

LEADERSHIP STYLES AND WORK ENGAGEMENT: AN INVESTIGATION INTO EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP PRACTICE

GAYA KEPEMIMPINAN DAN KETERLIBATAN KERJA: PENELITIAN TERHADAP PRAKTIK KEPEMIMPINAN YANG EFEKTIF

Syah Abadi Mendrofa

Universitas Nias

*syahabadi.mendrofa@gmail.com

**Corresponding Author*

ABSTRACT

Significant changes in the world of work, particularly due to the COVID-19 pandemic, have prompted many organizations to adapt to hybrid and remote work models. Even though digital leadership is a crucial factor in increasing work engagement, not much research has explored the influence of digital leadership style on employee engagement in this context. This research aims to analyze various digital leadership styles and their impact on work engagement in hybrid and remote work environments through a systematic literature review approach. The research results show that leadership styles such as transformational, servant, and agile leadership have a positive impact on employee engagement, while transactional leadership styles tend to be less effective in this context. The implications of this research provide insights for leaders to adopt a more adaptive and humane approach in increasing employee engagement in a dynamic digital work environment.

Keywords: Digital Leadership Style, Work Engagement, Hybrid Work, Remote Work, Transformational Leadership, Agile Leadership

ABSTRAK

Perubahan signifikan dalam dunia kerja, khususnya akibat pandemi COVID-19, telah mendorong banyak organisasi untuk beradaptasi dengan model kerja hybrid dan remote. Meskipun digital leadership menjadi faktor krusial dalam meningkatkan keterlibatan kerja, belum banyak penelitian yang mengeksplorasi pengaruh gaya kepemimpinan digital terhadap keterlibatan karyawan dalam konteks ini. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis berbagai gaya kepemimpinan digital dan dampaknya terhadap keterlibatan kerja di lingkungan kerja hybrid dan remote melalui pendekatan tinjauan literatur sistematis. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa gaya kepemimpinan seperti transformational, servant, dan agile leadership memiliki dampak positif terhadap keterlibatan karyawan, sementara gaya kepemimpinan transactional cenderung kurang efektif dalam konteks tersebut. Implikasi penelitian ini memberikan wawasan bagi pemimpin untuk mengadopsi pendekatan yang lebih adaptif dan manusiawi dalam meningkatkan keterlibatan karyawan di lingkungan kerja digital yang dinamis.

Kata Kunci: Gaya Kepemimpinan Digital, Keterlibatan Kerja, Hybrid Work, Remote Work, Transformational Leadership, Agile Leadership

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated significant transformations in organizational structures and work practices, leading to the widespread adoption of hybrid work environments. These changes require a reevaluation of leadership styles, especially the emergence of digital leadership, which leverages technology to improve communication, collaboration, and productivity among geographically dispersed teams. Digital leadership is characterized by its ability to overcome virtual communication challenges, build trust remotely, and create an environment that supports collaboration and engagement (Saurage-Altenloh, 2023; Cremers & Curşeu, 2023; Odeh et al., 2021).

The concept of work engagement is increasingly gaining attention as an important indicator of employee well-being and organizational productivity. High levels of engagement

correlate with emotional commitment and a strong desire to contribute to the success of the organization, which ultimately increases productivity (Hajjami & Crocco, 2023; Eichenauer et al., 2021). However, in hybrid and remote work settings, engagement can be threatened by feelings of isolation, communication barriers, and reduced connectivity between employees and their organizations (Kien & Konosu, 2023; Oruh et al., 2021). Leaders who adopt effective digital leadership strategies are critical in overcoming these challenges, as they can implement practices that encourage engagement and reduce the risks associated with remote work environments (Evans et al., 2021).

Research shows that transformational leadership, which emphasizes inspiration and motivation, plays an important role in increasing employee engagement, especially in hybrid environments (Um-e-Rubbab et al., 2021; Meiryani et al., 2022). However, the effectiveness of different leadership styles may vary based on the context of remote work compared to in-office work. For example, transactional leadership may be more effective in building commitment among remote employees, while transformational leadership may be more suitable for employees who work in the office (Łucjan, 2023; Horoub & Zargar, 2022). These differences highlight the importance of an adaptive leadership approach, which considers the unique needs of various work environments (Pattison & Corser, 2022).

