

INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF MULTIDISCIPLINARY: APPLIED BUSINESS AND EDUCATION RESEARCH

2025, Vol. 6, No. 9, 4429 – 4442

<http://dx.doi.org/10.11594/ijmaber.06.09.18>

Research Article

Leadership in Perspective: Nature, Challenges, and Future Directions

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Article history:

Submission 21 May 2025

Revised 31 August 2025

Accepted 23 September 2025

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ABSTRACT

Leadership is considered as a complex, multifaceted process of influencing, guiding, and managing people towards achieving common goals. It is not about authority or positions, but it requires innate and developed characteristics rooted in social responsibility and emotional intelligence. Researchers agree that effective leadership empowers others, promotes collaboration, and adapts to the changing organizational landscape. Moreover, it aims to address the challenges and ensures inclusive progress. In this light, this paper delves into the nature, impact, and types of leadership – examining the strengths and weaknesses such as autocratic, democratic, transformational, transactional, servant, charismatic, laissez-faire, bureaucratic, and situational leadership. It also highlights how these styles are interconnected and can be applied simultaneously. Furthermore, the research emphasizes the future of leadership, pointing out that blending two or more styles can foster a more motivated and satisfied organizational membership. This paper also states that no singular leadership style is solely or universally effective in all situations. Instead, the integration of multiple leadership styles which is coined as full-range or hybrid leadership, offering a more responsive, inclusive, and flexible workplace. The insights can serve as important framework for leadership development in numerous sectors most especially in education and governance.

Keywords: Leadership styles, Organization performance, Hybrid leadership, Full-Range leadership

Background

Leadership involves influencing, guiding, motivating, and managing individuals or groups to achieve shared goals. As defined by Vavouras et al., (2024), leadership is a process of social influence and helping others to complete a shared task. It includes innate qualities and social responsibility that focus on

education and experience (Firdaus & Muttaqin, 2024). Leaders should understand their positions, the structure of the organization, and their relation to the members to ensure success and avoid any failures (Veliu et. al., 2017). Being effective and efficient in leadership means inspiring and empowering the members to maximize their full potentials and perform

How to cite:

Romero, J. N. (2025). Leadership in Perspective: Nature, Challenges, and Future Directions. *International Journal of Multidisciplinary: Applied Business and Education Research*. 6(9), 4429 – 4442. doi: 10.11594/ijmaber.06.09.18

their best by means of adapting to the changing situational and organizational needs. Leadership sums up the overall performance of the teams, groups, and organizations (Luedi, 2022). It is also about learning to trust oneself and others, resolving conflicts, achieving a transformational change, attaining the visioned purpose, and fully understanding the pressure-laden responsibility.

According to Northouse (2025), leadership is termed as power relationship displayed between the leaders and the followers wherein the leaders have the expected power to effect change for them to complete the required tasks. Indeed, leadership is one of the most sought qualities that people want to embody, however, it poses difficulty to have due to the shifting landscape of the society. Understanding the nature of leadership has been proven as an effective guiding path towards a richer and deeper improvement and development (Bolden et al., 2023). The nature of any leadership should really be understood and acknowledged for the work to succeed (Cheong et al., 2019). Appropriate leadership style will ensure the optimization of all transactions and processes, effective use of resources and time, and generating of professional workplace (Loan, 2014). It also encourages creativity, innovation, and responsibility of each member resulting to save-costing operations and abundant benefits to the community.

Methods

This paper employed a comprehensive literature review exploring the nature, impact, and types of leadership. It uses scholarly works, theories, and empirical findings from various sources. It involves the process of identifying, reviewing, and synthesizing the different studies that defined leadership styles, discussed their importance, and assessed their roles in organizational and educational contexts.

Result and Discussion

Importance of Leadership

It is important to have an effective leadership because it promotes positive and conducive learning environment which can inspire, motivate, and integrate tactical vision into transformative actions. Effective leadership

brings success to the organization and foster essential skills among the whole team. It also promotes productive performance wherein the members constantly feel valued and inspired to actively contribute (Saharuddin et al., 2023). Leadership skill also equips and prepares the members to face and solve challenges. It enhances the organizational efficiency and development across various sectors. Leadership ensures active responsibility, purposefulness, and adaptability to attain an innovative growth (Cherkashyn et. al., 2023).

