Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources

WILEY | AHRI Australian HR Institute

ORIGINAL ARTICLE OPEN ACCESS

Leaders' Relational Energy and Employee Job Outcomes: A Moderated Mediation Model Across Three Countries

Maree Roche[1] | Jarrod Haar[2] | David Brougham[3]

[1]University of Auckland School of Business, University of Auckland, Auckland, New Zealand | [2]Human Resource Management, Massey University, Auckland, New Zealand | [3]School of Management, Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand

Correspondence: Maree Roche (maree.roche@auckland.ac.nz)

Received: 3 September 2024 | **Revised:** 9 February 2026 | **Accepted:** 13 February 2026

ABSTRACT

Our paper challenges current understanding of the importance of relational leadership by demonstrating how the relational energy of leaders influences employee job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and OCBs across three countries. Our overall sample was $n = 1277$ and comprised employees from New Zealand ($n = 427$), Australia ($n = 401$), and the United States ($n = 449$). We found that leaders' relational energy across three countries (the United States, New Zealand, and Australia) was positively related to followers' work-life balance, job and career satisfaction, and OCBs. Overall, the moderated mediation model highlighted that the work-life balance of employees mediated the relationship between their outcomes and their leaders' relational energy at least partially. Ultimately, we suggest that when leaders create positive relationships with followers by engaging in emotionally energetic and uplifting interactions, positive outcomes for employee wellbeing ensue and we provide empirical evidence of this relationship.

1 | Introduction

Broadly speaking, leadership involves influencing activities, and existing research has suggested that influence is built over time (Settoon et al. 1996). However, the rise of Volatile, Uncertain, Changing and Ambiguous (VUCA) conditions in the world of work (Taskan et al. 2022), particularly in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, has given rise to new questions about how leader and follower relationships in workplaces can flourish. Changes such as an increase in remote working arrangements have affected the nature and frequency of leader-follower interactions and may represent a reduced opportunity for leaders to develop connections and reciprocal exchanges. Wider spans of control, complex reporting, sporadic interactions, and generational differences contribute to suspicions that there is little time for relationship development in today's complex workplaces (Clark et al. 2018). As such, the need for leaders who are responsive to the increased needs of employee wellbeing has never been greater (Junça-Silva and Vilela 2023; Seppälä and Cameron 2022). If traditional models of leadership and opportunities for relationship building are proving increasingly elusive (Algoe et al. 2008), what can leaders today look to? Our contention is that the relational energy of leaders may be the missing piece in the puzzle that enables leader-follower connections to thrive despite the changes and challenging conditions faced by workplaces today.

The present study aims to examine how leaders' relational energy influences employee wellbeing and performance outcomes across different national contexts. Drawing on Conservation of Resources (COR) theory (Hobfoll 1989), and resource caravans (Halbesleben et al. 2014), where resources work together to enhance outcomes, this study conceptualises leaders' relational energy as an important resource in stressful times (Hochwarter et al. 2010; Hochwarter et al. 2007; Halbesleben et al. 2014). In turn, it enhances employees' work-life balance, which then also shapes key job outcomes (job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and organisational citizenship behaviours (OCBs)). We based this on a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design using panel data from 1277 full-time

Key Points

- We found that leaders' relational energy is significant across cultures, that it varies across age groups, is important to job and career satisfaction, enhances citizenship behaviours, and improves employee work-life balance.
- We suggest that leaders should aim to develop positive emotional energetic connections with their followers, particularly in this climate of unprecedented complexity, uncertainty, and change.
- No country differences were found.

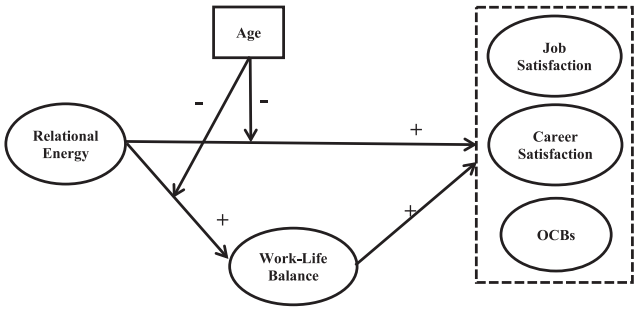

FIGURE 1 | Study model.

employees across New Zealand, Australia, and the United States. Data were analysed using moderated mediation modelling (PROCESS v3.4) to test both the mediating role of work-life balance and the moderating role of employee age in the relationship between leaders' relational energy and employee outcomes. The main research question guiding this research is: *how does leaders' relational energy influence employee well-being and job outcomes across countries, and does this relationship vary by employee age?* The significance of this study lies in advancing leadership theory by highlighting relational energy as a critical yet underexplored leadership resource in the post-VUCA world. Practically, it offers actionable insights for organisations seeking to enhance wellbeing and performance through emotionally energising leadership behaviours that transcend cultural and generational boundaries.

The purpose of our paper is threefold. Firstly, we advocate that leadership theory per se benefits from a renewed view of the type of relational practices leaders can engage in. Specifically highlighting the important contribution of leaders' relational energy in today's complex workplaces (Baker 2019). Secondly, we test leaders' relational energy across three countries (the United States, New Zealand, and Australia) and over four outcomes (work-life balance, job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and organisational citizenship behaviours [OCBs]), providing much needed empirical support in terms of the development and use of leaders' relational energy at work. Finally, drawing on COR (Hobfoll 1989), we test a model that extends understanding of leaders' relational energy as a central resource, using mediation and moderation analysis, specifically via resource caravans (Halbesleben et al. 2014; Hobfoll et al. 2018). As such, we highlight the impact of leaders' relational energy on the work-life balance of employees and introduce potential generational differences (younger employees' expectations) in the development and testing of this theoretical model. Following the model in Figure 1, we test a model of leaders' relational energy on employee outcomes, forging new territory into leadership practices in the post-COVID, VUCA world of work.

2 | Emotional Energy and Relational Energy

The question of how energy can be created and sustained in relationships, organisational settings, work initiatives, and work teams has been a subject of interest for psychology, business, and management scholars for many years (Algoe et al. 2011; Cross et al. 2003; Fredrickson 2013; Schippers and Hogenes 2011). Substantial research now indicates that positive emotional and affective states activate 'emotional energy' (Algoe 2020; Waters et al. 2021). Emotional energy then allows the interacting parties to connect to each other's emotions, creating positive resonance. This leads to the parties involved becoming more aware of one another (Junça-Silva et al. 2023; Owens et al. 2016) and being more connected with each other (Baker et al. 2003; Fredrickson 2013; Gunaydin et al. 2020). As such, emotional energy is an internal affective state, not a behaviour (Algoe 2020; Tugade et al. 2005; Waters et al. 2021). However, this energy, in turn, creates a shared positive, energetic (and short) interaction with others (Algoe et al. 2011; Beghetto 2015; Fredrickson 2013; Gunaydin et al. 2020; Stokes et al. 2012) that shapes the daily lives of individuals through several behaviours and attitudes, such as feeling grateful or satisfied (Du Plessis et al. 2020). Importantly, it also develops a greater sense of relationship connection and satisfaction (Gunaydin et al. 2020; Junça-Silva and Vilela 2023; Ohly and Schmitt 2015; Seppälä and Cameron 2022).

Within the workplace, events such as supportive leadership or positive responses to events create an affective 'uplift' of emotional energy (Seppälä and Cameron 2022; Yang et al. 2019, 2021). These moments then create affective interactions that deepen a shared sense of connectivity, consolidating the relationship even in crisis times (Sumpter and Gibson 2023). This sense of shared positive interaction extends beyond reciprocity, time, and other ways that relationships have traditionally developed (Algoe 2012; Haidt and Morris 2009; Seppälä and Cameron 2022), As such, when positive (brief) interactions are experienced between the leader and follower, it creates an emotional uplift that then facilitates the relational energy between the two parties (Algoe 2012; Algoe et al. 2011), prompting the two parties to become closer. The emotional energy that can be derived from such social interactions is referred to as relational energy (Baker 2019; Owens et al. 2016; Seppälä and Cameron 2022).

3 | Leaders and Relational Energy at Work

Relational energy at work is defined as "a heightened level of psychological resourcefulness generated from interpersonal interactions that enhances one's capacity to do work" (Owens et al. 2016, 37). This form of energy has attracted growing

attention in organisations and in leadership studies in particular (Baker 2019; Seppälä and Cameron 2022). The way relational energy operates in a leadership capacity can be better understood when it is regarded in light of well-established leadership psychological theories. Conservation of Resources (COR) theory states that humans are interested in protecting, retaining, and building resources. Social relations, and leadership specifically, are seen as a resource that help to facilitate and preserve other resources (Hobfoll 1989). Accordingly, a positive social relationship with one's leader is a means of enriching one's pool of resources. However, today, the usual range of interactions at work between leaders and followers may not always be available or appropriate, owing to conditions such as remote working. In this context, the relational energy of leaders may represent a source of positive energy for employees. Although prior studies use relational energy as a mediator between leadership and employee outcomes (see Wang et al. 2018; Yang et al. 2021, 2019) we suggest the *direct* impact of leaders' energy is crucial, since leaders are considered significant 'resources' (such as enabling career progression, job resources, etc.) for employees (Owens et al. 2016). Further, traditionally these resources entail connecting with others and feelings of belonging (Zimet et al. 1988; Hochwarter et al. 2008), alternatively, relational energy refers to the way an individual can positively influence another through the transmission of positive emotional resources (Owens et al. 2016). Gaining emotional resources from their leaders is particularly powerful and a novel leadership resource for employees.

