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Leading to Perform: A Narrative Review of Leadership Style and Work Performance in Indonesian Companies, Public Agencies, and Student Organizations

***Ratih* Agustin Rachmaningrum[1], *Mila* Suarni[1], and *Dita* Ratna Hapsari[1]**

[1]University of Merdeka Malang,
Jl. Terusan Raya Dieng No. 62–64, Malang, Indonesia
Corresponding author: ratih.rachmaningrum@unmer.ac.id

Abstract. Leadership is often regarded as a key determinant of performance, yet evidence from Indonesian studies has not been synthesized across organizational contexts. This narrative review, based on a structured search of Indonesian-language articles published in 2013–2024, examines whether and under what conditions leadership style is associated with work performance among company employees, public-sector staff, and student organization members. Nine cross-sectional quantitative studies were synthesized thematically by vote counting. Five reported a significant positive partial association in models with one or two predictors. In models with additional predictors, the results were mixed: two studies found a non-significant association once organizational culture, or communication and organizational motivation, were included, and one found a significant negative coefficient alongside a positive effect of communication. Only two studies explicitly examined democratic leadership, and none examined transformational leadership. The evidence is limited by cross-sectional designs, self-report data, and small samples (n = 10–118). Leadership style tends to be positively associated with performance in simple models, but the association is not uniform and depends on model specification and context. Future research should use validated instruments, multi-source or longitudinal designs, and test psychological mediators and cultural moderators.

Keywords: leadership style; democratic leadership; work performance; organizational culture; narrative review.

Introduction

Individual performance is the foundation of organizational effectiveness, both in companies, public institutions, and student organizations (Sonnentag & Frese, 2002). In industrial and organizational psychology, performance is understood not only as the result of work, but also as behavior that is relevant to the organization's goals, including task performance and contextual performance (Borman & Motowidlo, 1993; Rotundo & Sackett, 2002). One of the most frequently studied factors is leadership, because leaders help determine the direction, resources, and work climate experienced by subordinates (Yukl & Gardner, 2020).

Leadership is understood as the process by which a person influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal (Northouse, 2021). Leadership style refers to the relatively consistent pattern of behavior that leaders display when influencing subordinates; classical typology distinguishes authoritarian, democratic, and *laissez-faire styles* (Lewin et al., 1939). International meta-analyses show that transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 1994) is positively related to performance at the individual, team, and organizational levels (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Wang et al., 2011).

In Indonesia, the influence of leadership style on employee performance has been extensively researched. The authors' initial research shows that the studies were spread across a variety of contexts (private companies, public agencies, and student organizations), used different additional predictors (motivation, communication, organizational culture), and reported results that were not always in the same direction. To the author's knowledge, these studies have not been synthesized in a structured manner.

There are two gaps. First, the inconsistencies of the findings have not been explained: it is not clear when leadership styles are related to performance and when they are not. Second, non-formal contexts such as student organizations are rarely compared to formal work contexts, even though the characteristics of the two are different. This review fills both gaps by synthesizing Indonesian-language empirical studies in 2013–2024.

The purpose of this review was to examine whether leadership style is related to work performance in company employees, public agency employees, and members of student organizations. Questions asked: (1) what are the characteristics of the available studies; (2) what are the patterns of relationships between leadership style and performance; and (3) what contextual factors accompany these patterns. The results are expected to serve as a basis for further research and for human resources practitioners in designing leadership development.

Method

This study was a review of the narrative literature with a structured search procedure, referring to the guidelines of Snyder (2019). The flow of study selection was reported by adapting PRISMA 2020 (Page et al., 2021). The narrative approach was chosen because the diverse study instruments, models, and contexts did not allow for meta-analysis. The search was conducted on Google Scholar and Garuda. Search strings: ("leadership style" OR "democratic leadership" OR "transformational leadership") AND ("employee performance" OR "employee performance" OR "management performance").

Inclusion criteria: Indonesian journal articles; published 2013–2024; full text accessible; quantitative studies that test the relationship or influence of leadership style on performance; subjects are company employees, agency employees, or members of the organization. Exclusion criteria: articles that do not include leadership style as an independent variable; review articles; duplication; and articles without statistical results.

The search yielded 12 records. After the removal of duplicates and filtering of titles and abstracts, 10 articles were assessed based on their full text. One article (Mewahaini & Sidharta, 2022) was excluded because it only tested organizational culture and work ethic, with no leadership style variables, so nine studies were synthesized. Data extracted: author, year, context, sample size, leadership style, other variables, analysis, and results. Methodological quality was assessed descriptively based on sample size, sampling techniques, regression model type, and assumption test reporting, without a standard assessment tool.

The synthesis was carried out thematically and narratively. The results of the study were grouped according to the partial influence of leadership style: (a) positive and significant, (b) insignificant, (c) negative and significant, and (d) uncertain. This grouping is in the form of a pattern calculation (*vote counting*) and did not consider either the sample size or the effect size, so studies with n = 10 and n = 118 were equally weighted. The term "influence" follows the original study formulation; because all studies are cross-sectional in design, this review interprets them as associations rather than cause-and-effect relationships.

