

A Systematic Review of Leadership Development Programs for Faculty Members in Higher Education Institutions: A PRISMA-Based Review

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Abstract

Leadership development has emerged as a critical strategy for strengthening academic governance and institutional effectiveness in higher education. Despite the growing investment in faculty leadership development programmes, empirical evidence on their outcomes remains fragmented. This systematic review synthesizes and advances empirical research on the effectiveness of leadership development programs for faculty members in higher education institutions. Following PRISMA 2020 reporting standards, a comprehensive search was conducted across Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, Emerald Insight, and Google Scholar. After rigorous screening and eligibility assessment, 32 empirical studies were included in the final synthesis. The findings were analyzed thematically to identify dominant leadership outcomes and programme impacts. The review reveals that leadership development programmes contribute significantly to the enhancement of faculty communication skills, strategic decision-making, collaborative leadership practices, leadership identity formation, and engagement in institutional governance. Programmes incorporating experiential learning, mentoring, reflective practice, and institutional alignment demonstrate stronger and more sustainable outcomes. However, the evidence base is limited by methodological inconsistencies, a lack of longitudinal evaluation, and the underrepresentation of studies from developing country contexts. This review contributes to higher education policy and management literature by consolidating existing empirical evidence, identifying persistent research gaps, and highlighting the governance-level implications of faculty leadership development. The findings underscore the need for context-sensitive, methodologically robust, and strategically integrated leadership development initiatives to support sustainable leadership capacity in higher education institutions.

Keywords: Leadership development programmes, Faculty leadership, Higher education institutions, Academic governance, Leadership capacity building, Faculty development, Systematic review, PRISMA 2020

1. Introduction

Institutions of higher learning throughout the world are in the process of radicalization in an attempt to satisfy the growing requirements of accountability, quality assurance, global competitiveness, digitalization and stakeholder involvement. These developments have made academic governance and management more complex and put more leadership on the faculties members who historically balance between teaching, research, and service. Within the changing environment, leadership in higher education is no longer restricted to its formal administrative leadership roles but it is rather spread across academic departments and faculty services.

The faculty members are of significant importance in establishing the direction of the institution by designing the curriculum, leading research, making academic decisions, and being involved in the governing mechanism. However, many faculty members are appointed to leadership positions untrained and even unsystematic to grab leadership role. This discrepancy between the leadership expectations and the leadership readiness has made the leaders of higher education systems across the globe invest in leadership development programmes (LDPs) to develop leadership capacity in academic personnel of higher education.

Faculty leadership development programmes focus on developing faculty in a variety of skills, such as communication, strategic decision-making, collaboration, and leadership identity. However, in addition to the personal skills and growth, such programmes are becoming increasingly considered as strategic in the reinforcement of academic governance, facilitating change within institutions and continuity of leadership. With regard to policies and management of higher education, leadership development is thus not only a professional development program but also a major capacity building tool and organizational resilience.

Although the effectiveness of faculty leadership development programs is becoming increasingly popular, the empirical data collected on this phenomenon is rather fragmented and methodologically varied. The available researches are quite diverse in the design of the programmes, duration, the methods of evaluation and focus, so that it becomes hard to make general conclusions. Additionally, most of the existing literature is based in the contexts of Western higher learning facilities with few empirical studies done to explore the development of leadership development programmes in the developing economies like India where governance structures, cultural norms, and policy environments vary significantly.

Systematic reviews are very important in bringing together evidence, patterns and pointing out gaps in disjointed research areas. Although a few reviews have been conducted to analyze leadership development in any organizational or education context in a broader manner, there is still a vacuum of any PRISMA based systematic reviews based on the leadership development programmes in faculty members in the higher educational institutions. It is important to fill this gap when it comes to informing evidence-based policymaking and decision-making in institutions.

