

Leadership Influence on Work Performance in Health Care Professionals: A Narrative Review

Shamiksha^{1,*}, Ankitha¹

Abstract

Leadership plays an important role in influencing work performance, job satisfaction, and employee engagement among healthcare professionals. The healthcare sector is demanding and complex, making effective leadership essential for maintaining workforce well-being and quality patient care. This narrative review aims to explore the influence of different leadership styles on the work performance, job satisfaction, and engagement of healthcare professionals, and to identify effective leadership approaches that enhance teamwork, productivity, and overall healthcare outcomes. 21 peer-reviewed articles published between 2010 and 2025 were retrieved from PubMed and Semantic Scholar using relevant keywords. Leadership styles examined included transformational, servant, democratic, digital, collective, caring, authoritarian, and laissez-faire leadership. The findings indicate that transformational, servant, democratic, and caring leadership styles are consistently associated with higher job satisfaction, stronger employee engagement, improved teamwork, and better work performance. Digital leadership contributes positively by improving efficiency, communication, and employee empowerment through technology. In contrast, authoritarian and laissez-faire leadership styles are linked to increased stress, reduced motivation, role ambiguity, and lower performance. The review also highlights the importance of leadership training programs in developing leadership competencies and supportive work environments. Overall, the evidence suggests that adopting positive and people-centered leadership styles can improve employee well-being, healthcare service delivery.

Keywords: Leadership styles, healthcare professionals, work performance, job satisfaction, employee engagement, leadership training

INTRODUCTION

Leadership plays a crucial role in determining the success of healthcare organizations [1, 2]. The healthcare sector is dynamic and high-pressure, requiring professionals to continuously adapt to medical advancements, patient needs, and institutional challenges (Curado & Santos, [3] 2021; Notarnicola et al., [4] 2024) [5–14]. Effective leadership fosters motivation, engagement, and high-quality patient care, whereas ineffective leadership contributes to job dissatisfaction, burnout, and compromised patient

outcomes. Understanding how leadership styles influence work performance in healthcare is essential for enhancing employee well-being, organizational efficiency, and overall healthcare service delivery (Milojević et al., [10] 2024).

Healthcare leadership is unique because of its ethical responsibilities, emotional demands, and high-stakes decision-making. Leaders must balance administrative and financial responsibilities while creating a supportive environment for healthcare professionals (Mulenga et al., [11] 2018; Demeke et al., [7] 2024). Strong

*Author for Correspondence

Shamiksha
E-mail: shamikshashamiksha15@gmail.com

¹Student, Department of clinical Psychology, Yene Poya School of Allied Health Science University, Karnataka, India

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leadership promotes collaboration, resilience, and efficiency, ultimately improving patient care and institutional success. However, different leadership styles affect healthcare work performance in different ways [4, 15–19].

Transformational leadership inspires employees by providing a clear vision and motivation, leading to higher engagement and job satisfaction (Westbrook et al., [20] 2022). Servant leadership prioritizes employee well-being, fostering teamwork, ethical decision-making, and a culture of care. Democratic leadership encourages participation, collaboration, and innovation, empowering employees to contribute meaningfully to the organization. Digital leadership integrates technology-driven solutions to enhance operational efficiency and support healthcare professionals (Khan et al., [16] 2025). Caring leadership, rooted in emotional intelligence and compassion, strengthens workplace relationships and creates a positive environment (Demeke et al., [7] 2024).

In contrast, authoritarian leadership, characterized by strict control and top-down decision-making, can increase workplace stress and reduce employee morale. Laissez-faire leadership, which involves minimal supervision and direction, often leads to poor performance owing to a lack of guidance and accountability [10]. While leadership training programs have been introduced in many healthcare institutions, their effectiveness in shaping workplace performance remains an area of ongoing research (Notarnicola et al., [4] 2024).

Despite extensive studies on leadership in healthcare, a comprehensive synthesis of multiple perspectives is required. This narrative review examines 21 peer-reviewed articles to analyze the impact of different leadership styles on healthcare workers' performance. By identifying the strengths and limitations of each approach, this study provides insights into leadership strategies that enhance job satisfaction, employee well-being, and overall healthcare outcomes (Notarnicola et al., [4] 2024; Demeke et al., [7] 2024). These findings can serve as a valuable resource for policymakers, hospital administrators, and healthcare leaders to implement leadership practices that cultivate a motivated and high-performing workforce.

