



Revisiting Leadership Style and Behaviour: Examining Fluidity, Adaptability, and Contextual Contingency in Contemporary Leadership Discourse

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Abstract

Leadership studies have historically conceptualised leadership style and behaviour in divergent ways, with some scholars treating them as stable traits, while emerging perspectives emphasise their fluidity and situational contingency. This study revisits the discourse surrounding leadership style and behaviour, examining how contextual, organisational, and societal factors influence adaptive leadership. Drawing on transformational and situational leadership theories, behavioural and contingency frameworks, and empirical studies, the analysis highlights that leadership is neither static nor universally applicable. Leaders adjust their behaviours and style in response to organisational dynamics, crises, stakeholder expectations, and cultural norms. The current study also interrogates the limitations of classical trait-based models and their assumption of fixed leadership dispositions. A systematic literature review identifies trends, inconsistencies, and theoretical gaps in understanding the dynamic nature of leadership. The current analysis demonstrates that recognising the fluidity of leadership is essential for both theory development and practical leadership training. This study concludes by proposing a conceptual integration that positions leadership style and behaviour as contextually mediated and adaptive, offering directions for empirical research on situational leadership effectiveness.

Keywords: leadership style, leadership behaviour, situational leadership, adaptive leadership, organisational context, leadership theory

Introduction

Leadership style and behaviour are foundational constructs in organisational and political leadership scholarship, shaping how leaders influence followers, make decisions, and achieve strategic objectives. Classical theories often conceptualise leadership style as a relatively

stable attribute, reflecting enduring patterns in decision-making, interpersonal relations, and influence strategies (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939; Bass, 1990; Bass & Bass, 2008). Similarly, leadership behaviour has frequently been codified into stationary typologies, such as task-oriented or people-oriented behaviours (Stogdill, 1974). These frameworks suggest that effective leadership can be understood as a consistent set of traits or actions, largely invariant across contexts. While useful for establishing foundational concepts, such static models risk oversimplifying the complex and dynamic nature of real-world leadership practice, particularly in environments characterised by rapid change, organisational crises, or socio-political volatility.

Emerging evidence, however, challenges these assumptions of stability. Situational and contingency theories highlight that leaders often adapt both style and behaviour in response to changing circumstances, follower readiness, task complexity, and environmental uncertainty (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969; Fiedler, 1967). Transformational leadership literature further demonstrates that leaders may shift behaviours to motivate, inspire, and align followers with organisational goals depending on situational imperatives (Burns, 1978; Bass & Riggio, 2006). Such perspectives emphasise leadership as a relational and contextually mediated process rather than a fixed characteristic, illustrating the fluidity inherent in effective leadership. This growing recognition of adaptability underscores the necessity of examining leadership behaviour as contingent, dynamic, and responsive to complex organisational and societal demands.

Despite these insights, the literature remains fragmented. Many studies continue to treat leadership style and behaviour as stationary constructs, largely within disciplinary silos, such as organisational psychology, management studies, or political science (Akpapere et al., 2019; Cheng & Zhu, 2025; Dextras-Gauthier et al., 2023; Onesti, 2023). Comparative, longitudinal, or cross-context analyses remain rare, limiting understanding of how leaders adjust their style and behaviour over time or across different environmental pressures. Moreover, empirical research examining real-world manifestations of adaptive leadership across multiple sectors, cultures, and historical periods is limited, creating a gap in both theory and practice.

The tension between stationary and fluid conceptualisations presents a significant gap in the literature. While trait- and behavioural-oriented research emphasises consistency, contemporary scholarship increasingly highlights flexibility, responsiveness, and situational calibration as central to leadership effectiveness (Yukl, 2013). Few studies synthesise these perspectives within a unified framework that captures both the stable and adaptive dimensions of leadership. Consequently, existing theory may inadequately reflect the realities of leadership in dynamic and complex organisational, political, and societal contexts.

Addressing this gap, the present study seeks to revisit leadership style and behaviour discourse by critically integrating stationary and fluid conceptualisations. The study analyses how leadership constructs evolve in response to situational pressures, environmental uncertainty, and organisational challenges. By synthesising theoretical perspectives, including transformational leadership, contingency theory, situational leadership, and behavioural

frameworks, this research provides a multidimensional understanding of leadership as both principled and adaptive.

