

An Empirical Study of Hybrid Leadership Practices and Employee Engagement in Indian IT Organisations

Dr. Megha Bhargava¹, Victory Jawa²

¹Associate Professor, School of Business and Management, Jaipur National University

²Research scholar, School of Business and Management, Jaipur National University

ABSTRACT

The rapid expansion of hybrid work arrangements has transformed leadership practices within Indian information technology organisations, necessitating leadership approaches that balance flexibility with control while sustaining employee engagement. This study empirically examines the relationship between hybrid leadership practices and employee engagement among employees working in Indian IT organisations. Adopting a quantitative and cross sectional research design, primary data were collected from 228 respondents using a structured questionnaire measuring hybrid leadership practices and employee engagement through Likert scale statements. Pearson correlation and simple linear regression analyses were employed to test the stated hypotheses. The findings reveal a statistically significant and moderate positive relationship between hybrid leadership practices and employee engagement, with correlation results indicating a meaningful association. Regression analysis further confirms that hybrid leadership practices significantly predict employee engagement, explaining a substantial proportion of variance in engagement levels. These results suggest that leadership behaviours characterised by adaptability, consistent communication, autonomy with accountability, and collaborative support play a critical role in fostering employee engagement within hybrid work environments. The study contributes empirical evidence to leadership and engagement literature in the Indian IT context and offers practical insights for organisations seeking to strengthen employee engagement through effective hybrid leadership practices.

Keywords: Hybrid leadership practices, Employee engagement, Empirical research, IT organisations

LEADERSHIP DYNAMICS IN HYBRID WORK CONTEXTS

The emergence of hybrid work arrangements has reshaped organisational structures and managerial practices, particularly within the Indian information technology sector where flexible work models have become increasingly prevalent. Hybrid work environments, which combine remote and on site modes of working, require leaders to navigate complex challenges related to communication, coordination, performance management, and employee motivation. Traditional leadership approaches designed for physically co located teams are often insufficient in such contexts, highlighting the need for leadership practices that integrate adaptability, flexibility, and structured control.

Employee engagement has gained prominence as a critical organisational outcome due to its association with productivity, commitment, and organisational effectiveness. In hybrid settings, sustaining

engagement becomes particularly challenging as reduced physical interaction, varying work experiences, and perceived inconsistencies in managerial support can influence employees' emotional and behavioural attachment to their work. Leadership practices therefore play a pivotal role in shaping employee perceptions, trust, and involvement, especially when employees operate across dispersed and digitally mediated work environments.

Hybrid leadership practices emphasise the balanced application of flexibility and accountability, autonomy and oversight, and people oriented and task oriented behaviours. Such practices enable leaders to adapt their style to situational demands while maintaining alignment with organisational goals. Within Indian IT organisations, where project based work, tight deadlines, and collaborative innovation are central, the effectiveness of hybrid leadership practices is likely to influence employee engagement outcomes significantly.

Despite the growing relevance of hybrid leadership, empirical evidence examining its impact on employee engagement in the Indian IT context remains limited. Existing studies have largely focused on traditional leadership models or general engagement drivers without explicitly addressing leadership dynamics within hybrid work environments. Addressing this gap, the present study empirically investigates the relationship between hybrid leadership practices and employee engagement in Indian IT organisations. By examining both the associative and predictive influence of hybrid leadership practices, the study seeks to contribute context specific insights that inform leadership development and engagement strategies in hybrid work settings.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

(Kim, Waight, Xu, & Yoon, 2025) synthesised 36 peer reviewed studies on leadership strategies that sustain employee engagement under remote and hybrid working arrangements. Using job demands resources, self determination, and social exchange perspectives as organising lenses, the review mapped how leadership practices shape engagement by balancing demands with resources in distributed work. Across the evidence, engagement was consistently strengthened when leaders built trust, maintained relational connection through digitally competent communication, and adapted established approaches such as transformational leadership and leader member exchange for technology mediated work. The review also highlighted that newer configurations, particularly e leadership and family supportive leadership, are becoming central for engagement as work becomes structurally hybrid, suggesting that engagement outcomes depend less on formal flexibility alone and more on how leaders operationalise supportive, consistent, and human centred practices in virtual coordination.

