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INDEX

Sr. No.	Paper No.	Paper Title	Authors Name	Page No.
1	W01	AI in Teaching, Learning and Research	Dr. Alpesh R. Prajapati	01-05
2	W02 & W03	From Policy to Practice: A Multidimensional Analysis of Implementation Challenges in India's National Education Policy 2020	Dr. Deepa C. Chandwani Dr. Pragnesh B. Dalwadi	06-11
3	W04	Role of NEP-2020 in Transforming Higher Education in India	Dr. Hardik Mehta	12-16
4	W06	NEP 2020: A Transformative Stage Toward Equity and Inclusion in Education	Dr. Manish M. Chudasama	17-22
5	W07 & W16	NEP 2020 and Its Implementation: Examining Challenges in the Indian Education Sector	Dr. Gargi P Patel Dr. Nirali Ketan Shah	23-28
6	W09	National Education Policy to Transform the Education System of 21st Century: Prospects and its Implementation	Dr. Shilpa Jayantilal Patel	29-34
7	W11	Assessing NEP-2020 Implementation in Higher Education: A Comparative Study of Faculty and Student Perspectives	Dr. Vrundani K. Patel	35-43
8	W14	Reimagining Education: A Sociological Analysis of NEP 2020's Challenges and Future Outcomes	Mr. Jitendra Dhebariya	44-50
9	W20	Bridging The Digital Divide in Higher Education: Opportunities and Challenges of Technology Integration under National Education Policy 2020	Dr. Avani Lalitkumar Saraiya	51-58
10	W24	Digital Education under the National Education Policy (NEP) 2020: Challenges and Opportunities for Indian Higher Education	Dr. Jigarkumar Joshi	59-64
11	W25& W26	Digital Education and Technology Integration under NEP 2020	Dr. Ketan J Mehta Dr. Ravjibhai Kotval	65-69
12	W27	Teacher Capacity Building: Evaluating the Effectiveness of AI-Powered NotebookLM in Classroom Pedagogy	Dr. Krishna M. Lakhani	70-74
13	W28	Digital Education and Technology Integration in Higher Education: Students' Perspectives in the Context of NEP 2020	Dr. Rohan Shah	75-81
14	W29	Digital India and Educational Transformation: A Comprehensive Statistical Analysis using Multiple Regression Approach	Dr. Sanjay G Raval	82-87
15	W30& W31	Transforming India's Workforce: A Critical Study of Skill Development Initiatives under the NEP 2020	Dr. Vishal Gupta Dr. Ghanshyambhai M. Anjara	88-94

16	W32	Implementation of National Education Policy 2020 in Higher Education: Opportunities and Constraints	Mr. Bhaveshkumar R. Rathod	95-100
17	W35& P72	Digital Accounting Practices in MSMEs: An Empirical Study of Awareness and Usage Behaviour	Ms. Shivangi N. Patel Dr. Amina Nakhuda	101-104
18	W37	Integrating Indian Knowledge Systems (IKS) in Higher Education: Revitalizing Cultural Roots and Enhancing Learning Outcomes	Dr. Ajitha Shambhu Nair	105-111
19	W40	Indian Knowledge System in New Education Policy	Dr. Rupalben Ashokkumar	112-115
20	W41& W42	Towards Holistic Learning: The Vision of NEP 2020 (An Empirical Analytical Study Based on Primary Data)	Dr. Shital Rathod Dr. Kandarp Chavda	116-120
21	W43	Integrating Ayurveda into Leadership: A Dosha-Centred Approach	Dr. Megha Bhatt	121-128
22	W44	Educating the Inner Self for a Young Nation: Leveraging the Bhagavad Gita and Indian Philosophy to Realize India's Demographic Dividend	Dr. Shweta Zala	129-135
23	W45 & P26	Physical Activity and Sports as Pedagogical Tools in School Education: A Critical Analysis of NEP 2020	Dr. Mukeshkumar B. Baraiya Dr. Yogendra J. Chauhan	136-141
24	W48	Comparative Evaluation of Traditional and Modern Teaching Approaches in Secondary Schools of Ahmedabad City	Dr. Navita Sharma	142-147
25	W49	Portuguese Colonial Legacy and Its Impact on Tourism Development in Diu	Mr. Hardik R. Rathod	148-152
26	W52	English as a Bridge to Higher Education: Women's Academic Inclusion in Post-NEP 2020 India — A Qualitative Secondary-Data Review	Dr. Payal Trivedi	153-156
27	W56& W57	Inclusivity under NEP 2020: A Critical Study of Adivasi (Bhil) Representation in Higher Education	Ms. Saba Syed Dr. Sagar Vyas	157-160
28	W58& W59 P71	Comparative Risk–Return Evaluation of Selected Investment Instruments in the Indian Financial Market	Dr. Khagesh Joshi Ms. Lekshmi Ezhava Dr. Vaibhav Gallani	161-169
29	W60 & 61	Performance Evaluation of Selected Public Sector Banks in India.	Ms. Heenaben Parmar Dr. Ronak Rana	170-177
30	W23	Technology-Driven Higher Education: Insights from Students and Educators	Dr. Janki Mahesh Kotecha	178-181
31	W33	Need And Issues of Digital Education	Mr. Hasmukh Ramanlal Panchal	182-188

