases from 2018 (4) to 2023 (19). This trend reflects the enduring interest in studying organizational behavior, strategies, and dynamics. Group/Team: The analysis at the group or team level is relatively low compared to society and organization. It varies from year to year, with the highest point in 2020 (7) and the lowest in 2019 (1). This suggests that research or studies specifically focusing on group and team dynamics are less common but still present. The individual level of analysis is relatively consistent, with a range of 1 to 10 over the years. It indicates that there is a continuous interest in studying individual behaviors, motivations, and actions within research and studies, presenting greater consistency due to the confluence of study areas in which the individual level is relevant.

5.2. Purpose, Organizational Purpose, and Purpose-Driven Leadership

This section presents the exploration of the interconnected concepts of purpose, organizational purpose, and Purpose-Driven Leadership. By examining these constructs, we aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of how they relate to one another and their significance in the context of leadership studies.

Purpose, as a complex psychological phenomenon (By 2021; Kempster and Jackson 2021; Ocasio et al. 2023), is a consistent and generalized intention to do something that is simultaneously personally meaningful and holds relevance (Gavarkovs et al. 2023; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023). It acts as a foundational and central self-organizing life aim, guiding and stimulating goals and behaviors (By 2021; Gavarkovs et al. 2023), and providing a sense of meaning (Brendel et al. 2023; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023). Beyond simply being a primary objective (Jasinenko and Steuber 2023; Knippenberg 2020), purpose finds its value in daily expression, driving consistent actions and decisions that align with an overarching vision (By 2021; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023).

The nature of purpose is rooted in four core components:

1. **Consistency:** Purpose does not manifest as a fleeting intention but is grounded in its enduring nature (Gavarkovs et al. 2023; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023; Knippenberg 2020). Demonstrating resilience against ephemeral shifts in external conditions or situational variances, purpose consistently maintains its vigor and steadfastness (Rindova and Martins 2023; Trachik et al. 2020). It acts as a constant lodestar amid the dynamic terrains of both personal and professional spheres (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Qin et al. 2022; Rindova and Martins 2023).
2. **Generality:** In contradistinction to a limited, task-centric objective, purpose is distinguished by its comprehensive scope (By 2021; Gavarkovs et al. 2023; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023). Instead of being confined to proximate tasks or circumscribed aims, purpose spans a more expansive purview (By 2021; Gavarkovs et al. 2023; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023). This ubiquity of purpose guarantees its applicability across multifarious contexts (By 2021; Gavarkovs et al. 2023; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023).
3. **Two dimensions:**
 - **Internal Dimension:** The internal dimension of purpose refers to the individuals' intrinsic motivations and impulses, which are connected to their sense of purpose (Crane 2022; Knippenberg 2020). It serves as a source of meaning, supporting the rationale of every decision, direction, or objective delineated (Handa 2023; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023). This introspective aspect emphasizes the congruence and alignment between an individual and their purpose (Gavarkovs et al. 2023; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023).
 - **External Dimension:** Beyond its internal impact, the influence of purpose extends to the external environment, through the efforts generated by the individual within their context (By 2021; Gavarkovs et al. 2023; Handa 2023; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023). This is underpinned by the individual's commitment to promoting positive change in a broader environment (Ocasio et al. 2023; Qin et al. 2022).
4. **Daily embodiment and expression:** Purpose manifests as a palpable instantiation in quotidian activities since it is part of every decision and action made (By 2021; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023). Such perennial articulation provides consistency and influences daily activities (Bronk et al. 2023; Hurth and Stewart 2022; Ocasio et al. 2023).

When extrapolating the concept of purpose to organizational contexts, the relevance and implications of purpose are extended to the whole organization. The organizational purpose is rooted in the deepest level of an organization's identity (Hurth and Stewart 2022; Ponting 2020) and refers to the foundational reason why the organization exists (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Dimitrov 2022; Kaplan 2023), which guides all the activities (Fitzsimmons et al. 2022; Hong et al. 2021), provides direction (Ingen et al. 2021; Tuin et al. 2020) and unification (Almandoz 2023; Ingen et al. 2021), and drives meaning (Kaplan 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023).

Two perspectives of organizational purpose can be conceptualized: the inside-out and the outside-in perspectives. The inside-out perspective emphasizes the intrinsic, inherent motivations and values that drive an organization (Ocasio et al. 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023). This perspective is rooted deeply in the internal beliefs, culture, and aspirations of the organization (Almandoz 2023; Ocasio et al. 2023). On the other hand, the outside-in perspective emphasizes the external demands, societal needs, and broader environmental considerations (Almandoz 2023; Ocasio et al. 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023), being associated with the adoption of a higher purpose as the organizational purpose, described as a goal or aspiration that transcends immediate or purely profit-driven interests to achieve a broader and significant outcome (Cho 2023; Eisenschmidt et al. 2019; Enslin et al. 2023; Gwartz and Spence 2020; Islam et al. 2023). This process involves a deep analysis of the organization's core competencies and values, as well as an understanding of the broader societal and environmental context in which it operates (Gwartz and Spence 2020; Ocasio et al. 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023).

Several components of organizational purpose can be identified: authenticity, magnitude, significance, aspiration, direction/guidance, unification, transformation, and inspiration. Authenticity refers to the genuineness of organizational purpose, which resonates with the stakeholders and reflects the true value of the organization (Jasinenko and Steuber 2023; Walker and Reichard 2020). Its magnitude represents the massiveness of the organizational purpose based on its global scope and potential (Almandoz 2023; Dimitrov 2022). Significance refers to the degree of the internal or external contribution or impact of the organizational purpose on the lives or work of people (Handa 2023; Ingen et al. 2021; Martela and Pessi 2018). Aspiration represents the hope or ambition to realize a significant future objective that individuals pursue in its intrinsic value (Crane 2022; Ingen et al. 2021; Tan and Antonio 2022). Direction/guidance refers to the path or route rooted in the direction function of organizational purpose (Ingen et al. 2021; Tuin et al. 2020). Unification refers to the connection and integration of individuals within an organization around a shared purpose proposed by the organization (Almandoz 2023; Ingen et al. 2021). Transformation represents the characteristic of an organizational purpose that emphasizes the power to bring significant change or innovation within the organization, its industry/market, or even in the broader societal context (Dimitrov 2022; Hurth and Stewart 2022). Lastly, inspiration is described as the energizing of actions or behaviors carried out either for their inherent interest or to fulfill the organization's authentic, massive, significant, aspirational, directional, unifying, and transformative aspects of purpose (Ingen et al. 2021; Islam et al. 2023; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023).

The organizational purpose is not a mere statement or tagline used for marketing purposes (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Fitzsimmons et al. 2022). Instead, it represents the reason why the organization exists (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Dimitrov 2022; Kaplan 2023), which is recognized by both internal and external stakeholders (Ingen et al. 2021; Losada-Vazquez 2022), and it does not necessarily have to be written, although having it documented can help ensure clarity and alignment (Bunderson and Thakor 2022). Furthermore, it does not represent the mission or vision statements of the organization (Dimitrov 2022; Fitzsimmons et al. 2022). The mission operates in a more tangible and immediate dimension, serving as a practical reflection of the organizational purpose (Dimitrov 2022; Fitzsimmons et al. 2022). In this context, while the mission elucidates "what we do," the purpose acts as the guiding principle explaining "why we do it" (Fitzsimmons et al. 2022; Rey and Bastons 2018). In contrast, the vision portrays the long-term destination the organization aspires to achieve, guided by the purpose and actualized through the mission (Fitzsimmons et al. 2022; Lawson and Weberg 2023).

