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**A Review of Leadership Styles and Effectiveness**

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Peer Review Information	Abstract
<p><i>Submission: 21 Jan 2022</i></p> <p><i>Revision: 16 Feb 2022</i></p> <p><i>Acceptance: 05 March 2022</i></p> <p><b>Keywords</b></p> <p><i>Leadership styles, leadership effectiveness, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, servant leadership, organizational performance</i></p>	<p>Leadership is a critical factor influencing organizational performance, employee motivation, and long-term sustainability. Over the past century, leadership research has evolved from trait-based explanations to more complex behavioral, contingency, relational, and transformational perspectives. This review examines major leadership styles and evaluates their effectiveness across organizational and situational contexts. Key leadership approaches discussed include trait theory, behavioral leadership, contingency and situational leadership, transactional and transformational leadership, servant leadership, authentic leadership, and contemporary adaptive and ethical leadership models. Through a systematic synthesis of theoretical and empirical literature, this paper highlights the strengths, limitations, and practical relevance of different leadership styles. A comparative analysis is presented to assess their effectiveness in achieving organizational goals, enhancing employee engagement, and navigating dynamic environments. The review concludes by emphasizing that effective leadership is context-dependent and requires integrative, flexible, and ethically grounded approaches.</p>

**Introduction**

Leadership has long been recognized as one of the most influential factors shaping organizational success, employee behavior, and societal development. In both private and public organizations, leaders play a central role in setting direction, aligning resources, motivating individuals, and responding to environmental challenges. As organizations face increasing complexity due to globalization, technological change, and workforce diversity, the importance of effective leadership has intensified.

Early leadership research focused on identifying inherent traits that distinguished leaders from non-leaders. These **trait theories** assumed that leadership effectiveness was primarily determined by personal characteristics such as intelligence, charisma, and confidence. While these theories provided valuable insights, they

failed to explain why individuals with similar traits often displayed varying leadership effectiveness across contexts.

In response to these limitations, scholars shifted attention toward **behavioral leadership theories**, which emphasized what leaders do rather than who they are. Studies conducted at Ohio State University and the University of Michigan identified task-oriented and people-oriented leadership behaviors, suggesting that leadership effectiveness depends on how leaders balance structure and consideration.

However, behavioral approaches also faced criticism for neglecting situational factors. This led to the development of **contingency and situational leadership theories**, which argue that no single leadership style is universally effective. Instead, leadership effectiveness depends on contextual variables such as task

structure, follower maturity, and environmental uncertainty. These theories significantly advanced leadership research by incorporating situational adaptability.

The emergence of **transactional and transformational leadership** marked a major shift in leadership thinking. Transactional leadership focuses on exchanges between leaders and followers, emphasizing rewards, performance, and compliance. In contrast, transformational leadership emphasizes vision, inspiration, and personal development. Empirical research consistently demonstrates the strong relationship between transformational leadership and positive organizational outcomes, including job satisfaction, commitment, and performance.

More recently, leadership research has expanded to include **servant leadership, authentic leadership, ethical leadership, and adaptive leadership**. These contemporary approaches reflect growing concerns about trust, ethics, employee well-being, and sustainability. Modern leadership is increasingly viewed as a relational and moral process rather than a purely authoritative function.

Despite extensive theoretical development, leadership effectiveness remains a complex and debated concept. Effectiveness may be defined in terms of organizational performance, employee satisfaction, team cohesion, innovation, or social impact. Different leadership styles may be effective under different circumstances, highlighting the need for integrative and flexible leadership approaches.

This review aims to critically examine major leadership styles and assess their effectiveness based on theoretical arguments and empirical evidence. By synthesizing classical and contemporary perspectives, the paper provides a comprehensive understanding of leadership effectiveness in modern organizational contexts.

