Leadership Styles in Healthcare Settings for Hospital Management and Employee Engagement

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Abstract

Background: Effective leadership in hospital administration plays a critical role in shaping organizational culture, fostering employee engagement, and impacting patient care quality. Leadership styles vary widely, influencing organizational dynamics and employee behavior differently. Understanding these styles is crucial for achieving goals within healthcare settings. Methods: This cross-sectional quantitative study investigated leadership style, flexibility, and effectiveness among hospital directors in Central Java, East Java, and the Special Region of Yogyakarta, Indonesia. Data were collected from six hospital directors using questionnaires and in-depth unstructured interviews. Descriptive statistics and thematic analysis were used to analyze the data. Results: The most frequently utilized leadership style was supportive, favored by 37.9% of directors, emphasizing collaborative decision-making. Coaching, delegating, and directing styles were also noted. Directors' leadership styles were generally perceived as highly adaptable, with a positive correlation between adaptable leadership styles and effective leadership functions. However, there was no significant evidence linking leadership style effectiveness to overall leadership function. Conclusion: Supportive leadership styles are prevalent among hospital directors, characterized by collaboration and adaptability. Leadership styles significantly influence hospital management practices and employee engagement. Further research is needed to optimize leadership strategies in healthcare settings.

Keywords: Leadership styles, Hospital administration, Employee engagement, Organizational culture, Healthcare management

1.Introduction

Effective leadership in any organization, particularly in the context of hospital administration, plays a pivotal role in shaping organizational culture, fostering employee engagement, and ultimately impacting the quality of patient care. Leadership styles vary widely, each influencing organizational dynamics and employee behavior differently. Understanding these styles is crucial as they significantly affect how goals are set, communicated, and achieved within healthcare settings.

Leadership in hospital management encompasses the ability to guide, inspire, and coordinate diverse teams to deliver high-quality healthcare services amidst complex operational challenges. This introductory discussion explores the multifaceted impact of leadership styles on employee trust, willingness, and organizational outcomes within the healthcare sector, focusing on hospitals in Indonesia.

Leadership within hospital settings is tasked with achieving common goals while effectively managing resources and personnel. The manner in which leaders navigate these responsibilities significantly influences employee perceptions, engagement levels, and overall organizational success.

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According to Lim et al. (2018), leadership styles determine how leaders influence and manage their teams, impacting everything from operational efficiency to patient satisfaction.

Leadership styles are characterized by various approaches that leaders employ to guide their teams. These styles range from authoritative and directive to participative and transformational, each bringing distinct advantages and challenges to hospital management. Liu et al. (2015) note that a leader's upbringing, education, and past experiences shape their leadership approach, influencing their ability to foster innovation, collaboration, and adaptability within their teams.

Employee engagement hinges significantly on leadership effectiveness. Leaders who prioritize communication, collaboration, and transparency tend to foster higher levels of trust and motivation among their teams. This, in turn, correlates with improved job satisfaction and higher performance outcomes (Guntara, 2014; Oyewunmi et al., 2015).

The manner in which leaders provide incentives and recognition for employee contributions plays a crucial role in enhancing workforce morale and commitment. Effective leadership encourages a supportive environment where employees feel valued, thereby stimulating their creativity and initiative in problem-solving and service improvement (Setiasih, 2016; Simamora et al., 2019).

Leadership styles contribute significantly to shaping organizational culture within hospital environments. For instance, leaders who adopt transformational leadership styles are known for inspiring innovation and fostering a shared vision among their teams (Aini, 2021b, Aini and Qurratul, 2024; Qurratul 2024). Conversely, autocratic leadership styles may stifle creativity and inhibit open communication, potentially impacting employee morale and patient care quality.

A supportive leadership approach that values employee perspectives and promotes fairness based on performance can cultivate a positive organizational culture where continuous improvement is encouraged (Aini, Talib, et al., 2023; Wahyu Saripudin, 2019). This culture is essential for adapting to healthcare industry challenges and delivering patient-centered care effectively.

In healthcare settings, effective leadership is indispensable for ensuring the seamless delivery of services across diverse departments such as inpatient care, outpatient clinics, emergency services, and support facilities (Aini, Dzakiyullah, et al., 2023; Amason, 1996). The quality of leadership directly impacts operational efficiency, staff morale, and patient outcomes.

Leaders in hospital administration are tasked not only with strategic decision-making but also with fostering an environment conducive to high-quality care delivery. This involves setting clear goals aligned with the hospital's vision, establishing accountability frameworks, and providing ongoing support to staff (Government

of Indonesia, 2015). Such leadership practices are essential for maintaining regulatory compliance, optimizing resource allocation, and enhancing overall healthcare service quality.

