
Journal of Creativity Student

<http://journal.unnes.ac.id/journals/jcs>
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.15294/jcs.v9i3s.50950>

From Contingency to Adaptive: A Synthesis of Leadership Frameworks in Strategic Decision-Making within Contemporary Organisations

Siti Mursidah*, Maria Ulfa, Nina Oktarina, S Martono, Heri Yanto

Universitas Negeri Semarang, Semarang, Indonesia

*Corresponding Author: mursidah@mail.unnes.ac.id

Abstract

This article aims to map and synthesise the latest literature on the relationship between leadership and strategic decision-making in contemporary organisations, with a particular focus on the shift in discourse from contingency and situational frameworks, towards transformational frameworks, and finally to adaptive leadership frameworks. Using a systematic literature review approach, this article examines national (SINTA) and international (Scopus, Emerald) journal publications issued between 2021 and 2026, with an emphasis on findings from the last five years. The results of the synthesis indicate that the effectiveness of decision-making is determined by the interaction between the alignment of leadership style with the situation (contingency), the capacity for emotional regulation and psychological dynamics, the principles and decision-making paradigms employed, the leader's involvement in policy implementation (transformational), and the extent to which leaders adopt an adaptive approach in the face of uncertainty. This article demonstrates that these three frameworks are complementary, rather than mutually exclusive, in explaining the quality of strategic decision-making under volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) conditions. Theoretical and practical implications are formulated for the development of leadership capacity in the education, business and government sectors.

Keywords: *adaptive leadership; contingency leadership; leadership styles; organisational uncertainty; strategic decision-making*

INTRODUCTION

Amidst organisations that are changing at an ever-increasing pace, an age-old question has resurfaced with renewed urgency: what exactly distinguishes leaders who steer their organisations through difficult times from those who, in fact, lead them to ruin? The answer, it turns out, rarely lies in formal authority alone, but rather in the quality of the decisions taken at critical junctures in the organisation's journey. Leadership and decisionmaking are two sides of the same coin; they are mutually supportive and difficult to separate in practice. This phenomenon feels increasingly relevant today. Technological change, global market pressures and rapid social dynamics are forcing leaders at all levels from headteachers and company managers to heads of government agencies to constantly make decisions in conditions of great uncertainty. Recent literature emphasises that modern organisations operate in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) environment, meaning that static, procedure-based leadership is becoming increasingly irrelevant (Rahman et al., 2026). A strategic decision is long-term in nature and is usually taken by top management to address external challenges, whilst tactical and operational decisions are managed at lower levels but still have an impact on the overall sustainability of the organisation (Fadli et al., 2025). When a leader's decision-making capacity is weak, the impact is not confined to a single incident but spreads to staff motivation, the trust of organisational members, and even the long-term direction of the institution itself.

Various studies indicate that decision-making within organisations, including educational institutions, plays a key role in motivation, communication, coordination and organisational change,

and can only function effectively if leaders possess the ability to direct the implementation of these decisions in accordance with the roles and responsibilities of their members (Huliatunisa et al. 2023). This phenomenon underscores that leadership is not merely a structural position, but rather a relational process that is continually tested through the decisions made on a daily basis. Recent quantitative studies in the field of higher education in Indonesia also confirm this: leadership styles have been shown to have a significant influence on the effectiveness of decision-making at the managerial level (Hendriani et al., 2024). The urgency of this discussion is further heightened when considered in relation to diverse leadership styles. Each leadership style (authoritarian, democratic, transformational, or transactional) exhibits distinct tendencies in decision-making, and the strengths and weaknesses of a decision are largely determined by the style employed by the leader or manager in question (Lande et al., 2022). However, the academic discourse of the past five years has begun to shift: rather than debating which leadership style is superior, attention has turned to how leaders can be adaptive, combining various styles situationally whilst maintaining the coherence of the decision-making process (Sott & Bender, 2025). A recent integrative review of 278 academic works on adaptive leadership even confirms that this concept is rapidly emerging as a contemporary organisational capability, although theoretically it remains somewhat fragmented and presents a number of conceptual and methodological challenges (Rahman et al., 2026).

