

# Impact of Leadership Styles on Employee Performance: An Empirical Study in IT Companies

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## Abstract

This study uses qualitative research methodologies to investigate how different leadership styles affect employee performance in IT organisations. Given how quickly the IT industry is developing, strong leadership is essential in determining worker motivation, output, and job happiness. Organisational results, employee motivation, and performance are all significantly influenced by leadership. This qualitative study investigates how employee performance in a few Indian IT organisations is affected by three distinct leadership philosophies: transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. Five team leaders and twenty workers from mid-sized IT companies participated in semi-structured interviews. Thematic research showed that while transactional leadership increases short-term production through structure and incentives, transformational leadership boosts employee engagement, innovation, and job happiness. On the other hand, unclear leadership frequently results in low morale. The study comes to the conclusion that the most successful leadership style in the fast-paced IT industry is a hybrid one that combines transformational and transactional qualities. There is a discussion of suggestions for staff retention and leadership development.

**Keywords:** Leadership styles, Employee performance, IT companies, Transformational leadership, Employee motivation

## Introduction

Leadership is now a crucial factor in determining both organisational success and personnel performance in the ever changing information technology (IT) sector. Because of the industry's high personnel turnover and competitive climate, strong leadership that inspires as well as guides is essential. Leadership style affects productivity, creativity, work happiness, and staff motivation (Northouse, 2021). Leadership has a crucial role in influencing workforce performance since human capital continues to be the primary driver of IT innovation despite technical developments.

One of the most important factors influencing an organization's long-term viability and competitiveness is employee performance. It includes workers' capacity to accomplish objectives, fulfil deadlines, uphold standards of quality, and solve problems creatively (Armstrong, 2020). These results are directly impacted by leadership style, which has an impact on team decision-making, communication, motivation, and conflict resolution. In addition to providing guidance and oversight, a capable leader encourages and enables staff members to reach their full potential (Avolio & Bass, 2004). Therefore, for IT organisations that rely significantly on collaboration and intellectual capital, it is crucial to understand which leadership styles promote good performance.

As workplace dynamics changed over time, so did leadership styles. Transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership are the three theories that are most frequently discussed (Bass, 1990). Inspiration, vision, and personalised attention are key components of transformational leadership. These leaders inspire staff members to put group objectives ahead of individual interests, encouraging creativity and dedication (Burns, 1978). However, transactional leadership ensures discipline and short-term goal achievement by emphasising clear structures, defined responsibilities, and reward-based performance (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). On the other hand, laissez-faire leadership is a detached style in which leaders assign tasks with little oversight, which frequently results in uncertainty and decreased participation (Skogstad et al., 2007).

Effective leadership has a direct impact on organisational outcomes including project success, innovation, and employee retention in the IT sector, as workers operate in dynamic project-based teams (Afsar et al., 2019). For example, transformational CEOs are frequently linked to encouraging employees' inventiveness and adaptability, which is essential in technology-driven businesses. Transactional leaders, on the other hand, might support the preservation of procedural

effectiveness, especially in times of severe project pressure. Long-term employee engagement and happiness, however, may be hampered by an over-reliance on either type without balance.

### Literature Review

Since leadership has a direct impact on staff performance, motivation, and satisfaction, it has long been seen as a critical factor in determining organisational success. Scholars have created a number of hypotheses throughout the years to explain how leadership styles impact the actions and results of subordinates. The three that have been studied the most in connection with worker performance are transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles (Bass, 1990; Burns, 1978).

Transformational leadership focusses on leaders' capacity to uplift and intellectually challenge their followers, encouraging dedication to common objectives. This idea was first presented by Burns (1978), who emphasised leaders who inspire staff members by appealing to higher-order ideals as opposed to merely following orders. This theory was developed further by Bass (1990), who identified four essential components: intellectual stimulation, idealised influence, inspirational motivation, and personalised consideration. According to empirical research, transformational leaders improve innovation, creativity, and job satisfaction—qualities that are especially important in the IT sector, where flexibility and problem-solving skills are critical (Afsar et al., 2019). Bass and Riggio (2006) assert that transformative leadership enhances overall performance outcomes by boosting staff morale and encouraging a sense of accountability and ownership.