Despite its critical role, evaluating leadership effectiveness in hospital management poses challenges. Assessing leadership styles and their impact on employee performance requires comprehensive frameworks and continuous feedback mechanisms (Johns & Saks, 2001). This ongoing evaluation is vital for identifying strengths, addressing weaknesses, and refining leadership strategies to meet evolving healthcare demands.

Leadership evaluations should consider not only performance metrics but also qualitative aspects such as communication effectiveness, team dynamics, and patient satisfaction levels. Incorporating employee feedback and stakeholder perspectives provides a holistic view of leadership impact across different organizational levels (Putra et al., 2013).

Effective leadership in hospital management is indispensable for navigating the complexities of healthcare delivery, fostering employee engagement, and ensuring patient-centric care. Leadership styles significantly influence organizational culture, employee motivation, and operational outcomes within healthcare settings. Understanding these dynamics is crucial for optimizing leadership practices, enhancing workforce productivity, and achieving sustainable healthcare excellence.

Future research and practice should continue to explore innovative leadership approaches that promote collaboration, innovation, and resilience in healthcare management. By investing in leadership development and evaluation, hospitals in Indonesia can strengthen their capacity to deliver high-quality, patient-centered care while fostering a supportive and adaptive organizational culture.

2. Material and Methods

2.1 Study Design

This study employed a cross-sectional quantitative research design to investigate the factors influencing leadership style, flexibility, and effectiveness among hospital directors in hospital administration. The research was conducted in three provinces in Indonesia: Central Java, East Java, and the Special Region of Yogyakarta. The study focused on three general hospitals and three Muhammadiyah Aisyiyah hospitals within these provinces.

2.2 Sampling

The study population comprised all hospital directors from the selected hospitals, totaling six informants. A purposive sampling method, a form of non-probability sampling, was employed to select participants. Purposive sampling allows researchers to deliberately select participants who have specific knowledge and experience relevant to the study objectives (Aini, Talib, et al., 2023).

2.3 Criteria for selecting participants included:

Serving under the assessed director for more than six months.

Regular interaction with the evaluated director.

Understanding and familiarity with the director's management style.

2.4 Data Collection

Data collection methods included questionnaires and in-depth unstructured interviews. These instruments were chosen to gather both quantitative and qualitative data, providing a comprehensive understanding of leadership practices and their impact.

2.5 Questionnaire

Researchers developed structured questionnaires designed to assess leadership styles, flexibility, and effectiveness. The questionnaires included Likert-scale questions to measure participants' perceptions and experiences regarding leadership behaviors and outcomes.

2.6 In-depth Interviews

Researchers conducted unstructured interviews to gather qualitative insights into the leadership approaches employed by hospital directors. Interviews were recorded with participants' consent and transcribed for analysis.

2.7 Procedure

Selection of Participants: Researchers identified and approached potential participants based on the sampling criteria. Participants were briefed on the study's objectives, procedures, and their role in providing accurate information.

2.7.1 Data Collection

Questionnaires were administered to participants to collect quantitative data on leadership styles, flexibility in decision-making, and perceived effectiveness in hospital management. Interviews followed, focusing on exploring participants' experiences and perceptions in depth.

2.7.2 Data Analysis

Quantitative data from the questionnaires were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize responses and identify trends in leadership styles and effectiveness. Qualitative data from interviews were analyzed thematically to extract key themes related to leadership practices and their impact.

2.8 Ethical Considerations

The study adhered to ethical guidelines, ensuring participant confidentiality, voluntary participation, and informed consent. Institutional review board approval was obtained before commencing data collection.

2.9 Data Interpretation

Upon completion of data collection and analysis, researchers interpreted findings to assess the alignment between leadership styles, flexibility, and effectiveness in hospital administration. Insights derived from the study were used to evaluate the influence of leadership practices on organizational outcomes and to provide recommendations for enhancing leadership effectiveness in hospital settings.

2.10 Limitations

Potential limitations of the study included the small sample size due to the focused nature of purposive sampling and the potential for subjective bias in self-reported data from questionnaires and interviews. Researchers mitigated these limitations through rigorous data collection methods and triangulation of findings from multiple sources.

This methodological approach enabled a comprehensive exploration of leadership dynamics in hospital administration, shedding light on factors influencing leadership effectiveness and organizational outcomes. The study findings have implications for leadership development strategies and organizational policies aimed at enhancing hospital management practices and improving overall healthcare delivery.

3. Results and Discussion

Research activities were conducted to investigate the leadership styles employed by hospital directors in managing both regional general hospitals and Muhammadiyah or Aisyiyah hospitals. The analysis, as detailed in Table 1, focused on identifying prevalent leadership styles among directors. The results indicated that the most frequently utilized leadership style was supportive, favored by 37.9% of directors (Figure 1). Supportive leadership entails minimal direction and a strong emphasis on supportive behaviors, fostering shared decision-making and task review between leaders and subordinates. Coaching emerged as the second most common style, adopted by 27.6% of respondents, characterized by a balance of directive guidance and supportive engagement, wherein leaders explain decisions, accept input, and closely supervise task completion while promoting bidirectional communication. Delegating, which involves minimal direction and support with a focus on delegation, was another frequently noted style. Lastly, directing leadership, involving strong direction and low support, was also observed, where leaders provide specific instructions and oversee task execution with limited subordinate involvement.

