

Navigating Modern Dynamics: Exploring Adaptive Leadership and Evolving Management Styles in Contemporary Human Resource Management

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Article History	Abstract
Original Research Article	<p><i>This paper delves into the significance of adaptive leadership and evolving management styles in today's business environment, focusing on human resource management (HRM). It underscores their critical role in navigating the swiftly changing technological landscape and employee needs. Adaptive leadership is crucial for fostering innovation, cultivating resilient teams, and guiding organizations through turbulent periods, as exemplified by responses to challenges like the COVID-19 pandemic. Real-world examples illustrate how adaptive leaders effectively managed transitions to remote work, upheld high employee morale, and ensured business continuity during such crises. The evolution of management styles from autocratic to participatory and inclusive approaches is showcased through case studies of industry leaders such as Microsoft, Accenture, and Toyota. These transformations positively influence talent acquisition, retention, and organizational culture. Furthermore, the paper examines the legal ramifications of adaptive leadership and evolving management styles, particularly within HRM contexts. Organizations like IBM faced challenges in adhering to legal frameworks while implementing remote work policies, highlighting the importance of balancing business continuity with ethical and legal standards. Key findings include the transformative impact of adaptive leadership on organizational resilience and the importance of evolving management styles in fostering innovation and employee satisfaction. The paper concludes by suggesting future research directions, such as exploring the role of adaptive leadership in post-pandemic employee well-being and the cultural implications of changing managerial styles. Overall, the paper underscores the critical role of adaptive leadership and evolving management styles in navigating modern HRM challenges and ensuring organizational success amidst rapid change and uncertainty.</i></p> <p>Keywords: - Management, Human Resources Management (HRM), Leadership, Evolving Management Styles, Adaptive Leadership, Contemporary HRM.</p>
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<p>Copyright © 2026 The Author(s): This is an open-access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC) which permits unrestricted use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium for non-commercial use provided the original author and source are credited.</p> <p>Citation: ALI SOYLU; AMBER C. WOONMAVOVAH. (2026). Navigating Modern Dynamics: Exploring Adaptive Leadership and Evolving Management Styles in Contemporary Human Resource Management. UKR Journal of Economics, Business and Management (UKRJEBM), Volume 2(1), 137-145.</p>	

1. Introduction

The modern business landscape is a rapidly evolving environment, influenced by technological advancements and changing employee expectations. In this context, adaptive leadership and evolving management styles have become essential components of human resource management (HRM) [1]. This paper explores the significance of these concepts and their implications for navigating the complexities of today's workplace. Central to this exploration is adaptive leadership, a crucial paradigm for contemporary organizations. Adaptive leaders excel in managing change, fostering innovation, building

resilient teams, and guiding their organizations through challenging times [2]. During the COVID-19 pandemic, adaptive leadership proved vital as organizations faced unprecedented disruptions.

Organizations led by adaptive leaders demonstrated remarkable resilience during the pandemic. These leaders were instrumental in facilitating the transition to remote work, maintaining high employee morale amid uncertainty, and implementing strategies for business continuity [3]. By examining real-world examples of leaders who successfully navigated crises, this paper highlights the practical

necessity of adaptive leadership in today's business environment.

Additionally, the paper addresses the evolution of management styles in HRM. Traditional autocratic management styles are increasingly being replaced by more participatory and inclusive approaches. Organizations that embrace modern management styles and foster positive organizational cultures are leading in talent acquisition, retention, and development. This paper will present specific examples of evolved management styles, illustrating how these changes have led to tangible benefits, creating workplaces that attract and retain top talent.

Furthermore, the intersection of adaptive leadership with evolving management styles will be examined through the lens of compliance and ethical considerations. The paper will explore how organizations have navigated legal frameworks during crises, highlighting the balance between organizational flexibility and adherence to legal standards. The COVID-19 pandemic serves as a poignant backdrop for discussing these issues, emphasizing the ethical imperatives of HRM practices in the face of unprecedented challenges.

