



INSTITUTIONAL LEADERS' LEADERSHIP STYLES AND EMPLOYEES' PREFERENCES IN AUTONOMOUS MARITIME INSTITUTIONS: FRAMEWORK FOR ENHANCING IMPLEMENTATION OF EDUCATIONAL ORGANIZATION MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

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Abstract

This study examined the leadership styles of institutional leaders and the leadership preferences of employees in the autonomous units of the John B. Lacson Foundation (JBLF) System to develop a framework for enhancing the implementation of the Educational Organization Management System (EOMS). Using an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, data were collected from 72 institutional leaders and 210 employees through validated 18-item, scenario-based, forced-choice instruments based on Goleman's leadership styles and analyzed using descriptive statistics, the Chi-Square Test of Independence, and Cramér's V. Qualitative data from interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed using thematic analysis. Findings showed that leaders predominantly demonstrated Democratic, Affiliative, and Coaching styles, while employees preferred Coaching, Democratic, and Affiliative approaches. Significant associations emerged in selected leadership scenarios, while context-based areas of alignment and misalignment were observed between demonstrated and preferred leadership approaches. Qualitative findings revealed participative, relationship-oriented, developmental, and context-responsive leadership practices and preferences influenced by organizational, situational, and employee-related factors and challenges. The integrated findings informed a proposed framework incorporating participative and inclusive, relationship-oriented and supportive, coaching and development-focused, and adaptive and context-responsive leadership dimensions, supported by institutional mechanisms and integrated with the ISO 21001:2018 Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle to enhance EOMS implementation.

Keywords: Leadership Styles, Leadership Preferences, Leadership Framework, Maritime Education, Educational Organization Management System (EOMS)

Introduction:

Nature of the Problem

Leadership can be described as an interdisciplinary subject with varying definitions across fields; generally, it is understood to be the dynamic interaction between leaders and their followers with the objective of achieving common goals through organizational processes and changes (Rosari, 2019). Leadership is more than just positional power; it involves the art of influencing, guiding, and motivating people toward mutual success, especially in today's increasingly complex organizational context, where leadership greatly impacts organizational climate, employee engagement, and performance (McKinsey & Company, 2024; Vasilescu, 2019). In educational institutions, leadership is an important factor that affects organizational culture, the provision of quality education, and institutional performance (Mahanta & Saha, 2021). Leadership becomes even more important in Maritime Higher Education Institutions (MHEIs), which operate in an environment characterized by high specialization and strict national and international regulations, where performance requires meeting regulatory requirements and adapting to the needs of the industry (Lušić et al., 2019). Under such circumstances, the study of different leadership styles becomes essential for understanding how leaders influence organizational climate and motivate employees, especially within quality assurance frameworks such as ISO 21001:2018 (International Organization for Standardization [ISO], 2018), the Philippine Association of Colleges and Universities Commission on Accreditation (PACUCOA, 2025) standards, and the Philippine Quality Award (PQA, 2025).



Although the significance of leadership in ensuring organizational effectiveness is acknowledged, limited empirical evidence is available on how leadership styles are actually practiced within MHEIs, especially within multi-campus autonomous institutions. Existing leadership literature largely addresses broader theoretical and organizational contexts, while empirical evidence concerning the association between institutional leaders' leadership styles and employees' leadership preferences, including areas of alignment and misalignment, remains limited in the context of autonomous maritime institutions. In the case of the John B. Lacson Foundation (JBLF) System, which operates under CHED Autonomous Status (Commission on Higher Education, 2024) and implements multiple quality assurance and performance excellence frameworks, limited empirical evidence is available regarding the leadership styles demonstrated by institutional leaders, the leadership approaches preferred by employees, and the contextual factors and challenges that influence leadership practices. There is also limited understanding of how these leadership dynamics operate within a highly regulated maritime education environment while sustaining institutional performance, quality assurance requirements, and readiness for future evaluations.

Current State of Knowledge

In response to these gaps, this research examined the leadership styles exhibited by institutional leaders and the leadership preferences of employees in the three autonomous units of the JBLF System. Anchored in Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), as cited in Omilion-Hodges and Ptacek (2021), and Goleman's Six Leadership Styles (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2001), this research employed an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design that integrated quantitative and qualitative inquiry to develop a holistic perspective on leadership in the institution. Beyond determining leadership styles and employee preferences, the study explored how leadership styles were practiced, the factors influencing their application, and the challenges encountered by institutional leaders and employees. Through examining leadership styles alongside employee preferences, the study sought to generate data-driven insights that could contribute to the development of a leadership framework for enhancing the implementation of the Educational Organization Management System (EOMS).

