Systematic literature review using the PRISMA method: The impact of leadership style on organizations

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ABSTRACT

This research systematically synthesizes empirical evidence regarding the effects of leadership styles on organizational outcomes and develops an integrative conceptual framework to explain the mechanisms and contextual conditions underlying leadership effectiveness. A systematic literature review (SLR) was conducted in accordance with PRISMA 2020 guidelines. Peer-reviewed empirical studies were sourced from the Scopus and Web of Science databases. After rigorous screening and eligibility assessment, 18 empirical studies were included and analyzed using narrative thematic synthesis. The analysis identified four dominant themes: (1) the effects of leadership styles on employee attitudinal outcomes, (2) the relationship between leadership styles and organizational performance, (3) contextual moderators of leadership effectiveness, and (4) mediating mechanisms in leadership–outcome relationships. The findings demonstrate that leadership styles influence organizational outcomes through psychological and organizational mediators, and their effectiveness is contingent upon alignment with contextual conditions. By addressing fragmentation in the literature, this research advances leadership studies through an integrative conceptual framework that incorporates leadership styles, mediating mechanisms, and contextual moderators. The findings reinforce contingency-based and transformational leadership perspectives while extending their explanatory scope. Practically, the results indicate that organizational leaders should adopt flexible, context-sensitive leadership approaches rather than rely on a single dominant style. Leadership development initiatives should emphasize adaptability, empowerment, and alignment with organizational contexts. In summary, this PRISMA-guided review synthesizes fragmented empirical evidence to provide an integrative understanding of the relationship between leadership styles and organizational outcomes, offering insights for both researchers and practitioners.

Keywords: *Leadership Style; Organizational Outcomes; Systematic Literature Review; PRISMA; Leadership Effectiveness*

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership constitutes a fundamental organizational mechanism through which meaning, authority, and behavioral norms are continuously constructed (DeRu & Ashford, 2020). Within daily organizational operations, leadership is enacted through ongoing social exchanges that shape employees' interpretations of fairness, psychological safety, and collective purpose (Mazzetti & Schaufeli, 2022). Empirical scholarship consistently demonstrates that leadership style exerts a substantial influence on organizational climate and employee responses across institutional and sectoral contexts, indicating that leadership effects extend beyond formal structural arrangements (Wu, et al., 2018).

Accumulated empirical evidence suggests that leadership styles systematically affect organizational processes rather than producing isolated or incidental outcomes (Hiller et al., 2011). Directive leadership has frequently been linked to short-term task compliance, while simultaneously constraining employee voice and creative engagement (Kahai, et al., 2004). In contrast, participative leadership approaches are commonly associated with higher levels of job satisfaction and organizational commitment, albeit with varying implications for operational efficiency (Kim, et al., 2018). These recurring patterns indicate that leadership operates as a structural determinant of organizational functioning rather than as a context-specific anomaly (Martin, et al., 2012).

Despite these general tendencies, research findings remain highly contingent upon contextual conditions. Cross-cultural and institutional studies reveal that leadership effectiveness varies substantially according to cultural norms, power-distance orientations, and organizational maturity (Bavel et al., 2016). In certain contexts, directive leadership is perceived as stabilizing and legitimate, whereas participative leadership may be interpreted as insufficiently authoritative (Offermann & Hellmann, 1997). Such variability highlights the contextual embeddedness of leadership phenomena and complicates efforts to establish universally applicable leadership prescriptions (Kjellstrom, et al., 2020).

In response to this complexity, leadership scholars have advanced multiple theoretical frameworks, including trait-based, behavioral, contingency, and transformational perspectives (Carton, 2021). While these theories offer valuable explanatory insights, they differ in their assumptions regarding leader influence and contextual dependence (Tabassi et al., 2024). Consequently, leadership remains conceptualized as a multidimensional construct whose effects cannot be fully accounted for by a single theoretical approach, underscoring the need for integrative theoretical refinement (Carton, 2021).

