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Evolution of Leadership Theories in Organizational Management

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Abstract

The evolution of leadership theories reflects a progressive journey from traditional, trait-based models to dynamic, inclusive, and transformative paradigms that address the complexities of modern organizations. This literature-based review examines key leadership theories, including the Great Man theory, trait theory, behavioral theories, contingency models, and modern approaches such as transformational, transactional, and servant leadership. It critically analyzes the strengths and limitations of each theory within organizational management contexts. The study underscores the importance of adaptive, ethical, and culturally sensitive leadership to meet the challenges of globalization, technological advancement, and evolving workforce expectations. Additionally, it highlights the growing relevance of digital, authentic, and inclusive leadership as organizations transition to more flexible and human-centered management models. By synthesizing past and current leadership frameworks, this review provides valuable insights for scholars and practitioners to enhance leadership effectiveness and strategic alignment in today's complex organizational landscape.

Keywords: *Leadership evolution; organizational management; transformational leadership; contingency theory; servant leadership; leadership behavior; situational leadership; digital leadership; leadership theories; adaptive leadership.*

INTRODUCTION

The study of leadership has garnered considerable attention, emerging as a multifaceted domain within organizational and psychological research (Stogdill, 1975). Contemporary literature presents numerous explanations, classifications, theories, and definitions of leadership (Khan, 2016). Despite the extensive exploration, leadership remains a complex and not fully understood concept in the social sciences, which underscores the necessity for continuous investigation into evolving human behaviors and adaptation to environmental changes (Sumanasiri, 2020). Over the last decade, research on leadership has dramatically increased, leading to the development of diverse leadership theories (Dinh et al., 2013). Modern organizations are transitioning from traditional hierarchical structures to more adaptable, team-based models that empower employees, subsequently reshaping the essence of leadership (Horner, 1997). This shift necessitates a deeper understanding of how leadership theories have evolved to meet the demands of contemporary organizational management (Dinibutun, 2020). The trajectory of leadership theory evolution reveals a convergence of ideas, consolidating over two centuries into the prevailing theories utilized today (Low, 2012).

Early leadership studies sought to identify the distinct qualities inherent in leaders, marking the genesis of trait-based theories. These theories proposed that effective leaders possess specific innate traits and skills (Patrulescu, 2009). The "Great Man" theory, a precursor to trait theories, posited that leadership is an inherent quality, suggesting leaders are born, not made (Dinibutun, 2020). Later, researchers shifted their focus towards leadership behaviors and styles, exploring how leaders act and make decisions. Behavioral theories emphasize that leadership capabilities can be learned and developed through appropriate training and

experience. The focus then shifted to situational and contingency theories, which posited that effective leadership is contingent upon the situation and that no single leadership style is universally applicable ([Dinibutun, 2020](#)). As the limitations of universal leadership styles became apparent, contingency theories suggested that leadership effectiveness depends on matching leadership styles to specific situations. Contingency theories take into account various situational factors such as follower characteristics, task complexity, and organizational culture. The evolution of leadership theories also reflects a move from top-down control to more collaborative and empowering approaches. Recent theories emphasize adaptive and distributed leadership. Organizations now require leaders who can foster innovation and manage change effectively ([Rastogi et al., 2019](#)). The study of leadership has advanced to encompass the effects of cultural diversity and the necessity for inclusive leadership.

The study of leadership has grown, and the search for the factors behind effective leadership has grown with it ([Samul, 2019](#)). The evolution of leadership theories represents a shift towards more integrative models that consider the interplay between leaders, followers, and the environment ([Gigliotti & Spear, 2022](#)). Leadership theories provide a framework for understanding and improving leadership effectiveness within organizations, offering valuable insights into the qualities, behaviors, and situations that contribute to successful leadership. Understanding the historical progression of leadership theories provides a foundation for comprehending current leadership models and their relevance in addressing contemporary challenges. By studying the evolution of these theories, organizations can gain insights into how different leadership approaches have been applied in various contexts. Analyzing the evolution of leadership theories helps to identify the strengths and limitations of different approaches and provides a more nuanced understanding of what constitutes effective leadership in today's complex environment. The investigation of leadership theories provides practical tools and frameworks that organizations can use to develop leadership skills, improve team performance, and achieve strategic goals. Furthermore, it reduces confusion in leadership research that has existed for more than a century ([Dias et al., 2022](#)). Evolutionary leadership theory suggests that leadership and followership were crucial for the reproductive achievements of our ancestors ([Kenney, 2012](#)). Evolutionary anthropology suggests a deeper understanding of the development and cross-cultural patterns of leadership ([Garfield et al., 2018; Kenney, 2012](#)). Understanding this can help provide a more holistic understanding of leadership and its significance in organizational management.

