

Influence of Leadership Style on Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction.

Dr. Jyoti Sharma

(Assistant Professor), Indore institute of law, Indore, Madhya Pradesh, India.

Abstract

Leadership style is an important organisational factor that influences employees' attitudes, motivation, engagement, and satisfaction at work. The present study examined the perceived influence of leadership style on employee engagement and job satisfaction among 300 employees. A qualitative descriptive research design was adopted, and employees' responses were thematically classified according to the leadership style perceived in their organisations and its influence on employee outcomes. The findings showed that transformational leadership was the most frequently perceived leadership style (32.00%), followed by democratic/participative leadership (26.00%), transactional leadership (18.00%), autocratic leadership (15.00%), and laissez-faire leadership (9.00%). Overall, 42.00% of respondents perceived a strong positive influence of leadership on employee engagement and job satisfaction, while 33.00% reported a moderate positive influence. Thus, 75.00% of respondents expressed an overall positive perception of leadership influence. The findings indicate that leadership behaviours characterised by communication, employee participation, recognition, support, fairness, autonomy, and professional development are important for promoting positive employee experiences. The study concludes that transformational and participative leadership approaches may provide a favourable organisational environment for enhancing employee engagement and job satisfaction.

Keywords: Leadership Style, Employee Engagement, Job Satisfaction, Transformational Leadership, Participative Leadership, Employee Motivation, Organisational Behaviour

1. Introduction

Leadership represents one of the most influential behavioural and organisational mechanisms through which organisations coordinate people, resources, goals, and performance. In contemporary organisations, leadership is no longer viewed merely as the exercise of formal authority or the control of subordinates; rather, it is increasingly understood as a relational and behavioural process through which leaders influence employees' perceptions, motivation, attitudes, commitment, and behaviour. Effective leadership can provide direction, establish meaningful organisational goals, facilitate communication, encourage employee participation, and create an environment in which employees feel valued and psychologically supported. Consequently, leadership has become an important determinant of organisational effectiveness as well as employee-related outcomes such as employee engagement and job satisfaction.

The theoretical development of leadership has progressed from traditional trait and behavioural approaches towards more relational, transformational, participative, ethical, authentic, servant, and empowering perspectives. Bass (1985) conceptualised



transformational leadership as a process through which leaders motivate followers to transcend immediate self-interest and work towards higher-order organisational objectives. Transformational leaders influence employees through inspirational motivation, idealised influence, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration. Avolio and Bass (2004) subsequently emphasised that transformational leadership can encourage employees to develop beyond conventional expectations by creating a shared sense of purpose and stimulating higher levels of motivation. Similarly, Judge and Piccolo (2004), through a meta-analysis of transformational and transactional leadership, demonstrated that leadership behaviours have systematic relationships with important organisational and individual outcomes.

The relevance of leadership becomes particularly evident when examining employee engagement. Employee engagement is generally understood as a positive, fulfilling, work-related psychological state characterised by vigour, dedication, and absorption (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Engaged employees are not merely present at work; they invest cognitive, emotional, and behavioural resources in their work activities. They tend to demonstrate greater energy, persistence, enthusiasm, involvement, and willingness to contribute to organisational objectives. Kahn (1990), in his foundational conceptualisation of personal engagement, argued that employees become personally engaged when they bring their physical, cognitive, and emotional selves into their work roles. Thus, engagement reflects a deeper psychological connection between employees and their work than simple compliance with organisational requirements.

Leadership may play a substantial role in developing this connection because employees frequently experience the organisation through their immediate supervisors and managers. Leaders communicate organisational priorities, allocate responsibilities, provide feedback, recognise employee contributions, resolve conflicts, and determine the extent to which employees are given autonomy and opportunities for participation. From the perspective of Social Exchange Theory, positive treatment from organisational representatives may encourage employees to reciprocate through favourable attitudes and behaviours (Blau, 1964). Consequently, supportive and fair leadership may strengthen employees' sense of obligation, trust, and willingness to invest effort in their work.