Relational energy can also be explained when looking at emotional contagion effects at work (Owens et al. 2016; ten Brummelhuis et al. 2014). That is, in addition to being a significant emotional resource, leaders can exude emotional/relational energy that is contagious (Stanley and Schutte 2023). Emotional contagion is the "tendency to 'catch' (experience/express) another person's emotions (his or her emotional appraisals, subjective feelings, expressions, patterned physiological processes, action tendencies, and instrumental behaviors)" (Hatfield et al. 1992, 153; Skakon et al. 2010; Sy et al. 2005). Indeed, the emotional energy displayed by leaders can become contagious and transfer to others, including their family and followers (Baker 2019; Owens et al. 2016; Ryan and Frederick 1997).

4 | Hypothesis Development

Prior research emphasises that the energy individuals gain from social interaction is related to various positive workplace outcomes, such as employee engagement (Owens et al. 2016). Another study found that relational energy was positively associated with job performance, and these findings were informed by an Eastern sample, suggesting that these constructs have universal appeal (Yang et al. 2019). Under COR theory, relational energy provides resources for employees, with Hobfoll et al. (2018) stating that obtaining and retaining resources based on social interactions (here via the leaders' relational energy) aids workers with "the sense that they are capable of meeting stressful challenges" (104). Thus, employees working with a leader who provides greater levels of relational energy have more resources and are likely to report greater work-life balance.

4.1 | Work-Life Balance

Even when relational energy is not directly conceptualised, other studies have found that energising relational resources in the workplace is positively associated with creative and innovative behavior (De Clercq et al. 2016; Mumford et al. 2017; Vinarski-Peretz et al. 2011). Energising ties in the workplace are also negatively related to voluntary turnover (Parker and Gerbasi 2016), while autocratic and transactional styles of leadership are negatively related to energy at work (Amah 2017). Under COR theory, these represent resource loss occasions, further highlighting the importance of positive leadership. Overall, Baker (2019) suggests that relational energy can serve as a source that facilitates the "subjective capacity to do work" (380), and a range of findings confirm that it relates to positive workplace outcomes such as turnover intentions, engagement, job performance, and work-life balance (see Owens et al. 2016; Parker and Gerbasi 2016).

While relational energy at work is related to work-life balance, leaders' relational energy may be particularly important. As previously noted, leaders' emotions are contagious at work (Sy et al. 2005) and this crosses over into home (ten Brummelhuis et al. 2014). Furthermore, leaders are a resource (COR, Hobfoll et al. 2018) that employees wish to conserve and develop to feel satisfied, supported, and productive at work. In summary, relational energy is contagious—at work and at home, and we suggest that the relational energy of leaders functions as a resource for employees to draw on to aid their work-life balance, with this relational energy being a contagious dynamic (Baker 2019).

Haar (2013) defines work-life balance as "the extent to which an individual is able to adequately manage the multiple roles in their life, including work, family and other major responsibilities" (3308). Work-life balance is a key construct due to its links with work and well-being outcomes (e.g., Haar et al. 2014; Haar and Brougham 2022). Given that relational energy has theoretical and empirical linkages with work-life balance, we expect employees who engage with and who experience strong relational energy from their leader will experience stronger work-life balance. This leads to the first hypothesis.

Hypothesis 1. *Relational energy will be positively related to followers' work-life balance.*

4.2 | Job Attitudes and Behaviors

In response to Baker (2019), who called for more empirical testing of relational energy, we test a suite of work outcomes that are individually important. Du Plessis et al. (2020) found that relational energy influences others' attitudes and feelings, such as satisfaction and gratefulness, and we examine similar work-related outcomes relating to job and career satisfaction. Locke (1969) defines job satisfaction as "a pleasurable emotional state resulting from employees' favorable appraisal of their job, achievements, and job-related value" (309), and provides a common method of assessing employee well-being (Judge and Klinger 2008). Further, there is meta-analytic support for links with job performance (Judge et al. 2001). We also explore career satisfaction, as this reflects an employee's overall career experiences (Ng et al. 2005). Career

satisfaction indicates whether short-term interactions with a leader (relational energy) can still boost an employee's perceptions of their own career. Finally, we extend the performance approach in the literature and include organisational citizenship behaviours (OCBs). Organ (1988) defined OCBs as "individual behavior that is discretionary, not directly or explicitly recognized by the formal reward system, and that in the aggregate promotes the effective functioning of the organization" (4). OCBs align well with relational energy, as Smith et al. (1983) suggest that OCBs lubricate the social functioning of the organisation. There is also meta-analytic evidence of OCBs being linked with unit performance (Podsakoff et al. 2009).

Overall, the theoretical linkages between relational energy and COR theory detailed earlier towards work-life balance hold towards positive work behaviors. Hobfoll et al. (2018) note that resource gains, here from leaders' relational energy, provide additional resources (e.g., personal confidence, energy, time) that workers can use to meet workplace challenges. In effect, these greater resources provide workers with the resources to be more satisfied in their job and career, as well as being more able to invest in helping co-workers and their work challenges. Compared to workers with low leader relational energy, those with high relational energy have an abundance of resources they can expand on these work outcomes. Hypothesis 2 proposes that leaders' relational energy is positively associated with followers' job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and organisational citizenship behaviours. Drawing on COR theory, relational energy is conceptualised as a key leadership resource that enhances employees' psychological capacity and wellbeing. Thus, energising leader–follower interactions foster positive work and career evaluations and encourage employees to invest surplus emotional and motivational resources in discretionary behaviours, reflecting processes of resource gain, protection, and investment. We posit the following.

Hypothesis 2. *Relational energy is positively related to followers'* (*a*) *job satisfaction*, (*b*) *career satisfaction, and* (*c*) *OCBs.*

5 | Work-Life Balance Mediating Effects

Given that employees who experience an energising interaction tend to seek out or replicate that energising interaction with others (Lawler and Yoon 1996; Gunaydin et al. 2020), we extend the influence of relational energy to work-life balance and subsequently explore this as a mediator. Similar to Owens et al. (2016), we suggest that leaders' relational energy creates an energising, contagious effect that spreads into home interactions. This creates greater 'resource caravans' (Hobfoll et al. 2018) for employees, fuelling further energetic outcomes. In effect, positive energy from a leader enhances work-life balance and this in turn provides additional energy for employees to 'spend' on their work outcomes. Indeed, work-life balance has been found to influence job satisfaction (Haar 2013) across seven samples and six different cultures (Haar et al. 2014) and OCBs (Haar and Brougham 2022). Carr et al. (2019) found that work-life balance and career satisfaction, when directly tested, were significantly correlated.

Haar and Brougham (2022) stated that under COR theory, workers will have greater resources when they have high work-life balance, and this enables them to be more satisfied with their work and engage in greater OCBs. Thus, high work-life balance is an additional resource that provides additional confidence, skills, and knowledge and money (representing personal and energy resources, Hobfoll et al. 2018), which workers can then invest in positive work outcomes. Drawing COR theory, this study proposes that work-life balance mediates the relationship between leaders' relational energy and employee outcomes. COR theory suggests that individuals accumulate resources through supportive social interactions and invest these resources to enhance work outcomes including performance. Leaders' relational energy provides employees with additional resources, both emotional and psychological, that extend beyond the workplace, improving their ability to manage work and non-work demands. This enhanced work-life balance represents a secondary resource gain that enables employees to experience greater work outcomes (see Haar and Brougham 2022) and specifically towards higher job and career satisfaction and to engage in greater OCBs. Thus, relational energy initiates a resource gain process that operates indirectly through work–life balance, explaining how leader-follower interactions translate into broader employee outcomes. Consequently, we hypothesise that work-life balance will mediate the relationships between relational energy and work outcomes (job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and OCBs).

Hypothesis 3. *Work-life balance will be positively related to* (*a*) *job satisfaction*, (*b*) *career satisfaction*, (*c*) *OCBs, and* (*d*) *mediate the influence of relational energy towards follower outcomes.*

6 | Moderation Effects of Age

Our study also seeks to understand leaders' relational energy as a form of relational leadership, and therefore we examine employee age as a potential moderator and boundary condition. COR theory has a strong interest in contextual factors, and here we argue that age might represent a boundary condition that changes the influence of relational energy on outcomes. This is because, in their meta-analysis, Ng and Feldman (2010) explored the links between age and work outcomes (and found that these are generally more positive as workers get older). However, whether the influence of relational energy differs by follower age is a question yet to be investigated, although it is theoretically grounded in COR. Our study responds to calls to better understand younger generations of workers (Ng and Feldman 2010). In the workplace changes noted earlier, the entry of millennials and younger workers into the workplace has attracted attention (Chou 2012; Posthuma and Campion 2009), with leadership being a pressing issue. It has been suggested that leaders of such workers, who bring their own needs and expectations to the workplace, are well advised to engage in energising interactions with their followers (Festing and Schäfer 2014). We suggest that relational energy is a type of resource to which younger workers especially relate, and their work-life balance and work outcomes may be enhanced when they experience high relational energy. This is an important distinction to test, because typically, the Ng and Feldman (2010) meta-analysis shows older employees benefit more in general.