In summary, this introduction sets the stage for a thorough investigation of adaptive leadership and shifting management styles in HRM. The following sections will provide detailed insights based on real-world experiences and research findings, unveiling the complexities of these critical concepts and their impact on the future of human resource management.

2. Adaptive Leadership in HRM

2.1 Key Aspects of Adaptive Leadership

This section delves deep into the practical insights to apply adaptive leadership - an important aspect of navigating contemporary organizations' discerning landscape. Adaptive leaders embody it as the effective response to change, innovation, and building resilience against challenging conditions [4]. Indeed, the tangible impact of adaptive leadership is most evident in real-world challenges, as reflected by the powerful role adaptive leadership has played during COVID-19 [5]. Adaptive leadership is a very important and sensitive role that provides concrete proof that examines organizations confronted with these unprecedented challenges during this pandemic [6]. For instance, when the requirement of remote working struck due to the pandemic, the leaders who adopted adaptive strategies were able to lead from the front [7]. These leaders demonstrated a smooth transition into remote work and had an insight into the relevancy of maintaining employee morale. Real-world examples include tech companies where adaptive leaders fostered a sense of connection, purpose, and support required to

sustain the well-being of their teams during a period marked by uncertainty and isolation.

Adaptive leaders also ensure business continuity because it allows them to pivot fast and make decisions under conditions of uncertainty, allowing organizations to adjust their strategies, operations, and offerings according to the changes in market dynamics. Therefore, this adaptability became a strategic advantage and an imperative for survival [8]. For example, in the retail business, adaptive leaders have used innovative solutions to meet the new market demand that can redefine models of performance within an organization according to the different needs of customers [9]. The success stories of the organizations that have effectively navigated through the challenges of the pandemic bring out the significant importance of adaptive leadership. Histories proved that those leaders adapted adaptive strategies into their visions and practices and were symbols of stability and resilience in uncertain situations [10]. In a global crisis that tested the mettle of leaders with unprecedented disruptions, these crafted and executed breakthrough innovation solutions, reimagined new business models, and supported employees to make it through challenging times [11]. The leaders' experiences amidst the COVID-19 pandemic provide a poignant backdrop depicting adaptive leadership as a theoretical leadership style and transforming it into an action force in the modern organizational landscape.

Exploration of these real-world examples provides meaningful insights into the specific practices and approaches characteristic of adaptive leadership. It goes beyond the theoretical framework, giving a practical understanding of how adaptive leaders respond to changes, foster innovations, and develop resilient teams to face complex challenges [12]. Furthermore, as we move along within the subject, subsequent sections will further deconstruct adaptive leadership more comprehensively and have greater clarity to enhance its link to human resources management, along with areas in which it runs parallel with legal issues [13]. Leaders' experiences during the COVID-19 pandemic continue to stand as a powerful illustration of the tangible impact of adaptive leadership as leaders navigate an unprecedented challenge and steer organizations toward resilience and success.

2.2 Evolving Management Styles

Concurrently explored with adaptive leadership, the evolution of management styles prominent within human resource management (HRM) forms a salient and practical point. Traditional authoritative management manners slowly lead to more collaborative and inclusive styles that create a tweak across various organizational dynamics [14]. Real examples from real firms describe how they move from traditional authoritarian structures to more

collaborative approaches as they provide the mechanisms for this transformation. Consider, for instance, the paradigm shifts at Microsoft, a technology giant that historically operated with decision-making centralized up and down the hierarchy [15]. Realizing what agility and innovation called for, Microsoft was willingly receptive to a more participatory management style. This transformation enabled even lower-level employees to participate in the decision-making processes, and a new culture developed where ideas were shared and freely expressed [16]. Hierarchical barriers were broken down, and working across functions became paramount for the organization. This shift was not only able to attract the top talent who desired an opportunity to be part of a workplace that valued their input but also affected employee retention [15]. By establishing an environment where employees felt that they had been heard and that they mattered, Microsoft lowered the rates at which employees left the organization and ensured that it retained its top talent. In this regard, it follows the general trend in modern HRM, which has witnessed employees see a personal value in workplaces that stress collaborative effort, inclusion, and continuous learning.

