

Educational Leadership for Employee Productivity and Performance: An Integrative Review of Leadership Styles, Mechanisms, and Organizational Conditions

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Abstract

Educational institutions depend on teachers, academic staff, and administrative employees whose performance is shaped not only by individual competence but also by the quality of leadership and the organizational conditions created by leaders. This integrative literature review examines how educational leadership contributes to employee productivity and performance, which leadership approaches are most consistently associated with beneficial outcomes, and which psychological and organizational mechanisms explain those relationships. A structured search and synthesis of peer-reviewed journal literature was conducted, prioritizing empirical studies, meta-analyses, and systematic reviews on transformational, participative, distributed, transactional, ethical, servant, and relational leadership. Thirty-four journal articles were retained as the core evidence base, with recent studies emphasized and seminal meta-analytic evidence used for theoretical anchoring. The synthesis shows that transformational, participative, distributed, servant, and high-quality leader-member exchange approaches are generally associated with stronger job performance, engagement, job satisfaction, commitment, knowledge sharing, organizational citizenship behavior, and innovative work behavior. Leadership effects are rarely purely direct. They commonly operate through trust, work engagement, self-efficacy, collaboration, psychological empowerment, job satisfaction, organizational commitment, knowledge sharing, and perceived support. Transactional leadership can support task clarity and short-term execution, whereas laissez-faire and abusive leadership are consistently associated with weaker employee outcomes. In educational settings, distributed and transformational leadership are particularly relevant because professional work requires autonomy, collaboration, and shared responsibility. The review concludes that effective educational leadership should be understood as an adaptive system of direction, participation, relational support, capability development, and accountability rather than as a single leadership style. Practical implications are offered for school and higher-education leaders, together with a research agenda emphasizing longitudinal designs, multi-source performance measures, context-sensitive models, and stronger evidence from Indonesian educational institutions.

Keywords: *Educational Leadership, Transformational Leadership, Distributed Leadership, Employee Productivity, Employee Performance, Teacher Performance, Job Satisfaction*

INTRODUCTION

Educational institutions are labor-intensive organizations. Their quality depends on the sustained performance of teachers, lecturers, academic leaders, administrative staff, and support employees whose work involves both measurable tasks and less visible relational, developmental, and innovative contributions. In schools and universities, productivity therefore cannot be reduced to the quantity of completed work. It also concerns the efficient

use of time and resources, the quality and timeliness of services, instructional effectiveness, collaboration, professional learning, innovation, and the capacity to maintain performance without damaging employee well-being. These characteristics make leadership especially consequential because leaders determine priorities, distribute responsibilities, shape communication, allocate resources, create norms of accountability, and influence whether employees experience their workplace as supportive or controlling.

The original manuscript correctly positioned leadership as a strategic determinant of organizational outcomes, but its argument depended largely on textbooks and general statements rather than on a sufficiently broad body of peer-reviewed evidence. Contemporary research provides a more nuanced account. Leadership is associated with performance, but the strength and form of the relationship vary across leadership approaches, contexts, and mediating mechanisms. Meta-analytic evidence indicates that transformational leadership is positively associated with individual, team, and organizational performance, with particularly strong links to contextual performance (Wang et al., 2011). Relational evidence similarly shows that leader–member exchange is positively related to task and citizenship performance and negatively related to counterproductive behavior, with trust, motivation, empowerment, and job satisfaction explaining part of the association (Martin et al., 2016). These findings indicate that employees often perform better not merely because leaders issue stronger directives, but because leadership improves the psychological and social conditions under which work is performed.

This distinction is important for educational organizations. Teachers and academic employees are professionals whose work depends heavily on judgment, expertise, autonomy, knowledge sharing, and collaboration. Leadership practices that provide a meaningful vision, encourage participation, recognize competence, and create opportunities for professional learning may therefore be more effective than leadership that relies mainly on control. In international educational research, distributed leadership has been associated with teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction (Sun & Xia, 2018), while recent cross-national studies show that teacher collaboration and reduced job stress can function as important mechanisms connecting distributed leadership to job satisfaction (Ma & Gu, 2026; Xu et al., 2024). Evidence from Indonesian schools and madrasahs also links principal leadership and transformational practices to teacher performance and satisfaction (Aditya et al., 2025; Masdianah et al., 2023).