In the study of Sfantou et al. (2017), it was reported that leadership styles had a strong association with the quality of care and measures and considered as a key determinant of a well-coordinated and integrated organization. Yan-Li & Hassan (2018) emphasizes the importance of leaders' behavior in achieving satisfaction among their subordinates by providing adequate support. Additionally, it is important to wholly apprehend the varied forms and methods of leadership to provide quality service. It requires essential qualities such as personal human values, knowledge of the workplace, harmonious relationship with stakeholders, and active planning to innovate practices (Bhattacharyya, 2019).

Leadership plays an important role in achieving success especially in today's flexible, evolving and dynamic environment. Understanding the various leadership styles will greatly improve people's performance and mitigate any challenges (Syahlan, 2024).

Impacts of Leadership

Enhancing the work performance requires effectual leadership because of their motivation and satisfaction. Positive and significant leadership influence the work efficiency (Saharuddin et. al., 2023). Leaders' positive vision and motivation can inspire organizational triumph and success (Freitas, 2022). Understanding the impacts of the leadership could promote innovations and deliver benefits to the community and society (Li et. al., 2018).

Effective leadership determines the failure and success of the whole organization. Leaders must master how to direct and motivate their members to achieve the desired goals. Based on the study of Alonderiene & Majauskaitė (2016),

it was reported that there is a significant positive relationship between job satisfaction and knowing and applying properly the leadership styles. In addition, aside from the academic intelligence that the leaders should have, it is important as well to develop emotional intelligence and its components namely self-awareness, self-regulation, empathy, motivation, and social skills (Goleman, 2017). These components and their combinations will make the leaders easily integrate and apply the different leadership styles. On the other hand, Mustoip et. al. (2023) cites that educational institutions were able to achieve equity and excellence whenever school leaders were applying innovative strategies in the benefits for all students, teachers, and stakeholders. The study also suggested for the leaders to attend and be exposed to numerous trainings, seminars, and workshops to capacitate and help them to become effective and efficient leaders.

Types of Leadership

Leadership has variety of styles based on their unique characteristics and approaches in terms of decision-making, management, supervision, and engagement. Knowing these types is important for effective organizations and achievement of the desired outcomes. There is a need to have a high degree of precision, self-esteem, care, and technical know-how in the application and integration of the chosen leadership (Nawaz, 2016). Certainty of the application of the leadership styles should be properly understood and fully applied to refine the supervision and managerial prowess (Amanchukwu et. al., 2015). Understanding the different leadership styles will give the leaders the leverage to maintain their strengths and to improve their weaknesses (Keleş, 2022).

Autocratic Leadership

Autocratic leadership is usually seen as bringing negative effects on the morale and performance; however, it also positively affects both the morale and performance by providing orderly, predictable, and secured environment (De Hoogh et. al., 2015). In addition, autocratic leadership displays the following characteristics namely low agreeableness, high neuroticism, high narcissism, high psychopathy, need

of power, and task-oriented (Harms et. al., 2018). Another description of Kincaid (2024) highlights that this leadership is characterized by the strong and directive control as needed especially during uncertainties and doubts. As found in the study of Warsono & Riduwan (2019), in the Indonesian Navy Personnel, autocratic leadership which is known as dictatorial and directive leadership has a strong influence on the motivation and work results of the employees. There is really a need to better understand autocratic leadership to extricate the benefits and values it may potentially bring to the people despite the negative notion it is known for. Meantime, organizations with vague and unambiguous identities need for a leader who are populist and autocratic to achieve unclouded vision and direction. It also results in rapid decision-making, stability, and mobilized support. Autocratic leaders prioritize quick and efficient decision-making especially during uncertain circumstances and during crisis (Modise, 2024).

