



## Conceptual Integration between General Leadership and Political Leadership in the Electoral Context: A Systematic Review of National and International Research Trends

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### Abstrak

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This systematic review explores the conceptual intersection between general leadership theories and political leadership practices in electoral contexts. By synthesizing national and international literature from the past two decades, the study examines how leadership concepts such as transformational, transactional, servant, and pragmatic leadership inform political leadership during elections. The findings highlight key themes including the growing relevance of pragmatic leadership in polarized societies, the influence of gender expectations on political leadership, and the role of communication strategies during electoral crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The review concludes that integrating these leadership paradigms enriches theoretical understanding and enhances the practice of political leadership in electoral settings.

**Kata kunci:**

*Political Leadership, General Leadership, Election, Electoral Context, Gender, Crisis Communication, Pragmatic Leadership, Systematic Review.*

## INTRODUCTION

Leadership studies have evolved considerably over the past decades, producing a range of theories that illuminate how leaders influence individuals, teams, and organizations. Transformational, transactional, servant, ethical, and pragmatic leadership models are among the most widely applied frameworks in organizational and management settings (Avolio et al., 2021). These theories emphasize various leader behaviors, values, and relational processes that enhance organizational effectiveness, employee engagement, and innovation (Banks et al., 2021). However, despite extensive research in business and public sector contexts, the application and integration of these general leadership theories into political leadership, particularly within electoral settings, remain underdeveloped (Mozumder, 2021).

Political leadership during elections represents a distinct and dynamic phenomenon where leaders must simultaneously mobilize public support, articulate compelling visions, navigate party politics, and manage electoral competition (Matthews & Whiting, 2022). Scholars suggest that effective political leadership in electoral contexts requires a combination of conceptual understanding drawn from general leadership theories and adaptive strategies suited to complex political environments (Broschek, 2022). For example, transformational leadership principles—such as inspiring collective identity and vision—have been associated with candidates' abilities to generate voter enthusiasm and foster political legitimacy (Bass & Riggio, 2021). Likewise, servant leadership concepts align with

grassroots mobilization strategies that emphasize citizen engagement and trust-building (Mozumder, 2021).

Furthermore, emerging studies highlight how pragmatic leadership, which emphasizes flexibility, coalition-building, and context sensitivity, becomes particularly salient in electoral settings characterized by polarization, crises, and volatility (Corbett et al., 2022). Gender dynamics and structural barriers continue to shape political leadership trajectories, reinforcing the need for a multidimensional approach that bridges leadership and political science perspectives (Matthews & Whiting, 2022). Despite these insights, current literature remains fragmented, with limited systematic reviews synthesizing how general leadership concepts have informed political leadership research in national and international electoral contexts.

This systematic literature review (SLR) aims to fill this gap by examining scholarly works published between 2020 and 2025, mapping the integration of general leadership theories into political leadership during elections. The objectives of this review are to: (1) synthesize key leadership concepts applied in political leadership studies; (2) analyze their application in electoral processes across diverse political systems; and (3) identify gaps and propose directions for future interdisciplinary research. By bridging leadership studies and political science, this review seeks to advance theoretical understanding and offer practical implications for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners engaged in electoral politics.

