



Exploring leadership foundations and perspectives: relevant models, theories, and challenges

Explorando los fundamentos y perspectivas del liderazgo:
modelos, teorías relevantes y retos.

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Abstract

Leadership, in a globalized world and in a changing organizational context, is a matter of high relevance today. In this sense, the present paper explores different theories and models of organizational leadership, identifying its historical, conceptual and methodological bases, as well as its practical implications in current organizational contexts. We begin with an approach to classical models of leadership, mainly focused on people's characteristics associated with good leadership behaviors. We also explore, the leader-member exchange theory, which is the basis for the contemporary leadership theories. Contemporary models of leadership are also reviewed, incorporating contextual elements, as well as group characteristics as fundamental aspects for successful leadership. Finally, the current trends in organizational leadership are presented, which are oriented mainly to strategic leadership, the use of new technologies and digital transformation in its practice, as well as the development of creativity, flexibility and the enhancement of the approach of authentic leadership. It is also suggested how the study of leadership in the Colombian and latinoamerican context is oriented, emphasizing the relevance of authentic leadership and its advantages and contribution to organizational contexts.

Key words: Organizational leadership, charismatic leadership, transactional leadership, transformational leadership, authentic leadership.

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Resumen

El liderazgo, dentro un mundo globalizado y en un contexto organizacional cambiante, es un tema de alta relevancia en la actualidad. Es por esta razón, que en este documento se exploran diferentes teorías y modelos sobre el liderazgo organizacional, identificando sus orígenes históricos, conceptuales y metodológicos, así como sus implicaciones prácticas en los contextos organizacionales actuales. Se inicia con el abordaje de los modelos clásicos del liderazgo, enfocados principalmente en la identificación de características que hacen de una persona un buen líder. Posteriormente se explora la teoría de intercambio líder-miembro que sirve de puente para las teorías contemporáneas sobre este tema. A continuación, se revisan los modelos contemporáneos del liderazgo, los cuales incorporan elementos del contexto y del grupo como aspectos fundamentales para que se dé un liderazgo exitoso. Finalmente se exponen las tendencias actuales del liderazgo organizacional las cuales se orientan al liderazgo estratégico, el empleo de nuevas tecnologías y a la transformación digital en el ejercicio del liderazgo, así como a desarrollar la creatividad, flexibilidad y potenciar el abordaje del liderazgo auténtico; y se sugiere hacia donde se orienta el estudio del liderazgo en el contexto colombiano y latinoamericano, con principal relevancia del liderazgo auténtico y las ventajas que trae a los contextos organizacionales.

Palabras clave: Liderazgo organizacional, liderazgo carismático, liderazgo transaccional, liderazgo transformacional, liderazgo auténtico.

1. Introduction

In today's dynamic and constantly evolving business world, leadership remains as a central concept of interest, particularly regarding the direction and development of organizations. Leadership, with its multidimensional and complex nature, has been subject of study and reflection for decades, leading to a wide range of theories and models aimed at understanding its foundations, characteristics, and effects across various contexts. This theoretical document seeks to explore different leadership theories and models, identifying their historical, conceptual, and methodological origins, as well as examining their practical implications in contemporary organizational settings.

By exploring leadership theories, it not only fosters our understanding of the essential qualities of effective leaders, but also provides a solid foundation for analyzing current strategies related to this construct and

their connection to the evolving demands of a globalized environment. A detailed examination of these theories expands our knowledge of the fundamentals that define successful leadership and offers a critical perspective on how these theories have adapted to address the specific challenges of contemporary societies and organizations, which are increasingly interconnected, complex, and constantly transforming.

Throughout these pages, we examine both classical theories and more recent approaches to understand the inherent complexities of leadership and to provide a foundation for future research and practical applications. This document aims to offer to researchers and others interested in this subject, a resource to deepen their understanding of the dynamics and perspectives associated with various leadership approaches, as well as a solid framework for applying these insights to current organizational challenges. In this sense, this document not only enriches the academic debate, but also provides a broad perspective for enhancing the effectiveness of organizational actions related to leadership, promoting more ethical and adaptive leadership, and contributing to the development of more inclusive and resilient organizations.

