Central European Management Journal

Beneficial role of altruistic leadership to employee stay in organization: organizational cynicism as a mediator and caring and instrumental climates as moderators

Received 20 March 2025
Revised 3 April 2026
Accepted 21 May 2026

Marcin Wnuk
Department of Work and Organizational Psychology, Faculty of Psychology and Cognitive Science, Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan, Poland

Abstract

Purpose – Altruistic leaders represent a supportive and employee needs-focused type of leadership. Therefore, it is important to explore how altruistic leaders influence subordinates' attitudes toward the organization and turnover intentions on the grounds of social exchange and situational strength theory. This study aims to test the mechanisms underlying the link between altruistic leadership and turnover intentions, with organizational cynicism as a mediator and ethical climate as a moderator.

Design/methodology/approach – The cross-sectional research was conducted in a sample of 434 full-time employees from Poland.

Findings – The more altruistic leadership manifestations employees experienced, the less cynical they were in the workplace, which in turn was related to more propensity motivation to leave an organization. It was found that an instrumental ethical climate dampens the negative relationship between altruistic leadership and turnover intentions.

Research limitations/implications – The beneficial implications of developing altruistic leadership for attitude toward the organization were discussed. The cross-sectional, not longitudinal, method used in the study does not allow for presenting the outcomes from a cause-effect perspective.

Originality/value – It was the first attempt to examine the beneficial role of altruistic leadership in reducing employees' turnover intentions through the propensity to limit organizational cynicism and the moderating function of an ethical climate.

Keywords Turnover intention, Organizational cynicism, Ethical climate, Altruistic leadership

Paper type Research article

Introduction

In 2023, Poland saw its lowest employment rate in history (Unemployment rate 1990–2023). The appearance of Generation Z, who are more skeptical about building loyalty and organizational commitment, on the job market, population aging and costs of employee turnover are some factors affecting employees' motivation to stay in organizations. This issue has led to widespread debate among job market experts, company owners, human resources (HR) specialists and business advisors. Furthermore, there has been extensive research into the factors underpinning the intentions to quit an organization and into programs to protect against this phenomenon.

Literature on predictors of turnover intentions has emphasized the importance of the treatment of employees by organizations and supervisors expressed by perceived organizational and supervisor support (Wnuk, 2019; Ladao, Lacap, Batac, Batac, &

© Marcin Wnuk. Published in *Central European Management Journal*. Published by Emerald Publishing Limited. This article is published under the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY 4.0) license. Anyone may reproduce, distribute, translate and create derivative works of this article (for both commercial and non-commercial purposes), subject to full attribution to the original publication and authors. The full terms of this license may be seen at http://creativecommons.org/licences/by/4.0/

Central European Management Journal
Emerald Publishing Limited
e-ISSN: 2658-2430
p-ISSN: 2658-0845
DOI 10.1108/CEMJ-03-2025-0074

Downloaded from www.emerald.com/cemj/article-pdf/doi/10.1108/CEMJ-03-2025-0074/11692980/cemj-03-2025-0074en.pdf by guest on 10 November 2026

Dungo, 2022), trust in an organization and supervisor (Purba, Oostrom, Born, & van der Molen, 2016) or psychological contract breach (Pfrombeck, Doden, Grote, & Feierabend, 2020).

The mechanism of influence emphasizes the supervisor's role as the personification of an organization (Levinson, 1965), as the supervisor represents an organization in the process of social exchange with employees (Blau, 1964). In these mutual transactions, the reciprocity norm (Gouldner, 1960) plays a significant role in regulating the relationships between both parties of exchange. Employees who believe that their supervisor takes care of them, creates the appropriate conditions to fulfill their needs and treats them fairly with respect and dignity feel obligated to repay the organization through the appropriate attitude at work. This motivation translates into greater job involvement and organizational commitment, which prevents turnover intentions (Lee, Idris, & Tuckey, 2019). For example, Wnuk's (2019) study found that perceived supervisor support directly and indirectly, through the path of gratitude to the organization and affective organizational commitment, was related to the intentions to quit the organization.

Therefore, effective leadership can reduce the motivation to quit the organization (Babalola, Stouten, & Euwema, 2016). Depending on their leadership style, leaders and supervisors have a possibility to decrease (Lee *et al.*, 2019; Westbrook & Peterson, 2022) or increase (Wang, Cheng, & Wang, 2018; Iqbal, Asghar, & Asghar, 2022) employees' intentions to stay on the job.

This study proposed a new perspective on the relationship between leadership style and motivation to quit the organization showing that this link is more complex and is influenced by situational factors. First of all, the novelty of this research relies on altruistic leadership as a factor that has not yet been studied as a counteract turnover intention. Furthermore, for the first time, the role of the organizational environment, such as ethical climate in the mechanism underpinning the link between the altruistic leader and the motivation to quit an organization, was tested as a factor, which, depending on ethical climate type, can strengthen or weaken this relationship. Some previous studies have found that a general, not specific ethical, climate is an antecedent of turnover intentions (Wnuk, Czerw, Żywiołek-Szeja, & Chudzicka-Czupała, 2025), and this variable can interact with supervisor attitude in explaining the motivation to quit an organization (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015). In this study, the protective role of altruistic leaders in turnover intentions is explored to verify the potential direct and indirect mechanisms underlying this relationship. According to situational strength theory (Meyer, Dalal, & Hermida, 2010), this research examined whether the potential preventive function of altruistic leadership on turnover intention is amplified by a caring ethical climate congruent with an altruistic way of leading and weakened by instrumental ethical climate as antagonistic to the altruistic one. Additionally, following social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), this study posits that altruistic leadership is negatively and indirectly related to turnover intentions by protecting from organizational cynicism as a negative manifestation of employees' attitudes toward the organization. Altruistic leadership has never been considered an antecedent of organizational cynicism, which can, directly and indirectly, through organizational cynicism can influence intentions to quit the organization.

Literature review

Relationships between altruistic leadership and organizational cynicism as well as turnover intentions

The role of leaders and supervisors in employees' attitudes toward an organization has been widely studied, with leaders having beneficial or detrimental effects on employees based on the quality of leader–subordinate exchange. Organizational support theory (Eisenberger, Shanock, & Wen, 2020) and leader–member exchange (LMX) theory (Harris, Li, & Kirkman, 2014) have emphasized the role of supervisors in reciprocal relations with subordinates whose behavior toward an organization is coherent with supervisors' treatment toward them.

Downloaded from www.emerald.com/cemj/article-pdf/doi/10.1108/CEMJ-03-2025-0074/11692980/cemj-03-2025-0074en.pdf by guest on 10 November 2026

Employees who experience support, benevolence, openness and caring from leaders feel obligated to reciprocate the organization through a favorable attitude and a focus on organizational goals and interests, which are reflected in work engagement (Heyns, McCallaghan, & Senne, 2021; Li, So, Chen, Wang, & Sun, 2023), organizational commitment (Li, Castaño, & Li, 2018; Vandenberghe *et al.*, 2019), task performance (Shanock & Eisenberger, 2006), innovative behavior (Chen, Li, & Leung, 2016), organizational citizenship behavior (Sguera, Bagozzi, Huy, Boss, & Boss, 2018) and lack of motivation to quit the organization (Wnuk, 2019; Halliday, Paustian-Underdahl, Stride, & Zhang, 2022). The motivation to reciprocate is grounded in their desire to maintain a balance in social exchange and to ensure favorable treatment from the leader, as well as to protect themselves from the feeling of being ungrateful.

Additionally, trust in a supervisor is a relevant predictor of organizational attitudes connected with LMX. Trust in a leader is an antecedent of gratitude toward the organization (Wnuk, 2020), performance (Frazier, Gooty, Little, & Nelson, 2015), organizational citizenship behavior (Frazier *et al.*, 2015), affective commitment (Miao, Newman, Schwarz, & Xu, 2013), work engagement (Chughtai, Byrne, & Flood, 2015) and turnover intentions (Purba *et al.*, 2016). Frazier *et al.* (2015) found that perceptions of a leader's ability and benevolence were positively related to trust in them, which, in turn, positively predicted task performance and general and individual organizational citizenship behavior.