The objectives of this review are to explore the transition of leadership theories, focusing on trait-based, behavioral, contingency, and contemporary approaches. Analyzing these paradigm shifts provides a more comprehensive view of the field. By critically evaluating the strengths and weaknesses of each theory, this review aims to offer a balanced perspective on their applicability in diverse organizational settings. This paper aims to offer insights into emerging trends and challenges in leadership research, exploring how these developments shape leadership practices. Moreover, this review identifies how these theories address the changing dynamics of the modern workplace ([Megheirkouni & Mejheirkouni, 2020](#)). Ultimately, this review seeks to provide a practical resource for scholars and practitioners seeking to enhance their understanding of leadership in organizational management.

Classical Leadership Theories

Classical leadership theories are early approaches in leadership studies that focus on the personal traits of leaders, their behaviors, and the situational conditions that influence leadership effectiveness. These theories emphasize the leader as a key figure who has a significant impact on the success of an organization.

1. Great Man Theory

The "Great Man" theory, an early approach to understanding leadership, posits that leaders are born with inherent qualities and traits that distinguish them from others ([Stanca, 2021](#)). The Great Man theory suggests that leadership is intrinsic ([Stanca, 2021](#)). This theory emphasizes that great leaders are destined for their roles due to their unique and exceptional qualities. The "Great Man" theory is one of the first written theories of leadership ([Sivaruban, 2021](#)). The theory is rooted in the belief that leadership is a natural attribute and cannot be developed or acquired through learning or experience ([Khan, 2016](#)). The theory suggests that effective leaders possess innate characteristics such as intelligence, charisma, and decisiveness, which enable them to rise to positions of power and influence. The theory suggests that great leaders are those individuals who, through their extraordinary capabilities, shape the course of history. The "Great Man" theory tends to focus on the biographies of influential figures, examining their lives and actions to identify common traits that contributed to their success ([Ladkin, 2010](#)). However, the "Great Man" theory has been criticized for its inherent biases. One of the major criticisms against this theory is that it disproportionately focuses on male leaders, thereby marginalizing the role of women in leadership positions ([Armugam et al., 2021](#)). It is also criticized for neglecting the impact of social, economic, and political contexts on leadership emergence and effectiveness ([Uslu, 2019](#)). The "Great Man" theory suggests that great leaders are born, not made, and that they possess innate qualities that make them uniquely suited for leadership (["Great Man Theory of Leadership," 2024; Ladkin, 2010](#)). The "Great Man" theory provided a basic framework upon which contemporary leadership theories have been based ([Thompson et al., 2020](#)).

2. Trait Theory

Trait theory arose from the limitations of the "Great Man" theory. Trait theory emerged as a more systematic approach to identifying the characteristics associated with effective leadership ([Hopkins & O'Neil, 2015](#)). Trait theory attempts to identify specific personality traits, physical characteristics, and abilities that differentiate leaders from non-leaders ([Guo & Yan, 2021](#)) ([Skrzypczyńska, 2020](#)). Rather than assuming that leadership is solely based on innate qualities, trait theory seeks to empirically determine which traits are consistently linked to successful leadership outcomes ([Shrivastava et al., 2020](#)). The theory focuses on identifying and measuring individual characteristics such as intelligence, self-confidence, integrity, and sociability, with the aim of predicting leadership emergence and effectiveness. Researchers began conducting empirical studies to determine which traits were most strongly associated with leadership. Trait theory research has evolved, attempting to identify a definitive set of traits that universally predict leadership success. In doing so, the theory sought to move beyond anecdotal evidence and provide a more scientific basis for understanding leadership. This approach provided a more objective way to assess leadership potential and identify individuals who were likely to succeed in leadership roles. The trait theory is intuitively appealing because it aligns with the common perception that certain people are naturally predisposed to lead. However, trait theory also faced criticism for its lack of consistency and predictive power.

