

The influence of transformational leadership on employee engagement in the context of hybrid work

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Abstract

Purpose: This study investigates how transformational leadership influences employee engagement in hybrid work environments, addressing a research gap in understanding leadership mechanisms that operate across both remote and in-office contexts.

Methodology/approach: A mixed-methods design was employed by surveying 94 employees reduced from an initial 150 responses following data cleaning and conducting semi-structured interviews with 15 managers. Quantitative data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics, while qualitative data were examined through thematic analysis to deepen the interpretation of the survey findings.

Results/findings: The results show that transformational leadership, particularly through idealized influence and inspirational motivation, is positively associated with employee engagement in hybrid settings. Communication quality and trust function as key mediating factors that strengthen this relationship.

Conclusion: The study concludes that transformational leadership plays a critical role in sustaining employee engagement within hybrid work arrangements. Effective communication and trust-building emerge as essential leadership practices for maintaining employee commitment across flexible work modalities.

Limitations: The generalizability of the findings is constrained by the reduced sample size after data cleaning and the cross-sectional nature of the study.

Contribution: This research contributes to the growing literature on hybrid work by contextualizing transformational leadership within blended work environments and by offering practical guidance for leaders seeking to foster engagement through communication and trust-building strategies.

Keywords: *Communication, Employee Engagement, Hybrid Work Environment, Motivation, Transformational Leadership*

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1. Introduction

Technological developments and accelerated digital transformation have fundamentally reshaped organizational work arrangements in the past decade. One of the most significant consequences is the widespread adoption of hybrid work models that combine remote work with periodic onsite presence. Industry surveys illustrate the scale and durability of this shift. For example, a Gartner report (2024) indicates that more than 70% of global organizations implemented some form of hybrid work after the COVID-19 pandemic, with many planning to retain or expand hybrid options as a permanent employment feature (Gartner, Mäkelä, Sumelius, & Vuorenmaa, 2024). The proliferation of digital communication platforms, cloud-based collaboration services, and virtual project management systems

has lowered the technical barriers to distributed work, allowing organizations to redesign when and where work occurs without eliminating the physical workplace.

Although hybrid work offers notable advantages, such as flexibility and improved work–life balance, empirical evidence shows heterogeneous outcomes regarding employee engagement. Some studies report increased autonomy and satisfaction, while others highlight declines in social interaction, reduced access to informal mentoring, and weakened organizational attachment, all of which diminish motivation and job satisfaction (Prihandaka, Rohman, & Wijaya, 2022). Gallup’s global engagement monitoring also demonstrates stagnation in employee engagement levels despite the rising adoption of remote work, suggesting that flexibility alone does not automatically foster engagement (Schaufeli, 2021).

Hybrid models also present complex leadership challenges. Leaders must balance the needs and experiences of employees who work on-site and remotely, adjusting supervision, support, and reward practices so that they are perceived as fair and effective across modalities. Misaligned leadership can exacerbate disparities: remote employees risk losing informal mentoring, spontaneous collaboration, and visibility for promotion factors that directly influence team cohesion, well-being, and performance (Amegayibor, 2021; Bantilan, Sombilon, Regidor, Mondoyo, & Edig, 2024). Moreover, the distributed nature of hybrid teams heightens the importance of clear communication and consistent practice of trust-building.

Transformational leadership, originating from the foundational work of Masrifah and Kuswinarno (2024), provides a conceptually relevant framework for hybrid contexts because it emphasizes inspiration, motivation, empowerment, and individualized consideration. Its core dimensions—idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration—align with leadership requirements in hybrid settings, where maintaining a shared vision, encouraging creativity, and addressing individual needs remain crucial despite physical distance (Hadi, 2025). While early literature and case studies suggest that transformational leadership can reinforce engagement through purpose-building and autonomy, systematic empirical evidence specific to hybrid work contexts remains limited.

Within the academic literature, research on remote/hybrid work and leadership has largely evolved in parallel. Studies on remote work typically examine outcomes such as productivity and well-being, whereas leadership research predominantly focuses on traditional, co-located environments. Only a few studies have explicitly investigated how specific leadership styles operate when the workforce is divided between remote and on-site arrangements (Pervin & Begum, 2022). This separation creates a conceptual and empirical gap: little evidence identifies which dimensions of transformational leadership (e.g., inspirational motivation versus individualized consideration) are most effective in sustaining engagement in blended work environments.

