Research Paper

Organizational Leadership in Africa: A Structured Review and Suggestions for Future Research

Eben Enslin*[1] , Anton Grobler[1]
[1]UNISA Graduate School of Business Leadership (SBL), South Africa

Abstract

The field of organizational leadership has made significant progress in recent years, resulting in a substantial corpus of literature. Nevertheless, the African context continues to face challenges in the development of organizational leaders. This discrepancy underscores the necessity of additional research to investigate the leadership dynamics within the continent. This study seeks to address the knowledge gap on leadership's important role in solving Africa's organizational difficulties through a structured review process that ensures a reproducible and thorough synthesis of current literature. This article reviews 515 leadership studies conducted in Africa from 1960 to 2019. The purpose of this study was to broaden the understanding of leadership in the following ways: (i) Clarify the number and nature of organizational leadership studies in Africa vis-à-vis other leadership domains; (ii) Coding and categorize the theoretical and nomological network of organizational leadership articles in Africa; (iii) Provide a comprehensive analysis of the findings to comprehend the holistic research representation of organizational leadership in Africa; and (iv) Examine the instruments and methodologies employed in studies to assess organizational leadership on the continent. The outcomes have a dual purpose. Descriptive diachronic analysis allows scholars to explore an extensive collection of historical leadership literature. This article identifies four explanatory claims about African leadership research through a synchronic analysis. These are: (i) There is a notable scarcity of studies focusing on organizational leadership in Africa; (ii) Emic leadership scale development is a rarity; (iii) The effectiveness of techniques about organizational leadership development in Africa is debatable; and (iv) Many of the functions that managers are expected to fulfill are covered by organizational leadership theory. This comprehensive review significantly advances our efforts to understand and improve African organizational leadership practices.

Keywords: *Organizational Leadership, African Leadership, Structured Literature Review, Emic and Etic, Management*

INTRODUCTION

Organizational leadership matters, but it is inadequately examined in Africa (Banutu-Gomez et al., 2023). It is a highly valued organizational commodity (Northouse, 2021). Leadership research has come a long way, yet not enough is known, and much remains unexplained about the phenomenon (Sharma et al., 2018). Despite a plethora of research on leadership, there is a lack of knowledge regarding African organizational leadership, particularly in developing culturally relevant leadership instruments that assess the effectiveness of leadership development initiatives and adapt leadership frameworks to align with Africa's socioeconomic and cultural realities. This study addresses the gap in leadership literature by reviewing published research in prominent journals on organizational leadership in Africa from 1960 to 2019.

This study systematically examined the research on organizational leadership in the African context, the development of culturally specific (emic) leadership tools, and the effectiveness of current leadership development methodologies across the continent in the vast arena of leadership research. To address these gaps, this study systematically reviews 515 African leadership studies spanning 1960-2019, classifying trends, highlighting methodological shortcomings, and identifying important areas for future research, thus providing a foundation for developing leadership knowledge relevant to the African context. The socio-political and economic intricacies unique to Africa intensified the requirement for an inquiry into organizational leadership practices, necessitating a structured review of existing research (Kirabira et al., 2023).

The setting of this study implies that Africa has a complex and challenging social, economic, and political environment, which makes leadership more challenging (Abdulai, 2021). African leaders must navigate a complex landscape of historical, cultural, and economic pressures, all while facing urgent problems such as poverty, unemployment, inadequate service delivery, and deep-rooted governance challenges. These challenges underscore the vital role of organizational leaders in facilitating transformation across the continent. This emphasizes the significance of contextually relevant organizational leadership proficient at fostering socioeconomic transformation (Issa & David, 2012).

As a result, this study seeks to enhance the understanding of African leadership by offering an expansive historical framework, illustrating patterns and transformations over time, emphasizing current developments in leadership studies, and encompassing a wide-ranging chronological scope. The structured review encompasses five principal objectives: (i) analyzing leadership research articles published between 1960 and 2019; (ii) generating a succinct summary of the selected publications; (iii) classifying the information using a coding system; (iv) recognizing any observable patterns; and (v) suggesting potential avenues for future research.

This study highlights the critical need for an extensive understanding of contemporary African organizational leadership. Analyzing the theories and methodologies utilized in current literature and identifying research deficiencies, especially with the creation of suitable tools for evaluating leadership performance in African contexts, enhances comprehension of the present situation. This study aims to address some of these gaps to improve scholarly discussion and shed light on leadership practices across the continent.

Organizational leadership fundamentally seeks to influence and enable individual and group actions to attain shared goals (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). Leadership must serve the organizational needs by showing direction and influencing others to follow through with words and deeds (Iszatt-White & Saunders, 2020). Organizational leadership is the application of social influence. This discipline is notable within the humanities and presents a compelling phenomenon across diverse demographics, irrespective of organization, region, nationality, or culture. It is an essential yet challenging task (Fairhom, 2015). Moreover, it is crucial in generating results within an organization, pushing managers to embody decisiveness, courage, influence, and authority. Nevertheless, these general observations ignore subtle differences in leadership in African organizational environments, emphasizing the need for culturally specialized study. However, the scarcity of research in Africa has rendered certain concepts inadequate in different parts of the continent (Walumbwa et al., 2011).

The demand for effective organizational leaders has increased in recent years, underlining the high demand for practical leadership skills, as evidenced by the abundance of contemporary leadership information available (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). Scholars agree that the leader's role connects the team, task, and organization (Vilakati & Schurink, 2021). However, new technological developments, heightened competition, and the constantly changing macroenvironment have significantly impacted organizational landscapes. These changing dynamics require flexible leadership styles that are especially fit for the particular settings of different countries, particularly in Africa (Rahmatika & Saragih, 2023). The complexity of organizations requires leaders who can create high-performance cultures, inspire and develop subordinates, and optimize performance and profitability (Petry, 2018).