3. Behavioral Theories

Behavioral theories of leadership emerged as a response to the limitations of trait-based approaches. Behavioral theories shift the focus from what leaders *are* to what leaders *do*, emphasizing the actions and behaviors that differentiate effective leaders from ineffective ones ([Jiang, 2020; Sarwar et al., 2022](#)). These theories propose that leadership is not solely determined by innate traits or characteristics but can be learned and developed through specific behaviors ([Barker, 1997](#)). Researchers began to study the behaviors of leaders in various contexts, with the aim of identifying patterns and styles that contributed to positive outcomes. This approach emphasizes the importance of observable

actions and behaviors rather than internal traits or qualities ([Wang et al., 2023](#)). The Ohio State University and the University of Michigan conducted pioneering studies to identify key dimensions of leadership behavior. They identified two central behavioral dimensions: initiating structure and consideration ([Liu, 2015](#)). Initiating structure refers to the extent to which a leader defines and organizes the roles of group members, sets goals, and establishes clear lines of communication ([Roberts & Jennifer, 2018](#)). Consideration, on the other hand, involves the extent to which a leader shows concern for the feelings and needs of followers, builds relationships, and fosters a climate of trust and mutual respect. These behavioral dimensions are not mutually exclusive, and leaders can exhibit varying degrees of both initiating structure and consideration depending on the situation.

By focusing on observable actions and behaviors, behavioral theories provided a more practical and actionable framework for leadership development. The identified behaviors could be taught and learned, making leadership accessible to a broader range of individuals.

Contingency Theories

Contingency theories propose that there is no single best style of leadership. Instead, the effectiveness of a leader is contingent upon how well their leadership style matches the situation or context they are in. These theories emphasize the interaction between a leader's traits or behaviors and various situational factors.

1. Fiedler's Contingency Model

Contingency theories of leadership mark a significant departure from earlier approaches by emphasizing the importance of situational factors in determining leadership effectiveness. Contingency theories recognize that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to leadership and that the most effective leadership style depends on the context in which it is applied ([Suharyanto & Lestari, 2020](#)). Contingency theories propose that leadership effectiveness is contingent upon the interaction between leader characteristics and situational variables ([Suharyanto & Lestari, 2020](#)). Fred Fiedler's contingency model, introduced in the 1960s, was one of the first contingency theories of leadership ([Fiedler, 1978](#)). Fiedler's model posits that leadership effectiveness is determined by the match between a leader's style and the favorableness of the situation ([Mendieta, 2016](#)). Fiedler developed the Least Preferred Co-worker scale to measure a leader's style. Leaders with high LPC scores are considered relationship-oriented, while those with low LPC scores are considered task-oriented. Situational favorableness is determined by three factors: leader-member relations, task structure, and position power. The model suggests that task-oriented leaders are most effective in highly favorable or highly unfavorable situations, while relationship-oriented leaders are most effective in moderately favorable situations ([Rashid, 2024](#)). The contingency theory suggests the most appropriate leadership approach is dependent on the situation ([Suharyanto & Lestari, 2020](#)). The contingency theory helps explain leadership decisions and actions dependent on any internal and external factors ([Childs et al., 2022](#)). The contingency theory offers a long tradition to leadership that has been tested ([Shala et al., 2021](#)). Situational factors are considered critical factors that can affect leadership styles ([Jerab, 2023](#); [Shala et al., 2021](#)). The contingency approach offers a framework for organizations when developing leadership profiles ([Shala et al., 2021](#)). It also helps when creating individual profiles to understand where they would serve the organization most effectively ([Shala et al., 2021](#)). Contingency leadership broadens the understanding of leadership and its impact on people within the business environment ([Han et al., 2021](#)). Despite its influence, Fiedler's contingency model has faced criticisms for its complexity and lack of flexibility ([Mendieta, 2016](#)).

