



Is Successful Management A Byproduct of Effective Leadership? A Scoping Review

Richard SEGOVIA¹

Abstract

This scoping review examines how recent scholarship conceptualizes leadership and management in relation to organizational effectiveness. The review synthesizes 25 peer-reviewed empirical studies published between 2021 and 2025 across public sector organizations, private firms, healthcare systems, militaries, and project-based environments. Searches were conducted in Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, and MDPI. The review followed the scoping review framework developed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) and reported findings in accordance with PRISMA-ScR guidelines (Tricco et al., 2018). Most studies positioned leadership as the primary antecedent to effectiveness outcomes, with management appearing as a mediated system, a relational mechanism, or a contextual substitute depending on organizational conditions. A smaller group of studies showed that strong administrative capacity and managerial quality can drive performance independently of leadership influence. The review also identifies a recurring measurement overlap between leadership and management that may overstate leadership's contribution to effectiveness. Leadership and management are neither interchangeable nor independent; their relative influence depends on organizational structure, resources, and institutional context. Organizations may benefit from investing in both leadership development and management systems rather than treating one as a byproduct of the other.

Keywords: leadership, management, organizational effectiveness, scoping review, administrative capacity

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¹Corresponding author: Liberty University, United States, Aydın/Türkiye, rsegovial@liberty.edu, richard.segovia@outlook.com ORCID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2894-6909>

Introduction

Leadership and management have consistently held prominent, though often debated, roles in organizational studies (Backhaus & Vogel, 2022; Collins et al., 2023). The scholarship often discusses leadership and management together, yet each discipline has developed along distinct theoretical and empirical lanes. Leadership literature generally emphasizes vision, influence, and interpersonal dynamics, whereas management research tends to concentrate on systems, coordination, administrative oversight, and structural control. Despite these conceptual differences, the scholarship continues to blur the line between leadership and management, particularly when exploring outcomes related to organizational effectiveness (Collins et al., 2023; Eva et al., 2025). Building on this discussion, this review examines how the literature connects leadership and management to organizational effectiveness, which seem to be where the overlap between the two becomes most apparent.

This conceptual overlap appears to be most apparent in studies related organizational effectiveness. Across both disciplines, leadership and management seem to routinely invoke discussions concerning performance, productivity, engagement, innovation, and capacity (Agag et al., 2025; Deng et al., 2023). Still, the mechanisms through which effectiveness is attributed to either leadership or management are often implicit rather than explicit. For example, according to Eva et al. (2025), in many cases, leadership and management factors are used interchangeably or embedded within one another. This complexity prevents practitioners and scholars from determining whether leadership behaviors, managerial systems, structural conditions, or combinations of these factors drive effectiveness outcomes.

Interestingly, the problem is not simply semantic, per se. The way practitioners and scholars attribute effectiveness shapes theory development, measurement practices, leadership development programs, and organizational decision-making, particularly in complex or highly structured environments. (Backhaus & Vogel, 2022; Kim & Kang, 2025). According to Fenizia (2022), when organizations assume leadership to be the primary driver of effectiveness, they tend to invest in leadership development and influence-based interventions. On the other hand, Haque et al. (2021) asserts that when organizations frame management as central, they shift attention toward administrative capacity, systems design, and managerial competence. Without clarifying how these factors relate to effectiveness, researchers and practitioners risk reinforcing assumptions that may not apply across contexts.

Existing reviews of the leadership and management literature provide valuable insights but seem to leave important questions unresolved. Meta-analyses and systematic reviews have documented associations between leadership styles and various outcomes, but they often aggregate across diverse factors and contexts (Agag et al., 2025; Backhaus & Vogel, 2022). While rich in interpretation, narrative reviews may benefit from theoretical perspectives or reinforce dominant assumptions (Eva et al., 2021). Still, Eva et al. (2025) asserts that few reviews explicitly examine how leadership and management relate to one another within effectiveness models or identify the conditions under which management operates independently of leadership.