Notwithstanding the substantial research on leadership worldwide, the study of organizational leadership in the African setting has been significantly underexamined (Banutu-Gomez et al., 2023). Current research predominantly relies on frameworks and instruments developed in Western contexts (Walumbwa et al., 2011), which frequently fail to capture the

intricacies of African leadership dynamics, leading to issues of generalization. This study aims to understand and highlight these shortcomings by offering a systematic evaluation of 515 leadership studies conducted in Africa from 1960 to 2019.

LITERATURE REVIEW

For years, researchers and practitioners have sought to understand how to become influential leaders within organizations and recognize which leadership style produces the best results (Manning & Curtis, 2012). The transition from early studies that concentrated on behavioral and attribute theories of leadership to more contemporary methods, such as situational and contingency models, has been a defining feature of the evolution of leadership theories (Campos, 2024). Throughout history, researchers have employed various techniques to discover and characterize the efficacy of leadership (Sharma et al., 2018). Modern leadership theories encompass transformational, servant, and adaptive leadership, along with more intricate approaches such as authentic and remote leadership (Yukl & Gardner, 2020). However, organizational leadership remains a theoretical and practical concept that is significant and relevant (Van, 2014).

Navigating uncertain organizational situations is especially difficult in Africa, which faces significant socioeconomic and political challenges. These problems increase the complexity of leadership responsibilities, requiring more than mere inspiration and the growth of subordinates. African leaders face the immense challenge of steering organizations through many layers of uncertainty intensified by historical, cultural, and economic influences (Meylahn & Musiyambiri, 2017). This makes leadership development even more critical for ensuring organizational health and driving socio-economic transformation.

The subject of leadership within organizations across the continent incites spirited debates and discussions rooted in strongly held views. Some contend that insufficient leadership development contributes to reduced leadership efficacy throughout the continent. In contrast, others view leadership as a focal point solution to the economic difficulties encountered by African nations (Mbandlwa & Fagbadebo, 2020). Effective organizational leadership is necessary given African leaders' numerous obstacles, including widespread poverty and unemployment, inadequate service delivery, and health issues (Fourie et al., 2017). To address these serious concerns, African leaders must demonstrate initiative, accountability, and integrity (Eva et al., 2019).

Historical research worldwide, but especially in Africa, convincingly argues that the idea of leadership is divisive and difficult for academics to define (Iszatt-White & Saunders, 2020). Nonetheless, the understanding of leadership in organizations has undergone substantial transformation, with its significance in both scholarly and societal contexts intensifying over the last hundred years (Yukl & Gardner, 2020).

The exponential development in Google search results for the word "leadership" demonstrates this evolution, suggesting a continued interest in and extension of leadership theory and application. Jackson and Parry (2008) identified 168,000,000 Google results in 2008, while Iszatt-White and Saunders (2020) discovered 418,000,000 results in 2017. In 2021, the authors of this paper noted 2,500,000,000 results, suggesting the continuous evolution and emergence of leadership interests and theories over time. Leadership requires ongoing research and understanding because of its broad and vital role in organizations (Vilakati & Schurink, 2021). Leadership is a dynamic term marked by many classifications, and experts lack clarity about the essence of effective leadership (Daft, 2022). Current studies have outlined a range of leadership approaches and frameworks aimed at clarifying the complex nature of leadership (Northouse, 2021; Punnet, 2017; Yukl, 2013; Yukl & Gardner, 2020).

While some scholars have conceptualized leadership as a natural trait or behavior, others have examined it through a relational lens. Although these are different perspectives, there is a consensus that organizational leadership aims to exert influence on others and organize collective objectives toward common goals (Daft, 2022; Northouse, 2021; Yukl, 2013; Yukl & Gardner, 2020). Experts in the field agree that leaders have the responsibility and ability to improve the work efficacy of any group inside an organization by influencing the individuals and molding the team, which affects the outcomes. However, different people may have different ideas on the behaviors and strategies that are considered to be the most effective in leadership. This article summarizes the results of a structured literature analysis on organizational leadership studies in Africa. The study considers the unique viewpoints of each paper and attempts to provide a thorough overview of historical studies on leadership in an African context.

RESEARCH METHOD

A literature review is a practical tool for systematically organizing a vast body of knowledge relevant to specific academic inquiry (Creswell, 2015). It is indispensable in any research effort. A comprehensive literature review, characterized by its rigorous, replicable, and transparent methodology, stands as one of the most compelling forms of evidence for mitigating bias and enhancing decision-making processes (Sharma et al., 2018). Structured reviews are a meticulous and in-depth examination of the literature, adhering to predetermined criteria for acceptance or rejection (Munn et al., 2018). They offer detailed records of reviewer decisions, methodologies, and outcomes (Okoli, 2015). Additionally, they provide theoretical analysis that enhances the rigor and integrity of the method.

This study provides a comprehensive evaluation of research papers published over 59 years, focusing on leadership in Africa. One of its objectives is to contribute to the theory of organizational leadership through the application of an inductive methodology. The period from 1960 to 2019 was selected to comprehensively analyze African leadership literature. The lengthy duration of this timeframe highlights the abundant and varied landscape of leadership theory and practice throughout different periods of African history for multiple reasons. First, for many African nations, the post-1960 era marked a turning point, with a wave of political movements for independence and the integration of local leadership styles and ideas throughout the continent. This historical period provides valuable information about the origins of African organizational leadership techniques.

Furthermore, the comprehensive timeline contributes to the evolution and advancement of leadership theory and practice throughout the continent by analyzing the impact of changes in society, development in the economy, the rise of globalization, and various external factors on the transformation of African leadership. Ultimately, broadening the scope of the research to encompass recently published articles ensures that recent topics and trends are covered, including shifts in the workforce's demographics, technological developments, and the continuous process of globalization. These factors continue to affect leadership dynamics.