2. Situational Leadership Theory

Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory emphasizes the importance of leaders adapting their style to the readiness and competence of their followers ([Boikanyo, 2025](#)). The theory proposes that leaders should adjust their behavior based on the followers' level of maturity, which is determined by their competence and commitment to the task at hand. Situational leadership theory identifies four leadership styles: telling, selling, participating, and delegating. The telling style is appropriate for followers who are low in both competence and commitment, while the selling style is suitable for followers who are low in competence but high in commitment. The participating style is most effective when followers are high in competence but low in commitment, and the delegating style is appropriate for followers who are high in both competence and commitment ([Fokina et al., 2023](#)). The situational leadership style enables managers to examine requirements proactively and implement the most suitable leadership style ([Brasher, 2008](#)). For maximum efficiency, a leader must be proficient in various leadership styles and adept at gauging the developmental stages of their subordinates ([Brasher, 2008](#)).

The situational leadership theory suggests that flexibility is important, adapting leadership styles based on contextual factors ([Olatoye et al., 2024](#)). The situational leadership theory provides a more flexible and adaptive approach to leadership than trait or behavioral theories. However, the theory has been criticized for its simplicity and lack of empirical support ([Waller et al., 1989](#)).

3. Path-Goal Theory

House's path-goal theory focuses on how leaders can influence followers' perceptions of their work goals and paths to achieve those goals. The essence of the theory is that business leaders help team members to easily find their way to success and assist team members by giving necessary instructions and support, so that their goals are compatible with the general objectives of the group, organization or team ([Black et al., 2019](#)). The theory suggests that leaders should clarify the path to goal attainment, remove obstacles, and provide support to followers. Path-goal theory identifies four leadership styles: directive, supportive, participative, and achievement-oriented. Directive leadership involves providing clear expectations and guidance, while supportive leadership focuses on creating a positive and supportive work environment. The directive leadership style is most favorable in a high-pressure work environment where followers need to achieve challenging targets and goals ([Saleem et al., 2020](#)). The participative leadership involves involving followers in decision-making, and achievement-oriented leadership involves setting challenging goals and encouraging high performance. The path-goal theory is effective in determining the style of leadership a manager can adopt based on the nature of the subordinates and the type of work environment prevailing in the organization.

The path-goal theory posits that the effectiveness of a particular leadership style depends on the characteristics of the followers and the nature of the task ([Stanca, 2021](#)). Path-goal theory is a good way to consider different leadership styles that motivate employees. The path-goal theory offers a framework for leaders to adapt their style to different situations and follower needs. Path-goal leadership can be very rewarding and can lead to success if a leader recognizes the characteristics of their employees and is willing to adapt their style to meet those needs ([Bezak & Nahod, 2011](#)). Contingency moderators specify the circumstances that can lead to behaviors becoming effective or ineffective ([House, 1996](#)). The theory, however, has been criticized for its complexity and difficulty in implementation.

Modern leadership theories have shifted away from the traditional focus on individual traits and behaviors toward more holistic and relational perspectives. These theories emphasize the importance of leaders building strong relationships with followers, fostering a shared sense of purpose, and creating a culture of trust and empowerment.

Modern Leadership Theories

Modern leadership theories represent a shift from the earlier focus on traits and rigid structures toward a more dynamic understanding of leadership. These theories emphasize transformational impact, emotional intelligence, collaboration, and the mutual relationship between leaders and followers in an increasingly complex and changing organizational environment.

1. Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is a style that inspires and motivates followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes. Transformational leaders inspire others with their vision and collaborate with their team to identify common values ([Xu, 2017](#)). Transformational leadership enhances motivation and empowerment among nurses and offers ways to maintain a motivated work environment ([Simbolon et al., 2020](#)). Transformational leaders are able to motivate performance beyond expectations through their ability to influence attitudes ([Al-Sawai, 2013](#)). They are proactive in identifying the need for change, creating a vision, and mobilizing commitment ([Wang et al., 2022](#)). These leaders strengthen the bond between themselves and their followers to manage the organization better by enabling, inspiring, and encouraging their employees to achieve organizational success through their work ([Teoh et al., 2022](#)). Transformational leadership is believed to positively affect employee satisfaction, engagement, and performance ([Gebreheat et al., 2023](#)). Transformational leadership can significantly improve organizational culture by enhancing teamwork, cohesion, and conflict resolution ([Risqina et al., 2020](#)). At the core of the transformational process lies an emphasis on values, emotions, morality, and long-term goals, with particular attention to satisfying collaborators' needs and recognizing them as unique individuals ([Notarnicola et al., 2024](#)). Transformational leaders demonstrate concern for individuals' needs and aspirations, provide intellectual stimulation, and inspire followers to look beyond their self-interests for the good of the group ([Dragomir, 2020](#)) ([Zhang, 2018](#)). The application of transformational leadership principles extends to various organizational levels, influencing individuals from board members and directors to unit managers ([Page, 2004](#)).