The study was based on the notion that leadership effectiveness in educational institutions does not depend solely on the leadership styles demonstrated by institutional leaders, but also on how these styles correspond with employees' preferred leadership approaches. In MHEIs, where organizational performance relies heavily on compliance, coordination, communication, and people management, understanding both perspectives is important. Two main concepts guided this study: institutional leaders' leadership styles and employees' leadership preferences. Institutional leaders' leadership styles refer to the leadership behaviors demonstrated by institutional leaders in performing their roles. These were examined using Daniel Goleman's six leadership styles: Visionary/Authoritative, Coaching, Affiliative, Democratic, Pacesetter, and Commanding/Coercive. Employees' leadership preferences, on the other hand, refer to the leadership behaviors and approaches that employees prefer from their leaders or supervisors.

The two constructs in the quantitative phase were examined in relation to their dominant patterns and statistical association. In particular, the study determined the top three dominant leadership styles among institutional leaders, the top three prevailing leadership preferences among employees, and whether a statistically significant degree of association existed between the two variables. The results of the quantitative phase provided the numerical basis for identifying leadership tendencies and employee preferences within the autonomous maritime institutions. However, the study recognized that organizational leadership cannot be fully understood through quantitative patterns alone. Leadership practices are also shaped by institutional realities, situational conditions, and implementation challenges.

Theoretical Underpinnings

This study was anchored in Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), as discussed by Omilion-Hodges and Ptacek (2021), and Goleman's Six Leadership Styles (Goleman & Boyatzis, 2001). LMX Theory emphasizes the quality of relationships and interactions between leaders and their followers, providing a theoretical basis for examining leadership not only from the perspective of institutional leaders but also through employees' preferred leadership approaches. Goleman's framework, on the other hand, provided the behavioral basis for examining six leadership styles: Visionary/Authoritative, Coaching, Affiliative, Democratic, Pacesetter, and Commanding/Coercive. Together, these perspectives supported the examination of institutional leaders' demonstrated leadership styles, employees' leadership preferences, and areas of alignment or misalignment between them.

Consistent with these theoretical foundations, the integration of quantitative and qualitative findings enabled the study to move beyond identifying leadership styles and preferences by examining how leadership was practiced and experienced within actual organizational contexts. The study assumed that leadership effectiveness and the implementation of institutional systems may be strengthened when leadership practices are responsive to employees' needs, organizational circumstances, and leadership challenges. This integration provided the basis for developing



the proposed leadership framework for enhancing the implementation of the Educational Organization Management System (EOMS).

Objectives

This study examined the leadership styles demonstrated by institutional leaders and the leadership approaches preferred by employees in the three autonomous units of the JBLF System: JBLCF (Bacolod), Inc., JBLFMU (Arevalo), Inc., and JBLFMU (Molo), Inc. It also examined how leadership styles were applied in practice, the factors influencing leadership approaches, and the challenges encountered by institutional leaders and employees. Ultimately, the study aimed to develop a leadership framework for enhancing the implementation of EOMS.

Specifically, the study sought to determine: (1) the top three dominant leadership styles of institutional leaders in the autonomous maritime institutions; (2) the top three prevailing leadership preferences of employees; (3) whether there was a significant degree of association between institutional leaders' leadership styles and employees' leadership preferences; (4) how institutional leaders applied their dominant leadership styles in practice, the factors that influenced their leadership approaches, and the challenges they encountered in leading employees; (5) how employees described their preferred leadership approaches, the factors they valued most in their leaders, and the leadership-related challenges they commonly experienced; and (6) the framework that could be proposed based on the findings to enhance the implementation of the Educational Organization Management System (EOMS).

Methodology:

Research Design

An explanatory sequential mixed-methods research design was employed. The quantitative phase determined the dominant leadership styles of institutional leaders, the prevailing leadership preferences of employees, and the degree of association between the two constructs. The qualitative phase subsequently explained and contextualized the quantitative findings by examining leadership practices, influencing factors, and challenges experienced by leaders and employees. The findings from both phases were integrated during interpretation and served as the basis for developing the proposed framework for enhancing EOMS implementation.

Study Respondents

The respondents of the study consisted of institutional leaders and employees from the three autonomous units of the John B. Lacson Foundation (JBLF) System: John B. Lacson Colleges Foundation (Bacolod), Inc., JBLFMU (Arevalo), Inc., and JBLFMU (Molo), Inc., for Academic Year 2025–2026.

For the quantitative phase, 72 institutional leaders were included through complete enumeration: 25 from JBLFMU (Arevalo), Inc., 24 from JBLCF (Bacolod), Inc., and 23 from JBLFMU (Molo), Inc. Institutional leaders included administrators, department heads, program heads, course area heads, and designated quality assurance or QHSE-related leaders.

