

The Impact of Varying Styles of Leadership on Team Dynamics and Project Success

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Abstract

The present study examines the impact that distinct styles of leadership have on team dynamics and project success. By combining purposive, convenience, and networking sampling techniques to avoid overreliance on one single sampling technique, we used partial least squares structural equation modelling on a sample of 188 responses obtained from a semi-structured matrix-based questionnaire. Our findings revealed that autocratic leadership has no significant impact on team dynamics or project success. All other styles considered (i.e. servant leadership, agile leadership, ethical leadership, and laissez-faire leadership) have a statistically significant impact on team dynamics and project success. Furthermore, servant leadership and agile leadership have a strong positive correlation with team dynamics and project success, whereas ethical leadership exhibits a moderate positive linkage with team dynamics and project success. Laissez-faire leadership and autocratic leadership have weak positive correlations with team dynamics and project success. Lastly, team dynamics impact project outcomes in a statistically significant manner. Our analysis concludes that the most effective leadership style among all the above is servant leadership, which has a statistically significant positive impact on team dynamics and project success.

Key words

leadership style; teams dynamics; project success; project management

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Introduction

Haque et al. (2015) argued that within distinct economic sectors, leadership is an essential component of operational success and the management of projects. Strong leadership skills are one of the requirements within project management for the successful implementation and execution of

strategic goals (Kumar, 2009). In the modern business environment, effective project management has been vital for the timely conclusion of operations (Duggal, 2023). The role of the leader turns out to be more important in project management because the completion of tasks relies heavily on collaboration, coordination, and teamwork. Thus, for successful completion, the art and science of guiding a team could be regarded as project leadership. In other words, a common goal is achieved by a group of people under the project's leadership since collective work enables the team to achieve more compared to individual efforts (Duggal, 2023). Nonetheless, project leaders demonstrate different styles of leadership; yet there is no conclusive evidence on which style of leadership is more efficient and effective in the completion of a successful project, especially in the field of project management. Interestingly, in project management, a project lead could also be part of a project team, working with teammates and being involved in maintaining relationships with clients while scheduling the timely completion of the project within the constraints imposed by the budget. For the successful completion of the project, there is a heavy reliance of project managers on tools and techniques, such as Gantt charts, dashboards, and so on (Leadership in Project Management, 2023).

In this study, project success is defined through the multidimensional approach. Turner & Zolin (2012) and Shenhar et al (2001) frameworks have been considered by evaluating three key dimensions (the triple baseline) to measure project success. The first dimension is the 'time' of completion of a successful project and whether this happened within the scheduled timeframe. 'Cost' is the second dimension, indicating that the project adheres to the defined budget, and 'quality/scope' is the third dimension, confirming that the project will be successful through the deliverables meeting the scope, objectives, and the agreed-upon quality standards. Interestingly, the fourth dimension by which to measure project success in this study is 'stakeholder satisfaction'. Müller & Jugdev (2012) stated that stakeholder satisfaction is a very important aspect in measuring the overall success of a project, especially from the perspectives of clients and team members. Hence, we considered these four dimensions to measure project success. Urbański et al. (2019) argued that "implementing risk management frameworks help in enhancing project success and ensure the effectiveness of project planning in a competitive business environment". Thus, risk management and planning are important factors that need to be taken into consideration regarding the role of leaders actively involved in project management processes. This research further expands the body of empirical knowledge regarding leadership styles, especially within the project management space. In addition to that, the analysis aims to offer a more detailed overview of these characteristics compared to more general approaches embraced by the most recent literature. Scholars and academics will benefit from this study since it will help them enhance the existing body of knowledge, while project management professionals will benefit by learning about the leadership techniques that are more effective. Conclusively, this research aims to investigate how distinct styles of leadership affect team dynamics and process success.

1. Literature review

1.1. Effectiveness

Effectiveness refers to how a process has been performed for us to achieve the desired result (Jense, 2005). It describes the level of convergence between the attained target and the goal that was set at the outset of a project. According to Jensen (2005), effectiveness enables the organisation to achieve the mission, vision, goals, and strategic objectives, which, in the business context, is a capacity and

capability being combined in the appropriate manner. Powerful leadership plays a pivotal role in a project's success. According to Urbański et al. (2019), customer satisfaction is enhanced when a project leader has good management skills and the ability to deliver a project in a timely manner within the allotted budget.

1.2. Project Management

According to Good (2024), a project leader, in a certain timeframe, should ensure that the desired results are attained by using the knowledge and skills of the diverse group members. Hence, there is a clear purpose and a strategy to accomplish the short-term unique task within the specified time limit. Project requirements are kept in mind while it is ensured that not only tools and techniques are employed, but also that the skills and knowledge of the invaluable team members are used effectively by the project leads (PMI, 2017). It is important to understand that project leadership and project management are two distinct terminologies (Kumar, 2009). Hence, it is also possible that a successful manager might not always be a successful leader. Nonetheless, with the changes in the operative dynamics, it is also likely that project managers might develop strong leadership abilities and eventually emerge as successful leaders. Thus, with the changes in environmental demands, strong leadership is recommended to project managers in order to remain competitive, if not always successful. One could argue that creative and innovative abilities could be used by successful managers to develop leadership capabilities, so they remain effective in managing team dynamics and completing projects in a timely manner.