Accordingly, the systematic review synthesizes and advance existing empirical evidence on faculty development programs in higher education institutions using a PRISMA 2020 guided approach. Using empirical data provided in varying settings, the review would determine the main results of leadership, analyze the aspects that determine the success of the programme, and provide the important gaps in the research. In that way, the study can add to the higher education policy and management literature as it provides evidence-based information that can be utilized when designing, implementing, and evaluating faculty leadership development programs.

2. Objectives of the Review

The specific objectives of this systematic review are:

1. To examine the characteristics and design features of leadership development programmes for faculty members in higher education institutions.
2. To analyze the effectiveness of leadership development programmes in enhancing faculty leadership competencies and behaviors.
3. To identify key themes and outcomes associated with faculty leadership development.
4. To assess the methodological quality of existing studies.
5. To highlight research gaps and suggest directions for future research.

3. Research Question

1. How are faculty leadership development programmes conceptualized, structured, and delivered across higher education institutions?
2. What measurable and perceived leadership outcomes are reported in empirical studies of faculty leadership development?
3. To what extent do leadership development programmes contribute to institutional governance, collaborative leadership practices, and organizational sustainability?
4. What research designs, data collection methods, and quality assessment frameworks dominate the current evidence base?
5. What persistent methodological, contextual, and theoretical gaps warrant further scholarly investigation?

4. Methodology

4.1 Research Design

In this research, the systematic review design was adopted to provide empirical evidence on the effectiveness of leadership development programme in higher education institutions to faculty members. A methodological rigor, transparency, and evaluation of existing research were prioritized through the selection of a systematic approach to identify, evaluate, and synthesize the existing research. The PRISMA 2020 reporting framework was used to guide the review and offers the standards on how to conduct and report systematic reviews.

4.2 Data Sources and Search Strategy

The search of literature was performed in five large scholarly databases, including Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, Emerald Insight, and Google Scholar. The databases were chosen so that the study covers a wide range of peer-reviewed studies in the fields of higher education, leadership, and management. Google scholar has been taken as an auxiliary source because it was necessary to find other relevant studies that would not be found in subscription based databases.

An organized search plan was worked out as based on the combinations of keywords connected with leadership development, faculty development, higher education, and programme effectiveness. Truncation and Boolean operators were used to increase the sensitivity and relevance of a search. Search strategy was used consistently in all databases with slight modification where needed to suit database specific search capabilities.

4.3 Study Selection Process

A multi-stage screening process in accordance with PRISMA 2020 was used to select the studies. All records that had been retrieved were then exported to a reference management system where there were duplicates and they were

checked and deleted. The rest of the records were screened initially on the titles and abstracts to discard the studies that were evidently not related to the aspect of faculty leadership development or the context of higher education.

Potentially eligible studies were then evaluated in terms of inclusion and exclusion criteria. This step made sure that all the empirical research that directly studied the leadership development programmes among faculty members were retained. The general scheme of identification, screening, eligibility evaluation, and overall inclusion is shown in Figure 1, where the PRISMA flow diagram is presented to the viewer.

The systematic selection process presented in Figure 1 explained the inclusion, screening, and assessment of the eligibility of studies which were then included based on the PRISMA 2020 guidelines.

Table 1: Databases and search strategy used in the systematic review

Database	Search string
Scopus	("Leadership Development Programme*" OR "Faculty Development") AND ("Higher Education" OR "University*") AND ("Effectiveness" OR "Impact")
Web of Science	Same as Scopus
ERIC	Same as Scopus
Emerald Insight	Same as Scopus
Google Scholar	Same as Scopus (supplementary search)

Note: The searches were restricted to peer-reviewed journal articles between 2014 and 2024.

The databases searched and the search strings used to find the relevant studies to be used in this review are given in Table 1. Where possible the search was restricted in terms of titles, abstracts and keywords.

4.4 Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The inclusion criteria on which studies included in the review would be: (a) the research studies were based on leadership development or faculty development programmes in institutions of higher learning; (b) the study conducted empirical research, either quantitative, qualitative or both; (c) reported results on leadership skills, behaviours or institutional engagement; and (d) the research was published in peer-reviewed journals.