The leadership literature, however, does not support the claim that one style is universally superior. Transformational leadership has a large evidence base, yet transactional leadership can be useful when tasks require clarity, monitoring, and contingent rewards. Participative leadership can strengthen motivation and ownership, but participation without clear decision rights can slow execution. Distributed leadership can mobilize professional expertise, but excessive administrative distribution may create burden and stress. Ethical and servant leadership can strengthen trust and relational quality, while their incremental value relative to transformational leadership differs by outcome (Bedi et al., 2016; Hoch et al., 2018; Eva et al., 2019). In contrast, laissez-faire leadership and abusive leadership show

consistently harmful patterns because they withhold needed support or create psychologically unsafe working conditions (Gemeda & Lee, 2020; Singh et al., 2026).

A further weakness in simple leadership–performance models is the tendency to treat productivity and performance as direct responses to leader behavior. Recent research points to multiple pathways. Employee engagement can mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and job performance (Jiatong et al., 2022). Organizational citizenship behavior can transmit the effects of transformational leadership to performance (Qalati et al., 2022). Knowledge sharing can link university leadership to innovative work behavior and task performance (Saif et al., 2024). Leader emotional intelligence can improve performance directly and indirectly through trust (Lee et al., 2023), while positive team emotional climate may amplify the performance benefits of emotionally intelligent leadership among teachers (A'yunnisa et al., 2024). These mechanisms are highly relevant in education because performance is embedded in interpersonal and knowledge-intensive work.

This review therefore reframes educational leadership as a set of influence processes that shape employee capability, motivation, coordination, and opportunity to perform. It addresses three questions: (1) Which leadership approaches are most consistently associated with employee productivity and performance? (2) Through which psychological and organizational mechanisms does leadership influence those outcomes? and (3) What conditions support or constrain leadership effectiveness in educational organizations? The article contributes by integrating general organizational evidence with school and higher-education research, differentiating direct from indirect leadership effects, and proposing an adaptive framework suitable for educational institutions. Rather than advocating a single style, the review identifies a portfolio of leadership practices that can be aligned with task demands, employee readiness, professional autonomy, and organizational context.

METHODS

This study used an integrative literature review design because the objective was to combine theoretical, quantitative, qualitative, and review evidence concerning leadership, employee productivity, and employee performance. An integrative review is appropriate when a topic has been examined through multiple leadership theories and research designs and when the purpose is to build a coherent explanatory framework rather than estimate one pooled effect size. The review retained the substantive focus of the original manuscript while strengthening the evidence base and making the literature-selection process more transparent.

The literature search prioritized peer-reviewed journal articles available through publisher websites, open-access repositories, and scholarly indexing pages. Searches combined terms such as “educational leadership,” “school leadership,” “principal leadership,” “transformational leadership,” “participative leadership,” “distributed leadership,” “transactional leadership,” “servant leadership,” “ethical leadership,” “leader-member exchange,” “employee productivity,” “employee performance,” “teacher performance,” “job satisfaction,” “work engagement,” and “organizational commitment.” Recent literature from approximately 2018–2026 was prioritized, while seminal meta-analyses

and foundational empirical studies published earlier were retained when they provided strong cumulative evidence or clarified mechanisms. Sources were included when they (a) examined a definable leadership approach or leader behavior, (b) reported outcomes relevant to productivity, task performance, contextual performance, innovation, satisfaction, commitment, or related mechanisms, and (c) provided sufficient bibliographic information for verification. Purely opinion-based materials and duplicative sources were excluded.

Thirty-four journal articles were used as the principal evidence base. They included meta-analyses, systematic or integrative reviews, cross-sectional and multiwave surveys, multilevel studies, diary research, and educational case studies. The evidence covered schools, higher-education institutions, public organizations, service organizations, manufacturing, information and communication technology, and other employment contexts. Cross-sector studies were retained because leadership mechanisms such as trust, engagement, empowerment, and knowledge sharing are theoretically relevant to educational employees, but conclusions about educational practice were drawn most strongly from school- and university-based studies.