1.3. Team Dynamics in Project Management

We define a team as a structured group of individuals that demonstrate intention towards achieving a common goal (Zlotan & Vancea, 2015). From project initiation to project closing, the group of individuals working collectively to accomplish the task is regarded as the project team. There is a chance that for certain projects, cross-functional teams are formed, which means that individuals from different departments are collaboratively working together to achieve a common objective. According to Vige (2022), project scope and timely completion of the project is also the responsibility of project teams. "Teamwork is defined as the procedure between individuals within a team collectively working to resolve an issue or provide a solution to a given task" (Schmutz et al., 2019). As per Project Central (2021), three main objectives of a project management collaboration is to ensure team effectiveness in the completion of a project, develop an environment that team members feel good about, and are confident about assigned tasks while being engaged in the timely delivery of the project in a stress free manner.

1.4. Leadership Styles and Project Management

Kruse (2013) argued that being in a top position in the organization or having a status of seniority does not reflect leadership. In fact, it has more to do with how others are inspired and guided towards achieving a common goal, so it is more about having a positive social influence on team members to get things done (Kruse, 2013). Although, different styles of leadership are exhibited by individuals in project management, below we have listed some of the most commonly appearing styles (Table 1).

Feder (2022) argued that the laissez-faire leadership style could be both constructive in inspiring creativity as well as destructive in developing a feeling of loss among employees. In other words, there is a possibility that the imagination of team members is enhanced under the laissez-faire style of leadership by providing members a platform to experiment on the grounds that experimentation could foster creativity; delegation of authority could reap good rewards.

Table 1. Leadership styles in project management.

No.	Leadership styles in project management	No.	Leadership styles in project management
1.	“Servant Leadership	4.	Agile Leadership
2.	Ethical (Transactional) Leadership	5.	Autocratic Leadership”
3.	Laissez-Faire Leadership		

Source: developed by the authors.

Conversely, Lindauer (2024) argued that instead of characterized as a leadership style, it is practically a “non-leadership” style because employees do not receive significant guidance. On the other hand, ethical managers help teammates understand that project success is possible only if group members are truthful as well as accessible to one another, express their goals and challenges, and ultimately work together to ensure how their tasks should be planned so that everyone can have access to help and support (Bhatti et al., 2021). Such an approach leads to transparency, higher engagement and commitment, and higher respectability among customers and clients. However, at times, this type of leadership could be costly because of heavy reliance on existing norms. According to Haque & Yamoah (2021), project success and team dynamics are positively affected by the ethical leadership style because of ethical behaviour, integrity, and fairness. These aspects are crucial for project success and the well-being of team dynamics. Interestingly, ethical leaders can be better described as role models that are effective in creating and fostering a culture of trust, transparency, and accountability within a team (Brown & Treviño, 2006). “This leadership style enhances team cohesion by encouraging open communication and mutual respect, which are essential for effective collaboration and conflict resolution” (Walumbwa et al., 2011). Furthermore, positive team performance is a result of ethical leadership, which leads to project success, since there is a supportive and collaborative environment where team members are motivated and feel valued, thus, exhibiting their finest efforts (Piccolo et al., 2010). In addition to that, it is highly likely that projects led by ethical leaders tend to be successfully completed because of the high levels of commitment, high morale, and engagement, among team members (Mayer et al., 2009). According to Kenton (2024), servant leadership is a leadership style and attitude that describes how somebody interacts with others—whether as a senior manager or as a coworker—to gain respect rather than authority. The system symbolizes a decentralized organization and with a servant leadership approach, leaders acquire respect from others by prioritizing the needs of those around them. This fosters a shared vision among employees, which means that when they participate in decision-making, the results are typically on target. On the other hand, few servant leaders are familiar with this kind of administration (Kenton, 2024). The implementation of this method may necessitate significant cultural adjustments and although it is not often a simple process, it can be extremely satisfying. This leadership style encourages leaders to listen actively, show empathy, and provide resources and support, which enhances team cohesion and morale (Liden et al., 2008). As team members feel valued and empowered, they are more likely to be engaged and committed to their work, leading to improved performance and higher quality project outcomes (van Dierendonck, 2011). Consequently, projects led by servant leaders are often more successful due to the high levels of trust, motivation, and collaboration within the team (Spears, 2010).

Based on Nadine (2023), an Agile leadership style is marked by the ability to remain calm under pressure, successfully adapt to uncommon events, be open to creativity, discover techniques to inspire, engage people, and keep teams on track. This style improves responsiveness at all stages, and the leader has a greater appetite for difficult and important tasks, which leads to offering teams more motivation.