A structured comparison can be drawn between the concepts of individual purpose and organizational purpose. Table 2 succinctly captures the key components and characteristics of each, offering insights into their nature, core components, dimensions/perspectives, and expression:

Table 2. Comparative analysis of individual and organizational purpose.

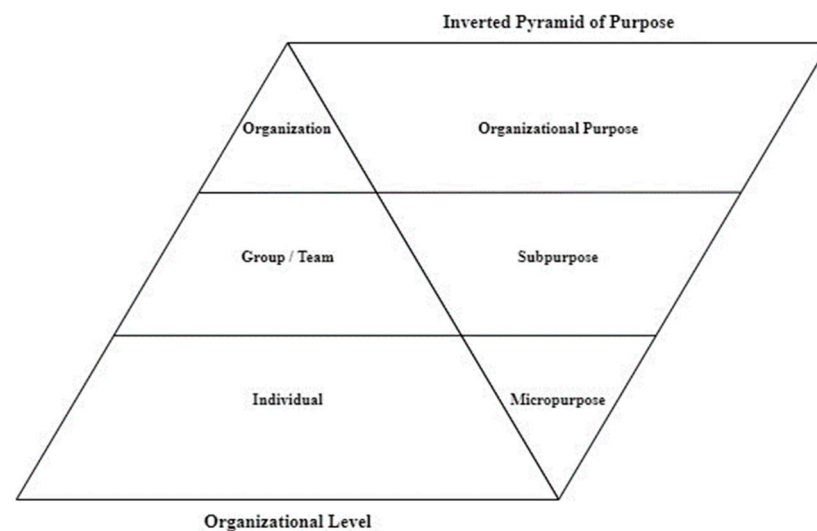
Aspect	Individual Purpose	Organizational Purpose
Nature	A consistent and generalized intention to do something that is simultaneously personally meaningful and holds relevance to the world (Gavarkovs et al. 2023; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023). It acts as a foundational and central self-organizing life aim, guiding and stimulating goals and behaviors (By 2021; Gavarkovs et al. 2023), and providing a sense of meaning (Brendel et al. 2023; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023).	The foundational reason why the organization exists (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Dimitrov 2022; Kaplan 2023) that guides all the activities (Fitzsimmons et al. 2022; Hong et al. 2021), provides direction (Ingen et al. 2021; Tuin et al. 2020) and unification (Almandoz 2023; Ingen et al. 2021), and drives meaning (Kaplan 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023). It is rooted in the deepest level of an organization's identity (Hurth and Stewart 2022; Ponting 2020).
Core components	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Consistency: Enduring nature (Gavarkovs et al. 2023; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023; Knippenberg 2020), and resilience against changes (Rindova and Martins 2023; Trachik et al. 2020). Generality: Comprehensive scope, applicable in many contexts (By 2021; Gavarkovs et al. 2023; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023). Embodiment: Manifestation in daily activities and decisions (By 2021; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023). 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> Authenticity: Genuine reflection of organizational values (Jasinenko and Steuber 2023; Walker and Reichard 2020). Magnitude: Global scope and potential (Almandoz 2023; Dimitrov 2022). Significance: Impact on internal and external stakeholders (Handa 2023; Ingen et al. 2021; Martela and Pessi 2018). Aspiration: Ambition for significant future objectives (Crane 2022; Ingen et al. 2021; Tan and Antonio 2022). Direction/Guidance: Providing a path or route (Ingen et al. 2021; Tuin et al. 2020). Unification: Connecting individuals around a shared purpose (Almandoz 2023; Ingen et al. 2021). Transformative: Capacity to bring change or innovation (Dimitrov 2022; Hurth and Stewart 2022). Inspiration: Energizing actions and behaviors (Ingen et al. 2021; Islam et al. 2023; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023).
Dimensions/Perspectives	<p>Internal: Individuals' intrinsic motivations (Crane 2022; Knippenberg 2020).</p> <p>External: Impact on the external context (By 2021; Gavarkovs et al. 2023; Handa 2023; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023).</p>	<p>Inside-Out: Intrinsic motivations and values that drive an organization (Ocasio et al. 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023).</p> <p>Outside-In: External demands, societal needs, environmental considerations (Almandoz 2023; Ocasio et al. 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023).</p>
Expression	Found in everyday actions, decisions, and goals (By 2021; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023).	Embodied in the organization's identity, activities, and stakeholder interactions (Fitzsimmons et al. 2022; Hong et al. 2021).

Table 2 highlights that individual purpose is predominantly a personal phenomenon, deeply rooted in an individual's consistent intentions and goals (By 2021; Gavarkovs et al. 2023). In contrast, organizational purpose extends beyond the individual, encompassing the foundational reason for an organization's existence (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Dimitrov 2022; Kaplan 2023). Purpose-Driven Leadership emerges at the nexus of individual and organizational purpose, offering an integrative and holistic approach to leadership that transcends traditional paradigms (Dimitrov 2022; Tuin et al. 2020) and emphasizes the inextricable link between leadership actions and the organization's purpose (Ingen et al. 2021; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023). Thus, leadership emphasizes the significance of a clear and compelling organizational purpose in guiding leadership actions and decisions (Ingen et al. 2021; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023), so that leadership is primarily about mobilizing and motivating people for the pursuit of the organization's purpose (Almandoz 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023). Within this context, leader–follower organizational purpose congruence

is a critical aspect, reflecting the harmonization of the individual's work purpose with the organizational purpose (Brendel et al. 2023; Martela and Pessi 2018).

5.2.1. Attributes of Purpose-Driven Leadership

The attributes of Purpose-Driven Leadership constitute the core characteristics, qualities, and behaviors exhibited by leaders who effectively implement and embody this leadership framework (Cavazotte et al. 2020; Dimitrov 2022). One fundamental attribute is the purpose commitment. It involves a deep organizational purpose alignment and fidelity (Kempster et al. 2019; Rocha et al. 2021). This commitment transcends mere compliance with organizational goals and reflects a genuine internalization of the organization's purpose, thereby fostering a strong connection with the followers (Kempster et al. 2019; Rocha et al. 2021). This implies integrating the organizational purpose in all aspects of the organization's operations and activities (Handa 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023). This purpose implementation and deployment is an important attribute of Purpose-Driven Leadership and involves a multi-level approach (Almandoz 2023; Hurth and Stewart 2022). This multi-level approach encompasses the organization's overarching purpose, the subpurposes of its groups or teams, and the micropurposes of individual members, as demonstrated in Figure 8.



Source: Created by the authors.

Figure 8. The Inverted Pyramid of Purpose: a tri-level perspective on organizational purpose.

