

Literature review of the relationship between emergent leadership and changing effectiveness

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Abstract: This classification research explores the role of emergent leadership in the context of organizational change management, focusing on how informal leaders contribute to effective change processes. In a rapidly evolving business landscape, traditional top-down leadership models often fall short, making emergent leadership—where individuals rise to influence without formal authority—essential. This study categorizes the traits of emergent leaders, such as adaptability, creativity, and influence, and examines how these characteristics facilitate team resilience and responsiveness to change. This study employs a classification research methodology to explore the concept of emergent leadership in relation to organizational change management. The research follows a qualitative approach, leveraging existing literature and case studies to identify and classify the characteristics of emergent leaders. Data is gathered from a range of sources, including: Academic Journals; Books; Case Studies. The findings underscore the importance of recognizing and supporting emergent leadership as a vital strategy for enhancing change management effectiveness in organizations, thereby contributing to the development of flexible and high-performing teams in today's complex work environments.

Keywords: leadership; emergent leadership; team work; changing; changing effectiveness.

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I- Introduction

In today's fast-changing business environment, the ability to lead organizational change effectively is more important than ever. Traditional, top-down leadership models often struggle to keep up with the demands of complex and collaborative work settings. Emergent leadership, where individuals naturally rise to leadership roles without formal authority, offers a flexible alternative. This review explores the connection between emergent leadership and the effectiveness of organizational change. Emergent leaders stand out by recognizing opportunities, building trust, and adapting quickly to change, making them key players in driving successful transformations. As businesses increasingly focus on teamwork and cross-functional collaboration, understanding how emergent leadership contributes to change effectiveness is crucial for fostering adaptable and high-performing teams.

Emergent leaders are characterized by their ability to recognize opportunities, foster trust, and adapt to new situations quickly, making them invaluable in settings that prioritize agility and continuous improvement. As organizations increasingly prioritize team-based projects and

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cross-functional collaboration, understanding and nurturing emergent leadership has become essential for cultivating resilient, high-performing teams.

This study seeks to explore the concept of emergent leadership in depth, addressing the following main questions: How does emergent leadership help organizations manage change effectively? What traits of emergent leaders are most important for successful change? And how do emergent leaders help teams adapt to fast-changing environments?

Despite the growing recognition of emergent leadership as a critical factor in organizational change, several knowledge gaps persist in the literature that warrant further exploration. These gaps hinder a comprehensive understanding of how emergent leadership functions and its implications for change management. While theoretical frameworks and conceptual discussions around emergent leadership exist, there is a scarcity of empirical studies that quantitatively assess the impact of emergent leaders on organizational change outcomes. Most existing research tends to focus on case studies or anecdotal evidence, which limits the generalizability of findings across different contexts and industries. Furthermore, emergent leadership does not operate in a vacuum; it is influenced by various contextual factors such as organizational culture, team dynamics, and environmental conditions. However, there is limited research that explores how these factors interact with emergent leadership traits and behaviors. Understanding these contextual influences is crucial for developing effective leadership strategies in diverse organizational settings.

Although emergent leaders are believed to influence team performance and adaptability, there is insufficient exploration of the specific mechanisms through which they influence team dynamics and outcomes. Studies often overlook the nuanced interactions between emergent leaders and team members, which are essential for understanding how these leaders drive change and foster collaboration.

Much of the existing research on emergent leadership is grounded in Western organizational contexts. There is a need for more diverse perspectives that examine how emergent leadership manifests in different cultural settings. Cross-cultural studies can provide valuable insights into how varying social norms and values influence the emergence and effectiveness of leadership styles.

The purpose of this study is to explore how emergent leadership impacts the success of organizational change. It aims to understand the key traits of emergent leaders that help teams adapt to change and identify ways to support these leaders. The study also offers practical advice for improving change management in organizations by focusing on the role of emergent leadership.