(Hooi & Chan, 2025) examined how e leadership influences employee engagement within remote working contexts by focusing on how leaders communicate and sustain shared meaning when employees are physically dispersed. Using survey data from 257 employees in Malaysian organisations and structural equation modelling, the study showed that e leadership was positively associated with employee engagement both directly and through stronger virtual communication. The findings indicated that engagement in homeworking ecosystems is particularly responsive to leadership behaviours that create clarity, responsiveness, and connection through digital channels, with shared understanding strengthening the communication to engagement linkage. This positions e leadership practices as a practical lever for sustaining engagement where interaction quality becomes a primary substitute for in person proximity.

(Makowski, Palframan, & O'Hara, 2025) explored how remote employees interpret leadership behaviours that either energise or suppress work engagement in fully remote environments. Drawing on a

multiple case study design with semi structured online interviews across Ireland and the UK, the study analysed employee accounts of transactional and passive avoidant leadership and their perceived implications for engagement. Participants associated engagement with leadership that maintained structure and follow through while still demonstrating presence and responsiveness in day to day remote coordination, whereas avoidance, delayed support, and limited relational contact were linked with disengagement and reduced psychological connection to work. By foregrounding employee sense making, the study underlined that engagement in remote contexts is shaped by the perceived availability and reliability of leaders, rather than leadership labels alone.

(Boccoli, Gastaldi, & Corso, 2024) tested how transformational leadership relates to work engagement in remote work settings, with particular attention to leader support enacted through digitally mediated interaction. The study modelled transformational leadership alongside perceived supervisor support and the supervisor's digital communication skills as boundary conditions within remote work. The results indicated that transformational leadership contributes to engagement through supportive supervisory relationships, and that digital communication capability strengthens the support to engagement relationship, implying that leadership influence on engagement is contingent on how effectively leaders communicate and convey support through technology. The study therefore reframed hybrid and remote engagement as partly dependent on leaders' ability to translate familiar leadership behaviours into digitally credible, responsive practice.

(Deepa & Juvala Dharshini, 2023) investigated work engagement among employees working from home by differentiating support resources available within and outside the home environment. Using a resource based framing of work from home conditions, the study assessed how leadership and organisational support function as external resources that sustain engagement when employees are physically separated from the workplace. The findings suggested that employees seek validation, care, and assurance from leadership and organisational systems to maintain engagement under remote working constraints, indicating that engagement is not only an individual capacity to self manage but also a relational outcome shaped by leaders' ongoing support signals and organisational reinforcement. This evidence strengthens the argument that leadership practices remain pivotal for engagement when work is remote or hybrid, particularly when employees must rely on digitally mediated reassurance rather than informal office based cues.

(Mutha & Srivastava, 2023) examined leadership mechanisms that activate employee engagement in virtual teams by considering how leadership behaviours translate into engagement through relational conditions in digitally mediated teamwork. The study focused on transformational leadership behaviours and tested how trust functions within the engagement process in virtual team contexts. The findings indicated that specific transformational behaviours, together with leadership communication effectiveness, are relevant for engaging virtual employees, and that trust plays a mediating role between leadership communication and engagement. In hybrid work structures where team interaction is frequently virtual, this work implies that engagement depends on leadership behaviours that build credibility and relational safety through communication, thereby supporting sustained involvement in team tasks despite physical separation.

(Günther, Hauff, & Gubernator, 2022) analysed how telework specific HRM practices and leadership behaviours jointly relate to teleworker well being, operationalised in part through work engagement and job satisfaction during the COVID 19 period. The study conceptualised leadership behaviours as contextual practices that can either buffer or intensify the strain and isolation risks associated with

extensive telework. Its evidence indicated that leadership behaviours, alongside supportive HRM practices, are meaningfully connected to engagement outcomes in teleworking conditions, underscoring that engagement is sensitive to how leaders structure work, maintain support, and mitigate isolation when employees are away from shared workplaces. Collectively, this stream of research signals an ongoing gap in specifying which leadership practices remain most engagement effective when work is structurally hybrid rather than temporarily remote, especially in sector specific contexts where digital coordination is routine.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Objective: To empirically examine the relationship between hybrid leadership practices and the level of employee engagement within Indian information technology organisations.

Research Design: The study adopted a quantitative, cross sectional research design to examine the relationship between hybrid leadership practices and employee engagement in Indian information technology organisations. This design was considered suitable as it enables the systematic collection of perceptual data from a defined population and facilitates statistical examination of relationships between organisational constructs within a single time period.