The transformational approach is one of the most popular and well-researched leadership theories since the early 1980s ([Yusuf & Kurniady, 2020](#)). Transformational leadership involves inspiring changes in the attitudes and core values of followers to align with the organizational vision ([Alessa, 2021](#)). Transformational leaders display a positive and enthusiastic vision, inspire followers to make continuous efforts to achieve success, provide instructions to help them develop skills, and attend to the individual needs of each follower by supporting their interests and well-being ([Gomes & Morais, 2025](#)). Transformational leaders have been shown to influence positive work environments and support the retention of nursing staff ([Reinhardt et al., 2022](#)). They inspire individuals to perform at an unexpected level and produce exceptional outcomes ([Iqbal et al., 2019](#)). Transformational leadership involves motivating and empowering employees, fostering a sense of ownership, and encouraging innovation ([Alfalih & Ragmoun, 2025](#); [Rehmani et al., 2023](#)). Transformational leaders stimulate and inspire their followers to commit to shared vision and goals of an organization, to achieve extraordinary outcomes and to be innovative problem solvers ([SENOL, 2019](#)). Transformational leaders often display charisma, which inspires followers and fosters trust and emotional connections. The presence of transformational leaders can foster a healthier and more productive work environment for nurses, which may lead to improved patient care outcomes ([Ystaas et al., 2023](#)).

2. Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership, in contrast to transformational leadership, focuses on the exchange between leaders and followers, where followers are rewarded for meeting specific goals or performance criteria. Transactional leaders focus on supervision, organization, and performance ([Samosudova, 2017](#)). The transactional leader exchanges tangible rewards for the work and loyalty of followers ([Gebreheat et al., 2023](#)). Transactional leaders ensure that employees have the resources needed to get the job done ([Russell & Mizrahi, 1995](#)). Transactional leadership is based on the principles of reinforcement and punishment, where leaders set clear expectations, monitor performance, and provide feedback or rewards based on results ([Cope & Murray, 2017](#)). Transactional leadership involves the exchange of resources between the leader and the follower in return for services rendered ([Page, 2004](#)). Transactional leaders are more focused on day-to-day operations and achieving short-term goals. The style relies on the use of rewards and punishments to motivate followers ([Bass, 1999](#)). There are three aspects to transactional leadership which include: contingent reward, active management-by-exception, and passive management-by-exception ([Bass & Riggio, 2006](#)).

3. Servant Leadership

Servant leadership places the needs of followers ahead of the leader's own self-interest. Servant leaders prioritize the growth and well-being of their team members, empowering them to reach their full potential. Servant leaders lead with humility, empathy, and a genuine desire to serve others. This style focuses on the growth, development, and well-being of followers. The servant leader's focus is on the followers, and the achievement of organizational objectives is a subordinate outcome ([Stone et al., 2004](#)). They build trust, foster collaboration, and create a supportive work environment.

The servant-leader is someone who is a servant first, focusing on meeting the needs of others ([Tsapnidou et al., 2025](#)). By leading through serving, servant leaders can make a difference within their organizations. These practices are intended to enhance individual development, teamwork, and organizational performance. Servant leadership is marked by behaviors such as listening, empathy, healing, awareness, persuasion, conceptualization, foresight, stewardship, commitment to the growth of people, and building community.

Servant leadership is a paradox, as it combines both service and leadership. The concept of servant leadership emphasizes collaboration, trust, empathy, and the ethical use of power. They promote the development and application of transactional leadership research and improve our understanding of this vital leadership style ([Dong, 2023](#)). Transformational leaders also create collaborative environments ([Hasel, 2013](#)).