These limitations underscore the need for a different type of synthesis. For example, instead of evaluating effect sizes or testing hypotheses, researchers might opt to conduct a mapping exercise to examine how leadership, management, and effectiveness are conceptualized and connected across the literature. As in this work, a scoping review suits this purpose because, according to Colquhoun et al. (2014), it enables systematic identification and organization of factors, outcomes, and contexts without assuming causal direction or theoretical preponderance.

Analytical Framework

Before mapping patterns across the literature, it helps to clarify what separates leadership from management analytically. This review treats them as conceptually related but functionally distinct. Leadership refers to influence-based behaviors directed at people, including vision-setting, motivation, trust-building, and shaping organizational culture. Management refers to systems-based behaviors directed at processes, including planning, coordination, resource allocation, performance monitoring, and administrative oversight.

The distinction matters because each operates through different mechanisms. Leadership tends to shape the conditions under which work occurs. Management tends to govern how work gets done once those conditions are in place. In practice, the two often overlap — a manager may also lead, and a leader may also manage — but this review treats them as analytically separable to examine how the literature positions each in relation to effectiveness outcomes.

Where leadership ends and management begins depends partly on context. In highly structured or bureaucratic settings, formalized rules and systems can substitute for leadership influence, which elevates management's independent role (Eva et al., 2021). In flexible, innovation-driven environments, leadership behaviors tend to carry more explanatory weight. This review uses that contextual variability as one lens for interpreting patterns across the included studies.

Method

Research Design

A scoping review of the literature and empirical research provided an appropriate approach to examine leadership, management, and effectiveness in organizational settings. It mapped how the scholarship defines leadership and management, attributes effectiveness outcomes, and describes variations across contexts and structural conditions. This review clarified how researchers most often conceptualize effectiveness in relation to leadership and management and revealed where alternative explanations emerged by synthesizing patterns and boundary conditions identified in recent studies. To guide the data analysis, this study addressed the following research question:

How does the literature and empirical research conceptualize and position the relationship between leadership, management, and effectiveness in organizational contexts?

By addressing this question, the review establishes a structured foundation for analyzing whether, and under what conditions, effective management emerges as a byproduct of leadership-related processes rather than functioning as an independent driver of organizational effectiveness.

This study's protocol followed the scoping review methodological framework developed by Arksey and O'Malley (2005) and later refined by Colquhoun et al. (2014). The review process included five sequential stages: (1) identifying relevant studies, (2) selecting studies, (3) mapping data, (4) summarizing and synthesizing results, and (5) reporting findings.

Data Collection Tool and Analysis

Step 1: Identifying Relevant Studies.

The review drew on literature searches conducted across several electronic bibliographic databases commonly used in management, psychology, and public administration research, including Google Scholar, ScienceDirect, Emerald Insight, and MDPI. It began with an exploratory search using broad terms related to leadership, management, and effectiveness to establish key parameters and refine the search terminology.

Based on this preliminary review, the search process used the following terms and combinations: leadership and performance, leadership versus management, management effectiveness, administrative capacity, organizational effectiveness, leadership measurement, and management practices and outcomes. The review limited searches to peer-reviewed literature published in English between 2021 and 2025 and screened the reference lists of eligible studies to identify additional relevant sources.

Table 1 presents database-specific search strings used Boolean operators to combine key concepts. The following table presents the search strings applied in each database.

Table 1.

Database-Specific Search Strings

Database	Search String
Google Scholar	("leadership" OR "transformational leadership" OR "servant leadership") AND ("management" OR "organizational management" OR "administrative capacity") AND ("organizational effectiveness" OR "performance" OR "productivity") AND (2021..2025)
ScienceDirect	TITLE-ABS-KEY(("leadership" OR "leadership style*") AND ("management" OR "managerial practice*") AND ("organizational effectiveness" OR "performance outcome*" OR "productivity")) AND PUBYEAR > 2020 AND PUBYEAR < 2026 AND LANGUAGE(english)
Emerald Insight	("leadership" OR "leadership behavior*") AND ("management effectiveness" OR "managerial quality") AND ("organizational performance" OR "administrative outcome*" OR "employee performance") — filtered to peer-reviewed, English, 2021–2025
MDPI	("leadership" AND "management") AND ("effectiveness" OR "performance" OR "organizational outcomes") — keyword search in titles and abstracts, filtered to peer-reviewed empirical studies, 2021–2025

Population, Sample, or Study Group

Step 2: Study Selection.

