

COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF LEADERSHIP STYLES AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN TAMIL NADU'S IT INDUSTRY

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Abstract

This study examines the prevalent leadership styles within Tamil Nadu's IT industry and their effects on employee engagement. Using a descriptive research design, the study analyzed data from 413 participants, including employers and team leaders from various IT companies in major cities such as Chennai and Coimbatore. The research utilized stratified random sampling to ensure representative coverage across different company sizes and hierarchical levels. Findings reveal a predominance of Transformational and Transactional leadership styles, with Autocratic and Democratic styles also present. Analysis indicates that Transformational and Transactional styles are associated with higher job satisfaction and motivation, while Autocratic leadership correlates with productivity. However, the statistical analysis reveals no significant differences in leadership practices across styles and a low impact of leadership style on engagement dimensions. Descriptive statistics highlight key practices valued by each leadership style, emphasizing the universal importance of open communication, timely recognition, and employee involvement. The study underscores the necessity for leadership to prioritize these practices to foster an engaged and productive workforce.

Keywords: *Leadership Styles, Employee Engagement, IT Industry, Tamil Nadu,*

Introduction

The Information Technology (IT) industry in Tamil Nadu, one of India's most industrialized and economically advanced states, has witnessed significant growth and transformation over the past few decades. With cities like Chennai and Coimbatore emerging as major IT hubs, the state's IT sector plays a pivotal role in driving economic development, generating employment, and fostering technological innovation (Gopinath, 2020). In this dynamic and competitive environment, the role of effective leadership becomes crucial in enhancing organizational performance and employee engagement. Leadership styles significantly influence organizational culture, employee motivation, job satisfaction, and overall productivity (Setiawan et al., 2021; Nanjundeswaraswamy, 2023). Different leadership styles—such as transformational, transactional, autocratic, and democratic—can have varying impacts on employees' attitudes, behaviors, and engagement levels (Sofi & Devanadhen, 2015; Kumar & Krishnaraj, 2018). Understanding these impacts within the context of Tamil Nadu's IT industry is essential for developing strategies that foster a conducive work environment, promote innovation, and ensure sustainable growth (Baruah et al., 2024).

Transformational leadership, characterized by inspiring and motivating employees by creating a vision,

fostering an environment of trust, and encouraging personal and professional growth, focuses on innovation and change (Gopinath, 2020). This leadership style often results in high levels of employee engagement, increased job satisfaction, and enhanced organizational commitment (Kakar et al., 2002). Employees under transformational leaders tend to exhibit higher levels of creativity and a strong willingness to go beyond their job roles (Baomar & Islam, 2024). On the other hand, transactional leadership emphasizes structure, routine, and clear objectives. Transactional leaders focus on performance, reward compliance, and correct deviations through a system of rewards and punishments. While this style can ensure efficiency and achieve short-term goals, it may not inspire long-term loyalty or creativity, leading to moderate levels of employee engagement with motivation driven primarily by extrinsic rewards (Sofi & Devanadhen, 2015; Thomas & Baddipudi, 2022).

Autocratic leadership, where leaders make decisions unilaterally with little input from employees, maintains strict control and expects compliance without question. This style often results in low employee engagement, reduced job satisfaction, and increased turnover, proving effective only in crisis situations while generally being detrimental to morale and innovation (Anand et al., 2016). In contrast, democratic leadership values input from team members and encourages participation in decision-making. By fostering a collaborative environment and promoting transparency, democratic leaders achieve high levels of engagement as employees feel valued and heard, promoting creativity, job satisfaction, and a sense of ownership among employees (Nanjundeswaraswamy, 2023; Parimalam & Mahadevan, 2012).

