



THE IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP STYLES ON WORK PERFORMANCE AT UNIVERSITIES IN VIETNAM

O IMPACTO DOS ESTILOS DE LIDERANÇA NO DESEMPENHO PROFISSIONAL EM UNIVERSIDADES NO VIETNÃ

EL IMPACTO DE LOS ESTILOS DE LIDERAZGO EN EL DESEMPEÑO LABORAL EN LAS UNIVERSIDADES DE VIETNAM

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ABSTRACT: The objective of the study is to clarify the impact of leadership styles on work performance at universities in Vietnam. The hypothesis is that democratic and supportive leadership styles have a positive impact, while autocratic and transactional styles are less effective. The study focuses on surveying the reality and analyzing the relationship between related variables. The research method combines qualitative and quantitative methods; in which, qualitative helps to explore subjective factors and organizational context, while quantitative uses questionnaires to collect data from leaders and managers at 154 universities in Vietnam. The research process includes designing survey instruments, collecting, processing and analyzing data. The research results contribute to providing a scientific basis for improving leadership capacity, promoting educational reform, and developing high-quality human resources.

KEYWORDS: Leadership style. Work efficiency. University. Vietnam.

RESUMO: O objetivo do estudo é esclarecer o impacto dos estilos de liderança no desempenho profissional em universidades no Vietnã. A hipótese é que os estilos de liderança democráticos e de apoio têm um impacto positivo, enquanto os estilos autocráticos e transacionais são menos eficazes. O estudo se concentra no levantamento da realidade e na análise da relação entre variáveis relacionadas. O método de pesquisa combina métodos qualitativos e quantitativos; em que o qualitativo ajuda a explorar fatores subjetivos e o contexto organizacional, enquanto o quantitativo usa questionários para coletar dados de líderes e gerentes em 154 universidades no Vietnã. O processo de pesquisa inclui a concepção de instrumentos de pesquisa, coleta, processamento e análise de dados. Os resultados da pesquisa contribuem para fornecer uma base científica para melhorar a capacidade de liderança, promover a reforma educacional e desenvolver recursos humanos de alta qualidade.

PALAVRAS-CHAVE: Estilo de liderança. Eficiência no trabalho. Universidade. Vietnã.

RESUMEN: El objetivo del estudio es aclarar el impacto de los estilos de liderazgo en el desempeño laboral en las universidades de Vietnam. La hipótesis plantea que los estilos de liderazgo democrático y de apoyo tienen un impacto positivo, mientras que los estilos autocrático y transaccional resultan menos efectivos. El estudio se centra en examinar la realidad y analizar la relación entre las variables relacionadas. El método de investigación combina enfoques cualitativos y cuantitativos; el primero permite explorar factores subjetivos y el contexto organizacional, mientras que el segundo utiliza cuestionarios para recopilar datos de líderes y directivos en 154 universidades de Vietnam. El proceso de investigación incluye el diseño de los instrumentos de encuesta, la recolección, el procesamiento y el análisis de los datos. Los resultados del estudio contribuyen a proporcionar una base científica para mejorar la capacidad de liderazgo, promover la reforma educativa y desarrollar recursos humanos de alta calidad.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Estilo de liderazgo. Eficiencia laboral. Universidad. Vietnam.

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INTRODUCTION

In the context of rapid and volatile development of the modern world, the role of leadership in organizations is becoming increasingly important. Especially in the field of higher education, which not only requires stability in the organization but also requires continuous innovation in content, methods and management structure. Here, leadership style plays a key role in ensuring operational efficiency and improving the quality of training and research. Leadership style is not simply the way leaders make decisions or assign work, but also the way they interact, inspire and engage the team to achieve the strategic goals of the organization.

Effective leadership in the educational environment requires the head to be able to identify a long-term vision, build appropriate development strategies and, more importantly, the ability to create a positive academic culture, promoting cooperation between individuals, units and departments. Leadership style—understood as the approach and behavior of the leader in leading the organization—is the decisive factor in the work efficiency of the staff, lecturers, and employees in the university. Each different leadership style will create different impacts on the working environment, individual and collective motivation, as well as the ability to achieve the organization's goals.

In the world, many studies have confirmed that transformational leadership style with outstanding characteristics is inspiration, concern for personal development, and creating conditions for creativity. This perspective has a clear positive impact on work efficiency and employee engagement. Meanwhile, transactional leadership style focuses on discipline, rewards and control. It creates short-term effectiveness but often lacks flexibility and does not encourage innovation. In addition, there is also a laissez-faire leadership style, where the leader has little involvement in daily operations, which often leads to a lack of direction and low performance if not tightly controlled.

In Vietnam, the higher education system is facing many challenges and requires strong innovation to keep up with the trend of globalization and digital transformation. Universities not only have to compete in terms of training and research quality but also must meet the increasing demands of society for quality human resources. In that context, leadership capacity—especially the appropriate leadership style—becomes a key factor helping universities adapt to change, improve operational efficiency and develop sustainably. However, there are still many questions that have not been fully answered: Which leadership style is commonly applied in universities in Vietnam? Which style is most effective in the academic environment? And what is the most suitable leadership model for the conditions and culture of Vietnamese higher education institutions today?

The work efficiency of lecturers and managers at universities depends not only on their professional qualifications, policy mechanisms or material conditions, but is also strongly

influenced by the leadership style of the management level. A positive, humane leadership style that can inspire responsibility, creativity and passion for the profession will contribute to building a positive and effective academic environment.