Inclusion and exclusion criteria were established to guide study selection. Studies had to meet the following criteria to be included:

- i. Be published in a peer-reviewed journal;
- ii. Be written in English;
- iii. Empirically examine leadership, management, or both as analytical factors; and
- iv. Include organizational effectiveness, performance, productivity, or administrative outcomes.

Studies were excluded if they were purely conceptual, normative, or opinion-based; if leadership or management appeared only as background context; or if outcomes were unrelated to organizational or managerial functioning. Titles and abstracts were screened to assess relevance, followed by a full-text review of potentially eligible studies. Final inclusion decisions were made based on a full-text review and analysis.

Step 3: Data Mapping

Data were extracted and mapped from the included studies using a structured approach. Extracted information included author(s), year of publication, journal, sector or context, study design, leadership factors measured, management factors measured, effectiveness outcomes, modeled relationships among factors, and identified boundary conditions or moderating factors. The data mapping process emphasized factor positioning and directionality rather than effect sizes or statistical significance in an effort to identify emergent themes from the literature and empirical research.

Step 4: Synthesis

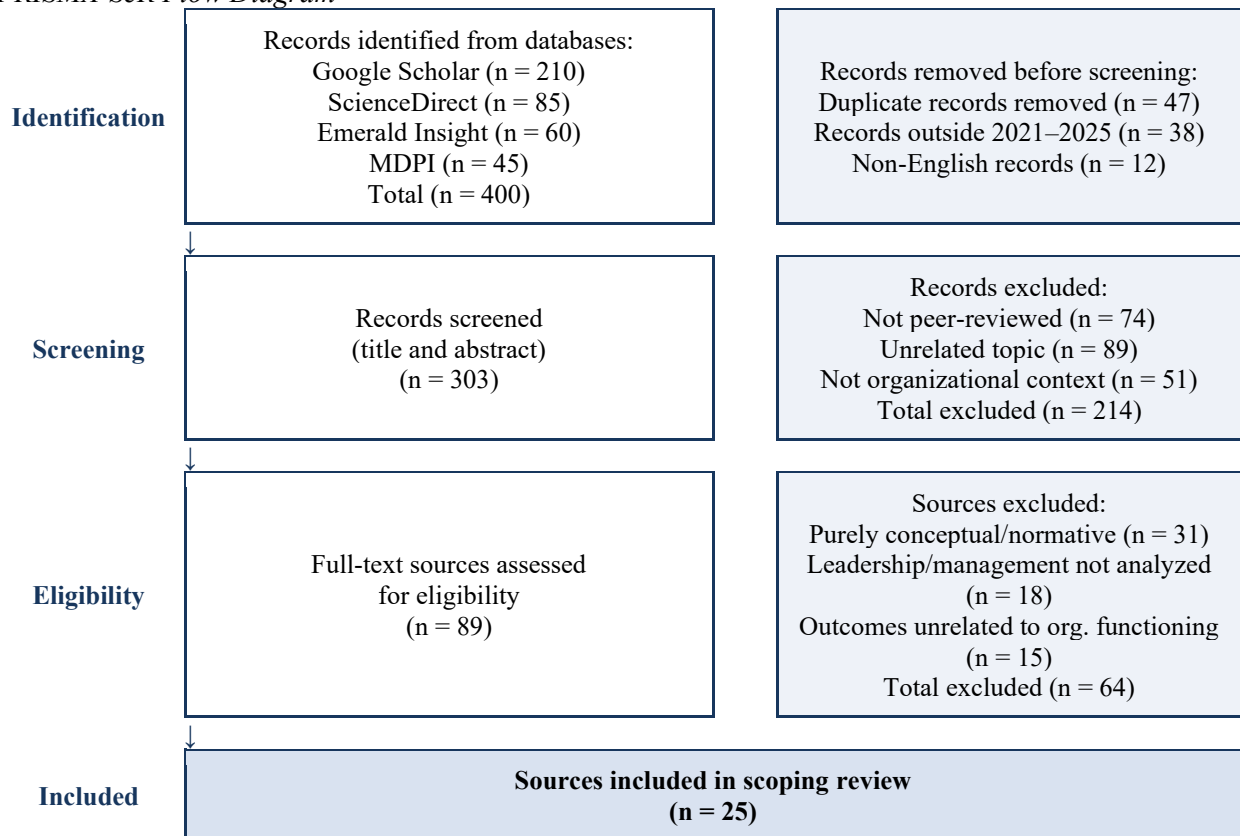
Mapped data were compared and grouped using an interpretive thematic mapping process (Huberman & Miles, 2002). Each study was assigned to one of six primary thematic categories based on its dominant analytical framing. Descriptive analysis was used to characterize the distribution of factors, outcomes, and contexts across the literature. Themes were developed to reflect how leadership and management were positioned relative to effectiveness, including cases where leadership served as an antecedent, management functioned as an outcome or mediator, or structural conditions substituted for leadership influence.