Employees consisted of teaching and non-teaching personnel without designated supervisory or formal leadership positions. Proportionate stratified random sampling was employed, resulting in 210 respondents from a population of 443 employees: 69 from JBLFMU (Arevalo), Inc., 66 from JBLCF (Bacolod), Inc., and 75 from JBLFMU (Molo), Inc. Overall, the quantitative phase involved 282 respondents.

For the qualitative phase, criterion-based purposive sampling was used to select six institutional leaders, two from each campus, for individual interviews and ten employees who participated in three focus group discussions (FGDs), one per campus.

Research Instrument

Two parallel 18-item, scenario-based forced-choice survey instruments were used for the quantitative phase: the Leadership Style Assessment for institutional leaders and the Leadership Preference Assessment for employees. Each item presented six behavioral options corresponding to Goleman's Six Leadership Styles. Both instruments obtained an overall content validity rating of 4.75/5 and reliability coefficients of $\alpha = .85$ and $\alpha = .82$, respectively. For the qualitative phase, semi-structured interview and FGD guides were used to examine leadership practices, preferences, influencing factors, and challenges.



Data Gathering Procedure

The data-gathering procedures followed two sequential phases. In the quantitative phase, the validated survey instruments were administered electronically to the selected leaders and employees after securing the necessary institutional permissions. Following quantitative analysis, purposively selected leaders participated in semi-structured interviews, while selected employees participated in FGDs. The qualitative sessions were conducted face-to-face, audio-recorded with participants' consent, transcribed, and prepared for thematic analysis.

Data Analysis and Statistical Tools

For the quantitative phase, both descriptive and inferential statistics were employed. Each of the two survey instruments contained 18 scenario-based forced-choice items, with six behavioral options corresponding to Goleman's Six Leadership Styles. Each selected option earned one point for its corresponding leadership style, producing six scores ranging from 0 to 18. The highest score represented the dominant leadership style or preference, while the second- and third-highest scores represented the supporting leadership profile.

Frequency counts and rank ordering were used to identify the top three dominant leadership styles of institutional leaders and the top three prevailing leadership preferences of employees. The Chi-Square Test of Independence using a 6×6 contingency table and Cramér's V were used to determine the significance and strength of association between leadership styles and employee preferences at $\alpha = .05$.

Qualitative data were analyzed using Braun and Clarke's (2006) six-phase thematic analysis. Orange Data Mining was used only as a supplementary tool for organizing textual data and identifying patterns and clusters, while interpretation and validation of the themes remained researcher-driven. Quantitative and qualitative findings were then integrated during interpretation to explain and contextualize the results and provide the basis for the proposed EOMS framework.

Ethical Consideration

The present research followed established ethical practices for the protection of the rights, well-being, confidentiality, and dignity of all participants. The research was guided by the American Educational Research Association Code of Ethics (American Educational Research Association, 2011) and applicable Philippine ethical guidelines. Formal approval for data collection was obtained from the appropriate institutional authorities of the three autonomous units. Participation was voluntary, informed consent was obtained, and participants' identities and collected data were kept confidential throughout the research process.

Results and Discussion

This section presents the findings of the study, including the quantitative and qualitative findings and their integration, which formed the foundation of the proposed leadership framework. The presentation of findings includes three major portions: (1) Quantitative Phase; (2) Qualitative Phase; and (3) Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings.

Quantitative Findings

Top Three Dominant Leadership Styles of Institutional Leaders in Autonomous Maritime Institutions

The analysis of leadership styles demonstrated by institutional leaders revealed Democratic, Affiliative, and Coaching as the top three dominant leadership styles, as shown in Table 1.

Table 1

Top Three Dominant Leadership Styles of Institutional Leaders in the Autonomous Maritime Institutions

Leadership Styles	f	Rank
Democratic	308	1
Affiliative	302	2
Coaching	265	3



Visionary	194	4
Commanding	175	5
Pacesetting	52	6

The analysis of leadership styles demonstrated by institutional leaders, as shown in Table 1, indicates that from the six leadership styles according to Daniel Goleman's framework, Democratic, Affiliative, and Coaching leadership styles are the top three most dominant leadership styles exhibited by the institutional leaders in the autonomous maritime institutions. It implies that leaders demonstrate leadership behaviors that are participative, relationship-oriented, and development-driven in leading people and processes.

The outcomes of the research are consistent with the broader leadership principles reflected in ISO 21001:2018, PACUCOA Accreditation Standards, and PQA Category 1, Leadership. These standards emphasize leadership, stakeholder engagement, empowerment, and continuous improvement, which are conceptually consistent with the participative, relationship-oriented, and developmental leadership patterns identified in the study.