The significance of this study lies in its potential to deepen the understanding of how emergent leadership contributes to effective organizational change. As organizations aim to become more adaptable and responsive, this study provides insights into how emergent leaders help teams navigate change and maintain performance. By exploring the link between emergent leadership and change effectiveness, the study highlights the value of flexible leadership styles that align with modern business challenges. Additionally, recognizing and

supporting emergent leaders can improve employee engagement, collaboration, and shared ownership of change processes.

1. Emergent leadership:

To understand the evolving nature of emergent leadership, it is essential to begin with a clear definition of leadership, which has been shaped by various perspectives and disciplines over time.

Table 1 illustrates the historical evolution of leadership models and theories, including key definitions and focal points

1900-1929	In a 1927 leadership conference, attendees viewed leadership as the ability to control individuals and groups to achieve obedience, respect, and loyalty. During this period, leadership was largely defined by power and influence.	Katz & Kahn, (1978)
1930-1939	Attention shifted towards influencing subordinates through specific leadership traits and qualities, emphasizing leader-member interaction.	Stogdill, (1948).
1940-1949	With advancements in management and sociology, leadership definitions evolved to focus on guiding individuals within groups without coercion, highlighting behavioral influence over force.	Fleishman, (1973).
1950-1959	Leadership was defined as the behaviors exhibited by a leader within a team to foster interaction and drive group and organizational effectiveness.	Bennett, (1952).
1960-1969	Consensus emerged that leadership involves influencing others to achieve specific goals, while also adapting to changing circumstances faced by the leader.	Burns, (1978).
1970-1979	The organizational behavior approach emphasized building teams and enhancing social relationships within them to meet organizational objectives.	Hackman & Oldham, (1976).
1980-1999	Leadership was increasingly seen as the power to influence, with renewed interest in trait theory. Charismatic leaders who could inspire transformation within teams and the organization were valued.	Northouse, (1997).
2000-present	With growing frustration over corruption in organizations and politics, new leadership trends emerged. Modern definitions often see the leader as a servant who prioritizes and supports subordinates, embodying honesty, authenticity, and ethical behavior.	Greenleaf, (2002).

As table 1 illustrates, the leader is an individual responsible for ensuring the organization's sustainability. The leader manage team members to achieve organizational goals. In fulfilling their leadership responsibilities, a leader may employ various approaches and styles. (Putri, Mirzania, & Hartanto, 2020, p. 50).

On the other hand, Fenton (2015) highlights that individuals can assume leadership roles and exert influence over group members without holding a formal position of authority. In this type of leadership, the leader influences others through task completion and by fostering a perception of adherence to group norms, which leads to the emergent leader being viewed positively by their peers. Individuals without official authority may emerge as informal leaders, such that teammates perceive them as leader-like and recognize their influence (Briker, Hohmann, Walter, K. Lam, & Zhang, 2021, p. 916). An emergent leader refers to an individual who informally navigates an unpredictable process of assuming leadership roles, influenced by a dynamic that determines who evolves into a leader. Those with unique personality traits, cognitive abilities, and other personal characteristics are more likely to emerge as leaders (Siregar & Anindita, 2021, p. 56). Additionally, emergent leaders fulfill leadership responsibilities in organizations, particularly within groups that lack designated leaders, such as autonomous work teams and informal meetings (Kickul & Neuman, 2000, p. 28).

Emergent leader hold a significant level of respect among their team members, even when they lack formal authority. This respect is not derived from a title but is earned through their active contributions, consistent performance, and deep expertise. Such leaders build trust by demonstrating genuine commitment, often collaborating with their team to tackle challenges, provide insights, and foster the growth of others. Their knowledge and dedication establish them as credible and dependable figures, leading team members to seek their guidance despite the absence of an official role. This earned respect transforms into a powerful form of influence, which effectively drives collaboration, cohesion, and collective success within the team (Briker et al., 2021; Fenton, 2015; Siregar & Anindita, 2021).