The analysis proceeded in four stages. First, studies were coded by leadership approach and outcome. Second, recurring mediating or moderating mechanisms were identified, including trust, engagement, job satisfaction, self-efficacy, organizational commitment, collaboration, knowledge sharing, organizational citizenship behavior, emotional climate, and perceived support. Third, convergent and divergent findings were compared to avoid presenting leadership effects as universally positive or direct. Fourth, the evidence was synthesized into themes concerning leadership style, mechanisms, and contextual conditions. Table 1 summarizes the analytical structure used in the review. The table is explicitly discussed here because it clarifies that the synthesis distinguishes leadership behavior from the mechanisms through which performance is produced, rather than treating all associations as equivalent causal effects.

Table 1. Analytical Structure of The Integrative Review

Analytical domain	Examples	Primary outcomes	Interpretive purpose
Leadership approaches	Transformational, participative, distributed, transactional, ethical, servant, LMX	Performance, productivity, satisfaction, engagement	Identify patterns across leadership approaches
Psychological mechanisms	Trust, self-efficacy, empowerment, engagement, satisfaction, commitment	Motivation and discretionary effort	Explain how leader behavior becomes performance
Social/knowledge mechanisms	Collaboration, knowledge sharing, citizenship behavior, emotional climate	Innovation, contextual performance, coordination	Explain collective and relational pathways
Contextual conditions	Workload, role clarity, institutional context, communication, fairness	Strength or sustainability of effects	Identify boundary conditions and implementation risks

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Leadership Approaches Associated with Productivity and Performance

Transformational leadership is the most consistently supported approach in the reviewed literature. Its core behaviors—articulating a meaningful vision, providing inspirational motivation, intellectually stimulating employees, and offering individualized consideration—are compatible with knowledge-intensive educational work because they connect organizational goals with professional growth. The large meta-analysis by Wang et al. (2011), based on more than one hundred independent samples, found positive relationships between transformational leadership and performance across individual, team, and organizational levels. More recent studies show similar patterns while clarifying the mechanisms. Jiatong et al. (2022) found that transformational leadership was positively associated with job performance and affective organizational commitment, with employee engagement functioning as a mediator. Qalati et al. (2022) showed that organizational citizenship behavior helped explain the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance. Bakker et al. (2023), using a daily diary design, demonstrated that day-to-day transformational leadership can stimulate strengths use and personal initiative, which subsequently predict work engagement and next-day performance.

The educational evidence is particularly relevant. Saif et al. (2024) found that transformational leadership in higher-education institutions was associated with innovative work behavior and task performance, with knowledge sharing serving as an important pathway. Aditya et al. (2025) described principal transformational leadership as a catalyst for teacher-performance improvement in an Indonesian elementary school. Restiani et al. (2024), reviewing principal transformational leadership and teacher job satisfaction, likewise concluded that the approach is consistently associated with positive teacher attitudes. Yong and Zhang (2025) found that transformational leadership can reduce teacher role stress through affective commitment and job satisfaction. Taken together, these studies indicate that transformational leadership is not simply motivational rhetoric; it is most useful when vision is translated into support, professional confidence, relational commitment, and meaningful participation.

Participative leadership has a related but distinct logic. It increases employee voice and involvement in decisions, thereby strengthening ownership and acceptance of goals. Akpoviro et al. (2018) found a positive relationship between participative leadership and employee productivity and described participation as a motivational tool. Khassawneh and Elrehail (2022), using data across managerial levels, also found that participative leadership was associated with employee performance, although institutional conditions shaped the relationship. In educational organizations, participative leadership is particularly appropriate for decisions that require teacher expertise, curriculum knowledge, or implementation commitment. The benefit does not imply that every decision should be made collectively. Effective participation requires leaders to specify which decisions are consultative, which are delegated, and which remain accountable to formal authority.