The IT industry in Tamil Nadu is characterized by rapid technological advancements, a high degree of competition, and a diverse workforce. Leaders in this sector face unique challenges such as managing cross-functional teams, navigating global market dynamics, and fostering innovation in a fast-paced environment (Cappelli et al., 2015). Effective leadership is essential for talent retention, as retaining top talent in a highly competitive market depends on leadership styles that enhance job satisfaction and engagement, significantly reducing turnover rates (Alm, 2012). Furthermore, transformational and democratic leadership styles drive innovation, a critical factor for staying competitive in the global IT market (Dhanabhakya & Kokilambal, 2014). Given the diversity within the workforce, leadership that values inclusivity and collaboration can help integrate different cultural perspectives, leading to a more harmonious and productive work environment (Gopinath, 2020; Sarangal et al., 2020).

This study aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of how different leadership styles impact employee engagement in Tamil Nadu's IT industry. By examining the relationship between leadership and employee engagement, the research will offer insights into best practices for IT companies seeking to enhance their organizational culture, boost productivity, and achieve sustainable growth. The findings will be valuable for industry leaders, HR professionals, and policymakers aiming to create a thriving IT ecosystem in Tamil Nadu (Thomas et al., 2018; Kakar et al., 2002).

Review of Literature

The impact of leadership styles on organizational outcomes has been widely studied across various industries, including the IT sector, with a particular focus on employee engagement, job satisfaction, and commitment. For instance, Setiawan et al. (2021) conducted a comparative study that highlighted how different leadership styles, such as transformational and transactional, can significantly influence employee productivity, suggesting that leaders who adopt a transformational approach tend to foster higher levels of motivation and engagement among their teams. Similarly, Nanjundeswaraswamy (2023) explored the mediating role of job satisfaction between leadership styles and employee commitment, emphasizing that leadership approaches that prioritize employee well-being and job satisfaction are more likely to cultivate a committed and engaged workforce. These studies collectively underscore the critical role of leadership in shaping employee attitudes and behaviors, particularly

within the high-pressure environments typical of the IT industry.

Expanding on the relationship between leadership and employee engagement, Gopinath (2020) examined the influence of demographic factors on job involvement, organizational commitment, and job satisfaction among academic leaders in Tamil Nadu universities. His findings suggest that leadership effectiveness can be contingent upon various demographic factors, such as age and experience, which may impact how leaders interact with their teams and influence their overall engagement levels. In a related study, Thomas et al. (2018) investigated the role of leadership, empowerment, and organizational culture in driving employee commitment within the hospitality industry. Their research highlighted that leadership styles that promote empowerment and a supportive culture are crucial for fostering high levels of employee commitment, which is transferable to the IT sector, where talent retention and engagement are critical for sustaining competitive advantage.

Moreover, leadership strategies in the context of cultural and regional dynamics have been explored by Alm (2012), who analyzed leadership practices in a Tamil Nadu village. Alm's work offers insights into how leadership is perceived and practiced in different cultural settings, providing a valuable perspective for understanding leadership in Tamil Nadu's IT industry. Additionally, Cappelli et al. (2015) examined Indian business leadership from a broader perspective, noting that leadership in India often involves balancing traditional values with modern management practices. This dual approach can be particularly relevant in Tamil Nadu's IT sector, where leaders must navigate the complexities of a diverse and rapidly evolving workforce. Collectively, these studies offer a comprehensive view of how leadership styles and cultural factors interact to influence organizational outcomes, particularly in contexts like Tamil Nadu's IT industry, where effective leadership is essential for driving innovation and sustaining growth.

Objectives of the Study

1. Examine and categorize the prevalent leadership styles within Tamil Nadu's IT industry, including transformational, transactional, autocratic, and democratic leadership.
2. Analyze how different leadership styles affect various dimensions of employee engagement, such as job satisfaction, motivation, commitment, and productivity.
3. Identify best practices in leadership that significantly enhance employee engagement, thereby fostering a productive and innovative work environment.

Methodology

Research Design

This study adopts a descriptive research design to analyze the relationship between leadership styles and employee engagement in Tamil Nadu's IT industry. Descriptive research is suitable for understanding the characteristics of a specific population and identifying patterns and relationships between variables.

Study Area

The research focuses on the IT industry in Tamil Nadu, with a particular emphasis on major IT hubs such as Chennai and Coimbatore. These cities are home to numerous IT companies ranging from multinational corporations to small and medium-sized enterprises.