The organizational purpose, serving as the apex of Purpose-Driven Leadership, is universally applied across the entire organization (Handa 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023), creating a unifying framework for all its activities and goals (Fitzsimmons et al. 2022; Hong et al. 2021). In alignment with the organizational purpose, a subpurpose can be understood as a more specific, targeted purpose that aligns with the broader organizational purpose but is tailored to the unique objectives and specific contributions of distinct groups or teams within the organization (Almandoz 2023; Hurth and Stewart 2022). It acts as a bridge, linking the overarching organizational purpose with the practical, day-to-day operations of different teams (Almandoz 2023; Rai 2020). This alignment ensures that each subgroup within the organization not only contributes towards the shared purpose but also finds relevance and meaning in their specific purpose (Almandoz 2023; Meynhardt et al. 2023). The same can be applied to individuals, leading us to create the concept of micropurpose, which further refines this alignment. Micropurpose refers to the individualized purpose of each member within an organization that is associated with the subpurpose of the group or team to which the individual belongs and the overall purpose of the organization (Meynhardt et al. 2023; Rai 2020). In essence, the subpurposes and micropurposes support

every task or activity, answering the question of why and serving the overall organizational purpose (Almandoz 2023; Dimitrov 2022; Meynhardt et al. 2023; Rai 2020).

Effective communication also plays an important role in Purpose-Driven Leadership, where clear and consistent dissemination of purpose is essential (LaVoi and Haley 2021; Qin et al. 2022). It involves ensuring that everyone within the organization understands and embraces the purpose, reflecting it in all aspects of their work (Fitzsimmons et al. 2022; Losada-Vazquez 2022; Qin et al. 2022). Authenticity is also an important aspect of Purpose-Driven Leadership (Crane 2022; Kempster et al. 2019). This means that leaders genuinely align themselves with the organization's values and beliefs, inspiring and motivating their followers (Kempster et al. 2019; Martela and Pessi 2018; Rey and Bastons 2018). Emotional intelligence is another attribute for leaders in this context, as it involves their ability to recognize, understand, and effectively manage both their own emotions and those of others during the purpose dissemination process (Handa 2023; Luedi 2022; Walker and Reichard 2020). Another attribute of Purpose-Driven Leadership is passion. This attribute serves as a driving force that energizes and propels the implementation of the organizational purpose (Almandoz 2023; Dimitrov 2022; Luedi 2022). Lastly, another attribute of Purpose-Driven Leadership is its transformative nature. This characteristic relates to a leader's capacity to bring constructive and significant changes within the organization that are consistent with its overall goals and values (Brendel et al. 2023; Dimitrov 2022; Hurth and Stewart 2022; Luedi 2022).

5.2.2. Purpose-Driven Leadership Construct Conceptualization

Based on the framework presented and its attributes, Purpose-Driven Leadership refers to a leadership approach where leaders are genuinely focused on aligning their actions and decisions with the overarching purpose of the organization (Ingen et al. 2021; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023), the foundational reason why the organization exists (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Dimitrov 2022; Kaplan 2023). This alignment demonstrates a profound commitment to and advocacy for the organizational purpose (Kempster et al. 2019; Rocha et al. 2021) demonstrating passion and inspiring followers (Kempster et al. 2019; Martela and Pessi 2018; Rey and Bastons 2018). Beyond this mere commitment, these leaders engage in meticulous and strategic communication of the organizational purpose (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Ingen et al. 2021), along with the specific subpurposes or micropurposes tailored to various operational levels within the organization (Almandoz 2023; Hurth and Stewart 2022; Meynhardt et al. 2023; Rai 2020).

This communication transcends conventional informational dissemination; it is intentionally crafted to resonate deeply with followers, thereby cultivating a robust, shared sense of purpose across all levels of the organization (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Ingen et al. 2021). Moreover, the effective integration of emotional intelligence by these leaders enhances this process by recognizing and responding to the emotions and underlying motivations of their followers (Handa 2023; Luedi 2022; Walker and Reichard 2020).

Through this transformative approach, leaders provide clear direction and guidance, ensuring that every member understands their role in the broader organizational context (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Bronk et al. 2023; Enslin et al. 2023; Islam et al. 2023), and foster unification under a shared sense of purpose (Almandoz 2023; Ingen et al. 2021). By articulating the organizational purpose, along with specific subpurposes or micropurposes, leaders help individuals navigate their daily activities in alignment with the organization's strategic objectives (Jasinenko and Steuber 2023; Knippenberg 2020). The leaders' consistent reinforcement of the organizational purpose serves as a powerful tool for bringing together diverse groups within the organization, helping to promote a more collaborative and supportive work environment (Almandoz 2023; Ingen et al. 2021).

5.3. Theoretical Foundations of Purpose-Driven Leadership

Purpose-Driven Leadership is not a singular concept but a confluence rooted in various theoretical perspectives from diverse academic fields, including organizational behavior,

psychology, and management (Jasinenko and Steuber 2023; Kempster and Jackson 2021). According to Ocasio et al. (2023) and Jasinenko and Steuber (2023), this leadership paradigm leverages the foundational tenets of strategic management that emphasize the alignment of organization strategy with organization purpose, as elucidated by Barnard (1938) and Selznick (1957). It is an approach that recognizes profitability as a critical means but insists that it should not overshadow the broader, more holistic end: fulfilling the organization's purpose (Clarke 2020; Kaplan 2023).

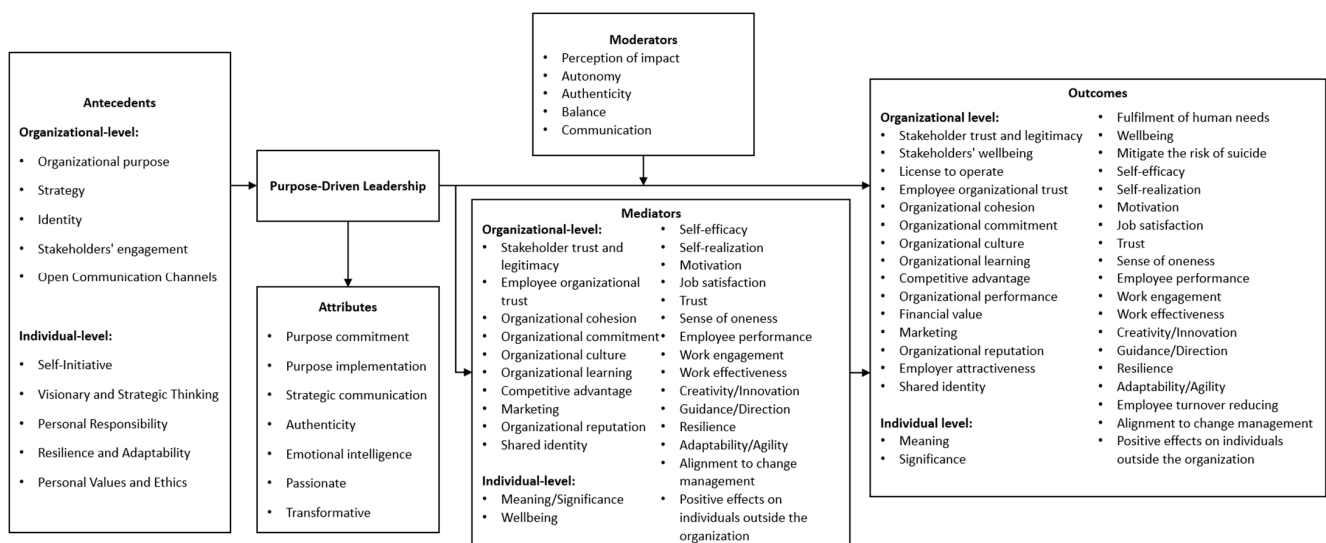
From an organizational standpoint, Purpose-Driven Leadership is linked to Stakeholder Theory and Agency Theory, both which posit that leaders must account for the different interests of all stakeholders in their decision-making processes (Clarke 2020; Kaplan 2023). According to Stakeholder Theory, Purpose-Driven Leadership posits that the value of an organization lies in its capacity to serve its community of stakeholders (Kaplan 2023; Qin et al. 2022). This community includes not only the shareholders but also employees, customers, suppliers, and society at large (Kaplan 2023; Ocasio et al. 2023). Consequently, the leaders are responsible for balancing these interests, which can be dissonant, according to Agency Theory, and cultivating a beneficial relationship that drives both the organization and its stakeholders toward shared success (Clarke 2020; Kaplan 2023). In the same way, based on Organizational Theory, Purpose-Driven Leadership operates within complex systems characterized by interdependencies in terms of the structures, relationships, and processes that serve a common purpose, as a sub-society (Gartenberg and Zenger 2023), aligning the organization's structure and identity and strategy (Gartenberg and Zenger 2023; Kaplan 2023; Losada-Vazquez 2022).

