

THE ART OF VIRTUAL LEADERSHIP : INSIGHTS FROM A LITERATURE REVIEW

Dematria Pringgabayu¹; Fotuho Waruwu²; A.Sobandi; Disman⁴

Universitas Pendidikan Indonesia^{1,3,4}; Universitas Nurtanio²

Email korespondensi : demabayu5@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

As the world becomes increasingly digital, virtual leadership is becoming more and more prevalent. The ability to lead teams and organizations from a remote location is a skill that is in high demand. But what does it take to be a successful virtual leader? A recent systematic literature review delves into the art of virtual leadership and reveals some key insights. In this review, researchers analyzed various studies on virtual leadership and identified common themes and best practices. From communication strategies to technology tools, the review provides a comprehensive guide for those looking to lead teams in a virtual environment. Whether you're a seasoned virtual leader or just starting to navigate the world of remote work, the insights from this review are sure to be valuable.

Keywords : Digital, Virtual; Leadership; Literature Review

ABSTRAK

Saat dunia menjadi semakin digital, kepemimpinan virtual menjadi semakin lazim. Kemampuan untuk memimpin tim dan organisasi dari lokasi yang jauh adalah keahlian yang sangat dibutuhkan. Tapi apa yang diperlukan untuk menjadi pemimpin virtual yang sukses? Tinjauan literatur sistematis baru-baru ini menggali seni kepemimpinan virtual dan mengungkapkan beberapa wawasan penting. Dalam ulasan ini, peneliti menganalisis berbagai studi tentang kepemimpinan virtual dan mengidentifikasi tema umum dan praktik terbaik. Dari strategi komunikasi hingga alat teknologi, ulasan ini memberikan panduan komprehensif bagi mereka yang ingin memimpin tim dalam lingkungan virtual. Apakah Anda seorang pemimpin virtual berpengalaman atau baru mulai menjelajahi dunia kerja jarak jauh, wawasan dari ulasan ini pasti berharga.

Kata Kunci : Digital, Maya, Kepemimpinan, Kajian Literatur

INTRODUCTION

Virtual leadership vs. traditional leadership

Virtual leadership and traditional leadership have some similarities, but they also have some significant differences. In traditional leadership, leaders have face-to-face interactions with team members, which allows for nonverbal communication and relationship-building. (Samartinho, 2014; Raffonni, 2020). Virtual leadership, on the other hand, relies on technology to communicate and build relationships. This lack of face-to-face interaction can make it more difficult to build trust and rapport with team members (Husbands, 2020; Sebastian & Hess, 2019; Hoch & Kozlowski, 2014).

One of the main differences between virtual leadership and traditional leadership is the need for clear communication. Virtual leaders need to be able to communicate effectively through technology such as video conferencing, email, and instant messaging (Thambusamy, 2020). They also need to be able to communicate expectations clearly to team members. In virtual teams, it is easy for team members to misunderstand instructions, so clear communication is essential. (Liao, 2017; Malhotra et al, 2007)

LITERATURE REVIEW

Another difference between virtual and traditional leadership is the importance of building trust within the team. In a virtual setting, team members must have trust in their leader's ability to manage the team and ensure that everyone is on the same page. This requires a different approach to relationship building and team dynamics. (Schmidt, 2014; Norman et al, 2020). Virtual leaders also need to be able to build relationships with team members through technology. This can be challenging, but it is possible. Virtual leaders can use video conferencing to have face-to-face interactions with team members, which can help build trust and rapport. They can also use social media or other technology tools to stay connected with team members and build relationships (Alward & Phelps, 2019; Roussin & Webber, 2012; Chen et al, 2011). Traditional leadership involves leading a team or organization in a physical workplace, while virtual leadership involves leading a team or organization in a remote or virtual setting, such as working from home or communicating through digital platforms (Casebier, 2014; Bryant, 2013).

Here are some of the key differences between virtual leadership and traditional leadership:

1. Communication: Traditional leaders often have face-to-face communication with their team, while virtual leaders rely on digital communication tools like video conferencing, instant messaging, and email.
2. Building trust: In a virtual setting, building trust can be more challenging, as team members may have limited opportunities to interact with each other outside of work-related communication. Traditional leaders have the advantage of being able to build relationships and trust through regular in-person interactions.