This article is structured as a systematic literature review aimed at mapping and synthesising findings from previous studies, both national and international, regarding the relationship between leadership and decision making. Unlike previous studies, which generally discuss a single leadership framework in isolation, this article specifically traces the shift in discourse from contingency and situational frameworks towards transformational frameworks, and finally to adaptive leadership which has developed rapidly over the past five years to examine how these three complement one another in explaining the quality of strategic decision-making. The discussion begins with an explanation of the literature search and analysis methods, followed by a presentation of the synthesised findings from the sources reviewed; these are then discussed in greater depth to examine their implications for contemporary leadership practice, and the article concludes with a summary that highlights the common thread running through the entire study.

METHOD

This article was compiled using a systematic literature review approach with a descriptive qualitative method. This approach was chosen because the primary aim of the study was not to test hypotheses through the collection of primary data, but rather to map, compare and synthesise the knowledge already generated by previous researchers regarding the relationship between leadership and decision-making. This type of literature review is commonly used in leadership studies, where the data presented is obtained from various relevant and reliable written sources such as books, academic journals, and scientific articles (Lande et al., 2022).

The data collection process involved searching national and international journal articles published by reputable publishers (Springer, Emerald, MDPI) as well as national journal portals indexed by SINTA/Garuda, including reference books and previous research findings discussing the topics of leadership, leadership styles, adaptive leadership, and organisational decision-making. Search keywords included “leadership and decisionmaking”, “leadership styles”, “adaptive leadership”, “leadership decision-making”, and “transformational leadership effectiveness”. The publication year range was limited to 2021–2026, with priority given to articles published between 2024 and 2026 to ensure the review reflects the latest developments in the field. The collected sources were then selected based on thematic relevance, methodological clarity, and the credibility of the publisher or journal in which the article was published; articles whose online availability could not be verified were excluded from the reference list.

Data analysis was conducted through the stages of data reduction, data presentation and drawing conclusions, as is customary in qualitative literature reviews. Each source obtained was read critically and then analysed narratively to identify patterns, similarities and differences in the authors’ perspectives regarding how leadership influences the quality of decision-making. The results of this process were then organised thematically into six groups of findings, namely emotional management and psychology, leadership styles, decision-making principles and paradigms, transformational leadership, contingency and situational leadership, and adaptive leadership in conditions of uncertainty, in order to fully address the objectives of this article.

A systematic literature review approach is considered most appropriate for the purposes of this article, as the topics of leadership and decision-making have been extensively studied empirically by other researchers across various organisational contexts, ranging from education, business and healthcare to the public sector. By synthesising these findings, this article can present a more comprehensive and contextual overview, without the need to repeat the process of primary data collection, which has already been carried out extensively in the past.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Key Findings from the Literature

A review of the literature reveals several key findings that consistently emerge in studies on leadership and decision-making. Firstly, the quality of decision-making is greatly influenced by a leader's ability to manage emotions, apply an adaptive leadership style, and understand the psychological dynamics of both individuals and groups within an organisation (Fadli et al., 2025). Leaders who are able to manage emotional and psychological aspects tend to produce decisions that are more widely accepted and supported by members of their organisation.

Secondly, leadership style has been shown to be one of the key determining factors in the decision-making process. A leader often employs two or three styles simultaneously when making decisions, and the strengths and weaknesses of a decision depend heavily on the dominant style used (Lande et al., 2022). This finding is reinforced by a quantitative study of organisations in West Sumatra, which showed that leadership style has a significant influence on the effectiveness of decision-making (Hendriani et al., 2024). Thirdly, in the context of educational organisations, good decision-making must adhere to fundamental principles such as authority, credibility, reference, ethics, orientation and scope, which are then translated into several decision-making paradigms: classical, administrative, incremental, administrative-incremental and contingency (Huliatunisa et al. 2023).