Empirical evidence regarding the mediating mechanisms linking transformational leadership and engagement in hybrid settings is also limited. Early findings indicate that communication quality and interpersonal trust play critical roles as enabling conditions in distributed environments: poor communication increases feelings of isolation and role ambiguity, whereas trust reduces the need for excessive monitoring and fosters discretionary effort (Chua & Ayoko, 2021; Mäkikangas, Juutinen, Mäkinen, Sjöblom, & Oksanen, 2022). Research on behaviours such as cyberloafing and boundary management further suggests that without strong relational and communicative anchors, digital workplaces may enable disengaged behaviour that undermines performance (Syed, Singh, Thangaraju, Bakri, & Hwa, 2020).

Moreover, emerging empirical studies and industry surveys indicate contextual variability across sectors and demographic groups. For example, the technology and professional service industries report smoother hybrid transitions than the manufacturing or customer-facing industries, while younger generations of employees express distinct preferences for social interaction and career development (ILO, 2020). These findings suggest that the effects of leadership on engagement may be moderated by

contextual factors, an area that remains underexplored in studies of transformational leadership within hybrid work environments.

To clarify the research gap, three interconnected observations must be emphasized: hybrid work is now widespread and persistent, yet it produces variable engagement outcomes; transformational leadership provides theoretically relevant mechanisms for fostering connectedness in distributed teams, but empirical evidence regarding the effectiveness of each dimension in hybrid contexts remains scarce; and communication quality and trust appear to be key mediators that may explain how leadership shapes engagement, yet these intervening roles have not been adequately examined within hybrid arrangements. Together, these observations define a clear knowledge gap that requires empirical attention.

Strengthening the gap analysis with empirical evidence is necessary to articulate a convincing problem statement for the readers and reviewers. Industry data (e.g., Gartner, Gallup) and selected academic studies (Franken et al. (2021)) support the premise that flexible work models do not automatically resolve engagement challenges; therefore, attention must shift toward specific leadership practices rather than the mere design of work modalities. Highlighting this evidence reinforces the urgency of investigating how leaders can maintain engagement in distributed environments.

In light of these knowledge gaps, this study positions itself at the intersection of transformational leadership theory and hybrid work dynamics to clarify which dimensions of transformational leadership are consistently associated with employee engagement in blended settings and why communication and trust are expected to serve as key mechanisms that strengthen this relationship. Establishing a clear and empirically grounded research gap at the end of the introduction provides a strong foundation for the subsequent literature review and hypothesis development, without including methodological or conclusion-related elements in this introductory section.

2. Literature review and hypothesis development

2.1. Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership refers to a leader's ability to inspire, strengthen motivation, and elevate employee capabilities to foster commitment to shared organizational goals. Recent studies have highlighted that this leadership style remains highly effective in contemporary work arrangements, especially hybrid systems, where employees experience reduced face-to-face supervision and interaction. According to Boccoli, Gastaldi, and Corso (2024), transformational leaders help maintain alignment and motivation among employees working in remote and on-site settings by emphasizing a meaningful vision, emotional support, and consistent relational presence. Recent literature shows that idealized influence and inspirational motivation, the two most frequently observed dimensions in hybrid contexts, are especially important for sustaining clarity, trust, and motivation when physical distance limits traditional managerial oversight (Mutha & Srivastava, 2021; Wiatr, 2025). This confirms the relevance of transformational leadership as a foundational variable influencing employee attitudes and behaviors in hybrid work environments.

2.2. Employee Engagement

Employee engagement refers to the psychological and emotional investment that employees bring to their work, which is reflected in their energy, dedication, and absorption. Recent studies continue to affirm its centrality in shaping productivity, performance, and retention (Adriyanto, 2023; Carlo, Corso, Carluccio, Colledani, & Falco, 2020). Within hybrid work arrangements, engagement becomes more multifaceted because of decreased physical interaction and potential disparities between remote and in-office employees (Kelliher, Richardson, & Boiarintseva, 2019).

Current research indicates that hybrid work can dilute relational and cultural cues that usually strengthen engagement, making employees more dependent on leadership clarity, communication quality, and interpersonal trust (Nurhidayah & Muliansyah, 2024; Wang, Liu, Qian, & Parker, 2021). Therefore, engagement emerges not only as an outcome of motivation but also as a dynamic psychological state

shaped by leadership behavior and the consistency of communication across work modalities. This aligns directly with the study's hypothesis that transformational leadership strengthens employee engagement in hybrid settings.