The studies were filtered out based on the following criteria: they were conceptual papers or opinion pieces, conference abstracts or dissertations; the aspect that they were specific to student leadership or faculty training; and that they lacked enough methodological explanation or outcome analysis. The criteria that were used in the screening process to include and exclude individuals are summarized in Table 2.

Table 2: Inclusion and exclusion criteria

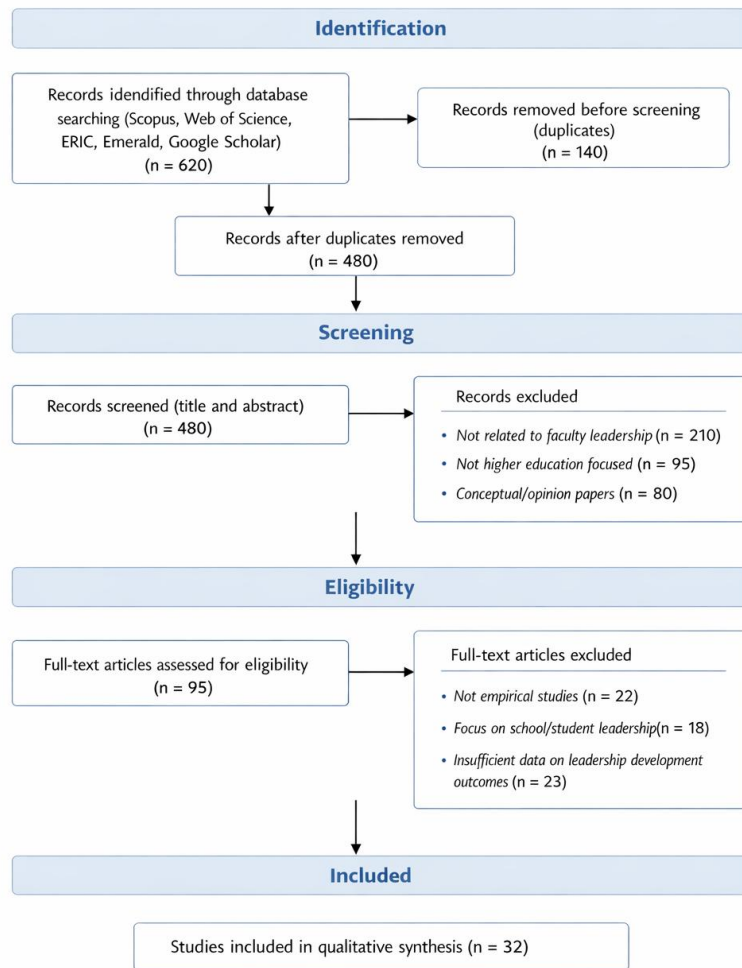
Criteria	Inclusion	Exclusion
Publication period	2014–2024	Before 2014
Language	English	Non-English
Document type	Peer-reviewed journal articles	Conference papers, theses, books
Population	Faculty members	Students, school teachers
Context	Higher education institutions	School education
Study design	Empirical studies	Conceptual/opinion papers

Note: Before the search of the database according to the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, criteria were set. The inclusion and exclusion criteria that were predetermined to identify eligible studies are outlined in Table.

4.5 Screening and Eligibility Outcomes

The use of the screening and eligibility criteria led to the eventual inclusion of studies in this review. After the elimination of duplicates, a large number of records were filtered out in the title and abstract screening process since they were irrelevant. Further exclusion occurred during the full-text assessment phase as the study reviews were not conducted on the resultant of leadership development or not specifically with faculty groups.

A total of 32 empirical studies were found to satisfy all the inclusion criteria, and they were incorporated in the synthesis. Table 3, which is a summary of the number of records identified, screened, excluded and included at each stage of the review, completes the PRISMA flow diagram.



Note. Criteria were defined prior to the database search following PRISMA 2020 guidelines.