The importance of emergent leadership is evident through several key factors. According to Spark & O'Connor, (2021), emergent leaders play a crucial role in creating positive relationships among team members. These leaders foster an environment of good interaction, which enhances collaboration and positively impacts the team's task performance. By building strong interpersonal connections, emergent leaders contribute to a more cohesive and effective team. Additionally, emergent leadership is linked to increased productivity at the team level. When teams function well together, their heightened productivity often translates into improved performance across the organization as a whole. This ripple effect underscores the importance of nurturing emergent leadership within teams, as it ultimately boosts the organization's overall productivity and effectiveness. Furthermore, emergent leaders guide the organization toward achieving its goals in an efficient and effective manner. By leveraging their influence and fostering teamwork, these leaders help align team efforts with organizational objectives, ensuring that strategic goals are met. On the individual level, the primary benefit of emergent leadership is the opportunity for individuals to attain formal leadership positions. This advancement can lead to increased compensation and the development of essential leadership skills. As a result, individuals not only achieve their personal and professional goals but also enhance their capacity to contribute to their organizations in meaningful ways (Spark & O'Connor, 2021, p. 2).

In the context of emergent leadership, certain personality traits significantly influence how individuals lead informally within a team. These traits form a robust foundation for building trust and cohesion among team members, enabling emergent leaders to navigate social dynamics effectively. Extraversion is one of the key traits associated with emergent leaders. Characterized by an outgoing, energetic, and socially oriented nature, individuals high in extraversion are typically sociable, talkative, and assertive. They enjoy engaging with others, participating in social activities, and seeking stimulation from their external environment. This sociability allows them to connect with team members easily, fostering a collaborative atmosphere (Alkan, Ozbilgin, & Kamasak, 2023). Then, Agreeableness is another important trait, reflecting an individual's tendency to be cooperative, compassionate, and considerate of others. People with high agreeableness are often empathetic and willing to compromise. They value harmony in relationships and strive to avoid conflict, making them approachable and supportive leaders who can effectively mediate team dynamics (Alkan et al., 2023). Also, Openness to experience is associated with creativity, curiosity, and a willingness to explore new ideas. Individuals high in openness are often imaginative and eager to engage in novel activities, bringing fresh perspectives and innovative solutions to their teams. This trait encourages adaptability and fosters an environment where team members feel comfortable sharing their ideas (Alkan et al., 2023). Furthermore, conscientiousness also plays a crucial role, characterized by organization, responsibility, and diligence. Individuals who exhibit high conscientiousness are thorough, reliable, and disciplined; they are committed to achieving goals and paying attention to details. Their reliability instills confidence in their teammates, further solidifying their role as informal leaders (Alkan et al., 2023). Lastly, emotional stability reflects an individual's resilience and ability to remain composed under stress. Those with high emotional stability are less prone to negative emotions, allowing them to handle challenges calmly and effectively. This stability enhances their credibility and makes them more approachable, further strengthening their leadership influence (Alkan et al., 2023, p. 243).

In addition to these personality traits, emergent leaders also exhibit specific behavioral characteristics that contribute to their influence and effectiveness within a team. For instance, they are often influential without intending to be, as colleagues admire and adopt their ideas. Their efficiency stems from the respect and acceptance they receive from peers, allowing them to understand team strengths closely. As they gain trust from teammates, they become self-assured, which makes them assertive and supportive leaders. Moreover, their collaborative nature encourages team input, fostering teamwork and engagement in contrast to traditional hierarchical leadership styles (Alam, 2023).

Moreover to personality and behavioral traits, emergent leaders demonstrate specific skills and approaches that enhance their leadership impact. For example, they exhibit self-motivation, actively seeking solutions and driving progress by solving problems and suggesting ideas to maintain project momentum. Their creative thinking allows them to propose innovative solutions to challenges, showcasing a willingness to take risks. Furthermore, they possess the influence to positively impact their teammates, gaining respect by seeking input and building credibility as trusted leaders. Their ability to practice self-management enables them to regulate their behavior and make independent decisions, serving as role models for personal accountability within the team. Finally, their adaptability allows them to shift between team member and leader roles as needed, guiding others to leverage their skills effectively in changing situations. They are also team-oriented, valuing consensus

and viewing themselves as integral parts of the team, focused on motivating others toward collaborative solutions (Team, 2024).