Additionally, this pandemic emphasizes the importance of leaders in building resilience in organizations. Effective leadership in times of crisis not only involves managing immediate challenges, but also creating an adaptive and supportive culture (Coun et al., 2021; Yulianti et al., 2022). Leaders who demonstrate compassion and understanding can significantly reduce employee stress and improve overall well-being, thereby encouraging a more engaged workforce (Oruh et al., 2021; Meiryani et al., 2022). As organizations continue to navigate the complexities of hybrid work, the role of digital leadership in maintaining employee engagement and organizational resilience remains critical (Peng et al., 2022; Damayanti, 2023).

In conclusion, the transition to a hybrid work environment requires a profound transformation in leadership styles, with digital leadership emerging as a crucial factor in building employee engagement and organizational resilience. By adopting adaptive strategies that address the specific needs of remote teams, leaders can effectively address the challenges posed by the pandemic and create a supportive work environment that increases productivity and well-being.

As the popularity of hybrid and remote work environments increases, a gap has emerged in the literature regarding how digital leadership styles contribute to work engagement. Although much research has addressed various traditional leadership styles (such as transformational and transactional leadership) and their impact on engagement, there has been little attention paid to digital leadership styles and their impact in the context of this new work environment. Most existing research focuses on the physical work environment, assuming that work engagement is determined primarily by the leader's physical presence and direct interactions.

In the context of remote and hybrid work, the dynamics of the relationship between leaders and employees change drastically, where physical distance and limited in-person communication become obstacles that digital leaders must overcome. This gap reveals an urgent need to understand how certain digital leadership styles, such as digital transformational leadership, servant leadership, or agile leadership, influence employee engagement in an increasingly digitized work environment. This research aims to answer unanswered questions in the literature and provide new understanding about effective leadership practices in managing hybrid or remote teams.

This literature review aims to analyze and synthesize existing research on digital leadership styles and their impact on work engagement in hybrid and remote contexts. Through this analysis, it is hoped that this study can identify common patterns that emerge in successful digital leadership styles, as well as uncover areas that are still poorly understood and

require further research. This study also aims to provide insight into how certain digital leadership styles can be applied to maintain and increase work engagement among employees working remotely, and how such practices may differ compared to leadership in a conventional work environment.

Through this review, this study not only focuses on the role of leaders in supporting individual employees, but also on their broader contribution to team performance and organizational success in facing the challenges brought by hybrid and remote work systems. Thus, the results of this study are expected to provide strategic recommendations for leaders and organizations adapting to digital work models, as well as encourage further research in the field of digital leadership and work engagement.

To provide a clear focus, this study was designed to answer the main research questions: **"How do digital leadership styles influence work engagement in hybrid and remote work environments?"** This question aims to explore the relationship between digital leadership styles and employee engagement levels in hybrid and remote work contexts. This research will not only assess the effectiveness of various digital leadership styles, but also try to explore the specific factors that support work engagement in situations where physical interaction between the leader and the team is very limited. Thus, it is hoped that this research can provide a deeper understanding of leadership practices that are relevant and effective in overcoming the challenges of work engagement in the digital era.

2. METHODS

2.1. Literature Search Strategy

The literature search process for this study was carried out systematically to ensure broad and comprehensive coverage of research relevant to the topic of digital leadership and work engagement in hybrid or remote environments. The search process begins by identifying key keywords and phrases that are directly related to the topic, such as "digital leadership styles," "work engagement," "hybrid work environment," "remote work," "virtual leadership," and "employee engagement." Additionally, other related terms such as "transformational digital leadership" and "agile leadership in remote settings" were also used to broaden the search results and cover a variety of digital leadership styles.

These keywords and phrases were used to search several major academic databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, and Google Scholar. Scopus and Web of Science were chosen because they both provide access to articles in highly reputable journals and are frequently used in international academic literature to access research indexed in Scopus Q1 journals. Google Scholar is used as an adjunct to reach publications and resources that may not be available in other databases. The search process focused on a range of publications from 2015 to 2024, to ensure that the literature reviewed was relevant to the latest developments in digital technology and hybrid work dynamics that have emerged in recent years.

2.2. Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To keep this literature review focused and relevant, inclusion and exclusion criteria were used in study selection. Inclusion criteria include:

- Article examining digital leadership styles in the context of hybrid or remote work and their impact on work engagement.
- Studies published in journals peer-reviewed, especially in journals indexed by Scopus or Web of Science, to ensure quality and credibility.
- Articles that combine quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods approaches in examining the relationship between digital leadership and work engagement, to gain a comprehensive understanding of the subject.