Beyond its moderating effect, we also expect age to attenuate the relationship between relational energy, work-life balance, and work outcomes. Hayes (2018) calls this approach moderated mediation and defines it as "an analytical strategy focused on

quantifying the boundary conditions of mechanisms and testing hypotheses about the contingent nature of processes... whether an indirect effect (mediation) is dependent on another variable (moderation)" (5). Such approaches can produce useful insights into understanding relationships (e.g., Haar, Di Fabio, and Daellenbach 2019; Haar, Sune, et al. 2019). We expect the indirect effects of relational energy on work outcomes (through work-life balance) to weaken as respondents get older. Thus, younger employees will be better able to draw resources from their interactions with energised leaders, whereas older workers will be able to draw less, and thus report less effectiveness. Under COR theory, this represents a contextual factor that changes the influence of resource gains (here relational energy) for employees depending on their age. Building COR, this study proposes follower age as a boundary condition shaping the effects of leaders' relational energy on work-life balance and subsequent job outcomes. COR theory emphasises that individuals differ in their sensitivity to resource gains and losses depending on contextual and personal factors. Follower age is theorised to influence how relational energy is valued and converted into resources. Younger employees, who typically possess fewer accumulated resources, are more reliant on leaders' relational energy to enhance work–life balance, job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and OCBs. In contrast, older employees draw on broader resource reserves (due to greater experience with work and resources in general), weakening, but not eliminating the impact of relational energy on these outcomes. Our next hypotheses are as follows.

Hypothesis 4. *Follower age will moderate the influence of relational energy towards followers' (a) work-life balance, (b) job satisfaction, (c) career satisfaction, and (d) OCBs, with younger employees reacting more positively than older employees.*

Hypothesis 5. *The indirect relationship between relational energy on (a) job satisfaction, (b) career satisfaction, and (c) OCBs, all* via *work-life balance as the mediator, will be moderated by follower age, such that the indirect effect of relational energy is stronger for younger followers and gets weaker as age increases (moderated mediation).*

Our study model is shown in Figure 1.

7 | Method

7.1 | Sample and Participants

This study adopts a quantitative, positivist research paradigm, aligning with prior leadership and wellbeing research using quantitative survey designs (e.g., Owens et al. 2016; Haar, Di Fabio, and Daellenbach 2019; Haar, Sune, et al. 2019). This approach is appropriate given the theory-driven nature of the research and the study's aim to test mediation and moderation effects derived from COR theory (Hobfoll 1989; Hobfoll et al. 2018). Quantitative survey methods are widely used in leadership research to capture perceptual constructs and test complex relational models across large samples (Owens et al. 2016; Haar, Di Fabio, and Daellenbach 2019; Haar, Sune, et al. 2019). This approach enables objective measurement and statistical testing of hypothesised relationships, making it well-suited to examining mediated and moderated effects across multiple national contexts. Data were collected via a panel from Qualtrics on employee experiences across the United States, New Zealand, and Australia. The study is cross-sectional. Participants had to be in paid work for a minimum of 30 h a week, which we use as a proxy for having sufficient exposure to their leader. Qualtrics collects data across countries and ensures respondents complete only one survey, and if survey completion speeds are too slow or fast, these respondents are removed. Such panels mean respondents are paid, and Qualtrics ensures the quality and single responses of participants. The data were provided as completed responses; non-responses are unknown. Non-responses, however, are typically around 25% because panels are able to target specific groups (e.g., employees) rather than sampling all individuals. Such an approach to data collection is becoming more commonplace because such data is broadly representative of countries by age, gender, and geographical spread (e.g., Haar, Di Fabio, and Daellenbach 2019; Haar, Sune, et al. 2019; Smidt et al. 2023). A recent meta-analysis by Walter et al. (2019) compared panel data and conventionally sourced data, and found these sources were comparable. Our overall sample was $n = 1277$ and comprised full-time employees from New Zealand ($n = 427$), Australia ($n = 401$), and the United States ($n = 449$). Table 1 shows the demographic breakdown of the sample.

7.2 | Measures

Appendix 1 has all items used.

Relational energy was measured using the five-item measure by Owens et al. (2016), coded 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree. Because we use this construct in two previously untested countries, a factor analysis was conducted (principal components, varimax rotation) for each sample (and the combined sample) to test the psychometric properties. Items, factor loadings, and reliabilities are all shown in Table 2.

Work-life balance was measured using the three-item scale by Haar (2013), coded 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree. This construct has been well validated (e.g., Carr et al. 2019; Haar et al. 2014; Haar and Brougham 2022). The measure had excellent reliability across all samples: $\alpha = 0.89$ (combined), 0.89 (New Zealand), 0.88 (US), and 0.87 (Australia).

Job satisfaction was measured with the three-item scale by Judge et al. (2005), coded 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree. While this is a short version of the scale, it has been well validated in New Zealand (e.g., Haar 2013) as well as across international samples (Haar et al. 2014). In the present study, the measure had excellent reliability across all samples: $\alpha = 0.89$ (combined), 0.87 (New Zealand and US), and 0.92 (Australia).

Career satisfaction was measured using the five-item scale by Greenhaus et al. (1990), coded 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree. The measure had excellent reliability: $\alpha = 0.93$ (combined), and 0.93 (Australia and US) and 0.90 (New Zealand).

OCBs were measured using three items from Lee and Allen's (2002) OCB instrument targeting individual OCBs, using

TABLE 1 | Study demographics.

Demographic	New Zealand	Australia	United States
Sample (total $n = 1277$)	$N = 427$	$N = 401$	$N = 449$
Gender	59.1% male	52.5% male	50.3% male
Age	45.9 (SD = 14.0)	45.3 (SD = 11.7)	40.8 (SD = 12.5)
Hours worked	41.8 (SD = 7.9)	39.9 (SD = 7.6)	39.2 (SD = 8.2)
Education	High School = 20.8%	High School = 27.9%	High School = 12.0%
	Technical Qual = 30.7%	Technical Qual = 20.9%	Technical Qual = 4.0%
	Uni Degree = 33.5%	Uni Degree = 32.9%	Uni Degree = 41.2%
	Postgrad Qual = 15.0%	Postgrad Qual = 18.2%	Postgrad Qual = 42.8%
Tenure	9.2 (SD = 9.2)	10.6 (SD = 9.2)	11.3 (SD = 9.2)
Sector	Private = 71.7%	Private = 73.8%	Private = 83.5%
	Public = 22.2%	Public = 21.2%	Public = 12.7%
	Not-for-Profit = 6.1%	Not-for-Profit = 5.0%	Not-for-Profit = 3.8%
Firm size	100 employees or less = 49.4%	100 employees or less = 42.6%	100 employees or less = 27.2%
	101–1000 employees = 26.0%	101–1000 employees = 26.9%	101–1000 employees = 48.8%
	1001+ employees = 24.6%	1001+ employees = 30.4%	1001+ employees = 24.1%
Sample occupations	Lawyers, teachers, office workers, secretaries, labourers, construction workers, retail workers, tourism operators, managers, vice-president marketing, health workers, miners, farmers, engineers, postal workers, hospitality workers, manufacturing, medical technician, media, pharmaceutical chemist, HR manager, security guard, IT worker		

the short scale by Saks (2006), coded 1 = never, 5 = always. The measure had adequate reliability: $\alpha = 0.78$ (combined), and 0.79 (US), 0.78 (New Zealand), and 0.74 (Australia).

The moderator Age was self-reported age in years, which also has meta-analytic support (Ng and Feldman 2010) around older workers having more positive attitudes.

We controlled for Hours worked (total per week), Education (1 = high school qualification, 2 = technical college, 3 = university, 4 = postgraduate) and Tenure (years). This is because long work hours and tenure are positively related to occupational outcomes (Ng and Feldman 2008, 2010).

7.3 | Measurement Models

We conducted a CFA in AMOS to confirm the constructs, following fit indices thresholds by Williams et al. (2009): (1) the comparative fit index (CFI ≥ 0.95), (2) the root-mean-square error of approximation (RMSEA ≤ 0.08), and (3) the standardised root mean residual (SRMR ≤ 0.10). The hypothesised measurement model was a good fit: $\chi^2(142) = 1009.0$ ($p = 0.000$), CFI = 0.96, RMSEA = 0.07 and SRMR = 0.07. Alternative CFAs were conducted, and the results were a poorer fit to the data, confirming our hypothesised CFA model (see Table 3).

7.4 | Metric Invariance Test

Since we had samples from three countries, we followed contemporary approaches (e.g., Haar, Di Fabio, and Daellenbach 2019; Haar, Sune, et al. 2019) and conducted analyses to confirm that respondents answered items in similar patterns. We conducted a multi-group CFA, which is a global CFA with all data combined, wherein each country is a distinct group (Vandenberg and Lance 2000). The data with the three country samples were analysed simultaneously, and the RMSEA fit statistics between each country were compared. Cheung and Rensvold (2000) suggest the RMSEA statistic because it is not contaminated by model complexity (Meade and Kroustalis 2006). The metric invariance analysis suggested our CFA had measurement equivalence because the difference in RMSEA across the three samples did not differ: the RMSEA in the unconstrained model (0.040) was identical to the measurement weights model (0.040), indicating an

TABLE 2 | Results of exploratory factor analysis for all samples.

