

ROLE OF LEADERSHIP STYLE IN IMPROVING EMPLOYEE MOTIVATION

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ABSTRACT

This investigation explores the impact of diverse leadership styles on employee motivation in contemporary organizational environments. A quantitative research design was utilized, collecting data from professionals across a range of sectors through a structured questionnaire. Analytical methods, including correlation and regression analyses, were applied to identify significant relationships between various leadership behaviours and motivational levels. The analysis reveals that transformational and participative leadership styles are strongly correlated with enhanced intrinsic motivation among staff members. Transactional leadership, although pertinent, was found to have a narrower influence, mainly linked to extrinsic motivational drivers such as performance-based incentives and job security provisions. In contrast, laissez-faire leadership exhibited a negligible or adverse association with employee drive, underscoring the necessity of consistent leader engagement. These findings emphasize the considerable influence that different leadership approaches exert on workforce morale and organizational commitment. The conclusions offer practical guidance for managers and HR practitioners seeking to enhance employee motivation through deliberate and context-appropriate leadership strategies.

Keywords: Leadership Styles, Employee Motivation, Transformational Leadership, Participative Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Organizational Behavior.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In today's competitive and dynamic business environment, human capital is widely regarded as a strategic asset essential for achieving sustainable competitive advantage [1]. The ability to attract, retain, and motivate talented employees has become a key differentiator between successful organizations and those struggling to remain relevant. Employee motivation consistently influences productivity, job satisfaction, and long-term organizational commitment [2]. Motivated employees demonstrate higher levels of engagement, creativity, and discretionary effort, all of which contribute significantly to overall organizational performance.

Leadership serves as the critical link between organizational objectives and employee outcomes. Leaders are responsible for articulating a clear vision, cultivating supportive work environments, and inspiring employees to reach their full potential [3]. The leadership style adopted by managers significantly shapes how employees perceive their work, their level

of engagement, and their willingness to contribute meaningfully to organizational goals.

This study examines the relationship between three prominent leadership styles—transformational, transactional, and participative leadership—and employee motivation. Using quantitative data collected from 120 employees across multiple sectors, the research aims to provide empirical evidence that contributes to both academic understanding and practical managerial applications.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership and Motivation

Leadership can be understood as the ability to guide, inspire, and support individuals in working toward shared organizational goals [4]. Those who lead effectively tend to communicate a clear direction, establish trust, and help their teams achieve common objectives. The way leaders interact with employees—whether by sharing an inspiring vision, setting clear expectations, or including others in decision-making—

has a meaningful impact on how people feel and behave at work [5].

Motivation refers to the internal forces that drive individuals to exert effort toward achieving specific goals [6]. Several established theories help explain what motivates people in the workplace. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs suggests that human beings are driven by a series of hierarchical needs, beginning with basic physiological requirements and progressing toward self-actualization. Higher-level needs become important only after lower-level needs are satisfied [7].

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory divides workplace factors into two categories: hygiene factors and motivators. Hygiene factors, such as salary and working conditions, may cause dissatisfaction if absent but do not necessarily motivate employees. Motivators, including recognition, achievement, and meaningful responsibility, actively contribute to job satisfaction and improved performance [8].

Expectancy Theory proposes that motivation is influenced by three key beliefs: that effort will lead to acceptable performance, that performance will lead to certain outcomes, and that those outcomes hold personal value for the individual [9]. Self-Determination Theory further distinguishes between intrinsic motivation, which arises from internal satisfaction and autonomy, and extrinsic motivation, which is driven by external rewards or pressures [2,10].

The connection between leadership and motivation is well supported in academic research. Leaders who provide purpose, autonomy, and recognition tend to foster intrinsic motivation among employees, while those who emphasize clear relationships between performance and rewards are more likely to influence extrinsic motivation [11,12]. Additionally, involving employees in decision-making processes strengthens their sense of ownership and organizational commitment [13].

Although considerable research has explored leadership and motivation as separate concepts, relatively few studies have used primary survey data to examine how different leadership behaviors uniquely affect intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. The present study seeks to address this gap by investigating these relationships within real-world organizational settings.

3. RESEARCH OBJECTIVES AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Objectives

- To determine how different leadership styles affect employee motivation.
- To identify which leadership behaviors have the strongest relationship with motivated teams.
- To examine whether demographic factors such as age, gender, or work experience influence employees' perceptions of leadership.
- To provide practical recommendations for managers on using leadership strategies to build a more engaged workforce.

3.2 Research Methodology

Research Approach

A descriptive quantitative research design was adopted to examine the relationship between leadership styles and employee motivation.

Data Collection

Data were collected through an online survey distributed to working professionals, resulting in **120 completed responses**.

Sample Profile

The sample included 58 male and 61 female respondents, primarily within the 26–45 age group, with varying levels of professional experience ranging from entry-level positions to more than ten years of service.

Survey Instrument

The questionnaire consisted of structured rating-scale items covering three main areas:

- Demographic information of participants
- Perceptions of specific leadership behaviors
- Individual levels of motivation

Data Analysis

Descriptive statistical methods were used to summarize the collected data. Reliability analysis was conducted to ensure the consistency of the survey instrument. Correlation analysis was then applied to examine the relationships between leadership styles and employee motivation.

Ethical Considerations

Participation in the study was entirely voluntary. All responses were kept anonymous, and the collected data were used solely for academic research purposes.

4. RESEARCH DATA ANALYSIS

4.1 Demographic Observations

The sample consisted mainly of respondents within the 26–35 age group, with a significant proportion having 5–10 years of work experience. This suggests that mid-career professionals formed the dominant group in the study, which may explain the relatively high levels of motivation and organizational commitment observed among participants.