The process of study selection was conducted according to the PRISMA 2020 requirements. A preliminary search in five databases provided 620 records. The full-text articles were evaluated on eligibility after the exclusion of duplicates and title-abstract screening. Lastly, 32 studies were filtered according to the inclusion criteria and fit the qualitative synthesis. Figure 1 represents the detailed selection process.

4.6 Data Extraction and Synthesis

Data extraction was conducted systematically using a predefined extraction framework. Information extracted from each study included publication details, research design, sample characteristics, programme features, outcome measures, and key findings. This approach ensured consistency and facilitated comparative analysis across studies.

Data that have been extracted were analysed using a thematic synthesis approach. The inductive coding was used to code leadership results and programme effects, which gave the opportunity to identify dominating themes of the studies included. The above themes were used to form the results and thematic discussion in the following sections.

4.7 Quality Assessment

The quality of the methodology of the included studies was determined through the use of the predefined appraisal criteria depending on the research design of the individual studies. Both quantitative and qualitative studies were judged on the aspects of sampling adequacy, measurement validity and analytical rigor, as well as credibility, transparency and methodological coherence, respectively. Mixed-methods research was evaluated on built-in quality standards.

Table 5, which summarizes the results of quality assessment, gives an idea of the methodological soundness of evidence base that was considered in this review.

Table 5: Quality assessment of included studies

Study design	Appraisal tool	Overall quality
Quantitative	JBI checklist	High
Qualitative	CASP checklist	Moderate–High
Mixed methods	MMAT	High

Table 5 presents the methodological quality assessment of the included studies using established appraisal tools.

4.8 Ethical Considerations

Since this study was the synthesis of already published research, there was no need to have a direct approval with regards to ethics. Nevertheless, ethical standards of transparency, correct reporting, and proper citation were highly followed during the review.

5. Results

5.1 Characteristics of Included Studies

The sample of 32 final studies incorporated indicates the increasing academic interest in the becoming faculty members leadership development programme (LDPs) within the last ten years. It was noted that there was an evident rise in publication after 2018, which was followed by a rise in the institutional and policy interest in academic leadership development. Most of the studies were geographically found in North America (United States and Canada) and thereafter in Europe (United Kingdom, Netherlands, Scandinavia), Australia, and some areas in Asia. The studies conducted within the developing countries, mainly India and other South Asian backgrounds, were only a few in number, thus bringing a major geographical imbalance in the literature.

Table 3 gives a summary of the main peculiarities of the studies used in the systematic review such as the year and country of publication, sample, methodology, and key findings.

Table 3: Characteristics of studies included in the review (N = 32 of which major 5 are listed)

Author(s)	Year	Country	Sample	Method	Key outcomes
Bryman	2018	UK	120 faculty	Survey	Improved communication and leadership confidence
Gibbs et al.	2015	UK	60 faculty	Qualitative	Strengthened departmental leadership
Jones et al.	2020	Australia	85 faculty	Mixed methods	Enhanced collaborative leadership
Middlehurst	2017	UK	40 academics	Interviews	Leadership identity development
Keshmiri	2023	Global	52 academics	Qualitative	Sustained professional growth

Table 3 gives a summary of the major attributes of the studies that were incorporated into the systematic review. Regarding the research design, the quantitative research processes ruled the world, and the most prevalent were the survey-based designs. The aforementioned studies took a mixed-method approach, which included surveys and interviews or focus groups to find out more information about the experiences of faculty leaders. Purely qualitative studies were less but gave rich contextual insights into the processes of the programmes and perceptions of the participants. The sample sizes were small samples (20-30 faculty members) to large-scale institutional studies with a population of over 500 people.

The leadership development programmes were diverse in terms of length and format, with some being of a short-term (workshops and certificate programmes), and others a year-long leadership fellowship. Most frequent programme elements were mentoring, coaching, action learning projects, reflective practice and peer learning communities. These differences indicate that there is no standard model of leadership development of faculty in institutions of higher learning.

5.2 Thematic Synthesis of Findings

A thematic synthesis of the articles included led to the discovery of five prevailing themes reflecting all important outcomes of leadership development programmes by faculty members.

