

Adaptive Leadership And Employee Work Productivity; A Literature Review

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Article	Abstract
<p>Keywords: Adaptive Leadership, Work Productivity, Employees, Literature Review</p> <p>Article History Received: Feb. 03, 2026; Reviewed: Feb. 07, 2026; Accepted: Feb 08, 2026; Published: Feb 13, 2026;</p>	<p><i>The changes in the increasingly dynamic work environment necessitate organizations to have leaders who can swiftly adapt to various challenges. Adaptive leadership has emerged as a relevant leadership approach in addressing the complexities and uncertainties faced by modern organizations. This article aims to examine the concept of adaptive leadership and its relationship with employee productivity based on various scientific literature. The method employed is a literature review of books, national and international journals, and relevant scientific publications. The findings indicate that adaptive leadership positively influences employee productivity by enhancing motivation, work engagement, innovation capabilities, and flexibility in task completion. Therefore, the implementation of adaptive leadership can serve as a crucial strategy for organizations to improve performance and competitiveness.</i></p>

	Abstrak
<p>Kata Kunci Kepemimpinan Adaptif, Produktivitas Kerja, Karyawan, Kajian Pustaka</p>	<p>Perubahan dalam lingkungan kerja yang semakin dinamis mengharuskan organisasi untuk memiliki pemimpin yang dapat beradaptasi dengan cepat terhadap berbagai tantangan. Kepemimpinan adaptif menjadi salah satu pendekatan kepemimpinan yang relevan dalam menghadapi kompleksitas dan ketidakpastian di organisasi modern. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk mengkaji konsep kepemimpinan adaptif serta hubungannya dengan produktivitas kerja karyawan berdasarkan berbagai literatur ilmiah. Metode yang digunakan adalah kajian pustaka terhadap buku, jurnal nasional dan internasional, serta publikasi ilmiah yang relevan. Hasil kajian menunjukkan bahwa kepemimpinan adaptif memiliki pengaruh positif terhadap produktivitas kerja karyawan melalui peningkatan motivasi, keterlibatan kerja, kemampuan berinovasi, dan fleksibilitas dalam menyelesaikan tugas. Dengan demikian, penerapan kepemimpinan adaptif dapat menjadi strategi penting bagi organisasi dalam meningkatkan kinerja dan daya saing.</p>



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INTRODUCTION

Growing globalization, advances in information technology, and rapid social and economic change have significantly impacted the world of work and organizations. Organizations now face various challenges, such as increasingly fierce competition, changing market needs, and demands for continuous performance improvement. In this situation, the role of leadership has become a key factor in determining organizational success (Oktarini, 2025).

Leadership is no longer understood solely as the ability to direct and control subordinates, but also as the ability to adapt to change and create solutions to complex problems. One leadership approach considered relevant in addressing these challenges is adaptive leadership. Adaptive leadership is an approach to leadership that emphasizes the leader's ability to adjust to dynamic and complex environmental changes. Adaptive leadership emphasizes the leader's ability to respond to change, manage uncertainty, and encourage learning and innovation within the organization (Sartini, 2024).

On the other hand, employee productivity is a key indicator of organizational success. Productivity reflects employees' ability to produce work output effectively and efficiently in accordance with organizational goals. High productivity levels indicate optimal utilization of human resources, while low productivity can indicate problems with management, the work environment, or leadership (Aravik, et.al, 2021).

Various studies have shown that leadership style has a significant influence on employee productivity (Maleha, et.al, 2025). Adaptive leadership is believed to create a supportive work environment, increase employee motivation and engagement, and encourage employee innovation. Therefore, studying adaptive leadership and employee productivity is crucial for understanding the role of leaders in improving organizational performance (Panjaitan, 2025).

Furthermore, a leader must possess a deep understanding of the values, foundations, philosophy, and context that determine the functioning of their business organization (Aravik, et.al, 2020). A leader's ineffectiveness is often due to a lack of knowledge and experience. The success of leaders stems from instilling philosophical values within the business organization. Beneficial aspects and the depth of diversity are key to long-term success. Aspiring leaders often fail because they ignore the values that shape the organization, its characteristics, and the foundations of strategic thinking.