Autocratic leadership revolves around the leaders who strictly control the planning and implementation of a program. It is also the leader who has a control on organizing and decision-making, with minimal to no input coming from the subordinates (Yea et al., 2024). Major concerns about this leadership are reducing the self-esteem and morale of the members, giving a not conducive environment, and sometimes a hindrance to innovation. Therefore, a balanced between collaboration and authority is significant to address the concerns. As stated by Haruna (2024), autocratic leaders displayed a significant control over their subordinates due to centralized decision-making processes. However, in the study of Shrestha et al. (2024) stating that AL positively influenced the performance of the employees across age demographics. Regardless of the age groups, it was concreted the argument that AL poses positive impacts on organizational transactions and processes.

Democratic Leadership

Democratic leadership centers on active participation, collaboration, and open communication. It is being characterized by the ability of the leaders to engage the community, assist

in realizing outcomes, and to improve the performance through empowerment. Based on the study of Setiawan & Janah (2025), the above-mentioned leadership encourages participation and shared inputs coming from the community members especially during the decision-making processes. The study also reported a 79.7% overall influence in the development and enhancement of the community - promoting enthusiasm in resolving any issues that may arise because of the vigorous contribution within the members.

Democratic Leadership aims to build a conducive environment and to promote harmonious relationships within the organization improving the quality of the outcomes (Endaryono et. al., 2021). Collective mindsets and competencies provide better understanding and embodiment of democratic leadership (Yada & Jäppinen, 2022). It can foster sharing and supportive workplace by promoting commitment and creativity (Wu & Chen, 2018).

It is vital for democratic leaders to serve as mediator to present positive impacts on the overall performance of the organizations (Maruf et. al., 2024). In a study conducted by Uwamahoro et. al. (2024), a Rwandan school with democratic leadership showed a 94.7% enhanced instructional planning, increased student assessment, and active teacher-parent collaboration. Meantime, research findings from Syahrul & Sakti (2021) showed strong positive connection between democratic leadership and increased motivation with a correlation value of $r = 0.587$. Another study by Pratiwi et al. (2023) revealed that employees' performance was significantly influenced by the democratic leadership as presented by t-count value of 12.292 exceeding the t-table value of 1.6. This signifies that the mentioned leadership style can improve the overall engagement and productivity resulting to collaboration, shared decision making, and active involvement among various stakeholders (Mäller, 2002). As democratic leadership promotes dignity, open dialogue, and rights of individuals.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is admired and respected by the followers because of the

unobstructed vision and sense of purpose it displays (Cetin & Kinik, 2015). People stay motivated to perform their tasks and responsibilities and committed to the shared goals and vision. With this leadership, creativity is encouraged to address individual differences and to revolve all issues within the organizations. Supported by the study of Anderson (2017), transformational leadership style is already proven to enhance the performance and morale of the organizations. In the same study, it was found out that for the past twenty years, there is a wide support and use of the leadership style in the school settings. It considered as great contributor in the enhancement of the school performance. It was recommended as well among the teachers to integrate the approach to their teaching practice fostering well-behaved classrooms.

Meantime, transformational leaders promote and encourage their employees to be risk-takers, creative, radical, and innovators (Zhang, 2025). With this type of leadership, members become inspired and motivated to achieve the collective goals over their self-interests. In the study of Asrar-ul-Haq & Kuchinke (2016), out of 224 full-time employees in the banking sector in Pakistan, it was revealed that employees were able to perform better when they are under a transformational leadership. Another study of Saleem (2015) also pointed out that transformational leadership has positive impacts on the job satisfaction. It also ensures a supportive and encouraging environment where everyone can share their thoughts, insights, and opinions. Transformational leadership focuses in improving the workplace because motivation and personal development are highly expected (Molina-Vicuña et al., 2025). In results, it optimizes the climate of the organization to stimulate productivity. It also integrates important values namely justice, trust, and responsibility enhancing the performance (Kotimah & Rindaningsih, 2025). Transformational leaders challenge the status quo promoting creativity, agility, innovative thinking, and strategic management (Gupta & Verma, 2024).

Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership emphasizes the importance of structured performance by having clear expectations, using of rewards, and injecting penalties for a more successful organization. In the context of educational settings, transactional school leaders ensure teachers' job satisfaction, professional achievement, and students' academic attainment (Hieng et al., 2024). It also encourages active participation through incentives achieving measurable learning outcomes (Sulistiani et al., 2024).

