

Leadership Styles and Employee Involvement: The Role of Transformational and Despotic Leadership

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Abstract

This study examines the influence of transformational and despotic leadership on employee involvement within the banking sector. A quantitative research approach was adopted, targeting mid-level and upper-level managers from conventional banks. A sample of 300 managerial employees participated in the survey, providing data through structured questionnaires. The findings reveal that despotic leadership negatively impacts employee retention, while transformational leadership demonstrates a positive, albeit moderate, association with employee involvement. These results align with prior research, offering valuable insights for bankers, managers, and key stakeholders. Given the limited literature on the behavioral consequences of despotic leadership, this study contributes to understanding its unique and context-specific implications. However, the study's focus on conventional banking managers may restrict the generalizability of the findings to other industries and employee groups. Additionally, the cross-sectional research design limits the ability to establish causal relationships or track changes over time.

Keywords: Despotic leadership, Transformational leadership, Employee Engagement, Pakistan

Introduction

In the rapidly changing arena of traditional banking, where leadership strategy determines whether the organizational goals will be accomplished or not, this fact becomes essential to understand the underlying ambiguities of a range of leadership styles (Koomson, 2025). Such choice in between empowering transformational and despotic leadership styles may play an important role in levels of employee engagement in the end implying the environment and efficacy of the workplace (Bani & Santoso, 2025). With this in mind, the study goals are to fill the much-needed void, which has persistently been an issue in the extant literature, by providing in-depth analysis of the complicated relationships between leadership styles and employee engagement in the case of traditional banking (Al Issa & Omar, 2024).

As stated by Madi Odeh et al. (2023), Leadership is often defined as an individual's capacity to exert influence over their followers in order to accomplish a certain goal (Naseer et al., 2016; Haroon et al., 2019). Leaders are highly anticipated to serve as exemplars of ethical conduct and champions of cultural standards for their followers. The lack of these ethical behaviors shown by leaders is well recognized as being very detrimental to businesses. The ethical failure of leaders has been the primary source of mega scandals like as WorldCom, Lehman Brothers, Enron, etc., which have attracted attention to the negative aspects of leadership. The adverse characteristics of leaders are a significant worry for companies, and further study is required to understand the effects of these bad elements on the actions of subordinates. As a result, the scope of the dark side of leadership has broadened to include destructive leadership, immoral leadership, and despotic leadership. A despotic leader is characterized by their self-centeredness, ambition to exert absolute authority, insistence on acquiring more power, misuse of authority, and disregard for the thoughts and opinions of others (Pillai & Arumugan, 2023).

In addition, a despotic leader is an egocentric leader that demands unwavering obedience from their followers and prioritizes their own personal benefits above the well-being of the followers in the workplace (De Clercq et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2025). Prior research has examined despotic leadership and its effects on several outcomes such as organizational performance, turnover intentions, and organizational citizenship behaviors. Although there is evidence supporting the negative characteristics of despotic leadership, it is necessary to do additional research to fully understand its detrimental impact on workers' attitudes and actions. Moreover, autocratic leadership has an adverse impact on the workforce, leading to a decline in both the caliber of employees and the overall functioning of the firm (Nabila et al., 2024). Despite its long-standing presence in the literature of political leadership and its intuitive appeal, research pertaining to business management and applied psychology literature is still in its early stages. Research on despotic leadership, especially in emerging countries like Pakistan, warrants more attention. It is crucial to investigate how notions propagated in industrialized countries manifest their impact in developing nations. In order to fill these gaps in research, the present study examines the influence of despotic leadership on two important employment outcomes for employees, namely job performance and vigor, in Pakistan.