The primary objective of this review was to identify digitized research publications from trustworthy academic journals. The title keywords used to search these articles in the database were (i) Leadership and (ii) Africa. The digitized publications comprised Sage, Sabinet, Emerald, Science Direct, and EBSCOhost. The inquiry, confined to publications from 1960 to 2019, yielded 515 results by utilizing the terms "Leadership" and "Africa," as illustrated in the first table below.

Table 1. Summary of selected publications

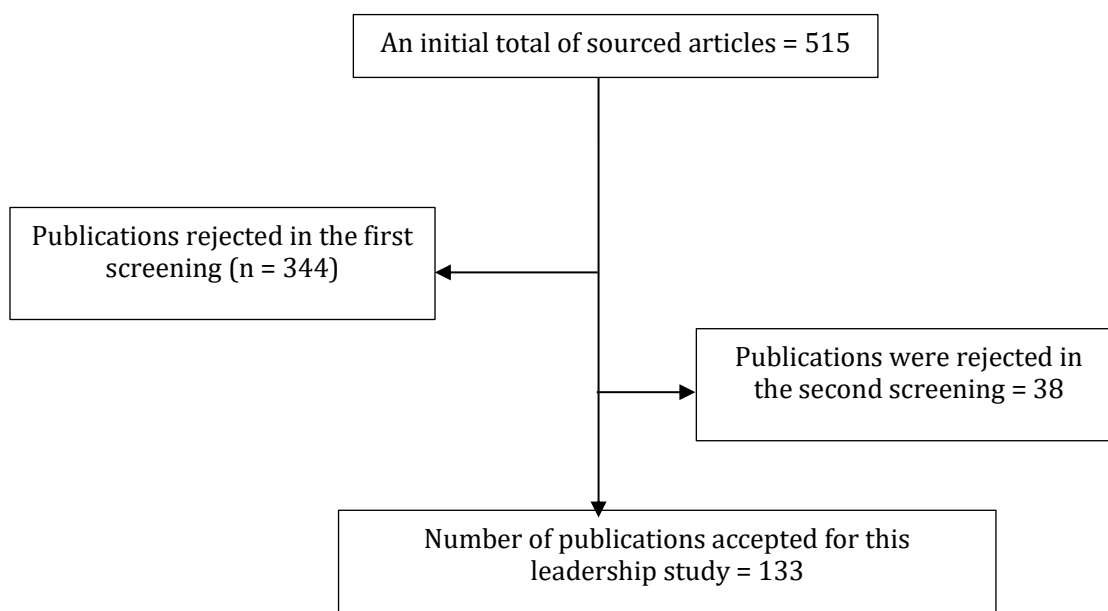| Name of the publication	Number of articles
EBSCO: Academic Search Premier	66
EBSCO: Complete business source	83
EBSCO–Masterfile	13
EBSCO-SocINDEX	44
Emerald	52
Sage	72
Science Direct	136
Sabinet	49
Total	**515**

Source: Authors

In the second part of the evaluation, articles not centered on organizational, political, cultural, religious or educational leadership were removed. Our criteria required leadership to be integrated into the article's main point rather than treated as a simple terminology. This stringent selection process eliminated 344 articles, leaving 171 publications on leadership for further consideration.

In the third phase, a thorough evaluation was conducted to exclude items that did not meet the predetermined leadership criteria. The primary objective was to find research that extensively examined leadership concepts or their application, specifically within the African setting, serving as the central emphasis of the study or argument. Through careful and thorough examination, 38 additional articles were excluded because they did not sufficiently address the concept of leadership in Africa. This led to the final selection of 133 papers for detailed analysis.

The fourth and last phase entailed a comprehensive coding process for the remaining articles. The objective of this study was to discover important patterns connected to organizational leadership practices, specifically within Africa and Southern Africa. This phase also investigated the research methodologies employed in each study and the application of emic (culture-specific) perspectives.

Figure 1 shows the exclusion procedure. Three hundred eighty-two of the original 515 articles were deemed inappropriate for the study's focus on leadership and were deleted. In the end, the structured review identified 133 papers that were significantly relevant to the study of African leadership.

```
                    ┌─────────────────────────────────────┐
                    │ An initial total of sourced articles = 515 │
                    └─────────────────────────────────────┘
```


Figure 1. Publications selected for evaluation
(Source: Authors)

The categorization process within the structured review was thoroughly organized through a coding table. The proposed model aimed to address several significant queries, including the following:

1. Are there any indications that leadership in Africa is distinctive or identical to leadership in various parts of the world?
2. What circumstances affect leadership and management in Africa?
3. Are there any behaviors of leadership that are specific to Africa?
4. Do perceptions of organizational leadership differ between individuals in Africa and those in other regions of the world?

To address these issues, the study methodically classified and categorized unique characteristics in each of the 133 papers so that conclusions could be reached. The coding procedure covered several classification categories, with articles receiving several codes spanning more than one topic or domain, ensuring a comprehensive study across important topics.

Classification Areas for the Structured Literature Reviews

1. Context: African countries are divided into four categories: developed, developing, emerging, and underdeveloped. Studies focusing on something other than a specific country were marked as "not applicable." '
2. Geographical Area: Studies were grouped into six African regions: Northern, Eastern, Central, Western, and Southern. Articles broadly connected to Africa but not unique to any region were coded separately.
3. Study Objective: Differentiating publications based on study methodology and aims, such as empirical studies, case studies, literature reviews, and conceptual or theoretical contributions, and more.
4. Leadership Topics: These were organized according to the subject matter and specific

aspects of leadership being examined, including leadership styles, moderating factors, mediating factors, leader attributes, perceptions of leadership, leadership behaviors, leadership competencies, and other related categories.