Nonetheless, customers might take advantage of the leader's flexibility. Agile leadership, which focuses on adaptability, collaboration, and empowerment, significantly enhances team dynamics and project success. Agile leaders encourage flexibility and responsiveness to change, fostering an environment where team members are empowered to take initiative and make decisions (Rigby et al., 2016). This leadership style promotes a culture of continuous improvement and learning, enabling teams to quickly adapt to new challenges and evolving project requirements (Dugan, 2017). By facilitating open communication and collaboration, agile leadership helps to build strong, cohesive teams that can deliver high-quality results efficiently (Appelo, 2016). As a result, projects led by agile leaders tend to be more successful, as teams are more engaged, innovative, and capable of meeting complex and dynamic project goals (Boehm & Turner, 2005). Centralized decision-making, directive communication, and minimal input from team members are key characteristics of the autocratic leadership style. According to Bass & Bass (2008) this style is most effective in critical situations where quick decision-making and clear directions are required, especially in times of crisis, because team members need more guidance as they lack the necessary experience. However, its effectiveness largely depends on the context and the nature of the team and the project. In some cases, autocratic leadership can lead to high productivity and efficiency, especially when tasks are straightforward and require strong oversight (Harms et al., 2018). Interestingly, the correlation between autocratic leadership and project success is somewhat complex. Shafer (2010) argued that although autocratic leaders could be effective in the completion of a project in a swift manner, the impact on the creativity and morale of the team is largely negative. Gastil (1994) found that lower job satisfaction and lack of motivation are evident in teams operating under an autocratic leader because members might feel no recognition and lack of participation in the process; this then leads to high employee turnover or reduced overall team performance. Consequently, although short-term project success is likely under the autocratic leadership style because of tight control and quick decision-making, it might impact team dynamics in the long-run (Sims et al., 2009).

There are other styles that could have an impact on team dynamics and project outcomes. However, for the purpose of specificity, only selected ones are discussed in this study. Nonetheless, a brief overview of visionary leadership is also given. This is a leadership style that is characterized by forward-thinking, innovation, and imagination. Visionary leaders can see the bigger picture and find creative methods for depicting it. However, there is a significant amount of risk, and personnel may burn out if they are continuously wondering 'What if' and never finish a job (King, 2023). Another such style is participative leadership, which encourages open discussion and innovation among teammates (Zylfijaj et al., 2014). Group members are encouraged to offer their thoughts and opinions during the process of decision-making when a group-related choice must be taken (Simply Psychology, 2024). One advantage of participatory leadership is the way it fosters employee involvement and responsibility. One disadvantage of participation in leadership is that it may be time consuming. Since choices are reached through discussion and building consensus, it may take more to achieve a result than under more authoritarian approaches to leadership.

1.5. Theoretical Framework and Hypothesis

For the scope of this project, only specific styles of leadership are considered. Thus, our study underlines and compares depth of knowledge to breadth of knowledge. Figure 1 presents a summary of the theoretical framework of the paper.