Furthermore, this study examines the implications of leadership fluidity for theory development, organisational practice, and leadership training. Leadership is not merely a set of static traits or behaviours but a dynamic interplay between personal style, situational demands, and organisational context (Bass & Riggio, 2006). The current research explores how leaders balance consistency with flexibility, ensuring that decision-making remains principled while responsive to emerging challenges. It also considers the tension between ethical stewardship and strategic responsiveness, recognising that leaders often operate in environments with competing demands and complex moral considerations (Yukl, 2013). By analysing leadership across multiple theoretical frameworks, including transformational, situational, and contingency perspectives, the study demonstrates the necessity of adaptive behaviours for effective leadership. The findings emphasise that the capacity to adjust communication, decision-making, and relational engagement is central to sustaining legitimacy and follower trust. Ultimately, this analysis contributes to a more nuanced and practically relevant conceptualisation of leadership, bridging the gap between classical assumptions of stability and contemporary understandings of adaptability.

In summary, this study addresses the persistent gap in leadership scholarship by offering a holistic, contextually grounded, and integrative analysis of leadership style and behaviour. It recognises that leadership embodies both stable and adaptive dimensions, challenging the assumption that effective leadership is rigid and trait-bound (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). By highlighting fluidity, adaptability, and situational responsiveness, the research underscores the importance of context in shaping leadership effectiveness. The current study also informs leadership development programmes by emphasising scenario-based training, ethical decision-making, and context-sensitive communication strategies. Moreover, it provides a conceptual framework that can guide organisational policy in cultivating flexible leadership practices across hierarchical levels. The present findings lay a foundation for future empirical studies aimed at operationalising adaptive leadership, measuring its impact on organisational outcomes, and examining its application across cultural and sectoral contexts. Overall, the study advances theoretical understanding, bridges classical and contemporary perspectives, and contributes actionable insights for leadership scholarship and practice.

Theoretical Perspectives

Several leadership frameworks illuminate the inherently fluid nature of leadership. Transformational leadership theory emphasises that effective leaders adjust their behaviour to inspire, motivate, and align followers with a shared vision and ethical imperatives (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1990). Transformational leaders are not static in their approach; they continuously respond to follower needs, organisational crises, and societal challenges, blending moral guidance with strategic action. This perspective foregrounds adaptability as central to leadership effectiveness, recognising that leaders may shift emphasis between task achievement and relational engagement depending on circumstances. Transformational leadership also underscores the ethical dimension, where leaders must reconcile

organisational goals with social responsibility. By framing leadership as dynamic and morally grounded, this theory challenges classical assumptions of stable, unchanging style. Consequently, transformational leadership provides a lens through which to understand leadership as an evolving and contextually responsive process.

Situational leadership theory complements transformational approaches by linking leadership behaviour to follower readiness, task complexity, and environmental conditions (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). Leaders are expected to modulate directive and supportive behaviours in real time, shifting strategies to maximise performance and engagement. This theory highlights that no single style is universally effective, emphasising the contingency of leadership behaviour on contextual variables. Leaders may adopt a more participatory style during periods of high follower competence, while exercising directive guidance in times of uncertainty or crisis. Situational theory, therefore, positions leadership as adaptive, requiring ongoing assessment and adjustment. It bridges the gap between stationary conceptualisations and the fluid realities observed in practice. By integrating follower characteristics with task demands, situational leadership illuminates the interactional nature of style and behaviour.

Behavioural and contingency theories further inform the understanding of leadership fluidity. Behavioural models historically categorised leaders as task-oriented or relationship-oriented (Fleishman, 1953), yet such classifications often fail to capture the nuanced ways leaders adjust across settings. Contingency theory posits that the effectiveness of a particular style or behaviour is mediated by environmental, organisational, and structural factors, including power dynamics, culture, and external pressures (Fiedler, 1967). Leaders may therefore display hybrid behaviours, combining task focus with relational sensitivity in response to situational imperatives. Both frameworks highlight the limitations of static typologies, advocating for a more flexible understanding of leadership practice. By situating style and behaviour within context, they reinforce that adaptability is a core feature of effective leadership. The intersection of behavioural and contingency perspectives offers a foundation for analysing leadership as both patterned and responsive.