Top Three Prevailing Leadership Preferences of Employees in Autonomous Maritime Institutions

Table 2

Top Three Prevailing Leadership Preferences of the Employees in the Autonomous Maritime Institutions

Leadership Styles	f	R
Coaching	918	1
Democratic	893	2
Affiliative	874	3
Visionary	583	4
Commanding	389	5
Pacesetting	123	6

From the results provided in Table 2, there is a clear trend regarding the leadership preferences of employees in the autonomous maritime institutions. Out of the six leadership styles identified under Daniel Goleman's framework, Coaching, Democratic, and Affiliative leadership styles were found to be the most preferred. This implies that employees tend to prefer leadership styles characterized by mentoring, participation, and the promotion of positive relationships among members.

These findings are also consistent with the broader leadership principles reflected in ISO 21001:2018, PACUCOA accreditation criteria, and the Philippine Quality Award (PQA) Category 1, Leadership, particularly their emphasis on stakeholder engagement, empowerment, and continuous improvement. The leadership preferences revealed by the employees underscore the importance of balancing the attainment of organizational goals with employee development and well-being. This suggests the value of leadership practices that support organizational performance while sustaining a favorable and developmental work environment.

Degree of Association Between Institutional Leaders' Leadership Styles and Employees' Leadership Preferences in Autonomous Maritime Institutions

Table 3

Degree of Association Between the Institutional Leader's Leadership Style and Employees' Leadership Preferences in the Autonomous Maritime Institutions



#	Scenarios	Most dominant Leadership Style	Most prevailing Leadership Preference	p-value (Chi-square) χ^2	Cramer's V	Remarks
1	Handling Employee Performance Challenges	Commanding	Coaching	.012	.228	Not Aligned
2	Initiating Institutional Projects or Activities	Affiliative	Affiliative	.550	.119	Aligned
3	Managing Workplace Conflict	Democratic	Democratic	.783	.030	Aligned
4	Implementing Policies and Procedures	Democratic	Democratic	.168	.009	Aligned
5	Responding to Employee Errors	Commanding	Coaching	< .001	.334	Not Aligned
6	Orienting New Personnel	Affiliative	Commanding	< .001	.115	Not Aligned
7	Managing Work Under Time Pressure	Affiliative	Affiliative	.553	.119	Aligned
8	Addressing Resistance to Change	Coaching	Democratic	< .001	.339	Not Aligned
9	Providing Task Support and Assistance	Affiliative	Affiliative	.843	.085	Aligned
10	Conducting Performance Feedback and Coaching	Coaching	Coaching	.447	.130	Aligned
11	Managing Institutional Change	Coaching	Coaching	.055	.196	Aligned
12	Addressing Departmental Issues	Affiliative	Affiliative	.445	.129	Aligned
13	Delegating Tasks and Responsibilities	Coaching	Coaching	.063	.193	Aligned
14	Responding to Negative Feedback	Commanding	Commanding	.334	.142	Aligned
15	Addressing Decline in Performance	Democratic	Coaching	.054	.196	Not Aligned
16	Delivering Feedback to Employees	Affiliative	Coaching	< .001	.329	Not Aligned
17	Solving Complex Organizational Problems	Democratic	Democratic	.057	.197	Aligned
18	Practicing Day-to-Day Leadership Effectiveness	Affiliative	Affiliative	.480	.126	Aligned

The results in Table 3 assess the level of association between the leadership styles adopted by institutional leaders and the preferred leadership styles of employees within the eighteen leadership scenarios. Based on the application of the Chi-Square Test of Independence and Cramér's V, the findings show significant associations in selected scenario contexts, although the degree of association is not uniform across all scenarios. Of the eighteen scenarios, twelve showed alignment between the dominant leadership style and prevailing employee preference, while six showed misalignment. It is important to distinguish such alignment from statistical association, since a significant association does not necessarily indicate that leaders and employees prefer the same leadership style.

The areas of misalignment involved handling employee performance challenges, responding to employee errors, orienting new personnel, addressing resistance to change, addressing decline in performance, and delivering feedback to employees. These findings indicate that although leaders and employees generally demonstrate similar leadership orientations, differences emerge in particular situations involving performance management, employee development, organizational change, and feedback. The context-based differences highlight the importance of



leadership flexibility, whereby directive, participative, relational, and developmental approaches are applied according to organizational circumstances and employee needs.