Distributed leadership extends participation by locating leadership practice across multiple actors rather than concentrating it in one formal position. Sun and Xia (2018) found that teacher-perceived distributed leadership had direct effects on teacher self-efficacy and job satisfaction and an indirect effect on satisfaction through self-efficacy. Ma and Gu (2026) reported that teacher collaboration mediated the relationship between distributed leadership and job satisfaction. Large-scale TALIS-based research similarly suggests that distributed leadership is positively associated with teacher satisfaction, although the strength and meaning of the association may vary across national contexts. For schools, this approach is attractive because expertise is naturally dispersed across department heads, senior teachers, coordinators, counselors, and professional learning teams.

Distributed leadership also illustrates why leadership should not be romanticized. When distributed leadership merely redistributes administrative tasks without authority, time, or resources, it can increase workload rather than empowerment. Cross-national evidence on distributed school leadership and job stress shows that the same structure can reduce stress through greater support while also generating burden if teachers are required to assume extensive administrative responsibilities (Xu et al., 2024). Thus, distribution is productive when it expands meaningful influence, professional collaboration, and problem-solving capacity; it is counterproductive when it becomes task dumping.

Transactional leadership remains relevant for performance management. It clarifies expectations, monitors execution, and links achievement to contingent rewards. Gameda and Lee (2020) found that transactional leadership was positively related to task performance among information and communication technology professionals, even while transformational leadership was more strongly associated with engagement and innovative work behavior. Fakhri et al. (2020), in an Indonesian organizational context, found significant effects for transformational leadership but not for transactional leadership, showing that the relative value of the two approaches depends on context and outcome. In education, transactional practices can be useful for compliance requirements, deadlines, administrative accuracy, and minimum performance standards. However, they are less likely by themselves to generate professional learning, innovation, or intrinsic commitment.

Ethical and servant leadership add a moral and relational dimension that is highly relevant to education. Bedi et al. (2016) found in a meta-analysis that ethical leadership was positively related to beneficial follower outcomes. Hoch et al. (2018) showed substantial conceptual overlap between transformational, authentic, ethical, and servant leadership, but also found that servant leadership demonstrated distinctive explanatory value for several outcomes. Eva et al. (2019), in a systematic review, conceptualized servant leadership around prioritizing follower growth, ethical conduct, and stewardship. In educational institutions, where leaders exercise authority over evaluation, workload, promotion, and professional opportunities, fairness and service are not peripheral values; they affect whether employees trust leadership decisions and remain willing to contribute beyond minimum role requirements.

Relational leadership evidence reinforces this conclusion. Martin et al. (2016) found that high-quality leader–member exchange was associated with task performance, citizenship performance, and lower counterproductive behavior. Trust in the leader was one of the strongest mediating mechanisms. This relationship-centered perspective explains why the same formal leadership policy can produce different outcomes across employees. Leadership is experienced through recurring exchanges: whether leaders listen, provide resources, keep promises, give useful feedback, recognize effort, and apply standards fairly. Consequently, productivity is shaped not only by formal leadership style but by the quality and consistency of leader–employee relationships.

Finally, the evidence clearly identifies approaches that undermine performance. Laissez-faire leadership is characterized by avoidance, delayed decisions, and insufficient guidance. Gameda and Lee (2020) found a negative relationship between laissez-faire leadership and task performance. Abusive leadership is even more damaging. Singh et al. (2026), in a meta-analysis of 39 independent studies with more than 32,000 participants, found that abusive leadership predicted poorer employee and organizational outcomes, including lower job performance, commitment, satisfaction, and well-being. Educational leaders therefore need to recognize that nonintervention and hostility are not neutral alternatives to “strong leadership”; both can systematically weaken the conditions needed for sustained performance.

Mechanisms Linking Leadership to Employee Performance

The reviewed literature indicates that leadership usually affects productivity and performance through intervening psychological and organizational processes. This is one of the most important improvements over the original manuscript’s direct role-based explanation. Leaders certainly function as decision makers, communicators, motivators, coaches, and evaluators, but those roles contribute to performance only when they alter employees’ motivation, capability, relationships, or working conditions.