Table 4 summarizes the major themes and leadership outcomes identified through the use of thematic synthesis of the studies included.

Table 4: Thematic synthesis of leadership development outcomes

Theme	Description	Key supporting studies
Communication skills	Improved interpersonal and organizational communication	Bryman (2018); Bolden et al. (2019)
Decision-making	Enhanced strategic and administrative decision-making	Middlehurst (2017); Jones et al. (2020)
Collaboration	Increased teamwork and shared leadership practices	Spillane (2016)
Motivation and identity	Higher job satisfaction and leadership aspiration	DeRue & Myers (2014)
Institutional support	Importance of mentoring and organizational culture	Gibbs et al. (2015)

Table 4 summarizes the prevailing leadership outcomes that have been identified in the studies reviewed; the components of the thematic analysis are based on this.

5.3 Thematic Analysis of Leadership Development Outcomes

The thematic synthesis of the studies incorporated showed that there were five major themes which depicted the results of leadership development programmes on faculty members in institutions of higher learning. These themes do not only represent the competency development at an individual level, but also have larger implications on academic governance, institutional effectiveness, and development of leadership capacity.

5.3.1 Enhancement of Communication Skills

One of the themes that stand out after reviewing the studies is improvement of the communication skills of the faculty participants. One of the leading leadership competencies that were always highlighted in leadership development programmes is interpersonal communication, active listening, conflict resolution and persuasive communication. Communication skills were improved and this meant that the faculty members were capable of communicating more effectively with their colleagues, students and administrative stakeholders.

Institutionally, enhanced communication abilities led to enhanced inter-departmental coordination and collaboration in decision-making and participative governance procedures. The faculty members said they felt more confident in their ability to express academic priorities, engage discussion, and deal with interpersonal challenges in academic units. These findings indicate that leadership development based on communication is a very important aspect that contributes to the development of open and inclusive academic governance frameworks.

5.3.2 Development of Strategic and Decision-Making Capabilities

A number of studies gave emphasis on the importance of leadership development programmes in improving the strategic thinking and decision-making skills of the faculty members. The participants also exhibited greater ability to decomposed complex institutional problems, match departmental objectives with institutional strategies, as well as having a sound decision to make within a governance structure.

The capabilities are especially important in the sphere of growing managerial complexity in institutions of higher education. The results show that the leadership development programmes aid the faculty members in shifting their

responsibilities of operation to the strategic players, thus boosting the institutional planning, policy implementation and the effectiveness of the leadership in their academic institutions.

5.3.3 Promotion of Collaborative and Distributed Leadership

Another theme that was evident in the reviewed literature was the promotion of collaborative and distributed leadership. The development programmes on leadership promoted common leadership practices, cross-functional teamwork, and group problem-solving among the faculty members.

These collaborative practices were reported to promote collegiality and also decrease hierarchical barriers in the academic setting. Through the development of distributed leadership, the programmes led to more robust governance systems that the leadership functions are distributed instead of being centralized in administrative positions. This change is in line with the current model of governance of higher education whereby the focus is on involvement, inclusion and collective responsibility.

5.3.4 Leadership Identity Formation and Professional Confidence

Development of leadership identity was deemed as one of the important results of faculty leadership development programmes. The involvement in the leadership training allowed the faculty members to re-frame the concepts of their professional roles and identify themselves as institutional leaders beyond the rank.

This change of identity was followed by greater professional confidence, self-efficacy, and willingness to accept leadership roles. This leadership identity formation is especially critical in academic institutions where leadership is in most cases informal or rotational. The results indicate that leadership development programmes are significant in the development of sustainable leadership pipeline in institutions of higher learning.

5.3.5 Increased Institutional Engagement and Organizational Commitment

The last theme deals with increased institutional involvement and organizational commitment of faculty members who attended leadership development programmes. Some of the studies indicated the participation in institutional efforts, governance committees, and strategic projects after the programme.