Fourthly, a PRISMA-based scoping review of 17 empirical studies published throughout 2024 found that transformational leadership is consistently and positively associated with organisational commitment across the higher education, public and private sectors, with job satisfaction, psychological empowerment and work engagement being the most frequently identified mediating mechanisms (Khan et al., 2025). At a more macro level, a systematic review of more than fifty studies found that transformational leadership has a positive and significant relationship with organisational performance (Agazu et al., 2025). Fifth, contingency theory and situational leadership reinforce the argument that leadership effectiveness depends on the fit between the leader's style and the characteristics of the situation at hand. A literature review of organisations in the technology, education and manufacturing sectors found that flexible contingency leadership enhances team performance, organisational efficiency and adaptability, although its implementation still faces challenges in the form of a lack of training and leaders' difficulties in accurately identifying situational needs (Gandascita & Asy'ari, 2024). In line with this, a literature review of Trait Theory and Behavioural Theory found that situational leadership styles—which include the behaviours of telling, selling, participating and delegating according to the Hersey and Blanchard model—influence employees' job satisfaction, as they facilitate the adjustment of leadership approaches to the maturity and readiness levels of organisational members (Hairiah & Asy'ari, 2024).

Sixthly, developments in the literature from 2024 to 2026 indicate a growing emphasis on adaptive leadership as a framework that explicitly links leadership capacity with strategic decision-making under uncertainty. A PRISMA-compliant systematic review of 33 studies identified flexibility, empathy, innovation and long-term vision as the key characteristics of adaptive leaders (Sott & Bender, 2025). A meta-analysis of 34 empirical studies also confirmed that leadership (across various styles) is positively and significantly associated with employees' adaptive performance in the face of organisational change, with no single leadership style consistently outperforming the others (Bonini et al., 2024). However, an integrative review of 278 academic works indicates that adaptive leadership still faces conceptual and methodological fragmentation (Rahman et al., 2026). One of the main causes of this is the lack of adequate integration between the perspectives of Heifetz et al. and those of Uhl-Bien and Marion. A summary of these findings can be seen in Table 1. When considered together, the above findings lead to one fundamental conclusion: decision-making is not merely a standalone technical skill, but is closely linked to the quality of an individual's leadership. In line with this, the ability to manage emotions and understand group psychological dynamics plays a crucial role in the

decision-making process (Fadli et al., 2025). A number of studies indicate that leadership style influences decision-making patterns (Hendriani et al., 2024). This confirms that the effectiveness of a leadership style is highly dependent on the situation and context at hand. Effective leaders tend to be flexible, capable of shifting from a directive to a participatory style depending on the urgency, complexity of the issue, and the readiness of their organisational members.

The diversity of decision-making principles and paradigms ranging from classical, administrative and incremental to contingency paradigms – reinforces the argument that no single decision-making approach can be uniformly applied to all situations (Huliatunisa et al. 2023). In practice, educational organisations, for example, often require a gradual, incremental approach when facing policy changes, whilst business organisations operating in highly competitive markets may require a contingency approach that adapts rapidly to changes in the external environment. Research on transformational leadership indicates that leadership effectiveness is closely linked to a leader's ability to build a shared vision and foster the engagement of organisational members (Agazu et al., 2025; Khan et al., 2025). Transformational leaders do not stop at formulating policies on paper, but are actively involved in their implementation so that organisational members can see consistency between what is decided and what is carried out.