Additionally, leadership style is an incentive for reciprocal exchange and gratefulness in the case of favorable treatment from the supervisor for work engagement (Lee *et al.*, 2019), affective commitment (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015), performance (Westbrook & Peterson, 2022) or lack of work alienation (Jiang, Chen, Sun, & Li, 2019) and motivation to quit the organization (Babalola *et al.*, 2016; Wang *et al.*, 2018). This means that a leader's characteristics and attitudes in the workplace and their approach to team members are perceived by subordinates through the prism of authority granted by the company and identified in relation to organizational motivations and intentions. Previous studies have confirmed that the antecedents of turnover intentions are authoritarian (Wang *et al.*, 2018) and despotic (Iqbal *et al.*, 2022) leadership. For example, authoritarian leadership positively predicted organizational cynicism (Jiang *et al.*, 2019). In contrast, the authentic, empowering, entrepreneurial, ethical, transformational and servant leadership styles were found to decrease employees' turnover intentions (Babakus, Yavas, & Ashill, 2010; Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015; Babalola *et al.*, 2016; Lee *et al.*, 2019; Westbrook & Peterson, 2022).

Both organizational cynicism and turnover intentions have not yet been examined in the context of leaders' altruistic attitudes in the workplace, but earlier research indicated that altruistic managers and altruistic behaviors lead to positive outcomes for both organizations and employees (Sosik, Jung, & Dinger, 2009; Wu, Hu, & Jiang, 2012; Zheltoukhova, 2016), whereas ego-driven leadership is detrimental (Kwak & Shim, 2017). Zheltoukhova (2016) showed that the altruistic leadership style is positively related to perceived leader effectiveness, job satisfaction, organizational climate and support for creativity. Aside from the lack of egoistic intentions, altruistic behavior requires self-sacrifice despite the personal cost without an expectation of being rewarded in return (Batson, 2010, 2011). Expectations to bear the costs of self-sacrifice and empathic helping are dimensions of altruistic leadership (Zheltoukhova, 2016). Altruistic motives appear in other forms of leadership. For example, they appear in spiritual leadership as "altruistic love" (Fry, 2003) and in servant leadership as "altruistic calling" (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Despite some similarities with spiritual, servant and transformational leadership, altruistic leadership is a leadership style that explains the additional variance in some variables, such as perceived leader effectiveness, organizational climate and support for creativity (Zheltoukhova, 2016). A leader's altruistic approach focuses on helping and supporting employees, despite personal costs, through social learning (Bandura, 1977), which is contrary to selfish pursuits resulting from organizational cynicism (Wnuk, 2024). In this way, an altruistic leader is a model to follow, boosting the

Downloaded from www.emerald.com/cemj/article-pdf/doi/10.1108/CEMJ-03-2025-0074/11692980/cemj-03-2025-0074en.pdf by guest on 10 November 2026

perceptions of coworkers and the organization as trustworthy and supportive and building beliefs about the honest intentions of organization.

H1. Altruistic leadership is negatively related to organizational cynicism.

H2. Altruistic leadership is negatively related to turnover intentions.

Organizational cynicism and turnover intentions

Organizational cynicism has a transactional character and is a consequence of the mutual exchange between an employee and organization, as well as its representatives, and manifests as a negative attitude toward an organization. Organizational cynicism is a result of the perception of an organization as incoherent, nonintegrated, unfair and unworthy of trust (Dean, Brandes, & Dharwadkar, 1998). Aside from the cognitive aspect, it consists of an affective dimension characterized by frustration and disappointment and a behavioral one that manifests as disrespectfulness and aversion to an organization (Dean *et al.*, 1998). Such reactions result from experiences with an organization and its agents. As a result, planned projects and changes are not implemented, and employees' ideas are ignored, despite encouragement for their initiative. The discrepancy between the points of view of employees and the organization can stem from differences in the realization of needs and values. From a worker's perspective, they can perceive their needs as not being met when they do not feel organizational support and belonging and when organizational values are present only in declarations, being absent in everyday practices.

Organizational cynicism is a consequence of the activities of leaders and the organizations they represent and the perceptions of employees who observe such activities and draw conclusions. Previous research has confirmed that antecedents of organizational cynicism are a perceived lack of organizational support (Treadway *et al.*, 2004; Byrne & Hochwarter, 2008), organizational injustice (Pfrombeck *et al.*, 2020; Sguera, Patient, Diehl, & Bobocel, 2022), breach of psychological contract (Johnson & O'Leary-Kelly, 2003; Li & Chen, 2018), lack of trust in the supervisor (Kannan-Narasimhan & Lawrence, 2012) or presence of authoritarian leadership (Jiang *et al.*, 2019).

When employees become convinced that their own needs and values are insignificant to the organization and when organizations and leaders fail to keep promises and previously agreed-upon terms of cooperation, lack of integrity and exercise benevolence, employees become convinced that the organization and its representatives care only about business goals and disregard employees' interests. They come to believe that this approach is permanent and will not change. This leads employees to believe that they should focus only on their own interests and encourages them to act egoistically against organizational goals. This, being a manifestation of organizational cynicism, is undesirable and harms both the organization and employees by way of counterproductive work behaviors (Li & Chen, 2018), work alienation and employees' unsafe behaviors (Jiang *et al.*, 2019) and turnover intentions (Schmitz, Froese, & Bader, 2018; Sungur, Özer, Saygili, & Uğurluoğlu, 2019).

H3. Organizational cynicism is positively related to turnover intentions.

Ethical climate in relation to organizational cynicism and turnover intentions

An ethical climate refers to the perception of organizational policies, practices and procedures as having an ethical character (Victor & Cullen, 1988). In an instrumental climate process of decision-making based on self-directed motives, employees become convinced to follow their self-interest, despite the potentially harmful effects on coworkers. In contrast, in a caring ethical climate, individuals are convinced that decisions should be made considering the well-being of others as a main organizational concern. This type of

Downloaded from www.emerald.com/cemj/article-pdf/doi/10.1108/CEMJ-03-2025-0074/11692980/cemj-03-2025-0074en.pdf by guest on 10 November 2026

climate awards altruistic and cooperative behaviors as a way to achieve well-being among the highest possible percentage of organizational members and opposes individual and selfish motivations.

A caring climate is focused on inclusiveness, creates the conditions for realizing affiliation needs and encourages employees to cooperate, share knowledge and support each other in a way that pursues the work contentment of a wide range of employees as a dominant motive in the workplace. In contrast, an instrumental ethical climate emphasizes individual well-being, rewards self-centeredness and the pursuit of selfish goals and motivates competitiveness and the growth of power and control.

Many studies have found that a caring ethical climate is favorable for enhancing job satisfaction (Elçi & Alpkan, 2009; Tsai & Huang, 2008; Wang & Hsieh, 2012; Parboteeah, Weiss, & Hoegl, 2024), meaning in work (Wnuk *et al.*, 2025), organizational commitment (Borhani, Jalali, Abbaszadeh, & Haghdoost, 2014; Cullen, Parboteeah, & Victor, 2003; Parboteeah *et al.*, 2024) and well-being (Parboteeah *et al.*, 2024), as well as discouraging quitting (Wnuk *et al.*, 2025). Conversely, the instrumental ethical climate is harmful to both employees' and organizational well-being as a negative antecedent of job satisfaction (Elçi & Alpkan, 2009; Tsai & Huang, 2008; Wang & Hsieh, 2012), meaning in work (Wnuk *et al.*, 2025), organizational commitment (Martin & Cullen, 2006) and a positive predictor of turnover intentions (Wnuk *et al.*, 2025). For example, Tsai and Huang (2008) found that a caring climate positively predicts satisfaction with payment, work itself and overall job satisfaction, but an instrumental climate is negatively related to satisfaction with promotion, overall job satisfaction and affective organizational commitment. Additionally, other positive functions of caring ethical climates were identified for different performance indicators (Newman, Round, Bhattacharya, & Roy, 2017; Parboteeah *et al.*, 2024) and ethical and unethical behavior (Kuenzi, Mayer, & Greenbaum, 2020; Al Halbusi, Ruiz-Palomino, Morales-Sánchez, & Abdel Fattah, 2021), such as bullying (Jin *et al.*, 2022), personal morality, emphatic concern, kindness and common humanity (Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara & Guerra-Baez, 2016) or employee silence (Zhang & Cao, 2021).

H4. A caring ethical climate is negatively related to turnover intentions, but an instrumental ethical climate is positively related to turnover intentions.