Sample Population

The target population for this study includes employers and Team leaders from various IT companies

in Tamil Nadu. The sample includes a diverse group of participants across different hierarchical levels, departments, and job roles to ensure a comprehensive understanding of leadership styles and their impact on employee engagement.

Sampling Technique

A stratified random sampling technique is employed to ensure representation from different strata within the IT industry company size. This method helps in obtaining a balanced and representative sample that reflects the diversity of the population.

Sample Size

A sample size of 413 participants is selected for the study, ensuring statistical validity and reliability. The sample includes a mix of employees and leaders to gather a holistic view of leadership styles and employee engagement.

Data Collection Instruments

Data is collected using a qualitative method to ensure a comprehensive analysis:

Questionnaires:

Structured questionnaires with Likert scale items are used to measure employers' perceptions on best practices based on their leadership styles. The next part of the questionnaires is designed to capture various dimensions of leadership styles and employee engagement, including job satisfaction, motivation, and organizational commitment.

Analysis and Interpretation

The table summarizes demographic characteristics and leadership styles within a sample of 413 individuals from various organizations.

Table No. 1: Percentage Analysis – Demographic Profile

		Frequency	Percent
Gender	Male	321	77.7
	Female	92	22.3
	Total	413	100.0
Age	Less than 30 Years	28	6.8
	30 - 40 Years	171	41.4
	Above 50 Years	185	44.8
	Above 50 Years	29	7.0
	Total	413	100.0
Designation	Team Leader	169	40.9
	Manager	163	39.5
	Executive	81	19.6
	Total	413	100.0
Company Size	Small	159	38.5
	Medium	137	33.2
	Large	117	28.3
	Total	413	100.0
Type of Leadership	Transformational leadership	113	27.4
	Transactional leadership	111	26.9

	Autocratic leadership	99	24.0
	Democratic leadership	90	21.8
	Total	413	100.0

Source: (Primary data)