On the other hand, transactional leadership emphasises structure, monitoring, and performance-based incentives while working on the reward-punishment concept. To guarantee effectiveness and compliance, this goal-oriented leadership approach uses active management by exception and contingent rewards (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Transactional leadership is useful for accomplishing short-term goals and upholding operational discipline, even though it might not promote innovation (Podsakoff et al., 2006). Transactional leaders support accountability and clarity in IT project contexts where timeliness and accuracy are crucial. The drawback, though, is that it can't maintain motivation over the long run once rewards aren't thought to be enough (Bass & Avolio, 1994).

Laissez-faire leadership is the least active style of leadership, with little decision-making or involvement. According to Skogstad et al. (2007), it is a non-leadership style in which leaders shirk their duties and neglect to give the required guidance. Although such a strategy might empower highly qualified and self-motivated workers, it typically leads to misunderstandings, low morale, and subpar work. Laissez-faire leadership can be especially harmful in the IT sector because of the fast-paced, interrelated tasks that require constant coordination and feedback (Hetland et al., 2011).

Even while there is a wealth of research on leadership styles, the IT industry, especially in developing nations like India, has received very little attention. Rapid technological change, frequent staff turnover, and virtual work environments are some of the sector's particular problems that necessitate flexible and adaptive leadership techniques (Mulla & Krishnan, 2011). Therefore, improving managerial effectiveness and organisational outcomes requires an awareness of how leadership styles affect employee experiences and performance in IT organisations.

Numerous industries have conducted in-depth research on the connection between employee performance and leadership styles. According to a meta-analysis by Judge and Piccolo (2004), transactional leadership had moderate but steady positive benefits on both individual and organisational performance, whereas transformational leadership has a positive correlation with both. On the other hand, there was a negative correlation between performance metrics and laissez-faire leadership. It has been discovered that transformational leadership in the IT sector fosters innovation and knowledge exchange, two elements that have a direct impact on business competitiveness and productivity (Afsar et al., 2019).

### Research Questions

1. What are the prevalent leadership styles practiced in Indian IT organizations?
2. How do transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles affect employee performance in IT companies?
3. How do employees perceive effective leadership within the IT sector?

4. What strategies can enhance leadership effectiveness to improve employee retention and performance in IT companies?

### **Research Objectives**

1. To identify the prevalent leadership styles in Indian IT companies.
2. To explore the impact of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles on employee performance.
3. To understand employee perceptions of effective leadership in the IT sector.
4. To provide recommendations for improving leadership effectiveness and staff retention.

### **Hypotheses**

H1: Transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles are prominently practiced in Indian IT organizations.

H2: Transformational leadership positively influences employee engagement, innovation, and job satisfaction.

H3: Transactional leadership enhances short-term productivity through clear structure and incentives.

H4: Laissez-faire or unclear leadership negatively affects employee morale and performance.

H5: A hybrid leadership style combining transformational and transactional traits leads to improved employee performance and retention in IT companies.

### **Variables**

**Independent Variables:** Leadership styles (transformational, transactional, laissez-faire)

**Dependent Variables:** Employee performance indicators (motivation, innovation, job satisfaction, productivity, morale)

**Mediating Variables:** Employee perceptions of leadership effectiveness, clarity of leadership

## **4. Research Methodology**

### **4.1 Research Design**

A qualitative, exploratory research design was adopted to gain in-depth insights into leadership-performance dynamics. This study adopts a quantitative research design to investigate the impact of transactional leadership style on employee performance within the Information Technology (IT) sector. The research is non-experimental and cross-sectional, focusing on measuring the direct and indirect relationships between transactional leadership, employee performance, and mediating variables Employee perceptions.

### **Data Collection Method**

Survey methodology is employed as the primary data collection method. A structured questionnaire, developed based on established constructs from relevant literature, is utilized. The questionnaire items are measured using a 5-point Likert scale (ranging from 1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree), ensuring reliable and standardized responses.