These traits and behaviors illustrate a comprehensive view of the qualities that enable emergent leaders to influence and lead within teams informally. Personality traits like extraversion, conscientiousness, and emotional stability form the core of their natural leadership disposition. Behavioral characteristics such as influence, efficiency, and collaboration enhance their ability to connect with and motivate others. Lastly, skills like self-motivation, adaptability, and team orientation solidify their impact and ensure they are valued within the team. Collectively, these traits highlight the adaptability, inclusiveness, and proactive approach that distinguish emergent leaders from formally appointed ones. Emergent leaders thrive on mutual respect, open dialogue, and creativity, setting them apart in organizational structures that increasingly value collaboration and flexibility. These qualities not only position emergent leaders as valuable team assets but also make them effective agents of change within their organizations.

2. Changing effectiveness in organization:

Changing management involves a radical or gradual transition from a current reality to a new state that differs from the previous conditions or the existing situation. It encompasses a set of actions and steps taken by an organization in its mission, policies, strategies, or any other element of its structure. The effectiveness of change refers to how successfully an organization or team can implement and manage change. This includes the ability to adapt to new conditions, processes, or strategies in a manner that leads to positive outcomes. Measuring the effectiveness of organizational change varies among researchers, each suggesting different criteria based on their perspectives. Key literature studies have addressed the measurement of change management effectiveness.

One approach to assessing change effectiveness is through performance evaluation at three levels: organizational, individual, and change management, based on Prosci's methodology. Organizational performance is measured by improvements in performance, business readiness, benefits realization, ROI, and the speed of implementing changes. Individual performance focuses on how employees adapt to change, utilizing metrics like engagement, awareness, behavioral changes, feedback, readiness, and support requests. Change management performance assesses the effectiveness of change management teams by tracking adherence to plans, training outcomes, communication effectiveness, timelines, and KPIs, along with benefit realization and ROI (Sokolova, 2022).

Another effective tool for measuring change management effectiveness is the balanced scorecard. This time-tested management tool allows companies to evaluate performance-related activities and provide feedback by aligning strategic goals with periodic outcomes. It compares project objectives with actual results, offering a clear and straightforward way to assess progress. The balanced scorecard evaluates impact from four key perspectives: customer, financial, process, and human, and can be applied across various sub-projects within digital transformation efforts (Futcher, 2020).

The Prosci ADKAR model, developed by Jeff Hiatt, focuses on individual change as the key to successful organizational transformation. ADKAR stands for five outcomes individuals must achieve: Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability, and Reinforcement. This model complements the broader Prosci 3-Phase Process for organizational change. By guiding individuals through these stages and addressing resistance, leaders can effectively support change initiatives. Tools like the ADKAR Blueprint and assessments help identify barriers and ensure progress. Awareness involves understanding the need for change, ensuring individuals recognize why the change is necessary and the risks of not changing. Desire reflects the willingness to support and participate in the change, focusing on motivating individuals to embrace and commit to it. Knowledge entails knowing how to change, which includes providing the necessary information, training, and skills required for effective implementation. Ability signifies having the capability to apply the knowledge and skills to execute the change, involving practice and overcoming obstacles. Lastly, Reinforcement ensures that the change is sustained through monitoring, feedback, and rewards, preventing a reversion to old behaviors and ensuring long-term success (Hiatt, 2006).

3. The relationship between emergent leadership and changing effectiveness:

Emergent leadership is especially valuable for organizations seeking to manage change effectively. Unlike assigned leaders, emergent leaders naturally arise within teams due to their influence, creativity, and adaptability, which allows them to address challenges at the ground level and guide teams through complex, fast-changing environments. This connection between emergent leadership and change effectiveness is strengthened by the distinctive qualities emergent leaders bring, as they often excel in creating an environment that promotes adaptability, innovation, and empowerment among team members (Schein, 2010; Rainey, 2014; Uhl-Bien & Arena, 2018).