Meanwhile, exclusion criteria include:

- Studies that only examine leadership styles in the context of physical work environments without including aspects of digitalization or remote work.
- Articles published in non-peer-reviewed journals or not indexed in major databases, to maintain the quality of the information source.
- Articles that do not use a valid quantitative or qualitative approach or simply offer opinions without a strong research basis.

By using these criteria, the studies included in the literature analysis will focus more on the relationship between digital leadership and work engagement in hybrid or remote environments, eliminating articles that lack relevance or quality.

2.3. Data Extraction and Synthesis

After the article selection process was complete, a data extraction procedure was carried out to extract important information from each selected study. The extracted data includes several main elements, namely:

- Research methodology: the research approach used (quantitative, qualitative, or mixed methods) as well as the population and sample involved in the research.
- Researched digital leadership styles: a type of digital leadership such as transformational digital leadership, servant leadership in digital environments, or agile leadership which is studied in the context of hybrid or remote work.
- Research results related to work engagement: key findings showing the impact of digital leadership styles on employee work engagement levels in hybrid or remote environments.

The synthesis process was carried out using a thematic analysis approach to identify recurring patterns and trends in research. This thematic analysis includes steps such as grouping findings by digital leadership style, comparative analysis of work engagement outcomes, and identification of contextual factors that may influence digital leadership effectiveness in hybrid or remote environments. The results of this analysis will be categorized into key themes that reflect trends in effective digital leadership and their impact on employee engagement. The aim is to reveal the main factors that support work engagement in digital contexts as well as identify areas that require further research.

3. RESULTS

3.1. Overview of Selected Studies

In this review, a number of articles have been selected for further analysis. The selected articles cover a variety of research types, including quantitative studies using surveys and statistical analysis, qualitative studies using in-depth interviews or case study, as well as mixed methods research that combines quantitative and qualitative approaches. These studies were conducted across geographic locations, including North America, Europe, Asia, and Australia, to provide a global perspective on digital leadership styles and work engagement in hybrid and remote environments.

The characteristics of the population involved in the study were varied, including employees from the technology, finance, education and healthcare sectors working in organizations with high levels of digital adoption. Additionally, some studies also include populations in leadership positions and junior employees to explore how different levels in organizations respond to different digital leadership styles. With this diversity, the selected studies are able to provide a rich picture of the dynamics of digital leadership and its impact on work engagement across various sectors and positions.

3.2. Main Findings Related to Digital Leadership Styles

In hybrid and remote contexts, several digital leadership styles stand out for their frequency of use and impact on work engagement. The main styles identified are:

1. Transformational Digital Leadership: Leaders who apply a digital transformational style are able to motivate employees through an inspiring vision and personal support, which can increase commitment and intrinsic motivation. Several studies have found that transformational leadership, especially when conducted digitally, helps employees stay connected to organizational goals while working remotely, which increases work engagement and loyalty.
2. Transactional Leadership: In a hybrid work environment, a transactional leadership style is often applied to organize routine tasks and clear targets. Studies find that although this style is effective in increasing productivity, its impact on work engagement tends to be lower than that of the transformational style. This is because the transactional style focuses more on results and rewards, so that aspects of employee emotional involvement are less accommodated.
3. Servant Leadership: Servant leadership conducted through digital media focuses on employee empowerment and their well-being, which has been found to have a positive impact on work engagement in hybrid and remote settings. Leaders who prioritize employee needs, listen to their feedback, and show empathy succeed in increasing feelings of belonging and job satisfaction, especially in challenging virtual work situations.
4. Agile Leadership: Agile leadership is applied for rapid adaptation in hybrid or remote environments, with a focus on collaboration and flexibility. Leaders who adopt this style are able to respond quickly to change and encourage innovation within the team. Studies show that agile leadership can increase work engagement, because employees feel empowered to participate in decision making and respond to dynamic needs in a hybrid work environment.

Each of these leadership styles has a unique influence on work engagement. Transformational and servant leadership show a significant positive impact on employee emotional involvement and commitment, while transactional leadership tends to be more effective in achieving results measured quantitatively. Agile leadership, meanwhile, allows for the flexibility and adaptability that employees greatly value in an ever-changing work environment.