Qualitative Findings

Table 4

Thematic Analysis of Leadership Practices, Influencing Factors, and Challenges

Thematic Analysis of Leadership Practices, Influencing Factors, and Challenges					
Phase 1: Raw Data (Excerpt)	Phase 1: Condensed Meaning	Phase 2: Initial Codes	Phase 3-4: Category	Phase 5: Theme	Phase 6: Thematic Interpretation
Participative, delegating jobs... assist employees, give examples	Leader involves employees and guides them	Participative leadership; Guidance; Delegation	Leadership Practices	Theme 1: Relationship-Oriented Application of Leadership	Leaders emphasize involvement and guidance rather than directive control
Openness... constructive feedback and assistance	Leader maintains openness and provides support	Open communication; Constructive feedback	Relationship Building	Theme 1: Relationship-Oriented Application of Leadership	Leadership is built on trust, openness, and constructive engagement
Understand employees... help those who need help	Leader understands employees' needs	Employee understanding; Support	Employee-Centered Leadership	Theme 1: Relationship-Oriented Application of Leadership	Leaders prioritize individual employee needs and well-being
Get opinions of all employees	Leader involves employees in decisions	Employee consultation	Participative Leadership	Theme 1: Relationship-Oriented Application of Leadership	Decision-making is inclusive and participative
Always open to help	Leader provides continuous support	Coaching; Availability	Development Support	Theme 1: Relationship-Oriented Application of Leadership	Leaders act as accessible mentors and guides
Maintain harmonious relationships	Leader prioritizes harmony	Harmony maintenance	Workplace Climate	Theme 1: Relationship-Oriented Application of Leadership	Maintaining positive relationships is central to leadership practice
I adjust based on employee needs	Leadership adapts to situation	Adaptability; Responsiveness	Situational Leadership	Theme 2: Situational and Context-Driven Leadership	Leadership is flexible and responsive to changing needs
Different contexts require different styles	Leadership depends on context	Context-based leadership	Organizational Demands	Theme 2: Situational and Context-Driven Leadership	Leaders adjust based on situational and institutional demands
Influenced by policies, ISO, CHED	Leadership shaped by systems	Policy-driven leadership	Institutional Influence	Theme 2: Situational and Context-Driven Leadership	Institutional frameworks strongly influence leadership behavior
Employee competence influences leadership	Leadership depends on capability	Employee-based adjustment	Human Factors	Theme 2: Situational and Context-Driven Leadership	Leaders adjust approaches based on employee readiness
Need to be assertive under pressure	Leader balances support and enforcement	Assertiveness; Performance pressure	Performance Management	Theme 3: Balancing People-Centered Leadership with Performance Demands	Leaders shift to directive roles under performance pressure
Encourage but ensure targets	Support with accountability	Accountability; Support balance	Leadership Balance	Theme 3: Balancing People-Centered Leadership with Performance Demands	Leadership integrates support with performance expectations
Maintain relationships while ensuring compliance	Balance harmony and compliance	Relationship vs compliance balance	Dual Leadership Role	Theme 3: Balancing People-Centered Leadership with Performance Demands	Leaders manage dual roles of care and control
Resistance to change	Employees resist new systems and processes	Resistance to change	Change Management	Theme 4: Leadership Challenges in a Compliance-Driven Environment	Change resistance remains a major leadership challenge
Communication gaps	Ineffective communication affects implementation	Communication gaps	Communication Issues	Theme 4: Leadership Challenges in a Compliance-Driven Environment	Ineffective communication hinders leadership effectiveness
Employees focus on own tasks	Lack of holistic perspective among employees	Limited organizational alignment	Organizational Behavior	Theme 4: Leadership Challenges in a Compliance-Driven Environment	Employees may lack alignment with institutional goals
Different attitudes and competence	Employees vary in behavior and ability	Workforce diversity	Workforce Diversity	Theme 4: Leadership Challenges in a Compliance-Driven Environment	Diverse workforce creates leadership complexity
Need for more support	Leaders lack sufficient institutional support	Resource constraints	Organizational Support	Theme 4: Leadership Challenges in a Compliance-Driven Environment	Institutional limitations affect leadership effectiveness

Application of Leadership Styles, Influencing Factors, and Challenges Experienced by Institutional Leaders in Autonomous Maritime Institutions

Findings from the qualitative analysis of the study shed more light on the way institutional leaders apply their leadership styles in practice, the factors influencing the approaches used, and the challenges they encounter in leading employees. The qualitative data were analyzed using the thematic approach of Braun and Clarke (2006), whereby responses were coded and grouped into themes reflecting leadership practices, influencing factors, and leadership challenges.

As presented in Table 4, the thematic analysis resulted in four major themes: 1) Relationship-Oriented Application of Leadership, 2) Situational and Context-Driven Leadership, 3) Balancing People-Centered Leadership with Performance Demands, and 4) Leadership Challenges in a Compliance-Driven Environment. These themes capture the predominant patterns seen in the practice of leadership adaptation and the challenges encountered by institutional leaders.

Overall, the findings indicate that leaders generally apply participative, relational, and developmental approaches while adapting their leadership to organizational requirements, employee needs, and situational demands. At the same time, communication gaps, resistance to change, varying employee capabilities and attitudes, resource limitations, and the need to balance employee well-being with performance and compliance requirements present continuing leadership challenges.