Accenture, for example, replaced traditional annual performance reviews with continuous feedback mechanisms and personalized development plans, all showing a commitment to modern management styles. This approach enabled the employees to oversee their professional growth, thus sustaining an adaptive workforce with the requisite aptitudes needed in a changing business environment [17]. The shift from authoritative to collaborative management styles is further demonstrated as significant by the change at Toyota, a company with the old command and control manufacturing approach [18]. Realizing the necessity of added agility and increased employee engagement, Toyota implemented a management style more reflective of inclusiveness. The shift led to the employees becoming more satisfied with their work and considering it as if it were their own company [18]. The culture that emphasized inclusivity and collaboration improved the company's day-to-day running and created an environment where employees would feel like they belonged.

These tangible effects of such modern management styles transcend organizational boundaries, contributing to the bigger narrative for HRM as a strategic driver of organizational success. Microsoft, Accenture, and Toyota are empirical examples of how shifting from traditional authoritative approaches to the newer collaborative and inclusive styles positively impacts talent acquisition, retention, development, and overall organizational culture [19]. As the business landscape continues to evolve, these

modern management paradigms embraced by such industry leaders shall position organizations to thrive within the competitive and dynamic world of contemporary human resource management practices.

2.3 Legal Implications of Adaptive Leadership and New Management Styles

From this perspective, analysis of the relationship between adaptive leadership and changing management styles in these legal contexts as they apply to human resource management (HRM) reveals a real encounter between organizational practice, change, and the demands of staying within the law and ethical standards [20]. The COVID-19 pandemic is a crucible, evaluating how organizations wrestle with these challenges. For the first time, organizations under the pandemic were subjected to pressures previously unencountered that compelled the critical intersection of adaptive leadership, evolving management styles, and legal compliance [21]. One of the examples is an international corporation - IBM, which rapidly implemented remote work policies against background coronavirus [22]. As adaptive leadership was critical to orchestrating such a quick transition, legal considerations came to the forefront regarding data privacy protection and labor and occupational health and safety laws.

Striking a delicate balance to preserve business continuity and demonstrating ethical standards was necessary for organizations like IBM to navigate the legal landscape. This called for a careful planning process toward protection against employee rights infringement and their privacy and general welfare [23]. For instance, the implementation of remote work brought fears of being monitored regarding workers' productivity and that it can violate privacy rights. To do this, adaptive leaders in IBM had to instill transparent communication channels such that employees knew and consented to be monitored, an example of ethical leadership meeting legal standards. The pandemic similarly accentuated that organizations must re-evaluate and modify HRM practices in consonance with changing legal setups [23]. Governments applied new laws targeting remote working patterns in places like the European Union. Therefore, organizations like IBM had to adjust their policies on a timely basis as the same dictates of law proved that the law-dictated HRM practices are not only adaptive but should be legally correct [24]. For example, the virtual onboarding of new employees was started instantly by IBM, which gave rise to a query concerning data safety and confidentiality [23]. There was an interplay between adaptive leadership and quick response to legal compliance requirements, as evidenced by the speed with which these organizations moved to hone their processes to create a

seamless onboarding process that respected privacy regulations.

3 Discussions

This section explores insights and findings from examining adaptive leadership and evolving management styles within human resource management (HRM). Through analyzing real-life case studies of leading companies, we gain a deeper understanding of how these concepts are practically applied, the challenges faced, and the strategies used during times of change [25]. For instance, Microsoft's experience in scaling operations highlighted the crucial role of adaptive leadership in navigating workforce changes and emerging technologies [15]. Under its CEO, Microsoft demonstrated significant innovation by decentralizing decision-making and allowing teams to experiment with new ideas. This approach enhanced the company's agility, helping it respond to market changes and attract top talent seeking a dynamic work environment.