Based on Self-Determination Theory, the role of the Purpose-Driven Leader is to foster intrinsic motivation within followers through purpose (Nazir et al. 2021; Tuin et al. 2020). When leaders support autonomy, competence, and relatedness, they enable followers to internalize the organization's purpose, thereby enhancing their intrinsic motivation (Nazir et al. 2021; Tuin et al. 2020; Walker and Reichard 2020). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs further complements the role of a Purpose-Driven Leader. This theory underlines the importance of addressing the full spectrum of an employee's needs through purpose: survival needs align with the perpetuity/continuity of purpose; safety and security needs are met through the positive difference of purpose; social needs correlate with progress; esteem needs are satisfied by prosperity; and self-actualization is achieved through positive inspiration (Das et al. 2018; Handa 2023).

Moreover, Purpose-Driven Leadership can be seen through the lens of a meaning framework, where it integrates the concept of meaning-making into its core (LaVoi and Haley 2021; Martela and Pessi 2018). This framework suggests that individuals are inherently driven to find meaning in their experiences (Knippenberg 2020; Martela and Pessi 2018), a process that is essential for the emotional and cognitive engagement of employees (Nazir et al. 2021; Tuin et al. 2020). In the context of Purpose-Driven Leadership, leaders facilitate the discovery of personal and collective meaning within the workplace by providing purpose (Jasinenko and Steuber 2023; Knippenberg 2020).

5.4. Mechanisms and Impacts of Purpose-Driven Leadership

Purpose-Driven Leadership implementation depends on the comprehensive exploration and understanding of the mechanisms through which the leaders influence and impact both organizational and individual outcomes (Ingen et al. 2021; Nakamura et al. 2022), encompassing its attributes, antecedents, outcomes, mediators, and moderators. These potential elements, identified through the literature review, are presented in Figure 9.



Source: Created by the authors.

Figure 9. A comprehensive framework of Purpose-Driven Leadership: potential attributes, antecedents, outcomes, mediators, and moderators.

5.4.1. Potential Antecedents

A critical aspect of understanding Purpose-Driven Leadership lies in identifying its antecedents. These pre-requisite elements are imperative for the emergence and subsequent efficacy of this leadership approach (Ingen et al. 2021; Nakamura et al. 2022). Antecedents are multifaceted and encompass a range of individual and organizational factors.

From an organizational-level standpoint, the creation of an organizational purpose that accomplishes authenticity, significance, aspiration, direction/guidance, unification, transformation, and inspiration emerges as a pivotal element (Aguileta-Clemente et al. 2023; Dimitrov 2022; Ingen et al. 2021; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023). The creation of a corporate purpose is linked to the organizational strategy (Ocasio et al. 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023) and identity (Fitzsimmons et al. 2022; Hurth and Stewart 2022). These interconnections are fundamental aspects in the context of Purpose-Driven Leadership, signifying a dynamic and reciprocal relationship where purpose shapes strategy (Hong et al. 2021; Ingen et al. 2021; Qin et al. 2022) and, conversely, strategy informs and refines purpose (Jasinenko and Steuber 2023; Ocasio et al. 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023). These alignments provide consistency in decision-making processes (Ingen et al. 2021; Rindova and Martins 2023) and ensure that the leader's actions consistently reflect the core organizational values and objectives (Ocasio et al. 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023), thereby enhancing credibility and integrity (Ingen et al. 2021; Ocasio et al. 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023). On the other hand, stakeholder engagement in creating and deploying the organization's purpose crucially contributes to the alignment of this purpose with broader social, environmental, and economic expectations (Kaplan 2023; Ocasio et al. 2023). This alignment of the organizational purpose with the stakeholders' expectations contributes significantly to the leader's ability to inspire and mobilize followers (Ingen et al. 2021; Ocasio et al. 2023). Furthermore, to facilitate the communication of the organizational purpose and Purpose-Driven Leadership framework implementation, the establishment of open communication channels is essential (LaVoi and Haley 2021; Qin et al. 2022). These channels enable leaders to articulate the purpose of the organization clearly and compellingly (LaVoi and Haley 2021; Qin et al. 2022).

From an individual-level standpoint, the personal attributes and qualities of the leader play a significant role as antecedents in Purpose-Driven Leadership framework implementation. First, self-initiative, visionary and strategic thinking, and personal responsibility are important skills in organizational purpose creation (Knippenberg 2020; Rindova and Martins 2023; Walker and Reichard 2020). Leaders with these skills are capable of defining

an organizational purpose that is authentic, significant, aspirational, unifying, and motivational (Dimitrov 2022; Ingen et al. 2021; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023). Moreover, due to the difficulty of conjugating the different interests of all stakeholders in organizational purpose creation, resilience and adaptability skills are also important (Crane 2022; Trachik et al. 2020). Equally critical in this framework are personal values and ethical alignment with the organizational purpose (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Crane 2022). This congruence plays a crucial role in enhancing the authenticity, trust, and credibility of their followers and stakeholders (Crane 2022; Kempster et al. 2019).

5.4.2. Potential Outcomes

The outcomes of Purpose-Driven Leadership impact the organization at diverse levels, affecting stakeholders, performance, and various organizational and individual aspects. The potential outcomes of Purpose-Driven Leadership, identified in the literature review, are presented in Table 3. This table encapsulates the wide-ranging outcomes of this leadership approach.

Table 3. Purpose-Driven Leadership potential outcomes.