Emergent leadership contributes to effective change management by encouraging adaptability, distributed leadership, and employee empowerment. These leaders foster a flexible environment where team members feel empowered to contribute to the change process. By promoting distributed leadership, emergent leaders allow responsibilities to be shared across teams, which means that more people are actively involved in the change efforts, resulting in higher engagement and commitment (Gronn, 2002; Spillane, 2006; Bolden, 2011). Furthermore, emergent leaders cultivate a culture of innovation by encouraging team members to think creatively and contribute fresh perspectives, making adapting to change not only easier but also more effective for organizations in dynamic environments (Kanter, 2006; Amabile, 1998; West, 2002).

Key traits of emergent leaders that support successful change include adaptability, influence, creativity, and self-management. Adaptability allows emergent leaders to navigate changing environments fluidly, making them well-suited to guide teams through transitions. Their influence stems from the trust and respect they garner within their teams, inspiring others to follow their lead (Zaccaro, 2001; Day et al., 2014; Avolio & Gardner, 2005). Creativity enables them to develop innovative solutions, addressing problems in unique ways that keep the organization responsive and resilient. Self-management, a hallmark of emergent

leadership, ensures these leaders can regulate their behavior and decisions independently, which is crucial in high-stress or high-stakes change scenarios (Goleman, 1998; Yukl, 2013; Wood & Bandura, 1989).

Additionally, emergent leaders play a pivotal role in helping teams adapt by fostering collaboration, open communication, and trust among members. They promote team-oriented approaches, encouraging members to work together and support each other during challenging times. This collaborative culture improves resilience, as team members are more likely to share information and develop solutions collectively (Edmondson, 1999; Katzenbach & Smith, 2005; Tuckman, 1965). By building trust and demonstrating commitment, emergent leaders create a positive work environment that allows team members to feel secure in contributing their ideas. This approach not only helps teams stay aligned with organizational goals but also enhances their ability to respond quickly and effectively to new changes (Lencioni, 2002; Senge, 1990; Argyris, 1991).

The role of emergent leadership in managing change effectively is essential for organizations that operate in dynamic environments. By embodying traits such as adaptability, creativity, and influence, emergent leaders enable their teams to navigate the complexities of organizational change with resilience and responsiveness. This leadership style supports a culture of distributed leadership and empowerment, encouraging team members to think and act as leaders themselves. Consequently, emergent leadership serves as a bridge between change initiatives and the desired outcomes, making organizations better equipped to handle the uncertainties of a fast-changing landscape (Heifetz & Laurie, 1997; Bennis, 2009; Kotter, 1996).

Conclusion:

In conclusion, the relationship between emergent leadership and change effectiveness is critical for organizations navigating today's complex and dynamic environments. Emergent leaders, who arise organically within teams, bring unique qualities such as adaptability, influence, creativity, and self-management that significantly enhance the change process. By fostering a culture of empowerment and distributed leadership, these leaders not only engage team members but also encourage collaboration and innovation.

The ability of emergent leaders to build trust and facilitate open communication creates an environment conducive to resilience and responsiveness during transitions. As they promote continuous feedback and improvement, emergent leaders ensure that change initiatives are not only implemented successfully but are also sustainable over time.

Ultimately, the integration of emergent leadership into change management practices serves as a vital mechanism for organizations seeking to thrive amid uncertainty. By leveraging the strengths of emergent leaders, organizations can effectively navigate challenges, harness the collective creativity of their teams, and achieve desired outcomes in a rapidly evolving landscape. This leadership approach not only bridges the gap between change initiatives and successful implementation but also equips organizations to remain agile and innovative in the face of future challenges.

The implications of the study on emergent leadership and change effectiveness are significant for both theory and practice within organizational settings.

- **Enhanced Leadership Development:** Organizations should recognize the value of identifying and nurturing emergent leaders within their teams. By fostering an environment that encourages leadership at all levels, organizations can enhance their capacity to manage change effectively. This includes investing in training programs that focus on developing adaptability, creativity, and collaborative skills among employees.