The contingency and situational leadership perspectives emphasise that leadership effectiveness depends on the fit between the leader's style, the maturity level of members, and the organisational conditions faced (Hairiah & Asy'ari, 2024; Gandascita & Asy'ari, 2024). Conceptually, this view is closely related to adaptive leadership, but the emphasis differs: contingency/situational theory places greater emphasis on the fit between leadership style and a relatively static situation at a single point in time, whilst adaptive leadership emphasises a continuous process of learning and adjustment over time as uncertainty constantly changes. The most notable development in recent literature is the growing prominence of the adaptive leadership framework as a conceptual bridge between leadership and strategic decision-making under high uncertainty. In contrast to transformational leadership, which emphasises vision and inspiration, adaptive leadership focuses more specifically on how leaders facilitate organisations to learn, experiment and adjust strategies when information is incomplete and the environment is constantly changing (Sott & Bender, 2025). These findings are reinforced by a meta-analysis of 34 empirical studies involving over 11,000 respondents, which demonstrated a positive and consistent relationship between leadership and employees' ability to adapt to changes in the workplace (Bonini et al., 2024). Interestingly, this relationship was found across various leadership styles. This reinforces the argument that leadership effectiveness is determined more by flexibility in responding to context than by the rigid application of a single style.

Nevertheless, it is important to maintain a critical perspective regarding the academic enthusiasm surrounding the concept of adaptive leadership. An integrative review synthesising 278 interdisciplinary academic works (across health, education, business, the military and public administration) found that this concept remains characterised by definitional ambiguity and theoretical fragmentation between two dominant perspectives (the practice-based approach of Heifetz et al. and the emergent based process approach of Uhl-Bien & Marion), which have yet to be adequately integrated (Rahman et al., 2026). This cautious stance is important to ensure that the literature synthesis in this article does not fall into the trap of over-generalisation: adaptive leadership appears promising as a bridging framework between leadership styles and the quality of decision-making, but cannot yet be positioned as a single model that supersedes previous frameworks.

In addition to the three main frameworks discussed, recent findings also draw attention to the framework of servant leadership as a relevant approach to enriching our understanding of the relationship between leadership and decision-making in contemporary organisations. Servant leadership differs from conventional approaches, which tend to regard formal power as the primary basis for decision-making. In this approach, leaders build trust, empower subordinates and actively involve them in the decision-making process (Nguyen et al., 2025). A recent quantitative study of 380 employees working under 'new ways of working' in Vietnam showed that servant leadership is positively and significantly associated with organisational citizenship behaviour, largely mediated by employees' sense of meaningfulness at work and psychological well-being (Nguyen et al., 2025). These findings are relevant to discussions on strategic decision-making as they reinforce the argument put forward previously: leaders who build trust and grant autonomy to their team members tend to produce decisions that are easier to implement, as members of the organisation feel involved, rather than merely being given orders.

Interestingly, the same study also found that new, fully digital and flexible working patterns can

actually weaken the positive influence of servant leadership on organisational citizenship behaviour, as reduced face-to-face interaction diminishes the quality of leader–member relationships (Nguyen et al., 2025). This finding adds an important nuance to the discussion on adaptive and contingency leadership discussed above: a leader's adaptive capacity is not merely a matter of stylistic flexibility, but also concerns the ability to maintain the quality of trusting relationships even as the medium of interaction changes drastically due to digitalisation. In other words, contemporary organisations face a dual challenge: not only must they select or combine the appropriate leadership styles, but they must also ensure that the relational essence of those styles is not eroded by the increasingly digital transformation of working practices.

This digital dimension is increasingly important to take into account, given that the majority of contemporary organisations whether in the education, business or government sectors are now operating amidst a rapidly unfolding process of digital transformation. A quantitative study of 579 respondents across various industries found that digital leadership enhances employee performance and organisational commitment primarily through the mediating role of digital transformation itself, rather than directly (Qiao et al., 2024). This implies that effective leadership in contemporary organisations is not merely about setting a vision for digitalisation, but must also actively manage the digital transition process so that its impact is truly felt in terms of the performance and commitment of organisational members. These findings reinforce the core argument of this article that strategic decision-making in the digital age demands more than merely setting policy direction at the top level of the organisation; it also requires leadership capacity to engage in a continuous implementation process.

