

# Leadership Based on Resilience : Lessons from The Donkey Principle by Rachel Anne Ridge

Linda Purnamasari <sup>1\*</sup>, Youna Cathrine Bachtar <sup>2</sup>, Noviandi <sup>3</sup>

<sup>1-3</sup> Universitas Esa Unggul, Indonesia 1-3; e-mail : [lindapurnama@esaunggul.ac.id](mailto:lindapurnama@esaunggul.ac.id)

\* Corresponding Author : Linda Purnamasari

**Abstract:** Authentic leadership has increasingly gained attention in academic studies and organizational practices. The Donkey Principle by Rachel Anne Ridge offers a unique perspective on leadership, emphasizing perseverance, authenticity, and resilience—qualities embodied by the donkey. This article explores the application of these principles in leadership through a literature review methodology, analyzing relevant leadership theories and insights from the book. The findings suggest that effective leaders are not necessarily those who stand out like racehorses, but rather those who remain steadfast in their values, face challenges with resilience, and create long-term meaningful impact. These insights provide valuable contributions to leadership development across various sectors, including business, education, and social organizations.

**Keywords:** Authenticity; Leadership; Literature Review; Resilience; The Donkey Principle

## 1. Introduction

In recent years, leadership has faced increasingly complex challenges due to digital transformation, economic uncertainty, and social change (Subramanian, 2024). The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated digitalization, changed the way organizations operate, and required leaders to be more adaptive in dealing with change (Strielkowski, 2023).

One of the major challenges of leadership today is the integration of technology and ethics in decision making (Ughulu, 2024). Rapid advances in artificial intelligence (AI) and automation have transformed the business landscape and organization (George, (2025). Although technology offers efficiencies, leaders must face ethical dilemmas related to the replacement of human labor, algorithmic bias, and transparency of AI-based decisions (Stuss, 2024). In addition, economic uncertainty is a factor that affects leaders in various industries (Dennison, 2025). Corporate leaders face the challenge of maintaining stability due to global market changes, inflation, and geopolitical uncertainty (Smit, 2025). In today's era, successful leaders are those who have the ability to manage risk, develop adaptable strategies, and maintain team trust amidst uncertainty. More inclusive and collaborative leadership is also a new trend (Ferdman, 2020). Organizations are increasingly recognizing the importance of diversity and inclusion in building a healthy and innovative work culture. Good leaders have the ability to listen to different perspectives, create a supportive work environment, and encourage every team member to actively participate. Rachel Anne Ridge's book *The Donkey Principle* offers a unique perspective on how one can achieve success and survival by adopting "donkey" characteristics in the face of challenges. Ridge compares human life to a donkey, which often

Received: May, 20 2025

Revised: June, 04 2025

Accepted: June, 18 2025

Online Available: June, 20 2025

Curr. Ver.: June, 20 2025



Copyright: © 2025 by the authors.

Submitted for possible open

access publication under the

terms and conditions of the

Creative Commons Attribution

(CC BY SA) license

([https://creativecommons.org/li](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/)

[censes/by-sa/4.0/](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-sa/4.0/))

considered less attractive than racehorses, but have extraordinary endurance, patience, and strength on long journeys. Key concepts in the book:

- a. Simplicity and Durability
  - 1) Ridge emphasizes that success does not always depend on speed or luxury, but rather on perseverance and consistency in living life.
  - 2) The donkey, as a symbol in this book, depicts how a person can survive difficult conditions by remaining focused on long-term goals.
- b. Appreciate Your Uniqueness
  - 1) This book invites readers to discover and embrace their unique strengths, without having to compare themselves to others who may be more “shiny” or conventionally successful.
  - 2) Every individual has hidden potential, just like a donkey that is often underestimated but has extraordinary ability in carrying heavy loads.
- c. The Importance of Persistence in Change
  - 1) Ridge teaches that change and success do not happen instantly, but through a continuous process and consistent effort.
  - 2) Ridge teaches that change and success do not happen instantly, but through a continuous process and consistent effort.

This research examines this issue and how leaders can create sustainable and value-based leadership strategies to address global change. This article will analyze recent literature on leadership and relate it to The Donkey Principle.

## 2. Literature Review

### 2.1 Adaptive Leadership Theory

Adaptive leadership theory is increasingly relevant in the face of rapid change in the contemporary world. Adaptive leaders can finding complex challenges, driving innovation, and leading teams amidst uncertainty, according to Heidetz et al. (2023). This concept is in line with The Donkey Principle, which emphasizes how important it is for leadership to have resilience and flexibility.

### 2.2 Digital Leadership (Digital Leadership Theory).

In today's era of digital transformation, leaders must have the ability to leverage technology to improve their organization's performance. Brown (2025) states that digital leadership includes mastering technology as well as building strong relationships, managing change, and ensuring the use of AI in an ethical manner. This principle is related to the concept of the donkey in The Donkey Principle, which emphasizes the importance of simplicity and perseverance when facing new challenges (Ridge, 2025).

### 2.3 Shared Leadership Theory.

The theory of shared leadership emphasizes that leadership can be given to teams, not just individuals. According to Ernst & Chrobot-Mason (2024), effective leaders can empower their team members, encourage collaboration, and create an inclusive workplace. This concept is in line with The Donkey Principle, which states that consistency and collaboration are the keys to success, not just speed.

### 2.4 Emotional Intelligence Leadership

Emotionally sensitive leaders are better able to build strong connections, understand what their team needs, and handle conflict well. Self-awareness, emotion regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skills are all components of emotional intelligence leadership, according to Goleman (2023). The Donkey Principle, which states that successful leaders are those who understand themselves and others well, is in line with this principle.