Step 5: Reporting

This scoping review was conducted in accordance with the PRISMA Extension for Scoping Reviews (PRISMA-ScR) checklist (Tricco et al., 2018). It did not include a formal assessment of methodological quality or risk of bias because the purpose was to map patterns and gaps in the literature rather than to evaluate intervention effectiveness. Figure 1 presents the PRISMA-ScR flow diagram documenting the study selection process.

Figure 1.

PRISMA-ScR Flow Diagram



Note. Final included studies (n = 25) reflect full-text review against stated inclusion and exclusion criteria. Adapted from PRISMA 2020 (Page et al., 2021).

Validity and Reliability

This review followed the PRISMA-ScR checklist (Tricco et al., 2018) to support transparency and replicability across the identification, screening, eligibility, and inclusion stages documented in Figure 1. Inclusion and exclusion criteria were applied consistently across all four databases, and the reference lists of eligible studies were screened to reduce the risk of omitting relevant sources. Because this is a scoping review of secondary literature rather than a primary qualitative or quantitative study, traditional reliability measures such as inter-rater coding statistics were not applicable; rigor was instead supported through the explicit, criterion-based selection process described above.

Role of the Researcher

A single researcher conducted the search, screening, data mapping, and thematic synthesis reported in this review. The researcher's prior familiarity with the leadership and management literature informed the framing of the research question and the thematic categories used in synthesis. To limit the influence of this familiarity on study selection, the researcher applied the inclusion and exclusion criteria listed under Population, Sample, or Study Group consistently across all four databases before assigning thematic categories.

Ethical Information

This study analyzed only previously published, publicly available peer-reviewed literature and did not involve human participants, identifiable personal data, or original data collection from individuals. Ethics committee review was therefore not required.

Findings

The final body of literature included 25 peer-reviewed empirical studies published between 2021 and 2025. The studies represented a range of organizational contexts, including public sector organizations, private firms, healthcare systems, global militaries, and project-based environments. Methodological approaches included meta-analyses, systematic reviews, large-scale quantitative studies, and mixed-methods designs.

Across studies, leadership and management were operationalized through diverse factors and measurement approaches. Effectiveness outcomes included organizational performance, productivity, job performance, innovation, engagement, and administrative capacity. Sector-specific indicators of effectiveness depended on the organizational setting, including patient care in healthcare systems, educational attainment in academic institutions, military readiness in defense organizations, citizen satisfaction in public services, environmental sustainability in industrial and ecological sectors, and fiscal performance in governmental and financial institutions.

The review coded the studies to identify thematic patterns through mapping and comparison, examining how leadership, management, and effectiveness relate to one another analytically rather than focusing on effect sizes. The work categorized each study into one primary theme based on how the relationships among these factors were modeled.

Table 2 presents the thematic alignment of all included studies, grouping sources that converged on similar leadership, management, and effectiveness relationships.

Table 2.