W43: Integrating Ayurveda into Leadership: A Dosha-Centred Approach

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Abstract: Leadership is a critical factor in determining organizational success, influencing employee motivation, decision-making processes, and overall productivity. Conventional leadership theories focus primarily on behavioural traits, situational leadership models, and personality psychology. However, ancient knowledge systems such as Ayurveda provide a holistic framework for understanding personality and leadership styles through the concept of *doshas*. Ayurveda, a traditional Indian system of medicine, explains human physiology and psychology through the Tridosha theory, which includes three fundamental energies—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. These doshas determine an individual's *prakriti* (natural constitution) and influence behavioural tendencies, decision-making abilities, and emotional responses. This research paper explores the relationship between Ayurvedic doshas and leadership types, examining how the characteristics of Vata, Pitta, and Kapha personalities correspond to different leadership styles. The study integrates Ayurvedic philosophy with modern leadership theories and presents an Indian case study of Ayurvedic leadership in practice. The findings suggest that integrating Ayurvedic principles into leadership development programs can enhance self-awareness, emotional intelligence, and organizational effectiveness. The paper concludes that a balanced combination of Vata creativity, Pitta decisiveness, and Kapha stability represents the ideal leadership model in modern organizations.

Key words: Ayurveda, Tridosha Theory, Leadership Styles, Organizational Behaviour, Emotional Intelligence, Indian Knowledge System

Introduction

Leadership is crucial for guiding organizations, motivating teams, and ensuring stability and success. Traditional leadership theories—such as trait, behavioural, and transformational approaches—mainly focus on observable actions or specific personality traits, but they often overlook a more holistic understanding of human nature. Ayurveda offers a broader perspective through the Tridosha theory, which explains personality using three energies: Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. These doshas arise from the five elements—earth, water, fire, air, and space—and shape an individual's natural constitution (*prakriti*). Each dosha influences how a person thinks, feels, and behaves.

This connection between personality and behaviour makes Ayurvedic theory useful for understanding leadership styles. For instance, Pitta individuals tend to be goal-oriented and decisive, while Vata types are creative and adaptable. Emerging research even suggests links between dosha types and biological or neurological patterns, indicating that Ayurveda may provide a scientifically relevant framework for analysing leadership and personality.

Research Objectives:

1. To examine the fundamental concepts of the Tridosha theory and their influence on human personality and behaviour.
2. To analyse the relationship between Ayurvedic doshas (Vata, Pitta, and Kapha) and different leadership styles in organizational settings.

3. To evaluate how dosha-based personality traits impact decision-making, emotional intelligence, and leadership effectiveness.
4. To explore the practical application of Ayurvedic leadership principles through an Indian case study and assess their relevance in modern organizations.

Research Methodology

Research Design: This study adopts a qualitative and conceptual research design, integrating traditional Ayurvedic philosophy with contemporary leadership theories. The research is exploratory in nature, aiming to develop a theoretical framework that links Ayurvedic personality types, as explained through the Tridosha theory, with modern leadership styles.