Work engagement is a central mechanism. Engagement refers to a persistent state of energy, dedication, and absorption in work. Transformational leaders can increase engagement by making work meaningful, recognizing strengths, encouraging initiative, and showing individualized support. Jiatong et al. (2022) found that engagement partially mediated the effects of transformational leadership on job performance and affective commitment. Bakker et al. (2023) demonstrated a dynamic version of the same process: transformational behaviors on one day predicted greater strengths use and initiative, which were associated with subsequent engagement and performance. For educational leaders, this suggests that productivity is not best sustained by constant pressure. Employees are more likely to invest discretionary effort when they can see purpose, use their competencies, and exercise responsible initiative.

Job satisfaction is another recurrent pathway. Satisfaction reflects employees’ evaluation of their work, relationships, conditions, and rewards. Chen et al. (2022) found that transformational leadership improved job satisfaction partly through a positive employee–relations climate. In school settings, principal leadership is repeatedly connected with teacher

satisfaction (Restiani et al., 2024), while distributed leadership appears to strengthen satisfaction through collaboration and self-efficacy (Ma & Gu, 2026; Sun & Xia, 2018). Masdianah et al. (2023), studying Indonesian madrasah teachers, positioned job satisfaction as a mediator between principal leadership style and teacher performance. These findings matter because satisfaction is not simply an employee-welfare outcome; it can influence persistence, cooperation, and willingness to maintain performance.

Trust is especially important when employees depend on leaders for resources, evaluation, and fair treatment. Martin et al. (2016) identified trust as a major mechanism connecting leader–member exchange with performance. Lee et al. (2023) similarly found that trust in the supervisor mediated relationships involving leader emotional intelligence, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and job performance. Trust reduces the perceived risk of speaking up, sharing ideas, accepting feedback, and investing effort in goals whose benefits are not immediately guaranteed. In educational settings, where innovation and professional dialogue often require employees to expose uncertainty or challenge routines, trust is a precondition for learning-oriented performance.

Self-efficacy and empowerment explain how leadership affects employees' sense of capability and agency. Sun and Xia (2018) found that distributed leadership contributed to teacher job satisfaction through teacher self-efficacy. Research on transformational leadership likewise indicates that leaders can improve performance by strengthening employees' belief that they can manage demanding tasks. Empowerment is especially relevant where work cannot be specified completely in advance. Teachers, lecturers, counselors, and program coordinators must make numerous context-sensitive judgments. Leaders who provide clear boundaries but also meaningful discretion can increase responsiveness and reduce the inefficiency caused by excessive upward approval.

Knowledge sharing and collaboration are particularly salient in educational institutions. Saif et al. (2024) found that knowledge sharing mediated leadership effects on innovative behavior and task performance in higher education. Ma and Gu (2026) found that collaboration helped transmit distributed leadership effects to teacher job satisfaction. These studies suggest that one function of leadership is to improve the flow of expertise. A school may employ capable individuals and still perform poorly if knowledge remains isolated. Leaders can improve collective productivity by protecting collaborative time, structuring professional learning communities, encouraging peer observation, and rewarding contributions to shared improvement rather than only individual achievement.

Organizational citizenship behavior is another mechanism through which leadership can affect organizational performance. Citizenship behavior includes voluntary actions that support colleagues and the organization beyond formal task requirements. Qalati et al. (2022) found that organizational citizenship behavior mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and employee performance. Such behavior is especially valuable in education because many essential activities—mentoring a colleague, sharing instructional resources, helping resolve a student problem, supporting a school event, or contributing to

accreditation work—cannot be fully captured in formal job descriptions. Leadership that builds identification, fairness, and trust can increase these discretionary contributions.

Emotional intelligence and emotional climate also shape leadership effectiveness. Rosete and Ciarrochi (2005) showed that emotional intelligence predicted leadership effectiveness beyond personality and cognitive intelligence. Lee et al. (2023) found positive direct and trust-mediated relationships between leader emotional intelligence and job performance. A'yunnisa et al. (2024), using a two-wave design involving primary-school teachers and leaders, examined how perceived leader emotional intelligence, employee emotional intelligence, and team emotional climate combine to influence flourishing and performance. These findings are important in education, where leaders frequently manage emotionally demanding interactions involving students, parents, staff conflict, performance feedback, and organizational change. Emotional intelligence should therefore be treated as a performance-relevant leadership competence rather than as a purely interpersonal attribute.