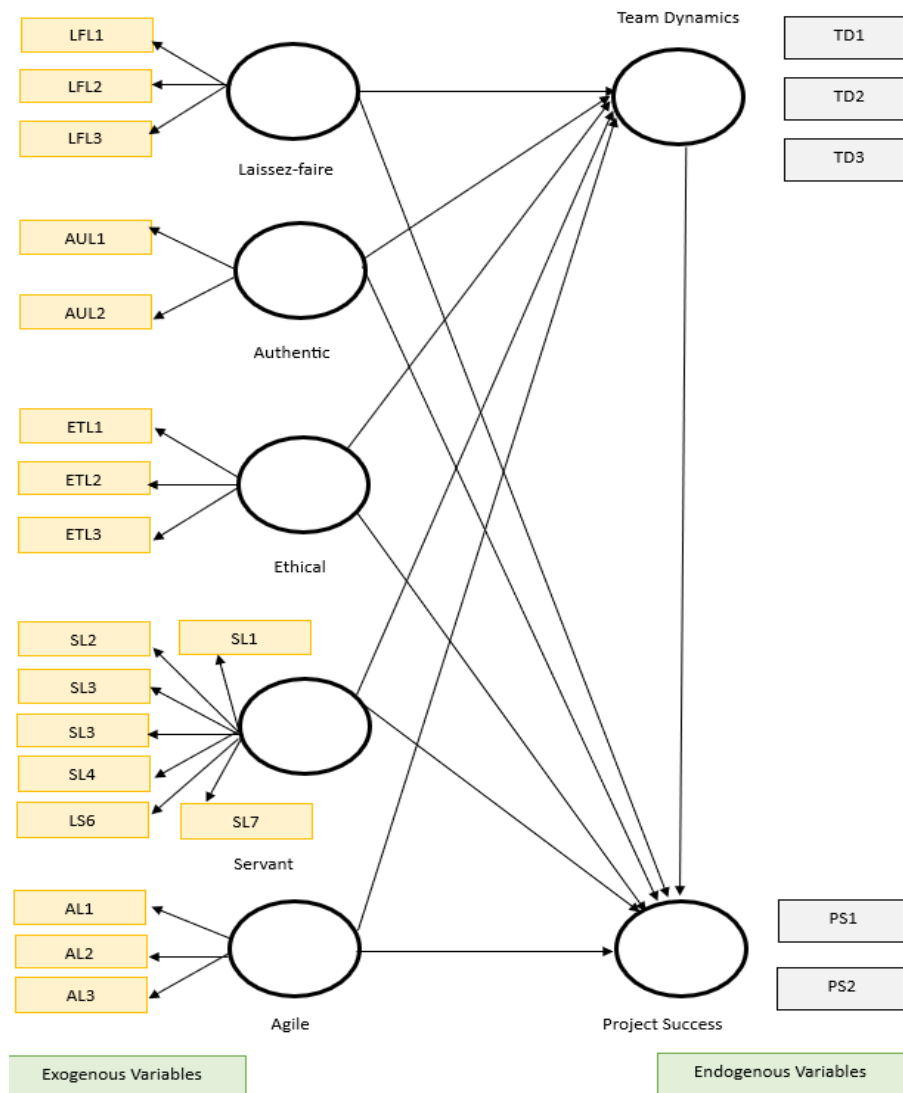


Figure 1. Theoretical framework of the paper.

Source: developed by the authors.

Based on the literature the following hypotheses are developed:

Ha: Distinct leadership styles do not significantly affect team dynamics of the project team.

Hb: Distinct leadership styles do not significantly affect project success.

Hc: There is no positive correlation between leadership style, team dynamics, and project success.

2. Methodology

Sekaran & Bougie (2013) state that the type of research determines the choice of research philosophy. The use of positivism was selected to examine the relationship between the variables employed, something that enabled us to gain mathematical objectivity. De Vaus' (2006) analytical approach is followed to ensure our research findings are supported by quantitative data. The use of cross-sectional data enables us to collect and analyze data with only one time lag (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013). Secondary data is used to gain a deeper understanding of our research goals. The cross-sectional design to compare the variables of interest used in this study, is based on the strategy employed by earlier researchers' work, namely, Haque et al. (2021), and Rahman et al. (2020). Out of

the initial 350 respondents who were surveyed, 188 fully completed questionnaires were selected for final analysis, yielding a response rate of 53.7%. We combined purposive, convenience, and networking sampling techniques to avoid overreliance on one single sampling technique. The basis for selecting respondents was based on the convenience and purposive sampling technique. Moreover, strong networking also played a pivotal role in the data collection process. The choice of the preferred industries (construction, education, Information Technology, healthcare, and manufacturing) is based on an axiological perspective, which means that the researchers focused primarily on the sectors where they had optimal chance to gather data to draw logical conclusions. The axiological stance is clearly stating that the selection of respondents from five sectors (healthcare, manufacturing, construction, IT, and education) was intentional. The prime motivation was to explore dynamics of leadership across a diverse range of industries to attain a broader understanding of how leadership style impacts businesses in varying contexts. We considered both service and production-oriented industries to ensure we had a comprehensive scope for understanding leadership impact. We hypothesized that these different sectors might show varying team dynamics and leadership effectiveness because of varying project types, leadership needs, and the overall operational environment (Northouse, 2018). The benchmark of a minimum of 35 respondents from each sector was considered, following Roscoe (1975) who suggests a minimum representation of greater or equal of 30 respondents (Table 2).

Table 2. Respondents from five different sectors in the present study.

Sectors	Number of respondents	Sectors	Number of respondents
Healthcare	37	Manufacturing	39
Education	40	Construction	36
Information Technology	36	Total	188

Source: developed by the authors based on the primary data using funnel approach.

The use of convenience sampling is based on the convenience of the respondents and in these sectors, researchers have excellent connectivity. Although this can introduce personal bias, Harman's single-factor test reduces the typical technique bias. The focus remains on dynamic sectors commonly found in all types of economies to enable more concentrated and in-depth studies. Perhaps this is due to the researcher's axiological position rather than their scientific technique.

Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) was used for the quantitative analysis. Good research emphasizes depth over breadth (Kaur & Haque, 2024; Haque, 2018); in the same spirit, we restricted our focus and only selected five sectors with at least 10 employees (study respondents were only those whose project-related job was that of the Project Manager, Team Leader, Team Member, and Project Coordinator). These individuals were specialized in projects and had experience of working in teams on different projects. The majority of participants are team members (86), team coordinators (38), team managers (35), and team leads (29) respectively (Table 3).

Table 3. Job categories of respondents.

Job Categories	Number of respondents	Job Categories	Number of respondents
Team members	86	Team managers	35
Team coordinators	38	Team Lead	29
Total			188

Source: developed by the authors using the funnel approach.

Hence, the views of team members are more evident in comparison to other job categories represented in this study. One limitation of the present study is that we have not assigned equal weights in terms of representation to all considered job categories. While managers (e.g., Project Managers and Team Leaders) may assess leadership styles from a strategic standpoint, team members might focus more on operational and interpersonal aspects (Dulewicz & Higgs, 2005). Nonetheless, the focus of this manuscript was on styles of effective leadership on the project success and thus team members' views work in favor to attain the objective of this study. In other words, team members are directly affected by the leadership style and their performance and project success might be affected more than other identified job categories. However, the lack of equal representation of all used job categories still remains a limitation of the study. There is just one time interval because the data was collected within five months reflecting the cross-sectional aspect of the study (Sekaran & Bougie, 2013).