Although others argue that transactional leadership is only for short-term goals and ineffective, however, it fosters long-term innovation and development which are necessary for the sustained success of the organizations. As cited by Song (2024), this leadership limits innovation and adaptability because of its complexity. Furthermore, transactional leadership focuses on leader-follower relationships and disregards focusing on external and situational issues (Khan, 2017). In connection with this, commitment, and relatedness are necessary to successfully embody transactional leadership (Afshari & Gibson, 2016). It also uses ethical conformism such as fairness, utilitarianism, and community in giving their moral judgments (Berkovich & Eyal, 2021). It focuses on rule-based morality and predictability to guide the decision-making process of the transactional leaders resulting in group harmonious relationships and desired community standards.

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership highlights serving others and focusing on the well-being of individuals as the core of the leadership. It is described as a moral-based approach wherein there is a given priority on the followers' development, emphasis on emotional and ethical engagement, and attainment of organizational success (Canavesi & Minelli, 2021). As mentioned by Schmidt & Dailey (2024), servant leadership prioritizes the needs of others above any individualistic tendencies. It also aims for community restoration by promoting love, forgiveness, and healing - as this is the highest main concern of the servant leaders. In the same study, Schmidt and Dailey cited that

servant leadership serves as a source of inspiration in resolving any complexities in the modern world due to the division among people and due to the entrenchment of ideas.

Employing servant leadership needs to zoom in into the learnings that can be found in the immense ideals and reasonings among the group of individuals - this will be a guiding path to become a good leader. According to Tanugraha et al. (2024), this leadership philosophy is rooted in the principles of humility, empowerment, and growth of others leading to a high member engagement, better service quality, and harmonious collaboration. Servant leadership greatly influences the performance of the employees fostering organizational commitment and effective work ethics (Permatasari et al., 2024). Moreover, the leadership also centered on forgiveness-based approach in managing complications, injustice, and suffering so all parties involved will benefit by enjoying societal welfare (Johnson, 2024). Meantime, in the study of Zamira & Umida (2023), servant leadership was described as a mindset wherein leaders prioritize serving their followers meaningfully. It was supported by Simon et al. (2022) where servant leadership emphasized the importance of listening, collaboration, openness, transparency, and empowerment. In results, prioritizing the needs of others and showing respect and care to them will surely result to optimal performance of the organization (Peyton & Ross, 2022).

Charismatic Leadership

Charismatic Leadership is based on the personal charm and ability of the leader to inspire and motivate others creating a deep loyalty and enthusiasm. It drives change and high-level engagement among the members. This leadership builds supportive and encouraging environment because of the personal charm and persuasive communication by the charismatic leaders (Hariadi & Sumardjoko, 2024). In results, it increases positive performance among the members and enhances the level of satisfaction and happiness.

It also essential for the charismatic leaders to engage the followers through intellectual and emotional engagement by sharing their knowledge and beliefs (Lehman, 2024). The

leaders need to master the ability to inspire, motivate, and build strong relationships with their members by means of experimentation, collaboration, and risk-taking leading to desired innovation (Simarmata et al., 2024). This leadership is also known for cultivating deep emotional bonds between the leaders and the followers fostering strong loyalty and dedication (Abbasiannejad et al., 2015). Conversely, there are challenges faced by charismatic leaders namely proper management of expectations - affirming their leadership capacity and integrating suitable reward systems to maximize the impact of the mentioned leadership. Another study by Conger (2020) stated that charismatic leadership is a process wherein the leaders can determine and resolve immediately any problems and shortcomings that may arise to the organization by setting transformational goals and providing concrete examples of solutions to achieve the goals. Charismatic leaders also highlight the importance of risk-taking, effective communication, and constant guidance as key to desired outcomes. In the study of Banks et al., (2017), it was concluded in their meta-analytic findings that charismatic leadership also revolves around influencing and inspiring motivation among the followers leading to positive outcomes within the organization due to the high-level performance and behaviors of the followers. This was supported by Teng & Tsaur (2022) emphasizing that the ability of the leaders to inspire and motivate ensures strong connection leading to improved organizational performance.