5. Leadership Theme: To further refine the research area, emphasis was placed on identifying each article's central or primary leadership concept.

6. Leadership Style: This section categorizes the specific leadership styles assessed in each article, thereby acknowledging their significance in inspiring individuals and offering guidance.

7. Study Type: Articles were categorized according to their primary domain of study, which encompassed organizational, political, cultural, religious, and educational leadership.

8. Industry Focus: Determine the various sectors in which leadership was necessary.

9. Research Period: Codified to understand the time-based context of each study, thereby identifying trends and the evolution of leadership research.

10. Research Methodology: This encompassed case studies, mixed methods, and qualitative, quantitative, and quantitative approaches.

11. Quantitative Instruments: The measuring tools or instruments were organized, with particular emphasis on those pertinent to statistical analysis and scale development.

12. The application of Interactive Qualitative Analysis (IQA): This refers to the employment of IQA for the systematic coding and acquisition of qualitative data.

13. Sample size: The population size from which each study was selected was described.

14. Industry Size: The size of the industry is recognized, considering the differences in organizational structure and size.

15. Research Results: The purpose was to determine whether the findings of each article provided novel insights or corroborated preexisting research.

16. Instrument/Measurement Origin: The study differentiated between etic (universal) and emic (culture-specific) instruments employed as measurement tools.

17. Authors' origin: Coded to understand the diverse perspectives and contexts from which the research authors emerged.

18. Author Gender: This study provided a gendered analysis of article authorship.

19. Leadership vs. Management Domain: Concentrated on the distinctions and overlaps between leadership and management as research disciplines.

This systematic methodology for classification and coding established a robust foundation for addressing the research inquiries, thereby contributing to the existing corpus of knowledge regarding leadership in organizations in Africa.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The following section critically examines the categorization results of the 133 leadership articles through the lens of the designated codes. The results are displayed in Table 2, followed by an examination and explanation. The purpose of this analysis is to identify specific areas of research that still need to be explored and investigated in the future.

Table 2. Classification and coding of the evaluated literature

Classification	Type	Number	Percentage
Context	Developed countries	5	4%
	Developing and emerging countries	120	90%

Classification	Type	Number	Percentage
	Least developed countries	6	5%
	Not applicable	2	1%
Geographical area	Northern Africa	2	1%
	Eastern Africa	6	5%
	Central Africa	0	0%
	Western Africa	7	5%
	Southern Africa	89	67%
	Africa	29	22%
Objective	Empirical study	80	60%
	Case study	9	7%
	Literature review	16	12%
	Conceptual/Theoretical	28	21%
	Other	0	0%
Topics	Leadership style in general	39	29%
	Moderating factors (contextualizing the effect)	12	9%
	Mediating factors (the reason for the effect)	6	5%
	Attributes, Traits, and Characters	32	24%
	Leadership perception	32	24%
	Behavior	5	4%
	Leadership competencies	5	4%
	Other	2	1%
Theme	Political Leadership	10	8%
	Leadership and Management	23	17%
	Leadership Styles	40	30%
	Leadership and Gender	5	4%
	Leadership Development	22	17%
	Leadership and Development	3	2%
	Leadership and African Values	4	3%
	Traditional Leadership	4	3%
	Individual Leadership	1	1%

Classification	Type	Number	Percentage
	Leadership and Ideology	1	1%
	Leadership in Education	12	7%
	Local Leadership	4	3%
	Leadership Communication	1	1%
	Leadership and Culture	1	1%
	Leadership Effectiveness	2	2%
Leadership style evaluation	Autocratic	5	4%
	Empowering	2	2%
	Strategic	5	4%
	Transformational	22	17%
	Laissez faire	0	0%
	Mixed style	35	26%
	Transactional	0	0%
	Ubuntu	7	5%
	Servant	4	3%
	Traditional	3	2%
	Motivational	0	0%
	Ethical	6	5%
	Not applicable	23	17%
	Authentic	6	5%
	Other	15	10%
Type of study	Organizational	67	50%
	Political	13	10%
	Cultural	8	6%
	Religious	0	0%
	Educational School	16	12%
	Educational University	13	10%
	Other	16	12%
Type of organization	Government	33	25%
	Manufacturing	8	6%
	Service	14	11%
	Trading	4	2%
	Mixed	74	56%
Period	Less than 1 year	3	2%
	2011-2018	84	63%
	2000-2010	37	28%
	1990-1999	7	5%

Classification	Type	Number	Percentage
	1980-1989	2	2%
	1970-1979	0	0%
	1960-1969	0	0%
Method	Quantitative	55	41%
	Qualitative	23	17%
	Mixed method	7	5%
	Case study	8	7%
	Other	40	30%
Measuring instrument	Existing	40	30%
	New	22	17%
	Other/None	71	53%
IQA used	Yes	0	0%
	No	133	100%
Sample size	0-50	26	20%
	51-100	8	6%
	More than 100	51	38%
	Other	48	36%
Size of industry	Large	95	71%
	Small- and medium-sized	5	4%
	Other/None	33	25%
Results	New perspectives	106	80%
	Consistent with previous literature	22	17%
	Previous model on different datasets	0	0
	Comparative study	3	2%
	Other	2	1%
Instrument Type	Emic instrument	16	12%
	Etic Instrument	47	35%
	None	70	53%
Origin of the authors	American	22	17%
	European	11	8%
	African	86	65%
	Mixed	11	8%
	Other	3	2%

Classification	Type	Number	Percentage
Gender of the author	Male	67	50%
	Female	17	13%
	Both	49	37%
Domain	Leadership	110	83%
	Management	4	3%
	Both	19	14%
	Neither	0	0%

Source: Authors

The analysis of 133 leadership articles based on assigned codes yields interesting findings, as presented in Table 2. The first categorization revealed an important trend: a majority (90%) of the articles focused on leadership research within developing African countries, leaving a scant 5% dedicated to studies in the least developed countries. To improve knowledge of leadership across continents, future studies should focus on leadership issues and practices in the least developed African nations.