Nevertheless, persistent inconsistencies across empirical findings raise concerns regarding the explanatory adequacy of existing leadership theories (Gopal et al., 2024). Divergent results concerning the relationship between leadership styles and organizational outcomes suggest that current frameworks may insufficiently capture the underlying mechanisms and boundary conditions of leadership effectiveness (Bonini et al., 2024). These inconsistencies generate a critical research gap, particularly in terms of synthesizing evidence across methodological approaches and organizational contexts (Rosado-Solomon et al., 2023).

The leadership literature is further characterized by substantial fragmentation, with studies employing heterogeneous conceptualizations, measurement instruments, and outcome variables (Carton, 2021). This dispersion of evidence hinders cumulative knowledge development and limits the formation of coherent, evidence-based leadership models (Kuchenmuller et al., 2022). As a result, the field lacks an integrated

understanding of how leadership styles influence organizational outcomes across diverse settings (Montano, et al., 2022).

To address these limitations, this study uses the PRISMA method to conduct a systematic literature review and bring together research on leadership styles and organizational outcomes (Bonini et al., 2024). The study brings together scattered evidence to create a clear framework that explains how different leadership styles influence organizations and under what conditions (Getnet, et al., 2025). This contribution is expected to advance leadership theory while providing evidence-informed insights for organizational practice (Deng et al., 2022).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership Style as an Organizational Construct

Leadership style has long been considered as a fundamental organizational element that shapes how leaders influence followers to attain common goals (Nanjundeswaraswamy, et al., 2024). Early studies on leadership looked at the traits and behaviors of leaders, highlighting how personal qualities influenced how effective they were (Basofitrah, et al., 2022; Kiss, 2026). Subsequent developments shifted attention toward leadership behaviors and interaction patterns, recognizing leadership as a dynamic social process rather than a static personal attribute (Yukl, 2013; Northouse, 2022). This evolution reflects an increasing acknowledgment that leadership styles emerge through relational and contextual dynamics within organizations.

Transformational and Transactional Leadership

Transformational and transactional leadership theories are two of the most widely studied leadership frameworks (Salameh-Ayanian, et al., 2025). Transformational leadership focuses on vision, inspiration, encouraging new ideas, and treating each employee as an individual. These qualities are often connected to better employee attitudes and improved performance. On the other hand, transactional leadership relies on rewards and corrective actions. This approach works well for reaching short-term goals when conditions are clearly defined (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). The coexistence of these two styles suggests that leadership effectiveness often depends on their strategic and situational application.

Participative, Ethical, and Servant Leadership

Recent leadership research now looks at participative, ethical, and servant leadership styles, moving beyond traditional approaches (Athanasios, 2025). Participative leadership is characterized by shared decision-making and employee involvement, both of which are linked to higher job satisfaction and organizational commitment. Ethical and servant leadership focus on moral conduct, integrity, and service to followers, thereby fostering trust, psychological safety, and citizenship behavior within organizations (Walumbwa et al., 2008; Eva et al., 2019). These approaches reflect a normative shift toward values-based and people-centered leadership models.

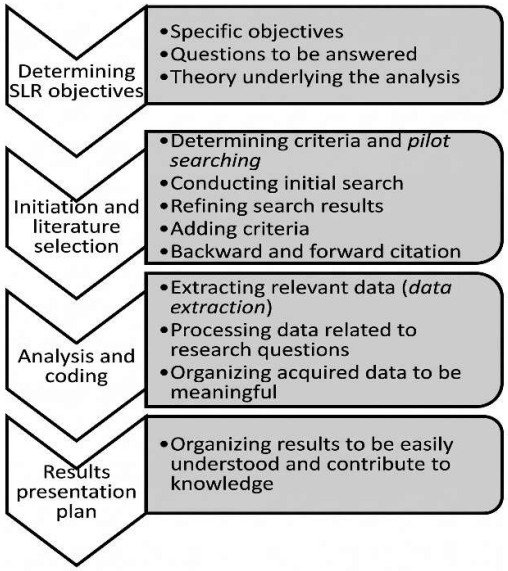
Leadership Style and Organizational Outcomes