Laissez-Faire Leadership (Delegative Leadership)

This leadership provides minimal direction and giving full autonomy among the team members. This kind of leadership only works with highly skilled and experienced individuals. The Laissez-Faire leadership is associated with hands-off approach wherein employees are left alone to complete their work and address problems relating to their assigned tasks (Kostiainen, 2023). Meanwhile, the results of the study by Kholis et al. (2023), showed that there is a significant relationship between improved teacher performance and delegative

leadership as agreed by 48 teacher-respondents.

Laissez-faire leadership is characterized by autonomy and minimal guidance permitting the employees to make decisions on their own (Salamon et al., 2024). Because of this, it will positively influence the engagement among the employees which in turn improves overall performance within organizations (Herru & Hartono, 2024). On the other hand, it may also lead to the feelings of undervaluation and disengagement among employees thus affecting the accomplishment and success of the organizations. Laissez-faire leadership can foster both disengagement and constructive challenging behavior, depending on the work environment and support from coworkers (Zheng & Li, 2024). Although others argue that this style can foster innovation and autonomy by valuing creativity and independence. Allowing members the freedom to explore and innovate is still the key to achieve effectiveness and productivity (Mukin & Haris, 2024). Delegating the tasks among the members will make the tasks easy and smooth to complete. In the study of Robert & Vandenberghe (2022), it was revealed that Laissez-faire leadership has a big impact on the performance of the employees and on the achievement of the goals.

On the other hand, other studies displayed that there are still challenges in implementing and embodying the mentioned leadership. In the study of Norris et al. (2021), it was found out that Laissez-faire leadership is misdescribed as having poor management because of the minimal supervision exhibited by the leaders, however, the study suggested that properly delegating the tasks with constant leaders' engagement is the key to successfully embody the leadership. The study findings of Maral & Hamedoðlu (2021) were associated with ineffective management resulting to poor performance of the individuals and the organization. Laissez-faire leadership was termed as "absence of the leadership" because of the minimal intervention and responsibility exhibited by the leaders resulting to poor management, and erosion of trust between the leaders and followers. This also resulted in the neglect of addressing the needs and objectives of the organization (Tosunoglu & Ekmekci, 2016)

Bureaucratic Leadership

Bureaucratic leadership is characterized by a structured, rule-based approach to management and supervision which marks a reformational change among the organizations. This leadership establishes the procedures and hierarchies affecting the employee performance. Bureaucratic leadership exhibits a positive relationship with competence among the employees (Ngabito & Pakaya, 2024). It is termed as the crucial factor in a reform highlighting that all leaders should possess effective digital skills to ensure progress and quality service (Rahman et al., 2024).

It involves sharing responsibility, delegating tasks, and encouraging the subordinate in the process of decision-making which directs increased commitment and improved performance (Sadaqat et al., 2024). Meantime, the study of Ahmad et al. (2023) cited the importance of healthy relationships between leaders and members leading to effective public service. There is a need for authenticity, growth, and connection to embody bureaucratic leadership. In the context of governance, the mentioned leadership ensures that structured processes and adherence to the rules will lead to effective government ascendency. In the context of nation-building, bureaucratic leadership faces challenges, particularly in heterogeneous societies like Nigeria, where it is essential for leaders to build administrative capacities to address complex governance issues (Igbokwe-Ibeto, 2024). In terms of governance, bureaucratic leadership focuses on the adherence to rules, procedures, and hierarchy. This style aims to implement reforms and ensures good governance to address any societal demands and globalization challenges (Permana et al., 2023). As cited by Sjamsoeddin et. al. (2023), the competency development, and motivation of the national defense policy in Indonesia was because of the transformational bureaucratic leadership model.

Situational Leadership

Situational Leadership refers to the dynamic approach wherein leaders are adapting their styles based on the readiness of the members. This leadership approach revolves around flexibility and responsiveness for

achieving organizational success. In the study of Bantuas & Conales (2024), it was proven the positive relationship between situational leadership and job satisfaction among health employees. The study also found out that adaptive leadership positively improves job satisfaction because of supportive workplace. It emphasizes the promotion of optimal results, organizational achievement, and task satisfaction due to its adaptive leadership style (Wang et al., 2024).