For the second category, six regions were identified in the geographical categorization: Northern, Eastern, Central, Western, and Southern Africa. Articles not specific to any region were excluded. Most (67%) of the studies concentrated on Southern Africa (Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia, and Zimbabwe), with general attention to Africa (22%) and 5%, respectively, for Eastern and Western Africa. A minimal 1% of the research occurred in Northern Africa. This highlights the necessity to broaden future research in underrepresented areas, including Northern, Eastern, and Western Africa, to enhance the understanding of regional leadership nuances.

The third classification, which classified the articles' objectives, showed that 60% of the articles utilized empirical methods, making it the most predominant approach. Empirical research refers to any investigation that derives its conclusions solely from concrete, verifiable evidence. Empirical studies are defined as informed scientific experimentation and/or evidence. This category was followed by conceptual studies (21%), literature reviews (12%), and case studies (7%). Future research might enhance both theoretical understanding and practical implications in African leadership contexts by integrating empirical approaches and conceptual frameworks.

The fourth classification attempts to understand the primary focus of leadership research. This collection of subjects reflects important topic domains investigated in leadership studies. The various facets of leadership studies are highlighted in each category. When taken as a whole, these subjects provide a framework for understanding various aspects of leadership theory and practice. In this context, the style of leadership emerged as the most significant factor at 29%, closely followed by discovering the characteristics of leaders and addressing the opinions related to the concept of leadership, at 24%. An opportunity exists to investigate underexplored aspects, such as mediating and moderating factors, that affect leadership outcomes in Africa.

In the fifth classification, the leadership theme emerged from fifteen distinct themes. These themes define specific domains within leadership research that include particular contexts, such as political and educational leadership, and broader aspects, including leadership styles, cultural and gender dynamics, and the impact of local and traditional values on leadership practices. Thirty percent of the studies examined leadership style, followed by factors such as developing leaders and leadership and management practices (17% each). Further research should examine how

traditional and local leadership principles impact modern leadership practices, particularly within the Ubuntu context.

The next categorization aimed to systematically classify and examine the style of leadership, organized into various distinct categories. For the past century, a significant amount of research has been conducted to determine which leadership style is most effective. The analysis of leadership styles revealed a preference for incorporating multiple styles (26%), with transformational leadership being the most examined single-style theory (17%). This finding indicates the potential for exploring lesser-studied leadership styles, such as servant leadership and ethical leadership, within the African context.

Regarding environmental context, in the seventh category, half of the articles (50%) were set in organizational contexts, with 22% in educational environments and 10% in political settings. Cultural and religious contexts comprised the remainder. Although half of the studies included organizations, future research should further investigate this environmental setting as economies expand and employ additional individuals.

The eighth classification considers the industry context. It saw 25% of articles focusing on leadership within government sectors, 6% in manufacturing, and 11% in service industries, with 56% not specifying the industry. Future research could investigate leadership dynamics across many industrial sectors to enhance sector-specific leadership strategies.

The ninth classification highlighted the publication periods. The results revealed a concentration between 2011 and 2018 (63%), followed by 2000-2010 (28%), indicating a recent increase in leadership research in Africa. To remain current, future research should incorporate modern trends such as digital, agile, and post-pandemic organizational shifts in leadership.

In terms of research methods, the tenth classification, quantitative approaches dominated (41%), followed by qualitative (17%), mixed methods (5%), and case studies (7%). Future studies should consider incorporating more mixed-methods strategies that can yield thorough insights by integrating qualitative depth with statistical analysis.

The eleventh classification examined the measuring instruments used and revealed that 17% of studies developed new instruments, with 30% relying on existing ones, and the majority (53%) not employing any specific measuring instruments. Developing culturally tailored (emic) instruments for specific African contexts is a critical gap that future research should address.

The subsequent classification indicated the number of papers that used Interactive Qualitative Analysis (IQA) as a systematic approach for coding qualitative research findings. None of the reviewed studies used IQA, indicating an opportunity for its application in future research.

In the thirteenth classification, sample sizes varied, with 38% involving more than 100 participants, highlighting the range of study scales. Future studies should ensure representation from diverse demographics to capture varied leadership experiences.

The fourteenth classification considered industry size and found a predominant interest in large-scale industries (71%). Investigating the dynamics of leadership within small and medium enterprises (SMEs) may yield valuable perspectives on the influence of leadership on grassroots economic development.

The following categorization pertains to the outcomes of the examined research. This category was divided into five subcategories. It included articles that brought new perspectives and results consistent with previous literature, whether it was a previous model with different data, a comparative study, or others. According to the findings, 80% of the evaluated publications offered a new perspective. Future studies could validate these findings with longitudinal studies to evaluate long-term effects.

The following classification shows the number of emic and etic instruments used in the reviewed articles. The use of etic instruments was a significant finding, with only 12% of the instruments tailored specifically to cultural contexts (emic). Future research should create more culturally relevant tools to enhance the validity of leadership measurements in Africa.

The seventeenth classification examined the authors' origins and identified that a majority (65%) were from Africa, 17% from America, 8% each from Europe and mixed origins, and 2% from other regions. Looking ahead, promoting both local and international collaborations may introduce new viewpoints and enhance African leadership studies.

The eighteenth classification coded the authors' genders, revealing a balance of 50% male, 13% female, and 37% a mix of both genders. Advancing gender diversity in research teams can yield a more equitable perspective on leadership challenges and solutions. Given that only 17% of the studies are undertaken by females, there is potential for females to make more significant contributions to this discipline in the future.