2. Approaches to the concept of leadership

Leadership, within the organizational context, is an increasingly relevant topic. It is widely recognized today that leaders play a crucial role in achieving organizational goals, mobilizing teams to reach high performance, enhancing contributions, and supporting employee retention (Avolio, 2007; Avolio et al., 2009; Yukl, 2012). Initially, research on this construct focused primarily on individual characteristics, such as leaders' traits, qualities, and behaviors. However, decades of study incorporating diverse cultural perspectives and theoretical frameworks have integrated additional elements from both the individual and the environment, providing a more comprehensive understanding of leadership's functioning and its impact on each member of a given work team (Horner, 1997).

According to recent literature, leadership is no longer defined solely by individual characteristics or differences. Instead, it is described across various models as a dyadic, relational, strategic, and global phenomenon, and also as a complex social dynamic (Avolio et al., 2004, 2009; Yukl, 2012). Current studies on leadership examine not only the leader, but also their followers, peer supervisors, work environment, work context, and even the organizational culture (Bass, 1995; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Dinh et al., 2014; Horner, 1997; Oc et al., 2023).

Thus, leadership is a process that involves multiple members within a team, in which exchanges occur to achieve common goals or desired future states, defined by those in the leadership role. The individual who assumes this role requires certain characteristics, such as self-confidence, positive self-regulatory behaviors, and a positive self-concept, among others. Additionally, other factors are considered, including followers' motivation, psychological conditions that enable them to follow the leader's guidance effectively, and a supportive context that facilitates this exchange (Avolio et al., 2009).

Leadership is a condition that facilitates organizational success through effective and timely decision-making in response to various situations, transforming conflicts into opportunities (Chacón Luna, 2016). Similarly, Roza-Sánchez et al. (2019) propose that leadership is the ability to coordinate groups, providing support to achieve a common goal. These abilities include taking initiative, managing, promoting teamwork, and motivating toward achievement. According to these authors, leadership intended as direction, is important because it mobilizes the established organizational directives and aims to ensure that members' behaviors produce desirable outcomes for productivity, meeting objectives, and fostering assertive communication. This comprehensive understanding of leadership identify influence, vision, authenticity, inspiration, and adaptability to changing contexts as essential elements for effective leadership.

Next, we will explore different leadership models, presented chronologically for an easier understanding to the topic.

3. Leadership models

3.1. Traditional models

Traditional leadership models define two strictly hierarchical roles: the leader and the follower. The leader is perceived as someone superior to their followers, exerting influence to guide their behavior, as well as to follow instructions and achieve predetermined goals or objectives. Followers, in turn, are those who support and accompany the leader (Avolio & Chan, 2008). Within this framework, leadership is considered as an individual differentiating characteristic, with these theories focusing on identifying the best ways to lead. This is often approached by studying the interaction between a leader's traits, their behaviors, and the context in which leadership occurs (Horner, 1997).

According to these models, leaders are believed to be born, not made, and achieving success depends on identifying those who are naturally capable to be great leaders. Consequently, personality, physical, and mental characteristics were the primary aspects studied. It was also believed that if the traits distinguishing leaders from followers could be identified, individuals could be effectively evaluated and placed in leadership roles. Among the traits identified as distinctive of leaders were persistence, tolerance for ambiguity, self-confidence, integrity, honesty, and drive, all considered as innate qualities (Avolio, 2007; Yukl, 2012). However, research failed to provide a definitive answer regarding which traits were consistently associated with effective leadership. One of the main shortcomings of these studies was their neglect of environmental and situational factors that influence a leader's effectiveness (Dweck & Leggett, 1988; Horner, 1997).

Traditional theories emphasized genetic and biological factors as the primary predictors of leadership. However, as previously mentioned, the debate over whether leaders are born or made persisted. Empirical evidence from various studies suggested that heredity is not a completely determining factor in predicting leadership (e.g., Arvey et al., 2006; Plomin & Daniels, 1987). Instead, other factors, such as the historical context in which individuals grow and work, have shown a significant relationship with this

construct (Avolio, 2007; Avolio et al., 2009; Horner, 1997).

Continuing with the study of individual leadership characteristics, research on personality traits has often been organized within the framework of the Big Five Theory of personality. Findings from different studies indicate that extraversion is a commonly observed trait among successful leaders. Conscientiousness and openness to experience have also been identified as relevant traits, although to a lesser extent, while agreeableness and emotional stability show no significant correlation with leadership (Horner, 1997). Additionally, more recent studies highlight emotional intelligence as another key characteristic of effective leaders (Robbins & Judge, 2009).