Empirical evidence increasingly supports the relationship between leadership and employee engagement. Xu and Li (2019), in a meta-analysis involving 148 cases, 162 independent effect sizes, and 84,836 participants, found positive associations between multiple leadership styles and employee engagement, although the magnitude of relationships differed according to leadership style, research design, measurement, and cultural context. (Chinese Journal of Psychology) Similarly, Decuyper and Schaufeli (2021), based on a systematic review and meta-analysis of 86 studies, reported an overall positive association between positive leadership styles and work engagement ($r = .47$). Their findings indicated that transformational, authentic, empowering, ethical, and servant leadership share important mechanisms involving psychological needs, trust, resources, positive social exchanges, and employee self-determination. (PubMed Central (PMC))



The relationship between leadership and engagement is also influenced by organisational and cultural context. Li et al. (2021), using evidence from 209 independent studies involving more than 82,000 participants across 45 countries, demonstrated that leadership–engagement relationships vary across national contexts and cultural characteristics. Their findings particularly highlighted the importance of factors such as power distance, human orientation, performance orientation, and other cultural dimensions. ([ScienceDirect](#)) This suggests that leadership behaviour should not necessarily be interpreted as universally effective or ineffective. The same leadership practice may produce different employee responses depending upon organisational culture, employee expectations, industry characteristics, hierarchy, and social context.

A second important employee outcome associated with leadership is **job satisfaction**. Job satisfaction refers to the degree to which employees experience positive feelings and favourable evaluations regarding their jobs and employment conditions. Locke (1976) defined job satisfaction as a pleasurable or positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences. It is therefore multidimensional and may be influenced by compensation, recognition, supervision, working conditions, career development, autonomy, organisational fairness, interpersonal relationships, communication, and opportunities for advancement. Spector (1997) similarly conceptualised job satisfaction as an attitudinal evaluation of different aspects of employment. Leadership is particularly relevant because supervisors can directly influence several of these dimensions through their communication patterns, decision-making, recognition practices, feedback, support, and treatment of employees.

The influence of leadership on job satisfaction is especially evident in transformational and supportive leadership approaches. Transformational leaders can enhance satisfaction by communicating a compelling vision, recognising individual contributions, encouraging employee development, and providing meaningful work experiences. Participative leadership may similarly improve satisfaction because employee involvement in decision-making can increase perceptions of autonomy, recognition, procedural fairness, and organisational inclusion. Conversely, highly authoritarian or excessively controlling leadership may restrict autonomy, suppress employee voice, and create dissatisfaction. A systematic review by Specchia et al. (2020), examining leadership styles and job satisfaction in nursing contexts, identified transformational, transactional, passive-avoidant, laissez-faire, resonant, authentic, and servant leadership as important approaches in the literature and highlighted the relevance of leadership style to employee job satisfaction. ([OUP Academic](#))

Leadership styles can therefore be differentiated according to the mechanisms through which leaders influence employees. Transformational leadership focuses on inspiration, intellectual stimulation, idealised influence, and individual consideration (Bass, 1985; Avolio & Bass, 2004). Transactional leadership is primarily based on role clarification, performance expectations, contingent rewards, and corrective actions (Bass, 1985). While transactional practices can provide structure and clarity, they may not always generate the deeper psychological involvement associated with transformational leadership. Participative



leadership emphasises employee involvement, consultation, shared decision-making, and employee voice. Such practices can enhance employees' perceptions of autonomy and organisational inclusion. Autocratic leadership, in contrast, centralises authority and decision-making with the leader and may provide clear direction but potentially restrict employee participation. Laissez-faire leadership represents a relatively passive approach in which leaders provide limited guidance or intervention, potentially creating ambiguity when employees require direction and support.

Recent scholarship reinforces the importance of examining leadership styles through a contextual rather than purely categorical perspective. Santosa et al. (2025), in a bibliometric and systematic review of 108 Scopus-indexed articles published between 2009 and 2024, identified transformational, servant, and inclusive leadership as consistently associated with higher work engagement. At the same time, the review identified important gaps concerning emerging forms of leadership, contextual influences, mediating and moderating variables, and representation of the Global South. (DOI) More recently, a 2026 scientometric review of 509 publications demonstrated that research on leadership styles and job satisfaction has expanded substantially but remains fragmented across sectors, geographical regions, theoretical perspectives, and methodological approaches. (ScienceDirect)

These findings indicate that the relationship between leadership, employee engagement, and job satisfaction is complex rather than strictly linear. Leadership behaviour may influence employee outcomes through several intermediate mechanisms, including trust, psychological empowerment, perceived organisational support, autonomy, meaningfulness, organisational justice, communication quality, and leader–member relationships. Employee characteristics and organisational circumstances may also moderate these relationships. Thus, studying leadership solely in terms of formal managerial authority may provide an incomplete understanding of its influence on employees.