On the contrary, if the leader applies an inflexible style, tends to be command-oriented or fails to create cohesion, work efficiency can be seriously reduced. In that context, studying the relationship between leadership style and work efficiency in the university environment in Vietnam is not only of academic significance but also of profound practical value. The results of this study will provide a scientific basis for improving leadership capacity in universities, contributing to promoting educational reform and developing high-quality human resources—one of the country's strategic goals in the current period.

This article aims to clarify the impact of different leadership styles on work efficiency at universities in Vietnam, through a field survey and analysis of the relationship between related variables. From there, propose appropriate recommendations for higher education managers in selecting and adjusting leadership styles to achieve the highest organizational efficiency.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To conduct research on the impact of leadership style on work performance at universities in Vietnam, we focus on answering the following questions:

- Which leadership style is currently commonly applied?
- What is the level of impact of each style on work performance?
- What factors can increase or decrease the impact of leadership style on work performance in the context of higher education in Vietnam?

RESEARCH METHOD AND THEORETICAL BASIS

Research methods

The objective of this study is to identify effective leadership styles. Therefore, this study follows a positivist approach, and quantitative research methods are the main methods applied. The application of quantitative research methods in this study is appropriate in the context of this study. Quantitative research methods using questionnaires can investigate effective leadership styles at universities in Vietnam through collecting and analyzing collected data. In addition, quantitative research methods increase the generality of research results, because these factors are based on the opinions and views of leaders and managers. In addition, the survey questionnaire contains open-ended questions related to qualitative research.

For the above reasons, this study uses two research methods: qualitative research and quantitative research.

Qualitative research method

Within the framework of the study on the influence of leadership style on work performance at universities in Vietnam, the qualitative research method is used as an important tool to deeply explore subjective factors, behavioral orientation and organizational context. The goal of this method is to clarify how leaders in the university environment express their leadership style and how these expressions affect the work performance of staff and lecturers.

First, the research team uses theoretical research methods to collect, synthesize and analyze theoretical documents related to the concept of leadership, leadership style and work performance in the context of higher education. Research and evaluation of domestic and foreign scientific works are the basis for establishing a system of concepts, analytical models and evaluation criteria, and at the same time contributing to building a set of qualitative research tools in a suitable and scientific manner.

Next, the method of classifying and systematizing information is used to process qualitative data collected from documents and surveys. The information is classified based on theoretical models of leadership styles (such as transformational leadership, transactional leadership, democratic leadership, etc.) and criteria for evaluating work performance in the higher education environment (such as task completion level, job satisfaction, teamwork spirit, etc.).

To clarify the process of forming and developing leadership styles in the field of higher education, historical and practical research methods are also applied. In which, the historical method is used to analyze the formation, development and changes in leadership approaches of Vietnamese universities over time, from the pre-renovation period to the present. Meanwhile, the practical method helps the research team directly access the real educational environment, record leadership phenomena in daily activities and evaluate their impact on work results through specific manifestations.

An important part of qualitative research is the design and analysis of open-ended questions in the survey questionnaire. Open-ended questions do not limit answers, allowing participants to flexibly present their views, feelings and practical experiences. Through that, the research team can deeply explore the complex, multidimensional aspects of leadership style and the relationship between that style and work performance.

The qualitative research implementation process is carried out as follows:

Step 1: Build a system of open-ended questions in the survey questionnaire, aiming to explore specific manifestations of leadership style in the university environment, as

well as the perceptions of staff and lecturers about the impact of leadership style on their work performance.

Step 2: Collect data from universities through questionnaires, focusing on opinions shared by leaders, managers, lecturers and administrative staff.

Step 3: Synthesize, code and group opinions according to each criterion or research topic. This grouping is based on theoretical models established in the theoretical research step, helping to ensure logic and systematization in the analysis process.

Step 4: Analyze the content of opinion groups to draw out typical manifestations and cause-and-effect relationships between leadership style and work efficiency. Qualitative analysis results are used to supplement, compare and clarify the results obtained from the quantitative research method later.

Quantitative research method

To measure the influence of leadership style on work efficiency at universities in Vietnam, the study used quantitative methods to collect, process and analyze data in the form of statistics. Quantitative methods allow research to approach on a large scale, helping to make objective and highly generalizable judgments.

In this study, the survey method using questionnaires was chosen as the main tool to collect quantitative data. The questionnaire was designed to exploit information related to personal characteristics, work position, awareness, leadership behavior and work efficiency assessment from the perspective of university managers.

The process of conducting quantitative research is as follows:

Step 1: Design the survey questionnaire. The research team built a questionnaire with a clear structure, including the following sections: basic personal information (gender, position, work experience, etc.), leadership style assessment content (based on theories such as transformational leadership, transactional leadership, etc.) and work performance (level of task completion, coordination efficiency, satisfaction, etc.). The questions were built in the form of a Likert scale to measure the level of consensus of survey participants.

Step 2: Create an online survey on the QuestionPro platform. After completing the questionnaire, the research team used QuestionPro software to create an online survey, convenient for distribution and collecting feedback from target audiences.

Step 3: Deploy the survey. The survey link was sent to the research subjects who are leaders and managers at universities, including: heads/deputy heads of functional departments, heads/deputy heads of faculties, directors of centers, members of the board of directors, chairmen of the school council and representatives of political and

social organizations in the school. The total number of survey forms expected is 40, corresponding to the number of leaders and managers in the school selected as the research sample.