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Leadership styles: In this study, leadership styles refer to the different approaches used by individuals in leadership positions to guide, influence, and manage healthcare professionals. These include transformational, servant, democratic, digital, collective, authoritarian, laissez-faire, and caring leadership. Each style has unique characteristics that shape the work environment, communication patterns, decision-making processes, and employee outcomes in healthcare settings.

Healthcare professionals are defined as individuals involved in delivering health services to patients, including doctors, nurses, allied health professionals, therapists, and support staff. Their performance and well-being are often influenced by workplace dynamics, including leadership behavior, team collaboration, and organizational support.

Work performance refers to the level of effectiveness, productivity, and efficiency demonstrated by healthcare professionals in fulfilling their roles and responsibilities at work. This includes the quality of patient care, communication with colleagues, adherence to clinical standards, and the ability to manage workload and stress.

Job satisfaction is the degree to which healthcare professionals feel fulfilled and content with their role. It is influenced by leadership style, interpersonal relationships, recognition, growth opportunities, and work-life balance. High job satisfaction contributes to improved performance, reduced turnover, and better patient care.

Employee engagement refers to the emotional and psychological connection that employees have with their work and workplace. Engaged employees are more likely to show commitment, enthusiasm, and proactive behavior, leading to higher performance and organizational loyalty.

Leadership training involves structured programs and initiatives designed to develop and enhance leadership competencies among healthcare workers. These programs aim to improve communication, decision-making, conflict resolution, and team management skills, thereby enabling leaders to create supportive and efficient work environments.

NEED FOR THE STUDY

Leadership is important in healthcare because it affects how well employees perform, how satisfied they are with their jobs, and the overall quality of patient care (Curado & Santos, [3] 2021). Good leadership helps healthcare workers feel supported, encourages teamwork, and improves the quality-of-service delivery. In contrast, poor leadership often leads to stress, burnout, and lower quality care outcomes (Milojević et al., [10] 2024; Notarnicola et al., [4] 2024).

Although many studies have explored leadership in healthcare, most have focused on individual styles in isolation without comparing their overall effects on work performance. There is a need for more research that brings together multiple perspectives and leadership styles to understand their strengths and limitations in real healthcare settings (Demeke et al., [7] 2024).

Leadership training programs are becoming more common in hospitals and clinics to support healthcare teams and improve organizational outcomes (Khan et al., [16] 2025). This review provides insights that can help hospital administrators, policymakers, and healthcare leaders apply the most effective leadership strategies to improve employee engagement, job satisfaction, and, ultimately, patient care outcomes.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

How do leadership styles influence work performance, employee engagement, and job satisfaction among healthcare professionals?

AIM

This study aimed to explore the influence of different leadership styles on the work performance, job satisfaction, and engagement of healthcare professionals. This study seeks to identify effective leadership approaches that enhance teamwork, productivity, and overall healthcare outcomes.

OBJECTIVE

1. To examine the impact of leadership styles on work performance in healthcare settings.
2. To analyze the relationship between leadership styles and employee engagement.
3. To evaluate how leadership styles influence job satisfaction among healthcare professionals.

HYPOTHESIS

Null Hypothesis (H_0)

Leadership styles have no significant impact on work performance, employee engagement, or job satisfaction in the healthcare sector.

Alternative Hypothesis (H_1)

Leadership styles significantly influence work performance, employee engagement, and job satisfaction in the healthcare industry.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Leadership plays a significant role in determining healthcare professionals' work performance, job satisfaction, and overall organizational success. Several studies have examined the impact of different leadership styles in healthcare settings, highlighting both positive and negative influences. This section synthesizes the findings from 21 peer-reviewed articles, categorizing them based on leadership styles and their effects on healthcare performance.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is often linked to improved job satisfaction, teamwork, and patient care outcomes. According to Curado and Santos [3] (2021), transformational leaders inspire and motivate healthcare employees, fostering a positive work environment that enhances job performance. Similarly, Notarnicola et al. [4] (2024) found that transformational leadership significantly boosts employee engagement, reducing burnout rates among nurses.

Servant Leadership

Servant leadership prioritizes employee well-being and emphasizes empathy, ethical behavior, and teamwork. Westbrook et al. [20] (2022) found that servant leaders contribute to higher employee retention rates because they prioritize staff development and well-being. Demeke et al. [7] (2024) highlighted that servant leadership enhances job satisfaction by creating a supportive and inclusive workplace culture and indicated that servant leadership in healthcare settings leads to improved patient outcomes.