Altruistic leadership and turnover intentions: organizational cynicism as a mediator and caring and instrumental ethical climates as moderators

Recent studies have suggested that the relationship between leadership styles and employees' motivation to quit an organization is complex and has an indirect character. In trying to explain the mechanisms underlying this link, researchers have tested some mediators, such as perceived organizational support (Ladao *et al.*, 2022), affective commitment (Yang, Guan, & Pu, 2019), toxic workplace environment, cognitive distractions (Iqbal *et al.*, 2022), organizational cynicism (Sungur *et al.*, 2019), work–family conflict (Yang *et al.*, 2019), ethical climate (Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015), psychological contract (Liao, Widowati, Hu, & Tasman, 2017), burnout (Babakus *et al.*, 2010), job satisfaction, self-efficacy, performance (Westbrook & Peterson, 2022) and work engagement (Lee *et al.*, 2019). Some of these results can be interpreted from the lens of the exchange process in the supervisor–subordinate dyad. For example, leaders perceived as integral, self-aware, and authentic and who act in a confident, transparent, predictable and optimistic way evoke positive reactions in workmates, who, feeling grateful, respond positively and become emotionally committed to the organization (Yang *et al.*, 2019). This, in turn, enhances their motivation to stay with an organization. Sungur *et al.* (2019) found that paternalistic leadership is characterized by power and authority, but helpfulness and an ethical approach negatively predicted organizational cynicism, which is an antecedent of turnover intentions.

Downloaded from www.emerald.com/cemj/article-pdf/doi/10.1108/CEMJ-03-2025-0074/11692980/cemj-03-2025-0074en.pdf by guest on 10 November 2026

Other factors affecting supervisor–subordinate exchange are environmental factors, such as national culture (Zhang *et al.*, 2022), organizational culture (Kalsoom, Khan, & Zubair, 2020) and organizational ethical climate (Parboteeah *et al.*, 2024), which can modify the effects of these mutual interactions, providing employees with cues and suggestions for appropriate behaviors in the workplace. When there is coherence and unambiguity between cues and incentives flowing from the leader and the ethical climate to employees, employees' behaviors tend to be consistent with signals from both of these sources rather than only one source.

Some studies have argued that an ethical climate is a factor that, alongside leadership preferences, interactively predicts employees' attitudes toward an organization. Schwepker and Schultz (2015) found that a caring ethical climate amplified the positive link between servant leadership and salespeople's value-enhancing behavior and performance. Zagenczyk, Purvis, Cruz, Thoroughgood, and Sawyer (2021) found similar results. In their study, ethical climate strengthened the link between perceived organizational support and organizational identification, as well as between perceived organizational support and organizational commitment.

These results are in line with situational strength theory (Meyer *et al.*, 2010), which posits that the strength of contextual factors is influential and determines employees' behaviors. Furthermore, the impact of contextual factors is greater when the climate is perceived to be stronger (Shin, 2012). Situational strength is defined as "implicit or explicit cues provided by external entities regarding the desirability of potential behavior" (Meyer *et al.*, 2010, p. 122) and is considered "the most important situational moderating variable" (Snyder & Ickes, 1985, p. 904). In this study, internal situational sources connected to an organization were taken into account (Alaybek *et al.*, 2017). These were employees' perceptions of altruistic leadership, a caring ethical climate and an instrumental ethical climate. Altruistic leaders represent values, expectations, and requirements consistent with the characteristics and guidelines of a caring climate and, in contrast to an instrumental ethical climate, propose an orientation toward people, not toward tasks. Altruistic leaders in a caring climate value the good of the community as opposed to the good of the individual, altruism versus egoism, cooperation versus competition and the need to belong versus the need for power.

This means that following the assumptions of situational strength theory (Meyer *et al.*, 2010), coherence between signals and cues from an altruistic leader and a caring ethical climate is a strong situational premise determining employees' behaviors and will interactively encourage them to stay with an organization. In the case of caring ethical climates, following social exchange theory (Blau, 1964), the law of reciprocity will cause employees to feel grateful for favorable treatment from both leaders and the organization. Conversely, incongruence between incentives flowing from an instrumental climate, which favors selfish motivations, needs and goals, and altruistic leadership should interactively positively influence the intentions to leave an organization. An instrumental climate is expected to dampen the negative relationship between altruistic leadership and turnover intentions.

H5. Altruistic leadership is indirectly related to turnover intentions through organizational cynicism.

H6. Caring and instrumental ethical climates moderate the relationship between altruistic leadership and turnover intentions.

Statistical analyses

The research model was verified using AMOS and path analysis. To test the indirect effect, the bootstrapping method was used (Preacher & Hayes, 2004). The 95% confidence interval (CI) was applied based on 5,000 bootstrapped replications. If a coefficient did not include 0 in its 95% CI, it was deemed statistically significant. The normal distribution of the data was

Downloaded from www.emerald.com/cemj/article-pdf/doi/10.1108/CEMJ-03-2025-0074/11692980/cemj-03-2025-0074en.pdf by guest on 10 November 2026

required to use the maximum likelihood method. Whether the data's distribution was close to the normal distribution based on the skewness and kurtosis values was determined. Using AMOS, distribution was interpreted as close to normal when the skewness was within the interval of −2 and 2, and kurtosis was −10 and 10 (Collier, 2020). Common method bias in structural equation modeling was examined using the latent method factor as an additional element, which, aside from other variables, explains the additional variance in the model (Podsakoff, MacKenzie, Lee, & Podsakoff, 2003).

Model fit was examined by applying the following fit indexes: the model's χ^2, the minimum discrepancy/degrees of freedom (χ^2/df), the comparative fit index (CFI), goodness-of-fit index (GFI), Tucker–Lewis index (TLI), normed fit index (NFI), incremental fit index (IFI), root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA) and standardized root-mean residual (SRMR). Results of a *P*-value for $\chi^2 > 0.05$; $\chi^2/df < 3$; CFI ≥ 0.95; GFI, TLI, NFI, and IFI all ≥ 0.90; and RMSEA and SRMR <0.08 implied a good model fit (Brown, 2006; Hu & Bentler, 1999). The same fit indicators in confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) were the point of reference for verifying the discriminant validity of the research measures. Before the examination of the moderated mediation model, common method bias was verified by Harman's one-factor test. The total variance explained by one factor exceeding 50% indicates a problem with common method bias (Podsakoff *et al.*, 2003). Finally, the potential multicollinearity problem was explored using the variance inflation factor (VIF). A VIF value that exceeds 5 indicates multicollinearity (James, Witten, Hastie, & Tibshirani, 2013).

Method

Participants

This study took as its participants 434 full-time employees who were hired on employment contracts by different companies in Poland. The criteria for including research were adulthood, possessing a contract of employment and employment in Poland. The participants were reached based on snowball selection using social media like LinkedIn. Members of the LinkedIn society were encouraged to fill out the online questionnaire and recommended to do this to their friends. Every participant expressed written consent to participate in the research. The online questionnaires were preceded by an introductory note, which informed the participants about the aim of the study, the anonymous and voluntary nature of the study and the right to withdraw from the study at any time without any consequences. No material incentives were offered to participants.

The sample consisted of 255 women (58.8%) and 179 men (41.2%). The average age of the participants was M = 29.44 years (SD = 10.79), with an average seniority of M = 8.58 years (SD = 9.48). In total, 6 (1.4%) had elementary education, 7 (1.6%) had vocational education, 182 (41.9%) had secondary education and 239 (55.1%) had higher education. With respect to their positions, 190 (43.8%) were ordinary workers, 148 (34.1%) were independent specialists, 30 (6.9%) were low-level managers, 51 (11.8%) were mid-level managers and 15 (3.5%) were senior-level managers.

Measures

The ethical work climate was verified by the Polish version of the Ethical Work Climate Questionnaire (EWCQ) (Wnuk *et al.*, 2025). It consists of 20 items. Every dimension of the EWCQ encompasses four items as indicators. Items are rated on a five-point Likert scale (from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). This tool demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency (Victor & Cullen, 1988). The CFA confirmed five factors of EWCQ ($\chi^2[134] = 257.61$; $p > 0.000$; CMIN/df = 1.92; CFI = 0.96; NFI = 0.92; TLI = 0.94; RMSEA = 0.046 (90% CI [0.038, 0.055]); SRMR = 0.052).

Organizational cynicism was measured using the Polish version of the Cynicism Questionnaire prepared by Chudzicka-Czupała, Grabowski, and Adamek (2017),

Downloaded from www.emerald.com/cemj/article-pdf/doi/10.1108/CEMJ-03-2025-0074/11692980/cemj-03-2025-0074en.pdf by guest on 10 November 2026

which consists of combinations of six items from the Organizational Cynicism Scale (Brandes, Dharwadkar, & Dean, 1999), and three from a tool prepared by Eaton and Struthers (2002). Responses are rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The one-factor structure of the Polish version of the cynicism questionnaire was confirmed (Chudzicka-Czupała *et al.*, 2017), and the internal consistency measured by the Cronbach's alpha coefficient was satisfactory (Chudzicka-Czupała *et al.*, 2017). In this study, the one-factor structure was a good fit for the data (χ^2[20] = 33.12; p = 0.033; CMIN/df = 1.65; CFI = 0.99; NFI = 0.98; TLI = 0.99; RMSEA = 0.039; (90% CI [0.011, 0.0062]); SRMR = 0.0163), explaining 60.72% of the variance in this construct.