3.3. Trends in Work Engagement Outcomes

The work engagement outcomes identified in this study include several key aspects:

- Employee Commitment: Many studies show that employees who feel supported by adaptive digital leaders tend to have higher commitment to the organization. This commitment increases if the leadership style prioritizes aspects of empowerment and support.
- Job Satisfaction: Job satisfaction was found to be high in employees led by servant and transformational leaders in hybrid or remote contexts. A leadership style that focuses on employee well-being creates a supportive work environment, even when employees are working remotely.
- Productivity: Transactional and agile leadership styles that are results-oriented and flexible are considered capable of increasing employee productivity in hybrid or remote settings. This is due to the clarity of targets and adaptive skills possessed by leaders.
- Employee Well-Being: Employee well-being is the main focus in servant and transformational leadership styles. Leaders who care about employee well-being create a work atmosphere that supports long-term engagement and satisfaction.

In general, work engagement is positively influenced by a leadership style that is adaptive and responsive to hybrid and remote needs. Leadership styles that encourage innovation, empowerment, and attention to individual needs appear to have the most significant impact on employee work engagement.

3.4. Identified Gaps in the Literature

Several gaps in the literature were discovered in this review:

1. **Lack of Longitudinal Studies:** Most existing research is cross-sectional, which limits understanding of the long-term impact of digital leadership styles on work engagement. Longitudinal studies are needed to evaluate the ongoing influence and changes in digital leadership styles in response to hybrid or remote work dynamics.
2. **Lack of Data in Certain Sectors:** Most of the existing literature focuses on the technology and financial sectors, while other sectors, such as manufacturing or public services, are less explored. In fact, different work contexts can influence the effectiveness of certain leadership styles in hybrid or remote work environments.
3. **Lack of Studies in Different Cultural Contexts:** Many studies were conducted in Western countries, thus lacking coverage of different cultural contexts and social values, which may influence leadership style preferences and employee responses. More geographically diverse studies would help provide a more holistic understanding of the influence of digital leadership.

4. DISCUSSIONS

4.1. Interpretation of Findings

A review of the impact of various digital leadership styles on employee work engagement in hybrid and remote contexts reveals important insights into how leadership approaches can influence employee motivation and performance. In particular, transformational leadership and servant leadership styles have proven to be very effective in encouraging employee engagement, especially in environments characterized by limited physical interaction.

Transformational leadership, which emphasizes long-term vision and individual empowerment, has proven effective in keeping employees engaged by providing clear goals and direction. This is in line with findings from Cortellazzo et al., who distinguish transformational leaders as those who inspire followers to exceed expectations, in contrast to transactional leaders who focus more on compliance through providing rewards (Cortellazzo et al., 2019). The importance of a supportive organizational climate, as discussed by Sulistiyorini, further strengthens the effectiveness of transformational leadership, because a positive climate increases exchanges between leaders and team members, which in turn increases employee commitment and involvement (Sulistiyorini, 2023).

Likewise, servant leadership, which prioritizes employee well-being and development, has been linked to increased work engagement. Research shows that servant leadership can reduce feelings of isolation in remote work environments by meeting employees' personal needs, ultimately increasing their well-being and engagement (Khan et al., 2021). This is supported by findings from Khan et al., who highlight the holistic nature of servant leadership as a leadership style that is particularly suited to ensuring engagement in the knowledge-based economy (Khan et al., 2021). Additionally, servant leadership's ability to adapt to individual employee needs is critical in a hybrid environment, where traditional engagement methods may be less effective.

In contrast, transactional leadership, which focuses more on short-term results and reward systems, may not be able to build the deep emotional connections necessary to sustain engagement in remote contexts. Although effective for productivity, this leadership style lacks

the psychological support that employees often need when working in isolation (Nguyen et al., 2023). Findings from Farhan et al. suggests that a purely transactional approach may not be enough in the digital era, where relationship dynamics and emotional connections are increasingly important for employee satisfaction and performance (Farhan et al., 2023).

Agile leadership, characterized by flexibility and responsiveness to changing situations, has also proven beneficial in hybrid environments. This leadership style allows for rapid strategy adjustments based on employee needs and situational demands, thereby increasing engagement. The ability to adapt and change is critical in today's dynamic work environment, where leaders must navigate the complexities of remote and hybrid work arrangements.

Overall, this review emphasizes the need for a digital leadership style that is not only adaptive, but also supports individual employees' needs to maintain high levels of engagement in hybrid and remote work contexts. Transformational leadership and servant leadership styles emerge as the most effective, while transactional leadership may lack the ability to build the emotional connection necessary for deep engagement. These findings provide valuable insight into the evolving leadership landscape in the digital era, emphasizing the importance for leaders to create an environment that prioritizes employee well-being and engagement.