Collectively, these theoretical perspectives converge on the principle that leadership style and behaviour are dynamic, contingent, and responsive to context. While some scholarship continues to treat traits and behaviours as stationary, the evidence from transformational, situational, behavioural, and contingency theories indicates otherwise. Leadership effectiveness depends on a leader's ability to modulate style, communicate strategically, and respond to evolving organisational and environmental demands (Yukl, 2013). Understanding leadership as fluid allows scholars and practitioners to account for temporal shifts, crises, and technological or societal changes. This multidimensional view also highlights the ethical and relational dimensions of leadership, recognising that adaptability must be coupled with principled decision-making. Importantly, this synthesis creates a framework for exploring how leaders balance consistency with flexibility, enabling deeper analysis of leadership behaviour across contexts. In sum, leadership style and behaviour cannot be divorced from situational pressures, organisational realities, and societal expectations, underscoring the need for adaptive, context-sensitive frameworks.

Methodological Approach

This study employs a qualitative conceptual-analytical research design to revisit the discourse on leadership style and behaviour (Jabareen, 2009). Such a design is particularly suited for synthesising theory and empirical evidence where the aim is not to test hypotheses statistically but to develop a nuanced understanding of complex constructs. The approach allows the researchers to examine leadership style and behaviour across historical, organisational, and cultural contexts, highlighting fluidity, adaptability, and situational responsiveness. By integrating multiple streams of leadership literature, the current study identifies patterns, tensions, and theoretical divergences. Conceptual-analytical methods also facilitate the comparison of stationary versus fluid models of leadership, bridging gaps between classical and contemporary frameworks. This approach acknowledges that leadership is embedded within environmental, structural, and relational constraints. The design supports critical reflection on how situational pressures shape leadership practice over time.

Data sources were selected to ensure breadth, depth, and analytical relevance. Peer-reviewed leadership journals provided contemporary insights into adaptive leadership, situational frameworks, and behavioural flexibility. Foundational texts offered classical perspectives on trait, behavioural, and contingency models (Lewin, Lippitt, & White, 1939; Stogdill, 1974). Organisational case studies enabled observation of real-world leadership responses to crises, change initiatives, and environmental uncertainty. Meta-analyses and systematic reviews contributed aggregated evidence on the effectiveness of different leadership styles across sectors. Inclusion criteria prioritised works that explicitly addressed the evolution, modification, or contextual adaptation of leadership style and behaviour. Excluded sources focused solely on stationary typologies or descriptive leadership inventories without situational analysis.

Thematic synthesis was employed to organise and analyse the collected literature systematically. Key themes included leadership adaptability, situational influence, ethical responsiveness, task versus relational orientation, and interaction with organisational and societal pressures. Patterns were identified across disciplinary boundaries, highlighting convergences and divergences in conceptualisation. The analysis examined both structural and individual factors influencing leadership behaviour, such as organisational culture, stakeholder expectations, and environmental volatility. This approach also allowed the study to trace historical shifts in understanding leadership from stationary to dynamic frameworks. Comparative analysis highlighted tensions between classical assumptions of fixed traits and contemporary evidence of adaptive, context-sensitive leadership. Triangulation across multiple theoretical and empirical sources enhanced interpretive validity and analytical rigour (Denzin, 2012).

Ethical and methodological considerations guided the research process. Intellectual integrity was maintained through accurate citation of primary sources and critical engagement with authors' arguments. Reflexive interpretation acknowledged the researcher's normative assumptions and potential bias in framing leadership fluidity. Transparency in data selection,

coding, and synthesis ensured replicability and credibility of findings. The study explicitly sought to address the literature gap regarding longitudinal and cross-situational analyses of leadership style and behaviour. By integrating theory with empirical observation, the methodology enables a multidimensional understanding of leadership as both patterned and responsive. Ultimately, this approach provides a conceptual platform for advancing leadership theory and informing practice in dynamic organisational and societal contexts.