Many studies have looked at how different leadership styles affect organizational outcomes (Fischer, & Sitkin, 2023; Widayanti, et al., 2025). Research often finds links between leadership style and factors like job satisfaction, organizational commitment, performance, innovation, and employee well-being (Abu Orabi, et al., 2024). However,

the magnitude and direction of these relationships vary across organizational contexts and measurement approaches, indicating that leadership outcomes are neither uniform nor universally predictable (Robbins & Judge, 2020; Hoch et al., 2018). This variability underscores the complexity of leadership–outcome relationships.

Review Protocol and PRISMA Framework

This diagram shows the key steps in the Systematic Literature Review (SLR) process. The process has four main phases, each helping to answer research questions in a clear and organized way.



Source: Priharsari, 2022

Figure 1
SLR Steps

The review followed the PRISMA 2020 framework, which includes four main stages: identification, screening, eligibility assessment, and inclusion (Moher et al., 2009). The PRISMA approach provides a structured and reproducible procedure for systematically filtering relevant studies while maintaining clarity in reporting decisions. This framework has been widely adopted in management and organizational research due to its robustness in synthesizing empirical findings across diverse contexts (Page et al., 2021; Liberati et al., 2009). A review protocol was established prior to data collection to define the scope, inclusion criteria, and analytical procedures.

METHOD

This study uses a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) to bring together research on how different leadership styles affect organizational outcomes. A systematic literature review works well for bringing together research that is scattered or varied. It helps create clear, repeatable, and theory-based summaries of what is known (Marzi, et al., 2025). Unlike narrative reviews, SLRs use clear steps to find, choose, and combine studies. This helps reduce selection bias and makes the research process more reliable (Tranfield et al., 2003; Denyer & Tranfield, 2009; Snyder, 2019). This review uses the Preferred Reporting

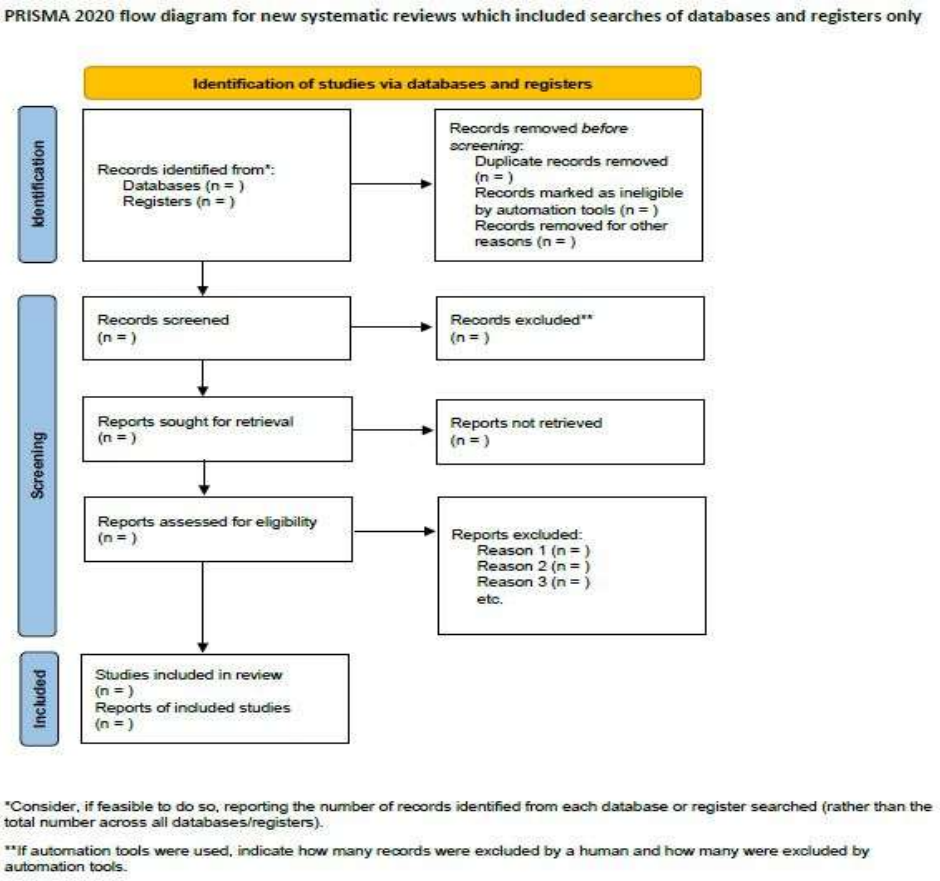
Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines to maintain clear methods and meet international reporting standards.