The transformation of a multinational corporation illustrates how management styles can shift. Traditionally hierarchical, the company needed to overhaul its working methods. As learning and experimentation progressed, more collaborative approaches emerged, facilitated by the HR department through the creation of cross-functional teams and enhanced communication [10]. In another example, HR professionals addressed legal frameworks by implementing flexible work arrangements and prioritizing employee safety [22]. Successfully navigating these legal complexities demonstrated how adaptive leadership can align strategic decisions with legal and ethical considerations.

In financial institutions, evolving management styles have positively influenced talent development. The shift from rigid performance reviews to continuous feedback mechanisms and personalized development plans has empowered employees to take control of their growth, ensuring the organization remains competitive with a flexible and skilled workforce [4]. These case studies highlight that adaptive leadership is vital for fostering resilience and innovation within organizations. By embracing collaborative and inclusive management approaches, companies create positive organizational cultures that attract top talent [6]. Additionally, navigating legal implications underscores the importance of ethical maneuvering within legal frameworks [26]. The key takeaway is the transformative impact of these concepts on organizational dynamics, talent management, and compliance with legal restrictions.

4 Implications of Findings

4.1 Adaptive Leadership and Organizational Resilience

The adaptive leadership provisions emerge as an important theme in the contemporary concurrent events and the

volatile and uncertain nature of modern organizations - especially underscored by unprecedented events such as COVID-19. The findings not only highlight but go on to further accentuate the role played by adaptive leadership in enhancing organizational resilience. A leader's ability to maneuver adeptly through challenges comes to the forefront, and this is exactly the role encapsulated under adaptive leadership. Leaders who adopted adaptive strategies during the pandemic showcased an incredible ability to respond and flourish amidst change. Real-life examples of the effect of adaptive leadership are vividly depicted through the different sectors. These leaders demonstrated the right kind of agility not only to adapt quickly as situations changed but also had the foresight on how to foster creativity in their organizations. It is not so much theoretical but practical power of adaptive leadership because it has armed organizations with the necessary tools and mindset to navigate a stormy sea of uncertainties.

In addition, the findings indicate that adaptive leadership does not offer a one-size-fits-all but gives room for adaptation to balance organization-specific challenges. This adaptability differentiates effective leaders from ineffective ones during crises, gliding them up and down the difficulties and continuing towards organizational success. However, adaptive leadership is not industry-relevant but across industries, as has been observed in the case of tech companies, where leadership played a critical part in the transition to remote work and dealing with uncertainties and isolation during the pandemic while keeping the employees engaged and connected. The results greatly reaffirm that adaptive leadership is not just a buzzword but an integral and concrete force in organizational success. Leadership is the compass that guides us at untraveled territories so that they will not only be able to respond well in a crisis but also learn about how they lead their teams toward resilience and sustained excellence. The experiences from these real-life examples strengthen our consciousness of the lasting relevance of adaptive leadership in coping with the complexities of environmental conditions characterizing contemporary organizational environments.

4.2 Management Styles and Organizational Success

The evolution of management styles is crucial for organizational success, reflecting a shift from traditional authoritative methods to more balanced, collaborative, and inclusive approaches. This transformation is more than a trend; it is a practical necessity, as demonstrated by leading industry examples. For instance, Microsoft, known for its centralized decision-making, recognized the need for agility and innovation, which led to the adoption of a more open, participative management style. This shift empowered employees at all levels to engage in decision-

making processes, dismantling hierarchical barriers and fostering cross-functional collaboration. Such a transformation not only attracted top talent seeking a workplace that values their input but also positively impacted employee retention. It illustrates how adopting a collaborative management style can enhance talent attraction and create an environment where employees feel heard and valued.

Similarly, Accenture has embraced modern management styles that emphasize employee development and well-being. This focus on lifelong learning reflects contemporary HR trends, recognizing that employees prefer environments committed to collaboration, inclusion, and continuous growth. Toyota, too, evolved from its traditional command-and-control manufacturing approach to a more participatory management style. This shift aimed to boost employee satisfaction and foster a sense of ownership, enhancing daily performance and cultivating a workplace culture where employees feel a genuine sense of belonging.