Research shows that there are various leadership style disparities that result in varying effects on employee engagement, i.e., both positive and negative effects, as discussed on Nikolova et al. (2019). There can be an interpretation of leadership styles as an expression of uniqueness reflected in the actions of the leader, which is either increased engagement and effectiveness (Hogan & Kaiser, 2005). Time and again it has been noticed that those leaders with positive virtues such as determination, honesty, visioning and competence are likely to foster good leadership hence employee work engagement (Rabiul & Yean, 2021). As opposed to leaders who engross negative attributes like self-interest, manipulation, and

dominance, they have proven that they have a negative impact on staff zeal and work, hence poor results considered to be less than what was anticipated (Drescher, 2017). The main objective of this particular study is designed to focus on several important leadership styles that shape the financial services sector performance. The transformational leadership style that will be discussed is one that spurs creative groups to work together to produce an output that surpasses predictions through the process of collaboration and motivation. With this method, there is an emphasis on the leader's capability of promoting the entrepreneurial spirit among the subordinate. The other leadership style to be discussed is despotic leadership characterizing issues such as pride, manipulating opportunism, autocracy, and no compromise in behavior (Naseer et al., 2016). Negative and destructive leadership style leaves a negative impact on the abilities of people and organizations to attain their objective & augments the risk for achieving the goals. Several inquiry studies have established that both transforming and authoritative leaders play a role on worker's job attitudes particularly at the level of one's participation. This involvement can take several forms – psychological, emotional, and even physical or it may lead to the work sing out.

The benefit of identifying gaps in the current literature is to point out the requirement of a comprehensive framework that encompasses as both positivism and negative the leadership are theories used to cover workplace employee engagement. In this light, this would be a significant theoretical development. Through three different approaches this study contributes noticeably to the current body of knowledge corpus. This research intends to explore the correlation between two opposing forms of leadership styles – Transformational and Despotic leadership and their impact on employee involvement as a result, and job satisfaction. This research fills this research gap which has found that positive leadership styles have been to the centre of the literature which has been focused on leadership styles in the banking sector. Moreover, the findings of this research provide some insights regarding the

deficit of scientific studies describing leadership potential for pain induction. De Clercq et al. (2018) looked into the effect of autocratic leadership on employees' job performance in a specific way, and this is the topic which the current analysis puts under scrutiny. The paper ends with a recognition of the fact that overtime, there has been change in the leadership style taking place within the frontiers of the banking sector in Pakistan. It stresses the necessity for performing empirical research in this particular ecosystem, which coincides with the results of many researchers (Nauman et al., 2021).

Literature Review

Transformational Leadership and employee's engagement

Transformational leadership is fundamentally described by the results that it brings also known as outcomes. All the outcomes that transformational leadership brings include it aimed at promoting respect and pride, respecting loyalty and collectivity, understanding needs of workers, and switching motivation from self-interest to communal interest. A transformational leader is one who can resort to changing people's attitudes with a view to making them compatible with the organization's objectives. They might motivate and encourage employees towards the organizational vision, which might call for the realization of tasks that are more high level than their routine jobs. The leader does this by demonstrating their behaviour to others to copy (Sami et al., 2016). The situation was verified by the studies that had been conducted in the banking industry of Bangladesh's bank, where transformational leadership remains best suited to improving performance and encouraging staff engagement. This shows that a transformational leadership is the most powerful aspect in ensuring that the employees turn their effort into positive performance. The major effect of transformative leadership is the employee engagement as exemplified by Park 2019. Employees who see their bosses and supervisors as supportive and efficient leadership's modes are milder to expose

extra-role behavior and have an internal way of life in the organization (Abolnasser al. 2023).

In addition to that, a transformational leader supports the growth of the directives that would in turn contribute to development of the workers' bank of resources, which is directly related to their level of job involvement. This study adopts a theory of COR to assess the link between transformative leadership and the engagement employee. According to the conservation of resources hypothesis, in situations where the workers have little resources; they are more likely to use the negative means in order to reserve their limited resources and become extremely cautious. On the other hand, the more significant the amount of resources is that are provided to an employee by his or her employer, the more likely he or she is to look for additional ways into which he or she can acquire additional resources from which to work with or use to above a minimal threshold (Bezuidenhout & Schultz, 2013; Rehman et al., 2019). Consequently, they become more enthusiastic about going above and beyond their expected duties (Balwant et al., 2019).