Leadership, Management, and Effectiveness Across Included Studies

Themes	Description of Pattern	Studies
Leadership first	Leadership behaviors are most frequently modeled as antecedents to effectiveness and performance outcomes, with management rarely operationalized independently	Agag et al., 2025; Backhaus & Vogel, 2022; Deng et al., 2023; Fareed et al., 2021; Karakitapoğlu-Aygün et al., 2024; Kılıç & Uluğa, 2021; López-Cabarcos et al., 2022; Qalati et al., 2022; Ystaas et al., 2023
Management systems	Management systems and practices are positioned as mechanisms shaped by leadership through culture, HR practices, or commitment	Audenaert et al., 2021; Chen & Wu, 2022; Meirinhos et al., 2023; Rahmatullah et al., 2022
Relational mechanisms	Leadership influences effectiveness indirectly through motivation, engagement, or relational dynamics	Chua & Ayoko, 2021; Kauppila et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2023
Conceptual overlap	Leadership and management factors are empirically overlapping or inconsistently differentiated	Collins et al., 2023; Eva et al., 2025
Structural constraints	Structural or contextual conditions reduce or replace leadership effects	Eva et al., 2021; Akıncı et al., 2022
Administrative capacity	Managerial quality or administrative capacity directly predicts performance outcomes	Fenzia, 2022; Haque et al., 2021; Kim & Kang, 2025; Aung et al., 2023

Table 2 groups the 25 included studies into six themes based on how each study modeled the relationship between leadership, management, and effectiveness. The largest cluster, Leadership First, covers nine studies that treat leadership behaviors as the starting point for performance outcomes, with management rarely examined on its own terms. Four studies fall under Management Systems, where

management practices act as the bridge between leadership and results rather than as independent drivers. Three studies fit the Relational Mechanisms theme, showing leadership working indirectly through motivation, engagement, and workplace relationships. Two studies address Conceptual Overlap, where leadership and management factors blur together in measurement. Structural Constraints captures two studies where organizational structure weakens or replaces leadership's influence entirely. Finally, four studies fall under Administrative Capacity, where managerial quality and institutional systems predict performance independently. Across all six themes, management surfaces most often as a dependent variable, a structural substitute, or an indirect mechanism, and only the Administrative Capacity theme treats it as a primary, independent force.

Leadership First

The largest group of studies identified leadership behaviors as direct precursors to effectiveness and performance outcomes. For example, meta-analyses and review studies consistently reported positive relationships between leadership styles and performance across a range of organizational settings (Agag et al., 2025; Backhaus & Vogel, 2022; Deng et al., 2023). Leadership often appeared as the main factor behind strong results in employee and organizational performance, project success, and, in specific sectors, patient care in healthcare and operational outcomes within different militaries (Fareed et al., 2021; Karakitapoğlu-Aygün et al., 2024; Kılıç & Uludağ, 2021; López-Cabarcos et al., 2022; Qalati et al., 2022; Ystaas et al., 2023; Akıncı et al., 2022). In most of these studies, management was not analyzed directly but appeared within outcome measures or narrative descriptions.

Agag et al. (2025) found that transformational leadership improved performance across many countries and industries. Leaders who motivated, supported, and challenged their employees inspired them to work toward shared goals. Backhaus and Vogel (2022) reported similar findings in the public sector, noting that leadership styles were strongly linked to performance and satisfaction — though results varied depending on how flexible or traditional an organization's systems were. Deng et al. (2023) showed that transformational leadership remained one of the strongest predictors of success. Leaders who encouraged learning and trust helped teams perform more effectively. Fareed et al. (2021) found that emotionally intelligent leaders improved outcomes by motivating and guiding their teams more effectively.

This leadership-focused pattern appeared often across large-scale studies. For example, Agag et al. (2025) found that transformational leadership improved performance in many countries and industries because leaders who motivated, supported, and challenged their employees inspired them to work toward shared goals. Backhaus and Vogel (2022) reported similar findings in the public sector and explained that leadership styles were strongly linked to performance and satisfaction. Noteworthy is that these results varied depending on how flexible or traditional an organization's systems were. Also noteworthy is the Deng et al. (2023) study, which showed that transformational leadership remained one of the strongest predictors of success because leaders who encouraged learning and trust helped teams perform more effectively. Fareed et al. (2021) found the same to be true and reported that emotionally intelligent leaders improved outcomes by motivating and guiding their teams more effectively. Together, these studies show that leadership behaviors consistently shape how organizations perform and provide a foundation for how the next themes are compared and discussed.

