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Applied Leadership and Management in the Workplace
Module Assignment Submission

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1. Introduction

This report examines how critical thinking is essentials in the workplace as it enhancing decision-making, solving complex problem and driving innovation. according to L.Petty (2025),. Critical thinking is an important soft skill that is useful across all workplaces, industries and job roles. It allows individuals to recognise problems, carefully evaluate facts and possible options, and then make well-informed decisions or select the most effective solution. This skill helps people examine situations objectively and understand the most appropriate course of action.

A strong critical thinker can set aside personal beliefs and opinions, assess situations without bias, and distinguish between useful and irrelevant information, focusing only on what is reliable and important.

There will also be discussions on the Beliefs, attitudes, and values that play a crucial role in shaping workplace dynamics, influencing decision-making, communication, and overall organizational culture. These factors impact how employees interact, solve problems, and contribute to a productive work environment. Understanding the relationship between personal and organizational values is essential for fostering inclusivity, ethical decision-making, and effective teamwork. This paper critically examines how beliefs, attitudes, and values shape workplace behaviour, their effects on professional relationships, and the potential challenges they present in diverse work settings. By analysing these influences, we can develop strategies to create a more cohesive and adaptable workplace. (Schein, 2010).

This paper also evaluates Management theories bureaucratic management theory of max weber and servant leadership management theory these theories help organisations understand how to manage employees, structure work and improve productivity. Evaluating a selected management theory involves examining its main ideas, strengths and limitations, and considering how effective it is in real workplace situations. For example, a theory may improve efficiency and organisation, but it may not consider employees' personal needs or motivation. By analysing both the advantages and disadvantages, it becomes possible to determine whether the theory is suitable for modern organisations and how it can be applied or adapted to improve management practices. exploring their relevance in modern workplaces and evaluating their effectiveness in dynamic business environments. By analysing these theories, we gain insights into their practical implications and the role they play in shaping managerial success. (Robbins, & Coulter,2022).

2. Beliefs, attitudes and values

a. Definitions & Differences

According to Mcfleerly(2025) Attitude and beliefs are part of what makes you who you are. They affect how you think, what you do and how you do it. Your background, upbringing, experiences and relationships will all have played a part in the way you see things. It is important to develop self-awareness as sometimes your attitudes and beliefs could lead you to assume things about people that are not right or fair. To work together with others in a way that considers their different attitudes and beliefs, you need to invest the time necessary to gain an understanding of these things.

Values - are firmly held ideals or standards that direct actions and choices. They are influenced by social conventions, cultural background, and individual experiences. For instance, a company that values profitability may focus on cost-cutting strategies, while a company that values employee well-being may prioritize work-life balance initiatives. Leaders' values often shape corporate policies and business strategies.

Beliefs - are assumptions or convictions that individuals accept as true, based on personal experiences, cultural background, or information they have acquired. Beliefs shape perceptions and responses to workplace situations. If a manager believes that employees work best under pressure, they may enforce tight deadlines, while another who believes in flexibility may encourage a more balanced approach. Misguided beliefs, such as gender biases or prejudices, can negatively impact hire and promotion decisions.

Attitudes - are emotional or mental dispositions toward people, situations, or ideas. They are shaped by values and beliefs and influence workplace behaviour. Attitudes affect productivity and teamwork. A leader with a supportive attitude fosters motivation and team collaboration, while a cynical or negative attitude may demoralize employees. In customer service, an employee's friendly and professional attitude enhances client satisfaction, while a dismissive attitude may drive customers away

Therefore, in a workplace setting beliefs, attitudes, and values play a crucial role in shaping workplace dynamics, influencing decision-making, communication, and overall organizational culture. These factors impact how employees interact, solve problems, and contribute to a productive work environment. Understanding the relationship between personal and organizational values is essential for fostering inclusivity, ethical decision making, and effective teamwork.

As discussed above, although beliefs, values, and attitudes are closely interconnected, they differ in several important ways. The table below provides a comparative overview of these constructs, highlighting variations in their nature, stability, and focus.

Concept	Nature	Stability	Focus	Example
Belief	Cognitive assumption about reality	Moderately Stable	What is true	Hard work leads to success
Attitude	Evaluation (positive/Negative)	Can change with experience	How I feel about something	Enjoy working overtime
Value	Core guiding Principle	Highly stable	What is important	Achievement is important in life

b. Formation and Development

The unique social, cultural, and technical experiences that influence people's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours within a certain age group are referred to as generational differences. These variations are impacted by historical occurrences, significant changes in society, and technical developments that took place throughout the early years of each generation.