Turnover intentions were verified using a three-item measure (Yücel, 2012). Participants responded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The internal validity of this measure as possessing a one-factor structure was confirmed (χ^2[20] = 33.12; p = 0.033; CMIN/df = 1.65; CFI = 0.99; NFI = 0.98; TLI = 0.99; RMSEA = 0.039; (90% CI [0.0011, 0.0062]); SRMR = 0.0163), explaining 60.72% of the variance in this construct.

Altruistic leadership was examined by items regarding altruism as one factor of the Servant Leadership Questionnaire (Barbuto & Wheeler, 2006). Participants responded to four questions on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree. The one-factor structure of this measure was supported by the results of CFA (χ^2[1] = 2.31; p = 0.033; CMIN/df = 2.31; CFI = 0.99; NFI = 0.98; TLI = 0.99; RMSEA = 0.055; (90% CI [0.000, 0.015]); SRMR = 0.009), explaining 64.7% of the variance in this construct.

Results

Preliminary results

Figure 1 shows the theoretical model, which assumes that the relationship between altruistic leadership and turnover intentions is mediated by organizational cynicism and moderated by the perception of instrumental and caring ethical climates.

Descriptive statistics are shown in Table 1. Because skewness and kurtosis values were within the designated intervals, meaning the data distribution was similar to the normal distribution, the maximum likelihood method was used (Collier, 2020). Harman's one-factor method indicated that the unrotated one-factor solution explained 31.9% of the variance, which is less than 50%, which meant the lack of the problem with common method bias. Additionally, multicollinearity was not observed (the VIF results did not exceed 5).

The correlation coefficients between study variables are presented in Table 2.

Table 3 shows that the CFA results support the assumption that the five-factor model best fits the data compared to alternative models, indicating good discriminant validity measures used in the research.

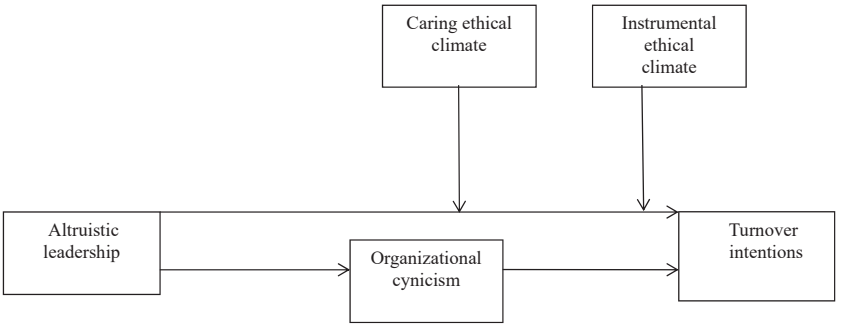


Figure 1. Theoretical model. Source: Own elaboration

Downloaded from www.emerald.com/cemj/article-pdf/doi/10.1108/CEMJ-03-2025-0074/11692980/cemj-03-2025-0074en.pdf by guest on 10 November 2026

Table 1. Descriptive statistics ($n = 434$)

Variable	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Standard deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	VIM	Cronbach's alpha coefficient
Altruistic leadership	4	20	11.47	3.39	−0.26	−0.09	1.52	0.81
Organizational cynicism	9	45	23.73	8.3	0.31	−0.61	1.74	0.92
Caring ethical climate	4	20	12	3.21	−0.28	−0.4	1.85	0.83
Instrumental ethical climate	4	20	11.23	2.88	0.24	0.06	1.49	0.74
Turnover intentions	3	15	8.33	3.49	0.15	−0.99	–	–

Note(s): VIM = variance inflation factor

Source(s): Own elaboration

Downloaded from www.emerald.com/cemj/article-pdf/doi/10.1108/CEMJ-03-2025-0074/11692980/cemj-03-2025-0074en.pdf by guest on 10 November 2026

Table 2. Values of r-Pearson correlation coefficients between research variables (n = 434)

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	
1. Altruistic leadership								
2. Organizational cynicism	−0.44**							
3. Caring ethical climate	0.57**	−0.55**						
4. Instrumental ethical climate	−0.30**	0.54**	0.37**					
5. Turnover intentions	−0.33**	0.64**	−0.47**	0.43**				
6. Education	0.03	−0.06	0.01	−0.04	0.03			
7. Seniority	−0.01	−0.08	0.01	−0.01	0.3**	0.03		
8. Level of the position held	0.07	−0.16**	0.12**	−0.04	0.3**	0.47**	0.12*	
9. Age	−0.05	−0.09	−0.03	−0.03	0.37**	0.95**	0.47**	0.03

Note(s): *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01

Source(s): Own elaboration

Table 3. The results of CFA for all measures used in the research measures (n = 434)

Number of model	Factors	CMIN/DF	RMSEA	SRMR	GFI	CFI	TLI	NFI
One-factor model	OC,CC,TI,I,AL	5.51 (p = 0.000)	[0.102, 90% (0.096; 0.108)]	0.0749	0.79	0.83	0.76	0.81
Two-factor model	OC,CC + TI,I,AL	4.94 (p = 0.000)	[0.090, 90% (0.084; 0.096)]	0.0766	0.83	0.87	0.83	0.84
Three-factor model	OC + CC + TI,I,AL	4.01 (p = 0.000)	[0.083, 90% (0.078; 0.089)]	0.0691	0.84	0.89	0.86	0.86
Four-factor model	OC + CC + TI + I,AL	2.43 (p = 0.000)	[0.058, 90% (0.051; 0.64)]	0.0875	0.9	0.95	0.93	0.91
Five-factor model	OC + CC + TI + I + AL	1.65 (p = 0.000)	[0.039, 90% (0.031; 0.46)]	0.0411	0.94	0.97	0.97	0.94

Note(s): AL = altruistic leadership; OC = organizational cynicism; CC = caring ethical climate; I = instrumental ethical climate; TI = turnover intentions

Source(s): Own elaboration

Hypotheses verification

The values for the model fit criteria indicated that the model had a good fit: $\chi^2(48) = 61.74$; $p = 0.08$; CMIN/df = 1.28; CFI = 0.99; GFI = 0.98; TLI = 0.98; NFI = 0.97; IFI = 0.99, RMSEA = 0.026 (90% CI [0.0, 0.043]), and SRMR = 0.043.

Hypothesis 1, positing that altruistic leadership is an antecedent of organizational cynicism, was supported. Altruistic leadership was found to be a negative predictor of organizational cynicism (b = −0.419, p > 0.000, 95% CI [−0.491, −0.340]). However, regarding Hypothesis 2, altruistic leadership was not relevant to turnover intentions (b = −0.008, p > 0.000, 95% CI [−0.094, 0.077]). Hypotheses 3 was fully supported, but Hypotheses 4 was partially supported. Both organizational cynicism (b = 0.045, p > 0.000, 95% CI [0.384, 0.558]) and a caring ethical climate (b = −0.175, p > 0.000, 95% CI [−0.268, −0.076]) predicted turnover intentions but instrumental ethical climate did not (b = 0.083, p > 0.060, 95% CI [−0.004, 0.171]).

Regarding Hypothesis 5, the indirect relationship between altruistic leadership and turnover intentions as mediated by organizational cynicism was confirmed (indirect effect = −0.197, p > 0.000, 95% CI [−0.255, −0.150]). Hypothesis 6, which posited that

Downloaded from www.emerald.com/cemj/article-pdf/doi/10.1108/CEMJ-03-2025-0074/11692980/cemj-03-2025-0074en.pdf by guest on 10 November 2026

caring and instrumental ethical climates moderate the relationship between altruistic leadership and turnover intentions, was partially confirmed. Instrumental climate strengthened the positive link between altruistic leadership and turnover intentions (b = 0.102, p = 0.014, 95% CI [0.024, 0.183]), but a caring ethical climate did not (b = 0.063, p = 0.127, 95% CI [−0.019, 0.144]). The moderating effect is illustrated in Figure 2.

Discussion

This study examined the mechanisms underlying the beneficial effects of altruistic leadership on turnover intentions. As was shown, altruistic leadership mitigated turnover intentions in two different ways. The first mechanism has an indirect character and is rooted in social exchange theory (Blau, 1964). A positive perception of a leader as altruistic within the reciprocity norm is a negative predictor of a cynical attitude in the workplace. In turn, organizational cynicism is a positive antecedent of the motivation to quit. The supportive and benevolent attitudes of leaders focused on employees' well-being motivate employees to express gratefulness as a manifestation of reciprocity. This employee obligation to reciprocate is strengthened by the belief that favorable treatment from a leader comes at a cost. The more sacrificial a supervisor's behavior is in subordinates' eyes, the stronger the subordinate's motivation to repay and strive to balance the debt (McCullough, Kilpatrick, Emmons, & Larson, 2001).