Management Systems

Several studies found that management effectiveness often developed from leadership and operated through organizational systems or workplace relationships. Audenaert et al. (2021) showed that employee performance management (EPM) systems linked leadership to employee outcomes because authentic leaders helped employees view these systems as fair and supportive rather than controlling. Their results showed that good leadership could turn performance management practices into tools that improved well-being and results. Chen and Wu (2022) found a similar pattern in their study on green human resource management (HRM) and green transformational leadership. They showed that HRM practices provided structure and policy support for sustainability, while transformational leaders gave employees the personal motivation to act on those goals. Meirinhos et

al. (2023) and Rahmatullah et al. (2022) also found that leadership shaped management effectiveness through culture, communication, and commitment. Both studies explained that when leaders built open communication and shared purpose, management systems worked better and produced stronger results. In most of these studies, management was not treated as an independent factor but appeared as part of the process through which leadership shaped organizational outcomes. This pattern suggests that management effectiveness often depends on leadership influence and reinforces the focus on leadership while leaving management less distinct in analysis.

Relational Mechanisms

Several studies explored indirect pathways through which leadership connects to effectiveness. These pathways run through motivation, engagement, and workplace relationships (Chua & Ayoko, 2021; Kauppila et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2023). Chua and Ayoko (2021) asserted that transformational leadership encouraged self-determined motivation. This led to higher engagement and stronger performance because employees who perceived their leaders as supportive felt greater ownership, autonomy, and purpose in their work. Kauppila et al. (2022) showed that servant leadership improved effectiveness by building trust and a shared sense of identity that extended beyond formal supervisory roles. Nguyen et al. (2023) reported that supportive leaders fostered public service motivation and a commitment to learning, connecting leadership to innovation. Management did not appear as a separate force in most of these studies but showed up indirectly through leadership's influence on motivation and relationships.

Conceptual Overlap

A smaller group of studies examined the blurriness between leadership and management. Collins et al. (2023) were able to show the separation of leadership actions from management actions by using the Leadership/Management Concept Scale (LMCS). The scale positioned behaviors along a continuum from management to leadership and showed that while some actions demonstrated clear alignment with one category or the other, many fell in between. Behaviors labeled as leadership frequently involved management tasks such as planning, coordination, and performance monitoring (Collins et al., 2023). Eva et al. (2021, 2025) raised similar concerns and questioned whether leadership measures added real value beyond related factors, and explained that leadership factors sometimes offered little additional insight once related variables like leadership styles and shared relational factors were considered. Together, these studies suggest that the way leadership and management are measured can blur the line between them and might make it difficult to see whether effectiveness comes from leadership, management, or broader organizational influences.

Structural Constraints

Some studies identified conditions where leadership effects weakened or disappeared. For example, Eva et al. (2021) showed that formalization and centralization could take the place of servant leadership effects. Their research used field and experimental data to test how different structural arrangements shaped the link between leadership and job satisfaction. The results showed that formalization substituted for servant leadership by giving employees clear rules and procedures that guided behavior, while centralization reduced leadership influence by moving and concentrating decisions at higher levels. Akıncı et al. (2022) found similar limits in a study of NATO's Allied Command Transformation. They showed that a strong climate for innovation strengthened the impact of "ambidextrous leadership" on innovative work behavior, while a weak innovation climate reduced it. Put simply, even effective leadership depends on a supportive environment to translate ideas into action and sustain innovation. Together, these studies show that leadership's effect on performance depends on context, as structural and environmental factors can replace or weaken its influence.

Administrative Capacity

Some studies showed that management capability and administrative capacity can drive performance on their own. For example, Fenizia (2022) found that skilled managers in Italy's public sector increased productivity by about ten percent. The improvement did not come from extra resources but because capable managers assigned tasks more effectively and encouraged better

performance across their teams. Haque et al. (2021) reached a similar conclusion and reported that administrative capacity forms the foundation of national development. They explained that governments with strong institutional systems, such as Singapore and Chile, implemented policies more effectively, managed crises better, and achieved steadier economic growth because their government systems had the flexibility, resources, and experience needed to adjust to new challenges and keep improving over time.