When linked to the framework of adaptive leadership discussed earlier, these findings on digital leadership demonstrate that the uncertainty faced by contemporary organisations stems not only from external factors such as the market or policy, but also from within the organisation itself in the form of technological disruption that structurally alters the way work is carried out. Strategic decision-making in this context requires leaders to simultaneously manage three elements: technological literacy, resistance to change amongst organisational members, and consistency in the long-term vision three elements that are rarely explicitly discussed within conventional leadership frameworks or within the classical contingency framework that emerged prior to the digital era (Hairiah & Asy'ari, 2024; Gandascita & Asy'ari, 2024).

If the above findings are considered in an integrated manner, a recurring pattern emerges across theoretical frameworks: the quality of the relationship between leaders and organisational members consistently emerges as a mediating variable between leadership style and decision-making effectiveness. Within contingency and situational frameworks, this relationship manifests as the alignment of leadership style with the maturity level of followers (Hairiah & Asy'ari, 2024); within the transformational framework, as organisational engagement and commitment built through a shared vision (Agazu et al., 2025; Khan et al., 2025), within the servant leadership framework, as trust and empowerment in decision-making (Nguyen et al., 2025) and within the adaptive framework, as the organisation's collective capacity to learn and experiment together amidst uncertainty (Bonini et al., 2024; Sott & Bender, 2025). Thus, the central argument of this article can be refined: the distinction between the various leadership frameworks does not lie in the presence or absence of relational elements, but rather in how each framework frames and operationalises these elements in accordance with the situational context it faces.

This understanding has methodological implications for future research. Rather than treating leadership styles whether contingency, transformational, servant, or adaptive as mutually exclusive categories, future research needs to develop measurement instruments capable of capturing the quality of leader-member relationships as a latent variable that is a common element across all four frameworks. In contrast to conventional leadership models, which rely more heavily on formal power, servant leadership emphasises the importance of empowering subordinates. Leaders grant trust and space to organisational members to engage in the decisionmaking process, rather than centralising all decisions upon themselves (Nguyen et al., 2025). Such a synthesis is also relevant to the context of strategic decision-making, as ultimately the quality of decisions taken by an organisation depends not only on the leadership model formally adopted, but on the extent to which that model genuinely fosters the quality of relationships that support collective learning.

Although the synthesis above offers a more integrated framework for understanding, it is important to acknowledge a number of methodological limitations inherent in the literature reviewed in this article. Firstly, the majority of the quantitative studies cited, including those on contingency

leadership (Gandascita & Asy'ari, 2024), situational leadership, and decision-making effectiveness (Hairiah & Asy'ari, 2024), employ cross-sectional designs, which limit the ability to draw strong causal conclusions. Data collected at a single point in time cannot fully explain how the relationship between leadership style and decision quality evolves over time, particularly in the context of organisations undergoing structural changes due to digital transformation (Hendriani et al., 2024).

Secondly, the majority of the literature discussing adaptive leadership and servant leadership originates from diverse cultural contexts, ranging from the Netherlands (Qiao et al., 2024), Vietnam (Sott & Bender, 2025), to Indonesia (Nguyen et al., 2025; Hairiah & Asy'ari, 2024; Gandascita & Asy'ari, 2024), without any systematic effort to compare how organisational cultural factors moderate the relationship between leadership style and decision-making effectiveness. Rahman, Beamish and Althaus note that research on adaptive leadership is still predominantly conducted in developed countries, particularly English-speaking nations (Hendriani et al., 2024). Therefore, the application of these research findings to organisational contexts in developing countries, including Indonesia, must take into account differences in social, cultural and institutional contexts.