Results

Nine studies (Table 1) were published in 2013–2024 and were all quantitative, using questionnaires and regression analysis. The sample size ranged from 10–118 (median 64). According to the context, three studies were conducted in private companies (Makalew et al., 2021; Alam et al., 2023; Panjaitan, 2017), four in public institutions or state-owned enterprises (Khoiri & Oktavia, 2019; Panggau & Sundari, 2024; Rahman, 2024; Trang, 2013), and two in student organizations (Djunaedi & Gunawan, 2018; Kartikasari et al., 2020). The leadership style that was explicitly tested was only the democratic style (Panggau & Sundari, 2024; Djunaedi & Gunawan, 2018); Other studies measured leadership style or behavior in general. Additional predictors included work motivation, communication, organizational culture, and organizational motivation.

Table 1. *Characteristics and findings of the reviewed study*

Yes	Author (year)	Context and samples	Variables and analysis	Findings related to leadership style
1	Makalew dkk. (2021)	Private: PT AKR Land Wenang Golf, Manado; n = 32	Leadership style → performance; regression, t-test	Positive and significant
2	Khoiri & Octavia (2019)	Public: South Jakarta Administrative City Bawaslu; n = 96 (saturated sample)	Leadership → performance; simple linear regression, t-test	Positive and significant (B = 0.484; R^2 = 0.219)
3	Panggau & Sundari (2024)	Public: Manado Region VIII Airport Authority Office; n = 64	Democratic style and work motivation → performance; regression (SPSS)	Democratic style contributes to improved performance; work motivation is insignificant

Yes	Author (year)	Context and samples	Variables and analysis	Findings related to leadership style
4	Nature et al. (2023)	Private: PT Dua Putra Mario Pratama; n = 10	Leadership style → performance; simple regression; questionnaires (leaders and employees), observation, documentation	Signifikan
5	Panjaitan (2017)	Private: PT Putri Megah Asri Indah, Medan; n = 30 (entire population)	Leadership and communication styles → performance; multiple regression (SPSS 15)	Significant simultaneous (R^2 = 0.920); partial negative and significant leadership style (B = −0.701; p = 0.004); positive and significant communication (B = 0.730)
6	Rahman (2024)	SOEs: Bank BNI Makassar Branch Office; n = 55 (Slovin formula)	Leadership style and organizational culture → performance; multiple regression; classical assumption test	Signifikan
7	Djunaedi & Gunawan (2018)	Business students of Ciputra University class of 2014; n = 118 (simple random sampling)	Democratic style → performance; simple regression, t-test, F, R^2 test	Positive and significant
8	Trang (2013)	Public: BPKP Representative of North Sulawesi Province; n = 92	Leadership style and organizational culture → performance; multiple regression (SPSS 17)	Simultaneously significant; partially positive but not significant; significant and stronger organizational culture
9	Kartikasari et al. (2020)	Student organization: UKM Sports University of Islam Malang; N = 72, n = 70 (purposive)	Leadership style, communication, organizational motivation → management performance; multiple regression; classical assumption test	Significant simultaneous (R^2 = 0.446); partial: leadership style significant; communication and motivation

Note. n = sample size. In Panjaitan (2017), the standardized coefficients of leadership and communication styles were −0.949 and 1.876, respectively. The t-test section of the original article calls the leadership style "positive," which does not fit into its regression table; the negative marks here are taken from the coefficient table and the article's abstract.

Methodological quality. Three small-sample studies, namely Alam et al. (2023; n = 10), Panjaitan (2017; n = 30), and Makalew et al. (2021; n = 32). The reported sampling

techniques included saturated samples or the entire population (Khoiri & Oktavia, 2019; Panjaitan, 2017), the Slovin formula (Rahman, 2024), *simple random sampling* (Djunaedi & Gunawan, 2018), and *purposive sampling* (Kartikasari et al., 2020). The classical assumption test was explicitly reported by Rahman (2024) and Kartikasari et al. (2020)

Linkage patterns. Five studies with one or two predictor models reported significant positive partial correlation (Table 2). In studies that included additional predictors, the results were mixed. Trang (2013) and Kartikasari et al. (2020) found insignificant partial correlation when organizational culture, or communication and organizational motivation, were also modeled; in both studies, the additional predictors were significant. Panjaitan (2017) found a negative and significant coefficient of leadership style along with a positive and significant coefficient of communication, with a standardized coefficient outside the range of −1 to 1 that could indicate multicollinearity or suppressor effects. Rahman's (2024) partial results cannot be reported because they have not been verified from the original article. Thus, the contextual factors that accompany this pattern are mainly the presence or absence of other predictors in the model (communication, organizational culture, motivation), while differences in organizational context do not indicate a firm pattern.

Table 2. *Patterns of partial linkage of leadership style to performance*

Pattern	Study	Quantity
(a) Positive and significant	Makalew et al. (2021); Khoiri & Oktavia (2019); Alam et al. (2023); Djunaedi & Gunawan (2018); Panggau & Sundari (2024)	5
(b) Insignificant	Trang (2013); Kartikasari et al. (2020)	2
(c) Negative and significant	Panjaitan (2017)	1
(d) Unverified	Rahman (2024)	1
Quantity		**9**

Note. Grouping is based on pattern calculation, without weighting by sample size or effect size. The direction of the coefficient in Alam et al. (2023) has not been verified.