According to Cash(2026)., Ranging from Traditionalists to Gen Z, these influences drive differences in work ethic, communication, and societal views, acting as "clues" to understanding, collaborating, and communicating across different ages.

The table below highlights generational differences, offering insight into how each cohort varies in its values, beliefs, and approaches to workplace structure.

Generation	Historical Context	Core Workplace Values	Beliefs About Work	Approach to Authority & Structure
Baby boomers (1946-1964)	Post-WWII economic growth and institutional stability	Loyalty, organisational commitment, strong work ethic	Work is central to identity and long-term employment equals success	Prefer hierarchical leadership and formal organisational structures
Generation x (1965-1980)	Economic uncertainty and rapid technological advancement	Independence, adaptability, work life b balance	Career stability is uncertain, self-reliance is necessary	More sceptical of authority; value autonomy over rigid hierarchy
Millennials (1981- 1996)	Rise of the internet; 9/11, 2008 fincial crisis	flexibility, meaningful work, development opportunities	Employment should provide purpose, growth, and balance	Prefer collaborative leadership and open communication
Generation Z (1997-2012)	Digital immersion; social media; global social awareness	Diversity, inclusion, mental wellbeing, innovation	Work should integrate technology and align with social values	Expect transparent, less hierarchical, and technologically integrated leadership

(Culture Partners,2024).

Cultural vs social conditioning

It is important to understand the meaning of these terms and understand they are not the same, however are related, they both influence our behaviour. But while culture is deeply embedded in our psyche and is often imperceptible to us, the effects of society are more transparent. (Wilson, 2025).

Wilson (2025)., believes culture is made up of the customs and principles that we develop throughout time. This explains why you could find yourself doing things a certain way each time, just because that's how it's "always done". However, Through the psychological process of social conditioning, people pick up behaviours, social norms, and beliefs through external signals and reinforcement. Both classical and operant conditioning systems in which actions are linked to reward or penalties. People absorb the ideals of society through this process, frequently without realising it. As they sound very similar Wilson (2025), Argues that social conditioning is formed from our earlier stages in life and comes from our family and education as Children mirror how parents regulate emotions or assign value to success and school shape social responsibility and reward acceptable behaviour like following rules and avoiding failure

c. Relationship to workplace behaviour

Workplace behaviour is strongly influenced by an individual's values, beliefs, and attitudes, which collectively shape how they interpret and respond to situations. Values underpin judgement by acting as internal standards that guide decision-making, influencing what individuals consider appropriate, ethical, or important in a professional context. Beliefs shape perception by affecting how people interpret information and experiences, meaning that two individuals may view the same situation differently based on their prior assumptions or experiences. Attitudes, which are shaped by both values and beliefs, influence behavioural responses by determining how individuals react emotionally and practically to workplace scenarios. In addition, bias and cognitive filtering play a significant role, as individuals tend to process information selectively, often reinforcing existing viewpoints while overlooking contradictory evidence. This can impact communication, decision-making, and interpersonal relationships within the workplace.

I have seen firsthand how attitudes, values, and beliefs may affect conduct and decision-making in the workplace. For instance, I have seen instances when people formed assumptions about coworkers based on their age or level of expertise, which had an impact on the distribution of duties and responsibilities. This illustrated how prejudices and personal convictions may influence attitudes and result in unfair treatment. Additionally, I have seen that although bad attitudes can lead to conflict and miscommunication, positive attitudes like openness and respect can enhance cooperation and communication. These encounters underscore the significance of self-awareness and inclusive behaviours by highlighting the effects of cognitive bias and filtering in routine professional interactions.

3. Application to workplace Behaviour

a. Decision-Making

Our worldview and decision-making are shaped by our beliefs. But they can also result in biases that affect our perceptions. We may take action to lessen the influence of these underlying belief-related biases on our decision-making by being aware of them. In a workplace setting decision making all comes down to these factors.

Decision-making is frequently influenced by cognitive biases that can distort judgment and lead to less rational outcomes. These biases affect how individuals interpret information, evaluate alternatives, and make choices. The key cognitive biases in decision-making are outlined below

- **Confirmation Bias:** Favouring information that confirms existing beliefs while ignoring contradictory evidence.
- **Anchoring Bias:** Relying too heavily on the first piece of information encountered (the "anchor") when making decisions.
- **Availability Heuristic:** Overestimating the importance or likelihood of information that comes to mind quickly.
- **Overconfidence Bias:** Overestimating the accuracy of one's own judgments or capabilities.
- **Sunk Cost Fallacy:** Continuing a project or behaviour based on past investment (time/money) rather than current prospects.
- **Hindsight Bias:** Perceiving past events as having been more predictable than they were.