Sources of data: The study is based on secondary data, collected through an extensive review of existing literature. Academic sources include:

- Peer-reviewed journals in Ayurveda, psychology, and management
- Books on leadership theories and Indian philosophical systems
- Research articles on personality frameworks and emotional intelligence

Literature Review

Author(s) & Year	Focus Area	Key Concepts	Findings / Contribution	Relevance to Study
Chakraborty (2011)	Ethics & Leadership Philosophy	Vedantic perspective, ethical leadership	Highlights lack of holistic and ethical depth in traditional leadership theories	Supports need for integrating holistic frameworks like Ayurveda
Khanna (2017)	Trust in Leadership	Trust, entrepreneurship, social impact	Emphasizes trust as foundation of leadership effectiveness in developing economies	Links leadership with ethics and social responsibility
Mukherjee (2018)	Case Study (Ratan Tata)	Ethical leadership, vision, CSR	Demonstrates importance of ethics and sustainability in leadership success	Provides real-world example aligned with dosha balance
Patwardhan et al. (2005)	Ayurveda & Genetics	Prakriti, HLA gene polymorphism	Suggests scientific basis for dosha classification	Validates Ayurveda as a biological

				personality framework
Travis & Wallace (2015)	Neuroscience & Personality	Dosha brain types	Links dosha types with neurological patterns	Supports scientific relevance of dosha-based leadership
Shilpa & Murthy (2011)	Psychological Assessment	Dosha & personality traits	Explains influence of doshas on behaviour and cognition	Connects Ayurveda with personality and leadership traits
Sharma et al. (2007)	Holistic Health	Ayurveda in healthcare	Emphasizes integration of physical, mental, emotional well-being	Supports holistic leadership development
P. R. Krishna Kumar (Case)	Ayurvedic Leadership Practice	Institutional leadership, Ayurveda	Demonstrates application of Ayurvedic principles in organizations	Shows practical implementation of dosha-based leadership

Case Study Selection and Analysis

The study includes qualitative case analysis of two Indian leaders:

- P. R. Krishna Kumar
- Ratan Tata

These cases were selected based on:

- Their recognized leadership impact in healthcare and corporate sectors
- Availability of documented evidence regarding their leadership styles
- Relevance to Ayurvedic principles and holistic management practices

The case studies were analysed using a thematic approach, identifying leadership traits and aligning them with dominant dosha characteristics (Vata, Pitta, Kapha).

Overview of Leadership Theories

Leadership has been studied extensively in management and organizational psychology. Several theories explain how leaders influence followers and achieve organizational goals.

Leadership theories explain how leaders emerge, succeed, and behave, focusing on traits, behaviours, situations, or transformational vision. Major theories include Trait Theory, Behavioural Theory, Contingency Theory, and Transformational Theory. These theories help leaders understand and enhance their effectiveness.

Here are the key leadership theories and their characteristics:

1. Great Man and Trait Theories (Born to Lead)

- Great Man Theory: Suggests that leaders are born with inherent traits and exceptional qualities, emerging when needed most.
 - Trait Theory: Focuses on specific personality traits—confidence, intelligence, charisma, and ambition—that make a person a natural leader.
2. Behavioural Theories (Leaders are Made)
- Behavioural Theory: Suggests that great leaders are made through learning behaviours and actions, not just born.
 - Managerial Grid: Developed by Blake and Mouton, it assesses leadership styles based on their concern for people versus their concern for production (tasks/results).
3. Contingency and Situational Theories (Adaptive Leadership)
- Contingency Theory: Emphasizes that the best leadership style depends on the specific, complex situation or environment.
 - Situational Theory: Proposes that leaders should adapt their style based on the maturity level of their followers and the specific circumstances.
4. Transformational vs. Transactional Theories (Interaction Style)
- Transformational Theory: Focuses on leaders who inspire, motivate, and help team members grow to achieve extraordinary results.
 - Transactional Theory: Centres on supervision, organization, and a system of rewards and punishments for employee performance.
5. Other Key Theories
- Participative Theory: Proposes that the most effective leaders involve others in the decision-making process.
 - Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory: Focuses on the two-way relationship between leaders and individual members.
 - Servant Leadership: Emphasizes the leader's role as a servant to their team, focusing on their needs and development.

Dosha-Based Leadership Types

Vata Leadership Style: Vata is associated with the elements of air and space and governs movement, communication, and creativity.

Characteristics Leaders with dominant Vata dosha typically demonstrate: Creativity and innovation, High energy and enthusiasm, Quick thinking and adaptability, Strong communication skills

Leadership Strengths: Vata leaders excel in environments that require innovation and flexibility, such as startups, research organizations, and creative industries. Their ability to generate new ideas and adapt quickly to change makes them valuable in rapidly evolving organizational environments.

Leadership Challenges: However, Vata leaders may struggle with: Lack of consistency, Difficulty maintaining long-term focus, Anxiety during stressful situations

Balanced routines and structured decision-making processes can help Vata leaders improve their leadership effectiveness.