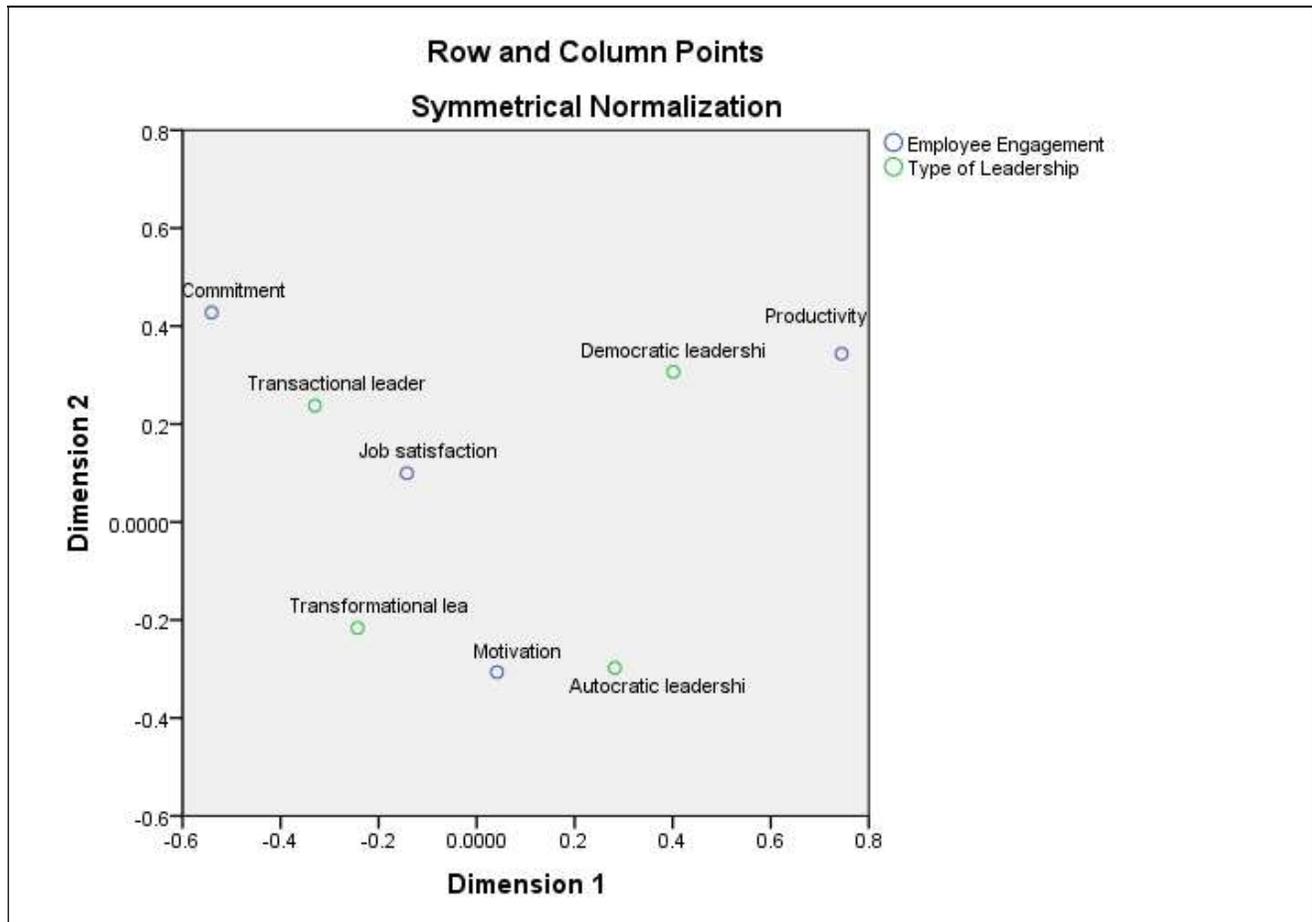
The table presents demographic and leadership style data for a sample of 413 respondents. The gender distribution shows a significant male majority, with 77.7% (321 respondents) being male and 22.3% (92 respondents) female. Regarding age, most respondents fall within the 30-40 years (41.4%) and above 50 years (44.8%) categories, indicating a relatively experienced workforce.

In terms of job roles, the sample is predominantly composed of Team Leaders (40.9%) and Managers (39.5%), with Executives making up 19.6%. The company size distribution reveals that 38.5% of respondents work in small companies, 33.2% in medium-sized companies, and 28.3% in large organizations. When examining leadership styles, Transformational leadership is the most common (27.4%), followed closely by Transactional leadership (26.9%). Autocratic (24.0%) and Democratic (21.8%) leadership styles are also represented, though to a slightly lesser extent. These figures suggest a diverse mix of leadership approaches within the sample, with a slight preference for more structured and change-oriented styles.

The table presents a correspondence analysis of the relationship between different leadership styles and dimensions of employee engagement within a sample of 413 respondents.

Table No. 2: Correspondence Analysis – Employee Engagement

Correspondence Table					
Type of Leadership	Employee Engagement				
	Job satisfaction	Motivation	Commitment	Productivity	Active Margin
Transformational leadership	47	46	10	10	113
Transactional leadership	49	39	12	11	111
Autocratic leadership	38	42	6	13	99
Democratic leadership	36	32	7	15	90
Active Margin	170	159	35	49	413



Summary

Dimension	Singular Value	Inertia	Chi Square	Sig.
1	.100	.010	6.101	.730 ^a
2	.070	.005		
3	.002	.000		
Total		.015		

a. 9 degrees of freedom

Source: (Primary data)

The data indicates how various leadership styles align with employee engagement dimensions, including job satisfaction, motivation, commitment, and productivity. Transformational and Transactional leadership styles show similar patterns, with high associations with job satisfaction and motivation. Autocratic leadership, while less effective in fostering commitment, appears to correlate with productivity. Democratic leadership is slightly less aligned with job satisfaction and motivation but shows some connection to productivity. The summary of the correspondence analysis reveals low inertia (0.015), with the first dimension explaining most of the variation (0.010). The Chi-Square value of 6.101 (with 9 degrees of freedom) suggests that there is no statistically significant association between leadership style and employee engagement dimensions, as indicated by the p-value (0.730). The table presents the results of an ANOVA test analyzing the significance of differences in perceptions of various best leadership practices among different groups within a sample.