4.3 Legal Compliance and Organizational Practices

The findings highlight an important facet of organizational dynamics, the inseparable linkage between legal compliance and operational practices, specifically in adaptive leadership evolving management styles. The COVID-19 pandemic became the crucible of testing organizations with new, worse than ever challenges, where any organization needed to find a fine balance between business continuity and modes demanded by ethics and legality. The remote work policies for the IBM case exemplify the intricacies that organizations have to dance around when traversing the legal landscape. The paramount consideration was the need to protect employee rights and data privacy and also the need to adhere to labor laws and occupational health and safety regulations.

Adaptive leadership and legal compliance intertwine as organizations such as IBM had to carefully develop and implement policies that not only afforded home working but also counterbalanced the legal implications of such arrangements. For example, the ethical leadership ensured compliance with the legal standards due to open communication avenues concerning monitoring employees' actions. The quick response to legal considerations proved agile leaders' agility in fitting new circumstances while keeping within the bounds of legal and ethical frameworks. The results further highlight the necessity of continued human resource management (HRM) practice adaptation to changing legal developments. Organizational reform becomes a compulsion as governments introduce new legislation to meet the demands introduced by reformed laws. For example, IBM's illustration of virtual onboarding demonstrates organizations that adapted their processes to

conform with data safety and confidentiality regulations, reinforcing the symbiotic relationship between adaptive leadership and legal compliance.

5 Limitations

Recognizing the dyadic landscape of human resource management (HRM) and organizational dynamics, it is essential to admit the inherent limitations entailed with the research. Another major limitation exists with the potential variation in industry and organizational size as a means for the effective nature of adaptive leadership and developing management styles. While the case studies presented will provide valuable insights, it is important to note that the strategies described may or may not be applicable and successful in diverse industry contexts and for organizations of different scales. Another limitation lies in the continuous change of HRM's best practices. The study recognizes that as the best practices in HR would be refined continuously with time, the efficacy of adaptive leadership and evolving management style can, again, be altered after witnessing any sort of major world phenomenon such as the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic presented unprecedented challenges that called for a quick review and adjustment of HRM practices. Given the dynamic business environment, some of these findings in this research will be subjected to being updated or changed given some new best practices that will emerge.

In addition, the research scope is limited to the examples and cases researched and may not embrace every industry with its idiosyncrasies concerning challenges and prospects. Finally, this research fails to capture sector-specific nuances upon which the effectiveness of adaptive leadership and evolving management styles may depend. Above all, the illustrative examples here are heavily weighted towards the largest corporations. The dynamics and challenges likely to be in the smaller enterprises or startups are probably very different, and thereby, the results of this study may not readily apply to this kind of context. Understanding the nuances of HRM within divergent organizational settings proves a complex endeavor, and this research provides insights primarily within the context of larger organizations.

While this research offers valuable pointers to the interplay of adaptive leadership and evolving management styles in HRM, certain limitations must be considered. Variability across industries and organizational sizes, the evolving nature of best practices, and the lean towards larger corporations constitute factors to account for in interpreting results from studies and generalizing their findings to other organizational contexts. Therefore, in these dynamic HRM business environments, the research must be ongoing and adaptable to the emerging trends so that the knowledge of

leadership and management practices becomes sensitive and nuanced across the organizational landscapes.