Such increased interest is indicative of the larger institutional influence of leadership development programs. Leadership development programmes help in aligning organizations and institutional cohesion by enhancing the knowledge of the members of the faculty about the organizational goals and processes of governance. These results put importance on the leadership development as an institutional capacity and long-term sustainability strategic investment.

6. Discussion

This is a systematic review of the existing empirical evidence on leadership development programme effectiveness in faculty members in institutions of higher learning. Instead of the reiteration of the results, this discussion explains the findings concerning the existing leadership theory, academic governance, and practice within institutions, thus expanding their relevance beyond the results of individual programmes.

6.1 Leadership Development and Faculty Capability Enhancement

The findings of the review show that the programme of leadership development has a consistent contribution to the improvement of the faculty leadership core capabilities, especially that of communication skills, strategic thinking, and the collaborative leadership practices. These findings indicate that leadership development programs offer faculty personnel with systematic facilitations to relocate the disciplinary skills and cultivate the wider perspectives of the organization. Better communication and strategy awareness can help faculty leaders to work successfully in a

complicated academic setting, interact with various stakeholders, and participate actively in institutional decision-making approaches.

Theoretically, the findings are consistent with the distributed leadership views, which define leadership as a collective and relational process currently incorporated into the practice of organization as opposed to formal managerial position. Development programmes empower faculty members to engage in leadership efforts by empowering them with leadership competencies hence enhancing collegial governance structures in institutions of higher learning.

6.2 Leadership Identity Formation and Professional Role Transition

In addition to the acquisition of skills, the review also demonstrates the importance of the leadership development programmes in the development of the faculty leadership identity. Some of the studies underscore that enrollment in leadership programs assists faculty members in the reconsideration of their professional functions as they move away to lose discipline-centered academics to institutionally-oriented leaders. This change in identity is especially pronounced in the higher educational settings where the responsibility of leading is usually assumed in addition to the teaching and research without proper training.

Leadership identity development improves faculty confidence, role legitimacy and readiness to take on leadership responsibility. The result supports the significance of reflective learning, mentoring and peer interaction in leadership development programmes since the aspects provide room through which the faculty members can negotiate leadership identities and values in accordance with institutional cultures.

6.3 Collaborative Leadership and Academic Governance

The review also proves that leadership development programmes promote participatory and collaborative leadership practices. One of the reasons why faculty members involved in leadership development have increased chances to implement inclusive decision-making process, cross-departmental cooperation, and shared governance mechanisms. These findings are particularly relevant to institutions of higher learning where leadership effectiveness depends on inclusive participation rather than hierarchical control.

Empirical data examined in this paper is evidence that leadership development has a strong association with the capacity to improve governance through increasing the level of trust, communication, and coordination within academic departments. In this regard, the leadership development programmes are also seen to act not solely as professional development instruments but also as governance interventions that facilitate institutional coherence and adaptability.

6.4 Programme Design and Implementation Considerations

It seems that leadership development programmes effectiveness is closely interrelated with the design and delivery of the programme. The review reveals that programmes that include experiential learning, mentoring, coaching and problem-solving that are context-based produce more significant and long-term results than programmes that are generic based or those that are short-term oriented. Those programmes where the goals of leadership development are aligned with the strategies of an institution are especially effective in how individual learning can be translated into the organizational impact.

On the other hand, programmed in the absence of a contextual relevance or follow-up mechanisms prove to have a limited effect. This observation supports the need to incorporate leadership development into larger institutional human resource and academic development systems as opposed to considering it as a stand-alone activity.

6.5 Methodological and Contextual Reflections

Although the studies under review present interesting information, methodological and contextual limitations that exist in the literature are also evident in the discussion. Most of the researches are based on self-reported results and short-term assessments, which preclude the possibility of measuring long-term leadership effects. Also, the fact that most research belongs to Western systems of higher education limits the ability to generalize all results to other institutional and cultural settings.