Questions followed the stem "The following questions relate to your supervisor..." and were coded 1 = strongly disagree, 5 = strongly agree	Factor loadings			
	Combined sample	New Zealand sample	Australian sample	US sample
1. I feel invigorated when I interact with my supervisor	0.903	0.894	0.926	0.874
2. After interacting with my supervisor I feel more energy to do my work	0.937	0.939	0.950	0.912
3. I feel increased vitality when I interact with my supervisor	0.942	0.946	0.957	0.914
4. I would go to my supervisor when I need to be "pepped up"	0.876	0.860	0.894	0.849
5. After an exchange with my supervisor I feel more stamina to do my work	0.921	0.939	0.932	0.880
Eigenvalues	4.196	4.197	4.343	3.927
Percentage variance	83.9%	83.9%	86.9%	78.5%
Cronbach's Alpha	0.95	0.95	0.96	0.93

RMSEA difference of 0.00. This score is beneath the established critical value by Cheung and Rensvold (2000), indicating the data across all three samples is comparable.

7.5 | Analysis

Relationships were tested using PROCESS 3.4 (in SPSS v. 25), specifically model 8 (moderated mediation). Control variables were entered in Step 1 with relational energy as the independent variable, work-life balance as the mediator variable, and age as the moderator. Three models were run with the various outcomes for each dependent variable (job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and OCBs). Products were mean-centred and bootstrapping (5000 times) confirmed effects. PROCESS generates an index of moderated mediation scores for model 8 (Hayes 2018) towards each dependent variable. Finally, our examination of the skewness and kurtosis statistics indicated that each of these was within acceptable limits (Hair et al. 2010).

8 | Results

Descriptive statistics for the study variables are shown in Table 4.

8.1 | Correlations

Relational energy is significantly correlated to work-life balance, job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and OCBs in the expected directions (all $p < 0.01$). Similarly, work-life balance is significantly correlated to job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and OCBs in the expected directions (all $p < 0.01$). We also confirmed these effects at the country level, and all relationships remained significant across the three individual samples.

The results of the mediation model estimated are shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2 shows that relational energy is positively related to work-life balance, job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and OCBs (all $p < 0.0001$). This supports Hypotheses 1 and 2. Hypothesis 3 is also supported, with work-life balance positively influencing all outcomes (all $p < 0.0001$). Overall, when work-life balance is included in the models, it consistently partially mediates the influence of relational energy on all outcomes, with all outcomes having a reduced direct effect from relational energy on outcomes, supporting Hypothesis 3d.

The effects of age as a moderator and the moderated mediation effects are shown in Table 5.

With regard to the direct effects of age, Table 5 shows that there is only one significant effect and that is towards OCBs (coefficient = −0.01 (0.00), $p = 0.0009$, LLCI = −0.01, ULCI = −0.00). However, age did interact significantly with relational energy towards work-life balance, career satisfaction, and OCBs (all $p < 0.01$; coefficient = −0.004 (0.002), $p = 0.0130$, LLCI = −0.01, ULCI = −0.00), and OCBs (all $p < 0.01$), although not towards job satisfaction ($p > 0.05$). This supports Hypotheses 4a, 4c, and 4d. Finally, the index of moderated mediation is significant for all models (all $p < 0.05$), supporting Hypotheses 5a–5c. Overall, the model accounts for moderate amounts of variance towards OCBs (15%) and work-life balance (22%), but much larger amounts for job satisfaction (43%) and career satisfaction (46%). Because the effects are identical, we graph the two-way interactions combined in Figure 3 and the moderated mediation in Figure 4 to illustrate the effects.

The moderation effect of age on relational energy (Figure 3) shows that for respondents with low relational energy, older

TABLE 3 | Results of confirmatory factor analysis for study measures.

Model	Model fit indices					Model differences			
	χ^2	df	CFI	RMSEA	SRMR	$\Delta\chi^2$	Δdf	*p*	Details
1. Hypothesized 5-factor model: relational energy, work-life balance, job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and OCBs	1009.0	142	0.96	0.07	0.07				
2. Alternative 4-factor model: relational energy and work-life balance combined, job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and OCBs	2916.0	146	0.86	0.12	0.12	1907.0	4	0.001	Model 2 to 1
3. Alternative 4-factor model: relational energy, work-life balance, job satisfaction and career satisfaction combined, and OCBs	1923.0	146	0.91	0.10	0.08	914.0	4	0.001	Model 3 to 1

respondents report significantly higher outcomes. When compared to those with high relational energy, this group reports significantly higher work-life balance, job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and OCBs, although younger respondents reported significantly higher outcomes than older employees. This supports our hypothesis that younger employees will respond more favourably to high relational energy. Regarding the moderated mediation effects (Figure 4), we follow the approach of Wayne et al. (2017) to probe conditional indirect effects (using standard deviations [SD] of the moderator age). Analyses show that the significant indirect effect is uniformly conditional on age, with younger respondents (−2SD) reporting the highest levels of outcomes, those of average age (mean score) reporting significantly lower effects, and older employees (+2SD) reporting significant but weaker effects.

The analysis shows that at a young age (−2SD), the indirect effects of relational energy on outcomes vis-à-vis work-life balance are strongest and most significant for job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and OCBs (all $p < 0.0001$). At mean level age, the effects are significant and positive but reduced for job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and OCBs (all $p < 0.0001$). Finally, at an older age (+2SD), the indirect effects of relational energy on outcomes vis-à-vis work-life balance are significant and positive, but further reduced (although all remain $p < 0.0001$). This provides support for the hypothesis of age as a boundary condition, with the highest levels of indirect effects of relational energy being for respondents who are younger.

8.2 | Supplementary Analysis

We also checked the data to determine whether there were country-level differences regarding relational energy and its influence on outcomes. We followed Haar et al. (2014) and conducted an ANOVA by country, using the Student–Newman–Keuls (SNK) test for post hoc analyses. ANOVA indicated significant differences across the three samples (all $p < 0.001$), towards relational energy ($F = 55.334$), work-life balance ($F = 32.216$), job satisfaction ($F = 23.931$), career satisfaction ($F = 34.757$), and OCBs ($F = 21.049$). In all analyses, the US sample reported higher levels of relational energy ($M = 3.70$) compared to Australia ($M = 3.14$), and followed by New Zealand ($M = 3.04$). This was similar for work-life balance (US $M = 3.87$) compared to Australia ($M = 3.47$) and New Zealand ($M = 3.40$), job satisfaction (US $M = 4.11$) compared to New Zealand ($M = 3.77$) and Australia ($M = 3.72$), career satisfaction (US $M = 3.94$) compared to Australia ($M = 3.54$) and New Zealand ($M = 3.47$), and OCBs (US $M = 3.53$) compared to Australia ($M = 3.29$) and New Zealand ($M = 3.10$). We also conducted analyses whereby our model was tested across countries (a moderated mediation model with country as an additional moderator) and the effects indicated there were no significant differences in relationships across the three countries.

9 | Discussion

The changed nature of the workplace, due to the continued VUCA environment of work, has taken a significant toll on leaders' ability to develop positive relationships. Yet, leadership is a central resource for employees in challenging times (Hochwarter et al. 2010; Hochwarter et al. 2007; Halbesleben

TABLE 4 | Correlations and means of study variables (combined data).

Variables	M	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Hours worked	40.3	7.9	—								
2. Education	2.67	1.1	−0.12**	—							
3. Tenure	10.4	9.2	0.13**	−0.05	—						
4. Relational energy	3.30	1.0	−0.09**	0.26**	−0.05	—					
5. Age	44.0	13.1	0.15**	−0.21**	0.43**	−0.23**	—				
6. Work-life balance	3.58	0.95	−0.16**	0.20**	0.10**	0.47**	−0.05	—			
7. Job satisfaction	3.88	0.92	−0.04	0.22**	0.08**	0.54**	−0.06*	0.57**	—		
8. Career satisfaction	3.66	0.94	−0.03	0.28**	0.12**	0.54**	−0.06*	0.58**	0.71**	—	
9. OCBs	3.31	1.0	0.04	0.12**	0.04	0.33**	−0.12**	0.27**	0.38**	0.34**	—

Note: $N = 1277$, $^{*}p < 0.05$, $^{**}p < 0.01$.

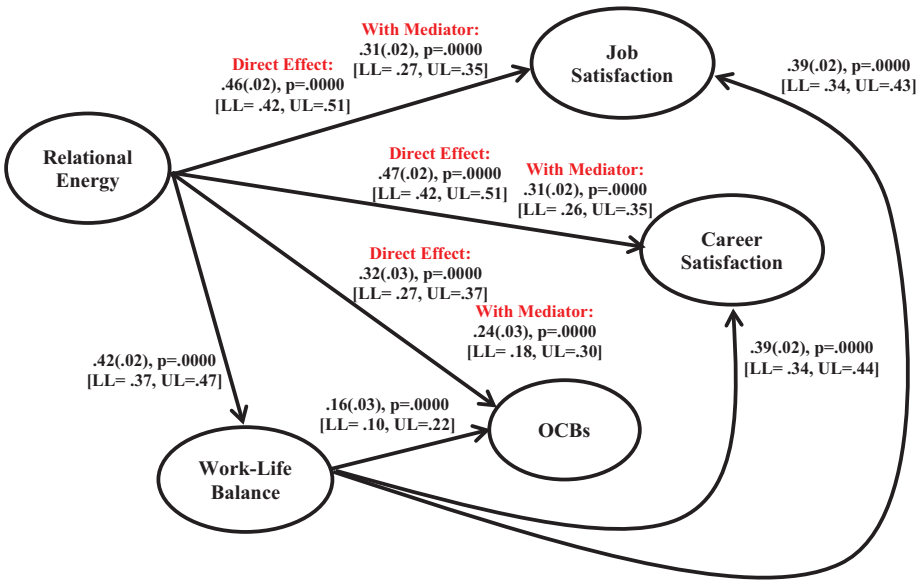

FIGURE 2 | Direct and mediation effects.

et al. 2014). Leadership, therefore, is central to success and employee wellbeing. Consequently, we posited that a novel leadership resource—that of positively energising leaders—is more crucial than ever in responding to the increased needs of employee wellbeing (Seppälä and Cameron 2022). Our study empirically contributes to knowledge around leaders' relational energy, extending previous studies focusing on Eastern countries (see Wang et al. 2018; Yang et al. 2021, 2019). Further, those studies explored relational energy as a mediator, and here we found a direct benefit of leaders' relational energy across three countries (the United States, New Zealand, and Australia). Overall, leaders' relational energy was directly and positively related to followers' work-life balance (wellbeing), job and career satisfaction (key job attitudes), and performance (OCBs).