Finally, categorizing the study domain revealed a strong preference for leadership research (83%), with a minimal focus on management (3%), indicating a clear delineation of research interests. Future studies should investigate the intersection between leadership and management to more effectively tackle organizational difficulties in Africa.

The most significant opportunities for future research reside in culturally specific leadership frameworks and measurement tools tailored for African contexts, addressing the underrepresentation of particular regions and sectors. Additionally, the notable increase in leadership research from 2011 to 2018 may be linked to heightened global interconnectedness, the emergence of digital transformation, or the evolving economic and political dynamics in Africa. This period's focus highlights the urgent need to tackle modern organizational challenges, providing significant perspectives on leadership strategies that can be utilized within the dynamic global and African landscapes.

The fact that African authors contributed 65% of the reviewed studies provides profound insights that are rooted in the continent's distinctive sociocultural, economic, and political realities. It offers an emic perspective that enriches comprehension of African leadership. These contributions expand global leadership paradigms by introducing a variety of context-specific frameworks and practices that elucidate the complex relationship between modern leadership requirements and local traditions (Saeed et al., 2023).

The discovery that 80% of the studies provided new viewpoints suggests a significant emphasis on the development of leadership theories and practices by introducing original insights, frameworks, and methodologies. These new perspectives often dealt with underexplored areas, including the integration of traditional African values into contemporary leadership frameworks, leadership practices that were specifically designed to meet the unique socio-political and economic conditions of Africa, and culturally specific leadership models. This will benefit both regional and global practices by contributing to a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of leadership.

CONCLUSIONS

Information gathered through diverse literature databases provides a thorough and detailed picture of the contexts, challenges, approaches, and demography that have influenced discussions on leadership in Africa. The findings include many criteria such as geographical breakdown, research goals, examined themes, and styles of leadership.

As delineated in Table 3, the findings of this study provide critical perspectives on areas that are primed for further exploration, making this study an excellent tool for directing future investigations within the discipline of leadership across Africa.

Table 3. Overview table of significant trends

Category	Most Common Result	Percentage
Context	Developing countries	90%
Geographical Area	Southern Africa	67%
Objective	Empirical Study	60%
Topics	Leadership style in general	29%
Theme	Leadership styles	30%
Leadership Styles Evaluated	Mixed style	26%
Type of Study	Organizational	50%
Type of Organization	Mixed	56%
Period	2011-2018	63%
Method	Quantitative	41%
Measuring Instrument	Existing	30%
Sample Size	More than 100	38%
Size of Industry	Large	71%
Results	New perspectives	80%
Instrument Type	Emic	12%
Origin of the Main Authors	African	65%
Gender of the author	Male	50%
Domain	Leadership	83%

Source: Authors

Table 3 provides summary insights into the current state of leadership research in Africa that can be used to inform academic pursuits and organizational strategies. Initially, the predominant emphasis on developing and emergent nations (90%) and Southern Africa (67%) underscores the region where leadership studies are most concentrated. In order to promote support for more region-specific research and development initiatives, academics in under-represented regions, such as Northern, Eastern, and Western Africa, can draw attention to the unique leadership challenges in these areas.

The prevalence of empirical studies (60%) suggests that organizations can benefit from implementing evidence-based leadership development strategies because they heavily rely on data to inform their practices. Nevertheless, the practical necessity of developing culturally tailored leadership frameworks is made apparent by the limited development of new measurement tools (17%) and the widespread adoption of existing instruments created for Western contexts. To effectively assess and develop leadership competencies, organizations and regions must prioritize emic measurement tools designed with the local context in mind. These instruments guarantee that leadership development programs are pertinent and beneficial in that specific African organizational environment.

This study emphasizes the practical applicability of blended leadership styles (26%) and transformational leadership (17%) in developing dynamic, adaptable, and inclusive leadership in African contexts. Additionally, the emphasis on educational (22%) and organizational (50%) contexts implies that leadership development initiatives should prioritize these sectors to optimize their impact. The results also underscore the significance of concentrating on large-scale industries

(71%), as leadership practices can substantially impact broader economic outcomes. These insights offer practical advice for ensuring leadership practices are by the distinctive challenges and opportunities of Africa.

This analysis revealed an array of thought-provoking patterns and discoveries that explained the progress of leadership development in Africa. The necessity of examining emic leadership methods in various socioeconomic and cultural contexts is underscored by the geographical diversity demonstrated in the research. This is particularly true for developing and emerging nations, with a notable focus on South Africa. The results of this review also indicate an apparent propensity or preference to use Western instruments and scales to measure leadership in Africa. Our review suggests the need for more African-rooted leadership instruments.

LIMITATION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

Many academics and researchers continue to be fascinated by the concept of leadership, especially in Africa (Saeed et al., 2023). This structured review's contribution is significant in two aspects: firstly, it summarizes the research findings of the selected articles and identifies potential areas for future research. Second, the examination of 133 articles intensely focusing on leadership practices in Africa highlights an important gap in research on organizational leadership within the continent. This approach reveals numerous opportunities for further in-depth investigations.

A limitation of this structured literature review was its failure to fully explore specific questions posed at the start of the process. For instance, the study failed to fully identify the socio-political or cultural factors that are most important in developing African leadership practices. To be more specific, the investigation failed to shed the spotlight on the unique factors that have the most impact on leadership throughout Africa. Furthermore, it did not uncover any distinguishing or unique leadership qualities specific to the continent. Moreover, the review of publications hardly addressed the comparison of leadership differences between Africa and other global settings, stressing a crucial direction for future research to investigate successful organizational leadership practices in Africa. This discovery highlights the significance of comparative studies that investigate the congruence or disparity of African leadership approaches with global leadership paradigms.