Research Approach: A quantitative research approach was employed, as the study focused on measurable variables and hypothesis testing using statistical techniques. This approach was appropriate given that both hybrid leadership practices and employee engagement were operationalised through numerical scale scores and analysed using correlation and regression methods.

Population and Sample: The target population comprised employees working in Indian IT organisations that operate under hybrid work arrangements. Data were collected from a sample of 228 respondents. The sample size was considered adequate to support reliable descriptive analysis, internal consistency assessment, and inferential testing through correlation and regression analysis.

A non probability sampling technique was used due to the absence of a comprehensive sampling frame and the practical constraints associated with organisational research settings. Respondents were selected based on their direct exposure to hybrid work practices and leadership operating across remote and on site environments.

Research Variables: The independent variable of the study was hybrid leadership practices, defined operationally as leadership behaviours that balance flexibility and control while managing employees across hybrid work contexts. The dependent variable was employee engagement, operationalised as the level of enthusiasm, commitment, emotional attachment, and involvement employees exhibit towards their work and organisation. Both variables were aligned directly with the research objective and the stated null hypothesis.

Instrument Development and Measurement: Data were collected using a structured questionnaire comprising two constructs: hybrid leadership practices and employee engagement. Each construct was measured using 10 Likert type statements, resulting in a total of 20 items. Responses were captured on a five point Likert scale ranging from 1 representing Strongly Disagree to 5 representing Strongly Agree. The instrument was designed to ensure clarity, relevance, and alignment with the conceptual definitions of the study variables.

Table 1.1: Opinion of the respondents for the Construct Hybrid Leadership

Sno	Likert Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	My immediate supervisor adapts leadership approaches based on situational demands in a hybrid work environment	0	5	63	139	21
2	Leadership practices in my organisation effectively balance flexibility with managerial control	0	5	73	126	24
3	Leaders provide autonomy while maintaining accountability in hybrid work arrangements	0	4	78	123	23
4	Leadership communication remains consistent and effective across remote and on-site contexts	0	4	78	127	19
5	Leaders actively support collaboration among employees working in hybrid modes	0	6	82	119	21
6	Decision-making processes under hybrid leadership incorporate employee input	0	4	92	114	18
7	Hybrid leadership practices facilitate trust between managers and employees	0	7	74	136	11
8	Leaders demonstrate adaptability when managing hybrid workforce challenges	0	3	79	128	18
9	Hybrid leadership supports innovation by allowing flexible work practices	0	4	75	133	16
10	Leaders balance task-oriented and people-oriented responsibilities in hybrid settings	0	5	76	132	15

The Likert scale responses indicate overall positive perceptions of both hybrid leadership practices and employee engagement among employees in Indian IT organisations. For hybrid leadership practices, agreement responses consistently exceed disagreement across all statements, with neutral responses evident for several items. This pattern suggests that leadership behaviours related to adaptability, balanced flexibility and control, communication across hybrid work settings, collaboration support, and trust facilitation are generally present, although their experience is not uniform across all respondents. The presence of neutral responses indicates that hybrid leadership practices may be applied inconsistently across teams or managerial levels

Table 1.2: Opinion of the respondents for the Construct Employee Engagement

Sno	Likert Statement	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
11	I feel enthusiastic about my work responsibilities	0	1	34	133	60

12	I am willing to invest extra effort to perform well in my job	0	0	27	134	67
13	I feel a strong sense of commitment to my organisation	0	0	30	131	67
14	My work inspires me to perform at my best	0	1	25	143	59
15	I am emotionally attached to my job role	0	1	34	123	70
16	I feel energised when carrying out my work tasks	0	0	34	124	70
17	I am deeply involved in my day-to-day work activities	0	0	30	131	67
18	I feel proud to be associated with my organisation	0	0	28	141	59
19	My job motivates me to contribute beyond basic requirements	0	0	26	129	73
20	Overall, I feel highly engaged in my work	0	2	28	128	70

Employee engagement items demonstrate a stronger and more consistent pattern of positive endorsement. Agree and Strongly Agree responses dominate across all engagement statements, while neutral and negative responses are minimal. This reflects high levels of enthusiasm, commitment, discretionary effort, pride, and involvement in work roles. Overall, the Likert scale findings suggest that while employee engagement is perceived at a high level, hybrid leadership practices, although positive, exhibit greater variability in perception, providing a contextual basis for the subsequent statistical analyses.