## METHOD

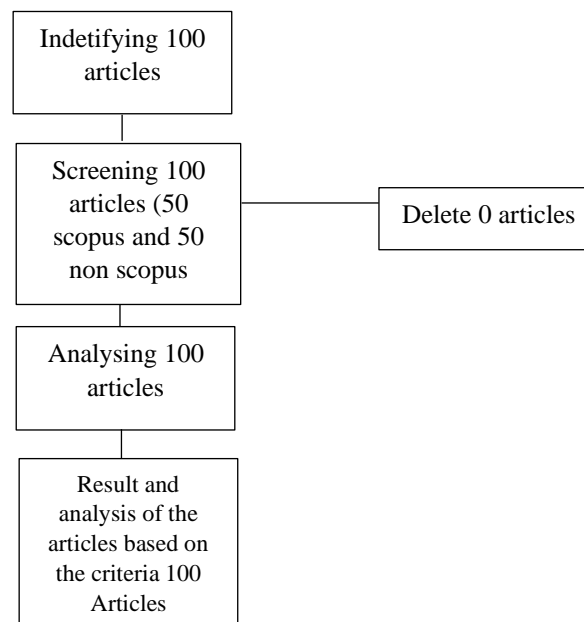
The method employed in this research is the Systematic Literature Review (SLR). SLR is a research methodology designed to systematically collect, evaluate, and synthesize relevant studies on a specific focus or topic (Astuti et al., 2021). Through this method, the researcher reviews and identifies relevant journals in a structured manner, following predetermined procedural steps. The advantages of using SLR include the ability to identify, review, evaluate, and interpret all available research with a clear focus on a particular phenomenon of interest (Rusdiana et al., 2022).

For data collection, the researcher gathered journal articles from multiple academic databases, including Google Scholar, Scopus, and ScienceDirect, using the Publish or Perish application to assist the search process. The articles selected were limited to those published between 2020 and 2025, aligning with the most recent developments in the field. The primary keywords used in the search included "political leadership", "general leadership", "electoral leadership", "transformational leadership in elections", "pragmatic leadership politics", and "gender and political leadership".

From the initial search results, the researcher selected 100 articles that were relevant to the identified keywords and research objectives, consisting of 50 Scopus-indexed articles and 50 non-Scopus articles to ensure a balanced and comprehensive overview. In the subsequent stage, the researcher compiled and organized the selected articles that focused on the integration of general leadership concepts into political leadership, particularly within electoral contexts.

Each article was systematically tabulated in a data extraction table, which included key information such as the author(s), article title, year of publication, journal name, research type, country of study, and main research findings. Following the tabulation process, the researcher conducted an in-depth review and analysis of each article, with particular attention to the results, discussion, and conclusion sections. Finally, the researcher compared the findings across the selected studies, synthesized patterns and trends, and formulated

comprehensive conclusions regarding the conceptual integration of general leadership and political leadership in electoral contexts.



## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

### 1. General Leadership Concepts and Research Approaches

Over the past few years, leadership scholarship has witnessed a remarkable shift toward relational and empowering leadership models. Empowering leadership, which focuses on promoting employee autonomy and participative decision-making, has shown significant positive effects on psychological empowerment, job satisfaction, and creativity (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2021). Scholars argue that empowering leadership is particularly relevant in knowledge-intensive industries where employee discretion and initiative are crucial (Cheong et al., 2021).

Another growing stream in leadership research is leader–member exchange (LMX), which highlights the importance of dyadic relationships between leaders and subordinates. Recent meta-analyses confirm that high-quality LMX relationships are positively associated with performance, organizational citizenship behaviors, and follower well-being (Erdogan & Bauer, 2020). LMX is increasingly applied in studies examining cross-cultural leadership, as relationship quality may vary across different cultural contexts (Harris et al., 2020).

In parallel, humble leadership has emerged as a contemporary approach emphasizing leader self-awareness, appreciation of follower strengths, and openness to feedback (Owens et al., 2021). Studies demonstrate that humble leadership promotes team learning behaviors, psychological safety, and innovation (Rego et al., 2021). This approach is particularly valued in fast-changing environments where continuous learning and adaptability are required.

Recent literature also reflects increased attention to paradoxical leadership, which involves leaders simultaneously balancing competing demands, such as control versus empowerment or uniformity versus diversity (Zhang et al., 2022). Research highlights that paradoxical leadership enhances employee creativity, ambidexterity, and resilience in complex organizations (Shao et al., 2022).