Kim and Kang (2025) found the same pattern of strong administrative systems driving better performance in their study of South Korea’s local governments. They discovered that a balanced level of administrative investment strengthened fiscal stability, while too much or too little administration reduced efficiency. At the organizational level, Aung et al. (2023) found that strong managerial practices in Myanmar’s construction industry directly improved job satisfaction and performance without relying on leadership as a mediating factor. Although leadership can play an important role in shaping workplace culture, their findings suggest that clear management systems and fair practices can produce strong results on their own. Together, these studies show that capable managers and strong administrative systems can sustain effectiveness independently, especially in structured or resource-dependent settings.

All themes illustrate that leadership and management are positioned asymmetrically across effectiveness models, with leadership most often specified as an antecedent and management variably appearing as mediated, constrained, or independent depending on organizational context. Table 2 presents structural and contextual conditions across the included studies that shaped how leadership and management were analytically linked to effectiveness outcomes.

Table 3.

Structural Conditions

Condition	Observed Pattern	Studies	Implication
High formalization and centralization	Leadership effects reduced or neutralized	Eva et al., 2021	Organizational structure may substitute for leadership
Strong administrative capacity	Management independently predicts performance	Fenizia, 2022; Kim & Kang, 2025	Management effectiveness not always leadership-dependent
Constrained institutional environments	Managerial practices drive outcomes	Aung et al., 2023; Haque et al., 2021	Leadership influence may be secondary
Organizational climate	Leadership effects contingent on context	Akıncı et al., 2022	Leadership effectiveness varies by environment
Measurement overlap	Leadership added limited explanatory value	Eva et al., 2025; Collins et al., 2023	Effectiveness attribution may be overstated

Table 3 shows that each search string targeted the same three conceptual domains: leadership, management, and effectiveness. Each string was structured differently to match each database's search architecture. Google Scholar required a date range operator, while ScienceDirect used field-specific syntax to restrict results by title, abstract, and keyword. Emerald Insight and MDPI used broader keyword searches filtered by publication type and date at the results level. Across all four databases, OR operators connected synonyms within each concept, and AND operators combined the three domains to narrow results to studies relevant to all three. This approach aimed to balance sensitivity with specificity, capturing a broad range of relevant studies while reducing the volume of clearly irrelevant records returned. Search strings were adapted to each database's syntax conventions. All searches were limited to peer-reviewed, English-language publications from 2021 to 2025.

The literature most frequently positioned leadership as an antecedent to effectiveness outcomes, with management variably appearing as a mediated system, an indirect relational mechanism, a contextual substitute, or an independent driver depending on organizational conditions.

This patterned asymmetry in factor positioning establishes the empirical foundation for examining whether, and under what conditions, effective management appears to emerge as a byproduct of leadership-related processes rather than as a consistently independent source of organizational effectiveness.

Discussion, Conclusion, and Recommendations

This review set out to explore how contemporary literature discusses leadership, management, and organizational effectiveness in public and private settings. It collected and analyzed findings from 25 peer-reviewed studies published between 2021 and 2025. The findings reveal several key patterns that help clarify how leadership and management connect and continue to shape debates about what drives organizational success.

In most studies reviewed, leadership stood out as the main factor used to explain organizational effectiveness. Larger-scale reviews and meta-analyses linked leadership behaviors to outcomes like performance, productivity, engagement, and innovation across sectors (Agag et al., 2025; Backhaus & Vogel, 2022; Deng et al., 2023). Most studies showed that management usually takes shape under the influence of leadership rather than driving results on its own. Research on performance management, HR practices, workplace culture, and communication found that these areas often act as bridges between leadership and outcomes (Audenaert et al., 2021; Chen & Wu, 2022; Meirinhos et al., 2023; Rahmatullah et al., 2022).