Outcomes	Sources	Outcomes	Sources
Adaptability/Agility	Dimitrov (2022), Gavarkovs et al. (2023), Lawson and Weberg (2023), Losada-Vazquez (2022), and Tan and Antonio (2022)	Organizational commitment	Jasinenko and Steuber (2023), Nazir et al. (2021), Qin et al. (2022), Tan and Antonio (2022), Trachik et al. (2020), and Trachik et al. (2022)
Alignment to change management	Handa (2023), Losada-Vazquez (2022), and Walker and Reichard (2020)	Organizational culture	Bunderson and Thakor (2022), Dimitrov (2022), Gwartz and Spence (2020), Hong et al. (2021), and Losada-Vazquez (2022)
Competitive advantage	Dimitrov (2022), Enslin et al. (2023), Fitzsimmons et al. (2022), Kaplan (2023), Ocasio et al. (2023), and Tuin et al. (2020)	Organizational learning	Crane (2022), Losada-Vazquez (2022), Peeters et al. (2023), and Tan and Antonio (2022)
Creativity/Innovation	Brendel et al. (2023), Kaplan (2023), Losada-Vazquez (2022), Meynhardt et al. (2023), Ocasio et al. (2023), Rindova and Martins (2023), and Tan and Antonio (2022)	Organizational performance	Aguileta-Clemente et al. (2023), Brendel et al. (2023), Edgar (2023), Hong et al. (2021), Jasinenko and Steuber (2023), Ponting (2020), and Rai (2020)
Employee organizational trust	Qin et al. (2022)	Organizational reputation	Hong et al. (2021) and Qin et al. (2022)
Employee performance	Brendel et al. (2023), Konadu et al. (2023), Nazir et al. (2021), Ponting (2020), and Tan and Antonio (2022)	Positive effects on individuals outside the organization	Ingen et al. (2021), and Lu and Ahn (2023)
Employee turnover reducing	Cavazotte et al. (2020), Jasinenko and Steuber (2023), Peeters et al. (2023), Ponting (2020), Qin et al. (2022), and Tan and Antonio (2022)	Resilience	Crane (2022), Handa (2023), Kaplan (2023), Trachik et al. (2020), and Trachik et al. (2022)
Employer attractiveness	Ingen et al. (2021), and Kempster and Jackson (2021)	Self-efficacy	Brown et al. (2021), Handa (2023), Martela and Pessi (2018), and Nakamura et al. (2022)
Financial value	Bunderson and Thakor (2022), Clarke (2020), Hurth and Stewart (2022), Kempster and Jackson (2021), Nakamura et al. (2022), Ocasio et al. (2023), and Rocha et al. (2021)	Self-realization	Martela and Pessi (2018), and Tuin et al. (2020)

Table 3. Cont.

Outcomes	Sources	Outcomes	Sources
Fulfillment of human needs	Hurth and Stewart (2022), Ingen et al. (2021), Jasinenko and Steuber (2023), and Tuin et al. (2020)	Sense of oneness	Brendel et al. (2023), Cavazotte et al. (2020), and Qin et al. (2022)
Guidance/Direction	Bhattacharya et al. (2023), Bronk et al. (2023), Enslin et al. (2023), Islam et al. (2023), Jasinenko and Steuber (2023), Martela and Pessi (2018), Ocasio et al. (2023), Ponting (2020), Rindova and Martins (2023), and Tuin et al. (2020)	Shared identity	Cavazotte et al. (2020), Crane (2022), Kaplan (2023), and Knippenberg (2020)
Job satisfaction	Brown et al. (2021), Cavazotte et al. (2020), Gavarkovs et al. (2023), Jasinenko and Steuber (2023), Konadu et al. (2023), Nakamura et al. (2022), Nazir et al. (2021), Ponting (2020), and Tuin et al. (2020)	Significance	Almandoz (2023), Ingen et al. (2021), Martela and Pessi (2018), Tan and Antonio (2022), and Trachik et al. (2022)
License to operate	Almandoz (2023), Clarke (2020), Ingen et al. (2021), and Ocasio et al. (2023)	Stakeholder trust and legitimacy	Almandoz (2023), Jasinenko and Steuber (2023), and Qin et al. (2022)
Marketing	Enslin et al. (2023), Ingen et al. (2021), LaVoi and Haley (2021)	Stakeholders' wellbeing	
Meaning	Brendel et al. (2023), Crane (2022), Dimitrov (2022), Handa (2023), Ingen et al. (2021), Jasinenko and Steuber (2023), Knippenberg (2020), Martela and Pessi (2018), Nazir et al. (2021), Trachik et al. (2022), and Tuin et al. (2020)	Trust	Bunderson and Thakor (2022), Lawson and Weberg (2023), Losada-Vazquez (2022), Meynhardt et al. (2023), and Qin et al. (2022)
Mitigate the risk of suicide	Martela and Pessi (2018), Trachik et al. (2020), and Trachik et al. (2022)	Wellbeing	Brendel et al. (2023), Bronk et al. (2023), Brown et al. (2021), Hurth and Stewart (2022), Jasinenko and Steuber (2023), Meynhardt et al. (2023), Ponting (2020), Tuin et al. (2020), and Williams (2018)
Motivation	Almandoz (2023), Crane (2022), Gavarkovs et al. (2023), Handa (2023), Ingen et al. (2021), Islam et al. (2023), Lu and Ahn (2023), Martela and Pessi (2018), Nazir et al. (2021), Rey and Bastons (2018), Tan and Antonio (2022), Tuin et al. (2020), and Walker and Reichard (2020)	Work effectiveness	Knippenberg (2020), Peeters et al. (2023), and Tan and Antonio (2022)
Organizational cohesion	Bronk et al. (2023), Trachik et al. (2020), and Trachik et al. (2022)	Work engagement	Bhattacharya et al. (2023), Cavazotte et al. (2020), Jasinenko and Steuber (2023), Nazir et al. (2021), Tan and Antonio (2022), and Tuin et al. (2020)

5.4.3. Potential Mediators

Further to the direct outcomes of Purpose-Driven Leadership, a variety of potential mediators were identified through the literature review and are systematically presented in Table 4. Each mediator plays a pivotal role in translating the purpose articulated by leaders into tangible results and measurable impacts (Ingen et al. 2021; Islam et al. 2023). Table 4 provides an in-depth analysis of these potential mediators, elucidating how they operate within the framework of Purpose-Driven Leadership.

Table 4. Purpose-Driven Leadership potential mediators.

Mediator	Outcomes	Sources
Stakeholder trust and legitimacy	License to operate Stakeholders' wellbeing Organizational reputation Employee organizational trust Organizational performance	Crane (2022), Enslin et al. (2023), and Kaplan (2023)
Employee performance	Organizational performance Financial value Work effectiveness	Gwartz and Spence (2020), Ponting (2020), Roberts (2020), Tan and Antonio (2022)
Wellbeing	Employee performance Fulfillment of human needs Mitigate the risk of suicide Work engagement	Hurth and Stewart (2022), Ponting (2020), Trachik et al. (2020), and Trachik et al. (2022)
Meaning/Significance	Self-realization Fulfillment of human needs Shared identity Organizational cohesion	Almandoz (2023), Gavarkovs et al. (2023), Handa (2023), Jasinenko and Steuber (2023), Kempster et al. (2019), and Kempster and Jackson (2021)
Shared identity	Organizational cohesion Sense of oneness Employee organizational trust	Cavazotte et al. (2020), Crane (2022), Kaplan (2023), Knippenberg (2020), and Ponting (2020)
Job satisfaction	Employee performance Work engagement Employee organizational trust Employee turnover reducing	Gavarkovs et al. (2023), Jasinenko and Steuber (2023), Martela and Pessi (2018), Ponting (2020), Rey and Bastons (2018)
Motivation	Job satisfaction Work engagement Employee performance	Kaplan (2023), Meynhardt et al. (2023), Tuin et al. (2020), and Walker and Reichard (2020)
Guidance/Direction	Organizational commitment Alignment to change management Organizational learning Work effectiveness	By (2021), Ingen et al. (2021), Islam et al. (2023), Peeters et al. (2023), and Rindova and Martins (2023)
Organizational commitment	Employee performance Work engagement Organizational performance Alignment to change management Employee turnover reducing	Bhattacharya et al. (2023), Brendel et al. (2023), Islam et al. (2023), Qin et al. (2022), and Tan and Antonio (2022)
Trust	Organizational cohesion Stakeholder trust and legitimacy Employee organizational trust	Bunderson and Thakor (2022), Lawson and Weberg (2023), and Qin et al. (2022)
Sense of oneness	Shared identity Meaning Trust Organizational cohesion Mitigate the risk of suicide	Brendel et al. (2023), Cavazotte et al. (2020), Trachik et al. (2020), and Trachik et al. (2022)
Self-realization	Self-efficacy Meaning Significance Resilience	Martela and Pessi (2018), and Tuin et al. (2020)
Self-efficacy	Self-realization Adaptability/Agility Resilience Work effectiveness Employee performance	Brown et al. (2021), Handa (2023), Martela and Pessi (2018), and Nakamura et al. (2022)

Table 4. Cont.