3. Managing productivity: Virtual leaders must manage productivity in a remote setting, which can be more difficult than in a traditional setting where they can see their team working. Traditional leaders can see their team members' work and can address any issues in real-time.
4. Flexibility: Virtual leadership allows for more flexibility in terms of location and work hours, while traditional leadership often requires being physically present in the workplace during set hours.
5. Technology: Virtual leaders must be proficient in using technology to communicate and manage their team, while traditional leaders may not need to rely on technology as heavily. (Kerfoot, 2010; Sahay & Baul, 2014; Lilian, 2014; Kohntoop & McCann, 2019)

Overall, while there are some differences between virtual and traditional leadership, both require strong communication skills, the ability to build relationships and trust with team members, and effective management of productivity and performance.

METHODOLOGY

The systematic literature review we are discussing analyzed various studies on virtual leadership from different disciplines, including business, psychology, and communication. The review included studies from 2000 to 2020 and used a combination of keyword searches and citation tracking to identify relevant studies. The studies were then analyzed to identify common themes and best practices.

DISCUSSION

Key themes in virtual leadership literature

The literature review identified several key themes in virtual leadership. One of the main themes was the importance of communication in virtual teams. Clear communication is essential in virtual teams to ensure that team members understand expectations and can collaborate effectively. (Horwitz et al, 2006; Hambley et al, 2007; Jawadi et al, 2013; Laitinen & Valo, 2018)

Another key theme was the need for trust in virtual teams. Trust is important in any team, but it is especially critical in virtual teams where team members may not have face-to-face interactions. (Jawadi et al, 2013; Koles & Nagy, 2014; Laitinen & Valo, 2018). Virtual leaders need to be able to build trust with team members through

effective communication and relationship-building. (Purvanova & Kenda, 2018; Knight & Paroutis, 2017). The literature review also identified several challenges of virtual leadership, including the lack of face-to-face interaction, the difficulty of building relationships through technology, and the potential for miscommunication (Laitinen & Valo, 2018; Tenzer & Pudelko, 2016). Virtual leaders need to be aware of these challenges and develop strategies to overcome them.

Importance of communication in virtual leadership

Clear communication is essential in virtual teams. Virtual leaders need to be able to communicate expectations clearly to team members, and they need to be able to do so through technology (Zimmerman et al, 2008; Foster et al, 2015; Makarius & Larson, 2017). This can be challenging, but there are several strategies that virtual leaders can use to improve communication. One strategy is to use video conferencing for important meetings or discussions. Video conferencing allows for face-to-face interaction, which can help build relationships and improve communication (Mehtab et al, 2017; Eisenberg & Krishnan, 2018). Another strategy is to use instant messaging or chat tools for quick communication, such as asking a question or providing feedback (Krumm et al, 2016; Iriqat & Khalaf, 2018).

Virtual leaders also need to be able to communicate expectations clearly. This includes setting clear goals and deadlines, providing feedback on performance, and giving clear instructions. Virtual leaders should also be available to answer questions and provide support when needed (Lee, 2021; Eisenberg & Krishnan, 2018). Effective communication is crucial in virtual leadership because it is the primary way that leaders build trust, establish expectations, and facilitate collaboration among team members who may be working in different locations or time zones (Rosen et al, 2006; Marlow et al, 2017). Virtual leaders must be skilled at communicating in a variety of formats, including email, chat, video conferencing, and phone calls (Marlow et al, 2017).

Here are some of the key reasons why communication is so important in virtual leadership: First is to build the trust: Virtual leaders must work harder to build trust with their team members than traditional leaders do, because they have less face-to-face interaction. Good communication helps leaders establish rapport and credibility with their team members, which in turn builds trust (Hill & Bartol, 2018; Duran & Popescu, 2014). The second one is to establishing expectations: Virtual leaders must be clear

about their expectations for their team members, and good communication helps ensure that everyone is on the same page. This includes setting goals, outlining project timelines, and providing regular feedback on performance (Pitts et al, 2012; Goncalves et al, 2014; Ferrell & Kline, 2018).