Cognitive sciences have also played a significant role in studying leader characteristics, particularly in understanding how leaders perceive, make decisions, and act. For example, Swan (as cited in Avolio et al., 2009) suggests that developing leadership requires analyzing how leaders' self-concept and work identity evolve, in relation to how they influence others. Additionally, Avolio and Chan (2008) highlight the existence of specific triggering events that activate a leader's work self-concept. These events prompt attention, self-evaluation, and the activation of this self-concept, shaping the leader's responses and actions.

From cognitive psychology, contributions to leadership models have also emphasized, for example, the importance of understanding a leader's cognitive attributes or capabilities, as well as the way thinking is shared within a group, as conditions to foster leaders' creativity. These approaches highlight how perspectives on leadership cognition can vary. On one hand, they focus on the leader's individual activities; on the other, they examine the interactions between individuals. Among the current aspects studied in relation to leaders' cognition, self-concept stands out as a particularly relevant characteristic (Avolio et al., 2009).

Another field that has explored effective leadership is contingency theory. This approach focus on the analysis of the interac-

tions between a leader's traits, behaviors, and the specific context in which leadership occurs. These theories are based on the assumption that the effects of one variable on leadership depend on other variables, suggesting that successful leadership may vary depending on the situation (Saal & Knight, 1988). Contingency theories also emphasize the analysis of the people being led, considering leadership as an interaction between the goals of the leader and their followers (House & Mitchell, 1974).

According to Horner (1997), situational leadership models propose that the variables influencing a leader's effective behavior include the nature of the task (whether it is intrinsically or extrinsically rewarding) as well as the autonomy and motivation levels of the followers. Avolio (2007) further suggests that achieving desired outcomes depends on the alignment between the leader's characteristics, leadership style, followers' maturity, and the challenges presented by the situation.

These theories also suggest that leaders are primarily responsible for fostering behaviors in their collaborators that enable them to achieve desired outcomes. Thus, leaders must be able to adapt to change according to cultural contexts, manage organizational culture effectively, communicate clearly, understand the needs of their collaborators and their environment, and train them to meet expected results in each situation (Horner, 1997). Additionally, Vroom and Yetton (1973) propose that leaders should support and involve their followers in the decision-making process. According to these authors, the effectiveness of decision-making largely depends on the degree of follower involvement. However, this perspective has been criticized as being somewhat limited in addressing the complexities of decision-making.

From these models, followers are recognized as a fundamental element in the leadership process, leading the way for the development of leader-member exchange theory (Horner, 1997).

3.2. Leader-Member Exchange theory (LMX)

Leader-Member Exchange theory (LMX) focuses on the relationship between the leader and the follower (Cogliser & Schriesheim,

2000). It is based on the assumption that leaders establish different exchange relationships with their followers, and the quality of these relationships influences the outcomes achieved by both the leader and their followers (Avolio, 2007). In this sense, leadership occurs when leaders and followers develop effective relationships that result in mutual and incremental influence (Uhl-Bien, 2006).

The LMX theory has evolved from focusing exclusively on the consequences of the relationship between the leader and their members to also considering both the antecedents and consequences of this relationship. For example, Tekleab and Taylor (2003) evaluated the levels of consensus between the leader and follower regarding their mutual obligations and expectations for achieving goals together. A meta-analysis conducted by Ilies et al. (2007) found that a higher-quality LMX relationship not only predicted greater levels of performance but also responsible behaviors within the organization (Avolio et al., 2009).

Another area of interest in studying LMX relationships is the context in which these relationships develop. For instance, Kacmar et al. (2007) identified that low-quality exchanges between leaders and followers may be associated with the role and conditions under which the leader attained their position. Additionally, they noted how supervisor competencies and organizational policies influence followers' willingness to exert effort at work, beyond what would be expected in a less effective exchange relationship.

Based on what has been explored so far, traditional leadership theories understood the leader as an individual at a hierarchical level, with subordinates under their charge. These theories emphasize individual characteristics such as personality traits and biological factors that predispose a person to become a leader. In contrast, later models incorporated contextual components, such as the different situations the leader faced, which influenced their approach to leadership and decision-making. These theories also recognized followers as an important part of the leadership process. This led to the development of the leader-member exchange model, which analyzes the exchange relationships between leaders and followers and

their impact on achieving organizational objectives. This theory serves as a bridge to the contemporary leadership theories that will be discussed next.