Despite variances and growing discrepancies in the sample framework, we used Haque's (2018) approach of combining several sampling strategies to ensure fair representation; this is also an effective approach for minimizing dependency on a single technique. Furthermore, questions were asked at the appropriate time, while responders were given no time restriction. Moreover, the common technique bias was avoided using Harman's single-factor test (Hu & Bentler, 1999). As a technique, the items of all variables included in the study were confined to a single factor explaining 30% of the total variance, which was considerably below the 50% cut-off mark (Hu & Bentler, 1999). In addition to that, all respondents held an undergraduate or postgraduate degree; the questionnaire was written in English and pilot testing was conducted prior to data collection with three academics and five respondents selected at random. Finally, secondary data has also been considered with a total of 32 articles examined to understand the styles of leadership in relation to team effectiveness. Only papers published in Scopus databases were selected. Finally, the data was gathered through bibliometric analysis, which helps in confining data specificity.

3. Results

Ringle et al. (2015) stated that Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) analysis commonly uses Smart-PLS (statistical software). We used the same SEM in this study. Haque (2024) argued that it has emerged as a popular choice among researchers for its efficiency to attain accuracy in results. Leadership Styles (autocratic, laissez-faire, ethical, servant, and agile leadership) are exogenous variables (an independent reflective) while Team Dynamics and Project Success are endogenous variables is employee performance.

3.1. Measurement of Model Validity

Discriminant and convergent validity are indicators of measurement model validity attained by using PLS (SEM). Cronbach's alpha (α), composite reliability (CR), and average variance extracted (AVE) reflect construct validity. As Table 4 shows, the items are acceptable because the obtained values for α and CR are greater than the benchmark value of 0.7, while AVE is only 0.5 (Hair et al. 2014).

Table 4. Finding of the measurement model (first order, reflective).

Construct	α	CR	AVE	Construct	α	CR	AVE
Servant Leadership	0.90	0.92	0.72	Autocratic Leadership	0.75	0.78	0.36
Agile Leadership	0.88	0.90	0.64	Team Dynamics	0.92	0.94	0.81
Ethical Leadership	0.85	0.88	0.56	Project Success	0.91	0.93	0.72
Laissez-Faire Leadership	0.80	0.84	0.49				

Source: developed by the authors.

To ensure external consistency of the model via discriminant validity, Fornell-Larcker criterion and cross loading were used. “The latent variable’s AVE should be greater than the squared correlations between those considered latent variables” (Fornell and Larcker, 1981; Imran et al. 2018). The discriminant validity confirmed in this study is reflected in Table 5.

Table 5. Fornell-Larcker Criterion.

Construct	Servant Leadership	Agile Leadership	Ethical Leadership	Laissez-Faire Leadership	Autocratic Leadership	Team Dynamics	Project Success
Servant Leadership	0.85	0.75	0.65	0.45	0.20	0.85	0.80
Agile Leadership	0.75	0.80	0.70	0.50	0.30	0.75	0.70
Ethical Leadership	0.65	0.70	0.75	0.55	0.25	0.65	0.60
Laissez-Faire Leadership	0.45	0.50	0.55	0.70	0.35	0.45	0.40
Autocratic Leadership	0.20	0.30	0.25	0.35	0.60	0.20	0.10
Team Dynamics	0.85	0.75	0.65	0.45	0.20	0.90	0.90
Project Success	0.80	0.70	0.60	0.40	0.10	0.90	0.85

Source: developed by the authors.

According to Haque et al. (2021), heterotrait-monotrait ratio of correlations (HTMT) is a new criterion to measure discriminant validity. Since the values obtained is less than 1, we confirm that they are acceptable (Table 6).

Table 6. Results of HTMT.

Construct	Servant Leadership	Agile Leadership	Ethical Leadership	Laissez-Faire Leadership	Autocratic Leadership	Team Dynamics	Project Success
Servant Leadership	0.91						
Agile Leadership	0.88	0.87					
Ethical Leadership	0.77	0.83	0.77				
Laissez-Faire Leadership	0.61	0.64	0.68	0.54			
Autocratic Leadership	0.29	0.41	0.33	0.47	0.45		
Team Dynamics	0.94	0.88	0.77	0.61	0.29	0.31	
Project Success	0.94	0.88	0.77	0.61	0.29	0.94	0.20

Source: developed by the authors.

3.2. Structural Model Assessment

To draw logical conclusions, a structural model assessment is carried out and the path coefficient is used for evaluating the structural model assessment. In Table 7, the data analysis outcome is demonstrated through t-values ≥ 1.96 at the 0.05 significance level as a threshold value, and the t-value reflects a positive relationship.

In this study, R^2 suggests moderate variation in team dynamics (0.72) and (0.85) in project success by leadership styles, reflecting over 70% variation in the team dynamics due to leadership styles, while 85% variance in project success is explained through the model (Table 7). The size effect of leadership style on team dynamics is found to have a largely weak impact ($f^2 = 0.25, 0.20, 0.18, 0.15, 0.05$, and 0.30), project success: $f^2 = 0.2, 0.22, 0.19, 0.17$, and 0.03 (Table 7).