In this leader–employee exchange, the leader is perceived as the representative of an organization, which informs whether employees have a desire to repay organizations through a less cynical attitude. As a result of positive exchanges, employees have a desire to care for an organization's image. Furthermore, altruistic leadership causes employees to believe that organizations are interested in employees' well-being. Additionally, coherence between organizations' declarations and actions encourages employees to stay with the organization. To rid organizations of employee cynicism, leaders must act as conduits of the human-oriented focus of organizations and their sincere intentions and motivations. This altruistic approach encourages openness to organizational needs and goals, creates an opportunity for building mutual trust and amplifies employees' connection with the organization, thus mitigating the desire to quit.

It is important to note that not only altruistic leadership may lead to reciprocal exchange with employees. Also, leaders who exhibit transactional or transformational leadership can evoke a sense of obligation to repay the organization among employees (Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

Transactional leaders pay attention to structure, efficiency and the exchange process with followers, emphasizing clear goals and roles, rewards and punishments, which can foster a

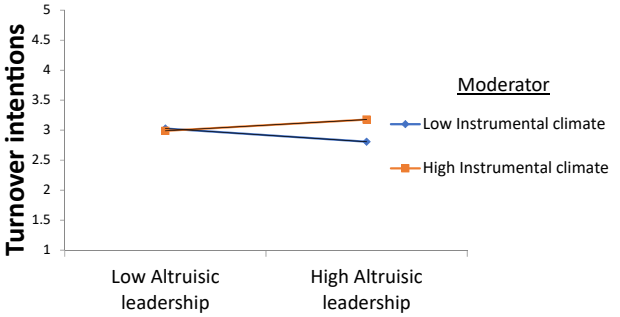


Figure 2. Moderating effect of ethical instrumental climate on the association between altruistic leadership and turnover intentions (n = 434). Source: Own elaboration

Downloaded from www.emerald.com/cemj/article-pdf/doi/10.1108/CEMJ-03-2025-0074/11692980/cemj-03-2025-0074en.pdf by guest on 10 November 2026

sense of fair treatment among subordinates and serve as a basis for repayment (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). On the other hand, transformative leaders, through their inspiring, motivating and empowering leadership, may foster a sense of support among employees. Recent research demonstrated that both transactional and transformative are positively related to intrapreneurial behaviors through perceived organizational support (Klein, 2023). Also, Asgari, Mezginejad and Taherpour (2020) found that transactional and transformational leadership are positively related to perceived organizational support, which, in turn, positively predicts organizational citizenship behavior.

The second mechanism underlying the relationship between altruistic leadership and turnover intentions is an instrumental ethical climate as an organizational and environmental factor that weakens the negative effect of leader altruism on the intentions to leave an organization. A framework that can be used to interpret the interactive effect of altruistic leadership and an instrumental ethical climate on turnover intentions is situational strength theory (Meyer *et al.*, 2010). Unexpectedly, a caring ethical climate coherent with altruistic leadership did not amplify the protective role of the perception of an altruistic leader on turnover intentions. Although this study did not find a synergistic effect between altruistic leadership and a caring ethical climate in explaining turnover intentions, it was only one type of ethical climate that could be an independent predictor of turnover intentions. The other types of ethical climates as controlled variables were irrelevant to turnover intentions.

Following situational strength theory (Meyer *et al.*, 2010), both leadership style and perceptions of an ethical climate were situational cues that resulted in psychological pressure to behave coherently with the values of the workplace. From this perspective, in comparison to a caring ethical climate, the situational influence of a leader's altruism on the motivation to quit an organization was not observed independent of its interaction with an instrumental ethical climate or indirectly through organizational cynicism. It is important to note that Poland is an individualistic country (Kuźmińska-Haberla, 2018), which means that it respects individual values, needs, goals, ambitions and aspirations against collective ones. This could have had an impact on employees' perceptions of an ethical climate, given their inclination to search for evidence of the presence of an instrumental organizational climate consistent with expectations. In this study, perceptions of an instrumental organizational climate were important in determining the relationship between altruistic leadership and turnover intentions.

In comparison to previous research regarding different samples and well-being indicators (Okpara & Wynn, 2008; Tsai & Huang, 2008; Elçi & Alpkan, 2009; Wang & Hsieh, 2012; Wnuk *et al.*, 2025), the harmful effects of an instrumental climate and the beneficial effects of a caring climate have been confirmed for the motivation to stay in an organization. These results emphasize the important role of ethical organizational environmental factors in shaping employee's well-being and their attitudes toward the organization.

Also, the same as in earlier studies, leadership style was related to the approach to organization (Sungur *et al.*, 2019; Yang *et al.*, 2019; Ladao *et al.*, 2022; Westbrook & Peterson, 2022) as an antecedent of organizational cynicism and indirectly through this variable on turnover intentions. It was shown that besides authentic, empowering, entrepreneurial, ethical, transformational and servant leadership (Babakus *et al.*, 2010; Demirtas & Akdogan, 2015; Babalola *et al.*, 2016; Lee *et al.*, 2019; Westbrook & Peterson, 2022), an altruistic leader in contrary to authoritarian (Wang *et al.*, 2018) or despotic (Iqbal *et al.*, 2022) can motivate the employees to stay in an organization. In contrast to an authoritarian leadership style that enhances organizational cynicism (Jiang *et al.*, 2019), it was confirmed that altruistic leadership can reduce this type of attitude among employees.

Also, organizational cynicism besides perceived organizational support (Ladao *et al.*, 2022), affective commitment (Kalay, Brender-Ilan, & Kantor, 2020); Yang *et al.*, 2019), psychological contract (Liao *et al.*, 2017) or burnout (Babakus *et al.*, 2010) was found as a factor underpinning the relationship between leadership styles and turnover intention. What is important to notice is organizational cynicism was earlier tested as mediator in the link

Downloaded from www.emerald.com/cemj/article-pdf/doi/10.1108/CEMJ-03-2025-0074/11692980/cemj-03-2025-0074en.pdf by guest on 10 November 2026

between paternalistic leadership and turnover intention, among another sample, and using other measures of organizational cynicism and turnover intention, revealing the same results (Sungur *et al.*, 2019). This means that the leader's attitude can limit employees' cynicism and, thanks to that, decreases turnover intention.

The theoretical implications of this study are as follows. Two mechanisms underpinning the link between altruistic leadership and turnover intentions were supported. The protective function of altruistic leadership was confirmed for organizational cynicism, which in turn may strenghten the motivation to quit. It was also shown that the perception of instrumental ethical climate mitigates the negative relationship between altruistic leadership and the turnover intention. It is important to emphasize that instrumental climate, as antagonistic to altruistic leader behavior along with this variable, in an interactive way, explains motivations to leave an organization. On the other side, values and rules characteristic of a caring climate, which are coherent with altruistic leadership only separately without interactive effect, predict turnover intention.

Some practical implications of this study should be emphasized. First, the leaders, as a result of their own reflections, training, workshops, coaching and other learning activities, should realize that their approach to employees can have a beneficial or harmful influence on employees' attitudes toward the organization. They should develop altruistic attitudes as an effective way to prevent their subordinates from organizational cynicism and motivation to leave an organization. To achieve this aim, they need to implement and propagate moral values and rules focused on supporting and caring for employees' welfare, not self-interests.

Companies and their representatives should hire leaders who are open to helping and supporting employees and, if possible, possess altruistic traits and attributes and who tend to sacrifice their own interests for employees' well-being. To maintain and strengthen leaders' altruistic approach, every manifestation of this kind of behavior should be rewarded and treated as valuable, and managers should be encouraged to emphasize altruistic purposes. A managerial evaluation system should assess the aspect of an altruistic attitude. Leadership development programs should feature workshops and training focused on the growth of skills and knowledge on the effectiveness of leader–employee exchange, cooperativeness, caring about employees, building belongingness and other altruistic values. Additionally, organizational politics, procedures, standards and codes of conduct should be rooted in an altruistic approach and manifest a caring ethical climate. The company's code of values and ethics should contain altruistic values to emphasize the behaviors required in the workplace.

It is important to note that transactional leaders, for whom the exchange with subordinates is a main rule of establishing reciprocal relationships, may be beneficial for positive employee attitudes toward the organization (Asgari *et al.*, 2020; Klein, 2023). This means that, in addition to altruistic leadership, organizations and their representatives should consider transactional leadership as a desirable and appropriate leadership style.