Pitta Leadership Style: Pitta represents fire and transformation and governs metabolism, intelligence, and ambition.

Characteristics: Pitta leaders are often characterized by: Strong decision-making abilities, Strategic thinking, Determination and competitiveness, High motivation and leadership confidence

Leadership Strengths: Pitta individuals are often natural leaders because of their strong analytical abilities and goal-oriented mindset. They are particularly effective in managerial and executive roles where strategic planning and decisive action are required.

Leadership Challenges: However, excessive Pitta dominance may lead to: Aggression and impatience, Authoritarian leadership style, Work stress or burnout

Developing emotional intelligence and empathy can help Pitta leaders maintain positive workplace relationships.

Kapha Leadership Style

Kapha is associated with earth and water and governs stability, endurance, and emotional balance.

Characteristics: Kapha leaders often demonstrate: Calmness and patience, Reliability and loyalty, Strong interpersonal relationships, Compassion and empathy

Leadership Strengths

Kapha leaders create stable and supportive organizational environments. Their ability to remain calm under pressure makes them effective mentors and team leaders.

Leadership Challenges

However, Kapha dominance may result in: Resistance to change, Slow decision-making, Lack of innovation etc. Encouraging adaptability and creative thinking can help Kapha leaders enhance organizational progress.

Indian Case Study: Ayurvedic Leadership in Practice

Case Study – 1: P. R. Krishna Kumar and The Arya Vaidya Pharmacy

An example of Ayurvedic leadership principles in modern organizational management can be seen in the work of P. R. Krishna Kumar, a prominent figure in the revival and modernization of Ayurveda in India. Krishna Kumar served as the managing director of **Arya Vaidya Pharmacy (AVP)** in Coimbatore and played a crucial role in expanding Ayurvedic research and healthcare institutions in India. He also established the **AVP Research Foundation** and the **Ayurvedic Trust**, organizations dedicated to advancing Ayurvedic medicine and education.

Leadership Characteristics: Krishna Kumar's leadership reflected a balanced integration of dosha characteristics:

Pitta Traits (1) Strategic decision-making (2) Visionary leadership in expanding Ayurvedic research (3) Strong determination to promote traditional medicine globally

Kapha Traits (1) Commitment to community healthcare (2) Long-term institutional development (3) Stable organizational management

Vata Traits (1) Innovative initiatives in Ayurvedic education and research (2) Promotion of Ayurveda in modern healthcare systems

Leadership Impact

Under Krishna Kumar's leadership: Ayurvedic research institutions expanded significantly. Collaboration between traditional medicine and modern scientific research increased. Ayurveda gained greater international recognition.

His leadership demonstrates how balancing creativity, strategy, and stability—qualities associated with the three doshas—can contribute to effective leadership.

Case Study – 2: Ratan Tata and Holistic Leadership

One of the most prominent examples of leadership in the Indian corporate sector is Ratan Tata, former chairman of Tata Group. His leadership style reflects a balanced integration of traits similar to the Ayurvedic doshas—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha—demonstrating how traditional personality frameworks can align with modern leadership principles. Ratan Tata served as chairman of Tata Group from 1991 to 2012. During his leadership, the company expanded globally and acquired several international firms, including Jaguar Land Rover and Corus Group. These strategic acquisitions transformed Tata Group into a global conglomerate. His leadership style is widely regarded as ethical, visionary, and people-cantered, which reflects characteristics associated with balanced dosha traits.

Analysis of Dosha Traits in Ratan Tata's Leadership

Pitta Traits: Strategic Vision and Decision-Making

The Pitta dosha represents ambition, intelligence, and strategic thinking. Leaders with dominant Pitta characteristics often demonstrate strong decision-making abilities and the confidence to pursue ambitious goals. In the case of Ratan Tata, Pitta qualities can be seen in his bold corporate strategies. Under his leadership, Tata Group made several significant acquisitions that expanded its international presence. The acquisition of Jaguar Land Rover in 2008 was initially considered risky, but it later became one of the most successful decisions in the company's history. This strategic vision demonstrates the decisive and transformational qualities associated with Pitta leadership.

Vata Traits: Innovation and Creativity

The Vata dosha represents creativity, innovation, and adaptability. Leaders influenced by Vata traits often encourage innovation and embrace new ideas. Ratan Tata demonstrated Vata leadership through innovative initiatives such as the development of the Tata Nano, which aimed to make automobile ownership affordable for middle-class Indian families. Although the Tata Nano project faced commercial challenges, it represented an innovative attempt to solve transportation problems in India. This reflects the creative and visionary qualities typical of Vata personalities.