Table 7. Findings of Structural Model.

Hypotheses	B	t-value	Decision	f ²	R ²
Servant Leadership → Team Dynamics	0.85	15.67	0.000**	0.25	0.72
Agile Leadership → Team Dynamics	0.75	12.34	0.000**	0.20	
Ethical Leadership → Team Dynamics	0.65	10.01	0.000**	0.18	
Laissez-Faire Leadership → Team Dynamics	0.45	7.45	0.000**	0.15	
Autocratic Leadership → Team Dynamics	0.20	1.98	NS	0.05	
Team Dynamics → Project Success	0.09	18.92	0.000**	0.30	0.85
Servant Leadership → Project Success	0.80	16.45	0.000**	0.25	
Agile Leadership → Project Success	0.70	13.67	0.000**	0.22	
Ethical Leadership → Project Success	0.60	11.23	0.000**	0.19	
Laissez-Faire Leadership → Project Success	0.40	8.50	0.000**	0.17	
Autocratic Leadership → Project Success	0.10	1.56	NS	0.03	

Note: ***p<0.1, **p<0.05, ns= nonsignificant (p>.05) (Two Tail).

Source: developed by authors.

The results of this study show that servant leadership style, agile leadership style, ethical leadership style, and laissez-fair leadership have a statistically significant positive impact on team dynamics (SL: $\beta = 0.85$, $t = 15.76$; AGL: $\beta = 0.75$, $t = 12.34$; EL: $\beta = 0.65$, $t = 10.01$; LL: $\beta = 0.45$, $t = 7.45$; Table 5), while autocratic leadership has no significant impact on team dynamics (AL: $\beta = 0.09$, $t = 1.98$; Table 7). Interestingly, results also confirmed that team dynamics have significant impact on project success (TD: $\beta = 0.90$, $t = 18.92$; Table 7). Moreover, it is also found that servant leadership, agile leadership, ethical leadership and laissez-fair leadership have statistically significant impact on the project outcome (SL: $\beta = 0.80$, $t = 16.45$; AGL: $\beta = 0.70$, $t = 13.67$; EL: $\beta = 0.60$, $t = 11.23$; LL: $\beta = 0.40$, $t = 8.50$; Table 7). However, autocratic leadership has no significant impact on project success (AL: $\beta = 0.10$, $t = 1.56$; Table 7). Thus, we reject both hypotheses. In other words, different leadership styles affect team dynamics and project success differently. Funnel approach revealed that servant leadership is conducive to success in project work across all given considered sectors. Thus, it is confirmed from this study that the servant leadership style is significantly interlinked with project success. However, it is also noted that there is evidence regarding the variation of servant leadership in considered sectors. In terms of visibility, servant leadership is more prominent in the education sector, followed by healthcare, IT, manufacturing, and to a lesser extent in the construction sector.

Not all styles have a significant impact since the autocratic style was found to have no significant impact on team dynamics and project success. This study, to some extent, supports the work of Feder (2022) while opposes the work of Lindauer (2024) since we established the impact of laissez-faire leadership style on team dynamics and project success. In addition to that, the results of this investigation are aligned with the work of Piccolo et al. (2010) regarding positive impact of ethical leadership on team dynamics and project success. Since servant leadership has a statistically significant impact on project success as well as team dynamics, we support earlier studies who have found identical results (Liden et al., 2008; Spears, 2010; van Dierendonck, 2011; Kenton, 2024). Lastly, the findings of this study also support the work of Appelo (2016) and Boehm & Turner (2005) that project success and team dynamics are positively impacted in a statistically significant manner by the agile leadership style. It is interesting to note that employees perform better under all types of leadership apart from the autocratic leadership style. Our findings partially differ from the work of Haque et al. (2015) that the transactional (ethical leadership) style has a negative impact on the performance and team motivation and morale. The funnel approach showed that servant leadership works surprisingly

well in the education industry, while ethical leadership and agile leadership style are more effective for individuals working in the IT sector.

In addition to the first two hypotheses, the third hypothesis was to examine the strength (direction) and degree (magnitude) of the correlation between the variables of interest. The results showed that there is a statistically significant strong positive correlation between servant leadership and team dynamics as well as project success (SL→TD: = 0.000 < 0.05; $p < 0.05$; SL→PS: = 0.000 < 0.05; Table 8). Similarly, agile leadership also has a strong positive correlation with team dynamics and project success (AGL→TD: = 0.000 < 0.05; $p < 0.05$; AGL→PS: = 0.000 < 0.05; Table 8). Additionally, ethical leadership and laissez-faire leadership has a positive moderate correlation with team dynamics and project success (EL→TD: = 0.001 < 0.05; $p < 0.05$; EL→PS: = 0.001 < 0.05; LL→TD: = 0.001 < 0.05; $p < 0.05$; LL→PS: = 0.001 < 0.05; Table 8). Furthermore, there is no statistically significant correlation between autocratic leadership and team dynamics as well as project success (AL→TD: = 0.07 > 0.05; $p < 0.05$; AL→PS: = 0.01 > 0.05; Table 8).