## 3. Proposed Method

This study analyzes the leadership concepts found in Rachel Anne Ridge's *The Donkey Principle* in a qualitative manner. The literature review allows the researcher to look at previous theories, ideas, and research on authentic leadership, resilience, and how it impacts various organizational contexts.

The data in this study were obtained from various literature sources, including the main book: *The Donkey Principle* (Ridge, 2022). Current scientific journals on leadership, resilience, and organizational development (e.g., *Harvard Business Review*, *Journal of Leadership Studies*, *Academy of Management Journal*). Academic articles discussing modern leadership theories, such as adaptive leadership (Heifetz et al., 2023), shared leadership (Ernst & Chrobot-Mason, 2024), and emotional intelligence-based leadership (Goleman, 2023). Additional sources include industry reports and white papers from research institutions such as McKinsey & Company and Deloitte Insights.

Data were collected through literature searches using academic databases such as Google Scholar, ResearchGate, and Wiley Online Library. This process included: Identification of relevant literature based on keywords such as "authentic leadership", "resilience in leadership", and "leadership strategies in the digital age". Selection of sources based on credibility and relevance to the research topic. Content analysis to extract theories and principles that can be linked to the concept. leadership in *The Donkey Principle*.

The data was analyzed using content analysis methods to identify patterns and relationships between the concept of authentic leadership and the principles described in the book *The Donkey Principle*. This analysis was carried out by: A conceptual comparison between classical and modern leadership theories. An exploration of the implications of resilience and value-based leadership in an organizational context. A synthesis of conclusions linking Ridge's

principles to current leadership literature. To ensure the validity of the data, this study used source triangulation by comparing theories from various reliable academic journals and books. In addition, peer review was conducted to evaluate the quality of the analysis and the relevance of the findings to leadership research.

#### **4. Results and Discussion**

Literature studies show that true leadership is an important component in building a lasting organization. According to Ridge (2022) in *The Donkey Principle*, successful leaders are not the most prominent; instead, those who are steadfast in personal principles, consistent, and strong when facing difficulties. According to George's research (2023), true leadership increases trust and loyalty in the organization. According to literature analysis, leadership consistency is a component that is often overlooked in conventional leadership theory. In his study of successful organizations, Collins (2024) found that leaders who remain steadfast in their principles and make decisions are better able to improve organizational sustainability than leaders who only pursue rapid innovation. This theory is in line with *The Donkey Principle*, which states that simplicity and persistence can be the main strengths in leadership.

Resilience and consistency are increasingly relevant to the challenges of adaptive leadership in the digital era in the context of contemporary leadership (2022–2025). According to Heidetz et al. (2023), leaders who are able to adapt to technological and social changes will be more successful in dealing with business dynamics. The concept of the donkey that persists and remains steadfast is described in this study as an apt analogy for leaders who not only follow trends but also ensure that the changes they make are in line with the organization's core principles.

Studies show that *The Donkey Principle*, a leadership approach based on authenticity, resilience, and consistency, can be applied in a variety of fields, such as business, education, and social organizations. This approach provides insights for leadership development that focuses more on long-term impact than popularity or speed of achieving goals.

#### **5. Conclusions**

The study concluded that effective leadership depends not only on rapid innovation and attractiveness, but also on consistency, loyalty, and faithfulness. Those who are able to face challenges, stick to their principles, and build organizations that are oriented towards sustainability are successful leaders.

## References

- [1] S. Brown, *\*The A-Z of Contemporary Leadership Theories\**, Saul Brown Publishing, 2025.
- [2] K. Dennison, "Strategies great leaders use to lead through economic uncertainty," *\*Forbes\**, Apr. 9, 2025.
- [3] C. Ernst and D. Chrobot-Mason, *\*Boundary-Spanning Leadership: Creating Alignment Across Divides\**, Harvard Business Review Press, 2024.
- [4] B. M. Ferdman, "Inclusive leadership: The fulcrum of inclusion," in *\*Inclusive Leadership\**, pp. 3–24, Routledge, 2020.
- [5] D. Goleman, *\*Emotional Intelligence in Leadership: The Key to Success\**, Penguin Books, 2023.
- [6] A. S. George, T. Baskar, and M. M. Karthikeyan, "Future of work trends: Key insights for 2025," *\*Partners Universal Multidisciplinary Research Journal\**, vol. 2, no. 1, pp. 7–12, 2025.
- [7] R. Heifetz, A. Grashow, and M. Linsky, *\*Adaptive Leadership: Navigating Complexity in a Changing World\**, Harvard Business Press, 2023.
- [8] R. A. Ridge, *\*The Donkey Principle: The Secret to Long-Term Living in a Fast-Paced World\**, Jakarta: PT Gramedia Pustaka Utama, 2025.
- [9] S. Smit, J. Condon, and K. Kwiatkowski, "Economic conditions outlook, March 2025," *\*McKinsey & Company\**, Mar. 28, 2025.
- [10] W. Strielkowski, *\*Leadership, Entrepreneurship and Sustainable Development Post COVID-19\**, Springer, 2023.
- [11] M. Stuss and A. Fularski, "Ethical considerations of using artificial intelligence (AI) in recruitment processes," unpublished, 2024.
- [12] I. S. Subramanian, "Future leadership challenges and opportunities amidst global dynamics," *\*Journal of Entrepreneurship Education\**, vol. 27, no. 6, pp. 1–29, 2024.
- [13] J. Ughulu, "Ethical leadership in modern organizations: Navigating complexity and promoting integrity," *\*International Journal of Economics, Business and Management Research\**, vol. 8, no. 5, pp. 52–62, 2024.