Step 4: Data processing and analysis. Data collected from the online survey was compiled on Excel and processed through basic statistical tools such as calculating the mean, standard deviation, standard error and confidence interval. With a sample size of 40—not reaching the minimum threshold for using specialized statistical analysis software such as SPSS or R—the study prioritized the use of Excel combined with integrated tools in QuestionPro to analyze and present the results.

The application of quantitative methods helps the study clearly determine the level of impact of each type of leadership style on work efficiency factors in the university environment, thereby making appropriate recommendations on leadership orientation in the field of higher education in Vietnam.

Sampling method, sample size

Sample size in statistics is the number of observation units (or elements) selected from a population for research or data collection. Sample size has a great influence on the accuracy and reliability of research results

In 2024, the total number of universities in Vietnam is 255 with a confidence level of 95%, an error of $\pm 5\%$, the sample to be selected is 154 schools, each school selects one person at the management level for survey. The survey link has been sent to 154 people. The number of respondents was 154.

Purposive sampling (Figure 1) is a common sampling method in qualitative research where researchers select subjects or sample units that are most meaningful to answer the research question. Instead of random sampling, this method focuses on selecting individuals or groups that are likely to provide rich and in-depth information about the problem being studied.

Research Process

Step 1: Study the theory and related research documents to establish the research foundation.

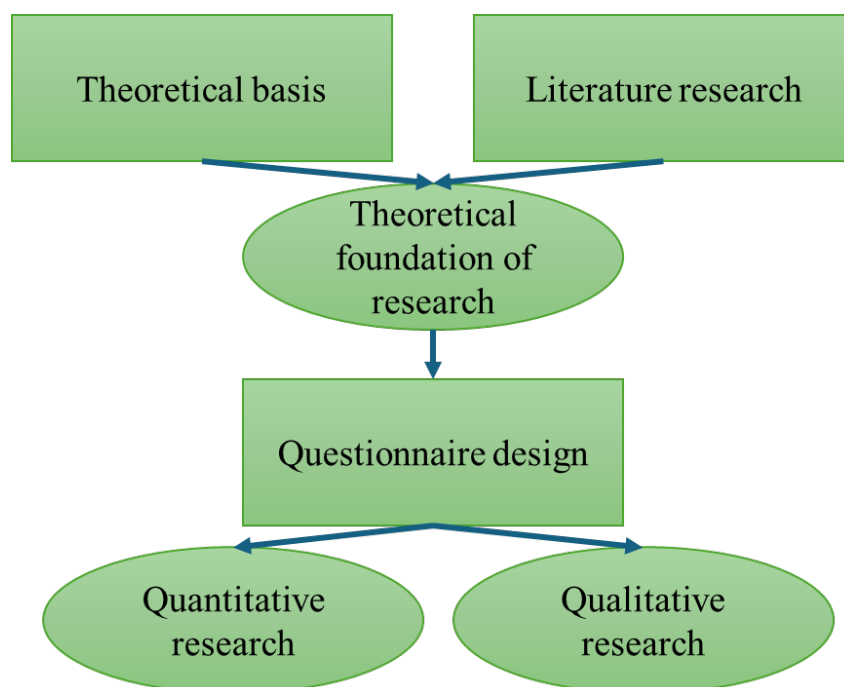
Step 2: Design a questionnaire including quantitative and qualitative questions.

Step 3: Conduct quantitative research.

Step 4: Conduct qualitative research

Figure 1

Three steps of the research process.



Note. Prepared by the authors (2025).

Theoretical basis

Concept of Leadership

The study of leadership style has been studied by scientists around the world and has presented many different perspectives. Each concept has different approaches to leadership and the role of a leader. Leadership in society is a necessary function to achieve specific goals.

There are many definitions of leadership, and it is understood in many ways:

- Leadership is a process that focuses on shaping or influencing people to achieve the common goals of the organization (Aisyah et al., 2022; Griffin et al., 2010; Hashimy et al., 2023). Leadership is the process of influencing the actions of others to achieve a desired goal (Cuban, 1988; Gkoros & Bratitsis, 2024; Onyefulu, 2021; Tuşa, 2023). Leadership is the process of influencing people to work together and through them to achieve set goals in a good working environment (López-Cabarcos et al., 2022; Saputra, 2021; Setiawan et al., 2022). Leadership is a relationship between two or more people in which one person tries to influence the other to achieve one or more goals (Dachasa, 2022; Dickson, 2023; Ionela, 2021; Szilagyi & Wallace, 1983).

According to the above-mentioned views, leadership has the following characteristics: Leadership represents the relationship between people; Leadership represents an impact, influence and attraction to others; The impact, influence and attraction of others by

Leadership are voluntary, not forced. In this study, Leadership is studied in the direction of the behavior of leaders and managers in an organization. It is the influence of an individual on others or a group of people, through their own abilities, beyond the effects of rules and regulations. Leadership in this study is the use of one's ability to create voluntary behaviors and commitments.

Leadership style, since 1939, social psychologist Kurt Lewin began to study leadership style. Since then, many authors have studied leadership style with different approaches. Leadership style is the way that leaders use to manage, guide, and influence their team (Boeske, 2023; Jaroliya & Gyanchandani, 2022). It not only reflects the personal style of the leader but also has a profound impact on work performance, employee personal development, and organizational culture (Aggarwal, 2022; Bucic et al., 2010; Mohiuddin, 2017; Sauer, 2011).

Leadership style is a set of behaviors, attitudes, and methods that a leader uses to lead and manage a team. It includes the way a leader communicates, makes decisions, solves problems, and motivates team members (Hui, 1990; Mester et al., 2003; Northouse, 2025; Salmani et al., 2022). Leadership style is not a fixed factor but often changes depending on the situation, goals and characteristics of the team (Ruben & Gigliotti, 2019), not one-way (Winston & Patterson, 2006).