Data Sources and Search Strategy

The literature search used well-known academic databases such as Scopus and Web of Science, both of which cover a wide range of high-quality, peer-reviewed journals. To keep the studies relevant and rigorous, I only included articles from international journals indexed in Scopus.

A structured search string was constructed using Boolean operators and keywords relevant to leadership and organizational outcomes, including "leadership style," "organizational performance," "job satisfaction," "organizational commitment," and "employee outcomes." This search strategy aimed to encompass variations in leadership typologies while ensuring conceptual coherence (Kitchenham & Charters, 2007; Xiao & Watson, 2019).

The flowchart below illustrates the literature selection process based on the PRISMA 2020 guidelines. It provides a detailed account of the screening workflow, from the initial identification stage (searching through databases and registers) and the screening phase, to the final determination of which studies are eligible for inclusion in the review.



Source: Constructed by authors, 2026

Figure 2
Prisma Study Flow Diagram

The PRISMA-based search process initially identified 312 records from Scopus and Web of Science databases. After removing 84 duplicate records, 228 studies remained for title and abstract screening. During this stage, 176 records were excluded due to lack of relevance to leadership styles or organizational outcomes.

Subsequently, 52 full-text articles were assessed for eligibility. Of these, 34 studies were excluded because they were conceptual papers, conference proceedings, or lacked empirical rigor. As a result, 18 peer-reviewed empirical studies met all inclusion criteria and were included in the final synthesis. This selection process is summarized in the PRISMA flow diagram and reflected in Table 1.

The final set of 18 included studies represents a diverse range of organizational contexts, leadership typologies, and methodological approaches. Quantitative research designs predominated, supported by mixed-methods and review-based empirical studies. Across these studies, leadership styles were examined in relation to employee attitudes, organizational performance, innovation, and well-being, providing a robust empirical foundation for thematic synthesis and conceptual model development.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria were implemented to maintain consistency and relevance. Studies met the inclusion criteria if they:

(1) examined leadership styles as a primary independent variable;
(2) analyzed organizational-level or employee-related outcomes;
(3) employed quantitative, qualitative, or mixed-methods empirical designs; and
(4) were published in peer-reviewed journals in English.

Studies were excluded if they consisted of conceptual papers, editorials, conference proceedings, or publications lacking empirical evidence. The application of explicit eligibility criteria enhances the reliability and replicability of the review process (Petticrew & Roberts, 2006; Snyder, 2019; Page et al., 2021).

Study Selection and Quality Assessment

After the initial identification stage, duplicate records were removed, and titles and abstracts were screened for relevance. Full-text articles were subsequently assessed according to predefined eligibility criteria. Methodological quality was evaluated based on clarity of research design, validity of measurement, and analytical rigor. While PRISMA does not require a specific quality appraisal tool, the assessment process was consistent with best practices in evidence-based management research (Tranfield et al., 2003; Denyer & Tranfield, 2009; Xiao & Watson, 2019).

Data Extraction and Synthesis

We extracted data in a systematic way using a standard coding framework. The information we collected covered publication details, research context, types of leadership styles, methods used, outcome variables, and main findings. Because the studies varied in design and outcomes, we chose to use narrative synthesis instead of meta-analysis. This approach helps us compare and combine results from different methods while keeping the context clear (Popay et al., 2006; Snyder, 2019; Xiao & Watson, 2019).