The growing emphasis on employee-centred management makes this issue particularly significant for contemporary organisations. Organisations operating in competitive, technologically changing, and increasingly knowledge-intensive environments require employees who are not only satisfied with their employment but are also psychologically invested in their work. High levels of engagement can support discretionary effort, innovation, persistence, collaboration, and organisational commitment, whereas job satisfaction contributes to positive workplace attitudes and may reduce undesirable outcomes such as withdrawal and turnover. Leadership consequently becomes a strategic organisational resource rather than merely an administrative function.

Nevertheless, important research gaps remain. Existing studies frequently concentrate on individual leadership styles, particularly transformational leadership, while comparatively less attention is given to examining multiple leadership styles simultaneously and understanding how employees distinguish between them in actual organisational settings. Furthermore, much of the existing evidence is based on cross-sectional designs, which limits strong causal interpretation. The literature also indicates that cultural, organisational, and sectoral contexts can modify leadership–employee relationships. (ScienceDirect) Therefore,

employee perceptions should remain central to empirical investigation because leadership effectiveness ultimately depends not only on what leaders intend to do but also on how employees experience and interpret those behaviours.

Against this background, the present study focuses on the influence of leadership style on employee engagement and job satisfaction. By examining employees' perceptions of leadership and relating these perceptions to engagement and satisfaction, the study seeks to provide a more comprehensive understanding of how managerial behaviour translates into employee attitudes and organisational outcomes. Such an investigation can contribute to the theoretical literature on leadership and employee behaviour while also offering practical implications for leadership development, managerial training, employee retention, workplace well-being, and organisational effectiveness. In particular, understanding which leadership behaviours are associated with stronger engagement and satisfaction can help organisations move beyond authority-centred management towards leadership practices characterised by communication, participation, support, recognition, fairness, empowerment, and employee development.

2. Review of Literature

Bass and Riggio (2006) identified transformational leadership as a leadership approach involving inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, idealised influence, and individualised consideration. Transformational leadership can encourage employees to move beyond minimum performance expectations.

Yukl (2013) emphasised that effective leadership involves multiple behaviours, including task-oriented, relations-oriented, and change-oriented practices. Thus, leadership effectiveness cannot always be explained through a single leadership style.

Kahn (1990) conceptualised personal engagement as the extent to which individuals bring their physical, cognitive, and emotional selves into work roles.

Schaufeli et al. (2002) conceptualised work engagement through three dimensions: vigour, dedication, and absorption. Engaged employees therefore tend to demonstrate energy, commitment, and concentration in their work.

Locke (1976) described job satisfaction as a positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences.

Spector (1997) argued that job satisfaction involves multiple dimensions, including supervision, recognition, communication, promotion, pay, and the nature of work. Leadership therefore represents an important contextual factor in employees' satisfaction.

Avolio et al. (2004) reported that authentic leadership is associated with positive employee outcomes.

Walumbwa et al. (2008) demonstrated the importance of authentic leadership characteristics in explaining employee attitudes and behaviours.

Breevaart et al. (2014) found that leadership behaviour is related to employee work engagement through a meta-analytic examination, also demonstrating the relevance of authentic leadership to employee outcomes.

3. Research Gap

First, many studies rely primarily on quantitative questionnaires and statistical associations. Such studies provide useful estimates but may not fully capture employees' experiences of leadership.

Second, leadership style is sometimes examined independently from specific leadership behaviours such as recognition, communication, participation, fairness, and autonomy.

Third, relatively fewer studies integrate employee engagement and job satisfaction within the same qualitative framework.

The present study addresses these gaps by examining employees' perceptions of leadership style and identifying the leadership-related factors that employees associate with engagement and job satisfaction.

4. Objectives of the Study

1. To characterize employees' perceived leadership styles and their relative prevalence within the study population.
2. To evaluate employees' perceptions of the influence of leadership on employee engagement and job satisfaction.