Instead, leadership requires a deep understanding of the leader's role in the ultimate success of the organization's mission and vision (By, 2021). From the above perspectives, leadership style is a synthesis of methods, measures, and unique, typical, and stable ways that leaders use every day to carry out their tasks. Leadership style is the way that leaders choose to lead and interact with the people they manage and lead (Northouse, 2018). Leadership style is the way or unique methods that leaders use to influence their subordinates. Leadership style is a system of signs that characterize the leader's activities, determined by their personality traits.

Psychologist Kurt Lewin studied and discovered 3 typical leadership styles: autocratic leadership style, democratic leadership style, and authoritative leadership style. Through research, the author believes that leadership styles include: Authoritarian (autocratic) leadership is an autocratic leadership style, controlling everything, making all decisions, and not letting anyone speak up while working; Participative (democratic) leadership is a leadership style in which the leader listens to the opinions of employees, but will still be the one to make the final decision; Delegative (laissez-faire) leadership is a style in which the leader does not directly participate in the decision-making process and places a lot of trust in his staff; Transactional leadership.

In the transactional leadership model, the relationships between the parties are based on the exchange of valuable resources. The transactional leadership model becomes popular in market economic conditions, when education becomes a public service provided by the

state, schools provide and individuals, families, and businesses are the demand side using these services; Transformational leadership is relationship-oriented. Transformational leaders are those who know how to develop, stimulate, and inspire subordinates to achieve better than expected results by appealing to their higher-level needs, building trust, and putting the interests of the organization above personal interests.

In Vietnam, leadership style is a system of values, thoughts, and leadership methods that are humane, scientific, and creative, a synthesis of methods, measures, and ways to carry out revolutionary leadership tasks (Dung et al., 2023; Phuong et al., 2023; Van Dung, 2022; Van Dung et al., 2023). That style is determined by position, role, prestige, life experience, political conditions; reflects core qualities of ideology, ethics, emotions, knowledge, will, personality... and is closely linked to Uncle Ho's revolutionary activities.

Leadership style is not only the crystallization of Vietnamese cultural traditions but also the inheritance of the quintessence of human culture, especially Marxism-Leninism. The most effective leadership style for a university depends on many factors, including organizational culture, strategic goals and characteristics of the leader and manager. An effective leader will know how to use the appropriate methods to promote work productivity and achieve common goals.

Studies on leadership effectiveness. The main function of leadership is to influence the leadership object, and this is a major way to influence performance (Humphreys, 2024; Humphrey et al., 2021; Miao et al., 2021). Leadership effectiveness can be the benefits or positive effects that a leader brings to the organization as well as its members (Ali & Anwar, 2021; Arghode et al., 2022).

Leadership effectiveness is to create profits for the organization, motivate members to act to achieve the goals and benefits they desire, and maintain a good reputation of the organization. Leadership effectiveness is the extent to which leaders bring success to a group or organization (Deng et al., 2023; Zaim et al., 2021).

From the above statements, leadership is a process, while leadership effectiveness is the result of that process. Leadership effectiveness is measured through the level of contribution of the leader to the development of the group or organization, perceived not only by subordinates but also by outside observers. This effectiveness is first reflected in the group or organization run by the leader completing assigned tasks well or achieving set goals. In addition, leaders also demonstrate their role through strengthening the stability and solidity of the group, enhancing cooperation among members, motivating and encouraging them to make efforts, effectively handling arising problems, making timely decisions and resolving internal conflicts in a reasonable manner.

Not only that, but leadership effectiveness is also demonstrated through the ability to improve the performance of the group, organize activities well, accumulate and develop

organizational resources, as well as prepare to deal with crisis situations. Effective leaders also contribute to improving the quality of life of cadres and employees, promoting the development of self-confidence, professional skills, and improving the level of psychological perfection of subordinates. Thus, leadership effectiveness is not only the completion of tasks or the achievement of goals, but also the comprehensive contribution to the sustainable development of the organization and the maturity of everyone in that organization.

Leadership effectiveness is the result of the synthesis of professional knowledge, political understanding and practical actions of the leader in the process of managing the organization. Success in the leadership role depends not only on individual capacity but also on the selected evaluation criteria, which vary depending on the goals and value system of the evaluator. The use of different evaluation criteria can lead to different, even contradictory, judgments about leadership effectiveness.

In this study, leadership effectiveness or leadership performance is understood as a reflection of the level of success in the career of an individual leader, viewed from their own perspective. Therefore, researchers use criteria such as knowledge, political capacity and leadership behavior to evaluate the impact of leadership style on organizational performance in a certain period.

An effective leader is someone who can guide, guide and motivate individuals or groups to achieve common goals in the most optimal way. Leadership effectiveness is not only measured through the results but also demonstrated through the way the leader develops the potential of the team, effectively manages resources and builds a sustainable organizational culture. Flexible thinking, behavior and response in management are specific manifestations of leadership effectiveness.

In the context of the public sector, civil servants—according to the provisions of Article 2 of the 2010 Law on Civil Servants—are Vietnamese citizens recruited according to job positions, working at public service units under the labor contract regime and receiving salaries from the salary fund of the public service unit.