- **Promoting a Culture of Empowerment:** The findings suggest that empowering employees to take on leadership roles can lead to higher engagement and commitment during change initiatives. Organizations should create structures that support distributed leadership, allowing team members to share responsibilities and contribute to decision-making processes. This empowerment can foster innovation and resilience, crucial for successful change management.

- **Facilitating Open Communication:** The study emphasizes the importance of trust and open communication in managing change. Organizations need to cultivate a culture where feedback is encouraged, and team members feel safe to express their ideas and concerns. Implementing regular check-ins and feedback mechanisms can help sustain this culture, ensuring that teams remain aligned and responsive to changes.

- **Adaptability as a Core Competency:** The findings highlight adaptability as a key trait of effective emergent leaders. Organizations should prioritize adaptability as a core competency in their leadership development frameworks. This can be achieved through training programs that simulate change scenarios, allowing leaders and team members to practice adaptive behaviors in a supportive environment.

- **Integration of Innovation in Change Processes:** The study underscores the role of emergent leaders in fostering a culture of innovation. Organizations should encourage creative problem-solving and idea generation as part of their change initiatives. This can involve brainstorming sessions, innovation workshops, and recognition programs that celebrate inventive contributions from team members.

- **Strategic Alignment with Change Initiatives:** Finally, organizations must ensure that their change initiatives align with their overall strategic goals. By leveraging the strengths of emergent leaders, organizations can more effectively connect change efforts to desired outcomes. This alignment can enhance the likelihood of successful implementation and long-term sustainability of change initiatives.

Based on the findings regarding the relationship between emergent leadership and change effectiveness, several recommendations can be made for organizations seeking to enhance their change management practices:

- **Identify and Develop Emergent Leaders:** Organizations should implement processes to identify potential emergent leaders within their teams. This can involve observing team dynamics and recognizing individuals who naturally influence and motivate others. Once

identified, provide targeted development opportunities, such as mentorship programs, workshops, and leadership training, to enhance their skills.

- Foster a Culture of Empowerment: Create an organizational culture that encourages empowerment at all levels. This includes delegating decision-making authority, allowing team members to take ownership of projects, and encouraging them to voice their ideas and concerns. Empowerment can lead to increased engagement and commitment during change initiatives.
- Encourage Collaboration and Teamwork: Promote a collaborative environment where team members feel comfortable working together and sharing information. Facilitate team-building activities and create cross-functional teams to enhance collaboration. This can help build trust and improve collective problem-solving capabilities, essential during periods of change.
- Implement Regular Feedback Mechanisms: Establish systems for continuous feedback and open communication. Regular check-ins, surveys, and feedback sessions can help gauge team sentiment and responsiveness to change. This practice not only fosters a culture of transparency but also allows for quick adjustments to change strategies based on team input.
- Cultivate Adaptability Training: Develop training programs focused on enhancing adaptability and resilience among employees. These programs can include simulations of change scenarios, resilience workshops, and stress management techniques. By preparing employees to navigate change effectively, organizations can enhance their overall adaptability.
- Promote Innovation as a Core Value: Encourage a culture of innovation by integrating creative problem-solving into the change process. This can be achieved through brainstorming sessions, innovation challenges, and recognition of creative contributions. Supporting innovative thinking can make the organization more responsive to change and improve overall effectiveness.
- Align Change Initiatives with Organizational Goals: Ensure that all change initiatives are strategically aligned with the organization's mission and goals. This alignment helps clarify the purpose of the change and engages team members in the process. Communicate the rationale behind changes clearly to foster understanding and support.

Evaluate and Adjust Leadership Approaches: Continuously assess the effectiveness of leadership styles and approaches in managing change. Solicit feedback from teams about their experiences with emergent leaders and adjust leadership development programs accordingly. This iterative approach can help refine strategies for leveraging emergent leadership in future change initiatives.

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