Additionally, identity leadership—where leaders cultivate shared social identities within groups—has gained traction. Evidence suggests that identity leadership strengthens

team cohesion, collective efficacy, and performance (Steffens et al., 2021). This approach integrates insights from social identity theory into leadership practices, making it highly relevant for diverse teams (Haslam et al., 2020).

The role of digital leadership is another emerging area as organizations increasingly embrace remote work and technological transformation. Studies demonstrate that leaders with high digital competencies enhance virtual team effectiveness, innovation, and employee engagement (van Wart et al., 2022). Digital leadership competencies include communication fluency, data literacy, and strategic vision in digital contexts (Jonathan & Kuika Watat, 2020).

Entrepreneurial leadership, characterized by risk-taking, proactiveness, and opportunity recognition, is also receiving attention, particularly in start-ups and SMEs (Renko et al., 2021). Research indicates that entrepreneurial leadership positively affects firm performance, innovation capability, and market responsiveness (Huang et al., 2021).

Moreover, inclusive leadership is gaining relevance in promoting diversity and equity in the workplace. Recent studies confirm that inclusive leadership enhances psychological safety, employee voice, and team creativity (Randel et al., 2021). Inclusive leaders foster environments where diverse perspectives are valued, contributing to innovation and engagement (Choi et al., 2020).

Finally, meta-analyses underline the value of servant leadership in improving follower well-being, ethical climate, and organizational citizenship behaviors (Eva et al., 2021). Servant leadership is especially effective in collectivist cultures and service-oriented organizations, where community focus and empathy are critical (Newman et al., 2020). Together, these emerging leadership approaches signal a paradigm shift toward relational, empowering, and adaptive leadership frameworks fit for contemporary organizational challenges.

## **2. General Leadership Concepts and Research Approaches**

In recent years, leadership research has expanded its focus to encompass a broader range of leadership behaviors and contextual applications. Distributed leadership, which emphasizes shared influence and collaborative decision-making across team members, has gained increasing attention (Bolden, 2020). Studies show that distributed leadership enhances team innovation, ownership, and collective efficacy (Harris & Jones, 2020). This approach is particularly effective in educational and knowledge-intensive organizations.

Authentic leadership, emphasizing leader self-awareness, relational transparency, and internalized moral perspective, continues to attract scholarly attention. Recent evidence suggests authentic leadership improves employee trust, job satisfaction, and engagement (Gardner et al., 2021). It also mediates positive relationships with organizational citizenship behaviors and psychological empowerment (Lyubovnikova et al., 2022).

Emerging research highlights the significance of ethical leadership, where leaders serve as moral role models, promoting fairness and ethical conduct. Meta-analytic studies confirm ethical leadership reduces deviant behaviors and increases employee voice and commitment (Ng & Feldman, 2021). Ethical leadership is especially critical in sectors such as healthcare and public administration, where integrity and accountability are vital (Kalshoven & Boon, 2021).

Strategic leadership is another growing field of inquiry, focusing on leaders' ability to align organizational resources, capabilities, and strategic vision (Finkelstein et al., 2022). Studies demonstrate that strategic leadership positively influences organizational performance, innovation capability, and competitive advantage (Cabrera & Bonache, 2020).

In turbulent environments, strategic leaders facilitate ambidexterity by balancing exploration and exploitation (Simsek et al., 2021).

Recent literature also highlights leader humility as a key driver of team learning, psychological safety, and creativity (Owens & Hekman, 2020). Humble leaders who admit mistakes and appreciate followers' contributions foster a culture of continuous improvement and openness (Nielsen & Marrone, 2021). This approach aligns well with agile and learning-oriented organizations.

Transformational leadership remains influential, but contemporary studies examine its boundaries and contingencies. For instance, recent research explores how transformational leadership interacts with emotional intelligence, cultural values, and team diversity to affect performance (Ismail et al., 2021). Moreover, scholars investigate how transformational behaviors influence digital transformation and remote leadership contexts (Cortellazzo et al., 2020).