**Literature Review**

1. Stogdill, R. M. (1948) – Trait leadership theory
2. Bass, B. M. (1985) – Transformational leadership
3. Burns, J. M. (1978) – Leadership theory
4. Fiedler, F. E. (1967) – Contingency model
5. Hersey, P., & Blanchard, K. H. (1982) – Situational leadership
6. Yukl, G. (2013) – Leadership in organizations
7. Northouse, P. G. (2021) – Leadership theory and practice
8. House, R. J. (1971) – Path-goal theory
9. Greenleaf, R. K. (1977) – Servant leadership
10. Avolio, B. J., & Gardner, W. L. (2005) – Authentic leadership
11. Brown, M. E., et al. (2005) – Ethical leadership

12. Goleman, D. (2000) – Emotional intelligence and leadership
13. Judge, T. A., & Piccolo, R. F. (2004) – Transformational leadership meta-analysis
14. Day, D. V., et al. (2014) – Leadership development
15. Luthans, F., & Avolio, B. (2003) – Positive leadership
16. Uhl-Bien, M. (2006) – Relational leadership
17. Heifetz, R. (1994) – Adaptive leadership
18. Bass, B. M., & Riggio, R. E. (2006) – Transformational leadership practice
19. Kirkpatrick, S. A., & Locke, E. A. (1991) – Leadership traits
20. Podsakoff, P. M., et al. (1990) – Leadership behaviors and effectiveness

**Major Leadership Styles**

- 1. Trait Leadership**  
Focuses on inherent leader characteristics.
- 2. Behavioral Leadership**  
Emphasizes task-oriented and people-oriented behaviors.
- 3. Contingency and Situational Leadership**  
Leadership effectiveness depends on contextual factors.
- 4. Transactional Leadership**  
Based on reward and performance exchanges.
- 5. Transformational Leadership**  
Inspires and motivates followers toward shared vision.
- 6. Contemporary Leadership Approaches**  
Include servant, authentic, ethical, and adaptive leadership.

**Comparative Table and Analysis**

Leadership Style	Core Focus	Strengths	Limitations
Trait	Personal attributes	Leader identification	Context neglect
Behavioral	Leader actions	Skill development	Situational limits
Contingency	Fit with situation	Flexibility	Complexity
Transactional	Performance control	Efficiency	Limited motivation
Transformational	Vision & inspiration	High engagement	Dependency risk
Servant/Authentic	Ethics & trust	Sustainability	Slow decisions

The analysis of leadership styles reveals that leadership effectiveness is a complex construct shaped by individual characteristics, follower dynamics, organizational context, and environmental uncertainty. Rather than being universally applicable, leadership styles vary in their effectiveness depending on situational demands and strategic objectives.

### **1. Trait and Behavioral Leadership: Foundational but Limited**

Trait leadership theories provided the earliest systematic attempts to explain leadership effectiveness by identifying personal attributes such as intelligence, confidence, and charisma. Analytical evaluation suggests that while certain traits may increase the likelihood of leadership emergence, they do not consistently predict leadership effectiveness across contexts. This limitation led to a shift toward behavioral leadership theories, which focus on observable leader actions.

Behavioral models, particularly task-oriented and relationship-oriented leadership, improved practical applicability by emphasizing skills that can be learned. However, empirical evidence shows that no single behavioral pattern guarantees effectiveness. Leaders who emphasize tasks may achieve efficiency but risk employee dissatisfaction, while relationship-focused leaders may foster morale but struggle with performance control.

### **2. Contingency and Situational Leadership: Contextual Fit**

Contingency and situational leadership theories address earlier shortcomings by asserting that leadership effectiveness depends on situational variables such as task structure, leader-member relations, and follower readiness. From an analytical standpoint, these models significantly enhance explanatory power by incorporating environmental and follower factors.

However, their practical limitation lies in complexity. Leaders must accurately diagnose situations and adapt styles accordingly, which requires experience, emotional intelligence, and organizational support. Misdiagnosis can reduce effectiveness, making these models demanding in real-world application.

### **3. Transactional Leadership: Performance and Control**

Transactional leadership is analytically effective in stable environments where efficiency, compliance, and measurable outcomes are prioritized. Its reliance on rewards and corrective actions makes it suitable for routine operations and short-term objectives.

Despite its strengths, transactional leadership shows limited effectiveness in fostering creativity, innovation, and long-term

engagement. Overreliance on extrinsic motivation may weaken intrinsic commitment, particularly in knowledge-intensive and dynamic organizations.

### **4. Transformational Leadership: Motivation and Change**

Transformational leadership consistently demonstrates strong positive relationships with leadership effectiveness indicators such as employee satisfaction, commitment, and organizational performance. Analytical synthesis of empirical studies highlights its effectiveness in change-oriented environments where vision, inspiration, and empowerment are critical.