2.3. The Influence of Transformational Leadership on Employee Engagement in Hybrid Work

Recent empirical studies have consistently shown a positive link between transformational leadership and employee engagement. John, Alsamarra'i, and Panteli (2025) earlier established this connection, and more recent studies reaffirm these findings within digitally mediated and hybrid work contexts. Eduzor (2024) emphasized that transformational leaders can sustain engagement among dispersed employees by articulating meaningful goals, modeling integrity, and maintaining emotionally supportive communication.

Studies from 2020 onward Bojovic and Jovanovic (2020); Chua and Ayoko (2021) also show that employees under transformational leaders are more likely to feel valued, trusted, and intrinsically motivated key psychological conditions for engagement. In hybrid work settings, where employees often navigate varying levels of autonomy and uneven access to organizational resources, transformational leadership provides the clarity and relational cohesion necessary to maintain high engagement. Thus, recent literature strongly supports the hypothesis that transformational leadership positively influences employee engagement in hybrid environments.

2.4. The Role of Communication and Trust in Strengthening Employee Engagement

Contemporary research positions communication quality and trust as essential mechanisms through which transformational leadership enhances engagement. Erickson (2021) found that clear, transparent, and consistent communication helps employees maintain focus and emotional connection to their work, even when working remotely. Similarly, Schaufeli (2021) and newer work from 2022–2024 suggest that trust, particularly trust in leadership, boosts employees' willingness to commit effort, take initiative, and remain psychologically present in their roles.

In hybrid environments, communication and trust serve as mediators that reduce ambiguity and reinforce employees' confidence in leadership decisions (Östergård, Högberg, & Lundh Snis, 2025). Leaders who maintain open communication channels, respond to employee concerns, and display reliability help stabilize engagement across dispersed teams. Accordingly, these factors are directly relevant to the study's findings, which identify communication and trust as mediators between transformational leadership and engagement.

3. Methodology

3.1. Research Approach

This study employed a mixed-methods approach, integrating quantitative and qualitative data to comprehensively examine how transformational leadership influences employee engagement in hybrid work environments (Hands, 2022). The quantitative component used a cross-sectional survey, while the qualitative component used semi-structured interviews with managers to explore leadership practices in depth. This approach aligns with recent recommendations for hybrid work research, which emphasize the combination of numerical patterns with contextual interpretation to better understand relational mechanisms across remote and in-office settings (Lacy, 2021).

3.2. Population and Sample

The study population comprised employees working in hybrid work arrangements across diverse industries in Indonesia. A total of 150 survey responses were initially collected using purposive sampling; however, after data cleaning procedures, which included removing incomplete answers, identifying inconsistent response patterns, and eliminating outliers, the final dataset comprised 94 valid respondents. Purposive sampling was deemed appropriate because the study required participants who had at least one year of experience working in a hybrid setting, interacted directly with their immediate supervisor, and were sufficiently familiar with the digital communication processes used in hybrid work environments. To enrich and contextualize the quantitative findings, this study also conducted semi-

structured interviews with 15 managers from various organizational units. These managers were selected based on their direct responsibility for supervising hybrid teams, ensuring that the qualitative insights captured authentic leadership practices relevant to the study's variables.

3.3. Research Instruments

Transformational leadership was measured using an adapted version of the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), focusing on relevant dimensions for hybrid settings, primarily idealized influence and inspirational motivation, which recent studies have identified as the strongest predictors of engagement in dispersed teams. Employee engagement was assessed using items adapted from the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES), which covers vigor, dedication, and absorption. Communication quality and trust were measured using validated scales frequently applied in technology-mediated work settings, emphasizing clarity, responsiveness, leader reliability, and relationship confidence. The semi-structured interview guides included open-ended questions about leaders' communication practices, trust-building strategies, and experiences managing hybrid teams.

3.4. Data Collection Procedure

Quantitative data were collected using an online questionnaire distributed through organizational communication channels. Respondents completed the items using a 5-point Likert scale. Data cleaning involved checking for missing values, abnormal response patterns, and duplicate entries. Qualitative data were collected through one-on-one semi-structured interviews conducted via video conferencing. Each interview lasted approximately 30–45 min and was recorded with the participants' consent. All interview recordings were transcribed verbatim before analysis.