Table 2 presents representative evidence from the review. As the table shows, studies differ in context and design, but they converge on a common pattern: productive leadership tends to work by creating motivational, relational, and capability-enhancing conditions. The table is not intended as a statistical meta-analysis; instead, it illustrates the consistency of mechanisms across school, higher-education, public, and private organizational settings.

Table 2. Representative Evidence on Leadership Mechanisms and Employee Outcomes

Study	Context/ design	Leadership focus	Mechanism	Main outcome
Wang et al. (2011)	Meta-analysis, 117 samples	Transformational	Multiple pathways	Positive individual, team, organizational performance
Martin et al. (2016)	Meta-analysis	Leader–member exchange	Trust, motivation, empowerment, satisfaction	Higher task/citizenship performance
Jiatong et al. (2022)	845 hotel employees	Transformational	Employee engagement	Higher job performance and commitment
Qalati et al. (2022)	405 SME employees	Transformational	Organizational citizenship behavior	Higher employee performance
Sun & Xia (2018)	TALIS multilevel SEM	Distributed	Teacher self-efficacy	Higher teacher job satisfaction
Masdianah et al. (2023)	Indonesian madrasah	Principal leadership	Job satisfaction	Higher teacher performance
Saif et al. (2024)	Higher education	Transformational	Knowledge sharing	Higher innovation and task performance
A'yunnisa et al. (2024)	Two-wave teacher study	Leader emotional intelligence	Emotional climate/EI	Flourishing and performance

Study	Context/ design	Leadership focus	Mechanism	Main outcome
Ma & Gu (2026)	Teachers	Distributed	Teacher collaboration	Higher job satisfaction
Bakker et al. (2023)	30-day diary	Transformational	Strengths use, initiative	Next-day engagement/performance
Gemeda & Lee (2020)	Cross-national ICT	Multiple styles	Work engagement	Transformational positive; laissez-faire negative
Singh et al. (2026)	Meta-analysis, 39 studies	Abusive leadership	Adverse psychological pathways	Lower performance, satisfaction, commitment

Supporting and Inhibiting Conditions for Leadership Effectiveness

Leadership effectiveness depends on context. Communication is a foundational condition because unclear priorities, inconsistent messages, and weak feedback create coordination costs. Effective communication includes downward clarification of goals, upward opportunities for voice, lateral coordination, and feedback that is specific enough to improve future performance. Participative and distributed leadership are especially dependent on communication quality; without it, involvement can become ambiguity rather than empowerment.

A second condition is the fit between leadership behavior and the nature of the task. Routine administrative work may benefit from transactional clarity, standard operating procedures, and monitoring. Complex pedagogical improvement, curriculum innovation, research development, and organizational change require stronger transformational, participative, or distributed elements. Effective leaders therefore switch emphasis rather than applying one style mechanically. This adaptive interpretation is consistent with the broader leadership literature: meta-analytic comparisons show meaningful overlap among positive leadership constructs, suggesting that leaders should focus on effective behaviors and mechanisms rather than on maintaining a rigid stylistic identity (Hoch et al., 2018).

A third condition is organizational trust and fairness. Trust increases the effectiveness of delegation, feedback, innovation, and change because employees are more willing to accept vulnerability. Ethical leadership is particularly relevant in decisions concerning workload, appraisal, promotion, and access to professional-development opportunities. Inconsistent standards can quickly undermine motivational leadership messages. Leaders who invite participation but disregard employee input, or who promote collaboration while rewarding only individual compliance, create contradictions that reduce credibility.

A fourth condition is managerial competence. Inspirational communication cannot compensate for poor scheduling, inadequate resource allocation, unclear job design, or delayed decisions. Educational leadership therefore requires both relational and operational capability. Leaders need to convert vision into priorities, staffing, budgets, timelines, meeting structures, performance indicators, and developmental feedback. Transformational leadership is most credible when employees can see that the organization is competently managed.