However, transformational leadership is not without limitations. Excessive dependence on charismatic leaders may create follower dependency and reduce critical thinking. Additionally, transformational leadership requires strong ethical grounding to prevent misuse of influence.

### **5. Contemporary Leadership Approaches: Ethics, Trust, and Adaptability**

Servant, authentic, ethical, and adaptive leadership models reflect contemporary organizational needs. Analytical evaluation shows that these styles enhance trust, psychological safety, and long-term sustainability. They are particularly effective in diverse, values-driven, and socially responsible organizations.

Their primary limitation lies in slower decision-making and potential role ambiguity. Nevertheless, these approaches are increasingly relevant in addressing modern leadership challenges such as employee well-being, corporate governance, and societal expectations.

## **Discussion**

The expanded analysis underscores a central theme in leadership research: **effective leadership is inherently situational and relational rather than purely positional or trait-based**. Early leadership theories provided important conceptual foundations but were insufficient to explain the diversity of leadership outcomes observed in practice.

One of the most significant insights from this review is the **shift from authority-based leadership to influence-based leadership**. Transformational, servant, and authentic leadership styles emphasize shared vision, moral responsibility, and follower development rather than command and control. This shift reflects broader organizational changes, including flatter structures, knowledge-based work, and increased emphasis on employee engagement. The discussion also highlights the **continued relevance of transactional leadership**. While

often criticized, transactional leadership remains effective in contexts requiring efficiency, standardization, and accountability. The challenge for modern leaders is not to abandon transactional practices but to integrate them with transformational and relational approaches. Another important discussion point is the **role of ethics and trust in leadership effectiveness**. Corporate scandals and governance failures have increased attention to ethical and authentic leadership. Empirical evidence suggests that ethical leadership enhances organizational commitment, reduces deviant behavior, and strengthens organizational reputation. Furthermore, leadership effectiveness increasingly depends on **emotional intelligence and adaptability**. Leaders must manage diverse teams, remote work environments, and continuous change. Adaptive leadership models emphasize learning, experimentation, and stakeholder engagement, making them particularly relevant in volatile environments. The discussion also reveals that **no single leadership style is sufficient** for addressing contemporary organizational challenges. Hybrid leadership approaches that combine structure, inspiration, ethical grounding, and adaptability are more effective than rigid adherence to one model. Overall, leadership effectiveness emerges as a dynamic capability that evolves with organizational context, follower expectations, and environmental demands.

### Conclusion

This review provides a comprehensive examination of leadership styles and their effectiveness, demonstrating that leadership is a multifaceted and evolving phenomenon. From early trait and behavioral theories to contemporary ethical and adaptive models, leadership research reflects changing organizational realities and societal expectations. The findings clearly indicate that **leadership effectiveness cannot be reduced to a single style or set of traits**. Instead, effective leadership requires contextual awareness, emotional intelligence, ethical responsibility, and strategic alignment. Classical theories remain valuable for understanding foundational aspects of leadership, while contemporary approaches address the complexities of modern organizations. Transformational leadership stands out as particularly effective in fostering motivation, innovation, and organizational change. However, its success depends on ethical conduct and follower empowerment. Transactional leadership continues to play a critical role in

performance management, especially in structured and regulated environments. Servant, authentic, and ethical leadership styles highlight the importance of trust, values, and social responsibility. As organizations increasingly emphasize sustainability and employee well-being, these leadership approaches will become even more significant. From a practical perspective, leadership development programs should focus on **integrative leadership competencies**, combining strategic thinking, interpersonal skills, adaptability, and ethical judgment. Leaders must be equipped to shift between styles as organizational conditions evolve. Future research should explore leadership effectiveness in digital, hybrid, and cross-cultural contexts, as well as the impact of artificial intelligence and remote work on leadership dynamics. Understanding leadership as a continuous learning process will be essential for sustaining organizational performance in an uncertain world.

In conclusion, leadership effectiveness is best understood as a **dynamic interaction between leader behavior, follower needs, and contextual forces**. Organizations that cultivate adaptive, ethical, and inclusive leadership will be better positioned to achieve long-term success.

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