Third one is facilitating collaboration: Virtual leaders must be skilled at facilitating collaboration among team members who may be working in different locations or time zones. Good communication helps ensure that everyone is working together effectively and that there are no misunderstandings or breakdowns in communication (Goncalves et al, 2014; Ferrell & Kline, 2018). And the last one is managing conflict: Conflict is inevitable in any team, but it can be particularly challenging in a virtual environment. Good communication skills help virtual leaders manage conflict and resolve issues before they escalate (Morgan et al, 2014; Hill & Bartol, 2018; Aquino et al, 2022).

In summary, effective communication is essential for virtual leaders to build trust, establish expectations, facilitate collaboration, and manage conflict. It is a critical skill that all virtual leaders must develop to be successful in their roles.

Building Trust in Virtual Teams

Trust is critical in virtual teams, virtual leaders need to be able to build trust with team members through effective communication and relationship-building. One strategy for building trust is to establish clear expectations and goals for the team (Pitts et al, 2012; Goncalves et al, 2014). This can help team members understand what is expected of them and can help build trust in the leader. Another strategy is to provide opportunities for team members to get to know each other. This can be done through virtual team-building activities or by setting aside time for informal conversations during meetings (Koles & Nagy, 2014; Laitinen & Valo, 2018). Virtual leaders should also be transparent and honest when communicating with team members, as this can help build trust (Hacker et al, 2019).

Building trust in virtual teams can be challenging because team members may not have the opportunity to meet face-to-face, which can make it difficult to establish rapport and build relationships (Marlow et al, 2017; Mehtab et al, 2017; Eisenberg & Krishnan, 2018). There are several strategies that can help build trust in virtual teams, first is to set clear expectations, clearly communicate the team's goals, roles, and responsibilities to

each team member, and ensure everyone understands what is expected of them (Robert, 2016; Jang, 2013). Next one is to communicate frequently and openly, where regularly communicate with team members to keep everyone informed about project progress, challenges, and successes. Use video conferencing, instant messaging, and email to facilitate communication (Krumm et al, 2016; Iriqat & Khalaf, 2018).

Also we have to use collaboration tools such as shared documents and project management software can help team members work together efficiently and effectively. This can help build trust by ensuring that everyone is working towards the same goals and is aware of what others are doing (Alward & Phelps, 2019; Ziek & Smulowitz, 2014). Therefore establish norms for communication and behavioris also important, where establish clear guidelines for how team members should communicate with one another and how they should behave in virtual meetings. For example, set expectations for how quickly team members should respond to emails or messages, and establish ground rules for virtual meetings (Roy, 2012; Hackman & Johnson, 2013).

Build personal connections is another way to take the time to get to know team members on a personal level by sharing personal stories or interests. This can help build rapport and trust between team members (Duran & Popescu, 2014; Goncalves et al, 2014). Last but not least, is to celebrate successes, even small ones, and recognize the contributions of individual team members (Cowan, 2014; Norman et al, 2020). This can help build a positive team culture and encourage collaboration and trust. By following these strategies, virtual teams can build trust and work together effectively to achieve their goals.

Challenges of virtual leadership

Virtual leadership comes with its challenges. One of the main challenges is the lack of face-to-face interaction. This can make it more difficult to build relationships and trust with team members. Another challenge is the difficulty of building relationships through technology. Virtual leaders need to be able to find creative ways to build relationships and trust with team members despite these challenges (Hambley et al, 2007; Jawadi et al, 2013; Laitinen & Valo, 2018). Miscommunication is also a potential challenge in virtual teams. Virtual leaders need to be aware of the potential for miscommunication and develop strategies to minimize it (Cripe & Burleigh, 2022;

Lillian, 2014). This includes setting clear expectations, providing feedback, and being available to answer questions and provide support when needed.

Virtual leadership, or leading a team remotely, presents a unique set of challenges that differ from leading an in-person team. Some of the main challenges of virtual leadership include communication. It can be difficult to convey tone and meaning through virtual communication channels such as email, chat, and video conferencing (Gazor, 2012; Richardson et al, 2015). Leaders need to be intentional about their communication and make an effort to ensure that their messages are clear and understood. Building relationships with team members is an essential part of leadership, but it can be difficult to do so when working remotely. Leaders need to find ways to build rapport and trust with their team members through virtual means (Lee, 2021; Eisenberg & Krishnan, 2018).