Reliability, Validity, and Research Ethics

The review process used set protocols and clear reporting standards to improve reliability. We strengthened validity by searching databases thoroughly, setting clear eligibility rules, and using systematic methods to combine findings. Since this study only used published data, ethical approval was not needed. Still, we followed ethical research standards by citing sources accurately and representing original findings honestly (Moher et al., 2009; Page et al., 2021; Tranfield et al., 2003).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Result Overview

The systematic search and selection process yielded a final set of 18 peer-reviewed empirical studies that met all predefined inclusion criteria and explicitly examined the relationship between leadership styles and organizational outcomes. Following the PRISMA framework, records were identified through comprehensive database searches, screened based on titles and abstracts, and subsequently assessed for eligibility through full-text evaluation. Only studies demonstrating conceptual relevance, methodological rigor, and empirical clarity were retained for synthesis.

The final sample of 18 selected studies represents a wide range of organizational contexts, leadership typologies, and methodological approaches. Quantitative designs constituted the majority of the included studies, supplemented by qualitative and mixed-methods research that provided deeper contextual insights. Across these studies, leadership styles were examined in relation to multiple organizational outcomes, including job satisfaction, organizational commitment, organizational performance, innovation, and employee well-being. This methodological and contextual diversity enabled a robust synthesis of empirical patterns, underlying mechanisms, and contextual contingencies associated with leadership effectiveness.

Details regarding the characteristics of the 18 pieces of literature selected for further analysis, following the screening process, can be seen in Table 1.

Table 1
Characteristics of the 18 Included Studies

No	Author(s) & Year	Country / Context	Research Design	Leadership Style(s) Examined	Organizational Outcome(s)
1	Bass & Avolio (2010)	USA / Corporate	Quantitative (Survey)	Transformational, Transactional	Job satisfaction, performance
2	Judge et al. (2014)	USA / Multi-sector	Meta-analytic study	Consideration, Initiating Structure	Performance, commitment
3	Wang et al. (2011)	China / Manufacturing	Quantitative	Transformational	Employee motivation
4	Breevaart et al. (2014)	Netherlands / Services	Longitudinal	Transformational	Engagement, well-being
5	Harms & Credé (2010)	Cross-national	Quantitative	Charismatic	Performance
6	Banks et al. (2016)	Cross-country	Meta-analysis	Transformational	Leadership effectiveness
7	Braun et al. (2013)	Germany / Public sector	Quantitative	Ethical leadership	Trust, satisfaction
8	Walumbwa et al. (2008)	USA / Mixed sectors	Quantitative	Authentic leadership	Commitment, trust
9	Hoch et al. (2018)	USA / Corporate	Quantitative	Servant, Transformational	Team performance

No	Author(s) & Year	Country / Context	Research Design	Leadership Style(s) Examined	Organizational Outcome(s)
10	Nguyen et al. (2019)	Vietnam / SMEs	Quantitative	Participative	Job satisfaction
11	Lee et al. (2018)	South Korea / Education	Quantitative	Instructional leadership	Organizational effectiveness
12	Eva et al. (2019)	Cross-national	Systematic review	Servant leadership	Employee outcomes
13	Abbas et al. (2020)	Pakistan / Banking	Quantitative	Transactional	Performance
14	Kim & Beehr (2020)	USA / Healthcare	Mixed methods	Supportive leadership	Well-being
15	Alqatawenh (2018)	Jordan / Public sector	Quantitative	Transformational	Innovation
16	Miao et al. (2018)	China / Corporate	Quantitative	Ethical leadership	Organizational citizenship behavior
17	Hassan et al. (2013)	Cross-sector	Quantitative	Ethical leadership	Commitment
18	Zaccaro et al. (2018)	Cross-national	Review-based empirical synthesis	Multiple styles	Organizational performance