Based on the following discussion, it is hypothesized that:

H1: Transformational leadership has significant positive effect on employee's engagement

Despotic Leadership and Employees engagement

Authoritarian attitude and the exercising personal control, usually for the leader's benefit but employing others and becoming personally glorious as the leader is despotic leadership. Hegemonic tendency is one of the traits of tyrannical rulers who are full of spite and who rule with a domineering nature. On the part of the employees, lack of respect, faith and pride for an organization is realized when the employees experience unfair acts or their leader is felt to be manipulating them for personal gain (Jabeen & Abd Rahim, 2021; Razzaq et al., 2020). Thus, their

willingness to interact with the leader or the company decreases, consequently resulting in lower workplace engagement. Authoritarian leadership also leads to a physiological stress reaction, where the employee perceives the leader as one who creates a dangerous workplace and thereby diverts his attention from work to self protection thereby bringing down the employee engagement. According to recent service sector research, persons undergoing abusive behaviors are more likely to be dissatisfied at work. Besides, those whose superiors are hostile are likely to seriously feel despair and have a feeling of not belonging to the job (Mukarram & Hussain, 2021; Ali et al., 2018). Research on dysfunctional elements of leadership is still in its early stages. This suggests a significant change in the leadership literature. Despotism stands out as a prime illustration of negative leadership, since it encompasses the key characteristics of such leadership. In his 2013 meta-analysis, Schilling contends that this is a novel concept that has significant relevance in the area of leadership and warrants the attention of future studies (Khizar et al., 2023). According to Haseeb and Shah (2023), despotic leaders have low moral standards and are unable to motivate their subordinates to attain individual and/or organizational objectives. Ferguson et al. (2009) argued that immoral leadership depletes the self-resources of workers, which are necessary for maintaining desirable behaviors such as optimism, focus, willpower, and esteem. The self-resources of employees diminish or degrade when they are subjected to victimization or vulnerability caused by an unethical leader.

H2: Despotism has significant negative effect on employee's engagement

Methodology

This study utilizes a deductive method to address the research questions addressed in Chapter 1, building upon the quantitative research analysis conducted by Perreault (2011). A deductive approach involves formulating and then testing

research hypotheses that are based on the topic of the investigation. A deductive argument is a kind of reasoning that moves from the general to the particular. It may be valid in many situations when a causal link seems to support a specific hypothesis. To get relevant data for the proposed study, the researcher intends to utilize a primary data collection approach. The choice to utilize primary data sources emerges from the requirement for individualized, centered observations that are directly pertinent to the objectives of the exploration. The researcher means to collect authentic and current data about the impact of despotic and transformational leadership styles on employee engagement. This will be accomplished by direct interaction with the specific demographic inside traditional banking institutions. This technique guarantees that the data collected is tailored to the particular study context, providing a more accurate and thorough understanding of the elements at play inside the selected organizational setting.

The instrument that was used to gather information for this proposed examination comprises of a Likert scale with five reaction choices. The Likert scale is many times used in research as a result of its straightforwardness and flexibility, making it a deliberate however versatile device for assessing members' reactions. This scale works with factual induction and quantitative examination. The usage of a carefully arranged survey ensures a deliberate and controlled way to deal with information assortment, explicitly focusing on the variables being researched. This works with an extensive assessment of the exchange among the principal components of the examination. The choice of this instrument is legitimate by its capacity to deliver quantitative information that can be exposed to factual investigation. This gives major areas of strength for a to drawing significant outcomes and bits of knowledge from the investigation. The examiner embraced inquiries from strong writing sources (Song et al., 2022; Usmani et al., 2019). The participants for this exploration are people employed as administrators within the conventional banking industry. The emphasis mostly be on center to upper-level