Table 8. Correlation between variables of interest.

Correlation variable	Pearson Correlation	Sig Value	Results	Interpretation
Servant Leadership → Team Dynamics	0.91	0.000	$P < \alpha$	****
Agile Leadership → Team Dynamics	0.75	0.000	$P < \alpha$	***
Ethical Leadership → Team Dynamics	0.65	0.001	$P < \alpha$	**
Laissez-Faire Leadership → Team Dynamics	0.45	0.001	$P < \alpha$	**
Autocratic Leadership → Team Dynamics	0.20	0.07	$P > \alpha$	*
Team Dynamics → Project Success	0.90	0.000	$P < \alpha$	****
Servant Leadership → Project Success	0.80	0.000	$P < \alpha$	****
Agile Leadership → Project Success	0.87	0.000	$P < \alpha$	****
Ethical Leadership → Project Success	0.60	0.001	$P < \alpha$	**
Laissez-Faire Leadership → Project Success	0.40	0.001	$P < \alpha$	**
Autocratic Leadership → Project Success	0.10	0.10	$P > \alpha$	*

Note: NS = No Significance, ** = significant, *** = highly significant, and **** = highly statistically significant.

Source: developed by authors.

Thus, servant leadership style is the most effective, followed by the agile leadership style. Servant and agile leadership styles have the highest impact on the effectiveness of team and project success; therefore, this study supports the work of Akhaya et al. (2022) and Aftab et al. (2022). Since this study found that ethical leadership has moderate positive correlation with team dynamics and project success, the work of Gulzar and Rehman (2021) is contradicting. There is partial confirmation of the work of Nauman et al. (2022) and Wang et al. (2022) because the moderate correlation was established with the laissez-faire style. However, this study contradicts the work of Gayan (2023), Skogstad et al. (2007), and Zhang et al. (2023) by confirming moderate positive relationship between the laissez-faire style of leadership and team effectiveness. The study found a statistically significant positive correlation between the variables of interest, except from one style. To put it another way, the path coefficient base model (CI values ranging from 0.40 to 0.85, Table 9) shows that when leadership styles are combined, they have significant impact on the performance of team and project success. Thus, there is substantial evidence that we can reject hypothesis 3.

From secondary sources, it is concluded that distinct styles have both pros and cons. They impact team dynamics and success to a certain extent. Laissez-faire leadership style allows empowerment, but it could lead to unclear directions at times of crises (Skogstad et al., 2007; Gayan, 2023; Zhang et al.,

2023). On the other hand, transparency enhances among team members with the ethical style, however, it could create discrepancies among team members and stiff competition within the team because the reward-and-punishment approach can create an unbalanced team (Walumbwa et al., 2012; Gulzar & Rehman, 2021; Martin et al., 2021).

Table 9. Path Coefficient in the base line model.

Structural Path	Coefficient Path
Servant Leadership → Team Dynamics	0.85***
Agile Leadership → Team Dynamics	0.75***
Ethical Leadership → Team Dynamics	0.65***
Laissez-Faire Leadership → Team Dynamics	0.45**
Autocratic Leadership → Team Dynamics	0.20 (NS)
Team Dynamics → Project Success	0.90***
Servant Leadership → Project Success	0.80***
Agile Leadership → Project Success	0.70***
Ethical Leadership → Project Success	0.60***
Laissez-Faire Leadership → Project Success	0.40**
Autocratic Leadership → Project Success	0.10 (NS)

Note: * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Source: developed by authors.

Visionary leadership helps in creating team dynamics to perform better, but it can lead to situations of alienation (der Voet & Steijn, 2021; Liu et al., 2022). Participative leadership could impact the crisis in a negative manner, but both the well-being and the self-esteem improve (Ali et al., 2022; Wang et al., 2022). Moreover, secondary sources revealed that servant leadership has a positive impact on team effectiveness (Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2021; Nauman et al., 2022). It is important to note that while servant leadership has broad applicability, it may be most effective in certain types of projects, depending on contextual factors like the project phase and industry requirements. In certain types of sectors, servant leadership is often the key driver behind project success, especially in healthcare and education (Eva et al., 2019). However, in fast-paced industries like IT where projects are time sensitive, and high stake or construction projects where triple baseline is frequent, servant leadership might not be very effective. Lastly, team performance is affected positively by agile leadership, as it is more connected to external parties and able to resolve conflicts, however, agile women leadership is frequently found positive while agile men leadership is not always fruitful (Hoobler et al., 2018; Akhaya et al., 2022; Aftab et al., 2022). From the empirical literature at hand, we identified that Van Dierendonck (2011) argued that team cohesion and communication increase due to an environment of trust with team dynamics leading towards project success, while servant leadership fosters an environment of trust, collaboration, and empowerment. However, if not always, but in most situations, team dynamics reap positive and successful results. Moreover, Greenleaf's (1977) work revealed that stakeholders' and teams' needs are met when projects are overall successful. In the present study, we found that team performance and project successes have been statistically significant and positively affected by servant leadership, thus, the positive correlation confirms servant leadership's role and indicates that it is mostly team dynamics that contribute towards project success.