Table 5

Thematic Analysis of Leadership Preferences, Influencing Factors, and Challenges

Thematic Analysis of Leadership Preferences, Influencing Factors, and Challenges					
Phase 1: Raw Data (Excerpt)	Phase 1: Condensed Meaning	Phase 2: Initial Codes	Phase 3-4: Category	Phase 5: Theme	Phase 6: Thematic Interpretation
Consult before making decisions	Employees prefer leaders who seek input before deciding	Participative decision-making	Participative Leadership	Theme 1: Preference for Supportive and Development-Oriented Leadership	Employees value involvement and shared decision-making
Prioritize relationships	Employees value leaders who build strong relationships	Relationship-oriented leadership	Relationship Building	Theme 1: Preference for Supportive and Development-Oriented Leadership	Leadership is grounded on trust and interpersonal connection
Creates a supportive environment	Employees prefer encouraging workplaces	Supportive work environment	Workplace Climate	Theme 1: Preference for Supportive and Development-Oriented Leadership	Positive environments enhance motivation and engagement
Prefer mentoring and guidance	Employees want development-oriented leadership	Need for guidance: Development-focused leadership	Development Support	Theme 1: Preference for Supportive and Development-Oriented Leadership	Employees seek coaching and continuous learning
Leader is approachable	Employees value accessible leaders	Leader accessibility	Employee-Centered Leadership	Theme 1: Preference for Supportive and Development-Oriented Leadership	Approachability strengthens support and communication
Prefer involvement in tasks	Employees want active participation	Participative involvement	Participative Leadership	Theme 1: Preference for Supportive and Development-Oriented Leadership	Engagement improves ownership and performance
Respect employee ideas	Employees want their voices heard	Inclusion of employee voice	Participative Leadership	Theme 1: Preference for Supportive and Development-Oriented Leadership	Inclusion fosters trust and commitment
Prefer coaching with participation	Employees prefer blended leadership styles	Blended leadership preference	Leadership Approach	Theme 1: Preference for Supportive and Development-Oriented Leadership	Employees favor a mix of coaching and democratic leadership
Clear instructions during deadlines	Employees need structured guidance under pressure	Need for task clarity	Work Demands	Theme 2: Context-Dependent Leadership Preferences	Leadership preference shifts in high-pressure situations
Prefer autonomy in work	Employees value independence	Need for autonomy	Work Style Preference	Theme 2: Context-Dependent Leadership Preferences	Autonomy is important in low-pressure contexts
Consider personal situations	Employees expect empathy	Consideration of personal needs	Employee Welfare	Theme 2: Context-Dependent Leadership Preferences	Leadership should be responsive to individual needs
Leadership changes under pressure	Preferences shift with workload	Pressure-driven leadership needs	Work Environment	Theme 2: Context-Dependent Leadership Preferences	Context influences leadership expectations
Depends on nature of work	Preferences vary by job demands	Task-based leadership need	Job Nature	Theme 2: Context-Dependent Leadership Preferences	Leadership must align with task requirements
Work environment influences preference	Employees value positive climate	Importance of work climate	Organizational Culture	Theme 2: Context-Dependent Leadership Preferences	Organizational culture shapes leadership expectations
Need structured leadership in compliance tasks	Employees require organization and clarity	Need for structured leadership	Compliance Context	Theme 2: Context-Dependent Leadership Preferences	Structure is critical in compliance-driven tasks
Teamwork and communication improve performance	Employees value collaboration	Collaborative environment	Work Culture	Theme 3: Importance of Communication, Participation, and Support Systems	Collaboration enhances productivity and engagement