For those holding leadership and management positions in the public sector, according to Clause 1, Article 3 of Decree 158/2007/ND-CP, leaders, civil servants, and public employees are those who are elected or appointed to leadership positions for a limited period in agencies, organizations, and units and receive leadership allowances. Thus, within the scope of research on leadership effectiveness in public service units, it is necessary to focus on assessing the impact of leadership style on organizational activities, through criteria reflecting the capacity, behavior, and work results of leaders, in accordance with the characteristics of leadership roles in the system of cadres, civil servants, and public employees in Vietnam.

RESEARCH CONTENT AND DISCUSSION

Research content

Characteristics of the research sample. The research sample of this study is leaders and managers working at Universities in Vietnam. The research sample focuses on individuals holding leadership and management roles in the school, usually including those responsible for directing, organizing, and managing educational, research, and administrative activities. Below are the specific characteristics of this group of subjects.

Position and role in the organization

- *Common positions:* Board of Directors (Principal, Vice Principal). Head or deputy head of functional departments (Department of Training, Department of Science, Technology and Foreign Cooperation, Department of Organization - Inspection & Legal Affairs, etc.). Head or deputy head of faculties, affiliated centers. Leaders of political and social organizations in the school, such as: Party Committee, Trade Union, etc.

Main roles:

- Developing strategies and development orientations for the school.
- Managing teaching, scientific research, and community service activities.
- Executing and supervising administrative and financial activities.

To survey this research sample, the research team sought the help of the Organization Inspection & Legal Department. The total number of emails sending the survey link was 154, the number of responses was 154 valid responses corresponding to a rate of 100%.

Table 1 shows that, in 154 personal information response forms, male participants accounted for 53.25% and female participants accounted for 44.75%. In addition, the majority of survey participants were in the age group of 35<40 years old (accounting for 11.69%), 40<45 years old (accounting for 40.26%), 45<50 years old (accounting for 17.53%), 50<55 years old (accounting for 28.57%) and over 55 years old accounted for 1.95%. The current management team mainly has experience from less than 5 years to less than 20 years.

Specifically, the group with less than 5 years of management experience accounts for the highest percentage with 63 people (40.91%), showing that most of the current management force is young and in the early stages of their management career. The group with 5 to less than 10 years of experience accounts for 13.64%, while the group with 10 to less than 15 years accounts for a fairly high percentage, up to 21.43%. Thus, up to 117 people (76%) have less than 15 years of experience, reflecting the trend of rejuvenation in the management

team. In addition, the group with 15 to less than 20 years of experience also accounts for a significant proportion (17.53%), showing that this is a force entering a period of stability and maturity in management expertise.

In contrast, the groups with 20 years of experience or more account for only a very small proportion: 1.95% in the 20–25 year group, 2.6% in the 25–30 year group and 1.95% in the 30–35 year group. Notably, there is no one in the group with 35 to 40 years of management experience.

From the above figures, the current management team is mainly in the early and middle stages of their career, so they need to be focused on training and fostering professional skills to meet job requirements.

The group with 10 to less than 20 years of experience can be considered the core force, which needs to be planned and developed to play a leading role in the coming time. In addition, the lack of people with long-term management experience also requires a succession strategy and the development of a visionary and competent leadership team to ensure stability and sustainable development in management work.

The total number of people with academic titles and degrees participating in management work is 154, of which 99 are Ph.Ds. (Ph.D.), accounting for 64.29%, and 55 are Associate Professors/Professors (PGS/GS), accounting for 35.71%. The proportion of Ph.Ds. participating in management accounts for the majority, showing that the leadership force mainly comes from people with high professional qualifications but do not have academic titles.

This reflects the trend of rejuvenation in the management team, when many Ph.Ds., even though they do not have academic titles, have been entrusted with important management responsibilities. On the other hand, the proportion of Associate Professors/Professors participating in management also accounts for a significant proportion (over 1/3), demonstrating the important role and contribution of the team with academic titles in management activities and development orientation.

This distribution shows that the academic structure in the management team is quite reasonable, with a combination of those with academic titles representing extensive experience and academic prestige and Ph.Ds. representing the young force with potential for development and innovation. This is an important foundation for building a team of capable scientific leaders with high professional qualifications, suitable for the requirements of innovation and development in the current context.

Table 1

Description of survey sample characteristics

General information		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	82	53,24
	Female	72	46,76

General information		Frequency	Percentage (%)
Age	<30	0	0,0
	30 < 35	0	0,0
	35 < 40	18	12,50
	40 < 45	62	40,62
	45 < 50	27	18,75
	50 < 55	38	25,00
	> 55	6	3,12
Management Experience	< 5	63	40,91
	5 < 10	21	13,64
	10 < 15	33	21,43
	15 < 20	27	17,53
	20 < 25	3	1,95
	25<30	4	2,60
	30 < 35	3	1,95
	35 < 40	0	0,0
Academic Title/Degree	PhD	99	64,29
	Associate Professor/ Professor	55	35,71

Note. Prepared by the author (2025).

Table 2
Leadership Style

Rate the following items	Not true	Not at all true	Neutral	True	Very true	Total
Leaders are visionary and strategic				62	92	154
Leaders clearly demonstrate leadership values			11	56	87	154
Leaders support employees when needed		9	17	74	54	154
Leaders acknowledge employee input			26	53	75	154
Leaders care and encourage employees			5	91	58	154
Leaders are altruistic and generous with their subordinates	12	21	7	51	63	154

Note. Prepared by the author (2025).

Based on Table 2 of the survey data, the content “A leader is a person with strategic vision and foresight” is evaluated very positively. Specifically, 40.26% of people chose “True”

and 59.74% chose “Very true,” with no negative or neutral evaluations. This shows absolute consensus (100%), affirming that planning capacity and strategic vision are outstanding qualities recognized in the leadership team. The content “A leader always clearly demonstrates leadership values and principles” also showed positive results, with 92.85% evaluating “True” and “Very true.”