It is important to note that the original study did not analyze specifically the sectoral impact because it was not the prime focus of this study. Additionally, the sample size constraints also restricted us in the sectoral analysis because the sample size is relatively smaller in each sector, thus, it limited

our ability to commence a meaningful cross-sector analysis without reducing the statistical power and numerical significance.

Conclusion

The overall conclusion is that the most effective leadership style among all is servant leadership. This style has a statistically significant positive impact on team dynamics and project success. Nonetheless, the agile leadership style also has a strong significant correlation with team dynamics and project success. However, we also conclude that different styles affect teams differently. Consideration of the nature of the project is critical, but to a larger extent project leaders and managers should ensure agility and adaptability. Based on the quantitative statistical analysis we conducted, we conclude that there is sufficient evidence to reject all three considered hypotheses of the study. In other words, distinct styles of leadership affect team dynamics and project success markedly.

In the present study, we investigated the current practices by project leaders rather than explored the ideal practices or hypothetical scenarios promoting ideal practices. Our conclusion is aligned with the work of Eva et al. (2019) since we identified that servant leadership is highly effective in environments that require higher stakeholder engagement and strong team collaboration, especially in healthcare and education. Nonetheless, we also acknowledge that servant leadership might not always be the most effective style in fast-paced industries, where quick decision-making and top-down directives are critical factors, such as in construction and high-stakes IT projects.

One of the limitations the present research has is that it is using quantitative data and not qualitative data. Hence, mathematical objectivity is attained, and results are numerically expressed, but in-depth analysis is missing. The hidden embedded truth (useful truth) is missing while factual truth has been attained. Moreover, this research is conducted in a limited timeframe therefore a longitudinal design is not used. In other words, by using cross-section analysis we focus on a specific point in time rather than different time intervals.

One of the limitations of this study is that project managers and project leaders might assess the leadership style from a strategic dimension (standpoint) while team members and team coordinators might focus higher on the interpersonal and operational perspective. Another limitation of the study is the omission of a sectoral analysis because we did not mainly focus on sectors in this study. Since, the sample size was small for each sector there was a sample constraint that limited us in conducting a meaningful cross-sector analysis. Perhaps, the cross-section analysis would have reduced the statistical power and numerical significance to a certain extent, though, we did not want to lose mathematical objectivity.

While present study provides invaluable insight by exploring the impact of various leadership styles on team dynamics and project success, yet the study offers a broader and general view. In other words, the project related specific factors such as nature, required timeframe, implementation phase, and the project implementation context are not considered that could impact the leadership styles' effectiveness. This is the limitation of the study that we focused on generalizability component to be in confined scope independent of project-specific characteristics, however, it serves foundation for the future studies.

Future researchers could consider the use of qualitative analysis to gain a more in-depth understanding of these matters. They could also consider in-depth interviews and panel discussions to ensure there is more concrete evidence regarding the variations in the variables of interest. Another

suggestion is to use advanced research instruments such as interviews and focus groups with experts from the field to gain more comprehensive information. In other words, they could consider the use of expert panels to gain more field related (i.e., project management) practical information. Future studies shall consider this limitation and use it as a foundation for their studies to have a comparison between strategic dimension (managers and leaders) and interpersonal and operational dimension (coordinators and members). Moreover, we suggest that future studies shall consider cross-section analysis to gain more in-depth insights about the specific topic. In other words, future research shall address the differential impacts of leadership styles across various sectors through larger sector-specific samples. In addition to that, the future studies shall consider the inclusion of determinants of leadership styles such as project's nature, implementation phase, required timeframe, and context of project implementation. These project related factors shall be considered because this could impact the effectiveness of the leadership styles. Future studies shall take into consideration project-specific characteristics to understand the impact of varying leadership styles on the team dynamics and project success in more depth. By incorporating this suggestion, future studies would be adding additional practical applicability layer to present research on leadership styles.

In the light of present findings, one of the most important recommendations for organizations dealing with distinct styles of projects is that they should consider hiring a professional mentor or a professional coach, who could work along with teams to guide them so that their effectiveness and motivation leads to desired project results. This would also lead to having closer interactions and face-to-face sessions, thus, helping the team share their concerns and groom their leadership skills to take on future projects. An effective listening mechanism should also be developed to ensure that all members feel that they are being heard, which in turn, will improve their sense of belongingness. Project success heavily relies on the collaborative approach. Once employees feel that they are valued, and their concerns are addressed they are willing to collaborate further. Moreover, organizations should ensure that goals and targets are continuously reminded because every project is different, and a new approach might be necessary. A clear role definition is also pivotal for project success, since employees should be regularly reminded about their responsibilities, and there should be a fair system in place in terms of accountability. Perhaps, a periodic assessment of the progress could help teams in measuring their performance and reflect on ways to improve the future course of actions. There should be a proper strategic approach to develop role models within the team, who exhibit excellence in their approach and behavior. This will further make team members honest, responsible, and ensure good work ethic that would lead to project success.

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