The literature also shows that leadership influences performance in indirect ways. Several studies found that employees tend to perform better when leaders inspire motivation, engagement, learning, and strong relationships at work (Chua & Ayoko, 2021; Kauppila et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2023). While many studies examined how leadership drives effectiveness, several showed that management can shape performance on its own. Fenizia (2022), Haque et al. (2021), Kim and Kang (2025), and Aung et al. (2023) each found that administrative capacity and managerial quality contributed to performance independently of leadership.

The line between leadership and management often blurs in research, which makes it difficult to tell which one truly drives success. Collins et al. (2023) showed that many leadership and management behaviors overlap. Eva et al. (2025) found that leadership variables often failed to explain much beyond what could already be accounted for by management quality, employee engagement, and contextual conditions. This overlap suggests that management's influence on success can sometimes be hidden within what researchers describe as leadership.

The studies in this review suggest that management often appears as a byproduct of strong leadership, not because management is unimportant but because of how most research defines and measures success. Leadership is often presented as the main force that drives results, while management appears later as part of the systems or routines shaped by leaders. However, when studies look directly at administrative ability and managerial quality, management clearly contributes to performance on its own. Management's impact isn't missing; it's often hidden within what researchers describe as leadership.

Research across different organizational areas supports this overall pattern. In sustainability and environmental management, leadership often sets the direction and culture that allow managerial systems to function (Althnayan et al., 2022; Chen & Wu, 2022). Studies on innovation and military organizations show that leadership's impact depends on climate and structure (Akıncı et al., 2022). Public administration research shows that management becomes an independent driver mainly when strong administrative systems are in place (Fenizia, 2022; Kim & Kang, 2025).

The data collected in this scoping review suggest that successful management often appears as a byproduct of effective leadership in the current literature. Most studies reviewed found that leadership provides the vision, trust, and environment that allow management systems to function effectively. This positions leadership as the main driver of organizational success in the existing body of evidence. Still, some data showed that management can operate independently when supported by

strong administrative capacity, clear structures, and reliable processes in structured, centralized, or highly formalized organizations.

This study suggests that leadership and management work best in partnership, with leadership setting direction and management ensuring execution. The evidence in this review shows that organizations may be more likely to achieve lasting effectiveness when both leadership and management are strong and clearly defined. That finding holds across sectors and organizational types, though the relative weight of each factor shifts depending on context.

This scoping review helps explain something many people in organizations already sense, maybe even know, but might find difficult to put into words, which is the difference between leading people and managing them. People who lead draw others toward a shared purpose through trust, example, and belief. People who manage direct effort through structure, systems, and accountability. People who lead tend to pull while people who manage tend to push. Both are necessary, and often overlap, but they do not create the same kind of commitment. The studies in this review suggest that successful management often follows effective leadership. When people feel inspired and supported by their leaders, they tend to find ways to deliver results, even when facing barriers, limited resources, or bureaucracy. On the other hand, people can be pushed to meet expectations, but that energy can fade quickly because it relies on compliance rather than conviction. The literature and empirical research in this review offers a practical takeaway for organizations in any sector: build systems that support managers but invest in leaders because when balanced, organizations are more resilient, adaptive, and consistently effective.

Limitations

This scoping review carries several limitations that bear on the interpretation of its findings. The search was confined to four databases and to sources published in English, which means that relevant work indexed elsewhere or published in other languages may have been excluded. The review was also conducted by a single researcher, and although the criterion-based selection process described above was applied consistently, the absence of a second independent screener removes a check that is commonly used to guard against selection bias in systematic and scoping reviews. Finally, because the review synthesizes secondary literature rather than original empirical data, its conclusions are bounded by the methodological quality and reporting practices of the studies it draws upon, and gaps or inconsistencies in that underlying literature necessarily limit the strength of the conclusions that can be drawn here.

Disclosure Statements

Contribution rate statement of the researchers:

The author is the sole contributor to this study.

Conflict of interest statement:

The author declares that there is no conflict of interest.

CRedit Authorship Contribution Statement

Richard SEGOVIA: Conceptualization, methodology, data collection, data analysis, writing – review & editing.

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Ethical Declaration and Committee Approval

In this research, the principles of scientific research and publication ethics were followed.