Findings and Discussion

Fluidity in Leadership Style

Evidence increasingly supports the notion that leadership style is neither fixed nor immutable, but highly responsive to context and situational demands. Transformational leaders, for instance, may adapt their behaviour to be participative, directive, or visionary depending on the organisational culture, follower needs, and external pressures (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Such behavioural flexibility enables leaders to maintain morale, sustain engagement, and guide institutions through periods of uncertainty or crisis. For example, during financial or political turbulence, leaders may emphasise directive approaches to ensure clarity and compliance, while in periods of stability, participative strategies may foster innovation and collaboration. Stationary interpretations of leadership style risk oversimplifying this adaptive process, potentially misrepresenting the effectiveness and responsiveness of leaders. Recognising style as situationally contingent allows researchers and practitioners to better understand the mechanisms through which influence, motivation, and ethical guidance are operationalised. This perspective positions leadership as a dynamic, rather than static, phenomenon.

Behavioural flexibility is evident across sectors and leadership levels, from organisational executives to political leaders. Leaders who exhibit style fluidity adjust their approach to balance competing objectives, such as performance outcomes, follower development, and stakeholder trust (Yukl, 2013). Case studies of adaptive leadership show that individuals may alternate between task-oriented and people-oriented behaviours depending on situational urgency, resource constraints, or institutional pressures. Such adaptation demonstrates that leadership effectiveness depends on both consistency in values and responsiveness to changing circumstances. Moreover, dynamic style allows leaders to manage tension between short-term demands and long-term strategic goals. By contrast, fixed-style models fail to account for how leaders recalibrate approaches to emerging challenges. This limitation underscores the importance of integrating situational and adaptive perspectives into leadership theory.

Leadership style is also shaped by technological and communication environments. Contemporary leaders increasingly operate in digitally mediated spaces where social media, livestreaming, and instant feedback influence decision-making and public engagement (Kaplan & Haenlein, 2010). In these contexts, a leader's style may shift to enhance transparency, credibility, or emotional resonance with a dispersed audience. Stationary models of leadership cannot capture the iterative adjustments required to maintain influence

across multiple platforms and stakeholder groups. Similarly, historical analyses of leaders, such as Michael Manley in Jamaica, reveal that leadership style shifted in response to mass mobilisation, media attention, and geopolitical pressures (Stephens & Stephens, 1986). Comparative studies indicate that adaptive style is therefore not a novel phenomenon but an enduring feature of effective leadership across eras. Understanding style as fluid highlights the interplay between personal disposition, situational demands, and communication modalities.

Finally, the conceptualisation of leadership style as fluid has significant theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, it challenges the dominance of trait-based or stationary models, advocating for a synthesis of classical, contingency, and adaptive frameworks (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969; Bass, 1990). Practically, recognising fluidity equips leaders with strategies to navigate crises, cultivate follower engagement, and achieve organisational or societal objectives under uncertainty. It also informs leadership development programmes by emphasising situational awareness, reflective practice, and behavioural versatility. Despite growing empirical support, literature integrating fluidity with longitudinal or cross-context analysis remains limited. Consequently, this study addresses the gap by systematically examining leadership style as a dynamic construct across situations, sectors, and time periods. In doing so, it contributes to a more nuanced and operationally relevant understanding of effective leadership in complex environments.

Adaptive Leadership Behaviour

Leadership behaviour, like style, is highly contingent upon situational, organisational, and environmental factors. Leaders often alternate between transactional and transformational behaviours depending on task complexity, follower readiness, and institutional priorities (Yukl, 2013). Transactional behaviours, including monitoring, reward, and corrective action, are useful in structured environments or high-stakes operational contexts, whereas transformational behaviours inspire vision, innovation, and commitment. Empirical evidence shows that leaders who can modulate their behaviour according to context achieve greater organisational effectiveness, improved follower engagement, and enhanced team cohesion (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Rigid adherence to a single behavioural mode may undermine responsiveness, particularly in dynamic or crisis-prone environments. This highlights the need to conceptualise leadership behaviour as adaptive rather than stationary. Recognition of behavioural flexibility also emphasises the interplay between personal competence, situational assessment, and stakeholder expectations.