3.3. Contemporary leadership theories

Within the alternative leadership approaches that have emerged as an evolution of traditional models, the so-called new wave theories have developed. These new leadership models emphasize the leader's symbolic behavior, visionary and inspirational communication, emotions and feelings, ideological and moral values, as well as individualized attention and intellectual stimulation. This contrasts with the more traditional models that focus on the leader's behavior in terms of the exchange relationships between leaders and followers (Avolio et al., 2009). Initial examples include charismatic and transformational leadership theories, which introduced this new orientation toward leadership.

As mentioned earlier, contemporary leadership theories are oriented toward development and change. For example, as will be explored further, transformational and charismatic leadership propose that an effective leader is one who inspires followers to identify with new, shared visions (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). When visionary leadership is shared within a team, its members create a vision of an attractive future state and a common mental model (Pearce, 2004). This shared vision helps to increase members' aspirations and their intrinsic motivations to pursue higher-order values such as self-direction, achievement, stimulation, power, security, conformity, tradition, benevolence, and universalism (Machado, 2020). Another example of this orientation is empowerment in decision-making. In this sense, being truly empowered means being able to take steps to do things differently, be proactive, or innovate (Kirman & Rosen, 1999; Zhang & Bartol, 2010, cited in Wang et al., 2014).

Next, the main contemporary leadership theories will be described:

3.3.1. Transactional leadership

Transactional leadership focuses on the appropriate exchange of resources. According to authors such as Judge and Piccolo (2004),

the transactional leader offers their followers something they want in exchange for something the leader desires. This leadership style has three main characteristics: contingent reward, management by passive exception, and by active exception (Jung & Avolio, 2000). The contingent reward refers to the extent to which the leader establishes constructive transactions or exchanges with followers. In this context, the leader outlines expectations and specifies the rewards that will be given for meeting them. On the other hand, management by exception refers to the degree to which the leader takes corrective actions based on the outcomes of transactions with them and their followers (Arroyo-Martínez & Muro-Martínez, 2017).

3.3.2. Charismatic leadership

Charismatic leadership has been studied since the mid-1970s. Based on both theoretical development and empirical research, this term describes a leadership style in which leaders inspire followers to achieve challenging goals by articulating a compelling vision for the future, communicating high expectations, and expressing confidence in followers' abilities to meet those expectations (Shea & Howell, 1999).

Regarding the followers of charismatic leaders, research has shown that they perceive greater positive organizational outcomes as a result of their leaders' influence and attribute the organization's positive performance to the leader's level of charisma. A laboratory study conducted by Pillai and Meindl (1991, cited in Shamir, 1992) supports these findings. According to this study, a fictional leader was rated as more charismatic when the organization's performance was described as positive, rather than negative. Furthermore, Judge and Piccolo (2004) suggest that leaders perceived as charismatic also have a positive impact on follower outcomes, as they enhance followers' perceptions of self-efficacy by improving their self-esteem and self-worth.

On the other hand, a limitation of this leadership style in terms of organizational outcomes, is that it has not been clearly demonstrated to what extent these results are influenced by other factors, such as the

economy, other stakeholders (e.g., subordinates), culture, structure, tasks, objectives, or any other factors that may affect them. Additionally, the contextual factors that influence the emergence and effectiveness of leadership have been insufficiently explored and specified (Avolio et al., 2009; Shamir, 1992; Shamir et al., 1993).

Shamir et al. (1993) argue that charismatic leadership is more likely to be effective when performance objectives cannot be clearly defined and measured, when the means to achieve these objectives are unclear, and when the leader cannot link extrinsic rewards to individual performance. Bass (1995) also suggests that charismatic leadership is more likely to stand out when feedback mechanisms about performance adequacy are lacking. Therefore, task feedback in followers' performance is related to charismatic leadership. One possible explanation for this is that charismatic leaders inspire their followers largely through emotional appeals to sustain effort related to the task, regardless of the feedback conditions. In other words, by setting a mission and ideological objectives that enhance participants' perceptions of the meaning and importance of their tasks, charismatic leaders can forge a strong emotional connection between participants and their work, elevating their motivation to perform (Shea & Howell, 1999).