Thus, the role of a leader has a significant impact on the organization or company they lead. Furthermore, a leader also significantly influences the performance of their subordinates. The success of a work environment, the establishment of good relationships among employees, and the achievement of company goals depend heavily on how a leader manages it (Rachmawati, 2023).

RESEARCH METHOD

The method used in writing this article is a literature review. The literature review was conducted by collecting and analyzing various literature sources relevant to the topic of adaptive leadership and employee productivity. The literature sources used included management and leadership textbooks, national and international scientific journals, and research articles published in recent years. The collected literature was then analyzed descriptively and comparatively to gain a deeper

understanding of the concept, characteristics, and relationship between adaptive leadership and employee productivity.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The Concept of Adaptive Leadership

Adaptive leadership is a concept introduced by Heifetz (1994) that emphasizes a leader's ability to help organizations address adaptive challenges, namely complex problems that lack clear technical solutions. According to Pudjiarti (2024), adaptive leadership is crucial because it enables organizations to act and adapt to the rapidly changing digital environment (Haiqal, 2025). Adaptive leadership requires leaders to learn, experiment, and adapt to change. Adaptive leaders function not only as decision-makers but also as facilitators who encourage employees to actively participate in the problem-solving process. This leadership concept emphasizes the importance of flexibility, openness to change, and the ability to manage conflicts that arise from change.

Key characteristics of adaptive leadership include:

1. The ability to understand environmental changes
 2. Flexibility in decision-making
 3. Employee empowerment and involvement
 4. The ability to encourage organizational learning
 5. The courage to take risks and innovate
- Adaptive leadership is highly relevant for application in modern organizations facing uncertainty and rapid change.

The Impact of Digital Transformation on Leadership

Digital transformation has brought significant changes to the way organizations operate and lead. According to Schwab (2017), the era of digital transformation is characterized by rapid technological developments and changing business landscapes that require rapid adaptation from organizations and their leaders. This creates an urgent need for leaders to develop adaptive and flexible skills to keep their organizations competitive and innovative. Gibson and Cohen (2003) note that digital transformation requires leaders who are not only able to understand new technologies but also able to leverage those technologies to drive innovation and improve efficiency. Leaders in the digital age must be able to guide their teams through rapid and often unpredictable changes and leverage data and technology to make better and faster decisions. Adaptive and Flexible Leadership Development Strategies To develop adaptive and flexible leadership, several strategies have been identified from various literature (Norman, 2024):

1. **Continuous Training and Development:** According to Kotter (1996), continuous training and development are key to developing the leadership skills necessary to adapt to change. Kotter emphasizes the importance of training programs designed to enhance problem-solving, decision-making, and innovation skills.
2. **Organizational Learning-Based Approach:** Senge (2006) highlights the importance of an organizational learning approach in developing adaptive leadership. Senge argues that organizations focused on continuous learning enable leaders to continuously develop new skills and adapt to changes in the external environment.
3. **Collaboration and Innovation:** Westerman, Bonnet, and McAfee (2014) suggest that collaboration and innovation are crucial factors in leadership development

in the digital age. They argue that leaders need to foster a collaborative and innovative work culture so their organizations can quickly adapt to technological and market changes.

The Challenge of Adaptive Leadership

The essence of adaptive leadership lies in adaptive challenges, as these are often vague and sometimes unidentified problems. These challenges cannot be solved by the leader alone (Naswya, et.al, 2025). When facing adaptive challenges, leaders need to encourage their followers to identify the existing obstacles and how to implement them. For example, leaders often face adaptive challenges when followers resist technological change due to specific concerns. In these situations, leaders must motivate them to learn and change their perspectives (Kelvin, 2025).

1. Get on the Balcony

This metaphor suggests that leaders must view the challenges or problems facing the organization holistically from multiple perspectives. By being on a balcony higher than their followers, leaders may be able to more clearly see the obstacles. This is because the leader is far from the center of the problem and alone, allowing them to think clearly and find solutions.