Kapha Traits: Ethical Leadership and Stability

The Kapha dosha represents stability, compassion, and emotional balance. Leaders with Kapha characteristics often prioritize long-term relationships, ethical behaviour, and social responsibility. Ratan Tata is widely respected for his ethical leadership and commitment to corporate social responsibility. A significant portion of Tata Group's profits is directed toward philanthropic initiatives through organizations such as the Tata Trusts. His leadership emphasized social welfare, employee well-being, and sustainable development, reflecting the compassionate and stable qualities associated with Kapha leadership.

Comparative Analysis of Indian Leadership Case Studies

Leader	Organization	Dominant Dosha Traits	Leadership Style
P. R. Krishna Kumar	Arya Vaidya Pharmacy	Pitta + Kapha	Visionary Ayurvedic healthcare leadership
Ratan Tata	Tata Group	Balanced Vata, Pitta, Kapha	Ethical, strategic, and innovative leadership

These case studies demonstrate that successful leadership often reflects a balanced combination of all three doshas.

Application of ayurvedic leadership in organizations

Self-Awareness and Leadership Development: Understanding one's dominant dosha can help leaders identify their strengths and weaknesses. Self-awareness allows leaders to manage stress effectively and improve communication with team members.

Team Composition: Organizations can benefit from diversity in dosha types within teams:

- Vata individuals contribute creativity and innovation
- Pitta individuals provide direction and strategic planning
- Kapha individuals maintain stability and support teamwork

Balanced teams improve organizational performance.

Stress Management: Ayurvedic practices such as meditation, yoga, and balanced lifestyle routines help leaders maintain emotional stability and mental clarity.

Comparative Analysis of Dosha Leadership Styles

Dosha	Leadership Style	Strengths	Weaknesses
Vata	Visionary / Creative	Innovation, adaptability	Lack of consistency
Pitta	Strategic / Authoritative	Decision-making, ambition	Aggression, stress
Kapha	Supportive / Servant	Stability, empathy	Resistance to change

This comparison demonstrates that each dosha contributes unique leadership qualities.

Limitations Of Dosha-Based Leadership Models

Despite its potential benefits, applying Ayurvedic principles to leadership studies has certain limitations:

1. Limited empirical research linking dosha types with leadership effectiveness.
2. Difficulty measuring dosha characteristics scientifically.
3. Cultural differences in interpreting Ayurvedic philosophy.

However, interdisciplinary research combining Ayurveda, psychology, and management science may help overcome these limitations.

Future research directions

- Empirical studies linking dosha types with leadership effectiveness
- Development of dosha-based leadership assessment tools
- Integration of Ayurveda with emotional intelligence and personality psychology
- Cross-cultural leadership studies using Ayurvedic frameworks

Such research may contribute to a deeper understanding of holistic leadership models.

Conclusion

This research highlights how Ayurvedic philosophy offers a holistic way to understand leadership through the three doshas—Vata, Pitta, and Kapha. Each dosha represents distinct personality traits that influence leadership behaviour. Vata is associated with creativity and innovation, Pitta with strategic thinking and decisive action, and Kapha with stability and emotional support. The key insight is that effective leadership does not rely on just one of these traits, but on a balanced integration of all three.

The examples of P. R. Krishna Kumar and Ratan Tata show how these principles can be applied in real-world contexts, blending ethical responsibility with strong leadership practices. Their success suggests that combining traditional wisdom with modern management can enhance organizational effectiveness. Overall, the conclusion emphasizes that Ayurvedic principles can contribute to leadership development, improve workplace well-being, and support sustainable growth, while also encouraging further research to validate and measure these concepts scientifically.

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About SLU College

Shree Lalshankar Umiyashankar Arts and Harivadan & Padmaben Thakore Commerce College for Women, which was established in 1920 as an endeavour of Gujarat Stree Kelvani Mandal, has the proud privilege of being the first women's college in Ahmedabad. The college is recognised under Section 2 (f) and 12 (b) of UGC Act 17th June, 1972. The college runs various programmes in affiliation with Gujarat University such as - B.A., B.Com., and M.Com. The BS-BBA programme was added from the academic year 2025-2026. The college also runs several add-on programmes like Fashion Design and Computer Courses at the ICTC centre located at the SLU Campus.

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