3.3.3. Transformational leadership

Transformational leaders are oriented toward a purpose that transcends short-term goals and focus on higher-order intrinsic needs. In comparison, transformational leadership seeks for followers to identify with the leader's vision and values, while transactional leadership offers followers something tangible that they want in exchange for something the leader wants or expects from them (Kuhnert & Lewis, 1987).

In transformational leadership, four dimensions are identified: idealized influence (or charisma), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. Charisma refers to the extent to which the leader generates admiration and encourages followers to identify with them. In this context, the leader fosters conviction

in their followers, leading them to adopt specific roles and emotionally support the development of tasks and goals (Pérez Vilar & Azzollini, 2013).

Regarding inspirational motivation, this refers to the extent to which the leader establishes a vision that is both inspiring and appealing to their followers. Leaders who exhibit inspirational motivation challenge their followers with high standards, give meaning to the tasks they need to perform, and communicate optimism about achieving future goals. In relation to intellectual stimulation, it refers to the degree to which the leader takes risks, questions assumptions, and encourages followers to contribute ideas, fostering their creativity (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Pérez Vilar & Azzollini, 2013). Finally, individualized consideration refers to the degree to which the leader addresses the needs of each follower, assumes a coaching role, and listens to their requirements and concerns (Chacón Luna, 2016).

Transformational leadership is oriented toward transcending self-interests for the benefit of the group, increasing awareness of important issues, and enhancing the need for self-growth and self-actualization (Waldman et al., 1987). According to Omar (2011), when employees perceive their superior as a transformational leader, it contributes to an increase in their job satisfaction. This satisfaction is also associated with the previously mentioned characteristics (charisma, decisiveness, and vision), enabling leaders to make decisions based on reason rather than emotion. This is further supported by Pérez Vilar and Azzollini (2013), who found that leaders who positively influence employees' attitudes, as well as those who exercise transformational leadership, lead to improvements in job satisfaction.

Followers of a transformational leader feel trust, loyalty, and respect, and they are generally willing to work harder than expected because the leader has the ability to inspire transformation. This occurs because the leader provides his followers with an inspiring mission, conveys vision and identity, and encourages them to seek and apply new ways to challenge or modify their environment, thereby reinforcing their sense of success (Burns,

1978, cited by Fernández & Quintero, 2017). Additionally, Pérez Vilar and Azzollini (2013) argue that leaders who practice this style of leadership motivate others to take action and educate them, while also serving as role models and promoting satisfaction. Transformational supervisors inspire employees' creativity to solve complex problems, achieve originality, and share values and goals, facilitating the transition from ideas to action (Liu & Huang, 2020).

3.3.4. Authentic leadership

The most recent approaches to the study of leadership incorporate the concept of authentic leadership as an additional model to complement more well-known leadership styles (transactional, transformational, or charismatic). Initially, this theory emerged from studies aimed at describing and identifying the traits and other individual characteristics that make a leader *authentic*. These studies also sought to examine how these processes positively affect their followers (Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

According to Avolio and Gardner (2005), and in alignment with other scholars (e.g., Bass, 1995; Conger & Kanungo, 1998; Dinh et al., 2014; Horner, 1997; Oc et al., 2023), authentic leadership focuses on identifying authenticity in leaders, which is understood as a foundational construct that distinguishes and characterizes individuals in leadership roles. This conceptualization prioritizes observable behaviors that reflect the internal processes of self-awareness and self-regulation in leaders. In this sense, it is essential to study how these internal processes, and the perception of these behaviors, influence followers and are associated with achieving positive outcomes of an affective, attitudinal, and behavioral nature (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Luthans and Youssef (2007) define authentic leadership as a process that develops from positive psychological capacities, along with a structured organizational context, leading to positive behaviors, greater self-confidence, improved self-regulation by leaders and associates, and enhanced self-development.

Taking the previous ideas into account, an important component highlighted in authentic leadership theory is the concept of