Behavioural adaptation is evident in both historical and contemporary leadership contexts. For example, political leaders like Michael Manley in Jamaica alternated between confrontational and collaborative behaviours to navigate Cold War geopolitics, domestic labour pressures, and economic dependency (Stephens & Stephens, 1986). Contemporary leaders, such as Mia Mottley of Barbados, similarly shift between policy-focused, evidence-based behaviours in international forums and motivational, participatory approaches domestically (Payne, 2004). These cases demonstrate that effective leaders monitor environmental cues, anticipate challenges, and tailor their actions to optimise influence and

legitimacy. Behavioural flexibility, therefore, is not incidental but central to adaptive leadership. Static typologies that categorise leaders as solely task-oriented or people-oriented fail to capture this dynamic responsiveness. The capacity for adaptation is increasingly critical in globalised, digitally mediated, and politically complex environments.

Situational and contingency theories provide conceptual tools for understanding behavioural fluidity. Contingency models emphasise that the effectiveness of any leadership behaviour is mediated by organisational structure, culture, and environmental constraints (Fiedler, 1967). Similarly, situational leadership theory posits that leaders must diagnose follower needs, readiness, and task requirements to determine appropriate behavioural responses (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). Integrating these perspectives allows for a more nuanced understanding of leadership behaviour as context-sensitive and adaptive. Behavioural flexibility is particularly crucial in crises, where rigid patterns may exacerbate uncertainty and reduce stakeholder confidence. Leaders capable of alternating between directive, supportive, and participatory behaviours demonstrate higher resilience and sustained influence. This adaptive approach underscores the interdependence between behaviour, context, and outcomes.

Finally, conceptualising leadership behaviour as adaptive has both theoretical and practical significance. Theoretically, it challenges models that assume behavioural consistency across time and context, advocating for frameworks that integrate contingency, situational, and transformational perspectives. Practically, recognising behavioural adaptability informs leadership development programmes by emphasising scenario-based learning, reflective practice, and real-time decision-making skills. It also encourages leaders to continuously monitor environmental cues, stakeholder reactions, and organisational performance to recalibrate behaviour as needed. Despite growing attention, longitudinal analyses of behavioural adaptation remain scarce, particularly studies that track changes across organisational crises or cross-cultural contexts. Addressing this gap, the present study synthesises evidence on adaptive leadership behaviour, highlighting its relevance for contemporary and historical leaders alike. By doing so, it contributes to a more operationally relevant understanding of leadership as a dynamic, contextually contingent practice.

Implications for Leadership Scholarship and Practice

Recognising the fluidity of leadership style and behaviour has significant theoretical implications. Traditional models that assume stationary traits or behaviours risk oversimplifying leadership dynamics and misrepresenting effectiveness (Stogdill, 1974). Integrating fluid and situational perspectives enables scholars to bridge classical trait, behavioural, and contingency theories with contemporary adaptive frameworks (Yukl, 2013). This synthesis allows for a multidimensional understanding of leadership that accounts for context, follower characteristics, and environmental constraints. It also challenges the assumption that leadership can be fully codified into static typologies, highlighting the importance of responsiveness and flexibility. By acknowledging adaptive variation, leadership theory can more accurately reflect real-world organisational and political practice. Such integration advances scholarship by providing a coherent framework for studying leaders across time, context, and culture.

From a practical standpoint, leadership development programmes must emphasise situational awareness and behavioural flexibility. Training should include scenario-based exercises, crisis simulations, and reflective practice to help leaders recognise when and how to adjust style and behaviour (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Leaders must learn to balance consistency and credibility with adaptability, ensuring that changes in behaviour do not undermine trust or organisational stability. Coaching, mentoring, and experiential learning provide mechanisms to cultivate these skills. Organisational structures should also support adaptive practice by encouraging feedback, decentralised decision-making, and dynamic problem-solving. Adaptive leaders are better positioned to respond to complex challenges, including technological disruption, globalisation, and shifting stakeholder expectations. These practices reinforce the link between theoretical insight and practical application.

Methodologically, the study highlights the need for longitudinal, cross-context, and mixed-methods research to capture leadership adaptability. Static surveys or short-term case studies may fail to detect behavioural shifts in response to environmental pressures (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969). Longitudinal designs allow researchers to trace how leaders modify style and behaviour over time, while comparative case studies can identify contextual determinants of adaptation. Incorporating qualitative and quantitative data enables triangulation, enhancing validity and depth of insight (Denzin, 2012). Such approaches can operationalise adaptive leadership, providing empirically grounded evidence of when and why leaders adjust. They also support the development of predictive frameworks for leadership effectiveness in diverse organisational and societal settings.