Thirdly, this literature review article itself has methodological limitations that must be honestly acknowledged. As the approach used is descriptive qualitative and does not strictly follow the PRISMA protocol as in some previous studies (Sott & Bender, 2025; Rahman et al., 2026), the resulting synthesis is more narrative-thematic in nature than quantitative systematic. Consequently, the conclusion regarding the complementary nature of the contingency, transformational, servant and adaptive frameworks should be viewed as an initial proposition requiring further empirical testing, for example through a meta-analysis that explicitly examines the interaction between leadership styles and the quality of decision-making. A similar approach has been used in a meta-analysis on the relationship between leadership and adaptive performance (Bonini et al., 2024).

Expanding on the synthesis above also yields more detailed implications than those previously outlined. In the education sector, headteachers or university leaders need to adapt their leadership styles to the level of professional maturity of teachers or lecturers (Hairiah & Asy'ari, 2024). At the same time, they also need to foster a culture of servant leadership that affords educators greater scope for participation in decision-making, particularly when institutions are undergoing a transformation towards digital or hybrid learning (Nguyen et al., 2025; Qiao et al., 2024). Failure to integrate these two dimensions situational and relational risks resulting in policies that, whilst technically sound, are not accepted by educators due to a lack of ownership over the decisions taken.

In the business sector, the implications place greater emphasis on an organisation's capacity to manage technological disruption without compromising the quality of leadership relationships. A study by Qiao, Li and Hong shows that digital transformation must be accompanied by leadership that actively fosters employee commitment in order to support organisational effectiveness (Qiao et al., 2024). This means that strategic decision-making regarding technological investment must always be accompanied by parallel decisions on how to mitigate resistance and maintain the engagement of organisational members during the transition period. Meanwhile, in the government sector and public organisations, the above synthesis emphasises the importance of combining a contingency approach which allows leadership styles to be adapted to the diverse bureaucratic contexts across different work units (Gandascita & Asy'ari, 2024) with the principle of servant leadership, which emphasises transparency and public involvement in the decision-making process (Nguyen et al., 2025). This combination is relevant given that government organisations often face higher demands for public accountability than business or educational organisations; consequently, a failure to build trust through participatory decision-making processes can have a direct impact on the institution's legitimacy in the eyes of the public.

Extending this synthesis also opens up opportunities to reconnect findings on leaders' emotional regulation and psychological dynamic (Fadli et al., 2025) with the digital context discussed above. As leader-member interactions increasingly take place via digital devices, a leader's ability to read and manage the emotional dynamics of their members becomes more challenging than in face-to-face interactions, as the non-verbal cues that typically help leaders assess the psychological state of their subordinates become far more limited. A study on servant leadership in a digital work context (Nguyen et al., 2025) indirectly confirms these concerns: the relationship between leadership and positive employee behaviour actually weakens when interactions take place within a fully digital work environment with minimal face-to-face contact. The implication is that emotional regulation identified as one of the key findings in this article (see Table 1) needs to be reinterpreted in the contemporary context; it should no longer be viewed merely as a conventional interpersonal competence, but rather

as a competence that must also be translated into effective digital communication practices.

This cross-framework synthesis is also relevant when reconsidered in relation to the principles and paradigms of decision-making discussed in the Results section (Huliatunisa et al. 2023). The principles of authority, credibility, ethics, orientation and scope, which form the basis of the classical, administrative, incremental, administrative-incremental and contingency paradigms, can essentially be mapped onto the four leadership frameworks synthesised in this discussion. The classical paradigm, for example, implicitly assumes formal authority as the basis for decisionmaking, in line with a more hierarchical leadership model; whilst the incremental and contingency paradigms are closer to the logic of situational leadership, which adapts decision-making steps to the organisation's readiness at a given moment (Gandascita & Asy'ari, 2024). On the other hand, the ethical principles and orientation towards the common good discussed previously are consistent with the core values of servant leadership, which emphasises the interests of the organisation's members over the individual interests of the leader (Huliatunisa et al. 2023; Nguyen et al., 2025). This interconnection demonstrates that the literature on decision-making principles and paradigms, although developed separately from the literature on leadership styles, actually shares a conceptual foundation that is mutually complementary and can be integrated within a broader analytical framework.