Furthermore, respondents generally perceived directors' leadership styles as highly adaptable, with a majority considering them "very flexible" and the remainder rating them as "flexible," with few describing them as "rigid" (Figure 2). Analysis of leadership function indicated that while supervision and delegation of authority were perceived less favorably by respondents, overall leadership functions were largely rated positively (Figure 3).

Examining the relationship between leadership style flexibility and directorial functions revealed that a more adaptable leadership style correlated positively with effective leadership functions (Figure 5). Similarly, the effectiveness of leadership styles in relation to directorial functions was generally perceived as positive and well-functioning (Figure 6). However, the study did not find significant evidence supporting a direct association between the effectiveness

Table 1. Hospital Director's Leadership Style

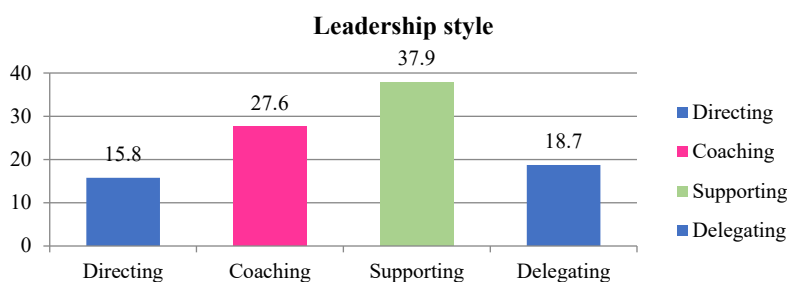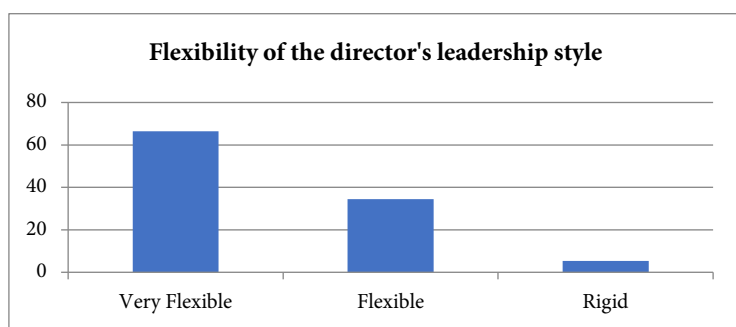| Leadership Style	Percentage (%)
Directing	15,8
Coaching	27,6
Supporting	37,9
Delegating	18,7

Figure 1. Leadership Style

Figure 2. Leadership Style Flexibility
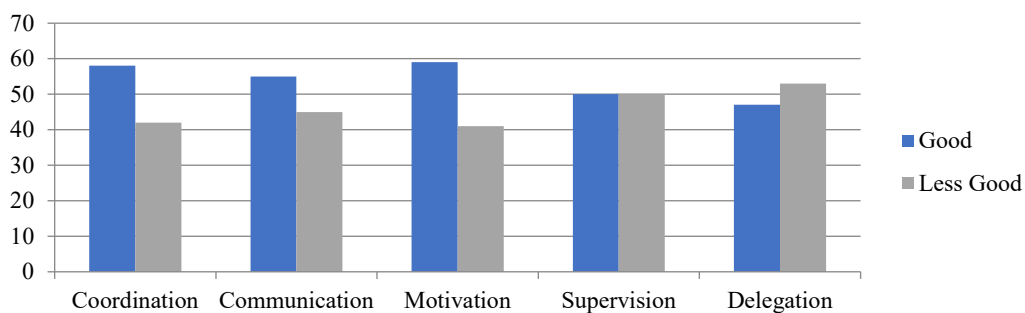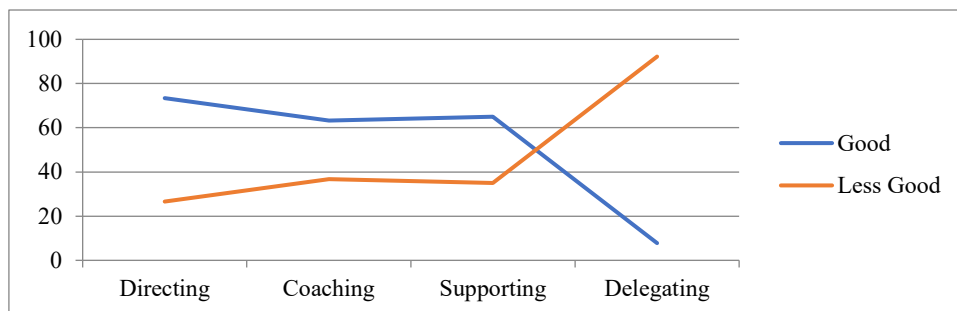