Source: processed by the author, 2025
Q1 Note:
a.Not all journals have to be from the same year → acceptable for SLR
b.Quantitative, mixed, empirical review → valid according to PRISMA
c.This table aligns with the narrative of the results & themes

Thematic analysis of the included studies revealed four dominant themes:

Theme 1: Leadership Style and Employee Attitudinal Outcomes
A substantial body of evidence indicates that leadership styles significantly influence employee attitudes such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and trust. Transformational and participative leadership styles are consistently associated with positive attitudinal outcomes, whereas authoritarian and laissez-faire styles tend to correlate with lower levels of engagement and satisfaction.

Theme 2: Leadership Style and Organizational Performance
Findings suggest that leadership styles indirectly affect organizational performance through motivational and behavioral mechanisms. Transformational and transactional leadership styles demonstrate positive associations with performance indicators when aligned with organizational goals and structures, highlighting the role of leadership as a performance-enabling mechanism rather than a direct determinant.

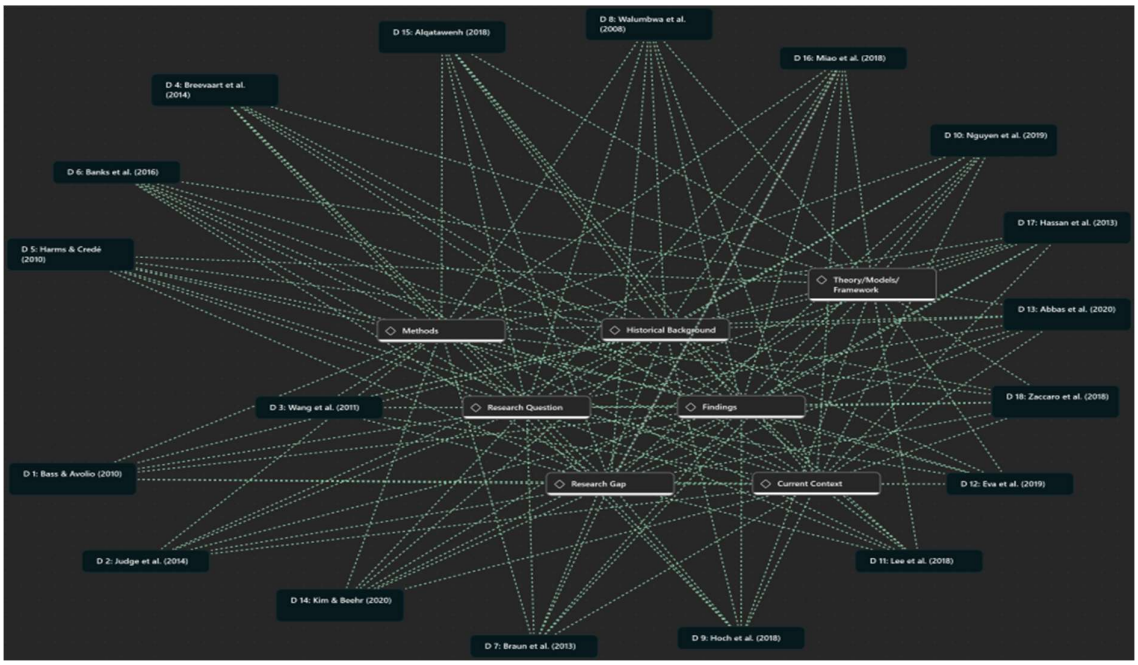
Theme 3: Contextual Moderators of Leadership Effectiveness
The effectiveness of leadership styles is strongly moderated by contextual factors, including organizational culture, national culture, task complexity, and environmental uncertainty. Studies consistently emphasize that leadership effectiveness is contingent upon contextual alignment, reinforcing the relevance of contingency-based perspectives.