Many international instruments have been developed to assess the connections between leaders and their subordinates and the influence of leadership on organizational tasks. However, this study highlights a deficiency of research focused on identifying organizational leadership behaviors within the African context. This statement illustrates the limited knowledge of complicated leadership dynamics in Africa and the important function that leaders play in shaping the behavior of their subordinates and establishing effective organizational cultures. Furthermore, future research should investigate the development of more emic frameworks for leadership to improve our knowledge of the leader-subordinate relationship within an organizational context.

Most leadership instruments and measures evaluated in this research were initially created for European and Western countries and subsequently adapted for African settings. This highlights the significance of developing future leadership tools that are deeply rooted in and resonate with Africa's cultural realities. This study revealed the importance of valid and reliable emic leadership measures. Moreover, a scarcity of female authors was observed, indicating a potential avenue for additional investigation into this phenomenon in future research. Therefore, future research could examine the underrepresentation of female researchers in African leadership studies and measure their impact on the framing of leadership research.

This structured review suggests that organizational leadership encompasses various managerial responsibilities. However, few articles explored these dimensions in the management domain. Despite numerous attempts to differentiate leadership within organizations from

management practices, our research results indicate that organizational leaders frequently get involved in a comprehensive range of managerial behaviors and activities. Nevertheless, they are frequently perceived as distinct entities and labeled accordingly. In an organizational context, the functions of a manager and a leader exhibit a distinct convergence. This indicates a potential avenue for future research to investigate the similarities or differences in the relationship between leadership and management within organizational contexts, especially in Africa.

The challenge of developing new organizational leadership theories with valid and reliable instruments is evident. There is a clear need to conceptualize and measure the most effective current leadership practices. Additionally, there is a necessity for developing African leadership theories further in an organizational context. This involves the development of theories that deal with challenges unique to Africa, including resource scarcity, socio-political instability, the values of Ubuntu, and economic transformation. Importantly, this review could not identify any emic, mixed-methods study employing the Interactive Qualitative Analysis (IQA) technique to conceptualize and discover leadership behaviors. This study also highlights the application of qualitative and quantitative methods across numerous studies, urging a reconsideration of the efficacy of existing leadership development methods in the African leadership context. Future investigations must explore IQA's capacity to enhance African leadership studies' qualitative rigor and accuracy.

Several researchers have acknowledged that the reliability and validity of globally accepted leadership measures have been, at best, minimal as their studies attempted to measure the characteristics of leadership in an African or South African environment (Daft, 2022). Several examined papers have sought to combine components or parts from various leadership scales based on decades of leadership studies. However, numerous questions remain regarding the validity and reliability of these consolidated scales. For instance, it becomes difficult to compare and integrate outcomes related to leadership behaviors when there is a dispute over the most relevant and meaningful leadership classifications. According to studies, many leadership behaviors and qualities are culturally specific and therefore cannot be measured internationally (Punnett, 2017). This approach opens the door to conceptualizing and measuring appropriate emic leadership practices in African organizations. Future research could examine incorporating specific African leadership qualities into current global frameworks to develop more culturally relevant and globally applicable metrics.

The significance of leadership in Africa's private sector has been emphasized as a topic for future research in several publications, mostly in business and economic management (Banutu-Gomez et al., 2023). This structured review found a need for more research on private-sector leadership, which provides an opportunity to create more refined and precise metrics for evaluating organizational leadership. Such research has the potential to reveal the nuances of leadership and unique approaches that could enhance performance and foster innovation within the constantly evolving landscape of Africa's private sector.

Our review demonstrated that empirical studies dominated the research landscape, indicating the need for research based on proof that offers tangible leadership perspectives. Investigating the topic of "Leadership Styles" underscores the persistent fascination with understanding the diverse leadership styles that characterize and influence the very nature of leadership in Africa. Discovering a "mixed styles" approach in many studies confirms that no singular leadership style is most appropriate or suitable and acknowledges African leadership's complex and multidimensional character. Future research should focus on contextual factors influencing leadership effectiveness across diverse African industries and regions.

It is encouraging to note the widespread utilization of quantitative approaches and the inclination to analyze organizational environments, which suggests the pursuit of measurable leadership outcomes. Nevertheless, integrating qualitative approaches with quantitative methods may yield a more nuanced understanding of leadership behaviors and outcomes, especially within culturally diverse contexts. This suggests that research is motivated by an aspiration to address tangible problems with organizations, including those present in Africa. The significance of indigenous perspectives in the global leadership debate was highlighted as African scholars authored most of the literature. Increasing collaboration between African and non-African scholars may provide valuable viewpoints and increase understanding of African leadership research. The focus on sectors with significant economic and social impacts is evident in the tendency to examine major sectors, underlining possible leadership effects.

Immediate suggestions derived from the findings of this structured review indicate the need to prioritize the development of culturally specific (emic) leadership measurement tools tailored to Africa's diverse socioeconomic and cultural contexts. Overreliance on Western frameworks limits the accuracy of leadership assessments on the continent. Future research should also examine contextual factors that affect the efficacy of diverse leadership approaches to enhance regional awareness and leadership practices, especially in underrepresented regions such as Northern, Eastern, and Western Africa. In contrast, the significant limitations identified in this study include the scarcity of comparative research investigating the alignment or divergence of African leadership practices with global paradigms, with an inadequate focus on private-sector leadership dynamics.

The purpose of this systematic literature analysis was to conduct an in-depth investigation into the history of studies on leadership in Africa. The study highlights the extent of studies on leadership in Africa, accentuating the relationship between leaders and economic and societal complexities. In addition, it has shown how important it is for African researchers to contribute more to leadership studies in the academic community. The results of this investigation provide valuable recommendations for subsequent studies, enabling scholars to identify unexplored areas and opportunities and to structure their research objectives.