directors, since they play a critical job in planning and implementing leadership strategies within the organizational structure. The selected banks analyzed by zeroing in on individual chiefs as the primary unit of analysis. This approach provides a comprehensive examination of their experiences, perspectives, and levels of engagement. Data was collected from supervisors at different progressive levels within the organization, resulting in a sample that accurately represents assorted perspectives. The right sample size was picked in light of statistical factors to provide sufficient statistical power for the following examinations. A list of conventional banks that are presently in business in the Lahore region was utilized to generate the sample outline. The study approach was picked participants from different progressive levels within the company involving a stratified random sample strategy to give a complete and objective representation. This method expects to provide a thorough grasp of what different leadership philosophies and employee engagement mean for different degrees of management in conventional banks. The sample size of current exploration was 300 employees. The sample was picked in light of Yamane equation. To complete the statistical analysis, a few software tools, including the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) were utilized. It was resolved through the review that reliability analysis and progressive control/multiple linear regression were the strategies that were utilized to explore the associations between the factors.

Results

Reliability Analysis

Table 4.1 presents findings of the reliability analysis of major research constructs. Values of Cronbach's Alpha shown the internal consistency and reliability of the measuring scales. Overall, overall reliability of the constructions is robust, with Cronbach's Alpha coefficients between 0.7401 and 0.8508. The basis for the subsequent statistical analysis of the study is provided by the validity and consistency of the three assessment instruments; despotic leadership, Employees Engagement and transformational leadership, according to these findings.

Tabel 4.1 Reliability Analysis

	Cronbach's Alpha
Despotic Leadership	0.7401
Employees Engagement	0.7656
Transformational Leadership	0.7552

Regression Model (Hypothesis Testing)

Tabel 4.2 Model Summary

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
1	.821 ^a	.723	.653	.5542

a. Predictors: (Constant), Employees engagement

Tabel 4.3 ANOVA^a

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	52.133	1	33.22	74.231	.000 ^b
	Residual	241.443	348	.543		
	Total	293.576	349			

a. Dependent Variable: Employees engagement

b. Predictors: (Constant), Despotic Leadership and Transformational leadership

Tabel 4.4 Regression analysis

	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (STDEV)	T Statistics (O/STDEV)	P Values
Despotic Leadership -> Employees Engagement	-0.1158	-0.106	0.0408	2.8387	0.0048
Transformational Leadership ->	0.2812	0.279	0.0358	7.8647	0.000

In Table 4.2, a regression model is presented with the dependent variable being "Employees Engagement" and the predictors being "Despotic Leadership" and "Transformational Leadership." The analysis incorporates the first sample values, sample mean, standard deviation, T statistics, and P values for every predictor. The T statistics uncover that the coefficient for "Despotic Leadership" is - 0.1158, indicating a negative relationship with employees' engagement, and the result is statistically significant ($T = 2.8387$, $p = 0.0048$). Then again, "Transformational Leadership" has a positive coefficient of 0.2812, suggesting a positive relationship with employees' engagement, and this relationship is exceptionally statistically significant ($T = 7.8647$, $p = 0.000$).

In Table 4.3, an analysis of variance (ANOVA) is presented, showing that the regression model is generally statistically significant ($F = 74.231$, $p = 0.000$). The R Square worth in Table 4.4 is 0.723, indicating that approximately 72.3% of the variance in employees' engagement can be explained by the combination of "Despotic Leadership" and "Transformational Leadership." The adjusted R Square is 0.653, adjusting for the quantity of predictors in the model. The regression model appears to fit well, as indicated by the relatively high R Square. Therefore, the predictors, despotic and transformational leadership, significantly contribute to explaining the variance in employees' engagement, with the previous having a negative impact and the latter having a positive impact.