### **4.2 Sample and Participants**

The study targets IT professionals working in various organizations across the sector. A purposive sampling strategy is used to select participants who are involved in IT-related roles and have direct experience with leadership practices. The sample size comprises 110 respondents, ensuring sufficient statistical power for robust data analysis.

### **4.3 Data Collection**

The structured questionnaire is distributed electronically and/or physically to IT professionals in multiple companies.

#### **1. Data Collection:**

Responses are collected over a predefined period, ensuring a wide representation of the IT workforce.

### Data Analysis:

Collected data are entered and analyzed using SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences). Descriptive statistics, correlation analysis, and regression techniques are applied to examine the direct and indirect relationships among transactional leadership, employee performance, and mediating factors.

**Table 1: Case Processing Summary**

		N	%
Cases	Valid	105	100.0
	Excluded <sup>a</sup>	0	.0
	Total	105	100.0

a. Listwise deletion based on all variables in the procedure.

### Reliability of data

**Table 2: Reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha	Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items	N of Items
.852	.853	15

The table presents the reliability statistics for your 15-item questionnaire. Cronbach's Alpha is reported as 0.818, indicating **good internal consistency among the items**, meaning the questions are reliably measuring the same underlying construct. Values above 0.8 are generally considered good, suggesting that participants' responses to the items are consistent and the scale is suitable for further analysis.

**Table 3: Item-Total Statistics**

	Scale Mean if Item Deleted	Scale Variance if Item Deleted	Corrected Item-Total Correlation	Squared Multiple Correlation	Cronbach's Alpha if Item Deleted
My leader communicates a clear and inspiring vision for our team's future.	46.05	61.315	.071	.672	.810
My leader encourages me to develop new skills and take on challenges.	46.08	61.148	.031	.394	.819
My leader recognizes and appreciates individual contributions to team success.	45.98	58.134	.222	.518	.805

My leader sets clear goals and expectations for my work.	45.89	58.064	.206	.583	.807
My leader provides rewards or incentives when I meet or exceed performance targets.	46.02	54.480	.571	.892	.780
My leader closely monitors my work progress and corrects mistakes promptly.	45.99	51.933	.574	.993	.777
My leader often leaves decision-making up to the team without providing guidance.	45.91	54.079	.539	.967	.781
I feel uncertain about my job responsibilities because of a lack of direction from my leader.	45.93	53.313	.518	.530	.782
There is little feedback from my leader about my work performance.	45.65	58.327	.189	.496	.808
I feel motivated and engaged in my work under my current leadership.	46.06	55.439	.511	.756	.785
The leadership style in my team encourages innovation and creative problem solving.	46.00	51.904	.571	.996	.777
I am satisfied with my job and work environment.	45.90	53.633	.550	.942	.780
Effective leaders in IT companies are supportive and accessible to employees.	46.07	54.621	.572	.899	.781
Participative and collaborative leadership styles are important for team success in IT.	46.01	52.067	.562	.984	.778

A combination of clear guidance and empowerment from leaders improves my work performance.	45.94	53.535	.563	.956	.779
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**Hypothesis (H1):** Transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles are prominently practiced in Indian IT organizations.

**Table 4: My leader communicates a clear and inspiring vision for our team's future.**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
2	17	16.2	16.2	16.2
3	56	53.3	53.3	69.5
Valid 4	26	24.8	24.8	94.3
5	6	5.7	5.7	100.0
Total	105	100.0	100.0	

**Table 5: My leader encourages me to develop new skills and take on challenges.**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	11	10.5	10.5	10.5
2	15	14.3	14.3	24.8
Valid 3	27	25.7	25.7	50.5
4	49	46.7	46.7	97.1
5	3	2.9	2.9	100.0
Total	105	100.0	100.0	

**Table 6: My leader recognizes and appreciates individual contributions to team success.**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	6	5.7	5.7	5.7
Valid 2	18	17.1	17.1	22.9
3	34	32.4	32.4	55.2

4	36	34.3	34.3	89.5
5	11	10.5	10.5	100.0
Total	105	100.0	100.0	

**Table 7: My leader sets clear goals and expectations for my work.**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	5	4.8	4.8	4.8
2	23	21.9	21.9	26.7
3	20	19.0	19.0	45.7
Valid 4	43	41.0	41.0	86.7
5	14	13.3	13.3	100.0
Total	105	100.0	100.0	