2. Identifying Adaptive Challenges

The core of this section is how leaders can distinguish between technical challenges and adaptive challenges. If a leader is able to resolve an obstacle on their own, then it is a technical challenge. However, if not, and new innovation is needed, and certain values are present, then an adaptive leader is essential. To facilitate the identification of adaptive challenges, here are four patterns that can be used: (1) a gap between demonstrated values and behavior, (2) competing commitments, (3) talking about what's unspoken, (4) avoiding work (Alma, 2019).

3. Managing Adversity

The task of an adaptive leader is to manage adversity. In general, adaptive challenges cause leaders to experience difficulty adapting to change, especially changes that impact values and beliefs, thus generating significant stress. In adaptive leadership, there are three aspects to managing stress: (1) creating a supportive environment, (2) providing direction, protection, conflict management, and productive norms, and (3) managing one's own stress.

4. Maintaining Discipline

The fourth activity is maintaining discipline, which means leaders must ensure their followers remain focused on the difficult tasks they need to complete. This is not easy, as people generally tend to be reluctant to face change, especially when it relates to their values and beliefs.

5. Delegating Tasks to Followers

The fifth role of adaptive leaders is delegating tasks to their followers. When leaders involve their followers by providing direction within the organization, they feel more at ease in carrying out their tasks. While providing direction can reassure followers, adaptive leaders need to set limits on their influence over their organization. Adaptive leaders can sometimes refuse to take responsibility for finding solutions to problems faced by others. This action does not mean avoiding responsibility as leaders, but rather, this behavior aims to encourage followers to participate or contribute to their organization, as adaptive leaders essentially only direct individuals to complete their part.

Implications of Adaptive Leadership Development

1. Organizational Resilience

Adaptive leadership enhances an organization's ability to thrive in a dynamic environment. Enhanced Organizational Resilience: Adaptive and flexible leadership... enables organizations to be more resilient in the face of change and challenges. According to Ready and Conger (2003), organizations led by adaptive leaders are better able to survive and thrive in dynamic and changing environments.

2. Innovation and Performance

Adaptive leaders foster innovation through rapid response to change. Enhanced Innovation and Performance: Westerman et al. (2014) noted that adaptive leaders are able to navigate change more effectively, manage uncertainty, and foster innovation.

3. Adaptive Culture

Building a flexible and collaborative organizational culture to address uncertainty. Adaptive leadership also plays a role in building an organizational culture that is ready for change, resilient, and continuously learning. With this approach, leaders can create an environment where innovation and learning become part of the daily work culture (Rofiyana, 2024).

Employee Work Productivity

Employee work productivity is a measure of an employee's ability to produce work output of optimal quality and quantity. Productivity relates not only to the quantity of work produced, but also to the efficiency with which time, energy, and other resources are used (Meirisha, et.al, 2025). The concept of productivity generally links output and input. According to Whitmore Abdilah (2010) in Margareta E. Harimisa (2013:2146), productivity is defined as a measure of resource utilization within an organization, typically expressed as the ratio between output achieved and resources used. Productivity is closely related to effectiveness and efficiency. Part of the definition of work productivity is explained as follows: "Productivity is the ability to obtain maximum benefits from available facilities and infrastructure by producing optimal output (Maliki, 2024).

According to Sedarmayanti (2018), work productivity is influenced by various factors, such as motivation, competence, work discipline, work environment, and leadership. High productivity indicates that employees are able to work effectively and efficiently in achieving organizational goals. Employee work productivity is also closely related to job satisfaction and commitment to the organization. Employees who feel appreciated and supported by their leaders tend to show better performance and be more productive.

Factors Influencing Employee Work Productivity

1. Some of the main factors influencing employee work productivity include:
2. Work motivation, which is the internal and external drives that influence employee morale.
3. Competence, which includes knowledge, skills, and work attitudes.
4. The work environment, both physical and non-physical.
5. Job satisfaction, which relates to employees' feelings about their work.
6. Leadership style, which determines how employees are directed and empowered.

Work Ethic on Employee Work Productivity

Research shows that work ethic influences employee work productivity. These results indicate that work motivation influences employee productivity (Aravik, et.al, 2024). When employees have a high level of motivation, a sense of ownership of their work, and a commitment to company goals, productivity tends to increase. A good work ethic also creates a positive work environment, increases collaboration, and reduces absenteeism and employee turnover. A good work ethic can create a work environment that improves employee psychological health. This sense of well-being helps employees manage stress and focus on work, thereby increasing overall productivity (Layli, 2024).