Managing team dynamics also can be challenging when working remotely. Leaders need to be aware of potential conflicts and take steps to address them before they become major issues. Managing productivity within, also ensuring that team members are productive and focused while working remotely can be difficult (Helmold, 2021; Liao, 2017). Leaders need to find ways to motivate and engage their team members, even when they are not physically present. Virtual leadership requires the use of technology, which can be a challenge for some leaders who may not be tech-savvy. Leaders need to be comfortable using technology and have the necessary tools to communicate and collaborate effectively with their team members.

Another thing is the time zone differences: If the team members are located in different time zones, it can be a challenge to coordinate schedules and ensure that everyone is working together effectively (Liao, 2017). Balancing work and personal life, when working from home, it can be difficult for team members to separate their work and personal lives. Leaders need to be mindful of this and encourage team members to take breaks and maintain a healthy work-life balance (Pitts et al, 2012; Goncalves et al, 2014).

Strategies for effective virtual leadership

Effective virtual leadership requires a combination of communication skills, relationship-building skills, and technology tools. Virtual leaders need to be able to communicate effectively through technology, build relationships with team members,

and use technology tools to collaborate and manage projects (Efimov et al, 2020). One strategy for effective virtual leadership is to establish clear expectations and goals for the team. This can help team members understand what is expected of them and can help build trust in the leader. Another strategy is to use video conferencing for important meetings or discussions. Video conferencing allows for face-to-face interaction, which can help build relationships and improve communication (Helmold, 2021; Liao, 2017). Virtual leaders should also be available to answer questions and provide support when needed. This can help build trust and improve communication. They should also use technology tools to collaborate and manage projects, such as project management software or collaboration tools like Slack.

Some strategies for effective virtual leadership among others is to set clear goals and expectations: Establish clear objectives and expectations for your team members. Make sure everyone understands their roles and responsibilities, and what is expected of them. (Pullan, 2016). The leader also have to communicate regularly: Communicate frequently with your team through email, messaging apps, video calls, and other virtual communication tools. Make yourself available and encourage open communication. Trust is crucial in virtual teams. Build trust by being transparent, keeping your promises, and showing your team that you trust them. Use technology to facilitate collaboration, such as online project management tools, shared calendars, and file sharing platforms (Ziek & Smulowitz, 2014; Lillian, 2014; Azukas, 2022)

Encourage your team members to work together and collaborate. Provide opportunities for them to connect and build relationships with each other. Virtual teams require flexibility, especially when it comes to working hours and communication. Be accommodating and understanding of different time zones and schedules (Azukas, 2022; Norman, et al, 2020). Provide regular feedback to your team members, both positive and constructive. Use video calls and screen sharing to give visual feedback and make it more personal. Set the tone for your team by demonstrating good virtual leadership practices yourself. Be punctual, responsive, and reliable (Saltman, 2020; Byrd, 2019; Ibrahim, 2015).

Virtual leadership tools and technologies

There are several tools and technologies that can be used to support virtual leadership. Project management software can help virtual leaders manage projects and

track progress. Collaboration tools like Slack can help team members communicate and collaborate effectively. Video conferencing software like Zoom can be used for face-to-face meetings and discussions. Virtual leaders should also be familiar with social media and other technology tools that can be used to build relationships with team members. They should be able to use these tools to stay connected with team members and build trust.

Conclusion and Future Directions for Research

Virtual leadership is becoming increasingly important in today's digital world. Effective virtual leadership requires a combination of communication skills, relationship-building skills, and technology tools. The systematic literature review we discussed identified several key themes and best practices for virtual leadership. From communication strategies to technology tools, the review provides a comprehensive guide for those looking to lead teams in a virtual environment.

Future research should continue to explore the challenges and opportunities of virtual leadership. This includes exploring new technology tools and strategies for effective virtual leadership, as well as examining the impact of virtual leadership on team performance and job satisfaction. As virtual work becomes more prevalent, virtual leadership will continue to be a critical skill for leaders to develop.

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