Finally, embracing fluidity in leadership scholarship encourages a holistic conception of leadership as a dynamic, relational, and contextually embedded process. Leaders are not simply the sum of their traits or predefined behaviours; they are active interpreters of situational cues, cultural expectations, and organisational realities. By integrating adaptive perspectives, scholars and practitioners can better understand how leaders sustain influence, motivate followers, and achieve objectives under changing conditions (Yukl, 2013). The recognition of fluidity also foregrounds ethical and strategic considerations, as leaders must navigate competing demands while maintaining legitimacy. This integrated approach contributes to theory development, informs leadership practice, and provides a foundation for future empirical investigation. Ultimately, understanding leadership as both stable and adaptive strengthens both scholarly coherence and practical relevance.

Conclusion

Revisiting the discourse on leadership style and behaviour confirms that both constructs are inherently dynamic and contextually shaped. Traditional stationary perspectives, which assume fixed traits or behaviours, overlook the adaptive capacity that leaders demonstrate in response to organisational, societal, and environmental pressures (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 2013). Evidence from transformational, situational, and contingency theories collectively illustrates that effective leaders continuously modulate their approach to balance competing objectives such as performance, morale, and ethical accountability. This study highlights that leadership cannot be fully understood without accounting for the fluidity of style and behaviour across

contexts. Recognising adaptability allows for a more accurate evaluation of leadership effectiveness, bridging the gap between classical and contemporary frameworks. By integrating multiple theoretical perspectives, the study provides a holistic lens for examining leadership as both principled and responsive. This perspective challenges scholars and practitioners to move beyond rigid typologies.

The analysis demonstrates that fluidity in leadership is not synonymous with inconsistency; rather, it reflects strategic responsiveness to situational demands. Leaders who adapt style and behaviour effectively can navigate crises, foster engagement, and sustain organisational legitimacy (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969; Bass & Riggio, 2006). The study emphasises that situational sensitivity and behavioural flexibility are central to moral and strategic leadership. Static conceptualisations risk misinterpreting leadership effectiveness and ignoring the nuanced strategies leaders employ in complex environments. Adaptive leadership supports ethical stewardship, stakeholder trust, and organisational resilience. Consequently, leadership theory should foreground the interplay between stability and flexibility as mutually reinforcing dimensions.

By addressing gaps in comparative and longitudinal analyses, this study contributes to an integrated conceptual framework for leadership research. Few prior studies systematically examine the interaction between stationary and adaptive dimensions across sectors, cultures, and organisational levels (Stogdill, 1974; Fleishman, 1953). This study synthesises historical, behavioural, and contingency-based perspectives to illuminate the mechanisms through which leaders modulate style and behaviour. Such integration enhances theoretical coherence and provides a basis for empirical operationalisation. Scholars can use this framework to design longitudinal studies, scenario-based research, and cross-cultural comparisons. Practitioners gain insight into how to develop leadership capacity that is both principled and contextually responsive. The framework thus serves as a bridge between theory, research, and practical leadership application.

Future research should empirically validate adaptive models using mixed-methods approaches, longitudinal designs, and cross-sectoral analysis. Investigating how leaders adjust style and behaviour in response to crises, technological change, and cultural variation can refine predictive models of leadership effectiveness (Yukl, 2013). Such studies would also inform training, organisational policy, and leadership development programmes, enhancing responsiveness to dynamic environments. By focusing on both behavioural flexibility and principled consistency, future research can advance a more nuanced understanding of leadership across contexts. Longitudinal data will allow scholars to trace adaptation over time and capture the interplay between leader characteristics and situational demands. Mixed-methods research can triangulate quantitative performance indicators with qualitative assessments of follower perception and engagement. Ultimately, embracing the fluidity of leadership style and behaviour strengthens both scholarship and practice, ensuring that leadership theory remains relevant in dynamic organisational and societal landscapes.