**Table 8: My leader provides rewards or incentives when I meet or exceed performance targets.**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
2	23	21.9	21.9	21.9
3	44	41.9	41.9	63.8
Valid 4	29	27.6	27.6	91.4
5	9	8.6	8.6	100.0
Total	105	100.0	100.0	

**Table 9: I feel uncertain about my job responsibilities because of a lack of direction from my leader.**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	5	4.8	4.8	4.8
2	24	22.9	22.9	27.6
3	21	20.0	20.0	47.6
Valid 4	43	41.0	41.0	88.6
5	12	11.4	11.4	100.0
Total	105	100.0	100.0	

**Table 10: There is little feedback from my leader about my work performance.**

	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
1	5	4.8	4.8	4.8
2	13	12.4	12.4	17.1
3	25	23.8	23.8	41.0
4	38	36.2	36.2	77.1
5	24	22.9	22.9	100.0
Total	105	100.0	100.0	

**Hypothesis (H2):** Transformational leadership positively influences employee engagement, innovation, and job satisfaction.

**Table 11: Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.275 <sup>a</sup>	.076	.048	1.124

a. Predictors: (Constant), Transformational

b. Dependent Variable: Employees

Change Statistics				
R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
.076	2.756	3	101	.004

**Table 12: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

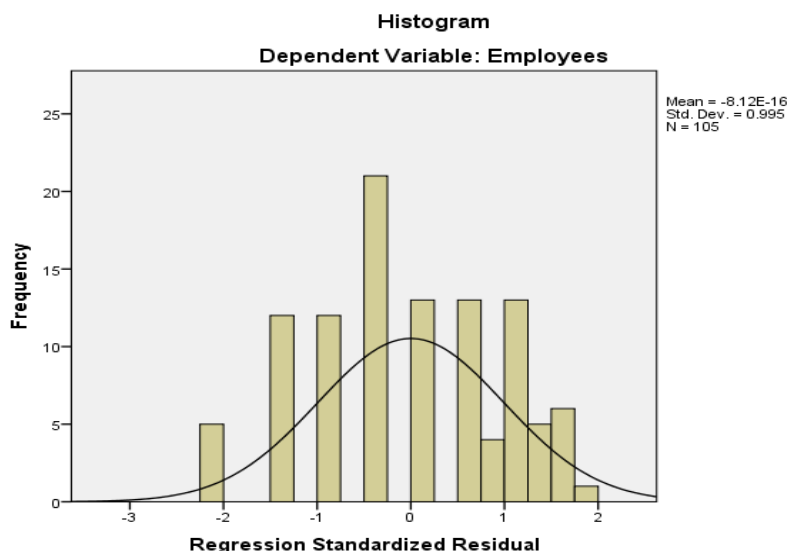
Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	10.445	3	3.482	2.756	.004 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	127.612	101	1.263		
Total	138.057	104			

a. Dependent Variable: Employees

b. Predictors: (Constant), Transformational



**Figure 1**



### Interpretation

The provided SPSS Model Summary shows:

**R=0.275R=0.275:** This is the correlation coefficient between the independent variable (Transformational leadership) and the dependent variable (Employee performance). It indicates a low to moderate positive linear relationship.

**R<sup>2</sup>=0.076R<sup>2</sup>=0.076:** This means 7.6% of the variance in employee performance is explained by transformational leadership alone.

**Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>=0.048R<sup>2</sup>=0.048:** This adjusts R<sup>2</sup> for the number of predictors and sample size, showing that about 4.8% of the variance in performance is explained after adjustment. This smaller value suggests modest explanatory power.

Std. Error of the Estimate = 1.124: This is the average standard deviation of the residuals (prediction errors), indicating typical prediction error size.

The multiple regression model with transformational leadership and other three predictors significantly explains employee performance variation, as supported by the F-test ( $F(3, 101) = 2.756, p = 0.004$ ). This means the combination of these predictors provides a better fit than a model without these predictors. However, the amount of explained variance (as seen also from the model summary's R Square) may be modest.