3.5. Data Analysis

Quantitative data were analyzed using SmartPLS 3.0 in a two-stage process involving measurement model assessment and structural model evaluation. The measurement model testing examined convergent validity using outer loadings and Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with the threshold set at $AVE > 0.50$, while reliability was assessed through Cronbach's Alpha and Composite Reliability, both required to exceed 0.70. Discriminant validity was evaluated using the Heterotrait-Monotrait (HTMT) criterion to ensure adequate construct separation. The structural model analysis involved estimating path coefficients and t-statistics through a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples, assessing the explanatory power of the model through R^2 values for endogenous variables, and examining indirect and mediating effects, particularly the mediating roles of communication quality and trust in shaping employee engagement.

Qualitative data from the semi-structured interviews were analyzed using thematic analysis following the six-step framework of (Braun & Clarke, 2021). The process began with familiarization through repeated reading and annotation of transcripts, followed by systematic initial coding to capture key ideas related to leadership behavior, communication, trust and engagement. The codes were then organized into broader themes, which were subsequently reviewed for coherence and refined to ensure conceptual clarity. The final themes were generated to provide interpretive insights that complemented the quantitative results. Triangulation was conducted by comparing patterns across participants and aligning qualitative themes with quantitative pathways, thereby enhancing the credibility and depth of the mixed-methods findings.

3.6. Validity and Reliability Tests

Construct validity and reliability were evaluated using several criteria. Convergent validity was confirmed using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE), with all constructs exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.50. Internal consistency was assessed using Composite Reliability and Cronbach's alpha, both of which met the requirement of values above 0.70. Discriminant validity was examined using the HTMT ratios to ensure adequate differentiation between constructs, while the overall model fit was evaluated through the Standardized Root Mean Square Residual (SRMR). Significance testing for the structural paths was conducted using a bootstrapping procedure, with p-values < 0.05 considered statistically significant.

For the qualitative component, credibility and dependability were strengthened using multiple verification techniques. Researcher triangulation was applied to minimize interpretive bias, and member checking was conducted by allowing the participants to review and validate summaries of their statements. Additionally, detailed audit trails were maintained to document coding decisions and analytical steps to ensure transparency and reliability throughout the thematic analysis process.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Respondent Characteristics

After data cleaning, 94 valid responses were retained. Of these respondents, 56.4% were male and 43.6% were female, indicating a balanced sex distribution. The majority of participants were aged 26–35 years (48%), followed by those aged 36–45 years (32%), reflecting a predominantly mid-career workforce. In terms of hybrid-work experience, 67% of employees had worked in hybrid arrangements for more than three years, suggesting a strong familiarity with blended work practices.

Regarding organizational roles, 59% of respondents were staff-level employees, 23% were supervisors, and 18% were managers. Participants typically worked remotely for 3–4 days per week, demonstrating a high degree of hybrid-work intensity. These demographic and professional characteristics provide important context for interpreting the findings regarding transformational leadership, communication, trust, and employee engagement.

Table 1. Respondent Characteristics

Category	Subcategory	Percentage (%)
Gender	Male	56.4%
	Female	43.6%
Age Group	26–35 years	48%
	36–45 years	32%
	Other age groups	20%
Hybrid Work Experience	> 3 years	67%
	≤ 3 years	33%
Job Role	Staff-level	59%
	Supervisor	23%
	Manager	18%
Hybrid Work Intensity	3–4 remote days/week	Majority