The fact that longitudinal and comparative studies are relatively scarce shows the need to develop more solid methodological designs. To build the evidence base, there is a need to make more use of mixed-method designs, tested leadership assessment instruments, and perspectives of multi-stakeholders to comprehend the complexity and changing character of faculty leadership development.

.6.6 Implications for Higher Education Policy and Practice

In terms of policy and management in the field of higher education, the results back the strategic significance of institutionalizing leadership development as opposed to viewing it as a single professional development endeavor. The development programmes of leadership must conform to the institutional missions, reforms in the governance and succession strategies. The observations of this review can help policy makers and institutional leaders to model evidence-based leadership development programs that are contextual and consistent with long-term institutional goals.

6. Research Gaps

Although the literature on leadership development programmes among faculty members in higher education institutions is increasing, this systematic review provides various research gaps that have remained to limit the development of theories and evidence-based policymaking in higher education leadership development.

To start with, there is a serious time gap that is brought about by the fact that longitudinal research designs are not extensively used. Most of the studies reviewed were based on short-term evaluations, most of them looking at short-term perspectives of leadership skill improvement after the programmes. Consequently, little has been done to test the long-term sustainability of the leadership competencies, their impact on the career path of the faculty, or their role in the succession of institutional leadership and continuity of the governance. The longitudinal research is necessary to define whether the leadership development yields the lasting organizational effects.

Second, the review shows that there has been an entrenched contextual and geographical gap of the literature. Empirical studies of faculty leadership development outcomes are skewed towards the higher education systems of the Western countries with minimal representation of the developing countries. The asymmetry prevents the generalizability of strong leadership development models in different institutional and cultural settings. Specifically, the limited number of studies that are based in the Indian higher education narrows the knowledge of interaction between leadership development and specific governance systems, regulatory frameworks, and socio-cultural norms.

Third, it has methodological gap in assessing leadership development programmes. A vast amount of research was based on a self-report, and there was minimal usage of objective data, behavioral measurement, or multi-stakeholder point of view. A lack of stringent assessment systems destroys the possibility to make causal inferences of the relationship between leadership development initiatives and organizational results. In the future, researchers need to use more rigorous mixed-method designs and validated measurement instruments to enhance the reliability of the results.

Fourth, the review establishes a gap in programme design and comparison. Little research has been conducted to comparatively study and contrast various strategies of leadership development (face to face, online, and blended) or investigate the comparative efficacy of particular pedagogical strategies, like mentoring, coaching, and experiential learning. The current scalable and context-specific leadership development initiatives should be informed by comparative evidence because of the rapid rate of digital transformation of higher education.

Lastly, we are still lacking a systems gap in the comprehension of the larger institutional implications of faculty leadership development. The current research is centered on the individual leadership outcomes with little investigation on the impact of leadership development on the organizational culture, academic governance, student performance and organizational performance. This gap is important in ensuring that leadership development is viewed as a policy tool as opposed to professional development as an activity.

8. Limitations of the Study

Although the systematic and rigorous method was followed in this review, there are several limitations that should be mentioned. To start with, only peer-reviewed journal articles that were published in the English language were analyzed. Consequently, other literature written in other languages or that exists in grey literature like institutional reports, policy reports, and doctoral theses might therefore have been locked out. The evidence base could be limited by this bias of language and publication.

Second, as several academic databases were searched according to the PRISMA 2020 guidelines, the risk of database selection bias cannot be totally eliminated. Professional or institutional sources in which leadership development initiatives are published may not be included in significant bibliographic databases, and this may result in the neglect of a study of context-specific or practice-driven studies.

Third, the methodological quality of the utilized articles was quite different. A big percentage of the included studies were based on cross sectional research design and self-reported data which could be affected by response bias and social desirability. The small number of longitudinal designs and objective outcome measures prevent the possibility to make strong conclusions about the long-term effects of the leadership development programmes on the institutional performance and academic outcomes.

Fourth, the multiculturalism of leadership development programmes, with regard to duration, content, mode of delivery and evaluation methodology, makes it difficult to compare and synthesize. The lack of standardised programme frameworks and outcome indicators restricted the possibility of quantitative synthesis and meta-analysis and had to rely on the qualitative thematic analysis.