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Appendix I: Summarising the key elements of your study on leadership style and behaviour fluidity

Section	Key Points	Theoretical/ Methodological Framework	Findings/Insights
Introduction	Leadership style and behaviour are traditionally considered stationary; however, situational demands suggest fluidity. Literature is fragmented with limited integration between classical and adaptive frameworks.	Review of classical trait/behavioural theories and contemporary adaptive leadership perspectives.	Identifies a gap: few studies examine longitudinal or cross-situational changes in leadership style/behaviour. Study aims to synthesise theory and evidence on adaptability.
Theoretical Perspectives	Transformational, situational, behavioural, and contingency theories suggest leadership is context-dependent. Leadership effectiveness is mediated by flexibility and responsiveness.	Transformational leadership (Burns, 1978; Bass, 1990); Situational leadership (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969); Behavioural theories (Fleishman, 1953); Contingency theories (Fiedler, 1967)	Leadership style and behaviour are dynamic constructs shaped by environmental, organisational, and follower-related variables.
Methodological Approach	Qualitative conceptual-analytical design; literature review and thematic synthesis; triangulation across historical, behavioural, and contingency studies.	Conceptual-analytical method (Jabareen, 2009); Triangulation (Denzin, 2012)	Enabled multidimensional analysis of how leadership style and behaviour adapt across contexts; identified patterns of fluidity and adaptability.
Fluidity in Leadership Style	Leadership style is responsive to situational demands, organisational culture, and external pressures. Rigid, stationary interpretations may misrepresent effectiveness.	Transformational and behavioural theories	Leaders display participative, directive, or visionary tendencies depending on context; style is situationally contingent.

Adaptive Leadership Behaviour	Leaders modulate transactional and transformational behaviours based on task demands, follower motivation, and organisational priorities.	Contingency and situational perspectives (Yukl, 2013)	Behavioural flexibility improves performance, engagement, and effectiveness; rigidity can be counterproductive in dynamic contexts.
Implications for Scholarship and Practice	Leadership training should emphasise adaptive decision-making, situational awareness, and context-sensitive communication.	Integration of stationary and fluid perspectives	Bridging classical and adaptive frameworks enriches leadership theory and informs organisational practice. Supports longitudinal and mixed-methods research to empirically validate adaptive models.
Conclusion	Leadership style and behaviour are dynamic, situationally contingent, and influenced by organisational, societal, and stakeholder factors.	Synthesis of theoretical perspectives	

Appendix II: Leadership style and behaviour

Leadership Construct	Example of Stationary Interpretation	Example of Fluid/ Adaptive Interpretation	Context/Notes
Transformational Style	A leader consistently inspires with visionary speeches, regardless of context.	A leader alternates between visionary, participative, or directive approaches depending on organisational culture, crisis, or stakeholder needs (Bass & Riggio, 2006).	Adaptive style improves follower engagement and organisational outcomes.
Transactional Behaviour	Rewards and penalties are applied uniformly across all tasks and	Leader adjusts transactional behaviours, using rewards or corrective feedback	Flexible transactional behaviour sustains motivation without

	teams.	selectively, based on task complexity and follower motivation (Yukl, 2013).	stifling innovation.
Task-Oriented Style	Leader always prioritises goal achievement, ignoring relational dynamics.	Leader balances task focus with people-oriented behaviours, shifting emphasis during crises or when team cohesion is essential (Fleishman, 1953).	Enhances performance while maintaining follower trust.
Relationship-Oriented Behaviour	Leader consistently emphasises team harmony, even at the expense of objectives.	Leader increases relational focus during low-morale periods and prioritises task completion under high-pressure situations (Hersey & Blanchard, 1969).	Context-sensitive adaptation strengthens organisational resilience.
Ethical/Moral Leadership	Ethical standards are uniformly applied, regardless of situational pressures.	Leader modulates ethical messaging to reinforce moral behaviour, address emerging dilemmas, and navigate complex stakeholder pressures.	Maintains legitimacy while responding to dynamic social or organisational challenges.
Communication Style	Formal, scripted communication regardless of audience or medium.	Leader shifts between formal, informal, persuasive, or participatory communication based on audience, medium, and contextual urgency.	Reflects adaptive leadership in digital, cross-cultural, or crisis environments.