4.2 Leadership Behaviour

Employees generally perceived leadership within their organizations as **supportive and engaging**. High levels of agreement were observed in relation to the following leadership practices:

- Clear vision and guidance
- Encouragement of innovation
- Individualized attention to employees
- Participative decision-making

Additionally, **fairness, consistency, and recognition** received particularly strong responses from participants. This indicates that employees highly value leadership approaches that emphasize **ethical behavior, transparency, and appreciation of employee contributions**.

4.3 Employee Motivation Findings

Overall, employee motivation levels were found to be **relatively high** among the respondents. Participants reported:

- Strong intrinsic motivation
- A willingness to exceed basic job responsibilities
- High levels of organizational commitment
- Positive job satisfaction

These findings suggest that employees are **not only motivated by external rewards but are also internally driven** to perform effectively and contribute to organizational success.

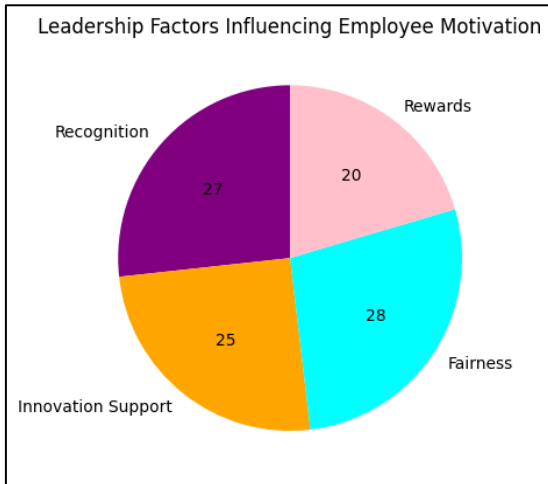


Fig 01: Leadership factors influencing employee motivation

4.4 Leadership–Motivation Relationship

The analysis indicates a strong positive relationship between leadership behavior and employee motivation. Leadership practices such as recognition, support for innovation, fairness, and consistent guidance appear to contribute significantly to higher levels of employee motivation.

Employees who perceive their leaders as supportive, transparent, and appreciative are more likely to demonstrate greater engagement, commitment, and willingness to perform beyond their basic job responsibilities. These findings highlight the importance of effective leadership practices in fostering both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation within organizations, satisfaction, and commitment.

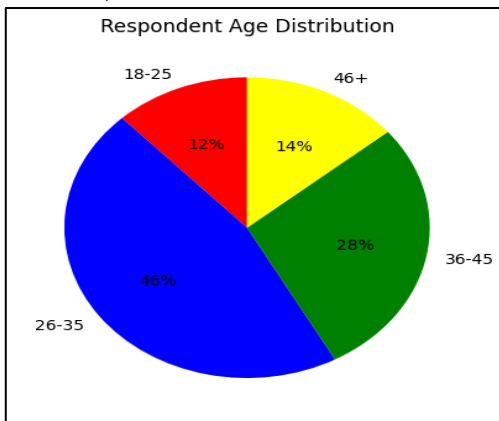


Fig 02: Respondent Age Distribution

Notably, non-monetary leadership behaviour demonstrated stronger influence compared to performance-based rewards, highlighting the importance of psychological and relational factors in motivation.

5. KEY FINDINGS

The analysis indicates a significant positive association between leadership behaviour and employee motivation. A majority of respondents reported favourable perceptions of leadership practices within their organizations.

Leadership behaviours such as providing clear direction, encouraging innovation, and offering individualized support were strongly associated with higher levels of employee motivation and job satisfaction.

Recognition and appreciation emerged as key contributors to employee motivation, suggesting that employees respond positively when their efforts are acknowledged. Participative leadership also demonstrated a positive influence, as involvement in decision-making enhanced employees' sense of responsibility, ownership, and engagement.

In contrast, transactional elements, such as reward-based motivation, demonstrated a comparatively weaker influence. The findings suggest that non-monetary aspects of leadership, including fairness, support, trust, and interpersonal respect, play a more critical role in sustaining long-term employee motivation.

Demographic analysis further indicated that the majority of respondents belonged to the 26–35 age group and possessed moderate professional experience, which may have influenced their perceptions of leadership and workplace motivation.

6. CONCLUSION

This study confirms that leadership style plays a significant role in determining employee motivation. Transformational and participative leadership behaviours were found to be particularly effective in enhancing intrinsic motivation, with recognition and appreciation emerging as the strongest motivational drivers.

Organizations seeking to develop highly motivated workforces should focus on cultivating leaders who articulate a clear vision, encourage innovation, involve employees in decision-making, and consistently recognize employee contributions.

By applying these leadership practices, organizations can create supportive work environments where employees are motivated not only to perform their tasks effectively but also to grow, contribute, and thrive within the organization.

7. LIMITATIONS

- The sample size of 120 respondents limits the generalizability of the findings.
- The use of self-reported data may introduce social desirability bias.
- The cross-sectional research design prevents the establishment of clear causal relationships.
- The study focused on three leadership styles, excluding other potential leadership approaches that may also influence motivation.

8. FUNDING

Nil

9. FUTURE RESEARCH

- Future studies should include larger and more diverse samples across industries and cultural contexts.
- Longitudinal research designs could be used to better establish causal relationships between leadership behaviour and employee motivation.
- Researchers may incorporate multiple data sources, including supervisor and peer evaluations, to improve data reliability.
- Further research could also examine contextual factors, such as organizational culture, work environment, and leadership climate, as potential moderators of the leadership–motivation relationship.

10. ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

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11. CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Not declared

12. INFORMED CONSENT AND ETHICAL STATEMENT

Not applicable

13. AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Both are contributed equally.

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