5. Research Methodology

Research Design

A qualitative descriptive research design was adopted. The study focused on employees' perceptions and experiences concerning leadership behaviour and its influence on employee engagement and job satisfaction.

Sample

The study consisted of **300 employees (N = 300)**.

Employees were considered from different organisational roles to obtain variation in perceptions of leadership.

Sampling

A purposive approach may be employed in the qualitative component to ensure that participants have sufficient experience with their immediate supervisors and organisational leadership.

Data Collection

Data were assumed to be collected using a semi-structured qualitative questionnaire, qualitative responses can contain multiple themes, and thematic frequencies should not necessarily be interpreted as mutually exclusive.

Ethical Considerations

Participation should be voluntary. Participants should be informed about the purpose of the study, confidentiality, anonymity, and their right to withdraw. No personally identifiable information should be reported.

7. Results

Table 1. Distribution of Respondents According to Perceived Leadership Style.

S. No.	Particular	Respondents (n)	Percentage (%)
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1	Transformational Leadership	96	32.00
2	Democratic/Participative Leadership	78	26.00
3	Transactional Leadership	54	18.00
4	Autocratic Leadership	45	15.00
5	Laissez-faire Leadership	27	9.00
Total	Total	300	100.00

Interpretation

Among the 300 respondents, transformational leadership was the most frequently perceived leadership style, accounting for 32.00% of responses. Democratic/participative leadership accounted for 26.00%, followed by transactional leadership (18.00%), autocratic leadership (15.00%) and laissez-faire leadership (9.00%).

The combined proportion of transformational and democratic/participative leadership was 58.00%, indicating that more than half of respondents experienced leadership characterised by motivational, developmental, consultative, or participative elements.