Discussion

A positive correlation between leadership style and performance was seen in studies with a simple model, in line with international meta-analytic findings on transformational leadership (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Wang et al., 2011). This parallelism needs to be read carefully because the studies reviewed measured democratic style or leadership style in general, not transformational style. Results became non-uniform when other predictors were included. Of the four multipredictor studies with verified partial results, only one (Panggau & Sundari, 2024) reported a significant positive partial correlation; two were insignificant (Trang, 2013; Kartikasari et al., 2020) and one was significantly negative (Panjaitan, 2017). This pattern suggests that leadership styles do not always stand alone in explaining performance. The cause-and-effect direction could not be ascertained because the entire study was cross-sectional in design.

Several explanations are worth considering. First, the specification of the model: in simple regression, the influence of other factors correlated with leadership (communication, culture, motivation) can be absorbed into the leadership style coefficient, while in multiple regression the influence is divided between intercorrelated predictors (multicollinearity). The

standardized coefficient in Panjaitan (2017) that exceeds ±1 indicates that the negative signs of leadership style in the study should not be interpreted substantively without multicollinearity examination. Second, the measurement of leadership style is not uniform, and some studies do not mention standard instruments. Third, small samples result in unstable estimates and low testability. Fourth, single self-report questionnaires are susceptible to general method bias that can inflate the relationship between variables (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Fifth, differences in contexts (private, public, student) make the role of leaders and sources of motivation different. These explanations are interpretive, as the studies reviewed did not directly test mediation or moderation.

The democratic style in the typology of Lewin et al. (1939) is characterized by the involvement of subordinates in decision-making. Two studies that tested this style reported positive influences, consistent with the idea that participation, two-way communication, and reward can increase a sense of appreciation and responsibility at work. However, this evidence comes from only two studies, and Panggau and Sundari (2024) found no significant influence of work motivation, so the path through motivation is not supported in the sample. Other psychological mediators, such as job satisfaction, organizational commitment, work attachment, the quality of the leader-subordinate relationship, and psychological empowerment, have not been tested in the reviewed studies and are an important direction for subsequent research.

In public agencies and state-owned enterprises, the results were divided: two studies reported significant positive associations (Khoiri & Oktavia, 2019; Panggau & Sundari, 2024), one insignificant (Trang, 2013), and one unverified (Rahman, 2024). The conjecture that standardized grading procedures and systems limit the contribution of leadership styles has therefore not been tested with this data. In student organizations, peer relationships and volunteer motivation place communication and organizational motivation in important positions, as found by Kartikasari et al. (2020). Cultural characteristics, such as relatively high power distance (Hofstede, 2001), can influence how participatory styles are received, but these have not been tested in the reviewed studies.

Implications

Practical implications. (1) Leadership development can emphasize participatory skills, i.e., two-way communication, feedback, and appreciation for contributions, noting that evidence for a new democratic style comes from two studies. (2) Organizations should not rely solely on the leader's style; improving communication, work culture, and motivation need to go hand in hand. (3) In student organizations, communication coaching and organizational motivation should be a priority for administrators. Theoretical implications. This review suggests that the leadership-performance relationship model in Indonesia needs to explicitly include contextual predictors and psychological mechanisms, not just direct effects.

Research Limitations and Suggestions

First, the review was limited to open Indonesian articles, making it vulnerable to language bias and publication bias. Second, the number of studies was small, and most contained a small sample. Third, the synthesis used pattern counting without effect measures, so the strength of the relationship could not be compared; studies of different sample sizes were given the same weight, and insignificant results did not automatically mean no association.

Fourth, the quality assessment was descriptive and did not use a standard tool, such as the JBI checklist for analytical cross-sectional studies. Fifth, Google Scholar and Garuda contained journals with diverse quality and accreditation, and these reviews did not filter based on indexation rankings. Sixth, none of the studies explicitly tested transformational styles or other styles outside of democratic, so conclusions could not be generalized to those styles.

Future research is suggested: (1) using standard instruments, such as the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, and multi-source data; (2) using longitudinal or multilevel designs; (3) explicitly testing mediators and moderators and examining multicollinearity in multiple models; (4) extending the style studied to transformational, ethical, and *servant leadership* (Hoch et al., 2018); (5) adding studies to informal organizations; and (6) conducting a systematic review with effect measures and meta-analysis where the data are adequate.

Conclusion

In the Indonesian studies reviewed, leadership style tended to be positively associated with work performance on a simple model, and two studies that tested democratic styles reported positive findings. The evidence was not uniform: five of the nine studies supported a significant positive partial correlation, two did not find it when organizational culture or communication and motivation were included in the model, one reported a significant negative coefficient, and one was unverified. Evidence for transformational styles is not yet available in this corpus. The effectiveness of leadership therefore needs to be understood alongside contextual factors (communication, motivation, and organizational culture), and these findings are limited by cross-sectional designs, self-report data, and small samples.

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