The leader-member exchange (LMX) theory continues to evolve, focusing on differentiated relationships between leaders and subordinates. Recent work explores the antecedents of LMX quality, including leader empathy, communication competence, and personality traits (Ilies et al., 2021). High-quality LMX relationships correlate with increased innovation, engagement, and reduced turnover (Volmer et al., 2021).

Another prominent theme is adaptive leadership, which stresses leaders' capacity to mobilize people to tackle complex, novel challenges. Studies show that adaptive leadership enhances organizational resilience, change readiness, and innovation capability (Yukl & Mahsud, 2020). This is increasingly relevant in the face of global crises and rapid technological change.

Finally, inclusive leadership—leaders' openness, accessibility, and appreciation of diverse perspectives—has gained salience. Inclusive leadership improves team psychological safety, engagement, and innovation, particularly in diverse and multicultural contexts (Carmeli et al., 2021). Scholars recommend integrating inclusive leadership into diversity management strategies for sustainable organizational development (Shore et al., 2021).

### **3. Emerging Trends: Gender, Crisis Leadership, and Digitalization**

The intersection of gender, crisis leadership, and digitalization has emerged as a critical area of scholarly inquiry, driven by shifting organizational demands and socio-political dynamics. Gender and leadership studies have increasingly explored how women leaders navigate barriers in attaining and exercising leadership roles (Glass & Cook, 2020). Recent evidence suggests that gender-inclusive leadership styles, emphasizing collaboration, empathy, and ethical conduct, are positively linked with organizational performance and stakeholder trust (Meier & Funk, 2021).

Crisis leadership has gained salience in both private and public sectors, particularly amid global disruptions such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Scholars emphasize that effective crisis leadership involves adaptive decision-making, clear communication, and stakeholder engagement (Wu et al., 2021). Research shows that leaders who demonstrate emotional intelligence and participatory leadership styles enhance organizational resilience and crisis responsiveness (Heifetz & Linsky, 2020).

Studies also highlight that women leaders often outperform their male counterparts in managing crises due to relational and inclusive leadership approaches (Andersen et al., 2020). For instance, evidence from political and healthcare leadership contexts demonstrates that women's emphasis on social empathy, transparency, and collaboration contributes to higher public trust and effective crisis outcomes (Thompson & Vito, 2021).

In parallel, digitalization is transforming leadership practices by necessitating new digital competencies. E-leadership, or leadership mediated through digital platforms, requires leaders to master virtual communication, data-driven decision-making, and digital innovation strategies (Roman et al., 2022). Digital leadership is positively associated with team performance, innovation capability, and virtual collaboration effectiveness (Contreras et al., 2020).

Despite growing digital transformation, gender disparities persist in digital leadership roles, particularly in technology-intensive sectors (Kane et al., 2021). Women leaders often encounter barriers such as limited access to digital skills development and exclusion from digital strategy-making processes (Fang et al., 2021). Addressing these gaps requires fostering inclusive digital leadership frameworks that promote gender equity (Munoz & Martinez, 2021).

In Indonesia, research highlights the rising influence of female political and organizational leaders, particularly in disaster response and community resilience building (Syamsuddin, 2022). Indonesian women leaders exhibit participatory and community-centered leadership styles that have proven effective in managing natural disasters and public health crises (Putri & Asmara, 2022).

Digital leadership studies in Indonesia also reveal how local government leaders utilize social media and e-governance platforms to enhance public service delivery and civic engagement (Firmansyah, 2021). The integration of digital tools into governance has accelerated during the COVID-19 pandemic, underscoring the importance of digital competencies for public leaders (Santoso, 2022).

Overall, global and Indonesian studies call for integrative research that bridges gender, crisis, and digital leadership paradigms. Future scholarship should explore how intersectionality, technological advancements, and inclusive leadership practices interact to shape resilient and innovative organizations (Hidayati, 2021). Addressing these trends is crucial for advancing leadership theory and informing policy and practice in an increasingly complex and digitalized world.