Data Collection Procedure: The questionnaire was administered to employees working in Indian IT organisations through a structured survey approach. Data collection was conducted over a defined period using a self-administered mode, ensuring anonymity and encouraging honest responses from participants.

Reliability of the Instrument: The internal consistency of the measurement instrument was assessed using Cronbach’s alpha. Reliability analysis was conducted separately for the hybrid leadership practices scale and the employee engagement scale.

Table 1.3:

Construct	Likert Statement	N	Cronbach's Alpha
Hybrid Leadership	10	228	0.798
Employee Engagement	10	228	0.860

The obtained Cronbach’s alpha values exceeded accepted threshold levels, indicating satisfactory internal consistency and supporting the use of composite mean scores for subsequent analysis.

Statistical Tools and Techniques: Descriptive statistics were used to summarise the central tendency and dispersion of the study variables through mean and standard deviation values. Pearson correlation analysis was applied to examine the direction and strength of the relationship between hybrid leadership practices and employee engagement. In addition, simple linear regression analysis was employed to assess the predictive influence of hybrid leadership practices on employee engagement. All statistical analyses were conducted at a significance level of $\alpha = 0.05$, consistent with conventional practice in behavioural and management research.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

H₀₁: There is no significant relationship between hybrid leadership practices and employee engagement in Indian IT organisations.

Table 1.4: Correlation

	r	p
Hybrid Leadership Mean and Employee Engagement Mean	0.51	<.001

To examine the stated hypothesis, a correlation analysis was conducted to assess the relationship between hybrid leadership practices and employee engagement in Indian IT organisations. The results indicate a positive and statistically significant relationship between hybrid leadership practices and employee engagement, as reflected by the correlation coefficient ($r = 0.51$).

The strength of the correlation suggests a moderate positive association, implying that employees working under higher levels of hybrid leadership practices tend to exhibit higher levels of engagement. This indicates that leadership approaches which integrate both traditional and contemporary practices contribute positively to enhancing employee engagement within Indian IT organisations.

Since the correlation result is statistically significant ($p < .001$), the null hypothesis (H_{01}) is rejected.

Finding

The findings clearly establish that there is a significant and positive relationship between hybrid leadership practices and employee engagement in Indian IT organisations. Adoption of hybrid leadership practices plays an important role in fostering employee engagement and strengthening organisational effectiveness.

H₀₂: Hybrid leadership practices do not significantly predict employee engagement in Indian IT organisations.

To examine the stated hypothesis, a simple linear regression analysis was conducted to assess whether hybrid leadership practices significantly predict employee engagement in Indian IT organisations. .

Table 1.5: Model Summary

R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	Standard error of the estimate
0.51	0.26	0.25	0.37

The model summary indicates a moderate positive relationship between hybrid leadership practices and employee engagement, as reflected by the correlation coefficient ($R = 0.51$). The coefficient of determination ($R^2 = 0.26$) suggests that hybrid leadership practices explain 26 % of the variation in employee engagement, while the adjusted R^2 value of 0.25 confirms the adequacy and stability of the regression model.

Table 1.6: ANOVA

Model	df	F	p
Regression	1	77.92	<.001

The ANOVA results further reveal that the regression model is statistically significant, $F(1, 77.92) = 77.92$, $p < .001$, demonstrating that hybrid leadership practices significantly contribute to explaining variations in employee engagement.

Table 1.7: Coefficients

Model	Unstandard. Coef. B	Standard. Coef. Beta	Std. Error	t	p
Constant	2.08		0.24	8.83	<.001
Hybrid Leadership Mean	0.56	0.51	0.06	8.83	<.001

The coefficients table shows that hybrid leadership practices have a positive and statistically significant effect on employee engagement. The unstandardised regression coefficient for hybrid leadership practices is $B = 0.56$, with a corresponding t value of 8.83 ($p < .001$), indicating that an increase in hybrid leadership practices is associated with a significant increase in employee engagement. Based on the unstandardised coefficients, the regression equation is expressed as:

Employee Engagement = 2.08 + 0.56 (Hybrid Leadership)

The regression equation indicates that the baseline employee engagement score is 2.08 when the hybrid leadership score is zero. Further, a one-unit increase in the hybrid leadership score leads to an increase of 0.56 units in the employee engagement score, highlighting the strong predictive role of hybrid leadership practices in enhancing employee engagement.