Delay in instructions	Communication delays affect efficiency	Delayed communication	Communication Issues	Theme 4: Experienced Gaps in Communication, Guidance, and Involvement	Inefficient communication disrupts workflow
Lack of communication	Employees experience inconsistency	Communication gaps	Communication Issues	Theme 4: Experienced Gaps in Communication, Guidance, and Involvement	Poor communication weakens leadership effectiveness
Limited participation in decisions	Employees feel excluded	Lack of involvement	Participation Issues	Theme 4: Experienced Gaps in Communication, Guidance, and Involvement	Lack of inclusion reduces engagement
Insufficient guidance	Employees need more coaching	Lack of coaching	Development Issues	Theme 4: Experienced Gaps in Communication, Guidance, and Involvement	Inconsistent coaching affects performance
Issues in delegation and trust	Trust affects leadership effectiveness	Trust concerns	Leadership Effectiveness	Theme 4: Experienced Gaps in Communication, Guidance, and Involvement	Trust is essential for effective delegation
Employees feel unsupported	Employees perceive lack of support	Insufficient support	Support Issues	Theme 4: Experienced Gaps in Communication, Guidance, and Involvement	Lack of support reduces motivation
Need stronger support systems	Employees want better leadership support	Need for stronger support	Affiliative Improvement	Theme 5: Need for Enhanced Coaching, Communication, and Leadership Systems	Strengthening support systems improves leadership effectiveness
Need more coaching	Employees want continuous development	Need for development programs	Coaching Improvement	Theme 5: Need for Enhanced Coaching, Communication, and Leadership Systems	Continuous learning is a key expectation
Need better communication systems	Employees require improved communication	Communication improvement	Communication Enhancement	Theme 5: Need for Enhanced Coaching, Communication, and Leadership Systems	Effective systems are essential for coordination
Need regular feedback	Employees want consistent evaluation	Feedback systems	Performance Monitoring	Theme 5: Need for Enhanced Coaching, Communication, and Leadership Systems	Feedback enhances performance and accountability
Desire fairness and consistency	Employees expect stable leadership behavior	Leadership consistency	Leadership Practices	Theme 5: Need for Enhanced Coaching, Communication, and Leadership Systems	Consistency builds trust and reliability
Need better tools and resources	Employees require institutional support	Resource support	Organizational Support	Theme 5: Need for Enhanced Coaching, Communication, and Leadership Systems	Resources enable effective work performance
Soft-spoken but firm leader	Ideal leader balances empathy and firmness	Balanced leadership behavior	Leadership Traits	Theme 6: Ideal Leaders as Balanced, Adaptable, and People-Centered	Employees value balanced leadership behavior
Leader should be approachable	Ideal leader is accessible	Leader accessibility	Affiliative Traits	Theme 6: Ideal Leaders as Balanced, Adaptable, and People-Centered	Accessibility fosters trust and communication
Leader should have integrity	Ethical leadership is valued	Ethical leadership	Leadership Values	Theme 6: Ideal Leaders as Balanced, Adaptable, and People-Centered	Integrity is central to leadership credibility
Leader should motivate	Employees value empowerment	Empowerment	Coaching Traits	Theme 6: Ideal Leaders as Balanced, Adaptable, and People-Centered	Motivation enhances engagement and growth
Leader should understand emotions	Emotional intelligence is important	Emotional intelligence	Leadership Competence	Theme 6: Ideal Leaders as Balanced, Adaptable, and People-Centered	Emotional awareness improves leadership effectiveness
Leader should be visionary	Employees value strategic thinking	Strategic leadership	Visionary Traits	Theme 6: Ideal Leaders as Balanced, Adaptable, and People-Centered	Vision guides direction and purpose
Leader should adapt	Flexibility is essential	Flexibility	Situational Leadership	Theme 6: Ideal Leaders as Balanced, Adaptable, and People-Centered	Adaptability is critical for leadership success