By testing this across three countries, our findings provide much needed empirical evidence of the importance of relational energy at work (Baker 2019). Our use of a moderated mediation model highlights the importance of resource caravans, in that the work-life balance of followers mediates the relationship between their outcomes and their leaders' relational energy, at least partially. We have also shown that younger employees value relational energy more and are most affected by it, although relational energy has a significant impact on older workers as well. Our findings suggest that in understanding leadership and relationships, organisations and researchers may wish to call on a range of relational practices, which includes recognising the important contribution of a leader's relational energy. Most importantly, we suggest that leaders' relational energy is a direct leadership influence of significance and, in being contagious (Baker 2019; Algoe et al. 2019), enhances employee outcomes at work and at home.

To address the research question of *how leaders' relational energy influences employee wellbeing and job outcomes across countries, and does this relationship vary by employee age?* The empirical analysis tested a moderated mediation model grounded in COR theory (Hobfoll 1989). In summary, this framework proposes that positive interpersonal relationships act as valuable psychological resources that enhance wellbeing and performance, and as outlined above, we highlighted the importance of leadership

TABLE 5 | Results model of moderator and moderated mediation effects.

Variables	β (SE)	Confidence intervals	p
Controls			
Hours worked ➜ Work-life balance	−0.02 (0.00)	LL = −0.02, UL = −0.01	< 0.0001
Education ➜ Work-life balance	0.06 (0.02)	LL = 0.02, UL = 0.11	0.0062
Tenure ➜ Work-life balance	0.01 (0.00)	LL = 0.01, UL = 0.02	< 0.0001
Hours Worked ➜ Job satisfaction	0.01 (0.00)	LL = 0.00, UL = 0.01	0.0115
Education ➜ Job satisfaction	0.06 (0.02)	LL = 0.02, UL = 0.10	0.0027
Hours worked ➜ Career satisfaction	0.01 (0.00)	LL = 0.00, UL = 0.01	0.0015
Education ➜ Career satisfaction	0.11 (0.02)	LL = 0.07, UL = 0.15	< 0.0001
Tenure ➜ Career satisfaction	0.01 (0.00)	LL = 0.00, UL = 0.01	0.0002
Hours worked ➜ OCBs	0.01 (0.00)	LL = 0.01, UL = 0.02	0.0007
Tenure ➜ OCBs	0.01 (0.00)	LL = 0.00, UL = 0.01	0.0268
Moderators – direct effects			
Age ➜ Work-life balance	0.00 (0.00)	LL = −0.00, UL = 0.01	0.2339
Age ➜ Job satisfaction	0.00 (0.00)	LL = −0.00, UL = 0.01	0.2123
Age ➜ Career satisfaction	0.00 (0.00)	LL = −0.00, UL = 0.00	0.4963
Age ➜ OCBs	−0.01 (0.00)	LL = −0.01, UL = −0.00	0.0009
Two-way moderating effects			
Relational energy × age ➜ Work-life balance	−0.01 (0.00)	LL = −0.01, UL = −0.00	0.0010
Relational energy × age ➜ Job satisfaction	−0.00 (0.00)	LL = −0.00, UL = 0.00	0.8581
Relational energy × age ➜ Career satisfaction	−0.004 (0.002)	LL = −0.01, UL = −0.00	0.0130
Relational energy × age ➜ OCBs	−0.01 (0.00)	LL = −0.01, UL = −0.00	0.0012
Index of moderated mediation			
➜ Job satisfaction	−0.002 (0.001)	LL = −0.00, UL = −0.00	0.0030
➜ Career satisfaction	−0.002 (0.001)	LL = −0.00, UL = −0.00	0.0020
➜ OCBs	−0.001 (0.000)	LL = −0.00, UL = −0.00	0.0122
R^2 values		**F-scores**	
Work-life balance	0.27	77.1194	< 0.0001
Job satisfaction	0.43	138.2199	< 0.0001
Career satisfaction	0.46	156.0702	< 0.0001
OCBs	0.15	31.8040	< 0.0001

Note: Unstandardized path coefficients. Only significant control variables are presented.

as a resource in difficult times, and specifically the role of leaders' relational energy on resource accumulation, overall enhancing employee outcomes. The results supported Hypothesis 1, showing that relational energy was positively related to followers' work–life balance, consistent with prior studies demonstrating that energising leader interactions improve employee wellbeing (Owens et al. 2016; Seppälä and Cameron 2022). Hypothesis 2 was also supported, confirming that relational energy increases job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and organisational citizenship behaviours (OCBs), in line with evidence linking leader energy to performance and engagement (Yang et al. 2019; Wang et al. 2018). Hypothesis 3 received partial support, showing that work–life balance mediated these effects, as previously observed in research highlighting how wellbeing resources translate positive leader energy into improved attitudes and behaviours (Haar et al. 2014; Carr et al. 2019). Hypothesis 4 revealed that age moderated these relationships, with younger employees responding more strongly to leader energy, consistent with findings that younger workers value emotionally engaging leadership (Festing and Schäfer 2014; Ng and Feldman 2010). Finally, Hypothesis 5 confirmed moderated mediation effects, indicating that relational energy's indirect effects through work–life balance weakened slightly with age (Hayes 2018; Haar, Di Fabio, and Daellenbach 2019; Haar, Sune, et al. 2019). Collectively, these

findings empirically demonstrate that leaders' relational energy functions as a resource that enhances employee wellbeing and performance, directly answering the central research question.

10 | Theoretical Contributions

This study makes several important theoretical contributions. First, it advances relational leadership theory by introducing relational energy as a distinct and measurable mechanism through which leaders influence employee wellbeing and performance. Prior work has often emphasised leader–member exchange or social exchange processes (Settoon et al. 1996), but our findings demonstrate that the emotional and energetic quality of leader–follower interactions is equally critical. Second, drawing on COR theory (Hobfoll 1989), this research positions relational energy as a resource that sustains work–life balance and enhances work outcomes. This extends COR theory beyond traditional resource categories to include affective, interpersonal energy as a valuable form of leadership resource. Third, by empirically testing a moderated mediation model across three countries, this study contributes to understanding the complexity of relationships, with work–life balance mediating, and age having moderating effects. In addition, the cross-cultural generalisability of relational energy theory shows that its benefits are consistent across Anglo cultural contexts and generations. Collectively, these contributions fill a theoretical gap by integrating positive relational processes into leadership and wellbeing research, thereby extending understanding of how affective energy operates as a foundational resource for employee outcomes.

This study makes three interrelated theoretical contributions to leadership, wellbeing, and Human Resource Management (HRM) scholarship. First, it advances relational leadership theory by demonstrating that the emotional and energetic quality of leader-follower interactions is as critical as structural or exchange-based leadership processes. Whereas prior research has largely focused on relational mechanisms such as leader-member exchange and social exchange, which emphasise reciprocity and trust developed over time, this study shows that leadership influence can also operate through emotionally energising micro-interactions that do not rely on prolonged exchanges or formal behaviors. Second, the study extends COR by conceptualising leaders' relational energy as a distinct interpersonal resource generated through leader-follower interaction. The findings demonstrate that relational energy enhances employees' work-life balance, which in turn mediates effects on job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and OCBs, thereby extending the resource caravan principle by showing how leadership-based emotional resources accumulate and spill over across life domains. Third, the study contributes to HRM theory by embedding leadership relational energy within resource-based explanations of how HRM systems shape employee wellbeing and outcomes. Rather than treating leadership as a structural input, this study positions leaders as active resource generators through whom HRM practices translate into lived employee experiences, with age further operating as a boundary condition that highlights differential resource sensitivity across the workforce.

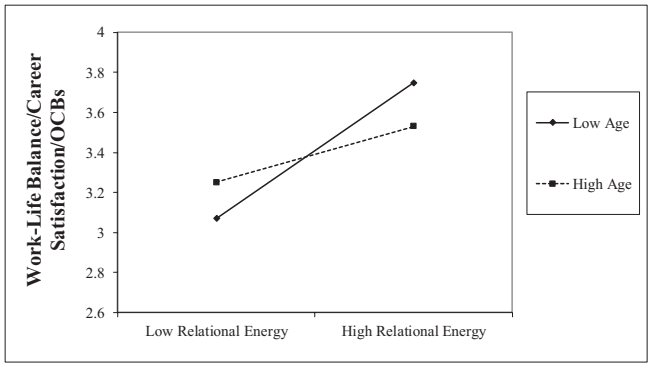

FIGURE 3 | Relational energy × age to work-life balance, career satisfaction and OCBs.