- **Bandwagon Effect:** Adopting beliefs or actions because many others are doing so.
- **Framing Effect:** Being influenced by how information is presented (e.g., focusing on potential gains rather than losses)

Values however are powerful motivators that helps prioritise actions and decisions, they help us distinguishing right from wrong, promoting fairness, justice and respect in decision-making processes, which important to have in a workplace setting

b. Leadership

Leadership core values are not just lofty ideals; they are practical necessities for effective and sustainable leadership, their values underpin their judgement about what is important in the workplace weather that's control, performance or wellbeing. They serve as the compass guiding every decision and action, shaping not only the leaders themselves but also the culture and success of their organizations. This links closely to Douglas McGregor's theory X and Theory Y in his 1960 book, The Human Side of Enterprise. These theories explained two contrasting management styles, based on what managers believe motivates their employees. (Channell,2025)

Theory X- assumes employees dislike work, avoid responsibility, and require close supervision.

Theory Y- assumes employees are self-motivated, seek responsibility and can exercise self direction. (C. boyd,2026).

According to Porter (2025)., Leadership beliefs are the fundamental, frequently unconscious presumptions that influence a leader's perspective, choices, and behaviours. Taking accountability for one's influence, encouraging authenticity, accepting ongoing development, leading with integrity, and inspiring others are examples of core values. These ideas have a direct impact on organisational culture, performance, and team morale.

(Covey et al., 2022)

c. Communication & Conflict

When people have different ideas about what is "right" or "wrong," or "efficient" or "inefficient," values, prejudices, and personal opinions might collide in professional communication. These distinctions may cause miscommunication, strained relationships, and decreased teamwork. These conflicts frequently arise unintentionally, especially in high-stress settings when workers must rely on mental shortcuts, presumptions, or prejudices due to stress, rushing, or deadline pressure.

To manage these challenges, organisations and employees can adopt several strategies:

1. **Active listening** – fully focusing on and understanding the speaker's perspective.
2. **Open and respectful communication** – encouraging honest dialogue while maintaining professionalism.
3. **Seeking common ground** – identifying shared goals or interests to build consensus.
4. **Clarifying assumptions** – questioning personal biases and verifying interpretations before reacting.

5. **Collaborative problem-solving** – engaging all parties to develop mutually beneficial solutions.
6. **Conflict resolution training** – equipping employees with skills to manage disputes constructively.

By implementing these strategies, employees can reduce misunderstandings, foster stronger teamwork, and create a more inclusive and productive workplace environment. (Situational,2026)

4. Critical Evaluation of Management Theories

a. Overview of Theories

Within this section of the report, two key management theories will be discussed: bureaucratic management theory and servant leadership theory. These approaches offer contrasting perspectives on how organisations are structured and managed, with bureaucratic theory emphasising hierarchy, rules, and control, while servant leadership focuses on employee well-being, empowerment, and ethical leadership practices.

Bureaucratic Management Theory (weber)

According to Max Weber's bureaucratic management theory, organisations should be set up with rigid hierarchies, clear regulations, well defined responsibilities, and impersonal connections in order to maximise control and efficiency. It was created in the early 20th century with the goal of reducing personal favouritism in organisational decision-making. It places a strong emphasis on competence-based recruiting, specialisation, and rational-legal authority.

Bureaucratic Management Theory (Weber)

Weber argues that a bureaucratic organization is one in which tasks are divided into small, manageable units, and each unit is overseen by a specialist who has the necessary skills and knowledge to carry out the task.

Servant Leadership Theory

Robert Greenleaf created the management theory known as "servant leadership" in 1970. It places a higher priority on the development and welfare of individuals and communities than on conventional top-down authority. By emphasising listening, empathy, and service, servant

leaders empower their followers and promote trust, teamwork, and moral behaviour, which eventually boosts individual development and organisational effectiveness. (Shonk,.2026)

Servant leadership seeks to involve others in decision making, is strongly based in ethical and caring behavior, and enhances the growth of workers while improving the caring and quality of organizational life, (Spears,2010).

b. Assumptions

Both bureaucratic management theory and servant leadership theory are built on different underlying assumptions, value systems, and perspectives on human nature.