6 Future Research

Since human resource management (HRM) is a dynamic field and the future organizational environment will change workplace conditions, this section helps provide potential insights for research on adaptive leadership. First, it is necessary to establish the role of adaptive leadership in employee well-being in the post-pandemic era. The COVID-19 pandemic aftermath has changed the work environment like never before and called for more focused attention on the operations of adaptive leadership concerning employee well-being. Further research might investigate the long-standing psychological effects on the employees, such as job satisfaction, mental health, and overall well-being caused by adaptive leadership processes during these junctures of the pandemic. For example, this can be longitudinal research to track the effects of organizations that adopted adaptive leadership during the pandemic on post-pandemic employee well-being. Adaptive leadership's sustained impact on employee welfare can be measured quantitatively using metrics such as employee burnout rates and engagement levels satisfaction surveys. Furthermore, the relevant research should also aim to highlight the role of adaptive leaders in nourishing a healthy work culture that may advocate mental health initiatives and a conducive environment for balancing work-life accommodations. There are case studies that would illustrate how certain organizations that shifted to the hybrid or remote work model transformed most efficiently. These would provide insights into how adaptive leadership practices were responsible for such change.

Furthermore, review innovative integration of the emerging technologies within HRM under adaptive leadership to develop new insights. With the continually increasing technological advancements, the review and innovative integration of emerging technologies within HRM is bound to be nothing more or less than a gold mine for discoveries. Future research that elaborates on how adaptive leaders exploit technologies like artificial intelligence, data analytics, and machine learning for improving HRM practices, refining decision-making processes, and optimizing talent management strategies may be elaborated. For instance, a comparative analysis of organizations led by adaptive leaders embracing cutting-edge HR technologies versus their stagnant counterparts would help unearth the impact on efficiency, employee satisfaction, and resultant organizational performance. For this, ethical considerations of data privacy, transparency, and fairness shall have to be taken care of while implementing these technologies under the guidance of

adaptive leadership. Case studies on the successful integration of chatbots for support to employees, predictive analysis for talent acquisition, or virtual reality for training and development - could provide practical insights into the maturing participation of technology within HRM. Future research should, therefore, identify specific applications and possible ramifications to these technologies to offer actionable recommendations to organizations on how to adapt their HRM practices to such a resultant technology landscape.

Future research should entail studies identifying the cultural implications of changing managerial styles. Further research should be done on the implications of culture arising out of evolution in management styles, especially in terms of a better context that is more collaborative and inclusive. Based on how these management styles implicate organizational culture and related initiatives, a further exploration of this nature could be drawn up. Besides, case studies about the successful inclusive management practices among organizations would also provide insight into the cultural shifts brought about by these approaches. Quantifiable successes can be derived from examining the key performance indicators of diversity, representation, and inclusion and employee surveys on workplace culture. Furthermore, research into the cultural challenges and successes of organizations moving from more traditional to more inclusive management styles might shed some light on possible strategies for change management. Future research should also consider how evolving management styles intersect with differences in diverse cultural contexts, recognizing that the impact may be across organizations' regions, industries, and sizes.

7 Conclusion

This paper explores the critical role of adaptive leadership and evolving management styles in contemporary human resource management (HRM). Through specific insights and real-world examples, it highlights how these approaches are essential for fostering organizational resilience, designing effective talent management strategies, and ensuring legal compliance, especially during major global disruptions like the COVID-19 pandemic. The case studies and narratives demonstrate that adopting adaptive leadership and innovative management styles is not just a strategic choice but a necessity for organizations aiming to navigate and excel in today's rapidly changing and uncertain HRM landscape.

For instance, Microsoft's swift transition to remote work during the pandemic showcases how adaptive leadership can drive innovation and agility, significantly impacting employee well-being and organizational adaptability. Similarly, the shift from a traditional to a collaborative

management style within a multinational corporation resulted in notable improvements in employee satisfaction and organizational performance. These real-world examples provide a solid foundation for understanding the practical application of these concepts.

Furthermore, insights from diverse industries, including manufacturing and finance, underscore the adaptability of leadership and management styles across different organizational contexts. A manufacturing company's effective handling of legal complexities during the pandemic highlights the crucial link between adaptive leadership and legal compliance. Embracing adaptive leadership and evolving management styles has become a strategic necessity for organizations to respond to change, foster innovation, and uphold legal and ethical standards. As organizations face unprecedented challenges, these lessons offer valuable guidance for achieving resilience, talent excellence, and legal adherence in an era characterized by rapid transformation and uncertainty.

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