11 | Contributions to Practice and HRM

This manuscript contributes to practice by translating theoretical insights on leaders' relational energy into actionable strategies for Human Resource Management (HRM). It bridges the gap between theory and practice by showing how a concept grounded in COR theory can inform leadership development, wellbeing policies, and organisational culture. The research can be used in practice by integrating relational energy into leadership training, work-life balance initiatives, and trust building programmes. This could improve job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and organisational citizenship behaviours. These

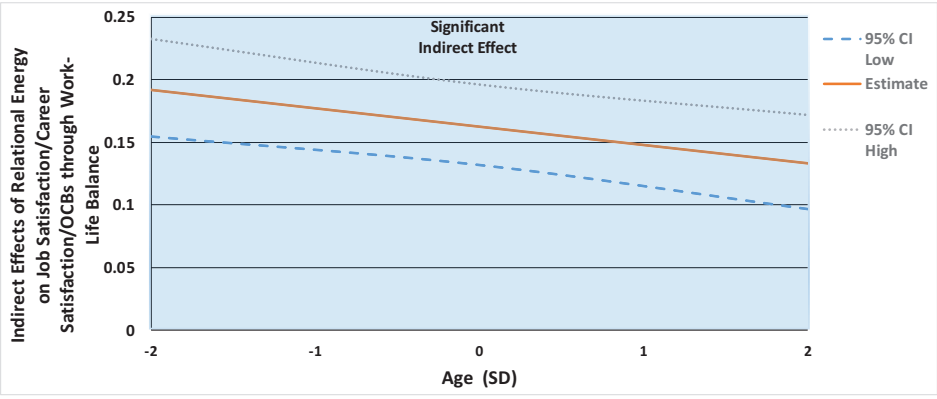

FIGURE 4 | Indirect effects of relational energy on job satisfaction/career satisfaction/OCBs through work-life balance conditional on age.

implications are directly consistent with the study's empirical findings, which show that leaders' relational energy enhances employee wellbeing and performance across countries and generations. Consequently, the paper not only contributes to theory but also provides evidence-based guidance for organisations seeking to create high-energy, supportive, and productive workplaces.

Our findings suggest several actionable implications for HRM to foster a positive work environment through the relational energy of leaders. HRM should integrate relational energy into leadership development initiatives. Given relational energy is garnered through positive interactions, ensuring that leaders who engage in emotionally energising and positive interactions may significantly enhance employee job satisfaction, career satisfaction, and OCBs. As such, HRM can develop training programmes that focus on relational leadership, and most important, on fostering a leadership style that builds energising, supportive relationships, ultimately driving positive employee outcomes. As work-life balance impacts the relationship between relational energy and employee outcomes, HRM should prioritise policies that promote work-life balance (Haar and Brougham 2022). This includes offering flexible work arrangements, encouraging time off, and ensuring managers are attuned to the wellbeing of their teams. Leaders who support work-life balance create a workplace where employees feel valued and satisfied, which in turn enhances overall productivity and retention.

Our study found that younger employees are particularly influenced by relational energy. As such, HRM should tailor leadership development to different generational needs. For younger employees, more frequent, positive relational energy exchanges may be essential, while older workers might appreciate a relational leadership style that focuses on support and guidance without the need for heightened emotional engagement because of the generational differences. By recognising these differences, HRM can enhance leadership effectiveness across age groups. As trust plays a critical role in enhancing relational energy, HRM should encourage a culture of transparency and integrity within the organisation. HRM can facilitate this through training, ensuring that leaders are seen as credible and trustworthy by their teams. Regular feedback will provide HRM with insights into areas where leadership development can be improved to better support employee engagement and satisfaction. These insights can be further specified through an HRM lens by recognising how relational energy is operationalised differently across cultural contexts. In Confucian-influenced HRM systems, relational energy is likely enacted through hierarchical sensitivity, moral leadership, and responsibility for follower harmony, embedded in mentoring, role modelling, and leader self-regulation. Although this study focuses on Anglo contexts, it offers a flexible HRM framework that can be adapted to culturally aligned implementations of relational energy rather than a single universal approach.

12 | Limitations

While this research opens the way to new dialogue about leadership relational resources, it is not without its limitations. For example, if the relational energy of the leader is to be a sustained resource, other factors are also worth investigating and warrant longitudinal testing. Testing factors such as follower trust in the integrity of their leaders could provide insights into questions of whether energetic connections are enhanced when levels of trust increase. Without trust and integrity, interactions between two parties may be de-energising in longitudinal terms, but this speculation needs further investigation. Future research might conduct a daily diary study that maps the fluctuations of leaders' emotions and emotional activation across a period of days or weeks, and assesses the impact of relational energy at the day-to-day level. Further, multi-level analysis may uncover whether leaders themselves feel emotionally activated during their connections with followers. That is, a comparison of the perceptions of leaders and followers' affective states may offer additional insights. We suggest that the fundamental building block to 'emotional' energy is the leader's actual positive emotional state (Izard 2010, 2011). To bring this theory into the true moments of emotional energy and connection, research into leaders' actual emotions, and even categories of emotions, are needed as an antecedent to the emotional energy and outcomes.

We do acknowledge that while our panel data is likely broadly representative of the workforce, there are potential issues concerning workforce representativeness around professions (e.g., office workers versus labourers), as well potential biases in the panel method such as self-selection bias and technology and Internet requirements. This suggests that there are possibly some limitations around methodological rigour. While the quantitative, cross-sectional survey design provides strong statistical power and generalisability including for moderated mediation analysis, it also presents some limitations. Cross-sectional data capture relationships at a single point in time, restricting the ability to infer causality or observe temporal changes (Hair et al. 2010). This design may also introduce common method bias and limit insights into the dynamic, evolving nature of relational energy and employee wellbeing. Longitudinal or mixed-method designs could strengthen future research by tracking fluctuations in leader–follower interactions and validating findings through qualitative depth (Hobfoll et al. 2018; Wilkinson and Haar 2023).

While this may limit the overall generalisability of findings, it was weighed against the practical convenience of data collection. While we were unable to separate our measures by time, we did conduct Harman's One Factor test as a common way to assess the potential for common method bias (e.g., Wilkinson and Haar 2023). Similarly, we found that no single factor accounted for more than 50% of the overall variance in any of the three samples. This suggests that common method bias is not unduly influencing relationships tested. A limitation of this study is that it focuses on three predominantly Western, Anglo cultures. Future research should explore countries with more distinct cultural profiles, such as China, Thailand, and Malaysia, where relational energy may interact differently with hierarchical norms, collectivist values, and Confucian beliefs. Cross-cultural leadership research suggests that emotional energy and influence can vary widely across work environments (Yang et al. 2019; Wang et al. 2018). Finally, we acknowledge that the three-item scale of job satisfaction is a short version, although this was strongly related in the sample.

13 | Future Research

We suggest that an understanding of leaders' relational energy may offer leaders and organisations an additional 'resource' that fosters positive employee relationships and outcomes. Further, a notable finding was the lack of difference between the three countries in the study, implying that the cultural dimensions of the Anglo nations may not be as pronounced as suggested by Hofstede (1994), despite these countries being significantly different by size. Future studies may include samples from a wider cultural perspective, such as Indigenous people who may be influenced via energy with greater cultural nuance. To enhance the broader applicability of these findings across the Asia-Pacific, future research should consider how relational energy operates in high power-distance and collectivist contexts such as Japan, China, and Indonesia (Hofstede 1994). As the present study has focused more on Anglo Saxon countries within the sample. In hierarchical cultures such as China or Japan, leaders' relational energy may manifest through respectful engagement and empathy within clear power structures, reinforcing harmony and trust. In more egalitarian cultures like New Zealand or Australia, relational energy may be expressed through open dialogue and shared decision-making. HRM policies across Asia-Pacific nations can incorporate relational energy by fostering culturally aligned leadership training that emphasises emotional connection, authenticity, and wellbeing, within context-specific organisational norms.

14 | Conclusions

This paper explores the impact of leaders' relational energy on employee outcomes across three countries, New Zealand, Australia, and the United States. Our findings show that leaders who engage in emotionally energising interactions positively influence employees' work-life balance, job and career satisfaction, and Organisational Citizenship Behaviours (OCBs). The study also reveals that relational energy has a stronger effect on younger employees, though older employees also benefit from such leadership. The work-life balance of employees was found to partially mediate the relationship between relational energy and employee outcomes. These results highlight the importance of relational energy as a leadership resource that can foster positive employee wellbeing and engagement. Organisations should prioritise leadership development that encourages relational energy, while HRM practices should support work-life balance and trust-building to maximise these benefits. Ultimately, leaders' relational energy plays a crucial role in enhancing organisational performance and employee satisfaction.

Acknowledgements

Open access publishing facilitated by The University of Auckland, as part of the Wiley - The University of Auckland agreement via the Council of Australasian University Librarians.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

Data Availability Statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available from the corresponding author upon reasonable request.

References

Algoe, S. B. 2012. "Find, Remind, and Bind: The Functions of Gratitude in Everyday Relationships." *Social and Personality Psychology Compass* 6, no. 6: 455–469.

Algoe, S. B. 2020. "Developing and Maintaining High-Quality Relationships via Emotion." *Emotion Review* 12, no. 4: 276–278.

Algoe, S. B., P. C. Dwyer, A. Younge, and C. Oveis. 2019. "A New Perspective on the Social Functions of Emotions: Gratitude and the Witnessing Effect." *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology* 119: 40–74. https://doi.org/10.1037/pspi0000202.

Algoe, S. B., B. L. Fredrickson, and S. M. Chow. 2011. "The Future of Emotions Research Within Positive Psychology." In *Designing Positive Psychology: Taking Stock and Moving Forward*, edited by K. M. Sheldon, T. B. Kashdan, and M. F. Steger, 115–132. Oxford University Press.