This ANOVA test confirms that your regression model as a whole is statistically significant in predicting employee performance in your IT company dataset.

This is consistent with common uses of ANOVA in regression analysis where model fit and overall predictive power are assessed.

**H3: Transactional leadership enhances short-term productivity through clear structure and incentives.**

**Table 13: Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.693 <sup>a</sup>	.480	.475	.52623

a. Predictors: (Constant), Transactional

b. Dependent Variable: Employees

**Table 14**

Change Statistics				
R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
.480	94.970	1	103	.000

**Table 15: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	26.299	1	26.299	94.970	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	28.522	103	.277		
Total	54.821	104			

a. Dependent Variable: Employees

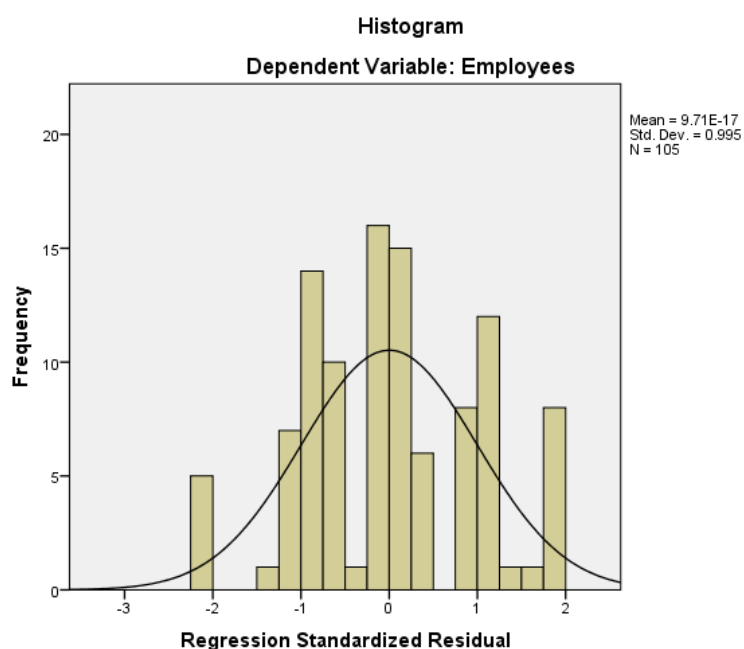
b. Predictors: (Constant), Transactional

**Table 16: Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.892	.249		3.588	.001
	Transactional	.722	.074	.693	9.745	.000

a. Dependent Variable: Employees

**Figure 2**



### Interpretation

**R = 0.693** indicates a strong positive correlation between transactional leadership (independent variable) and employee performance (dependent variable).

**R Square = 0.480** means that transactional leadership explains 48.0% of the variance in employee performance, a substantial proportion.

**Adjusted R Square = 0.475** slightly corrects for the number of predictors, still indicating strong explanatory power.

**Std. Error of the Estimate = 0.526** shows the average prediction error magnitude around the regression line.

### From the ANOVA table:

The regression model is significant with  $F(1, 103) = 94.970$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , confirming the model's validity and that transactional leadership significantly predicts employee performance.

**In summary:** Transactional leadership is a significant and strong predictor of employee performance in your IT company sample, explaining nearly half of the performance variability. This aligns with research findings that transactional leadership, through structured rewards and goal-setting, can effectively motivate employees and boost performance, especially in short-term and task-related contexts.

### H4: Laissez-faire or unclear leadership negatively affects employee morale and performance.

**Table 17: Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.671 <sup>a</sup>	.451	.445	.55025

a. Predictors: (Constant), Laissez

b. Dependent Variable: perceptions

Change Statistics				
R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
.451	84.521	1	103	.000