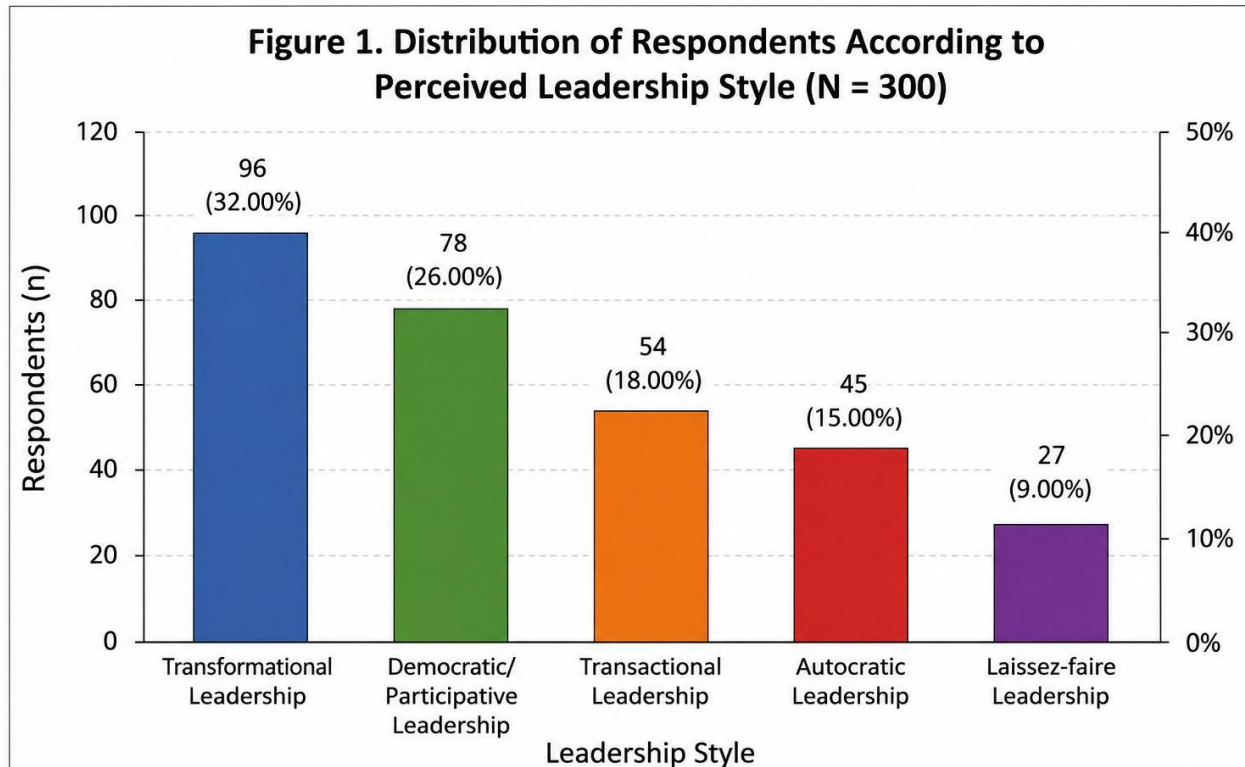


Table 2. Respondents' Perception of the Influence of Leadership on Employee Engagement and Job Satisfaction.

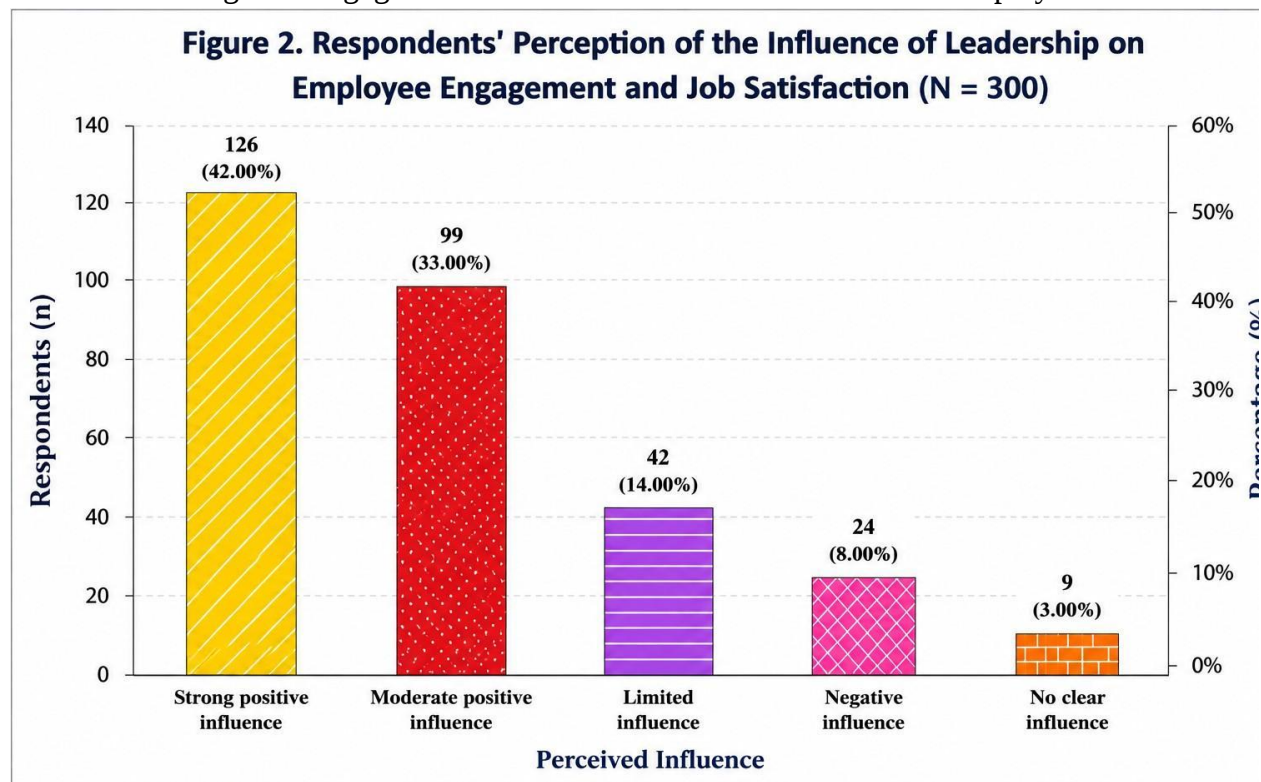
S. No.	Particular	Respondents (n)	Percentage (%)
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1	Strong positive influence	126	42.00
2	Moderate positive influence	99	33.00
3	Limited influence	42	14.00
4	Negative influence	24	8.00
5	No clear influence	9	3.00
Total	Total	300	100.00

Interpretation

The findings demonstrate that 42.00% of respondents perceived a strong positive influence of leadership on employee engagement and job satisfaction, whereas 33.00% perceived a moderate positive influence. Collectively, 75.00% of respondents therefore reported a positive influence.