Democratic Leadership

Democratic leadership, characterized by participatory decision-making, is associated with increased employee engagement and innovation. Teame et al. [19] (2022) found that democratic leadership in hospitals promotes collaborative problem-solving, leading to improved operational efficiency. Additionally, Abuljood et al. [1] (2024) demonstrated that democratic leadership increases job satisfaction among nurses, as they feel valued and involved in decision-making processes.

Digital Leadership

Khan et al. [16] (2025) reported that with the rise of technology in healthcare, digital leadership has become increasingly relevant. Digital leadership enhances work efficiency by integrating technological solutions into patient care and administration. Digital leaders foster innovation, improve telemedicine services, and streamline workflow management, leading to better performance. Digital leadership reduces administrative burdens, allowing healthcare professionals to focus more on patient care.

Caring Leadership

Zhang et al. [21] (2024) explained that caring leadership emphasizes emotional intelligence, compassion, and support for healthcare employees. Their findings indicated that caring leadership significantly reduces stress and burnout among medical staff. When leaders show empathy and support, employees exhibit higher job satisfaction and commitment to caring for patients. The study also highlighted that caring leadership contributes to a positive work culture, enhancing team cohesion and productivity.

Authoritarian Leadership

Milojević et al. [10] (2024) reported that authoritarian leadership, characterized by strict control and top-down decision-making, negatively affects healthcare professionals by increasing stress levels and reducing job satisfaction and self-efficacy, thereby limiting their autonomy, creativity, and work engagement. Empirical evidence from nursing settings further supports these findings, as Shan et al. [17] (2022) demonstrated that authoritarian leadership is positively associated with nurse presenteeism, with excessive workload acting as a key mediating factor and leader identification intensifying this negative relationship. Similarly, focusing on early career nurses, Zheng et al. [22] (2025) found that authoritarian leadership significantly increased burnout, with organizational climate and psychological capital serving as important mediating mechanisms. Together, these studies indicate that authoritarian leadership undermines nurses' well-being and performance by fostering stressful work environments, increasing workload pressure, and weakening psychological and organizational resources.

Laissez-Faire Leadership

Laissez-faire leadership, which involves minimal supervision and guidance, has been linked to decreased work performance. Milojević et al. [10] (2024) found that in healthcare, laissez-faire leadership leads to role ambiguity and poor accountability, negatively affecting employee well-being and work outcomes. Similarly, Westbrook et al. [20] (2022) highlighted that a lack of leadership involvement results in decreased motivation and lower team cohesion among healthcare workers. Layek D. and Koodamara [8] (2024) also confirmed that limited leadership guidance is associated with reduced efficiency and increased workplace challenges.

METHODOLOGY

This narrative review examines how different leadership styles affect the work performance, job satisfaction, and engagement of healthcare professionals. Research articles were collected from PubMed and Semantic Scholar between 2010 and 2025 using keywords such as leadership styles, transformational leadership, servant leadership, democratic leadership, authoritarian leadership, work performance, job satisfaction, and employee engagement. A total of 21 peer-reviewed articles were selected for this review. Studies that were not related to healthcare professionals or were not peer-reviewed were excluded from the review. The selected studies were analyzed to identify common themes and patterns in leadership styles and their effects. Since this study only reviewed existing research and did not collect new data, ethical approval was not required. The findings aim to help hospital administrators and policymakers improve their leadership strategies in healthcare.

INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION CRITERIA

Inclusion Criteria

- Studies about leadership styles in healthcare settings.
- Research on work performance, job satisfaction, or teamwork of healthcare workers.
- Studies that involve doctors, nurses, or healthcare professionals.
- Articles published in the last 10 years (2015–2025).
- Studies written in English and fully available.

Exclusion Criteria

- Studies about leadership in business, education, or other industries.
- Opinion pieces, editorials, or articles without research data.
- Studies that do not focus on healthcare professionals.
- Articles that are not in English or have only short summaries.

VARIABLES EMPLOYED IN THE STUDY

- *Independent variable*
 - Leadership styles (transformational, servant, democratic, digital, caring, authoritarian, Laissez-Faire)
- *Dependent variables*
 - Work performance of healthcare professionals
 - Job satisfaction
 - Employee engagement
 - Teamwork and productivity

Research Design

This study used a narrative review design to analyze the impact of leadership styles on healthcare work performance.