Leadership Preferences, Influencing Factors, and Challenges Experienced by Employees in Autonomous Maritime Institutions

The qualitative results obtained from the research offer further understanding of the leadership styles preferred by employees, the factors affecting such preferences, and the problems encountered in their work environment. As presented in Table 5, employees generally preferred supportive, participative, and developmental leadership approaches characterized by guidance, involvement in decision-making, and positive working relationships. Their preferences were influenced by contextual factors such as workload, task complexity, organizational pressures, and individual expectations. Employees also identified leadership-related challenges involving inadequate communication, insufficient guidance, limited involvement in decision-making, and concerns related to trust and support.

Integration of Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The integration of quantitative and qualitative findings revealed a general convergence between the leadership styles demonstrated by institutional leaders and those preferred by employees. Quantitatively, Democratic, Affiliative, and Coaching emerged as the dominant leadership styles of institutional leaders, while employees primarily preferred Coaching, Democratic, and Affiliative Leadership. The qualitative findings further explained this pattern, showing that leaders generally practiced participative, relationship-oriented, and developmental leadership, while employees similarly valued guidance, participation in decision-making, positive working relationships, and developmental support.

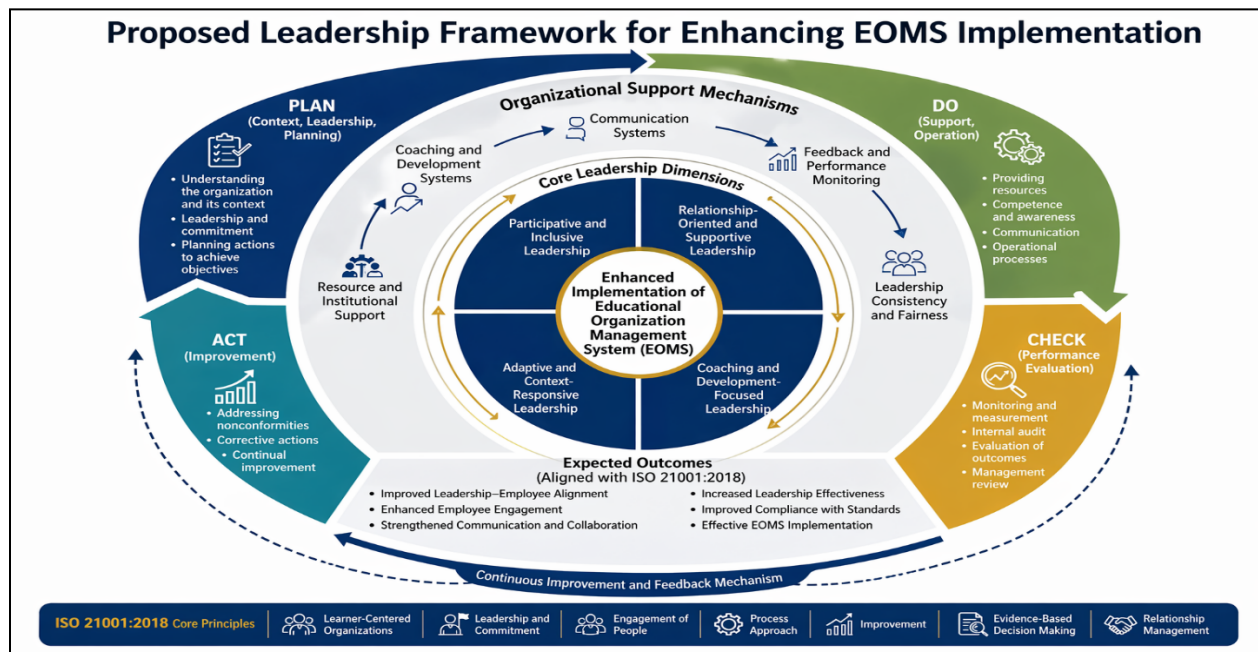
Despite this general convergence, both phases revealed context-based gaps involving communication, employee participation, guidance, resistance to change, performance demands, and varying organizational and employee needs. These findings indicate that leadership effectiveness depends not only on the alignment of leadership styles and employee preferences but also on leaders' ability to adapt their approaches to situational demands. The integrated findings therefore provided the basis for the proposed leadership framework for enhancing EOMS implementation.

Proposed Leadership Framework for Enhancing EOMS Implementation

Based on the integrated findings, the proposed framework incorporates four leadership dimensions: Participative and Inclusive Leadership, Relationship-Oriented and Supportive Leadership, Coaching and Development-Focused Leadership, and Adaptive and Context-Responsive Leadership. These are supported by communication, coaching and development, feedback and performance monitoring, leadership consistency, and institutional resource support. Integrated with the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle of ISO 21001:2018, the framework provides a systematic approach to strengthening leader-employee alignment, engagement, collaboration, continuous improvement, and the effective implementation of EOMS.

Figure 1

Proposed Leadership Framework for Enhancing EOMS Implementation





Conclusions

The nature of leadership practiced in the autonomous maritime institutions is mainly participative and developmental in character. The leaders in these institutions practice mostly Democratic, Affiliative, and Coaching leadership styles, indicating an emphasis on employee participation, positive working relationships, and development rather than predominantly directive leadership.

The employees prefer leadership styles that are supportive, participative, and developmental in nature. The predominance of Coaching, Democratic, and Affiliative Leadership indicates that employees value guidance and development, involvement in decision-making, and positive workplace relationships.

The findings further indicate an association between institutional leaders' leadership styles and employees' leadership preferences, although the degree of association varies across leadership situations. While general convergence was observed between the leadership orientations of leaders and employees, context-based areas of misalignment demonstrate that leadership approaches and employee preferences do not necessarily coincide in all situations.

Leadership effectiveness is also influenced by organizational, situational, and employee-related factors, including institutional policies, quality assurance requirements, workload demands, and employees' competence and motivation. Despite the general convergence observed, leadership gaps involving communication, guidance, employee involvement, adaptation to change, and resource support may affect leadership effectiveness.

Effective leadership within the institutions should therefore be viewed as an integrated, dynamic, and adaptive process rather than as the application of a single dominant leadership style. Leaders need to balance participative, relational, developmental, and directive approaches according to organizational circumstances and employee needs.

The proposed leadership framework provides a structured approach for strengthening leadership practices and enhancing EOMS implementation. Its integration with the Plan-Do-Check-Act (PDCA) cycle of ISO 21001:2018 reinforces continuous improvement while supporting leader-employee alignment, engagement, collaboration, and institutional quality performance.

Limitation and Further Research

The study was limited to three autonomous maritime institutions within the JBLF System; thus, the findings should be interpreted within this institutional context. The quantitative findings were also based on self-reported leadership behaviors and preferences, which may be influenced by respondents' perceptions. Future research may include other maritime and higher education institutions, employ longitudinal or comparative designs, and examine the application and effectiveness of the proposed leadership framework across different organizational contexts.

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