A fifth condition is workload and role design. The literature on distributed leadership shows that sharing leadership can increase satisfaction and professional influence, but it can also generate stress when new responsibilities are added without removing existing tasks (Xu et al., 2024). Leaders should distinguish empowerment from overload. Delegated responsibilities should be accompanied by authority, time, information, and recognition. This principle is especially important in schools where teachers may already face substantial teaching, assessment, administrative, and pastoral demands.

A sixth condition is cultural and institutional context. Khassawneh and Elrehail (2022) showed that the effects of participative leadership are contingent on institutional conditions. International research on distributed leadership likewise finds variation across countries and levels of analysis. Leaders should therefore avoid importing a model without considering power distance, professional norms, policy constraints, and organizational maturity. In some settings, employees may need stronger structural clarity before extensive delegation becomes effective. In others, centralized decision making may suppress valuable expertise and reduce ownership.

The final condition is measurement and accountability. Leadership should not be evaluated only through employee perceptions or satisfaction. Performance indicators should include task quality, timeliness, innovation, citizenship behavior, service outcomes, absenteeism or retention where relevant, and—within education—appropriate indicators of instructional or academic quality. At the same time, leaders should avoid simplistic productivity targets that reward quantity while reducing quality. A balanced approach is required because educational performance is multidimensional.

An Adaptive Framework for Educational Leadership

The synthesis supports an adaptive framework with five mutually reinforcing leadership functions. The first is direction: leaders create a clear and credible sense of purpose, priorities, and performance expectations. The second is participation: leaders involve employees in decisions where their knowledge is relevant and distribute leadership where shared expertise can improve implementation. The third is relational support: leaders build trust, fairness, psychological safety, and a positive emotional climate. The fourth is capability development: leaders provide coaching, feedback, learning opportunities, and conditions for knowledge sharing. The fifth is accountability: leaders monitor results, address performance gaps, recognize contributions, and ensure that autonomy remains aligned with organizational goals.

These functions resolve an apparent tension in the leadership literature. Transformational leadership emphasizes direction, meaning, and development; participative and distributed leadership emphasize involvement and shared influence; servant and ethical leadership emphasize relational and moral quality; transactional leadership contributes structure and accountability; and leader–member exchange emphasizes relationship quality. Rather than choosing one label, educational leaders can combine the underlying behaviors in ways suited to particular tasks and employees.

For example, a school implementing a new curriculum may begin with transformational direction by explaining the educational rationale and expected benefits. It may then use participative and distributed processes by involving subject leaders and teachers in adaptation. Relational support is needed to create safety for experimentation and feedback. Capability development is required through training and peer learning. Finally, transactional accountability is needed to ensure deadlines, documentation, and agreed minimum standards. The sequence shows why effective leadership is an integrated process rather than a single style.

The framework also clarifies the relationship between productivity and performance. Productivity concerns the efficient conversion of time, effort, knowledge, and resources into useful outputs. Performance is broader, including quality, timeliness, contextual contribution, innovation, and alignment with organizational goals. Leadership can improve both by reducing coordination waste, clarifying priorities, increasing discretionary effort, strengthening employee competence, and enabling collaboration. However, productivity gains are unlikely to be sustainable if they are achieved through chronic overload, fear, or abusive control. Sustainable performance therefore requires a balance between results and the human conditions that make continued results possible.

The review also identifies an important distinction between short-term compliance and long-term capability. Authoritarian or highly transactional control may produce immediate adherence when tasks are simple and monitoring is strong. Yet educational institutions require employees to solve novel problems and continuously update their knowledge. Leadership that weakens autonomy, trust, or professional learning can therefore undermine future performance even if current targets are achieved. The most effective educational leadership is consequently developmental: it produces results while increasing employees' capacity to produce future results.

Practical Implications for Educational Institutions

First, leadership-development programs should move beyond generic training on "leadership styles." Programs should train specific behaviors: setting priorities, giving developmental feedback, facilitating participation, managing difficult conversations, designing delegation, recognizing performance, and building trust. Second, school and university leaders should establish structured mechanisms for employee voice. Participation is most useful when it is connected to real decisions, supported by transparent criteria, and followed by communication about how input was used.