authenticity, which stems from positive psychology. This concept has been redefined from a psychological perspective and is broadly described as the ability to identify and transparently express one's thoughts, emotions, needs, and beliefs (Avolio & Gardner, 2005). More specifically, the concept of authenticity focuses on four main aspects. The first refers to authenticity as a form of self-understanding (the perceptual nature of being or self-awareness); the second pertains to recognizing one's own reality (based on the processing of personal information); the third aspect relates to one's actions (behavioral component); and finally, the fourth refers to relationships with others (relational component). To be authentic, these four components must exhibit certain characteristics that reflect the true essence of the leader (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Kernis & Goldman, 2006; Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Regarding the perceptual component, the leader must have a strong commitment to achieving a deep self-awareness of their emotions, cognitions, values, and desires, which in turn allows for greater acceptance and integration of their true self. Concerning information processing, authenticity implies that this processing is unbiased and free from distortions about both the negative and positive aspects of oneself, as well as the surrounding reality (Conejero Pérez et al., 2022). In terms of the behavioral component, the leader should demonstrate behaviors that are consistent with their internalized needs, values, and beliefs (Chatterjee et al., 2023). Finally, regarding the relational component, the authentic leader seeks to build transparent relationships with others, maintaining consistency with the previous three components and avoiding distortions regarding others' expectations (Kernis & Goldman, 2006).

In the literature, authentic leadership is often associated with ethical leadership, which is described as a pattern of transparent and ethical behavior in which the leader promotes openness among followers by sharing necessary information for decision-making, while also accepting their contributions. Additionally, the leader demonstrates normatively appropriate behavior through personal actions and interpersonal relationships, fostering such conduct among followers

(Avolio et al., 2009; Aragón et al., 2021). In this way, the authentic leader is characterized as trustworthy, genuine, optimistic, resilient, transparent, ethical/moral, future-oriented, empathetic, emotionally intelligent, and a team player. The authentic leader does not attempt to coerce or persuade their team; instead, their authentic values, beliefs, and behaviors serve to model their team's development and prepare them to become leaders themselves (Luthans & Youssef, 2007; Conejero Pérez et al., 2022).

As part of the authentic leader's role, they are expected to share and communicate their business vision to followers, thereby shaping their behavior, which aligns with the concept of coaching. According to Carey et al. (2011), contemporary organizations are increasingly recognizing the importance of developing leadership competencies that enhance a leader's ability to understand and differentiate their own emotions, manage their behavior, and navigate interpersonal relationships. These skills not only benefit the leader but also positively influence the personal growth of their followers, contributing to the achievement of the group's established goals. In this sense, coaching has become one of the primary strategies for leadership development and organizational change in recent years, helping leaders to meet the growing challenges of complex environments.

According to the description above, authenticity is not necessarily a stable or permanent characteristic of a person, but rather something that evolves and strengthens over time. It can also manifest at different levels, depending on the various roles an individual assumes. For example, people may express a high degree of authenticity in a work context while exhibiting lower levels in a social or recreational environment. However, to be authentic in a leadership role, some degree of congruence must exist between this role and other roles an individual performs, as well as coherence between meeting the organization's expectations for that role and one's own values or beliefs (Avolio et al., 2009).

This leadership model shows that the cognitive elements involved in a leader's development, such as self-awareness and self-regulation of behavior, are also reflected

in the development of followers. The parallel processes associated with the development of both the leader and the follower are integrated into a climate that can either facilitate or hinder effective leadership development (Avolio, 2007; Avolio & Gardner, 2005).

4. Conclusions

Years of research have significantly contributed to the development of knowledge about leadership. Over time, various forms of leadership have been conceptualized, revealing different leadership styles and highlighting several important trends in ongoing research. Below are some key aspects to consider regarding the current and future landscape of leadership studies.

A first key aspect to mention is the adoption of more holistic views or approaches in the field of leadership. In this sense, leadership is understood as a process of interaction between individuals, such as leaders, followers, and the surrounding environment, as well as among different levels of leadership and their dynamic interactions. For example, studies by Aránega et al. (2023), Chacón Luna (2016), Chatterjee et al. (2023), and Liu & Huang (2020) suggest that recent social and organizational changes have led to the development of more flexible work policies and a better utilization of information technologies, resulting in greater autonomy for workers. This, in turn, requires leaders to understand the organizational context, themselves, and their teams in order to manage them effectively, handle change appropriately, and fulfill their assigned functions and goals without negatively impacting team dynamics.

The second trend involves examining how the leadership process develops, for instance, by integrating research from cognitive psychology with strategic leadership (Avolio et al., 2009; Fernandes et al., 2022). The third trend focuses on exploring alternative ways to study leadership, including more qualitative and mixed-methods approaches.

In terms of leadership practice within organizations, current trends play a crucial role in addressing the various challenges they face, such as fostering creativity within teams (Aránega et al., 2023; Rodríguez et al., 2021).