Mediator	Outcomes	Sources
Adaptability/Agility	Organizational performance Resilience Competitive advantage Alignment to change management	Dimitrov (2022) , Gavarkovs et al. (2023) , Lawson and Weberg (2023) , and Tan and Antonio (2022)
Resilience	Self-realization Adaptability/Agility Organizational performance	Crane (2022) , Handa (2023) , Kaplan (2023) , Trachik et al. (2020) , and Trachik et al. (2022)
Creativity/Innovation	Work engagement Organizational learning Organizational performance	Kaplan (2023) , Meynhardt et al. (2023) , Ocasio et al. (2023) , and Rindova and Martins (2023)
Work engagement	Employee performance Job satisfaction Motivation	Cavazotte et al. (2020) , Jasinenko and Steuber (2023) , Nazir et al. (2021) , Tan and Antonio (2022) , and Tuin et al. (2020)
Work effectiveness	Employee performance Financial value Organizational performance	Knippenberg (2020) , Peeters et al. (2023) , and Tan and Antonio (2022)
Employee organizational trust	Organizational commitment Stakeholder trust and legitimacy Shared identity Employee turnover reducing	Bunderson and Thakor (2022) , and Qin et al. (2022)
Alignment to change management	Organizational learning Organizational commitment Adaptability/Agility Organizational performance	Brendel et al. (2023) , Dimitrov (2022) , Losada-Vazquez (2022) , Ponting (2020) , and Qin et al. (2022)
Organizational learning	Creativity/Innovation Organizational performance Alignment to change management Organizational culture	Crane (2022) , Losada-Vazquez (2022) , and Peeters et al. (2023)
Positive effects on individuals outside the organization	Stakeholders' wellbeing Organizational reputation Employer attractiveness	Ingen et al. (2021)
Organizational culture	Organizational learning Employer attractiveness Organizational performance Employee organizational trust	Bunderson and Thakor (2022) ; Dimitrov (2022) , Gwartz and Spence (2020) , Hong et al. (2021) , and Losada-Vazquez (2022)
Marketing	Employer attractiveness Organizational reputation Financial value	Enslin et al. (2023) , Fitzsimmons et al. (2022) , and Ponting (2020)
Organizational reputation	Stakeholder trust and legitimacy License to operate Marketing Employer attractiveness	Almandoz (2023) , Hong et al. (2021) , Jasinenko and Steuber (2023) , and Qin et al. (2022)
Competitive advantage	Financial value Organizational performance Creativity/Innovation	Dimitrov (2022) , Enslin et al. (2023) , Fitzsimmons et al. (2022) , Kaplan (2023) , and Ocasio et al. (2023)
Organizational cohesion	Sense of oneness Significance	Almandoz (2023) , Bronk et al. (2023) , Trachik et al. (2020) , and Trachik et al. (2022)

5.4.4. Potential Moderatos

The effectiveness of Purpose-Driven Leadership is further influenced by a range of potential moderators, identified in Table 5. These moderators involve the perception of impact, which refers to the way individuals within an organization view the effects and

influence of their work on the contribution to the organizational purpose (Ingen et al. 2021), autonomy, authenticity, work–life balance, and communication (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Crane 2022; Gavarkovs et al. 2023; Ingen et al. 2021; Jack et al. 2022; Kempster et al. 2019; Knippenberg 2020; Martela and Pessi 2018; Nazir et al. 2021; Ponting 2020; Qin et al. 2022; Walker and Reichard 2020). High perception of impact, autonomy, authenticity, effective communication, and a positive work–life balance promotes the implementation and success of Purpose-Driven Leadership. On the other hand, when these elements are lacking, it can hinder the effectiveness of the Purpose-Driven Leadership approach (Crane 2022; Ingen et al. 2021; Kempster et al. 2019; Martela and Pessi 2018).

Table 5. Purpose-Driven Leadership potential moderators.

Moderator	Outcomes	Sources
Perception of impact	Meaning Motivation Job satisfaction Resilience Employee performance Employer attractiveness	Ingen et al. (2021)
Autonomy	Wellbeing Motivation Sense of oneness Creativity/Innovation	Bhattacharya et al. (2023), Crane (2022), Gavarkovs et al. (2023), Ingen et al. (2021), Jack et al. (2022), Martela and Pessi (2018), Nazir et al. (2021), and Walker and Reichard (2020)
Authenticity	Meaning Trust Motivation	Crane (2022), Ingen et al. (2021), Kempster et al. (2019), and Martela and Pessi (2018)
Balance (Work-life balance)	Employee performance Meaning/Significance Work engagement Positive effects on individuals outside the organization	Ingen et al. (2021), Nazir et al. (2021), and Ponting (2020)
Communication	Organizational performance Shared identity Organizational commitment Adaptability/agility Work effectiveness Organizational culture Organizational cohesion	Bhattacharya et al. (2023), Ingen et al. (2021), Knippenberg (2020), and Qin et al. (2022)

5.5. Purpose-Driven Leadership as a Guiding Light

In an era marked by VUCA contexts, Purpose-Driven Leadership emerges as an essential approach for guiding organizations through transformative challenges (Dimitrov 2022; Ingen et al. 2021). It addresses these challenges by fostering a strong sense of shared purpose within the organization (Bronk et al. 2023; Knippenberg 2020), encouraging collaborative problem-solving and innovation (Brendel et al. 2023; Kaplan 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023), and promoting unity and commitment (Bunderson and Thakor 2022; Dimitrov 2022; Gwartz and Spence 2020) to face VUCA environments. By anchoring decisions in the organization’s core purpose, leaders can provide a consistent direction, even in the face of fluctuating external conditions (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Bronk et al. 2023; Enslin et al. 2023; Islam et al. 2023), as well as in cases of remote work (Steenkamp and Dhanesh 2023). This approach also enhances the organization’s adaptability, as it is rooted in a flexible yet enduring purpose (Crane 2022; Gavarkovs et al. 2023; Tan and Antonio 2022).

Compared to traditional leadership approaches, which focus on the relationship between leader–followers (Kempster and Jackson 2021), Purpose-Driven Leadership adopts a more holistic and integrated approach, emphasizing the alignment of the organization’s

collective efforts with its organizational purpose, involving all the stakeholders (Enslin et al. 2023; Kaplan 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023). While the traditional leadership approaches address the “what” and “how”, Purpose-Driven Leadership focuses on the “why”—the organizational purpose (Koh et al. 2023). This shift in focus from a solely leader–follower dynamic to an organization-wide purpose orientation is crucial in addressing the multifaceted challenges presented in a VUCA environment (Ocasio et al. 2023).