REFERENCES

Abdulai, M. (2021). The culture of toxic organizational leadership in Sub-Saharan Africa: Why contexts matter. In A. Örtenblad (Ed.), *Debating bad leadership* (pp. 123–137). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-65557-9_9

Banutu-Gomez, M., Fanneh, M. M., Tanimu-Saminaka, I. U., & Rudin, J. (2023). Measuring organizational leadership in Africa. *International Journal of Business & Economics (IJBE)*, *8*(1), 202–213. https://doi.org/10.1234/ijbe.v8i1.202

Campos, J. D. S. (2024). Entrepreneurs' leadership skills and employee productivity: A structural equation model approach. *Organization and Human Capital Development*, *3*(1), 45–60. https://doi.org/10.31098/ohcd.v3i1.2000

Creswell, J. W. (2015). *Mixed methods research: Designs and procedures*. Sage Publications.

Daft, R. L. (2022). *The leadership experience* (8th ed.). Cengage.

Eva, N., Robin, M., Sendjaya, S., van Dierendonck, D., & Liden, R. C. (2019). Servant leadership: A systematic review and call for future research. *The Leadership Quarterly*, *30*(1), 111–132. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2018.07.004

Fairholm, M. R. (2015). Defining leadership: A review of past, present, and future ideas. *The George Washington University Center for Excellence in Municipal Management*, 1–37. https://doi.org/10.13140/RG.2.1.3219.4405

Fourie, W., van der Merwe, S. C., & van der Merwe, B. (2017). Sixty years of research on leadership in Africa: A review of the literature. *Leadership*, *13*(2), 222–251. https://doi.org/10.1177/1742715015580665

Issa, A. S., & David, A. K. (2012). The challenges of leadership and governance in Africa. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, *2*(9), 141–157. https://doi.org/10.6007/IJARBSS/v2-i9/999

Iszatt-White, M., & Saunders, C. (2020). *Leadership*. Oxford University Press.

Jackson, B., & Parry, K. (2008). *A very short, fairly interesting and reasonably cheap book about studying leadership*. Sage Publications.

Kirabira, A., Winston, B. E., & Wood, J. A. (2023). Development of an instrument to measure leadership excellence. In S. K. Dhiman, J. Marques, J. Schmieder-Ramirez, & P. G. Malakyan (Eds.), *Handbook of global leadership and followership* (pp. 345–360). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-82512-5_20

Manning, G., & Curtis, K. (2012). *The art of leadership* (5th ed.). McGraw-Hill.

Mbandlwa, Z., & Fagbadebo, O. (2020). Leadership challenges in the South African local government system. *Journal of Critical Reviews*, *7*(13), 1642–1653. https://doi.org/10.31838/jcr.07.13.256

Meylahn, J.-A., & Musiyambiri, J. (2017). Ubuntu leadership in conversation with servant leadership in the Anglican Church: A case of Kunonga. *HTS Teologiese Studies/Theological Studies*, *73*(2), 1–8. https://doi.org/10.4102/hts.v73i2.3830

Munn, Z., Peters, M., Stern, C., Tufanaru, C., McArthur, A., & Aromataris, E. (2018). Systematic review or scoping review? Guidance for authors when choosing between a systematic or scoping review approach. *BMC Medical Research Methodology*, *18*(143), 1–7. https://doi.org/10.1186/s12874-018-0611-x

Northouse, P. G. (2021). *Leadership: Theory and practice* (9th ed.). Sage Publications.

Okoli, C. (2015). A guide to conducting a standalone systematic literature review. *Communications of the Association for Information Systems*, *37*, 879–910. https://doi.org/10.17705/1CAIS.03743

Petry, T. (2018). Digital leadership. In K. North, R. Maier, & O. Haas (Eds.), *Knowledge management in digital change* (pp. 209–218). Springer. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-73546-7_14

Punnett, B. J. (2017). Africa: Open for business. In T. R. Lituchy, B. L. Galperin, & B. J. Punnett (Eds.), *LEAD: Leadership effectiveness in Africa and the African diaspora* (pp. 1–18). Palgrave Macmillan. https://doi.org/10.1057/978-1-137-59121-9_1

Rahmatika, A. H., & Saragih, S. (2023). Who else wants to work innovatively? The role of transformational leadership in the workplace. *Organization and Human Capital Development*, *2*(2), 97–112. https://doi.org/10.31098/ohcd.v2i2.1566

Saeed, S. A., Ali, S. O., & Rashid, K. M. (2023). The effect of different leadership styles on job satisfaction. *Organization and Human Capital Development*, *2*(2), 16–30. https://doi.org/10.31098/orcadev.v2i2.1747

Sharma, G. D., Aryan, R., Singh, S., & Kaur, T. (2019). A systematic review of literature about leadership and organization. *Research Journal of Business Management*, *13*(1), 1–14.

Van Zyl, E. (2014). The role of self-leadership in becoming an ethical leader in the South African work context. *African Journal of Business Ethics*, *8*(2), 5–14.

Vilakati, V. M., & Schurink, W. J. (2021). An explorative-descriptive qualitative-constructivist study of three African leaders' experiences and perceptions regarding the translation of shared African human values into leadership and business practice. *SA Journal of Human Resource Management*, *19*(0). https://doi.org/10.4102/sajhrm.v19i0.1397

Walumbwa, F. O., Avolio, B. J., & Aryee, S. (2011). Leadership and management research in Africa: A synthesis and suggestions for future research. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, *84*(3), 425–439.

Yukl, G. (2013). *Leadership in organizations* (8th ed.). Pearson.

Yukl, G. A., & Gardner, W. L. (2020). *Leadership in organizations* (9th ed.). Pearson.