Also, to prevent employee turnover, organizations should focus on coherency between their declaration and actions to avoid the cynical approach of workers. Companies should not manifest promises without covering to avoid the employees' disappointment being premises to their cynical attitude.

Limitations and future research

This study has some limitations. The generalizability of this study is limited to Polish culture, especially to cultural conditions. Also, the snowball sampling of participants and the use of specific methods to reach them, for example via social media such as LinkedIn, make it impossible to generalize the results to the entire population of employees in Poland.

Therefore, there is a need to conduct future studies in other cultures to enable cross-cultural comparison. Previous studies indicated that some dimensions of culture modify the link between supervisor–subordinate exchange and team–member exchange with turnover

Downloaded from www.emerald.com/cemj/article-pdf/doi/10.1108/CEMJ-03-2025-0074/11692980/cemj-03-2025-0074en.pdf by guest on 10 November 2026

intentions (Costigan *et al.*, 2013; Rutishauser & Sender, 2019), as well as the attitude toward an organization and turnover intentions (Wong & Cheng, 2020).

Future research could assess other potential moderators of the relationship between leadership style and turnover intentions, such as company size, which was not taken into account in this study. For example, Oh and Oh (2017) showed that the indirect negative effect between authentic leadership and turnover intentions via affective commitment is stronger in smaller organizations. In addition, studying other leadership styles would lead to interesting results, showing their potential differences in explaining the motivation to stay with an organization both independently and interactively with an ethical organizational climate. Altruistic leadership was examined using items from a multidimensional measure dedicated to verifying servant leadership, which treated altruistic behaviors as an attribute of servant leaders, not as a separate leadership style. Recent research has provided arguments for altruistic leadership as distinct from servant leadership, but further exploration could be fruitful in resolving this issue.

This study was cross-sectional, which allowed the conclusions to indicate only correlations between the variables but not causality. Alternative models testing for a relation in another direction were not conducted, which, for example, means that organizational cynicism might be an element that determines perceptions of altruistic leadership. To verify this, future research should adopt a longitudinal character that unambiguously indicates the causes and effects.

References

Al Halbusi, H., Ruiz-Palomino, P., Morales-Sánchez, R., & Abdel Fattah, F. A. (2021). Managerial ethical leadership, ethical climate and employee ethical behavior: Does moral attentiveness matter?. *Ethics & Behavior*, *31*(8), 604–627. doi: 10.1080/10508422.2021.1937628.

Alaybek, B., Dalal, R. S., Sheng, Z., Morris, A. G., Tomassetti, A. J., & Holland, S. J. (2017). Situational strength cues from social sources at work: Relative importance and mediated effects. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *8*, 1512. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2017.01512.

Asgari, A., Mezginejad, S., & Taherpour, F. (2020). The role of leadership styles in organizational citizenship behavior through mediation of perceived organizational support and job satisfaction. *Innovar-revista De Ciencias Administrativas Y Sociales*, *30*(75), 87–98. doi: 10.15446/innovar.v30n75.83259.

Babakus, E., Yavas, U., & Ashill, N. J. (2010). Service worker burnout and turnover intentions: Roles of person-job fit, servant leadership, and customer orientation. *Services Marketing Quarterly*, *32*(1), 17–31. doi: 10.1080/15332969.2011.533091.

Babalola, M. T., Stouten, J., & Euwema, M. C. (2016). Frequent change and turnover intention: The moderating role of ethical leadership. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *134*(2), 311–322. doi: 10.1007/s10551-014-2433-z.

Bandura, A. (1977). *Social learning theory.* New York: Prentice-Hall.

Barbuto, J. E. Jr., & Wheeler, D. W. (2006). Scale Development and construct clarification of servant leadership. *Group & Organization Management*, *31*(3), 300–326. doi: 10.1177/1059601106287091.

Batson, C. D. (2010). Empathy-induced altruistic motivation. In M. Mikulincer, & P. R. Shaver (Eds.), *Prosocial Motives, Emotions, and Behavior: The Better Angels of Our Nature*. American Psychological Association.

Batson, C. D. (2011). *Altruism in humans*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Blau, P. M. (1964). *Exchange and power in social life*. New York: Wiley.

Borhani, F., Jalali, T., Abbaszadeh, A., & Haghdoost, A. (2014). Nurses' perception of ethical climate and organizational commitment. *Nursing Ethics*, *21*(3), 278–288. doi: 10.1177/0969733013493215.

Downloaded from www.emerald.com/cemj/article-pdf/doi/10.1108/CEMJ-03-2025-0074/11692980/cemj-03-2025-0074en.pdf by guest on 10 November 2026

Brandes, P., Dharwadkar, R. & Dean, J. W. (1999). Does organizational cynicism matter? Employee and supervisor perspectives on work outcomes. *The 36th Annual Meeting of the Eastern Academy of Management*, Philadelphia, 1–33.

Brown, T. A. (2006). *Confirmatory factor analysis for applied research*. New York: The Guilford Press.

Byrne, Z., & Hochwarter, W. A. (2008). Perceived organizational support and performance: Relationships across levels of organizational cynicism. *Journal of Managerial Psychology, 23* (1), 54–72. doi: 10.1108/02683940810849666.

Chen, T., Li, F., & Leung, K. (2016). When does supervisor support encourage innovative behavior? Opposite moderating effects of general self-efficacy and internal locus of control. *Personnel Psychology, 69*(1), 123–158. doi: 10.1111/peps.12104.

Chudzicka-Czupała, A., Grabowski, D., & Adamek, D. (2017). Who is behaving cynically at work? Work engagement, organizational commitment and work ethic, and their relationship with organizational cynicism. *Zarządzanie Zasobami Ludzkimi*, *114*, 69–86.

Chughtai, A., Byrne, M., & Flood, B. (2015). Linking ethical leadership to employee well-being: The role of trust in supervisor. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *128*(3), 653–663. doi: 10.1007/s10551-014-2126-7.

Collier, J. E. (2020). *Applied structural equation modelling using AMOS: Basic to advanced techniques*. New York: Routledge.

Costigan, R. D., Insinga, R. C., Berman, J. J., Kranas, G., Kureshov, V. A., & Li, P. P. (2013). The significance of direct-leader and co-worker trust on turnover intentions: A cross-cultural study. *Journal of Trust Research*, *3*(2), 124–198. doi: 10.1080/21515581.2013.820028.

Cullen, J. B., Parboteeah, K. P., & Victor, B. (2003). The effects of ethical climates on organizational commitment: A two-study analysis. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *46*(2), 127–141. doi: 10.1023/A:1025089819456.

Dean, J. W., Jr., Brandes, P., & Dharwadkar, R. (1998). Organizational cynicism. *Academy of Management Review*, *23*(2), 341–352. doi: 10.5465/amr.1998.533230.

Demirtas, O., & Akdogan, A. A. (2015). The effect of ethical leadership behavior on ethical climate, turnover intention, and affective commitment. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *130*(1), 59–67. doi: 10.1007/s10551-014-2196-6.

Eaton, J., & Struthers, C. W. (2002). Using the internet for organizational research: A study of cynicism in the workplace. *CyberPsychology and Behavior*, *5*(4), 305–313. doi: 10.1089/109493102760275563.

Eisenberger, R., Shanock, L. R., & Wen, X. (2020). Perceived organizational support: Why caring about employees counts. *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior*, *7*(1), 101–124. doi: 10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-012119-044917.

Elçi, M., & Alpkan, L. (2009). The impact of perceived organizational ethical climate on work satisfaction. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *84*(3), 297–311. doi: 10.1007/s10551-008-9709-0.

Frazier, M. L., Gooty, J., Little, L. M., & Nelson, D. L. (2015). Employee attachment: Implications for supervisor trustworthiness and trust. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, *30*(2), 373–386. doi: 10.1007/s10869-014-9367-4.

Fry, L. W. (2003). Toward a theory of spiritual leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *14*(6), 693–727. doi: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2003.09.001.

Gouldner, A. W. (1960). The norm of reciprocity. *American Sociological Review*, *25*, 165–178.

Halliday, C. S., Paustian-Underdahl, S. C., Stride, C., & Zhang, H. (2022). Retaining women in male-dominated occupations across cultures: The role of supervisor support and psychological safety. *Human Performance*, *35*(3-4), 156–177. doi: 10.1080/08959285.2022.2050234.

Harris, T. B., Li, N., & Kirkman, B. L. (2014). Leader–member exchange (LMX) in context: How LMX differentiation and LMX relational separation attenuate LMX's influence on OCB and turnover intention. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *25*(2), 314–328. doi: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2013.09.001.