Overall, while bureaucratic management theory is grounded in control and structure, servant leadership is based on trust and people-centred values, reflecting fundamentally different assumptions about how individuals behave and what motivates them in the workplace.

Weber's Bureaucratic Theory vs. Servant Leadership

Feature	Weber Theory (Bureaucracy)	Servant Leadership Theory
Core Focus	Efficiency, structure, predictability, and standardized processes	People-first approach emphasizing growth, well-being, and development
Role of Leader	Authority figure who directs, controls, and enforces rules (rational-legal authority)	Supportive servant who guides, empowers, and nurtures others
Source of Authority	Formal position within a hierarchy; rules and regulations	Earned through trust, empathy, ethical behaviour, and service
View of Workers	Functional roles—task-oriented and replaceable within a system	Individuals with unique potential, creativity, and intrinsic value
Relationships	Impersonal and professional to ensure fairness and avoid bias	Personal, empathetic, and collaborative to foster trust and growth
Decision-Making	Centralized, rule-bound, and top-down	Shared, participative, and inclusive
Primary Goal	Stability, consistency, and organizational productivity	Community building, empowerment, and holistic success

c. Differences between theories and value systems

The following table provides a comparative analysis of bureaucratic management theory and servant leadership theory, focusing on their underlying assumptions, value systems, and perspectives on human nature. By examining these key aspects, the comparison highlights the fundamental differences between a structured, control-oriented approach, strengths, weakness and a more people-centred, values-driven leadership style. This allows for a clearer understanding of how each theory influences workplace behaviour, decision-making, and leadership practices.

	Max Weber – Bureaucratic Theory	**Robert K. Greenleaf – Servant Leadership**
Key Ideas	Organisations operate through formal rules, hierarchy, and clear authority structures	Leaders' priorities the wellbeing and development of employees
Strength	Predictability, fairness through rules, organisational stability	Builds trust, promotes ethical leadership; improves organisational culture
Weakness	Show decision-making, inflexible procedures, limited innovation	Maybe perceived as weak in highly competitive environments
Employer-Employee Dynamic	Authority flows through, hierarchy, employees follow procedures	Leaders support employees rather than dominate them
Approach to Leadership	Leadership is based on authority, position, and control within a hierarchy.	Leadership is based on serving others, building trust, and supporting team development.
Generational compatibility (values, attitudes and belief)	Baby boomers; generally comfortable with hierarchy, gen x; accepts structure but prefers flexibility, millennials often frustrated by rigid processes. Gen z; prefer flatter, faster decision structure	Baby boomers; may find the approach unusual compared to traditional authority, gen X; generally receptive to supportive leadership, millennials/gen Z; highly compatible due to emphasis on wellbeing and purpose

(Weber 1978). **(**Greenleaf, 1977).

The interpretation and application of leadership theories can be greatly influenced by various belief and value systems. People or groups who value order, stability, and unambiguous authority may be more receptive to Weber's Bureaucratic Theory, which promotes structure, hierarchy, and efficiency. On the other hand, those who place a higher value on empathy, personal development, and the welfare of others are likely to find greater resonance with the Servant Leadership Theory. These interpretations are also significantly shaped by cultural differences. For instance, servant leadership could be more successful in collectivist cultures where harmony and collaboration are valued, whereas Weber's bureaucratic style might be more acceptable in cultures that place a higher importance on hierarchy and authority.

Additionally, generational differences influence how these theories are perceived in the workplace. Older generations, such as Baby Boomers, may prefer the structure and stability associated with bureaucratic leadership, while younger generations, including Millennials and Generation Z, are more likely to favour servant leadership due to its focus on collaboration, flexibility, and employee well-being. Overall, the effectiveness and acceptance of each theory depend on the underlying beliefs, cultural context, and generational values of individuals and organisations.

d. Limitations

According to Pubadmin (2025), although Weber's management theory has been hailed as the gold standard for organizational efficiency and rational administration, critics have pointed out that, despite its theoretical rigor, the model overlooks several crucial aspects of human behaviour and organizational dynamics. They argue that this mechanistic view of organizations fails to account for the complex social and psychological factors that influence individual behaviour within institutional settings.

Alternative leadership theories, such Servant Leadership Theory, which centres organisational practice around people rather than processes, have emerged as a result of Weber's mechanical approach's limitations. Servant leadership addresses many of the social and psychological aspects that bureaucratic systems sometimes ignore by emphasising empathy, trust, and the development and well-being of employees, in contrast to Weber's emphasis on rules and hierarchy.