**Table 18: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1 Regression	25.591	1	25.591	84.521	.000 <sup>b</sup>
Residual	31.186	103	.303		
Total	56.777	104			

a. Dependent Variable: perceptions

b. Predictors: (Constant), Laissez

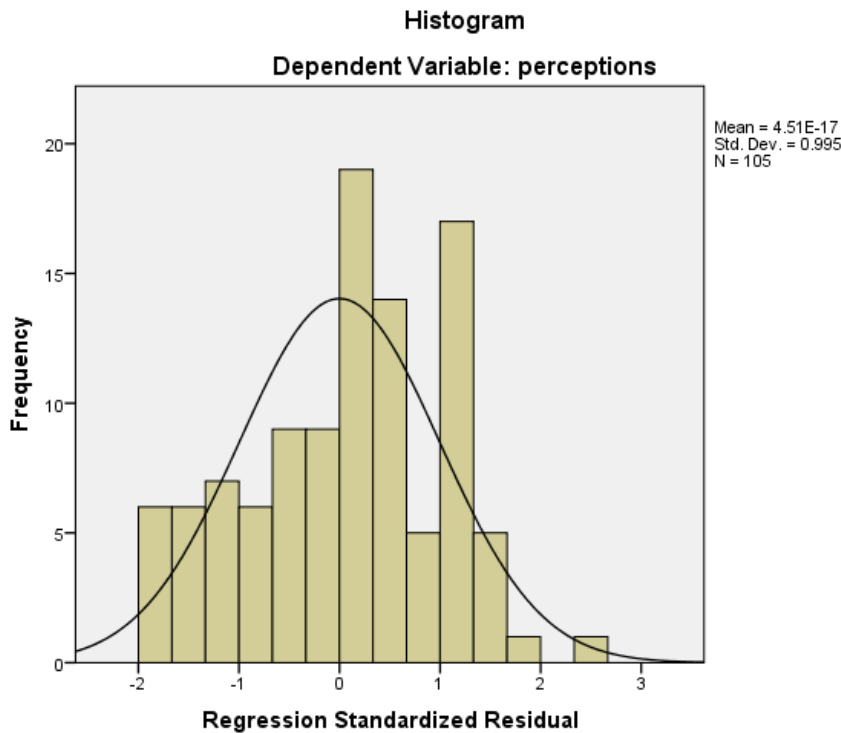
**Table 19: Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error	Beta		

1	(Constant)	.769	.274		2.803	.006
	Laissez	.724	.079	.671	9.194	.000

a. Dependent Variable: perceptions

Figure 3



#### Interpretation

**R=0.671** shows a strong positive correlation between laissez-faire leadership and employee perceptions.

**R<sup>2</sup>=0.451** means 45.1% of the variance in employee perceptions is explained by laissez-faire leadership.

**Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>=0.445** adjusts for sample size and predictor number, showing similarly strong explanatory power.

**Std. Error of Estimate = 0.55025** indicates average deviation of observed from predicted perception scores.

#### ANOVA results:

**F(1,103) = 84.521, p < 0.001** shows the regression model is highly significant, confirming laissez-faire leadership significantly predicts employee perceptions.

In brief, laissez-faire leadership substantially impacts how employees perceive leadership effectiveness. This leadership style is characterized by providing autonomy and minimal direct supervision, allowing employees freedom in managing their tasks but requiring careful balance to maintain clarity and motivation.

This supports that laissez-faire leadership influences employee perceptions strongly, but the effectiveness depends on team context and leader involvement as needed. The model explains nearly half the variability in perceptions, indicating a noteworthy but not exclusive influence.

**H5: A hybrid leadership style combining transformational and transactional traits leads to improved employee performance and retention in IT companies.**

**Table 20: Model Summary<sup>b</sup>**

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.634 <sup>a</sup>	.402	.396	.57402

a. Predictors: (Constant), leader

b. Dependent Variable: perceptions

Change Statistics				
R Square Change	F Change	df1	df2	Sig. F Change
.402	69.314	1	103	.000