Figure 3. Leadership Functions

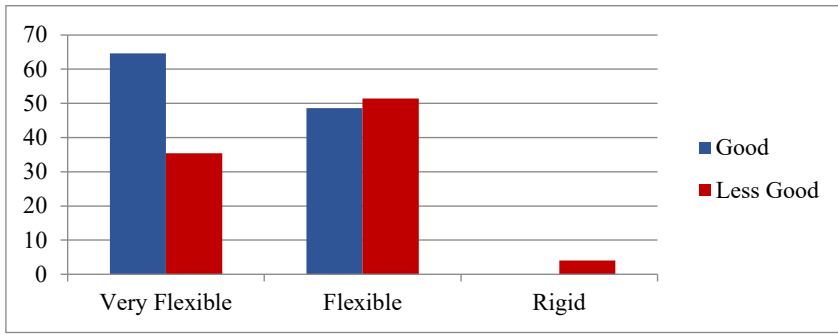**Figure 4.** The Relationship of Leadership Style to Leadership Function

Figure 5. The Relationship of Leadership Style Flexibility to Leadership Function
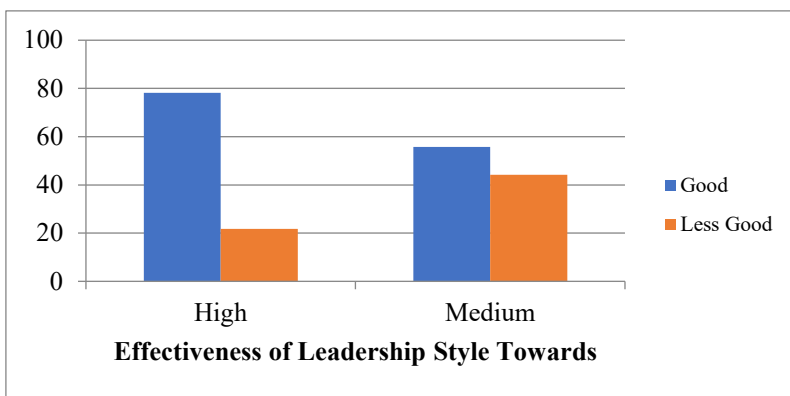

Figure 6. Effectiveness of Leadership Style Towards

of leadership style and the overall leadership function of hospital directors.

The research underscores the diversity in leadership styles employed by hospital directors, highlighting the significance of adaptability in achieving effective leadership functions. Further investigation into the nuanced impacts of these leadership styles on hospital management could provide deeper insights into optimizing leadership practices in healthcare settings.

Based on the study's findings, the most prevalent leadership style observed is supportive, characterized by collaborative decision-making between leaders and subordinates, and a shared evaluation of task implementation. The adaptability of these high-response leadership styles reflects leaders' capacity to adjust their approaches based on situational demands. Effective implementation of coordination and communication surpasses that of supervision and delegation of authority, indicating successful leadership style functionality. The study underscores a significant correlation between hospital directors' leadership styles and their ability to fulfill leadership functions effectively. Flexible leadership styles are particularly noted for their positive association with effective leadership functions. However, the study did not find compelling evidence linking the effectiveness of leadership styles directly to the overall leadership function of hospital directors.

Leadership styles significantly influence hospital management practices, with employee evaluations favoring styles that prioritize collaboration and mutual interests. Effective leadership necessitates enhancing organizational quality, supporting team members, and exhibiting emotional intelligence. Leadership growth demands rapid decision-making, adept management of challenges, and effective conflict resolution to navigate critical processes and stages. Researchers emphasize that effective leadership styles can catalyze institutional transformations in response to evolving challenges. Leaders must articulate and align visions, objectives, and collaborative goals to enhance the quality of healthcare facilities, especially hospitals, thereby preserving and creating long-term value.

4. Conclusion

In conclusion, this study highlights the prevalence of supportive leadership styles among hospital directors, emphasizing collaborative decision-making and adaptability in achieving effective leadership functions. While leadership styles significantly influence hospital management practices and employee engagement, further research is needed to fully optimize leadership strategies in healthcare settings.

Author contributions

Q.A. conceptualized the study, conducted the investigation, curated the data, developed the methodology, performed the

formal analysis, and drafted the original manuscript. N.R.D. contributed to the conceptualization, data curation, and formal analysis, and reviewed and edited the manuscript.

Competing financial interests

The authors have no conflict of interest.

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