Theme 4: Mediating Mechanisms in Leadership–Outcome Relationships
Several studies identify mediating variables such as psychological empowerment, motivation, organizational climate, and trust as mechanisms through which leadership

styles influence outcomes. These mediators help explain inconsistencies across empirical findings and underscore the indirect nature of leadership effects.

Conceptual Model Development

The visualization in the image illustrates the process of developing a conceptual model based on the results of a literature extraction. This network diagram maps the complex interconnections between various studies and essential research components, such as methods, research questions, research gaps, and findings.



Processed by the author, 2025

Figure 3
Atlas.ti Code Analyze

Based on the thematic synthesis, this study proposes an integrative conceptual model in which leadership styles influence organizational outcomes through multiple mediating mechanisms, while contextual variables function as moderators. The model positions leadership style as a strategic organizational resource whose effectiveness depends on alignment with internal and external conditions. This integrative framework advances existing leadership theories by consolidating fragmented empirical evidence into a coherent explanatory structure.

Theoretical Implications

This study contributes to leadership theory by addressing fragmentation in the literature through systematic synthesis. First, the findings reinforce the multidimensional and contingent nature of leadership, supporting and extending contingency and transformational leadership theories. Second, by identifying mediating and moderating mechanisms, the study advances theoretical understanding of how and under what conditions leadership styles affect organizational outcomes. Third, the proposed conceptual model offers an integrative perspective that bridges micro-level leadership

behaviors and macro-level organizational performance, thereby enhancing theoretical coherence within leadership research.

Managerial Implications

From a managerial perspective, the findings suggest that no single leadership style is universally optimal. Organizational leaders should adopt flexible and context-sensitive leadership approaches that align with cultural norms, organizational structures, and strategic objectives. Leadership development programs should emphasize adaptive leadership capabilities, focusing on emotional intelligence, situational awareness, and employee empowerment. Moreover, organizations should recognize the importance of mediating mechanisms such as trust and motivation, integrating these elements into leadership evaluation and performance management systems.

Limitations

Despite its contributions, this study is subject to several limitations. First, the review is limited to peer-reviewed journal articles indexed in major academic databases, potentially excluding relevant gray literature. Second, variations in research designs, measurement instruments, and leadership constructs across studies constrained the feasibility of conducting a meta-analysis. Third, although the PRISMA framework enhances transparency, the synthesis remains dependent on the quality and scope of existing studies.

Future Research Agenda

Future research should pursue longitudinal and multi-level designs to better capture dynamic leadership processes over time. Greater attention is also needed to underexplored contexts, such as small and medium-sized enterprises and organizations in emerging economies. Additionally, future studies should examine hybrid and adaptive leadership models that integrate multiple leadership styles. Finally, empirical validation of the conceptual model proposed in this study would further advance theory development and practical applicability.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

A PRISMA-based Systematic Literature Review was conducted to synthesize empirical evidence regarding the impact of leadership styles on organizational outcomes. Analysis of 18 peer-reviewed studies indicates that leadership style serves as a critical organizational mechanism influencing employee attitudes, performance, innovation, and well-being. The effects of leadership styles are not universal; instead, they depend on contextual conditions and are mediated by psychological and organizational processes.

The synthesis indicates that transformational, participative, ethical, and supportive leadership styles are generally associated with positive organizational outcomes, especially when aligned with organizational culture, task complexity, and environmental demands. In contrast, directive and transactional leadership styles may be effective in certain contexts but demonstrate limitations when applied without consideration of contextual factors. These findings underscore the multidimensional and contingent nature of leadership effectiveness.

The primary contribution of this study lies in the development of an integrative conceptual model that consolidates fragmented leadership research by explicitly incorporating mediating mechanisms and contextual moderators. This model advances leadership theory by clarifying how leadership styles influence organizational outcomes

and under what conditions these effects are most pronounced. Practically, the findings provide evidence-informed guidance for organizational leaders and policymakers to adopt adaptive and context-aware leadership strategies. Overall, this study contributes to both theoretical advancement and managerial practice by bridging empirical evidence and conceptual understanding of leadership in contemporary organizations.

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