Critical Analysis and Comparison

1. Strengths and Weaknesses of Each Theory

Each leadership theory has its own unique set of strengths and weaknesses that make it more suitable for certain situations and organizational contexts. Transformational leadership excels at inspiring and motivating followers, fostering innovation, and driving organizational change. Transformational leadership helps employees see the importance and value of their work. However, it can be less effective in stable environments that require routine tasks and processes. One of the main differences between transformational and servant leadership is the leader's focus ([Stone et al., 2004](#)). Transformational leaders focus on changing the organization, while servant leaders focus on developing those within the organization. Transactional leadership is effective in maintaining stability, ensuring compliance, and achieving short-term goals ([Coetzer et al., 2017](#)). They will be left behind by leaders using other leadership styles. However, it may stifle creativity, discourage risk-taking, and fail to address the emotional and developmental needs of followers. Servant leadership promotes a positive and supportive work environment, enhances employee engagement, and fosters long-term growth ([Saleem et al., 2020](#)). However, servant

leadership is only one style for leading an organization, and it is not for everyone or every organization, since everyone does not possess the capacity to be a servant leader and every organization is not ready for servant leadership ([Kohntopp & McCann, 2018](#)). Despite its numerous benefits, servant leadership may be challenging to implement in organizations with a hierarchical culture or a short-term focus ([Afaq, 2020](#); [Canavesi & Minelli, 2021](#)).

2. Evolutionary Trends in Leadership Thought

The evolution of leadership theories reflects a shift from autocratic and directive approaches to more participatory and empowering models. Early leadership theories focused on the traits and behaviors of individual leaders, while later theories emphasized the importance of situational factors and the leader-follower relationship ([Martinez & Leija, 2023](#)). Contemporary leadership theories recognize the complexity of organizational dynamics and the need for leaders to be adaptable, collaborative, and ethically grounded ([Stogdill, 1975](#)). Leaders are developed through a never-ending cycle of self-study, education, training, and experience ([Bass, 1999](#)). This evolution reflects a growing understanding of the importance of human capital, organizational culture, and ethical considerations in achieving sustainable success. Modern leadership research focuses on the importance of knowledge sharing behavior between employees and leaders ([Baskoro, 2021](#)). The latest research focuses on how emerging digital technologies and artificial intelligence will shape the future of leadership ([Heenan et al., 2024](#)).

3. Impact on Organizational Management

Leadership theories have had a profound impact on the practice of organizational management, influencing how organizations are structured, how decisions are made, and how employees are managed. The shift towards more participatory leadership styles has led to flatter organizational structures, empowered teams, and increased employee involvement ([Bronlet et al., 2024](#)). The rise of transformational leadership has inspired organizations to prioritize innovation, learning, and continuous improvement. Effective leadership enhances employee satisfaction, teamwork, organizational change, and overall performance ([Steenkamp, 2021](#)). Servant leadership has fostered a culture of trust, respect, and collaboration in many organizations. Leadership theories provide a framework for understanding and improving the effectiveness of organizational management practices.

Future Directions in Leadership Research

1. Emerging Leadership Models

The future of leadership research is likely to focus on emerging leadership models that address the challenges and opportunities of the 21st century. One promising area of research is authentic leadership, which emphasizes the importance of leaders being genuine, transparent, and true to their values ([Pardey, 2008](#)). Another emerging model is inclusive leadership, which focuses on creating a diverse and equitable work environment where all employees feel valued and respected. Digital leadership, which addresses how to lead change through digital technologies, also has implications for the future ([Petrucci & Rivera, 2018](#)). As organizations become more global and interconnected, cross-cultural leadership will become increasingly important. Leaders are now required to adapt their practices and embrace continuous learning to effectively lead in the rapidly changing landscape ([Aboramadan et al., 2019](#)). The rise of remote work and virtual teams has spurred interest in virtual leadership. Future research should explore how leaders can effectively manage and motivate employees in virtual environments.