Downloaded from www.emerald.com/cemj/article-pdf/doi/10.1108/CEMJ-03-2025-0074/11692980/cemj-03-2025-0074en.pdf by guest on 10 November 2026

Heyns, M. M., McCallaghan, S., & Senne, O. (2021). Supervisor support and work engagement: The mediating role of psychological safety in a post-restructuring business organisation. *Journal of Psychology in Africa*, *31*(2), 140–144. doi: 10.1080/14330237.2021.1903180.

Hu, L.-t., & Bentler, P. M. (1999). Cutoff criteria for fit indexes in covariance structure analysis: Conventional criteria versus new alternatives. *Structural Equation Modeling*, *6*(1), 1–55. doi: 10.1080/10705519909540118.

Iqbal, J., Asghar, A., & Asghar, M. Z. (2022). Effect of despotic leadership on employee turnover intention: Mediating toxic workplace environment and cognitive distraction in academic institutions. *Behavioral Sciences*, *12*(5), 125. doi: 10.3390/bs12050125.

James, G., Witten, D., Hastie, T., & Tibshirani, R. (2013). *An introduction to statistical learning: With applications in R* (1st ed.). New York: Springer.

Jiang, H., Chen, Y., Sun, P., & Li, C. (2019). Authoritarian leadership and employees' unsafe behaviors: The mediating roles of organizational cynicism and work alienation. *Current Psychology*, *38*(6), 1668–1678. doi: 10.1007/s12144-017-9726-1.

Jin, F., Ashraf, A. A., Ul Din, S. M., Farooq, U., Zheng, K., & Shaukat, G. (2022). Organisational caring ethical climate and its relationship with workplace bullying and post traumatic stress disorder: The role of type A/B behavioural patterns. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *13*, 1042297. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2022.1042297.

Johnson, J. L., & O'Leary-Kelly, A. M. (2003). The effects of psychological contract breach and organizational cynicism: Not all social exchange violations are created equal. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *24*(5), 627–647. doi: 10.1002/job.207.

Judge, T. A., & Piccolo, R. F. (2004). Transformational and transactional leadership: A meta-analytic test of their relative validity. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *89*(5), 755–768. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.89.5.755.

Kalay, E., Brender-Ilan, Y., & Kantor, J. (2020). Authentic leadership outcomes in detail-oriented occupations: Commitment, role-stress, and intentions to leave. *Journal of Management and Organization*, *26*(5), 832–849. doi: 10.1017/jmo.2018.8.

Kalsoom, Z., Khan, M. A., & Zubair, D. (2020). Organizational culture as a moderator between paternalistic leadership style and organizational commitment: A case of banking sector, Pakistan. *European Journal of Business and Management*, *12*(1), 41–54, SSRN. Available from: https://ssrn.com/abstract=3538039

Kannan-Narasimhan, R., & Lawrence, B. S. (2012). Behavioral integrity: How leader referents and trust matter to workplace outcomes. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *111*(2), 165–178. doi: 10.1007/s10551-011-1199-9.

Klein, G. (2023). Transformational and transactional leadership, organizational support and environmental competition intensity as antecedents of intrapreneurial behaviors, *European Research on Management and Business Economics*, *29*(2), 1–11. doi: 10.1016/j.iedeen.2023.100215.

Kuenzi, M., Mayer, D. M., & Greenbaum, R. L. (2020). Creating an ethical organizational environment: The relationship between ethical leadership, ethical organizational climate, and unethical behavior. *Personnel Psychology*, *73*(1), 43–71. doi: 10.1111/peps.12356.

Kuźmińska-Haberla, A. (2018). Poland and India in the Light of Hofstede's cultural dimensions. In M. Bilgin, H. Danis, E. Demir, & U. Can (Eds.), *Eurasian Economic Perspectives. Eurasian Studies in Business and Economics* (Vol. 8/2, pp. 267–283). Cham: Springer. doi: 10.1007/978-3-319-67916-7_17.

Kwak, W. J., & Shim, J. H. (2017). Effects of Machiavellian ethical leadership and employee power distance on employee voice. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal*, *45*(9), 1485–1498. doi: 10.2224/sbp.5896.

Ladao, L., Lacap, J. P., Batac, J. A., Batac, J., & Dungo, J. M. (2022). The mediating effect of perceived organizational support on the relationship between authentic leadership and turnover intention. *Asia-Pacific Social Science Review*, *22*(1), 60–77. doi: 10.59588/2350-8329.1438.

Downloaded from www.emerald.com/cemj/article-pdf/doi/10.1108/CEMJ-03-2025-0074/11692980/cemj-03-2025-0074en.pdf by guest on 10 November 2026

Lee, M. C. C., Idris, M. A., & Tuckey, M. (2019). Supervisory coaching and performance feedback as mediators of the relationships between leadership styles, work engagement, and turnover intention. *Human Resource Development International*, *22*(3), 257–282. doi: 10.1080/13678868.2018.1530170.

Levinson, H. (1965). Reciprocation: The relationship between man and organization. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *9*(4), 370–390. doi: 10.2307/2391032.

Li, S., & Chen, Y. (2018). The relationship between psychological contract breach and employees' counterproductive work behaviors: The mediating effect of organizational cynicism and work alienation. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *9*, 1273. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2018.01273.

Li, Y., Castaño, G., & Li, Y. (2018). Perceived supervisor support as a mediator between Chinese university teachers' organizational justice and affective commitment. *Social Behavior and Personality: An International Journal*, *46*(8), 1385–1396. doi: 10.2224/sbp.6702.

Li, H., So, C., Chen, H., Wang, Y., & Sun, S. (2023). Examining the mechanisms linking responsible leadership and work engagement: The mediating roles of general distributive justice climate and perceived supervisor support. *Current Psychology*, *42*(18), 15186–15201. doi: 10.1007/s12144-022-02855-z.

Liao, S., Widowati, R., Hu, D., & Tasman, L. (2017). The mediating effect of psychological contract in the relationships between paternalistic leadership and turnover intention for foreign workers in Taiwan. *Asia-Pacific Management Review*, *22*(2), 80–87. doi: 10.1016/j.apmrv.2016.08.003.

Martin, K. D., & Cullen, J. B. (2006). Continuities and extensions of ethical climate theory: A meta-analytic review. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *69*(2), 175–194. doi: 10.1007/s10551-006-9084-7.

McCullough, M. E., Kilpatrick, S., Emmons, R. A., & Larson, D. (2001). Is gratitude a moral affect?. *Psychological Bulletin*, *127*(2), 249–266. doi: 10.1037/0033-2909.127.2.249.

Meyer, R. D., Dalal, R. S., & Hermida, R. (2010). A review and synthesis of situational strength in the organizational sciences. *Journal of Management*, *36*(1), 121–140. doi: 10.1177/0149206309349309.

Miao, Q., Newman, A., Schwarz, G., & Xu, L. (2013). Participative leadership and the organizational commitment of civil servants in China: The mediating effects of trust in supervisor. *British Journal of Management*, *24*(S1), S76–S92. doi: 10.1111/1467-8551.12025.

Newman, A., Round, H., Bhattacharya, S., & Roy, A. (2017). Ethical climates in organizations: A review and research agenda. *Business Ethics Quarterly*, *27*(4), 475–512. doi: 10.1017/beq.2017.23.

Oh, J., & Oh, S. (2017). Authentic leadership and turnover intention: Does organizational size matter?. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, *38*(7), 912–926. doi: 10.1108/LODJ-08-2016-0209.

Okpara, J. O., & Wynn, P. (2008). The impact of ethical climate on job satisfaction, and commitment in Nigeria: Implications for management development. *Journal of Management Development*, *27*(9), 935–950. doi: 10.1108/02621710810901282.

Parboteeah, K. P., Weiss, M., & Hoegl, M. (2024). Ethical climates across national contexts: A meta-analytical investigation. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *189*(3), 573–590. doi: 10.1007/s10551-023-05387-z.

Pfrombeck, J., Doden, W., Grote, G., & Feierabend, A. (2020). A study of organizational cynicism and how it is affected by social exchange relationships at work. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *93*(3), 578–604. doi: 10.1111/joop.12306.

Podsakoff, P. M., MacKenzie, S. B., Lee, J. -Y., & Podsakoff, N. P. (2003). Common method biases in behavioral research: A critical review of the literature and recommended remedies. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, *88*(5), 879–903. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.88.5.879.

Preacher, K. J., & Hayes, A. F. (2004). SPSS and SAS procedures for estimating indirect effects in simple mediation models. *Behavior Research Methods, Instruments & Computers*, *36*(4), 717–731. doi: 10.3758/BF03206553.