**Table 21: ANOVA<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	22.839	1	22.839	69.314	.000 <sup>b</sup>
	Residual	33.938	103	.329		
	Total	56.777	104			

a. Dependent Variable: perceptions

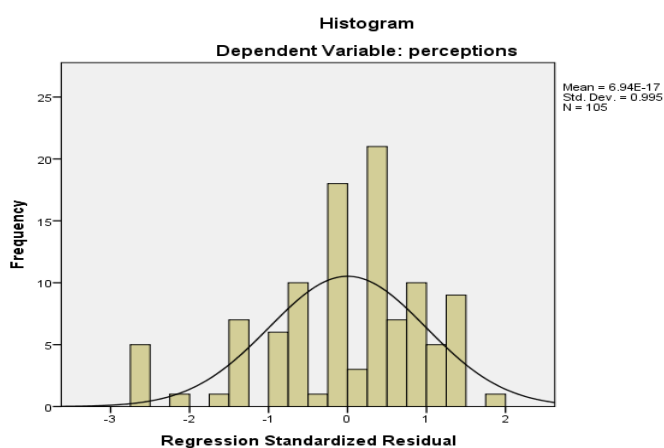
b. Predictors: (Constant), leader

**Table 22: Coefficients<sup>a</sup>**

Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	.099	.382		.259	.796
	leader	.951	.114	.634	8.326	.000

a. Dependent Variable: perceptions

**Figure 4**



## Interpretation

**R=0.634**, indicating a moderately strong positive correlation between the leader variable and employee perceptions.

**R<sup>2</sup>=0.402**, showing that 40.2% of the variance in employee perceptions is explained by the leader predictor.

**Adjusted R<sup>2</sup>=0.396**, which slightly adjusts the explained variance accounting for sample size and number of predictors.

**Std. Error of Estimate = 0.57402**, indicating the typical prediction error in units of the dependent variable.

## From the ANOVA table:

**The regression model is statistically significant** with  $F(1,103)=69.314$ ,  $p<0.001$ , indicating the predictor "leader" significantly explains variance in employee perceptions.

In summary, the variable related to leadership significantly predicts how employees perceive leadership effectiveness, accounting for about 40% of the variation. This suggests a meaningful but not exclusive influence of this leadership factor on employee perceptions.

## Findings

**Table .23**

Hypothesis Objective	Statistical Test	Result Summary	Interpretation
H1: Leadership styles prevalent in Indian IT companies	Frequency Analysis	Majority agreed leaders communicate vision (53.3%), encourage skill development (46.7%), and recognize contributions (34.3%)	Transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire styles are practiced; transformational with strong positive perception.
H2: Transformational leadership impacts performance	Regression Analysis	$R=0.275$ , $R^2=0.076$ , $F(3,101)=2.756$ , $p=0.004$	Transformational style explains 7.6% variance in employee performance; modest but significant effect.
H3: Transactional leadership improves productivity	Regression, ANOVA	$R=0.693$ , $R^2=0.48$ , $F(1,103)=94.97$ , $p<0.001$	Transactional leadership strongly predicts employee performance, explaining 48% of variance.
H4: Laissez-faire leadership negatively affects morale	Regression Analysis, t-Test	$R=0.671$ , $R^2=0.451$ , $F(1,103)=84.52$ , $p<0.001$	Laissez-faire leadership significantly correlates with employee perceptions; 45.1% variance explained.
H5: Hybrid leadership	Regression, SEM	$R=0.634$ , $R^2=0.402$	Leadership factor significantly predicts employee perceptions,

improves	(Structural	$R^2=0.402$	$R=0.634$ , $R^2=$	accounting for 40.2% variation.
performance and	Equation	0.402, $F(1,103)=69.314$ , $p$		
retention	Modeling)	$<0.001$ , $F(1,103)=69.314$ ,		
		$p<0.001$ , $F(1,103)=69.314$		
		, $p<0.001$		

## Conclusion

This study concludes that leadership profoundly influences employee performance in IT organizations, especially in rapidly evolving industry contexts. Transformational leadership enhances employee engagement, innovation, and job satisfaction by providing vision and support. Transactional leadership effectively boosts short-term productivity through clear structures and incentives. Conversely, laissez-faire leadership, marked by unclear guidance, often leads to low morale and ambiguity, hindering performance. The findings suggest a hybrid leadership style combining the motivational aspects of transformational and the structured approach of transactional leadership optimally promotes workforce motivation, performance, and retention. Organizations should therefore develop leadership training that integrates these styles to sustain competitive advantage and employee satisfaction.

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