Lastly, concentration of the studies based on the contextual focus is the limitation on the externalization of results to the context of a developing country, including India, due to the predominance of the studies that were carried out in Western systems of higher education. The design and effectiveness of leadership development programmes may be impacted by cultural, organizational and policy differences, and the contextual differences are underrepresented in the literature.

9. Directions for Future Research

Based on the findings and the research gaps that have been identified during this systematic review, there are a number of future research directions that are proposed in order to develop a further literature and to guide the higher education policies and practice of management. By dealing with these areas, the empirical basis of faculty leadership development will be enhanced and improve the effectiveness of making institutional decisions.

To begin with, longitudinal research studies and multi-phase research studies should be prioritized in future research with the aim of investigating the long-term impacts of leadership development programmes. The evidence on the issue of whether the leadership skills that have been trained can be sustained over a long period and converted into academic leadership development, involvement in governance, and institutional performance is needed. This kind of research would also offer useful information about the involvement of leadership development in the faculty succession planning.

Second, there is a great necessity of context-specific and comparative investigation of developing and non-Western higher education systems, especially in India. Future research ought to examine the interaction between leadership development programmes and various governance systems, regulatory systems, and cultural practices. The comparative cross-national study would contribute to the comprehension of the situational adaptability of the leadership development models and enable the creation of the locally responsive frameworks.

Third, the methodologically rigorous mixed-method studies that combine the quantitative measurement with the qualitative insights should be used in future studies. Causal inference would be reinforced by the use of proven leadership evaluation tools, behavioral cues and multi-stakeholder evaluation feedbacks, which would improve findings validity. These methodological developments are necessary in informing evidence-based policy and programme evaluation.

Fourth, researchers are supposed to carry out comparative analyses of the leadership development models and delivery models such as face-to-face, online and blended leadership development models. Since higher education is increasingly getting digital, there is need to use empirical evidence to identify the effectiveness, scalability, and inclusivity of technology-enabled leadership development programmes. Also, further research must isolate and evaluate the effects of particular aspects of a programme, including mentoring, coaching, and action learning.

Lastly, future studies ought to extend a step further to investigate the systemic and institutional effects of faculty leadership development instead of individual level. Exploring relationships between leadership growth and academic governance quality, organizational culture, student performance and institutional resilience would enhance the place of leadership growth as a strategic policy tool in a higher education system.

10. Conclusion

This systematic review synthesizes and advance empirical evidence on the effectiveness of leadership development programs for faculty members in higher education institutions. The review offers a summarized knowledge about the beneficial role that such programmes play in the capacity building of leaders in the academic community by integrating the results of the research on the same in different institutional and national environments.

The review reveals that properly designed leadership development programs are significant in promoting such important faculty leadership skills as communication, strategic thinking, collaborative practice, development of leadership identity, and institutional governance. They seem to be especially successful in the translation of personal learning into organizational deliverables with the use of programmes based on a combination of experiential learning, mentoring, reflective practice, and alignment with the priorities of the institution.

In addition to personal competence development, the results highlight overall governance implications of faculty leadership development. Empowering faculty leaders enhances the participative decision making, organizational resilience and long term academic governance. With the growing complexity and accountability pressures placed on institutions of higher learning, leadership development is becoming a strategic process and no longer a periphery professional development process.

Though there are these contributions, the limitations of the available evidence base are also presented in the review such as inconsistent methodological strategies, reduced longitudinal assessment, and an insufficiency of developing and non-Western studies. These limitations need to be resolved in order to develop the scholarship of leadership development and inform more effective institutional and policy-level interventions.

To summarize, the review contributes to the literature on higher education policy and management by combining disjointed empirical data, highlighting gaps in the research, and placing strategic importance on faculty leadership development. The results offer a basis to further research, policy models and institutional practice to enhance sustainability of leadership capability and effective academic governance within the higher education systems.

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