Algoe, S. B., J. Haidt, and S. L. Gable. 2008. "Beyond Reciprocity: Gratitude and Relationships in Everyday Life." *Emotion* 8, no. 3: 425–429.

Amah, O. E. 2017. "Leadership Styles and Relational Energy in High Quality Mentoring Relationship." *Indian Journal of Industrial Relations* 53, no. 1: 59–71.

Baker, W., R. Cross, and M. Wooten. 2003. "Positive Organizational Network Analysis and Energizing Relationships." In *Positive Organizational Scholarship: Foundations of a New Discipline*, edited by K. Cameron, J. Dutton, and R. Quinn, 328–342. Berrett-Kohler.

Baker, W. E. 2019. "Emotional Energy, Relational Energy, and Organizational Energy: Toward a Multilevel Model." *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior* 6, no. 1: 373–395. https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-orgpsych-012218-015047.

Beghetto, R. A. 2015. "Creative Leaders Define Themselves in the Micromoments of Leadership." *Journal of Leadership Studies* 9, no. 3: 72–74.

Carr, S., J. Haar, D. Hodgetts, et al. 2019. "An Employee's Living Wage and Their Quality of Work Life: How Important Are Household Size and Household Income?" *Journal of Sustainability Research* 1, no. 1: e190007. https://doi.org/10.20900/jsr20190007.

Cheung, G. W., and R. B. Rensvold. 2000. "Assessing Extreme and Acquiescence Response Sets in Cross-Cultural Research Using SEM." *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology* 31, no. 2: 187–212.

Chou, S. Y. 2012. "Millennials in the Workplace: A Conceptual Analysis of Millennials' Leadership and Followership Styles." *International Journal of Human Resource Studies* 2, no. 2: 71–83.

Clark, L., S. B. Algoe, and M. C. Green. 2018. "Social Network Sites and Well-Being: The Role of Social Connection." *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 27, no. 1: 32–37.

Cross, R., W. Baker, and A. Parker. 2003. "What Creates Energy in Organizations?" *MIT Sloan Management Review* 44, no. 4: 51–56.

De Clercq, D., D. Dimov, and I. Belausteguigoitia. 2016. "Perceptions of Adverse Work Conditions and Innovative Behavior: The Buffering Roles of Relational Resources." *Entrepreneurship Theory and Practice* 40, no. 3: 515–542. https://doi.org/10.1111/etap.12121.

Du Plessis, C. F., T. Guse, and G. A. Du Plessis. 2020. "I Am Grateful That I Still Live Under One Roof with My Family: Gratitude Among South African University Students." *Emerging Adulthood*. https://doi.org/10.1177/2167696820970690.

Festing, M., and L. Schäfer. 2014. "Generational Challenges to Talent Management: A Framework for Talent Retention Based on the

Psychological-Contract Perspective." *Journal of World Business* 49, no. 2: 262–271.

Fredrickson, B. 2013. *Love 2.0: How Our Supreme Emotion Affects Everything we Feel, Think, Do, and Become*. Hudson Street Press.

Greenhaus, J., S. Parasuraman, and W. Wormley. 1990. "Effects of Race on Organizational Experiences, Job Performance Evaluations, and Career Outcomes." *Academy of Management Journal* 33, no. 1: 64–86.

Gunaydin, G., O. D. Hazal, D. H. Karabulut, and S. Salman-Engine. 2020. "Minimal Social Interactions With Strangers Predict Greater Subjective Well-Being." *Journal of Happiness Studies* 22: 1839–1853. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10902-020-00298-6.

Haar, J., and D. Brougham. 2022. "Work Antecedents and Consequences of Work-Life Balance: A Two Sample Study Within New Zealand." *International Journal of Human Resource Management* 33, no. 4: 1–24. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2020.1751238.

Haar, J., A. Di Fabio, and U. Daellenbach. 2019. "Does Positive Relational Management Benefit Managers Higher Up the Hierarchy? A Moderated Mediation Study of New Zealand Managers." *Sustainability* 11, no. 16: 4373. https://doi.org/10.3390/123.

Haar, J. M. 2013. "Testing a New Measure of Work–Life Balance: A Study of Parent and Non-Parent Employees From New Zealand." *International Journal of Human Resource Management* 24, no. 17: 3305–3324. https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2013.775175.

Haar, J. M., M. Russo, A. Sune, and A. Ollier-Malaterre. 2014. "Outcomes of Work-Life Balance on Job Satisfaction, Life Satisfaction and Mental Health: A Study Across Seven Cultures." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 85, no. 3: 361–373.

Haar, J. M., A. Sune, M. Russo, and A. Ollier-Malaterre. 2019. "A Cross-National Study on the Antecedents of Work–Life Balance From the Fit and Balance Perspective." *Social Indicators Research* 142, no. 1: 261–282.

Haidt, J., and J. P. Morris. 2009. "Finding the Self in Self-Transcendent Emotions." *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the United States of America* 106: 7687–7688. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.0903076106.

Hair, J. F., W. C. Black, B. J. Babin, and R. E. Anderson. 2010. *Multivariate Analyses*. 7th ed. Prentice Hall.

Halbesleben, J., J. Neveu, S. Paustian-Underdahl, and M. Westman. 2014. "Getting to the "COR": Understanding the Role of Resources in Conservation of Resources Theory." *Journal of Management* 40, no. 5: 1334–1364. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206314527130.

Hatfield, E., J. T. Cacioppo, and R. L. Rapson. 1992. "Primitive Emotional Contagion." In *Emotion and Social Behavior*, edited by M. S. Clark, 151–177. Sage Publications.

Hayes, A. F. 2018. "Partial, Conditional, and Moderated Moderated Mediation: Quantification, Inference, and Interpretation." *Communication Monographs* 85, no. 1: 4–40.

Hobfoll, S. E. 1989. "Conservation of Resources: A New Approach at Conceptualizing Stress." *American Psychologist* 44, no. 3: 513–524.

Hobfoll, S. E., J. Halbesleben, J. P. Neveu, and M. Westman. 2018. "Conservation of Resources in the Organizational Context: The Reality of Resources and Their Consequences." *Annual Review of Organizational Psychology and Organizational Behavior* 5: 103–128.

Hochwarter, W., G. Ferris, M. Laird, D. Treadway, and V. Coleman Gallagher. 2010. "Nonlinear Politics Perceptions—Work Outcomes Relationships: A Three-Study, Five-Sample Investigation." *Journal of Management* 36, no. 3: 740–763. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206308324065.

Hochwarter, W., M. Laird, and R. Brouer. 2008. "Board Up the Windows: The Interactive Effects of Hurricane-Induced Job Stress and Perceived Resources on Work Outcomes." *Journal of Management* 34, no. 2: 263–289. https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206307309264.

Hochwarter, W. A., P. L. Perrewé, J. A. Meuers, and C. Kacmar. 2007. "The Interactive Effects of Work-Induced Guilt and Ability to Manage Resources on Job and Life Satisfaction." *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology* 12: 125–135.

Hofstede, G. 1994. "The Business of International Business Is Culture." *International Business Review* 3, no. 1: 1–14.

Izard, C. 2010. "The Many Meanings/Aspects of Emotion: Definitions, Functions, Activation, and Regulation." *Emotion Review* 2, no. 4: 363–370. https://doi.org/10.1177/175407391037466.

Izard, C. 2011. "Forms and Functions of Emotions: Matters of Emotion-Cognition Interaction." *Emotion Review* 3, no. 4: 371–378. https://doi.org/10.1177/1754073911410737.

Judge, T. A., J. E. Bono, A. Erez, and E. A. Locke. 2005. "Core Self-Evaluations and Job and Life Satisfaction: The Role of Self-Concordance and Goal Attainment." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 90, no. 2: 257–268. https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.90.2.257.

Judge, T. A., and R. Klinger. 2008. "Job Satisfaction: Subjective Wellbeing at Work." In *The Science of Subjective Wellbeing*, edited by M. Eid and R. J. Larsen, 393–413. Guilford Press.

Judge, T. A., C. J. Thoresen, J. E. Bono, and G. K. Patton. 2001. "The Job Satisfaction–Job Performance Relationship: A Qualitative and Quantitative Review." *Psychological Bulletin* 127, no. 3: 376–407.

Junça-Silva, A., L. Mosteo, and R. R. Lopes. 2023. "The Role of Mindfulness on the Relationship Between Daily Micro-Events and Daily Gratitude: A Within-Person Analysis." *Personality and Individual Differences* 200: 111891. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2022.111891.

Junça-Silva, A., and C. Vilela. 2023. "The Black Unicorn Effect: Micro-Daily Events and Satisfaction Decrease the COVID-19 Xenophobia, but Only for Those With Low Levels of Neuroticism." *Psychological Reports* 128, no. 2: 899–919. https://doi.org/10.1177/00332941231161278.

Lawler, E. J., and J. Yoon. 1996. "Commitment in Exchange Relations: Test of a Theory of Relational Cohesion." *American Sociological Review* 61, no. 1: 89–108.

Lee, K., and N. J. Allen. 2002. "Organizational Citizenship Behavior and Workplace Deviance: The Role of Affect and Cognitions." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 87, no. 1: 131–142.

Locke, E. A. 1969. "What Is Job Satisfaction?" *Organizational Behavior and Human Performance* 4, no. 4: 309–336.