2. The Role of Technology in Leadership

Technology plays an increasingly important role in leadership, enabling leaders to communicate, collaborate, and make decisions more effectively. Artificial intelligence and data analytics provide leaders with new tools to understand organizational dynamics, identify trends, and predict outcomes ([Modliński, 2024](#)). Digitalization is shaping

organizations, creating new challenges that leaders have to face ([Cortellazzo et al., 2019](#)). However, technology also poses new challenges for leaders, such as the need to manage information overload, protect data privacy, and mitigate the risks of cyberattacks. It is crucial for leaders to develop digital literacy and understand how to use technology strategically to achieve organizational goals ([Cortellazzo et al., 2019](#); [Sacavém et al., 2025](#)).

3. Cross-Cultural Leadership Considerations

Organizations operating in global markets face the challenge of managing diverse workforces with different cultural values, beliefs, and norms. Cross-cultural leadership requires leaders to be culturally sensitive, adaptable, and able to build relationships with people from different backgrounds ([Galanti et al., 2024](#)). Research suggests that effective cross-cultural leaders possess a high level of cultural intelligence, which is the ability to understand and adapt to different cultural contexts. Cross-cultural leaders must also be aware of the potential for cultural misunderstandings and conflicts, and they must be able to mediate disputes and build consensus across cultural boundaries. Organizations should implement policies to address age-related challenges and provide training programs to increase digital literacy among older employees in a continuously adapting work environment ([Galanti et al., 2024](#)). Addressing cybersecurity and maintaining stakeholder trust are both leadership responsibilities ([Pawar & Dhumal, 2024](#)).

CONCLUSION

The evolution of leadership theories reflects a growing understanding of the complexities of organizational management and the importance of human factors in achieving success. From the early focus on traits and behaviors to the later emphasis on context and relationships, leadership theories have provided valuable insights into how leaders can effectively motivate, inspire, and guide their followers. The contingency theories posit that effective leadership depends on the context and the characteristics of the followers, which emphasizes agility and openness to innovation in digital leadership ([Adie et al., 2024](#)). The rise of transformational leadership has highlighted the importance of vision, inspiration, and empowerment in creating high-performing organizations. Authentic leadership stresses the importance of genuineness, integrity, and ethical behavior in building trust and fostering positive relationships with followers.

The insights from leadership theories have important implications for organizational practice. By understanding the different leadership styles and approaches, managers can adapt their leadership to suit the specific needs of their teams and organizations. Organizations should invest in leadership development programs that provide managers with the skills and knowledge they need to lead effectively. Such programs should focus on developing not only technical skills but also interpersonal and emotional intelligence skills. Moreover, organizations need to foster a culture of ethical leadership, where leaders are held accountable for their actions and employees feel empowered to speak up about wrongdoing. Organizations can enhance their employer brand by using transmedia storytelling.

This narrative review has several limitations. First, the scope of the review was limited to a selection of leadership theories and did not cover all possible approaches to leadership. Second, the review relied on existing literature and did not involve any primary data collection, which could cause potential biases. Third, the review did not explore the cultural dimensions of leadership in detail, which is an important area for future research.

Future research should address the limitations of this review and explore new directions in leadership theory and practice. More research is needed to understand the role of technology in leadership and how leaders can effectively manage virtual teams and remote workers. Future studies should investigate the impact of cultural values on leadership styles and effectiveness

in different countries and regions ([Megheirkouni & Mejheirkouni, 2020](#)). Longitudinal studies using multi-source data are needed to establish causality, as cross-sectional designs may limit the ability to fully capture the relationships between employer branding and talent management ([Raja et al., 2021](#)). Future research should also explore the ethical dimensions of leadership in more depth and examine how leaders can create a culture of ethical behavior within their organizations. Longitudinal studies that use multisource data are needed to establish causality ([Arnold & Sangrà, 2018](#); [Barnes et al., 2024](#); [Raja et al., 2021](#); [Teoh et al., 2022](#)).

In conclusion, the study of leadership is a dynamic and evolving field, and there is still much to learn about how leaders can effectively guide their organizations to success in an increasingly complex and uncertain world. Organizations should proactively address issues of diversity and inclusion in the workplace by providing equal opportunities for growth and advancement for all employees ([Al-Amad et al., 2024](#)). Further research could consider whether bias is increasing recruitment sustainability ([Busa & Rūtītis, 2023](#)).

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