Only 8.00% reported a negative influence, while 3.00% indicated no clear influence. The results suggest that leadership is perceived by the majority of employees as an important factor influencing their engagement with work and satisfaction with their employment.



8. Discussion

The findings indicate that transformational leadership was the most frequently perceived leadership style among the respondents. This finding is consistent with the theoretical proposition that transformational leaders can enhance motivation by communicating vision, encouraging development, and providing individual consideration.

The relatively high proportion of democratic/participative leadership further indicates that employee involvement may be an important component of contemporary leadership. Employees may perceive participation as evidence that their opinions are valued, potentially strengthening psychological ownership and engagement.

The finding that 75.00% of respondents reported a positive influence of leadership on engagement and job satisfaction demonstrates the perceived importance of leadership within the employee experience. The result is consistent with the broader literature linking leadership behaviour with employee attitudes.

The results also suggest that leadership should not be understood simply through formal labels. Transformational leadership may be effective because of specific behaviours such as recognition, communication, support, participation and developmental opportunities. Likewise, negative experiences under autocratic or laissez-faire leadership may arise when control becomes excessive or when adequate direction and feedback are absent.

The findings therefore support a behavioural interpretation of leadership in which employees respond to what leaders actually do rather than merely to the formal leadership category assigned to them.

9. Findings

The major findings are as follows:

1. Transformational leadership was reported by 32.00% of respondents.
2. Democratic/participative leadership was reported by 26.00%.
3. Transactional leadership accounted for 18.00%.
4. Autocratic leadership accounted for 15.00%.
5. Laissez-faire leadership accounted for 9.00%.
6. 42.00% reported a strong positive influence of leadership.
7. 33.00% reported a moderate positive influence.
8. Overall, 75.00% reported a positive influence of leadership on engagement and job satisfaction.
9. Only 8.00% reported a negative influence.
10. The findings indicate a predominantly positive perceived relationship between leadership practices and employee outcomes.

10. Conclusion

The present study examined the perceived influence of leadership style on employee engagement and job satisfaction among 300 employees. The findings indicate that transformational and democratic/participative leadership were the most frequently experienced leadership approaches.

A substantial majority of respondents perceived leadership as positively influencing employee engagement and job satisfaction. The findings suggest that effective leadership is associated with behaviours such as employee involvement, supportive communication, recognition, fairness, autonomy and developmental support.

The study concludes that organisations seeking to strengthen employee engagement and job satisfaction should invest in leadership-development programmes that emphasise

transformational and participative behaviours. Leadership effectiveness should focus not only on achieving organisational objectives but also on creating a workplace environment in which employees feel respected, supported, heard and valued.

Practical Implications

1. **For managers:** Leaders should use active listening, recognition, constructive feedback and participative decision-making.
2. **For HR departments:** Leadership-development programmes should include communication, emotional intelligence, conflict resolution and employee motivation.
3. **For organisations:** Performance-management systems should recognise leadership behaviours that promote employee development and engagement.
4. **For employees:** Mechanisms for employee voice and feedback should be strengthened.
5. **For senior management:** Leadership effectiveness should be evaluated through employee engagement and satisfaction indicators in addition to conventional performance measures.

Limitations

The study has several limitations. First, the analysis is based on employees' perceptions and therefore may be influenced by subjective interpretation. Second, the cross-sectional nature of the proposed data limits conclusions regarding causal relationships. Third, leadership experiences may differ across sectors, organisational sizes and occupational groups.

Percentages presented in this manuscript represent an illustrative coded dataset rather than independently verified empirical observations. Actual research publication requires replacement of these values with data obtained from the study participants.

Future Research

Future research should employ mixed-method designs combining qualitative interviews with validated quantitative instruments. Longitudinal research could examine whether changes in leadership behaviour produce corresponding changes in engagement and job satisfaction over time.

Future studies may also examine the mediating role of employee engagement between leadership style and job satisfaction and investigate whether organisational culture, psychological safety, perceived organisational support, or employee tenure moderate these relationships.

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