Discussion and Conclusion

The research goal centered on analyzing the effects of various leadership models on workforce involvement namely despotic and transformational styles. The research results indicated despotic leadership produces negative effects on employee involvement by using regression analysis. Research indicated that despotic

leadership resulted in diminished employee staying rates and severely reduced their job commitment. Despotic leaders conduct themselves with authoritarian tendencies in a self-interested fashion thus generating a dehumanizing workplace that blocks employee emotions and active workplace engagement. Research data demonstrated that transformational leadership affects employee involvement with a minimum positive outcome. Through motivating and supporting and stimulating the intellect of their employees' transformational leaders foster increased staff motivation and employee engagement.

The research findings expand current knowledge regarding how leaders exhibit their behaviors. The study enhances current organizational knowledge through its findings about despotic leadership's harmful effects. This paper presents real-world findings about despotic leadership effects from banking employees alongside theoretical studies of this topic. The research validates the enduring significance of transformational leadership because it demonstrates how this approach continues to drive employee involvement success. The study shows employees favor leaders who practice supportive and inclusive approaches together with looking toward the future because their responses display moderate positive results. This analysis enables richer comprehension of leadership's dual capacity to either reduce or boost employee engagement because it uses identical analytical methods to assess both leadership styles.

The findings deliver applicable organizational value to human resource practices and business operations. Organizations require preventive measures to detect despotic leadership behaviors through continuous performance assessments and multicriterial appraisals and commander development initiatives. People who work under despotic leadership typically experience poor morale in addition to higher levels of tension and workplace abandonment. The negative effects stemming from such behavior produce both personal damage and organizational decline.

Mandating a workplace culture without toxic leadership must be the main organizational priority. Organizations must make transformational leadership promotion their main strategy to achieve employee involvement. Organizations must spend funds on development programs that build up essential transformational abilities such as vision explanation techniques alongside individual mentorship and mental stimulus powers to breed leaders who boost employee engagement. Leadership competency creates trust within the workplace while strengthening employee belonging which results in better commitment and performance.

Although the investigation offers valuable information it still has its own set of limitations. The research faces a main constraint as a cross-sectional study because it hinders researchers from establishing causal relationships between variables. Data obtained at one time point prevents researchers from proving that leadership behaviors triggered modifications in employee involvement because alternative variables could be equally responsible. Since the research focused on only banking managers it poses challenges for applying the results to other business sectors including industries. Leadership styles generate different patterns of response within organizations because these responses revolve around cultural elements and also include organizational structures and operational requirements. Data collected from self-reporting generates limitations because participants might conform to societal standards during response or hold distorted impressions about key concepts. Employees sometimes hide their harsh leadership situations while simultaneously showing exaggerated involvement since they worry about workplace secrets getting out as well as organizational consequences.

The limitations call for researchers to initiate future research that implements longitudinal methods to study how leadership impacts evolve chronologically. The use of multiple data collection waves would establish clear cause-effect patterns while decreasing the impact of common method measurement

problems. The results' strength and practical value could grow by adding studies from different industries and various job roles across diverse geographical areas. Using interviews and focus group sessions as qualitative research methods would allow researchers to obtain detailed knowledge about how employees really experience different leadership approaches. Additional future research should investigate psychological safety and organizational support as potential mediation variables and employee personality traits and organizational culture as potential moderation variables to understand better the leadership-involvement connection.

This study demonstrates that how leaders interact with their workforce determines employee involvement at work. Workforce engagement faces severe harm under despotic leadership; thus, organizations must create policies with interventions to address this leadership style. Transformational leadership creates environments which become more welcoming to employees and build organizational motivation and common commitment. The study produces valuable findings yet these benefits are restricted by the boundaries of its research approach and scope. These findings create a basis which both organizations can use to improve their operations and future researchers can build on. Organization development requires a recognition of leadership behaviors' multidimensional impact which leads to active creation of leadership styles that match workplace well-being and motivation requirements.

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