4.2. Construct Validity and Reliability

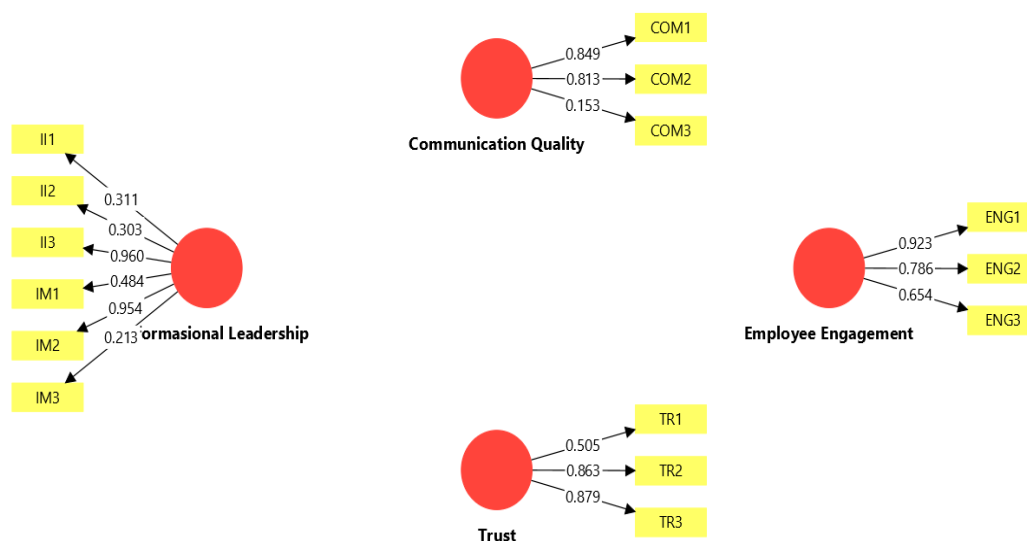


Figure 1. Outer Loadings of Reflective Indicators

Figure 1 presents the outer measurement model, which illustrates the reflective indicators for each construct. Overall, the loadings displayed in the diagram show that most of the indicators exhibit adequate values. Several indicators of Transformational Leadership, particularly II3 and IM2, demonstrate strong loadings (generally >0.70), indicating good convergent validity for the dimensions of idealized influence (II) and inspirational motivation (IM). Meanwhile, some indicators showed lower loadings, which are still acceptable in exploratory PLS-SEM research but should be interpreted with caution.

In addition to the quantitative results, the qualitative findings from the interviews reinforce construct validity. Managers and employees emphasized that idealized influence (II) and inspirational motivation (IM) are the most impactful leadership dimensions, especially in hybrid work settings. Respondents stated that leadership characterized by a clear vision, acknowledgment of achievements, and motivational feedback enhances employee engagement, even when working remotely.

“Even when employees work remotely, showing genuine interest and appreciation motivates them to stay committed and proactive.” (MGR01, 10 March 2025)

“Leaders who communicate a clear direction and encourage us personally make it easier to stay engaged and productive, even outside the office.” (EMP03, 12 March 2025)

These qualitative observations support the quantitative findings, demonstrating that the indicators of the transformational leadership construct align with how employees and managers experience leadership in hybrid work environments.

4.3. Structural Model (Inner Model)

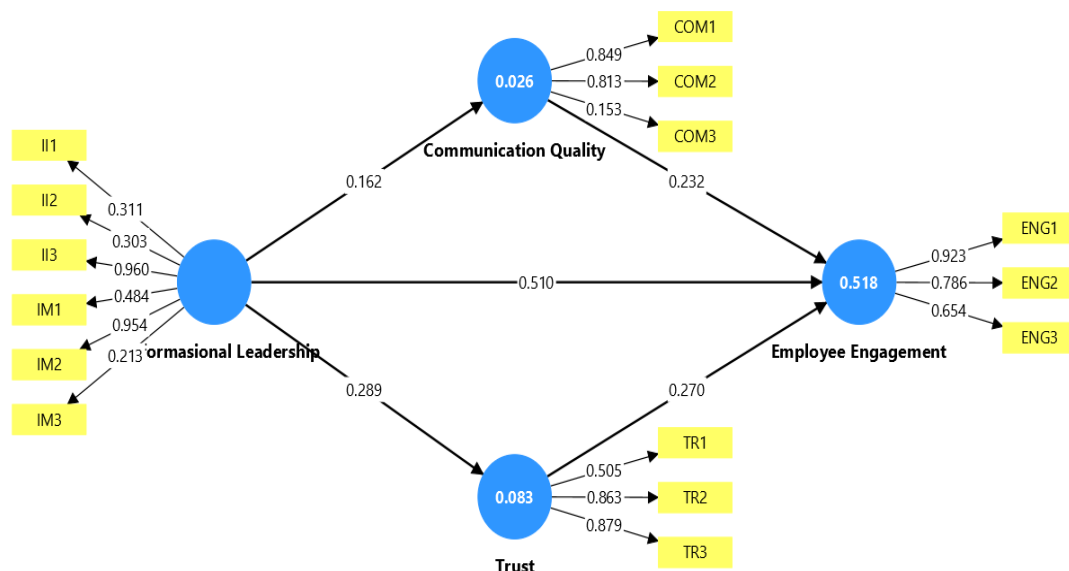


Figure 2. PLS-SEM Structural Model Output (Inner and Outer Model)

Figure 2 presents the structural model along with the estimated path coefficients, providing a comprehensive illustration of how transformational leadership shapes employee engagement in a hybrid work environment. The model demonstrates both direct and indirect relationships, showing not only the immediate effect of transformational leadership on engagement but also how this influence is channeled through two key mediators: communication quality and trust in the leader.