The flexibility and adaptability of the situational leadership enhance the decision-making of the members resulting to the improved productivity, motivation, and collaboration within the organization (Desintawati, 2024). Situational leaders possess four major characteristics namely being directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented (Al-Sayyad, 2024). The same study also found that situational leadership brings positive impacts on the management especially during crisis and problems. Situational leadership fosters flexibility in way that leaders serve as facilitator in developing followers' capabilities and it also helps the members to deepen their understanding and self-awareness (Lynch, 2015). In the study of Ghazzawi et. al. (2017), majority of 150 participants employed in the North Lebanon hospitals agreed that situational leadership helped them to be productive because they felt that they were understood and motivated. This only shows that productivity will only arise when the members, followers, or subordinates will be given a sense of belongingness and making them involved and engaged in any organizational processes and decisions.

Combination of the Leadership Styles

All the abovementioned leadership styles have their own strengths and weaknesses. It is important to recognize as well that no single style is universally effective, and leaders should have a vast knowledge and know-how on the integration of two or more leadership styles to ensure organizational success. Anderson & Sun (2017) stated that there should be revisiting and reorientation of the different leadership styles and determine how they overlapped and how they are interconnected to each other.

Integrating two or more styles will lead to a full-range leadership style.

Full-range model leadership is a newly developed style wherein numerous leadership styles encompass and distill the distinct characteristics and qualities resulting to a progressive and productive organization. Naidoo & Mafora (2023) cited that integrated approach is necessary to improve the service delivery especially during healthcare settings. In result, these styles improved the management and supervision of the healthcare environment. Another example stated by Goti (2024), the combination of transformational style which focuses on inspiration and innovation and traditional style which centers on hierarchical structures foster inclusive and value-oriented of the organizations. Successful leaders know how to combine set of practices and different ways to ensure progress and making difference to the members' outcomes (Day, 2016).

The use of numerous leadership styles can improve the performance and climate of the organization (Knights, 2024). Understanding the approach and methods of each leadership style will allow the leaders to cater the needs and solve the problems. On the other hand, in the study of Rosing et. al. (2022), it was found that during emergencies, leaders who demonstrate autocratic and democratic leaderships can uplift the performance of the team. For the meanwhile, leaders should be careful of combining and blending of different styles because it may bring negative impacts on peoples' performance. For an instance, in the study of Mendez (2022), majority of the 232 elementary and secondary teachers in Sta. Cruz District in Zambales experienced authoritative leaders giving them higher level of work stress, unlike laissez-faire (delegative) leaders, which only contributes a slightly work stress among the teachers. The study proves that any leadership styles can cause significant stress among members if not properly integrated and implemented. Therefore, leaders need to evaluate themselves as well as their approaches and methods in managing their subordinates to ensure that all possible problems and challenges will be immediately resolved.

Conclusion

Leadership should not be viewed as one-size fits all endeavor, rather, it is a dynamic and multifaceted process that must continuously adapt to the ever-changing demands of organizations and society. This study emphasizes that while each different leadership style - autocratic, democratic, transformational, transactional, servant, charismatic, laissez-faire, bureaucratic, and situational - displays their own unique strengths and weaknesses, no single approach can guarantee a universal success. Leaders must be flexible and adaptable in aligning the leadership style to different contexts.

The integration of two or more leadership styles termed as hybrid or full-range leadership fosters a more effective and sustainable direction. With multiple styles, leaders can develop a workplace culture that are both structured and innovative, authoritative yet participatory, emotionally intelligent yet strategically driven. In results, it will foster greater satisfaction and motivation among members.

As challenges of the future become more complex, there is an urgent demand for all leaders to combine, adapt, and innovate within and across leadership styles. Hybrid leadership is not merely an option; however, it is an imperative for achieving inclusive progress, resilience, and long-term success in education, governance, and beyond.

Acknowledgement

The author extends deep gratitude to the family and colleagues whose encouragement and support made the completion of this work possible. Special appreciation as well to Prof. Rodolfo B. Burac Jr. for the support and providing valuable insights about leadership as possible focus of the study.

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