The strategic orientation of Purpose-Driven Leadership allows for a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the organization’s role in its wider context and creates a more effective response to VUCA (Aguileta-Clemente et al. 2023; Enslin et al. 2023; Losada-Vazquez 2022; Rindova and Martins 2023). It enables leaders to see beyond immediate challenges, recognizing the potential for long-term impact and sustainable growth (Gavarkovs et al. 2023; Hurth and Stewart 2022). This perspective not only guides decision-making but also inspires a culture of resilience and agility, essential in adapting to the ever-changing organizational landscape (Crane 2022; Dimitrov 2022; Tan and Antonio 2022; Trachik et al. 2020).

5.6. Measurement Approaches for Purpose-Driven Leadership

As previously highlighted, the corpus of research on Purpose-Driven Leadership has predominantly been theoretical or qualitative in nature, with limited quantitative empirical evidence, due to the complexity associated with quantifying Purpose-Driven Leadership (Jasinenko and Steuber 2023; Qin et al. 2022).

This research trajectory has been constrained by the inherent challenges of developing quantitative metrics capable of capturing the multifaceted characteristics of Purpose-Driven Leadership (Crane 2022; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023). This has led to the use of related metrics and concepts to capture the nuances of Purpose-Driven Leadership: Jasinenko and Steuber (2023) used items from the concepts of meaningful work, common good-oriented job characteristics, leadership style, and workplace spirituality; Brendel et al. (2023) used the way of being inventory; Nakamura et al. (2022) and Trachik et al. (2022) used part of the psychological wellbeing scale; Tan and Antonio (2022) used items from the concepts of greater good motivation, positive meaning, and contribution to meaning-making; Qin et al. (2022) used five items adapted from reputable professional websites; Brown et al. (2021), Das et al. (2018), Hong et al. (2021), Islam et al. (2023), Lu and Ahn (2023), and Nazir et al. (2021) used items from the concept of sense of purpose; Tuin et al. (2020) used items from the concepts of mission and vision; Trachik et al. (2020) used the Combat Operational Stress Control (COSC) leadership scale; Cavazotte et al. (2020) used the transformational leadership scale; Meynhardt et al. (2023) used a Leipzig Leadership Model (LLM)-based scale; Fitzsimmons et al. (2022) used the Radley Yeldar brand fit for purpose index; Aguileta-Clemente et al. (2023) assessed the presence of a purpose statement in the IBEX 35 companies’ websites; and Bhattacharya et al. (2023) and Bunderson and Thakor (2022) used binary items.

While these approaches provide insights into various aspects of Purpose-Driven Leadership, a significant gap in the literature persists. Specifically, there is a notable absence of a dedicated measurement instrument developed expressly for assessing Purpose-Driven Leadership. This omission is problematic because, without a tailored measurement tool, research cannot fully capture the unique elements of Purpose-Driven Leadership or assess its specific impacts on organizational outcomes.

6. Discussion

Purpose-Driven Leadership, as a nexus of individual and organizational purposes (Dimitrov 2022; Tuin et al. 2020), highlights the crucial role of a clear and compelling organizational purpose in guiding leadership actions and decisions (Ingen et al. 2021; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023), so that leadership is primarily about mobilizing and motivating people for the pursuit of the organization’s purpose (Almandoz 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023). This approach, based on promoting the organizational purpose (Knippenberg 2020; Ocasio

et al. 2023), compared with traditional leadership approaches, which focus on the relation of leader–follower (Kempster and Jackson 2021), involves the entire organization in a shared vision and collective effort (Bronk et al. 2023; Knippenberg 2020).

The success of a Purpose-Driven Leadership approach relies on the organizational purpose definition and implementation. This definition is contingent upon the strategic delineation of the organizational purpose, based on inside-out or outside-in perspectives (Ocasio et al. 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023), involving a deep analysis of the organization's core competencies and values, as well as an understanding of the broader societal and environmental context in which it operates (Gwartz and Spence 2020; Ocasio et al. 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023). Most of the literature analyzed is focused on the outside-in perspective, with the definition of a higher purpose, anchored at the maximums of the Environmental, Social, and Governance (ESG) or Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) frameworks, as the organizational purpose (e.g.,: Bhattacharya et al. (2023); Cho (2023); and Islam et al. (2023)), limiting the exploration of the inside-out perspective, which emphasizes leveraging an organization's unique strengths and internal capabilities to define its purpose (Qin et al. 2022).

Beyond its definition, the implementation of the organizational purpose relies on its levels, described in the Inverted Pyramid of Purpose. While the organizational purpose is universally applied across the entire organization (Handa 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023), a subpurpose can be understood as a more specific and targeted purpose that aligns with the broader organizational purpose but is tailored to the unique objectives and specific contributions of distinct groups or teams within the organization (Almandoz 2023; Hurth and Stewart 2022). Refining this alignment, micropurpose refers to the individualized purpose of each member within an organization that is associated with the subpurpose of the group or team to which the individual belongs and the overall purpose of the organization (Meynhardt et al. 2023; Rai 2020). This segregation into different levels of purpose within an organization enhances the perception of impact among its members, focusing on their specific contribution to the purpose (Ingen et al. 2021).

Purpose-Driven Leadership has several potential positive outcomes which have been previously identified, namely that it contributes directly or indirectly to work engagement (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Cavazotte et al. 2020; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023; Nazir et al. 2021; Tan and Antonio 2022; Tuin et al. 2020), organizational commitment (Jasinenko and Steuber 2023; Nazir et al. 2021; Qin et al. 2022; Tan and Antonio 2022; Trachik et al. 2020; Trachik et al. 2022), employee performance (Brendel et al. 2023; Nazir et al. 2021; Ponting 2020; Tan and Antonio 2022), and organizational performance (Brendel et al. 2023; Hong et al. 2021; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023; Ponting 2020; Rai 2020). However, Purpose-Driven Leadership must not be seen as the unique contributor to the outcomes identified. For example, while Purpose-Driven Leadership can contribute to increasing financial value (Bunderson and Thakor 2022; Clarke 2020; Hurth and Stewart 2022; Kempster and Jackson 2021; Nakamura et al. 2022; Ocasio et al. 2023; Rocha et al. 2021), it is important to acknowledge the interplay of other factors such as organizational structure, financial management strategies, market conditions, and investment decisions (Ahinful et al. 2023; Capon et al. 1990; Fu et al. 2022).

Additionally, the effectiveness of Purpose-Driven Leadership is contingent upon the interaction of various mediators. For example, stakeholder trust and legitimacy can significantly enhance the organization's license to operate and improve overall organizational reputation and performance (Crane 2022; Enslin et al. 2023; Kaplan 2023); meaning and significance play a pivotal role by contributing to self-realization and the fulfillment of human needs, fostering a sense of purpose and belonging among employees (Almandoz 2023; Gavarkovs et al. 2023; Handa 2023); organizational commitment, reflecting the psychological attachment and loyalty of employees towards their organization, is significantly influenced by Purpose-Driven Leadership, which aligns individual and organizational purposes, enhancing employees' emotional and intellectual investment in their work (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Brendel et al. 2023; Qin et al. 2022); and organizational engagement, closely related to organizational commitment, enhances the effectiveness of

Purpose-Driven Leadership by boosting enthusiasm and dedication towards work and the organization (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023). Consequently, Purpose-Driven Leadership provides employees with a clear sense of purpose and direction, making their work more meaningful and aligned with their personal values and aspirations (Almandoz 2023; Gavarkovs et al. 2023). Engaged employees are more likely to exceed their formal job responsibilities, contributing to higher levels of productivity, innovation, and overall organizational performance (Brendel et al. 2023; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023; Ponting 2020).