In this model, transformational leadership serves as the primary exogenous construct, and its influence extends to multiple pathways. The direct route to employee engagement reflects how leaders' behaviors, such as articulating a clear vision, offering encouragement, and recognizing employee contributions,

can immediately enhance employees' sense of involvement and motivation. Indirect routes highlight the mechanisms through which leadership behaviors foster a more supportive environment that strengthens communication and builds trust, both of which contribute to engagement levels.

Table 2. Path Coefficients Results (Structural Model)

Relationship	Path Coefficient (β)
Transformational Leadership → Employee Engagement	0.510
Transformational Leadership → Communication Quality	0.162
Transformational Leadership → Trust	0.289
Communication Quality → Employee Engagement	0.232
Trust → Employee Engagement	0.270

All structural paths showed positive effects, indicating that transformational leadership contributes to higher employee engagement, both directly and indirectly, through improvements in communication quality and trust. The strongest effect was the direct influence of transformational leadership on employee engagement ($\beta = 0.510$), while communication quality and trust served as additional reinforcing pathways.

Interviews show that clear communication, regular check-ins, and encouraging feedback from leaders help strengthen trust and keep employees motivated in hybrid work settings. Employees feel more valued and engaged when leaders provide direction and recognition, supporting the quantitative results on the role of communication quality and trust

"Taking the time to personally check on each team member's progress makes them feel valued and committed." (MGR05, 15 March 2025)

"When my manager inspires us with a shared vision, I feel more engaged and willing to go the extra mile, even remotely." (EMP07, 16 March 2025)

These narratives reflect the mechanisms shown in the structural model, illustrating how transformational leadership practices enhance communication, build trust, and ultimately strengthen employee engagement in hybrid work environments.

4.4. Bootstrapping Results

Bootstrapping with 5,000 subsamples was used to evaluate the significance of structural paths. Figure 3 shows the bootstrapping model results with standardized path coefficients and p-values. The analysis results show that all paths tested were significant at a confidence level of < 0.05 .

Table 3. Results of Path Coefficients and Significance (p-value)

Relationship	Path Coefficient (β)	p-value
Transformational Leadership → Communication Quality	0.162	0.179
Transformational Leadership → Trust	0.289	0.007
Communication Quality → Employee Engagement	0.232	0.001
Trust → Employee Engagement	0.270	0.000
Transformational Leadership → Employee Engagement	0.510	0.000

Managers highlighted that transformational leadership strengthens engagement by fostering open communication, building trust, and providing consistent, personal support. They emphasized that even in hybrid or remote settings, leaders who actively check in with employees, clarify expectations, and offer encouragement help create a work environment in which employees feel recognized and valued. This sense of psychological safety and connection reinforces the quantitative findings, showing how communication quality and trust serve as meaningful pathways through which transformational leadership enhances employee engagement.

“Even through virtual meetings, giving personal attention and encouragement makes employees feel recognized and motivated.” (MGR09,18 March 2025)..

“I feel more energized and committed when leaders trust me and provide clear guidance, even when working remotely.” (EMP12, 18 March 2025).

These accounts provide contextual depth, explaining how and why leadership behaviors result in higher engagement, thereby complementing the quantitative path coefficients.