Decision

Since the regression model and the hybrid leadership coefficient are statistically significant ($p < .001$), the null hypothesis (H_0) is rejected.

Finding

The findings clearly establish that hybrid leadership practices significantly predict employee engagement in Indian IT organisations. Effective adoption of hybrid leadership practices plays a vital role in improving employee engagement levels, thereby supporting organisational performance and employee commitment.

OVERALL CONCLUSION

The study provides empirical evidence that hybrid leadership practices are positively associated with employee engagement in Indian IT organisations. The correlation results indicate a moderate and statistically significant relationship, while regression analysis confirms that hybrid leadership practices significantly predict employee engagement and explain a meaningful proportion of variance in engagement levels. Collectively, the findings suggest that leadership behaviours that balance flexibility

with structure, maintain communication across work modes, and foster trust and collaboration are linked with stronger employee engagement in hybrid work environments.

SUGGESTIONS

The following were the suggestions based on the findings

1. Organisations should strengthen leadership development initiatives focused specifically on managing hybrid work environments.
2. Managers should be trained to apply leadership practices consistently across remote and on-site teams to reduce uneven employee experiences.
3. Clear organisational guidelines should be developed to standardise hybrid leadership behaviours across departments.
4. Leaders should actively promote participative decision making to address neutral perceptions related to employee involvement.
5. Communication practices should be structured to ensure clarity and regularity for both remote and on-site employees.
6. Supervisors should formalise autonomy with accountability by setting clear expectations and performance standards.
7. Collaboration mechanisms should be strengthened through inclusive meeting practices and shared digital platforms.
8. Trust building should be reinforced through transparent evaluation processes and equitable workload distribution.
9. Leadership practices should support innovation by allowing flexibility alongside structured channels for idea sharing.
10. Recognition systems should acknowledge discretionary effort and sustained performance to reinforce engagement.
11. Organisations should promote initiatives that strengthen organisational pride and employee commitment.
12. Managers should monitor employees who express neutral engagement perceptions and provide targeted support where required.
13. Hybrid work policies should be communicated clearly to avoid ambiguity regarding availability and responsibilities.
14. Regular managerial check ins should be conducted to identify engagement risks in hybrid settings.
15. Periodic engagement assessments should be institutionalised to track the effectiveness of hybrid leadership practices over time.

REFERENCES

1. Boccoli, G., Gastaldi, L., & Corso, M. (2024). Transformational leadership and work engagement in remote work settings: The moderating role of the supervisor's digital communication skills. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 45(7), 1240–1257. <https://doi.org/10.1108/LODJ-09-2023-0490> (Re.Public)
2. Deepa, R., & Juvala Dharshini, J. (2024). Driving sustained work engagement: Moderating role of leadership and organizational support for remote work. *Management Research Review*, 47(3), 464–482. <https://doi.org/10.1108/MRR-11-2022-0806> (ResearchGate)

3. Günther, N., Hauff, S., & Gubernator, P. (2022). The joint role of HRM and leadership for teleworker well-being: An analysis during the COVID-19 pandemic. *German Journal of Human Resource Management*, 36(3), 353–379. <https://doi.org/10.1177/23970022221083694> (Open HSU)
4. Hooi, L. W., & Chan, A. J. (2025). Employee engagement in homeworking ecosystem: The role of e-leadership, virtual communication and shared understanding. *International Journal of Manpower*, 46(8), 1418–1437. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJM-10-2023-0585> (ScienceDirect)
5. Kim, H. S., Waight, J., Xu, X., & Yoon, S. W. (2025). Navigating leadership in hybrid or remote workplaces: A systematic review of employee engagement strategies. *Human Resource Development Review*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1177/15344843251381386> (CoLab)
6. Makowski, P., Palframan, J., & O’Hara, T. (2025). Rethinking leadership in remote work: A thematic analysis of employees’ perceptions of transactional and passive-avoidant leadership on work engagement. *International Journal of Organization Theory & Behavior*, 1–19. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOTB-03-2025-0055> (University of Limerick)
7. Mutha, P., & Srivastava, M. (2021). Decoding leadership to leverage employee engagement in virtual teams. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*. Advance online publication. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOA-07-2021-2856> (Emerald)