From a practical perspective, the above synthesis also suggests the need for a shift in the way organisations design leadership development programmes. Rather than equipping prospective leaders with a single, specific leadership model in isolation, such as standalone transformational leadership training or situational decision making training, contemporary organisations need to integrate the four dimensions discussed sensitivity to situational context, the ability to build a shared vision, a focus on serving members' interests, and adaptive learning capacity into a single, coherent leadership development curriculum. Such an approach is in line with the leadership development framework proposed by Schmitt and Pauknerova, which emphasises the importance of developing adaptive leadership behaviour to address organisational uncertainty whilst remaining mindful of the well-being of organisational members (Nguyen et al., 2025).

Ultimately, this synthesis of leadership and strategic decision-making in contemporary organisations demonstrates that the effectiveness of decision-making is not determined by any single leadership style, but rather by the dynamic interaction between situational fit, the quality of relationships, value orientation, and the organisation's collective learning capacity. This argument is consistent with all the findings presented in the Results section, whilst reinforcing this article's position that the shift in discourse from the contingency framework to the adaptive framework is not a linear model change, but rather an accumulative process in which each framework contributes distinct yet complementary analytical emphases to the same phenomena of leadership and decision-making. Proposed future research agendas based on this synthesis encompass at least three main directions. Firstly, empirical research that explicitly tests the interaction effect between situational leadership styles and service orientation on the quality of decision-making, given that these two frameworks have traditionally tended to be studied separately within different research traditions (Nguyen et al., 2025; Hairiah & Asy'ari, 2024). Secondly, longitudinal research that traces how an organisation's adaptive capacity develops over time as it undergoes gradual digital transformation, thereby addressing methodological criticisms regarding the dominance of cross-sectional designs in the current literature (Qiao et al., 2024; Rahman et al., 2026). Thirdly, comparative cross-national research is required, particularly involving Indonesia in a more systematic manner, to test whether the principles of adaptive leadership and the influence of organisational factors identified in the international literature (Schmitt & Pauknerova, 2026 ;Sott & Bender, 2025) also apply in the context of organisations in Indonesia. Such research could simultaneously expand upon previous studies on the relationship between leadership styles and decision-making effectiveness by taking into account differences in cultural and institutional contexts (Hendriani et al., 2024).

These three research directions are important not only for enriching the academic body of knowledge, but also for providing a stronger foundation for decision-making practice in the field. As repeatedly emphasised in this study, there is no single formula that can be uniformly applied to all types of organisations or all stages of their development. Educational institutions currently building a new digital culture require a different approach from technology start-ups that have operated in a fully digital environment from the outset, and both require a different approach again from government bodies bound by strict regulations and demands for public accountability. Consequently, the main contribution of the in-depth discussion in this article is not to offer a single formula, but rather a conceptual map that can help leaders and researchers identify which combination of leadership

elements is most relevant to the specific organisational context they face. To conclude this in-depth discussion, it is important to reiterate that the four frameworks that have been synthesised namely, contingency and situational, transformational, servant, and adaptive leadership are not intended to replace one another. Rather, they form a continuum of emphasis that leaders can utilise flexibly according to the demands of the situation at hand, ranging from relatively stable and predictable circumstances to those fraught with uncertainty and requiring continuous collective learning. It is this understanding that serves as the central thread linking all the findings in this article to the original aim of the writing, namely to map out how leadership and strategic decision-making are intertwined in contemporary organisations.