Work Motivation

These elements originate from within and outside the individual and emerge through psychological processes. Work motivation can encourage someone to take responsibility for their work and optimize their goals. Some important points regarding motivation are (Esisuarni, 2024):

- 1) Job satisfaction.
- 2) Measuring the potential for satisfying work.
- 3) Motivating job design.
- 4) Social factors in motivation.
- 5) Providing incentives and rewards to increase motivation.
- 6) Training.
- 7) Opportunities for development (promotion).
- 8) Motivation and business progress. Companies naturally have specific goals when motivating employees at work.

According to Istiatin & Ida (2016:45), there are several goals of motivation, as follows: 1) Improving employee morale and job satisfaction. 2) Increasing employee productivity. 3) Maintaining employee stability within the company. 4) Improving employee discipline. 5) Improving employee recruitment effectiveness. 6) Creating a harmonious work environment and relationships. 7) Increasing employee loyalty, creativity, and participation. 8) Improving employee well-being. 9) Strengthening employees' sense of responsibility for their duties.

Work Environment

The work environment encompasses all the tools, materials, and surroundings surrounding a person's work, the methods used, and the work arrangements, both individually and in groups (Kemie, 2025). The work environment is defined by space, physical layout, noise levels, available tools and materials, and interactions between coworkers. The quality of all these elements has a significant positive impact on the quality of work produced (Nur, 2020).

Factors influencing the work environment include:

- 1) Employee Relations. There are two types of relationships within the employee context: interpersonal relationships and intergroup relationships (Aravik, et.al, 2020).
- 2) Noise Level in the Workplace. An uncomfortable work environment can disrupt work activities. Noise levels in the workplace can be a factor that can reduce employee well-being and negatively impact performance.
- 3) Work Regulations. Clear and well-defined regulations will ensure employees

comply with and respect existing regulations, and enable them to perform well in their career development.

- 4) Lighting. Lighting includes not only electricity but also natural light from sunlight. Adequate and comfortable lighting conditions will make employees feel better at work.
- 5) Air circulation. Providing good ventilation will improve air circulation in the room.
- 6) Security. Creating a sense of security and comfort in the work environment will motivate employees to work more enthusiastically (Yulianti, et.al, 2020).

The Relationship Between Adaptive Leadership and Employee Productivity

Based on the results of a literature review, adaptive leadership has a positive relationship with employee productivity. Adaptive leaders are able to create an open work environment that supports innovation and is responsive to change. Adaptive leadership encourages employees to actively participate in decision-making, thereby making them feel valued and have a greater sense of responsibility for their work (Hendriarto, 2025). This has an impact on increasing employee motivation and work engagement. Furthermore, adaptive leadership helps employees cope with change and uncertainty by providing clear direction and adequate support. Thus, employees are able to adapt to change and remain productive.

CONCLUSION

From the above explanation, it can be concluded that adaptive leadership is a highly relevant leadership approach in addressing the dynamics of changing organizational environments in the era of globalization and digital transformation. Adaptive leaders are not only required to be able to interpret changes and make flexible decisions, but also to empower employees, encourage organizational learning, and create an innovative and collaborative work culture. Through strategies such as continuous training, strengthening learning organizations, and developing a culture of innovation, adaptive leadership has been proven to increase organizational resilience, strengthen competitiveness, and help organizations face complex challenges that cannot be solved solely with technical approaches.

Based on the results of the literature review, adaptive leadership has a positive and significant relationship with employee work productivity. Adaptive leaders are able to create a supportive work environment, provide motivation, and involve employees in the decision-making process, thereby increasing their sense of responsibility, job satisfaction, and commitment to the organization. This support helps employees adapt to change, maintain a strong work ethic, and work more effectively and efficiently. Therefore, the implementation of adaptive leadership is a strategic factor that organizations can use to increase employee work productivity while ensuring the sustainability of organizational performance in the long term.

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