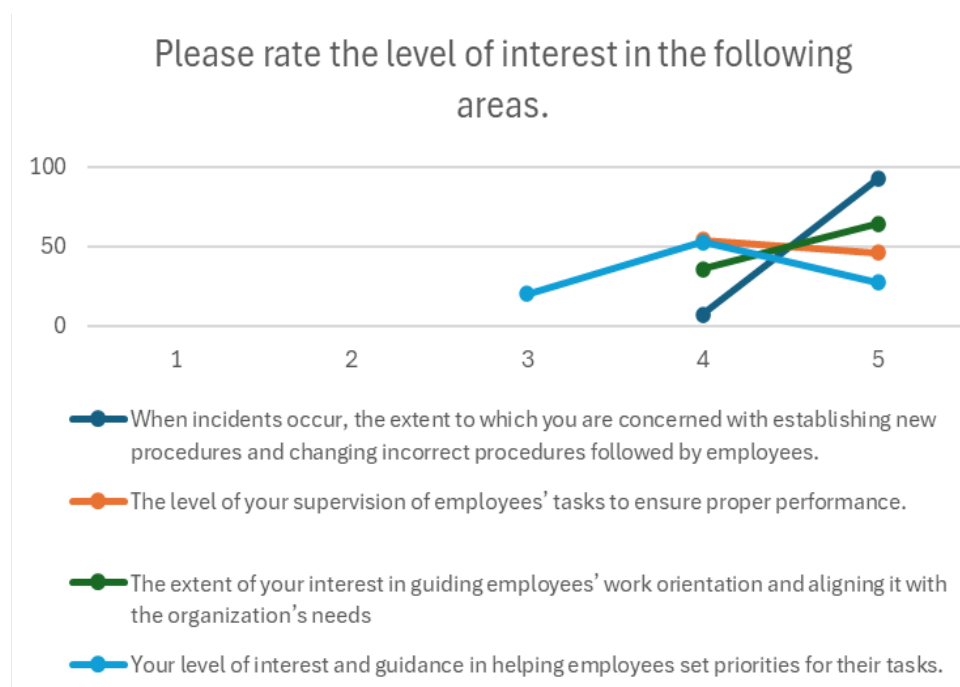
Although there are still 7.14% neutral, there are no incorrect or completely incorrect evaluations, showing a relatively high consistency in the perception of transparency and principles in the management of leaders. Regarding the content “Leaders support employees when needed,” many respondents still rated it positively with 48.05% “True” and 35.06% “Very true.”

However, there were also 11.04% neutral and 5.84% rated “Absolutely not true”, showing that there are still several employees who feel they have not received adequate support when needed. This is a point that managers need to pay attention to further enhance their role in accompanying employees. “Leaders acknowledge employees’ contributions” was agreed by 83.12% of participants, of which 34.42% chose “True” and 48.70% chose “Very true.”

However, the neutral rate was 16.88%, higher than other contents, reflecting that the level of listening and accepting subordinates’ opinions, although good, still has room for improvement. “Leaders care about and motivate employees,” the rates of “True” and “Very true” are 59.09% and 37.66% respectively, showing a very positive assessment (96.75%) from employees. This shows that the leadership style is perceived as close, caring about human factors, contributing to creating positive working motivation in the organization. “Leaders are altruistic, generous with their subordinates” received a relatively high consensus with 33.12% choosing “True” and 40.91% choosing “Very true.” However, up to 21.43% of people rated “Incorrect” and “Absolutely incorrect,” along with 4.55% neutral. This shows that some of the respondents are still skeptical or have not clearly felt the tolerance and generosity in the behavior of leaders, thereby posing the need to strengthen the image of a more humane and empathetic leader in management.

The survey data reflects a positive and highly unanimous view of respondents on the core qualities of a leader, especially vision, principle, and concern for employees. However, the contents related to practical support, listening attitude, and human qualities such as altruism still need to be further strengthened and developed to build a comprehensive and effective management environment (Graph 1)

From Graph 1, the level of interest of leaders in some contents related to employees’ work is shown through four specific aspects. Data collected from 154 people shows that the general trend is that leaders show a high level of interest, however, there are significant differences between the contents surveyed.

Graph 1*Level of interest among leaders*

Note. Prepared by the author (2025).

Specifically, as follows: First, regarding the level of interest when an incident occurs to establish or change the incorrect working process of employees, up to 143/154 people (92.86%) chose the level of very interested and 11/154 people (7.14%) chose interested. No one chose neutral, little interested or not interested. This is the content with an absolute interest rate, reflecting that leaders give high priority to intervening and improving the process when an incident occurs, demonstrating quick response and high management responsibility; Second, regarding the level of supervision of work by leaders to ensure that employees perform their tasks properly, 71 people (46.10%) rated it as very interested and 83 people (53.90%) rated it as interested.

Although the rate of interest is still maintained at 100%, compared to the previous content, the level of very interested has decreased somewhat, showing that although supervision is important, it can be flexibly adjusted depending on the nature of the work and the level of trust in employees; Third, when assessing the level of interest in employee orientation and appropriate exploitation for the organization, 99 people (64.29%) chose very interested and 55 people (35.71%) chose interested. There were no neutral or negative responses.