Third, educational institutions should protect time for collaboration and knowledge sharing. The evidence suggests that leadership contributes to performance partly through these mechanisms. Professional learning communities, cross-unit project teams, mentoring, peer observation, and shared repositories can convert individual expertise into organizational capability. Fourth, leaders should monitor workload when distributing leadership responsibilities. Additional leadership roles should include clear authority, workload adjustment, and recognition.

Fifth, performance management should integrate accountability with development. Evaluation should not be a once-a-year judgment. Leaders should use recurring goal-setting, observation, feedback, coaching, and follow-up. Recognition should be fair and connected to meaningful contributions, including collaboration and innovation rather than only easily counted outputs. Sixth, institutions should explicitly address destructive leadership. Mechanisms for confidential feedback, grievance handling, leadership coaching, and corrective action are necessary because abusive and laissez-faire leadership can damage performance and well-being.

Finally, leaders should use data cautiously. Employee-satisfaction surveys, engagement measures, attendance, service-quality indicators, and performance data can help identify organizational conditions, but they should be triangulated. Strong educational leadership does not optimize a single metric; it builds a coherent environment in which employees can perform high-quality work efficiently, ethically, and sustainably.

Limitations and Future Research

This review has several limitations. It is an integrative rather than a formal systematic review or meta-analysis, so it does not estimate a pooled causal effect. The included literature spans different sectors, countries, measurement instruments, and research designs. Cross-sector evidence was used to clarify general leadership mechanisms, but sector differences mean that findings cannot be transferred to educational institutions without interpretation. Many leadership studies also use cross-sectional self-report data, which can inflate associations because leadership and outcomes are measured from the same respondents at the same time.

Future studies should use longitudinal, experimental, quasi-experimental, diary, and multi-source designs to strengthen causal inference. Educational research should distinguish teacher-rated leadership, principal self-reports, peer assessments, and objective or supervisor-rated performance. More research is also needed on productivity as an efficiency construct, because educational studies more often measure satisfaction, commitment, or performance than resource-adjusted productivity. Indonesian research would benefit from multi-institution samples that compare schools, madrasahs, and higher-education institutions, as well as public and private settings. Studies should also examine when distributed leadership becomes empowering versus burdensome, how digital work changes leader communication and monitoring, and how leadership influences performance through psychological safety, knowledge sharing, and professional learning over time.

CONCLUSION

Educational leadership has a substantive role in employee productivity and performance, but its influence is more complex than a simple direct relationship between leadership style and work results. The strongest evidence supports leadership approaches that combine clear direction with employee involvement, relational quality, capability development, and appropriate accountability. Transformational leadership is consistently associated with beneficial performance outcomes, while participative and distributed leadership are particularly valuable in educational organizations because they mobilize professional

expertise and strengthen ownership. Ethical, servant, and high-quality leader–member relationships contribute by building trust and fairness. Transactional leadership remains useful for task clarity and standards, but it is insufficient as the sole basis for knowledge-intensive and developmental work. Laissez-faire and abusive leadership are clearly detrimental.

The principal contribution of this review is the identification of mechanisms. Leadership improves performance when it increases engagement, trust, self-efficacy, job satisfaction, commitment, collaboration, knowledge sharing, organizational citizenship behavior, and perceived support. These mechanisms explain why leadership practices that merely intensify control may produce short-term compliance without sustainable improvement. For educational institutions, effective leadership should therefore be understood as an adaptive system rather than a fixed style. Leaders need to choose behaviors that fit the task, employee capability, organizational culture, and level of change while preserving fairness, autonomy, and accountability.

A publishable leadership argument should consequently avoid claiming that one leadership style automatically improves every outcome. The more defensible conclusion is that leadership creates the conditions under which employees are willing and able to perform. When leaders provide purpose, voice, support, learning, and fair accountability, educational organizations are more likely to convert human expertise into sustained productivity, high-quality performance, and organizational improvement.

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