PROCEDURE

This study follows a narrative review approach and synthesizes existing research on the impact of leadership styles on employee engagement and job satisfaction in healthcare settings. Relevant peer-

reviewed articles were selected based on the inclusion criteria, analyzed for key themes, and summarized to provide insights into effective leadership strategies.

MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE NARRATIVE REVIEW

Transformational Leadership

This leadership style is the most effective in the healthcare sector. Leaders who motivate, inspire, and support their teams help employees feel more engaged and satisfied with their work. It also helps reduce stress and burnout among healthcare workers and improves the quality of patient care.

Servant Leadership

It focuses on helping and supporting employees. It makes workers feel valued and happy, leading to better teamwork and ethical decision-making. It reduces stress and makes employees feel more committed to their jobs.

Democratic Leadership

It encourages teamwork and shared decision-making. Employees feel respected and included, which boosts morale and work engagement. This leads to better problem-solving and commitment in the workplace.

Authoritarian Leadership

It uses strict rules and strong control over employees. This often leads to stress, low job satisfaction, and increased resignations. It can hurt teamwork and reduce the quality of patient care.

Laissez-Faire Leadership

It involves very little supervision from leaders. This can cause confusion and a lack of direction in healthcare teams. Employees may feel unsupported and become less productive.

Digital Leadership

Technology is used to improve work efficiency and patient care. It helps teams communicate better and work smarter.

Role of Leadership Training

Training programs help leaders improve their skills, communicate better, and support their teams. Well-trained leaders can reduce stress, increase motivation, and create a positive working environment.

FUTURE IMPLICATIONS

Leadership Training and Development

Healthcare organizations should invest in structured leadership training programs to develop essential skills, such as communication, decision-making, and emotional intelligence. Training in transformational, servant, and democratic leadership can enhance teamwork, motivation, and efficiency among healthcare professionals. Continuous leadership assessments and feedback mechanisms should be implemented to help leaders adapt to and improve their approach.

Improving Workplace Culture and Employee Well-Being

Organizations should foster a positive and supportive work environment in which employees feel valued, heard, and motivated. Work-life balance initiatives should be encouraged to prevent burnout and stress caused by high workloads in healthcare settings. Leaders must practice empathy and active listening to address employees' concerns and boost job satisfaction.

Policy Development for Effective Leadership

Healthcare institutions should introduce leadership policies that promote collaborative decision-making, ethical leadership, and transparency. Guidelines should be established to ensure that leaders

actively engage with their teams and create an inclusive and productive work atmosphere. Government agencies and healthcare policymakers should focus on leadership competency frameworks to improve management quality in healthcare settings.

Integration of Digital Leadership and Technology

With advancements in healthcare technology, leaders should adopt digital tools to improve communication, workflow management, and patient care coordination. Virtual leadership strategies can be implemented for telemedicine teams and remote healthcare workers to improve their performance. AI-driven leadership analytics can be used to monitor employee engagement, work performance, and stress levels, helping leaders take proactive measures.

Future Research Directions

Further studies are needed to explore the long-term effects of leadership styles on healthcare performance and patient satisfaction. Future research should examine how leadership influences mental health and burnout prevention among healthcare workers. Comparative studies between different cultural and healthcare settings can provide deeper insights into the universal applicability of leadership strategies.

LIMITATION

This study had several limitations. First, it relies only on PubMed and Semantic Scholar, which may have excluded relevant studies from other databases. As a narrative review, it does not include statistical analysis, making the findings more descriptive than conclusive. Additionally, the reviewed studies used different research methods and sample sizes, making direct comparisons challenging. The study also does not explore other influencing factors such as organizational policies and team dynamics, which can impact leadership effectiveness. Furthermore, publication bias may have been present, as studies with positive results are more likely to be published. Finally, the findings may not be fully applicable to all cultural and regional healthcare settings, as leadership effectiveness varies across different contexts.

CONCLUSION

This study examined how different leadership styles impact work performance, job satisfaction, and employee engagement in the healthcare industry. Effective leadership is crucial for maintaining a positive work environment, improving teamwork, and ensuring high-quality care.

The findings suggest that transformational, servant, and Demeke leadership styles contribute to better job satisfaction and engagement, whereas authoritarian and laissez-faire leadership may lead to stress and lower performance. Leadership training programs can help healthcare professionals develop the necessary skills to create supportive and efficient workplaces.

Future research should focus on the long-term effects of leadership development programs and explore how leadership styles can be adapted to different healthcare settings. By prioritizing strong and positive leadership, healthcare organizations can enhance employee well-being and patient outcomes.

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