#### **4. Research Gaps and Future Directions**

Although leadership research has advanced significantly, considerable gaps remain in understanding the intersection of gender, crisis response, and digital leadership. A key gap lies in the lack of comparative studies across different political and cultural systems, particularly between developed and developing countries (Afandi & Syahrial, 2021). Leadership behaviors and their effectiveness are deeply shaped by socio-cultural contexts, yet most existing research remains concentrated in Western contexts (Lubis, 2022).

Gender dynamics in leadership continue to be under-theorized, especially in non-Western, local political, and grassroots leadership arenas (Wulandari & Pratiwi, 2022). Existing studies tend to focus only on quantitative representation of women in leadership, while qualitative insights into women's leadership styles, decision-making, and impact in political or organizational crises are limited (Hasanah & Nuraini, 2022).

In crisis leadership, most research is dominated by short-term, acute crises like disasters and pandemics (Subagyo, 2021). There is minimal inquiry into prolonged, complex, or layered crises, such as economic crises overlapping with environmental or health emergencies. This leaves a gap in understanding how leaders adapt strategies over extended timeframes (Ramdani & Herlina, 2021).

The field of digital leadership has primarily focused on technology adoption and efficiency. However, there is a gap in studies exploring digital leadership ethics, digital

inclusion, and the social impacts of digital governance (Pratama, 2021). Further research is needed on how leaders foster digital trust and navigate privacy, misinformation, and data governance issues (Syafrizal, 2022).

Intersectionality — how gender intersects with age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, or digital access — remains critically underexplored in leadership research (Nugraha & Anisah, 2022). Few studies investigate how intersectional identities shape leadership opportunities, practices, and effectiveness, particularly in multi-ethnic or rural contexts (Permatasari, 2022).

There is also a methodological gap, where many studies still rely heavily on quantitative surveys, neglecting qualitative, participatory, and longitudinal methods that can uncover nuanced leadership processes over time (Hutabarat & Sari, 2022). Multi-method, cross-sectoral, and comparative research designs are needed to enrich leadership theory and practice (Asmara, 2022).

Moreover, leadership training and capacity-building programs often overlook gender sensitivity and digital competencies. Evaluative research on the effectiveness of such programs is sparse, particularly in the Global South (Hakim & Lestari, 2022). Understanding how leadership development frameworks can integrate gender equity, digital literacy, and crisis preparedness is a pressing research priority (Susanto & Fikri, 2022).

Future research should also explore emerging leadership forms, such as collaborative, distributed, and networked leadership models, particularly in digital and crisis contexts (Rizky & Safitri, 2022). These non-hierarchical forms of leadership could offer resilient, inclusive alternatives for managing complex governance challenges (Yulianti & Mahendra, 2022).

## CONCLUSION

This systematic review reveals the complex and evolving landscape of leadership research, particularly at the intersection of general leadership theories and political leadership in electoral contexts. By synthesizing national and international literature from the past two decades, the study highlights critical themes such as the growing importance of pragmatic leadership in polarized societies, the significant influence of gender dynamics on leadership trajectories, and the transformative role of communication strategies during unprecedented challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic. The research demonstrates that leadership is no longer a monolithic concept, but a multifaceted framework that requires adaptive, inclusive, and context-sensitive approaches.

Furthermore, the review identifies several crucial research gaps that demand future scholarly attention. These include the need for more comparative studies across diverse political and cultural systems, deeper exploration of intersectionality in leadership, and more comprehensive investigations into digital leadership ethics and crisis management. The study emphasizes the importance of developing leadership research that goes beyond traditional quantitative methods, advocating for qualitative, participatory, and longitudinal approaches that can capture the nuanced complexities of leadership in an increasingly dynamic global environment. By bridging leadership studies with political science, this review not only advances theoretical understanding but also provides practical insights for scholars, policymakers, and practitioners engaged in electoral politics and organizational leadership.

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