Table No.3: ANOVA Test – Best Practices in Leadership

ANOVA						
		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
A clear vision is communicated consistently to the team.	Between Groups	1.177	3	.392	.318	.812
	Within Groups	504.678	409	1.234		
	Total	505.855	412			
Open and transparent communication is maintained within the team.	Between Groups	5.410	3	1.803	1.368	.252
	Within Groups	539.297	409	1.319		
	Total	544.707	412			
Goals and expectations are clearly defined and understood by all team members.	Between Groups	.472	3	.157	.133	.941
	Within Groups	485.489	409	1.187		
	Total	485.961	412			
Timely recognition is given for achievements and contributions.	Between Groups	.013	3	.004	.003	1.000
	Within Groups	505.203	409	1.235		
	Total	505.215	412			
A fair and consistent reward system is in place for good performance.	Between Groups	4.470	3	1.490	1.244	.293
	Within Groups	489.747	409	1.197		
	Total	494.218	412			
Opportunities for advancement and growth are provided based on performance.	Between Groups	2.563	3	.854	.651	.583
	Within Groups	536.750	409	1.312		
	Total	539.312	412			
Adequate support is provided for professional development and skill enhancement.	Between Groups	7.406	3	2.469	1.893	.130
	Within Groups	533.465	409	1.304		
	Total	540.872	412			
Autonomy is encouraged, allowing team members to take ownership of their tasks.	Between Groups	4.291	3	1.430	1.049	.371
	Within Groups	557.520	409	1.363		
	Total	561.811	412			
Constructive feedback is regularly provided to help improve performance.	Between Groups	2.379	3	.793	.655	.580
	Within Groups	494.755	409	1.210		
	Total	497.133	412			
Team members are encouraged to contribute ideas and participate in decision-making processes.	Between Groups	2.147	3	.716	.622	.601
	Within Groups	470.657	409	1.151		
	Total	472.804	412			
A collaborative environment is fostered, where teamwork is highly valued.	Between Groups	.545	3	.182	.149	.930
	Within Groups	498.622	409	1.219		
	Total	499.167	412			
Diverse perspectives and contributions are valued and respected within the team.	Between Groups	3.908	3	1.303	1.093	.352
	Within Groups	487.540	409	1.192		
	Total	491.448	412			
Innovation is encouraged, and new ideas are welcomed.	Between Groups	3.173	3	1.058	.863	.460
	Within Groups	501.369	409	1.226		
	Total	504.542	412			
A safe environment is created for experimenting and learning from	Between Groups	1.281	3	.427	.321	.810
	Within Groups	543.242	409	1.328		

failures.	Total	544.523	412			
Creative problem-solving is actively promoted within the team.	Between Groups	3.150	3	1.050	.788	.501
	Within Groups	545.237	409	1.333		
	Total	548.387	412			

Source: (Primary data)

The ANOVA results indicate that there are no statistically significant differences in the perceptions of the various best leadership practices across different groups, as evidenced by the high p-values (Sig.) across all items, all of which are above the 0.05 threshold. For example, the perception of "A clear vision is communicated consistently to the team" has an F-value of 0.318 with a significance level of 0.812, indicating no significant difference between groups. Similarly, practices like "Open and transparent communication," "Timely recognition," and "A fair and consistent reward system" also show non-significant differences. This suggests that respondents generally perceive leadership practices similarly, regardless of their group classification.

The table presents the mean scores and ranks for various leadership practices within four leadership styles—Transformational, Transactional, Autocratic, and Democratic—highlighting the top five practices in each category.