This clearly reflects the priority of leaders in developing individual capacity in conjunction with organizational goals, demonstrating the role of strategic orientation in human resource management; Finally, regarding the level of interest and guidance for employees in setting work priorities, the results showed a greater degree of dispersion: 42 people (27.27%) rated

very interested, 81 people (52.60%) chose interested, while 31 people (20.13%) were neutral. This is the only content where a neutral choice appeared, showing that there is still a group of leaders who have not clearly demonstrated their role in supporting employees in determining and arranging work order, possibly due to time and skill limitations or lack of specific policies.

The research results show that the level of application of leadership styles is significantly different. When compared on the Matrix Scorecard scale, the democratic leadership style is the most used style (score = 3.79), followed by the supportive leadership style (score = 3.74). In contrast, the autocratic leadership style (score = 1.47) and the transactional leadership style (score = 2.62) were the two least applied styles.

Figure 2 reflects the level of evaluation of research participants towards the leadership style of communication with clear goals and expectations. The results show that most respondents consider this style to be effective.

Figure 2

Participants' assessment level



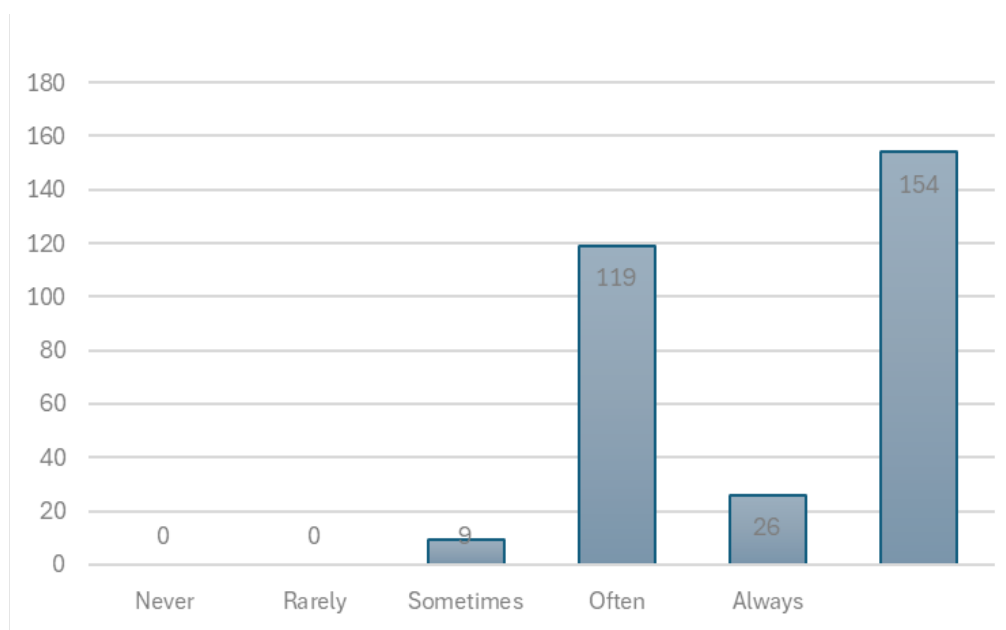
Note. Prepared by the author (2025).

Specifically, 32.47% rated this style as effective, 30.52% said it was very effective, 17.53% said it was very effective and 13.64% said it was beyond expectations. In total, the positive evaluation rate was up to 94.16%, showing that this is a leadership style that is highly appreciated in practice. On the contrary, only 5.84% of opinions said that this style is less effective. Thus, it can be affirmed that leadership communication with clear goals and specific expectations is considered one of the key factors contributing to improving the effectiveness of management and operation in the organization.

The survey results (Graph 2) show that most participants highly appreciate the level of open communication and sharing of leaders with subordinates. Specifically, out of a total of 154 people surveyed, up to 119 people (77.27%) said that leaders often perform this behavior, and 26 people (16.88%) rated it as always.

Graph 2

Leaders regularly communicate openly and share information with subordinates



Note. Prepared by the author (2025).

Only 9 people (5.84%) said that leaders sometimes communicate openly, while absolutely no one chose the level of rarely or never. These numbers reflect a positive reality: two-way communication and information transparency are being focused on by leaders regularly in the organization. This contributes significantly to building trust, promoting working spirit and enhancing management effectiveness.

Cohesion and consensus at work play a key role in building an effective and sustainable working environment. According to the survey results, up to 97% of participants said that they always inform their team about goals, progress and related decisions, showing a high level of commitment to sharing information and building consensus within the group.

Maintaining cohesion and consensus within the organization not only helps strengthen the spirit of cooperation but also creates a solid foundation for team activities. When leaders can build consensus, they will connect members with each other and with the common goal, thereby enhancing the sense of responsibility and community in the work.

Full and transparent communication with all members is a key factor in promoting cohesion and building trust. When everyone in the team is fully updated with information, they not

only understand their roles and tasks but also grasp the overall picture of the organization's operations. This helps reduce misunderstandings, clearly directs actions and ensures that everyone works towards a common goal. Furthermore, transparent information sharing helps promote effective coordination among team members, avoids duplication of tasks or omissions, and helps detect and promptly handle arising problems. Clear information also creates conditions to encourage active participation of team members, motivates them to proactively give ideas, feedback and suggestions, thereby improving the quality and efficiency of overall work.

When answering open-ended questions in the survey, participants pointed out four important factors that need to be changed to improve leadership effectiveness, including: actions, attitudes, skills and style. In the context of the current working environment, an autocratic leadership style is still considered to be appropriate in certain situations to ensure operational effectiveness. However, according to feedback from survey participants, the general trend in current leadership styles is shifting towards being more democratic and open.