Meade, A. W., and C. M. Kroustalis. 2006. "Problems With Item Partialing for Confirmatory Factor Analytic Tests of Measurement Invariance." *Organizational Research Methods* 9, no. 3: 369–403.

Mumford, M. D., L. M. Steele, T. J. Mulhearn, T. McIntosh, and L. L. Watts. 2017. *Leader Planning Skills and Creative Performance: Integration of Past, Present, and Future*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Ng, T. W., and D. C. Feldman. 2008. "Long Work Hours: A Social Identity Perspective on Meta-Analysis Data." *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 29, no. 7: 853–880.

Ng, T. W., and D. C. Feldman. 2010. "The Relationships of Age With Job Attitudes: A Meta-Analysis." *Personnel Psychology* 63, no. 3: 677–718.

Ng, T. W. H., L. T. Eby, K. L. Sorensen, and D. C. Feldman. 2005. "Predictors of Objective and Subjective Career Success. A Meta-Analysis." *Personnel Psychology* 58, no. 2: 367–408.

Ohly, S., and A. Schmitt. 2015. "What Makes Us Enthusiastic, Angry, Feeling at Rest or Worried? Development and Validation of an Affective Work Events Taxonomy Using Concept Mapping Methodology." *Journal of Business and Psychology* 30: 15–35.

Organ, D. W. 1988. *Organizational Citizenship Behavior: The Good Soldier Syndrome*. Lexington Books.

Owens, B. P., W. E. Baker, D. M. Sumpter, and K. S. Cameron. 2016. "Relational Energy at Work: Implications for Job Engagement and Job Performance." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 101, no. 1: 35–49.

Parker, A., and A. Gerbasi. 2016. "The Impact of Energizing Interactions on Voluntary and Involuntary Turnover." *Management* 19, no. 3: 177–202.

Podsakoff, N. P., S. W. Whiting, P. M. Podsakoff, and B. D. Blume. 2009. "Individual- and Organizational-Level Consequences of Organizational Citizenship Behaviors: A Meta-Analysis." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 94, no. 1: 122–141.

Posthuma, R. A., and M. A. Campion. 2009. "Age Stereotypes in the Workplace: Common Stereotypes, Moderators, and Future Research Directions." *Journal of Management* 35: 158–188.

Ryan, R. M., and C. Frederick. 1997. "On Energy, Personality, and Health: Subjective Vitality as a Dynamic Reflection of Well-Being." *Journal of Personality* 65, no. 3: 529–565.

Saks, A. M. 2006. "Antecedents and Consequences of Employee Engagement." *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 21, no. 7: 600–619.

Schippers, M. C., and R. Hogenes. 2011. "Energy Management of People in Organizations: A Review and Research Agenda." *Journal of Business and Psychology* 26, no. 2: 193–203.

Seppälä, E., and K. Cameron. 2022. *The Best Leaders Have a Contagious Positive Energy*. Harvard Business Review. https://hbr.org/2022/04/the-best-leaders-have-a-contagious-positive-energy.

Settoon, R. P., N. Bennett, and R. C. Liden. 1996. "Social Exchange in Organizations: Perceived Organizational Support, Leader–Member Exchange, and Employee Reciprocity." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 81, no. 3: 219–227.

Skakon, J., K. Nielsen, V. Borg, and J. Guzman. 2010. "Are Leaders' Well-Being, Behaviors and Style Associated With the Affective Well-Being of Their Employees? A Systematic Review of Three Decades of Research." *Work & Stress* 24, no. 2: 107–139.

Smidt, M. N., N. L. Jimmieson, L. M. Bradley, and M. R. Edwards. 2023. "Wellness Programs and Employee Outcomes: The Role of HR Attributions." *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources* 61, no. 3: 613–642.

Smith, C. A., D. W. Organ, and J. P. Near. 1983. "Organizational Citizenship Behavior: Its Nature and Antecedents." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 68, no. 4: 653–663.

Stanley, P. J., and N. S. Schutte. 2023. "Merging the Self-Determination Theory and the Broaden and Build Theory Through the Nexus of Positive Affect: A Macro Theory of Positive Functioning." *New Ideas in Psychology* 68: 100979.

Stokes, P., C. Millar, and P. Harris. 2012. "Micro-Moments, Choice and Responsibility in Sustainable Organizational Change and Transformation." *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 25, no. 4: 595–611. https://doi.org/10.1108/09534811211239245.

Sumpter, D. M., and C. B. Gibson. 2023. "Riding the Wave to Recovery: Relational Energy as an HR Managerial Resource for Employees During Crisis Recovery." *Human Resource Management* 62, no. 4: 581–613. https://doi.org/10.1002/hrm.22117.

Sy, T., S. Côté, and R. Saavedra. 2005. "The Contagious Leader: Impact of the Leader's Mood on the Mood of Group Members, Group Affective Tone, and Group Process." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 90, no. 2: 295–305.

Taskan, B., A. Junça-Silva, and A. Caetano. 2022. "Clarifying the Conceptual Map of VUCA: A Systematic Review." *International Journal of Organizational Analysis* 30, no. 7: 196–217.

ten Brummelhuis, L. L., J. M. Haar, and M. Roche. 2014. "Does Family Life Help to Be a Better Leader? A Closer Look at Crossover Processes From Leaders to Followers." *Personnel Psychology* 67, no. 4: 917–949. https://doi.org/10.1111/peps.12057.

Tugade, M., B. Fredrickson, and L. Feldman Barrett. 2005. "Psychological Resilience and Positive Emotional Granularity: Examining the Benefits of Positive Emotions on Coping and Health." *Journal of Personality* 72, no. 6: 1161–1190. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-6494.2004.00294.x.

Vandenberg, R. J., and C. E. Lance. 2000. "A Review and Synthesis of the Measurement in Variance Literature: Suggestions, Practices, and Recommendations for Organizational Research." *Organizational Research Methods* 3, no. 1: 4–69.

Vinarski-Peretz, H., G. Binyamin, and A. Carmeli. 2011. "Subjective Relational Experiences and Employee Innovative Behaviors in the Workplace." *Journal of Vocational Behavior* 78, no. 2: 290–304. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jvb.2010.09.00.

Walter, S. L., S. E. Seibert, D. Goering, and E. H. O'Boyle. 2019. "A Tale of Two Sample Sources: Do Results From Online Panel Data and Conventional Data Converge?" *Journal of Business and Psychology* 34: 425–452. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-018-9552-y.

Wang, L., B. P. Owens, J. Li, and L. Shi. 2018. "Exploring the Affective Impact, Boundary Conditions, and Antecedents of Leader Humility." *Journal of Applied Psychology* 103, no. 9: 1019–1038.

Waters, L., S. B. Algoe, J. Dutton, et al. 2021. "Positive Psychology in a Pandemic: Buffering, Bolstering, and Building Mental Health." *Journal of Positive Psychology* 17, no. 3: 303–323. https://doi.org/10.1080/17439760.2021.1871945.

Wayne, S. J., G. Lemmon, J. M. Hoobler, G. W. Cheung, and M. S. Wilson. 2017. "The Ripple Effect: A Spillover Model of the Detrimental Impact of Work–Family Conflict on Job Success." *Journal of Organizational Behavior* 38, no. 6: 876–894.

Wilkinson, S., and J. Haar. 2023. "Smartdevice Use in a COVID-19 World: Exploring Work-Family and Family-Work Conflict and Turnover Intentions." *Asia Pacific Journal of Human Resources* 61: 981–1007. https://doi.org/10.1111/1744-7941.12370.

Williams, L. J., R. J. Vandenberg, and J. R. Edwards. 2009. "12 Structural Equation Modeling in Management Research: A Guide for Improved Analysis." *Academy of Management Annals* 3, no. 1: 543–604.

Yang, C., F. Yang, and C. Ding. 2021. "Linking Leader Humor to Employee Creativity: Theroles of Relational Energy and Traditionality." *Journal of Managerial Psychology* 36, no. 7: 548–561. https://doi.org/10.1108/JMP-06-2020-0300.

Yang, F., J. Liu, Z. Wang, and Y. Zhang. 2019. "Feeling Energized: A Multilevel Model of Spiritual Leadership, Leader Integrity, Relational Energy, and Job Performance." *Journal of Business Ethics* 158: 983–997. https://doi.org/10.1007/s10551-017-3713-1.

Zimet, G. D., N. W. Dahlem, S. G. Zimet, and G. K. Fadey. 1988. "The Multidimensional Scale of Perceived Social Support." *Journal of Personality Assessment* 52, no. 1: 30–41.

Appendix 1

Study Variables

Relational energy:

1. I feel invigorated when I interact with my supervisor
2. After interacting with my supervisor I feel more energy to do my work
3. I feel increased vitality when I interact with my supervisor
4. I would go to my supervisor when I need to be "pepped up"
5. After an exchange with my supervisor I feel more stamina to do my work

Work-life balance:

1. I am satisfied with my work-life balance, enjoying both roles
2. Nowadays, I seem to enjoy every part of my life equally well
3. I manage to balance the demands of my work and personal/family life well

Job satisfaction:

1. I am enthusiastic about my work.
2. I feel satisfied with my present job.
3. I find real enjoyment in my work.

Career satisfaction:

1. I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career.
2. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my overall career goals.
3. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my income goals.
4. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for advancement.
5. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for the development of new skills.

OCBs:

Please indicate how often you engage in the following behaviours...

1. Willingly give your time to help others who have work-related problems.
2. Adjust your work schedule to accommodate other employees' requests for time off.
3. Give up time to help others who have work or non-work problems