Downloaded from www.emerald.com/cemj/article-pdf/doi/10.1108/CEMJ-03-2025-0074/11692980/cemj-03-2025-0074en.pdf by guest on 10 November 2026

Purba, D. E., Oostrom, J. K., Born, M. P., & van der Molen, H. T. (2016). The relationships between trust in supervisor, turnover intentions, and voluntary turnover: Testing the mediating effect of on-the-job embeddedness. *Journal of Personnel Psychology*, *15*(4), 174–183. doi: 10.1027/1866-5888/a000165.

Rutishauser, L., & Sender, A. (2019). Effect of team-member exchange on turnover intention: A cross-cultural perspective on a selected aspect of employee engagement. *International Studies of Management & Organization*, *49*(1), 43–62. doi: 10.1080/00208825.2019.1565093.

Schmitz, M. A., Froese, F. J., & Bader, A. K. (2018). Organizational cynicism in multinational corporations in China. *Asia Pacific Business Review*, *24*(5), 620–637. doi: 10.1080/13602381.2018.1492203.

Schwepker, C. H., & Schultz, R. J. (2015). Influence of the ethical servant leader and ethical climate on customer value enhancing sales performance. *Journal of Personal Selling and Sales Management*, *35*(2), 93–107. doi: 10.1080/08853134.2015.1010537.

Sguera, F., Bagozzi, R. P., Huy, Q. N., Boss, R. W., & Boss, D. S. (2018). The more you care, the worthier I feel, the better I behave: How and when supervisor support influences (un)ethical employee behavior. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *153*(3), 615–628. doi: 10.1007/s10551-016-3339-8.

Sguera, F., Patient, D., Diehl, M. -R., & Bobocel, R. (2022). Thank you for the bad news: Reducing cynicism in highly identified employees during adverse organizational change. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *95*(1), 90–130. doi: 10.1111/joop.12369.

Shanock, L. R., & Eisenberger, R. (2006). When supervisors feel supported: Relationships with subordinates' perceived supervisor support, perceived organizational support, and performance. *The Journal of Applied Psychology*, *91*(3), 689–695. doi: 10.1037/0021-9010.91.3.689.

Shin, Y. (2012). CEO ethical leadership, ethical climate, climate strength, and collective organizational citizenship behavior. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *108*(3), 299–312. doi: 10.1007/s10551-011-1091-7.

Snyder, M., & Ickes, W. (1985). Personality and social behavior. In G. Lindzey, & E. Aronson (Eds.), *Handbook of Social Psychology* (pp. 883–948). Random House.

Sosik, J. J., Jung, D., & Dinger, S. L. (2009). Values in authentic action: Examining the roots and rewards of altruistic leadership. *Group & Organization Management*, *34*(4), 395–431. doi: 10.1177/1059601108329212.

Sungur, C., Özer, Ö., Saygili, M., & Uğurluoğlu, Ö. (2019). Paternalistic leadership, organizational cynicism, and intention to quit one's job in nursing. *Hospital Topics*, *97*(4), 139–147. doi: 10.1080/00185868.2019.1655509.

Treadway, D. C., Hochwarter, W. A., Ferris, G. R., Kacmar, C. J., Douglas, C., Ammeter, A. P., & Buckley, M. (2004). Leader political skill and employee reactions. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *15*(4), 493–513. doi: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2004.05.004.

Tsai, M., & Huang, C. (2008). The relationship among ethical climate types, facets of job satisfaction, and the three components of organizational commitment: A study of nurses in Taiwan. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *80*, 565–581. doi: 10.1007/s10551-016-3339-8.

Unemployment rate (1990–2023). Available from: https://stat.gov.pl/en/topics/labour-market/registered-unemployment/unemployment-rate-1990-2023,3,1.html [accessed 17 October 2023].

Vandenberghe, C., Panaccio, A., Bentein, K., Mignonac, K., Roussel, P., & Ayed, A. K. B. (2019). Time-based differences in the effects of positive and negative affectivity on perceived supervisor support and organizational commitment among newcomers. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, *40*(3), 264–281. doi: 10.1002/job.2324.

Victor, B., & Cullen, J. B. (1988). The organizational bases of ethical work climates. *Administrative Science Quarterly*, *33*(1), 101–125. doi: 10.2307/2392857.

Wang, Y., & Hsieh, H. (2012). Toward a better understanding of the link between ethical climate and job satisfaction: A multilevel analysis. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *105*(4), 535–545. doi: 10.1007/s10551-011-0984-9.

Downloaded from www.emerald.com/cemj/article-pdf/doi/10.1108/CEMJ-03-2025-0074/11692980/cemj-03-2025-0074en.pdf by guest on 10 November 2026

Wang, L., Cheng, M. -Y., & Wang, S. (2018). Carrot or stick? The role of in-group/out-group on the multilevel relationship between authoritarian and differential leadership and employee turnover intention. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *152*(4), 1069–1084. doi: 10.1007/s10551-016-3299-z.

Westbrook, K. W., & Peterson, R. M. (2022). Servant leadership effects on salesperson self-efficacy, performance, job satisfaction, and turnover intentions. *Journal of Business-to-Business Marketing*, *29*(2), 153–175. doi: 10.1080/1051712X.2022.2068820.

Wnuk, M. (2019). Social exchange as a key factor in shaping employees' attitudes towards the organization. *Organization and Management*, *3*(186), 57–70.

Wnuk, M. (2020). Trust in the supervisor as a mediator between perceived supervisor support and attitude toward the organization. *Zarządzanie Zasobami Ludzkimi*, *137*(6), 35–50. doi: 10.5604/01.3001.0014.5838.

Wnuk, M. (2024). Whether employees with dark triad personality traits are cynical at work: The mediating role of meaning in work and the moderating role of instrumental climate. Unpublished manuscript.

Wnuk, M., Czerw, A., Żywiołek-Szeja, M., & Chudzicka-Czupała, A. (2025). The polish version of the ethical climate questionnaire. *Scientific Reports*, *15*(1), 8899. doi: 10.1038/s41598-025-93990-7.

Wong, K. F. E., & Cheng, C. (2020). The turnover intention–behaviour link: A culture-moderated meta-analysis. *Journal of Management Studies*, *57*(6), 1174–1216. doi: 10.1111/joms.12520.

Wu, T., Hu, C., & Jiang, D. (2012). Is subordinate's loyalty a precondition of supervisor's benevolent leadership? The moderating effects of supervisor's altruistic personality and perceived organizational support. *Asian Journal of Social Psychology*, *15*(3), 145–155. doi: 10.1111/j.1467-839X.2012.01376.x.

Yang, J., Guan, Z., & Pu, B. (2019). Mediating influences of entrepreneurial leadership on employee turnover intention in startups. *Social Behavior and Personality*, *47*(6), 1–13. doi: 10.2224/sbp.8117.

Yücel, I. (2012). Examining the relationships among job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intention: An empirical study. *International Journal of Business and Management*, *7*(20), 44–58. doi: 10.5539/ijbm.v7n20p44.

Zagenczyk, T. J., Purvis, R. L., Cruz, K. S., Thoroughgood, C. N., & Sawyer, K. B. (2021). Context and social exchange: Perceived ethical climate strengthens the relationships between perceived organizational support and organizational identification and commitment. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, *32*(22), 4752–4771. doi: 10.1080/09585192.2019.1706618.

Zhang, H., & Cao, W. (2021). How can the silence be broken? Caring ethical climate and employee silence. *Social Behavior and Personality*, *49*(2), 1–12. doi: 10.2224/sbp.9970.

Zhang, Y., Guo, Y., Zhang, M., Xu, S., Liu, X., & Newman, A. (2022). Antecedents and outcomes of authentic leadership across culture: A meta-analytic review. *Asia Pacific Journal of Management*, *39*(4), 1399–1435. doi: 10.1007/s10490-021-09762-0.

Zheltoukhova, K. (2016). Developing and validating a scale of altruistic leadership. [Doctoral Thesis, Lancaster University]. Lancaster University.

Zoghbi-Manrique-de-Lara, P., & Guerra-Baez, R. (2016). Exploring the influence of ethical climate on employee compassion in the hospitality industry. *Journal of Business Ethics*, *133*(3), 605–617. doi: 10.1007/s10551-014-2415-1.

Corresponding author
Marcin Wnuk can be contacted at: marwnuk@wp.pl

For instructions on how to order reprints of this article, please visit our website:
www.emeraldgrouppublishing.com/licensing/reprints.htm
Or contact us for further details: **permissions@emeraldinsight.com**

Downloaded from www.emerald.com/cemj/article-pdf/doi/10.1108/CEMJ-03-2025-0074/11692980/cemj-03-2025-0074en.pdf by guest on 10 November 2026