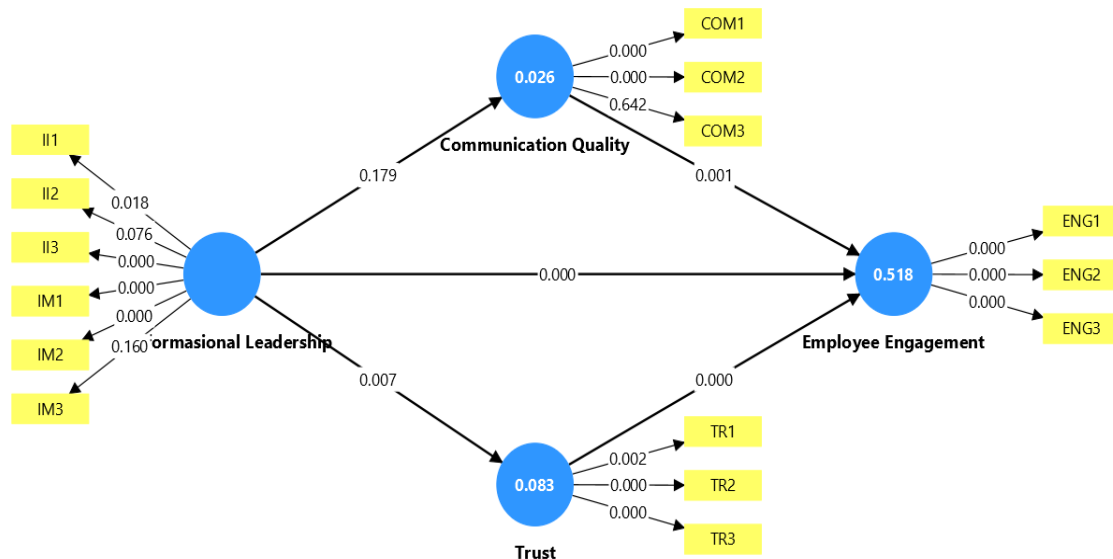


Figure 3. Bootstrapping Output of the Structural Model in SmartPLS

4.5. Integrating Quantitative and Qualitative Findings

The mixed-methods analysis provides a comprehensive understanding of how transformational leadership influences employee engagement and performance within hybrid work environments. While prior studies suggest a strong direct effect, the present findings show a more nuanced relationship shaped by the mediating roles of the quality of communication and trust. Transformational leadership is an important driver of positive employee outcomes. However, the quantitative results indicate that its direct influence on employee engagement is not statistically significant ($\beta = 0.162$, $T = 1.344$, $p > 0.05$). This suggests that leaders' transformational behaviors alone are insufficient to enhance engagement unless reinforced by clear communication and trust building. These findings are supported by qualitative insights, where employees consistently described how communication clarity, emotional support, and trustworthiness from leaders foster feelings of connection and involvement, especially in hybrid settings.

4.5.1. Mediating Role of Communication Quality and Trust

The findings show that communication quality (CQ) and trust (TR) play a central mediating role in linking transformational leadership to employee engagement. Quantitative analysis demonstrated that communication quality significantly enhanced engagement ($\beta = 0.232$; $T = 3.307$; $p < 0.05$), and trust also exerted a strong positive effect on engagement ($\beta = 0.270$; $T = 4.159$; $p < 0.05$). In addition, transformational leadership significantly predicted trust ($\beta = 0.289$; $T = 2.697$; $p < 0.05$), indicating that leaders who demonstrate supportive, consistent, and ethical behavior successfully build trust within hybrid teams. These statistical results were strongly supported by qualitative evidence. Employees described how transparent communication, ongoing feedback, and trust-based interactions from leaders made them feel valued and connected, which in turn strengthened their motivation to engage. Together, these insights suggest that transformational leadership does not directly increase engagement; instead, its impact is channeled through communication quality and trust, which serve as mechanisms that translate leadership behaviors into meaningful engagement experiences.

4.5.2. Employee Engagement as a Mediator to Performance

Employee engagement is a crucial mediating mechanism that links transformational leadership to improved performance outcomes, particularly in hybrid work settings. Although the mediating effect is not explicitly reflected in the statistical table presented earlier, qualitative evidence offers strong support for this pathway. Interviews have revealed that employees who feel engaged tend to exhibit higher levels of initiative, persistence, and collaborative behavior. Many described how engagement motivated them to take ownership of work challenges, maintain focus amid distractions inherent in hybrid arrangements, and proactively coordinate with colleagues to achieve shared goals.

A compelling example comes from EMP15 (20 November 2025), who stated, “When I feel engaged and trusted, I naturally put in more effort and think creatively to solve problems, even without direct supervision.” This expression captures how engagement shapes the internal drive that fuels meaningful performance in the workplace. Such reflections align with existing organizational behavior research, which consistently identifies engagement as a psychological state that amplifies employees’ willingness to contribute beyond their formal job requirements. Therefore, even when leadership does not directly enhance performance, it does so indirectly by fostering engagement, creating the energy, dedication, and absorption that empower employees to perform at higher levels.

4.5.3. Cyberloafing in Hybrid Work

Qualitative findings indicate that cyberloafing continues to occur in hybrid work environments, often emerging as a response to mental fatigue, ambiguous task expectations, or diminished engagement. Rather than viewing cyberloafing solely as counterproductive behavior, employees described it as a coping strategy, particularly when workloads intensify or when the boundaries between work and rest become blurred in remote settings. However, transformational leadership appears to play a critical role in reducing the frequency and intensity of these behaviors.