4.2. Implications for Theory and Practice

This review makes a significant contribution to the development of leadership theory in digital contexts, particularly in understanding how different leadership styles can adapt their approaches to maintaining work engagement in hybrid and remote settings. In the literature on leadership, this review adds to the body of knowledge regarding the role of digital leadership which includes not only technical skills, but also interpersonal skills to create stronger connections and support employee well-being in a distributed work environment.

From a practical perspective, these findings can be used as a reference for leaders in modern organizations to be more selective and adaptive in using digital leadership styles. Some recommendations that can be taken include:

1. **Increasing Inspirational Interactions:** Leaders who adopt a transformational approach can schedule regular virtual engagement sessions to convey the team's vision and goals, which helps employees feel more connected to the company's mission.
2. **Provide Personal Support:** Leaders who adopt an approach servant leadership It is best to increase one-on-one communication with employees to listen to challenges and provide individual support, thereby helping to increase the sense of community and employee well-being.
3. **Implement Flexibility in Assignments:** By applying the approach agile, leaders can give employees the freedom to complete their tasks in the way that best suits them, which can reduce stress and increase work engagement.

These implications make an important contribution to digital leadership practice by emphasizing the need to pay attention to human aspects, such as individual well-being and adaptation, which are key in maintaining employee engagement in the modern work environment.

4.3. Limitations of the Review

This review has several limitations that need to be acknowledged. First, language limitations because this review only includes articles in English. This may lead to bias in study selection and neglect of research in other languages that may offer different perspectives. Second, this review mostly uses studies published in peer-reviewed journals with certain indexes (Scopus and Web of Science), so articles outside these indexes may not be covered, although some of them may be of comparable quality and relevance.

Additionally, most of the research included in this review focuses on industry sectors that have been quicker to adopt digital technologies, such as the technology and financial sectors, while other sectors may face different challenges in implementing digital leadership in

hybrid and remote environments. This is a limitation because it does not provide a comprehensive view of how digital leadership styles are applied in various sectors.

4.4. Suggestions for Future Research

This review opens up several further research opportunities that could enrich the literature related to digital leadership and work engagement in hybrid and remote contexts. Some recommendations for future research include:

1. **Longitudinal Research:** Further research needs to be conducted with a longitudinal approach to understand the long-term impact of digital leadership styles on work engagement. These long-term studies will provide insight into the changes that occur in work engagement over time in hybrid and remote contexts.
2. **Exploration in Different Sectors:** Given that most studies focus on sectors that are rapidly adopting technology, research in other sectors, such as manufacturing, public services, or education, can help understand the unique challenges and dynamics these sectors present in implementing digital leadership.
3. **Cross-Cultural Studies:** Given that cultural differences can influence employees' perceptions of certain leadership styles, research across cultures can help understand whether and how digital leadership should be adapted to specific cultural values to maximize work engagement.
4. **Mixed Methods Approach:** Studies that use mixed methods, such as combining quantitative data from surveys with qualitative data from interviews or focus groups, can provide more comprehensive and in-depth insight into the experience of employees working in hybrid and remote environments.

It is hoped that these recommendations will make a significant contribution to further developments in digital leadership research, with a focus on ways to increase work engagement in modern work environments that increasingly rely on technology.

5. CONCLUSION

This literature review concludes that certain digital leadership styles, esp transformational, servant, And agile leadership, has an important role in increasing work engagement in hybrid and remote environments. Leadership styles oriented towards support, flexibility, and empowerment have proven to be more effective in maintaining employee engagement and satisfaction amidst the physical limitations that arise in hybrid and remote work settings. On the other hand, leadership style transactional, which focuses on controls and incentives, while efficient in the short term, tends to be less than optimal in creating deep emotional engagement in employees working in more isolated conditions.

The main contribution of this review is the identification of patterns that suggest that an adaptive and humanistic digital leadership style is better suited to meeting employee needs in the modern, more flexible, technology-based work context. This review fills a gap in the literature by providing a more comprehensive understanding of how various digital leadership styles can be applied to maintain work engagement, especially as companies transition to hybrid and remote work models.

The importance of this research for leaders in hybrid and remote environments is increasingly clear as it provides practical guidance on the most effective leadership strategies for managing employee engagement in the digital era. This review confirms that leadership that is responsive to changing technology and employee needs can be key to creating a productive and prosperous work environment, even in the absence of consistent physical interaction. So, this research provides a foundation for leaders who want to develop their digital skills and strengthen their team's engagement in the ever-evolving modern work environment.

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