Another important outcome is the contribution of the organizational purpose and leading through it for marketing purposes. This can lead to an undesirable phenomenon, purpose washing, which reflects the superficial adoption of purpose-driven strategies for external exposure and marketing gain, without genuine commitment (Clarke 2020; Islam et al. 2023; Kaplan 2023), which can affect the achievement of the outcomes identified. On the other hand, it is important to notice that an imbalance in work–life can significantly undermine the efficacy of Purpose-Driven Leadership to contribute to the outcomes identified (Ingen et al. 2021; Nazir et al. 2021; Ponting 2020), since when employees experience a disproportionate focus on work at the expense of personal life, it can lead to burnout, decreased job satisfaction, and reduced productivity (Cline et al. 2022; Haar and Harris 2023; Mulyani et al. 2021). To mitigate these risks, leaders can incorporate strategies that promote a healthy work–life balance. This includes but is not limited to flexible working arrangements, mental health and wellbeing programs, and a supportive organizational culture (Panojan et al. 2022; Rashmi and Kataria 2022).

Beyond the perception of impact and work–life balance, other moderators can influence the effectiveness of Purpose-Driven Leadership. These include the leader’s capacity to effectively communicate the organizational purpose (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Ingen et al. 2021; Knippenberg 2020; Qin et al. 2022) and demonstrate authenticity in their actions and decisions (Crane 2022; Ingen et al. 2021; Kempster et al. 2019; Martela and Pessi 2018), and the autonomy of the employee to engage with and contribute to the organizational purpose in a meaningful way (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Crane 2022; Gavarkovs et al. 2023; Ingen et al. 2021; Jack et al. 2022; Martela and Pessi 2018; Nazir et al. 2021; Walker and Reichard 2020).

The current literature does not focus on comparing this leadership approach with other approaches. While the focus of traditional leadership approaches is on the relationship between leader–followers (Kempster and Jackson 2021), Purpose-Driven Leadership adopts a more holistic and integrated approach, emphasizing the alignment of the organization’s collective efforts with its organizational purpose, involving all of the stakeholders (Enslin et al. 2023; Kaplan 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023). Despite a different focus, this approach is not mutually exclusive to the others and can be seen as a complementary approach (Dimitrov 2022; Kempster and Jackson 2021).

This focus across the entire organization through the organizational purpose (Enslin et al. 2023; Kaplan 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023) and its strategic orientation (Enslin et al. 2023; Losada-Vazquez 2022; Rindova and Martins 2023), enables Purpose-Driven Leadership to address the challenges presented in a VUCA environment (Ocasio et al. 2023), through a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the organization’s role in its wider context (Losada-Vazquez 2022; Rindova and Martins 2023), providing a consistent direction (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Bronk et al. 2023; Enslin et al. 2023; Islam et al. 2023), fostering a strong sense of shared purpose (Bronk et al. 2023; Knippenberg 2020), encouraging collaborative problem-solving and innovation (Brendel et al. 2023; Kaplan 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023), and promoting unity and commitment (Bunderson and Thakor 2022; Dimitrov 2022; Gwartz and Spence 2020) to face VUCA environments.

7. Conclusions

The research on Purpose-Driven Leadership illustrates its significant role in aligning individual and organizational purposes (Dimitrov 2022; Tuin et al. 2020). This study enabled us to conceptualize Purpose-Driven Leadership, define its key attributes, and elucidate its theoretical foundations. Additionally, it provided insights into the mechanisms by which it operates, including its potential antecedents, mediators, moderators, and outcomes.

In our findings, it was found that Purpose-Driven Leadership relies on the reason for the organization's existence, its purpose (Enslin et al. 2023; Fleischer 2021; LaVoi and Haley 2021), and provides several positive outcomes (Brendel et al. 2023; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023). Focusing on this organizational purpose commitment and its effective communication, the leader creates a consistent direction (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Bronk et al. 2023; Enslin et al. 2023; Islam et al. 2023), and fosters a strong sense of shared purpose (Bronk et al. 2023; Knippenberg 2020), which is reflected in unity and commitment (Bunderson and Thakor 2022; Dimitrov 2022; Gwartz and Spence 2020). Furthermore, under this approach, the leader also provides meaning (Brendel et al. 2023; Dimitrov 2022; Handa 2023; Islam et al. 2023; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023) and promotes work engagement (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023) and effectiveness (Peeters et al. 2023; Tan and Antonio 2022), contributing to employee and organizational performance (Brendel et al. 2023; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023).

The implementation of Purpose-Driven Leadership depends on its antecedents and attributes, namely the organizational purpose definition (Dimitrov 2022; Jasinenko and Steuber 2023), linked to the organizational strategy (Ocasio et al. 2023; Rindova and Martins 2023) and identity (Fitzsimmons et al. 2022; Hurth and Stewart 2022), and its implementation through effective communication (LaVoi and Haley 2021; Qin et al. 2022) and a multi-level approach encompassing the organization's overarching purpose, the subpurposes of its groups or teams, and the micropurposes of individual members (Almandoz 2023; Hurth and Stewart 2022), leading us to the creation of the Inverted Pyramid of Purpose framework (Figure 8). Moreover, the effectiveness of Purpose-Driven Leadership is further influenced by a range of moderators, namely the employee perception of impact on the contribution to the organizational purpose (Ingen et al. 2021) and the maintenance of a positive work-life balance (Ingen et al. 2021; Nazir et al. 2021; Ponting 2020). Additionally, autonomy, authenticity, and communication play crucial roles as moderators in enhancing the efficacy of Purpose-Driven Leadership (Bhattacharya et al. 2023; Ingen et al. 2021; Martela and Pessi 2018).

Purpose-Driven Leadership also emerges as an essential approach for guiding organizations in VUCA environments (Dimitrov 2022; Ingen et al. 2021), through the organization's adaptability, as it is rooted in a flexible yet enduring purpose (Crane 2022; Gavarkovs et al. 2023; Tan and Antonio 2022), a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of the organization's role in its wider context (Enslin et al. 2023; Losada-Vazquez 2022; Rindova and Martins 2023), and a focus on a long-term impact and sustainable growth (Gavarkovs et al. 2023; Hurth and Stewart 2022).

Based on the findings and conclusions presented, several avenues for future research emerge. Due to the lack of quantitative measurement approaches, we recommend developing a measurement instrument to assess the effectiveness of Purpose-Driven Leadership. Acknowledging the positive outcomes of Purpose-Driven Leadership, as highlighted in our findings, this instrument can lead to a quantitative study of the mechanisms of Purpose-Driven Leadership that contribute to organizational performance. In line with this quantitative study, it would be interesting to perform a comparative study with other leadership approaches.

Supplementary Materials: The following supporting information can be downloaded at: <https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/admsci14070148/s1>, Table S1: Comprehensive Overview of Research Papers Reviewed.

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