However, although servant leadership is very successful in encouraging long-term growth and employee engagement, it can backfire in the workplace if it becomes one-way service,

veers too far into self-sacrifice, or is used in toxic settings where accountability is missing. When well-meaning executives put staff satisfaction ahead of performance objectives or neglect to establish their own authority, the model frequently fails, resulting in decreased productivity and personal burnout. (scottmautz,2021)

When applying these theories in the workplace, leaders can quickly experience burnout due to the constant demands of supporting staff and prioritizing their well-being, which can lead to emotional fatigue, particularly in high-stress healthcare settings. At the same time, Weber's Bureaucratic approach, with its focus on hierarchy, rules, and formal procedures, can create rigidity and slow decision-making, potentially hindering rapid responses to critical patient needs. The impersonal nature of bureaucracy may also reduce staff morale and engagement, while the highly collaborative focus of servant leadership can sometimes create role ambiguity and overdependence on the leader. In our workplace, we have observed these challenges firsthand, and finding the right balance can be difficult. This underscores the importance of understanding these theories and applying them thoughtfully. Both approaches have limitations when applied in healthcare, highlighting the need for a balanced strategy that integrates structure, efficiency, and human-centred care.

5. Synthesis and Development

The analysis highlights that values and beliefs play a fundamental role in shaping workplace behaviour, influencing how individuals interpret situations, make decisions, and interact with others. Values act as guiding principles that underpin judgement, while beliefs shape perception and understanding. Together, they influence attitudes and behavioural responses, often operating unconsciously. However, the presence of cognitive biases can distort these processes, leading to subjective interpretations and potentially flawed decision-making. This demonstrates that while values and beliefs provide structure and consistency, they can also limit objectivity if not critically examined.

According to profrjstarr(2007), A key limitation identified is the presence of blind spots, where individuals are unaware of their own biases and assumptions. These blind spots can result in misjudgements, stereotyping, and ineffective communication, particularly in diverse workplace environments. For example, individuals may unknowingly favour those with similar backgrounds or perspectives, reinforcing bias and reducing inclusivity. Additionally, overreliance on personal experience rather than evidence can further restrict balanced decision-making.

RED Model of Critical Thinking the RED Model's critical thinking skills framework has three main indicators including -(R) Recognize Assumptions; (E) Evaluate Arguments; and (D) Draw Conclusions. You can use the RED Model to analyse various types of information, such as news articles, reports, essays, or speeches, and to improve your

own arguments and communication skills. The model helps you to identify and challenge the assumptions that underlie your own and others' reasoning, to assess the quality and relevance of the arguments that support or oppose a claim, and to reach logical and sound conclusions based on the evidence and criteria. The RED framework may help leaders and employees become more self-aware, confront possible prejudices, and make more thoughtful and balanced decisions—especially in challenging or demanding work environments. (DISRUPTIVE LEADERSHIP, 2025)

6. Conclusion

To conclude, critical thinking is an essential skill in both the workplace and everyday life. The ability to think critically and apply effective decision-making is a crucial professional competency that enables individuals to assess situations, make informed choices, and resolve problems successfully. As discussed, the use of structured approaches such as the RED Model, alongside relevant theories, can be applied across different industries to improve decision-making, reduce biases, and promote a culture of continuous improvement within organisations.

Critical thinking contributes not only to individual performance but also to teamwork, creativity, and overall organisational success. Employees with strong critical thinking skills are better equipped to analyse challenges and anticipate potential problems.

A key insight from this report is the significant influence of biases, assumptions, values, beliefs, and attitudes on workplace decision-making. Beliefs shape how individuals perceive situations, while values guide what they consider important and ethical. Attitudes influence behaviour and responses to challenges. When these factors remain unexamined, they can lead to biased judgments, ineffective decisions, and limited problem-solving. Unconscious biases may result in flawed reasoning, while deeply held beliefs and values can restrict openness to alternative perspectives.

By applying critical thinking, individuals can question their assumptions, reflect on their attitudes, and evaluate evidence objectively. This enables more balanced, fair, and accurate decision-making. Furthermore, encouraging critical thinking in the workplace enhances communication, collaboration, adaptability, and creativity—skills that are essential in today’s competitive business environment. Ultimately, fostering a culture that values critical thinking and evidence-based reasoning supports continuous learning, professional development, and long-term organisational success.

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