Strategic leadership, whose research has significantly increased since 2020, aims to tackle competitive advantage in a disruptive global landscape. This has led to investigations into topics such as digital transformation, empowerment, innovation, and creativity, suggesting the need for more theoretical perspectives that encompass individual psychology (Fernandes et al., 2022; Singh et al., 2023).

Finally, another emerging trend is focused on digital transformation, particularly the study of Business Analytics (BA) and Business Intelligence (BI) techniques in various configurations of modern organizations. These techniques promote stable leadership practices that are more data-driven and aligned with competitive market contexts. Additionally, by utilizing these tools, leaders can more accurately assess the current state of the organization, enabling well-founded, timely, and effective decision-making (Romagnano, 2021). In line with this, the implementation of technologies in the digital transformation of work, which has gained greater relevance following the Covid-19 pandemic, has had a significant impact on employee performance and work-life balance. Thus, it is logical to have leaders with transformational leadership skills who contribute to and facilitate organizational operations in these contexts. According to recent literature, the implementation of technologies and digital transformation is reflected in the increased capabilities of information technologies, dynamic innovation in the digital workplace, and evolving workplace policies within organizations, among other factors (AlNuaimi et al., 2022; Chatterjee et al., 2023).

What has been presented above is crucial for the development of contemporary organizational leadership models and for the training of leadership competencies within organizations, aimed at achieving effective leadership. It is also important to continue researching the development of authentic leadership, which, although explored decades ago, remains essential for fostering effective leadership—especially in the Colombian context, where leadership is often approached through earlier models such as transformational and transactional leadership (Chacón Luna, 2016; Rueda Laguna, 2016). In this regard, authors like Roza-Sánchez et al. (2019) note

that transformational and charismatic leadership are the predominant leadership styles guiding strategic direction in this region.

On the other hand, regarding the Colombian context, it is important to conduct more empirical research within the country. As Rueda Laguna (2016) points out in a bibliometric study, there are only between 0 to 2 articles in indexed journals related to leadership in Colombian companies. Furthermore, Rodríguez and colleagues (2021) conducted a systematic review and bibliometric analysis of 519 documents on organizational leadership, finding that studies on this topic are primarily focused on organizations in the United States, Asia, and Europe, making it a relatively underexplored subject in Latin American companies. In this regard, it is essential to give greater attention to the study of leadership as it pertains to the specific organizational conditions of these contexts. This would facilitate the development of leadership models that are better aligned with the needs of organizations in Colombia and Latin America, addressing aspects such as policies, structure, culture, and other factors, as well as the implications these conditions have for leadership practices. Given that research in the country has not yet established a well-defined approach to leadership or the outcomes associated with it, it has primarily focused on leaders' behaviors as individuals (Rueda Laguna, 2016).

In the ever-evolving world of the 21st century, leadership plays a crucial role in achieving goals and building strong, resilient organizations. This document has explored the importance of leadership in the current context, emphasizing its relevance in achieving optimal results for teams, companies, and communities. Additionally, it has examined some of the most significant theories in this field of knowledge, both in terms of practical application and academic research. Factors such as globalization, workplace diversity, and rapidly advancing technology have transformed the dynamics of leadership. Today's leaders face unprecedented challenges that require a blend of traditional skills and new competencies, including emotional intelligence, adaptability, and the ability to lead virtual teams. Moreover, the capacity to inspire, motivate, and empower others is increasingly recog-

nized as a fundamental element of successful leadership, according to current explanatory models. In terms of applied trends, the pursuit of a shared purpose and the promotion of innovation are central to these approaches. Furthermore, ethics and social responsibility have gained much greater prominence in leaders' decision-making, with an increasing emphasis on sustainability and positive social impact.

Similarly, leadership remains a topic of great interest in research. Academics continue to investigate new theories and models of leadership, as well as exploring how contextual factors, such as organizational culture and technology, influence leadership effectiveness. As demonstrated throughout this document, leadership remains an essential component of success in organizations and societies. Understanding current trends and ongoing research is crucial for adapting to a constantly changing world. Leaders must also be willing to learn, evolve, and embrace new ways of leading. The capacity for effective leadership will continue to be an invaluable asset in the pursuit of a better and more prosperous future.

5. Conflict of Interests

The authors declare that they have no conflict of interests. This manuscript has not been published in other scientific journals, nor is it being considered for publication elsewhere.

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