Table No.4: Descriptive Statistics – Best Practices in Leadership

Type of Leadership	Transformational leadership		Transactional leadership		Autocratic leadership		Democratic leadership	
	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank	Mean	Rank
A clear vision is communicated consistently to the team.	3.6726	10	3.7748	7	3.6566	15	3.7667	6
Open and transparent communication is maintained within the team.	4.1773	1	4.0270	2	4.1313	1	3.8222	4
Goals and expectations are clearly defined and understood by all team members.	3.7080	7	3.7387	9	3.7172	9	3.6444	9
Timely recognition is given for achievements and contributions.	4.0354	3	4.0450	1	4.0505	3	4.0444	1
A fair and consistent reward system is in place for good performance.	3.7788	6	3.5586	15	3.7475	7	3.5556	14
Opportunities for advancement and growth are provided based on performance.	3.6814	9	3.8198	5	3.6667	11	3.8444	3
Adequate support is provided for professional development and skill	3.5133	15	3.6126	14	3.8687	4	3.7333	7

enhancement.								
Autonomy is encouraged, allowing team members to take ownership of their tasks.	3.8584	4	3.8198	6	3.6667	13	3.6111	11
Constructive feedback is regularly provided to help improve performance.	3.8142	5	3.6396	13	3.7374	8	3.6333	10
Team members are encouraged to contribute ideas and participate in decision-making processes.	4.0973	2	3.9730	3	4.0808	2	3.9222	2
A collaborative environment is fostered, where teamwork is highly valued.	3.7080	7	3.7477	8	3.6667	11	3.6556	8
Diverse perspectives and contributions are valued and respected within the team.	3.5929	13	3.8198	4	3.7172	10	3.5889	13
Innovation is encouraged, and new ideas are welcomed.	3.6283	11	3.7207	10	3.7576	6	3.5222	15
A safe environment is created for experimenting and learning from failures.	3.6183	12	3.6486	12	3.6667	14	3.7778	5
Creative problem-solving is actively promoted within the team.	3.5398	14	3.6667	11	3.7778	5	3.6111	12

Source: (Primary data)

For Transformational leadership, the highest-ranked practice is "Open and transparent communication" (Mean = 4.1773), emphasizing the value placed on clear dialogue within teams. "Team members are encouraged to contribute ideas" (Rank 2) and "Timely recognition for achievements" (Rank 3) also score highly, reflecting a focus on inclusivity and acknowledgment. The practices "Autonomy is encouraged" (Rank 4) and "Constructive feedback is regularly provided" (Rank 5) further underscore the importance of empowerment and growth.

In Transactional leadership, "Timely recognition for achievements" (Mean = 4.0450) tops the list, illustrating the significance of rewarding performance. "Open and transparent communication" (Rank 2) and "Team members are encouraged to contribute ideas" (Rank 3) also feature prominently, suggesting that even in a structured environment, communication and involvement are critical. "Diverse perspectives are valued" (Rank 4) and "Opportunities for advancement" (Rank 5) highlight the emphasis

on fairness and progression.

For Autocratic leadership, "Open and transparent communication" (Mean = 4.1313) leads, which might seem counterintuitive but suggests that even in authoritative settings, clear communication is key. "Team members are encouraged to contribute ideas" (Rank 2) and "Timely recognition for achievements" (Rank 3) are similarly valued, indicating some level of acknowledgment and participation. "Adequate support for development" (Rank 4) and "A collaborative environment is fostered" (Rank 5) also make the top five, though this leadership style generally prioritizes control.

Under Democratic leadership, "Team members are encouraged to contribute ideas" (Mean = 3.9222) and "Opportunities for advancement" (Rank 3) are highly valued, reflecting the participative nature of this style. "Timely recognition for achievements" (Rank 1) and "A safe environment for experimenting" (Rank 5) also rank highly, showing a strong focus on fostering a supportive and innovative work environment.

Findings

The analysis of the demographic and leadership style data from 413 respondents reveals a predominance of male respondents (77.7%), with the majority aged between 30-40 years and above 50 years. The sample is mainly composed of Team Leaders (40.9%) and Managers (39.5%), and is distributed across small (38.5%), medium (33.2%), and large companies (28.3%). Leadership styles in the sample are diverse, with a slight preference for Transformational (27.4%) and Transactional (26.9%) styles, followed by Autocratic (24.0%) and Democratic (21.8%) styles.