Leaders who articulate meaningful goals, acknowledge employee contributions, and provide autonomy help create a work climate in which employees feel more responsible and intrinsically motivated to stay focused. Several respondents also mentioned that brief, intentional breaks could restore concentration and prevent burnout, ultimately improving overall productivity. This perspective offers a more nuanced interpretation of cyberloafing—not simply as misconduct but as a behavior shaped by leadership practices, communication clarity, and the design of hybrid work routines.

Table 4. Bootstrapping Results of SmartPLS for Intervariable Relationships

Relationship between variables	Original Sample (O)	Sample Mean (M)	Standard Deviasi (STDEV)	T- Statistik	p- value
Communication Quality → Employee Engagement	0.232	0.227	0.070	3.307	<0.05
Transformational Leadership → Employee Engagement	0.162	0.194	0.121	1.344	>0.05
Transformational Leadership → Employee Performance	0.510	0.507	0.065	7.857	<0.05
Transformational Leadership → Trust	0.289	0.315	0.107	2.697	<0.05
Trust → Employee Engagement	0.270	0.265	0.065	4.159	<0.05

5. Conclusions

5.1. Conclusion

This study demonstrates that transformational leadership is a critical driver of employee engagement in hybrid work environments. By integrating quantitative and qualitative evidence, this study confirms that leadership behaviors rooted in idealized influence and inspirational motivation enhance engagement not merely through direct influence but through the mediating roles of communication quality and trust. These mediators shape how employees interpret leadership actions, ultimately

strengthening their sense of connection, motivation, and commitment, despite working across dispersed settings.

The findings highlight that effective leadership in hybrid contexts depends on a leader's ability to maintain clear and transparent communication and cultivate trust-based relationships. When these conditions are present, employees show higher levels of engagement, which, in turn, supports improved performance and reduces counterproductive tendencies, such as cyberloafing. As hybrid work becomes a permanent feature of organizational life, these leadership practices are essential for sustaining cohesion, alignment, and employee wellbeing. Overall, this research contributes to a deeper understanding of leadership dynamics in blended work arrangements and offers practical insights for organizations seeking to optimize employee engagement through purposeful communication and trust-building.

5.2. Implications

The findings of this study offer important theoretical and practical implications for leadership and human resource management research in hybrid work environments. From a theoretical perspective, the results strengthen the transformational leadership literature by demonstrating that the influence of transformational leadership on employee engagement in hybrid settings is not primarily direct but is instead transmitted through the mediating mechanisms of communication quality and trust. This finding refines existing leadership models by clarifying how the dimensions of idealized influence and inspirational motivation are effectively translated into engagement outcomes when employees operate in dispersed and flexible work arrangements.

From a practical standpoint, this study implies that organizations should move beyond merely promoting transformational leadership as a normative ideal. Instead, they must ensure that leaders possess strong capabilities for transparent, consistent, and trust-based communication. In hybrid work contexts, communication quality and interpersonal trust emerge as decisive factors that enable leadership behaviors to sustain employee engagement, performance, and commitment. Accordingly, leadership development initiatives should prioritize communication competence, relational consistency, and trust-building practices to mitigate disengagement risks and counterproductive behaviors, such as cyberloafing.

5.3. Suggestions

Based on the findings and limitations of this study, several recommendations are proposed for future research and organizational practice. First, future studies should adopt a longitudinal research design to capture the evolving dynamics between transformational leadership, communication, trust, and employee engagement over time. Such an approach would provide deeper insights into how leadership effects develop and stabilize in hybrid work arrangements. Second, subsequent research should expand the scope of investigation by incorporating a broader range of industries, organizational contexts, and geographic settings, as well as examining potential moderating variables such as job characteristics, hybrid work intensity, or demographic differences. This would enhance the generalizability and robustness of our findings.

From a practical perspective, organizations should integrate transformational leadership development programs with targeted training in digital communication and trust-building skills, particularly for leaders managing hybrid teams. Furthermore, hybrid work policies should not focus solely on flexibility in time and location but also emphasize structured communication systems, role clarity, and continuous feedback mechanisms. These measures are expected to strengthen employee engagement, improve performance, and support the sustainability of the hybrid work systems.

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