This open and democratic leadership style facilitates the promotion of cooperation within the organization, encouraging members to participate in the decision-making process and act towards common goals, instead of working individually. This shift not only increases individual responsibility and initiative, but also contributes to improving teamwork spirit, creating motivation for mutual support among members, thereby significantly improving leadership effectiveness and work quality.

DISCUSSION

In this study, the two prominent leadership styles are autocratic and democratic. Most of the survey participants said that they chose to apply democratic leadership style in their work, which is demonstrated by assigning tasks to subordinates and allowing them to self-monitor and proactively orient themselves during the implementation process. However, some participants also admitted that directly handling the work is still more effective and faster than delegating power to subordinates. This shows that, despite the democratic tendency, leaders still have a certain role of control and intervention, especially in important decisions.

Although democratic leadership style is positively evaluated in promoting participation and initiative of subordinates, there is still a tension between delegating and retaining power. This is reflected in the fact that leaders can allow subordinates to express their views and participate in the decision-making process, but still directly intervene in tasks that should be within the autonomy of subordinates.

In addition, some survey participants also said that, in the current context, an autocratic leadership style is still considered appropriate in some cases to ensure work progress and

efficiency. This opinion is reinforced through responses to open-ended questions. Specifically, survey participants (ID:086180...12) said that current leaders still “do things for employees, do not delegate authority, and do not trust experts with difficult tasks,” while another participant (ID:042083...53) commented that “work will not be effective if superiors are too autocratic, arbitrary, or if authority is delegated but lacks the necessary support, leading to subordinates working based on emotions, bias or selfishness.”

The difference between these two leadership styles is clearly shown. The autocratic leadership style emphasizes the concentration of power and decision making in the hands of the leader, while the democratic style aims to divide power, encourage the participation of subordinates, thereby creating conditions to improve collective efficiency and achieve the common goals of the organization.

Based on the comparison of the autocratic leadership style and the democratic leadership style, it is possible to identify the outstanding characteristics in the leadership style of current managers.

Although most survey participants said that they are applying the democratic style to improve leadership effectiveness, the reality shows that they have not fully demonstrated the core characteristics of this style. Specifically, they have not really empowered their subordinates; Delegation of tasks does occur, but without the necessary guidance and support; trust in subordinates is still limited; and in the decision-making process, there are still elements of bias, selfishness or personal favoritism.

From the survey results and the comparison between the two leadership styles, it can be concluded that the leadership style of many participants is clearly influenced by the autocratic leadership model. Part of the reason is explained by the current working environment contributing to the formation of this style. Although they claim to be applying a democratic style, their leadership behavior still does not fully reflect the democratic nature but instead is a style that is gradually shifting from autocratic to democratic.

This shifting trend is clearly illustrated, showing a gradual decrease in the power concentrated in the leader (Increasing Release of Control by Leader), while increasing the independence and autonomy of subordinates (Increasing Independence of Followers). The new leadership style emphasizes the creativity, initiative, and responsibility of employees, allowing them to participate more deeply in the decision-making process and task implementation.

The shift from autocratic leadership to democratic/participatory leadership is not only a change in form, but also an inevitable development trend in modern organizational management. This change reflects the need to adapt to an increasingly dynamic working environment, promoting the active participation of cadres, civil servants, public employees and workers in the management process. At the same time, it is also associated with the development of new

human resource management models, changes in thinking about leadership effectiveness and the importance of the human factor in organizational success.

Although the study has achieved some remarkable results, there are still some limitations that need to be considered. Specifically, the sample size is limited, when each educational institution has only one survey participant. This somewhat affects the representativeness and generalizability of the research results.

Therefore, in future studies, it is necessary to expand the sample size, consider stratification by criteria such as age, years of leadership experience, or work position, to further examine the level of application of democratic leadership style as well as the relationship between demographic factors and leadership behavior.

The above limitations also open important suggestions for future research directions, contributing to further improving the assessment and development of leadership models suitable for practical contexts in the field of education.

CONCLUSION

This study has clarified the impact of different leadership styles on work performance in the context of universities in Vietnam. The results show that democratic and supportive leadership styles are the most applied styles, while autocratic and transactional leadership styles are less used. Among them, democratic leadership style—with the encouragement of participation and contribution from employees—has proven to be effective in enhancing team spirit and job satisfaction.

However, the implementation of democratic leadership style still faces some limitations, especially the lack of support and guidance from leaders to subordinates. This shows the need to balance empowerment and companionship, to ensure that democratic leadership style is implemented effectively and sustainably.

While an autocratic leadership style may still be appropriate in certain situations—especially when it comes to ensuring work progress or dealing with urgent issues—the general trend today shows a clear shift towards a more democratic and open leadership style. This shift not only increases the sense of responsibility and initiative of everyone, but also contributes to promoting teamwork, motivating members to support each other in their work.

Notably, the research results also confirm that cohesion and consensus at work play a key role in building an effective and sustainable working environment. When leaders can maintain consensus, they will create a strong connection between members as well as between everyone and the common goals of the organization. This contributes to strengthening the collective spirit, raising the sense of responsibility and enhancing internal cooperation.

From the above analysis, it can be affirmed that democratic and supportive leadership styles are important factors contributing to improving work efficiency in universities in Vietnam. However, to optimize leadership effectiveness, managers need to pay more attention to supporting and guiding subordinates proactively, while making efforts to build a cohesive, consensual working environment and encourage active participation from all members of the organization.

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