Correspondence analysis indicates that while Transformational and Transactional leadership styles are strongly associated with job satisfaction and motivation, Autocratic leadership is linked to productivity. Democratic leadership shows a mixed alignment with employee engagement dimensions. However, the low inertia (0.015) and non-significant Chi-Square value (6.101, $p=0.730$) suggest that leadership style does not have a statistically significant impact on employee engagement dimensions.

ANOVA results reveal no significant differences in perceptions of best leadership practices across different leadership styles, as all p -values exceed the 0.05 threshold. This indicates a general consensus on leadership practices regardless of leadership style.

Descriptive statistics highlight the highest-ranked practices for each leadership style: Transformational leadership values "Open and transparent communication" and "Timely recognition"; Transactional leadership emphasizes "Timely recognition" and "Open communication"; Autocratic leadership values "Open communication" and "Team member contribution"; and Democratic leadership prioritizes "Team member contribution" and "Opportunities for advancement." These findings underscore the importance of communication, recognition, and involvement across various leadership styles in enhancing employee engagement and creating supportive work environments.

Discussion

The findings from this study offer a understanding of how different leadership styles influence employee engagement within Tamil Nadu's IT industry. The predominance of Transformational and Transactional leadership styles highlights a strong inclination towards leadership approaches that emphasize change and structured reward systems. This preference aligns with global trends where these styles are associated with higher levels of job satisfaction and motivation.

The correspondence analysis suggests that Transformational and Transactional leadership styles are most effective in enhancing job satisfaction and motivation, reflecting their focus on inspiring and rewarding employees. Transformational leaders, who prioritize vision and innovation, and Transactional leaders, who focus on performance-based rewards, both significantly impact these dimensions of employee engagement. In contrast, Autocratic leadership, characterized by centralized

decision-making, while less effective in fostering commitment, is linked to productivity. This indicates that while Autocratic leaders may drive output, they might not equally cultivate engagement and loyalty among their teams. Democratic leadership, though less influential on job satisfaction and motivation compared to Transformational and Transactional styles, demonstrates its value in promoting a collaborative and supportive work environment.

ANOVA results further reveal that there are no significant differences in perceptions of best leadership practices among the various leadership styles. This uniformity suggests a consensus on what constitutes effective leadership practices, irrespective of the leadership approach. Practices such as clear communication, timely recognition, and opportunities for growth are universally valued, emphasizing their fundamental role in driving employee engagement.

Descriptive statistics reinforce these insights, showing that across all leadership styles, practices like "Open and transparent communication," "Timely recognition," and "Encouragement of idea contribution" are consistently ranked high. For Transformational leaders, these practices underscore their focus on vision and empowerment. For Transactional leaders, the emphasis on rewards and recognition reflects their structured approach to performance management. Autocratic leaders value communication and idea contribution, which, despite their authoritative style, suggests an appreciation for clear dialogue and some level of employee involvement. Democratic leaders, who thrive on inclusivity, place a strong emphasis on idea contribution and advancement opportunities.

Conclusion

This study provides valuable insights into the prevalent leadership styles within Tamil Nadu's IT industry and their impact on employee engagement. The analysis reveals that while Transformational and Transactional leadership styles are favored, each style exhibits unique strengths in fostering engagement. Transformational leaders excel in communication and recognition, while Transactional leaders emphasize performance rewards. Autocratic leaders prioritize clear communication and idea contribution, even within their authoritative framework, while Democratic leaders focus on inclusivity and advancement opportunities. Despite these preferences, the overall consensus on effective leadership practices suggests that core elements such as open communication, timely recognition, and employee involvement are universally valued across different leadership styles. The lack of significant differences in perceptions of leadership practices and the absence of a strong statistical impact of leadership styles on engagement dimensions highlight the need for a delicate approach to leadership. Organizations should focus on these fundamental practices to enhance employee engagement and create a supportive, productive work environment.

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