Another point worth noting is that the process of strategic decision-making in contemporary organisations is becoming increasingly difficult to separate from issues of digital literacy and the readiness of human resources to adapt to technological change. Leaders who excel in relational and situational terms but lack an understanding of the implications of technology for their organisation's work processes risk making decisions that are socially acceptable but technically misguided (Qiao et al., 2024). Therefore, contemporary leadership competencies should ideally integrate the relational dimensions discussed at length above with adequate digital literacy, so that the strategic decisions made genuinely take into account both the human and technical aspects of the changes facing the organisation. The implications of these findings are quite far-reaching. In the field of education, headteachers or heads of institutions need to be equipped not only with technical managerial competencies, but also with psychological sensitivity and the ability to adapt their leadership style to the context (Hendriani et al., 2024). In the world of business and industry, organisations facing technological disruption require leaders who are bold enough to make swift decisions whilst remaining data-driven and involving their teams in a participatory manner. Meanwhile, in the social and governmental spheres, leadership that prioritises engagement and transparency in decision-making has the potential to restore public trust, which is often eroded by decisions perceived as unilateral.

Table 1. Summary of Literature Findings

Theme of Findings	Key Findings	Source
Emotional management & psychology	Optimal decision-making is influenced by a leader's ability to manage emotions and their adaptive style	Fadli et al. (2025)
Leadership styles	Leadership style determines the pattern and quality of decisions made	Lande et al. (2022)
Leadership style (quantitative)	Leadership style has a significant effect on the effectiveness of managerial decision-making	Hendriani, Sari, & Gistituati (2024)
Principles & paradigms of decision-making	Decisions follow principles of authority, ethics, etc., through five paradigms	Huliatunisa et al. (2023)
Transformational leadership	Transformational leadership is consistently positively associated with organisational commitment across 17 empirical studies from 2024	Khan, Mahmud, & Fayyaz (2025)
Organisational performance	Transformational leadership is positively associated with organisational performance	Agazu, Kero, & Debela (2025)
Contingency leadership	Flexible contingency leadership enhances team performance and organisational adaptability	Gandascita & Asy'ari (2024)
Situational leadership	Situational styles (telling, selling, participating, delegating) influence job satisfaction	Hairiah & Asy'ari (2024)
Adaptive leadership (characteristics)	Flexibility, empathy, innovation and long-term vision as characteristics of adaptive leaders	Sott & Bender (2025)
Adaptive leadership (decisionmaking practices)	Leadership has a significant positive effect on adaptive performance across 34 empirical studies	Bonini et al. (2024)
Adaptive leadership (conceptual critique)	The concept of adaptive leadership remains theoretically and methodologically fragmented (a review of 278 works)	Rahman, Beamish, & Althaus (2026)

CONCLUSION

This literature review confirms that leadership and decision-making are two inseparable elements in organisational practice. The quality of decisions made by a leader is greatly influenced by their ability to manage emotions and psychological dynamics, the leadership style applied, the decision-making principles and paradigms employed, and the extent to which the leader develops adaptive capacity and is directly involved in the implementation of the policies that have been decided upon. The various pieces of literature reviewed (including developments in the discourse on adaptive leadership over the past five years) consistently indicate that there is no single, universally applicable formula; the effectiveness of leadership and decision-making depends heavily on the context, the nature of the organisation, and the readiness of its human resources. Ultimately, good leadership can be understood as the ability to continually learn to read a situation and choose the most appropriate decision-making approach at the right moment. In the context of contemporary organisations that are constantly faced with uncertainty, adaptability in leadership and precision in decision-making are becoming increasingly important for the organisation's sustainability and development. It is hoped that this literature review may serve as an initial reference for further research that empirically examines the relationship between adaptive leadership and strategic decision-making within more specific organisational contexts.

DECLARATION OF GENERATIVE AI

The authors declare that no generative AI or AI-assisted technologies were used in the writing process of this manuscript.

CONFLICTING INTEREST STATEMENT

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest in the publication of this article.

FUNDING INFORMATION STATEMENT

This research did not receive any specific grants from any funding bodies, whether in the public, commercial or non-profit sectors.

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