EFFECT OF TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP ON FIRM PERFORMANCE: MEDIATING ROLE OF EMPLOYEE SELF-EFFICACY AND WORK ENGAGEMENT

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to analyze the impact of transformational leadership on the performance of private banks located in Hyderabad, Pakistan. Additionally, it examines how employee self-efficacy and work engagement act as mediators in this relationship. Through non-probability convenience sampling, 156 participants from private banks were selected and data was collected using a Likert scale questionnaire. Structural equation modeling (SEM) was used for data analysis through Smart PLS software. By exploring the effects of transformational leadership on firm performance and the mediating roles of employee self-efficacy and work engagement, this study contributes new insights to the existing literature on leadership and firm performance. The findings have practical implications for managers and leaders in the private banking sector in Pakistan, highlighting the importance of transformational leadership in enhancing firm performance. Notably, they underscore the indispensable role of transformational leadership in fostering organizational success and offer actionable insights to enhance performance within this context. Furthermore, this study contributes to a deeper understanding of the intricate interplay between leadership styles, employee attitudes, and organizational outcomes, thus paving the way for future research avenues in this domain.

Keywords: *Transformational Leadership; Firm Performance; Employee Self-Efficacy; Work Engagement; Private Banking Sector; Hyderabad; Pakistan.*

INTRODUCTION

In today's ever-changing business landscape, companies are constantly searching for ways to enhance their performance and gain a competitive advantage (Meria et al., 2022). Effective leadership has been identified as a crucial factor in organizational success, as it is linked to improved employee motivation, job satisfaction, and overall firm performance

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(Lai et al., 2020). Among the different leadership styles, transformational leadership has gained considerable attention due to its positive impact on organizational outcomes. This type of leadership involves inspiring and motivating followers to achieve higher levels of performance (Judeh & Abou-Moghli, 2019), with leaders who possess a clear vision for the company and can effectively communicate and implement it (Zeeshan et al., 2021). This leadership style is also characterized by charisma, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration toward followers, resulting in a positive impact on employee attitudes and behaviors (Kusumaningrum et al., 2020). Various studies have provided evidence of the positive relationship between transformational leadership and organizational outcomes, including employee job satisfaction (Safrizal et al., 2020), commitment (Nguyen, 2020), and performance (Ashfaq et al., 2021). However, the underlying mechanism through which transformational leadership influences firm performance is not fully understood.

One plausible interpretation of the influence of transformational leadership on firm performance is through the intermediary effects of employee self-efficacy and work engagement. Self-efficacy pertains to an individual's confidence in their capability to effectively accomplish specific tasks or behaviors (Zia et al., 2022). This has been recognized as a crucial factor in impacting employee performance (Santoso et al., 2019), and transformational leaders are acknowledged for enhancing their followers' self-efficacy by providing them with support and resources to triumph (Asada et al., 2021). Conversely, work engagement refers to a positive and gratifying mental state characterized by dedication and energy toward one's job (Ahmed et al, 2019). It has been associated with higher levels of performance and stronger organizational outcomes (Zia et al., 2022). Transformational leaders can effectively engage their employees by employing their vision and charisma, fostering a sense of purpose and significance in their work (Ahmed et al., 2019).

This study aims to examine the relationship between transformational leadership and firm performance in the private banking sector of Hyderabad, Pakistan. The rapid growth and intense competition in this sector, driven by technological innovations and changing customer preferences, make it crucial to understand the impact of transformational leadership. By exploring the mediating role of employee self-efficacy and work engagement, this study provides insights into the underlying mechanisms that explain the positive effect of transformational leadership on organizational outcomes. The findings

could have practical implications for private banking organizations and contribute to the growing body of literature on transformational leadership.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Transformative leadership is a highly influential leadership style that serves as a source of inspiration, motivation, and empowerment for employees to bring about positive changes and achieve exceptional results (Santoso et al., 2019). This particular leadership approach has been associated with various favorable outcomes, including enhanced innovation, job satisfaction, employee commitment, and, more importantly, improved firm performance (Ashfaq et al., 2021).

Several studies have demonstrated the significant impact of transformative leadership on firm performance (Nguyen, 2020). For example, a comprehensive meta-analysis conducted by Judge and Piccolo (2004) revealed a substantial correlation between transformative leadership and diverse indicators of organizational performance such as customer satisfaction, employee satisfaction, and profitability. Correspondingly, Meria et al. (2022) argue that transformative leaders possess a visionary quality that enables them to establish a strong sense of shared purpose and direction, thereby leading to enhanced performance. Additionally, transformative leaders are renowned for their ability to stimulate employee creativity and innovation, which are crucial for the success and growth of any organization (Santoso et al., 2019). Hence, it can be posited that transformative leadership serves as a crucial predictor of firm performance, and its presence in the private banking sector in Hyderabad, Pakistan is likely to yield positive outcomes.

Self-efficacy is an important concept in the workplace, as it refers to an individual's belief in their ability to successfully perform a specific task (Kusumaningrum et al., 2020). It is a significant predictor of various work-related outcomes such as job performance, job satisfaction, and commitment (Lai et al., 2020). Recent studies have shown that transformational leadership can have a positive influence on employee self-efficacy, which in turn, impacts firm performance (Zeeshan et al., 2021). This is because transformational leaders promote a supportive and challenging work environment, which fosters employees' self-efficacy (Santoso et al., 2019). As a result, employees with higher levels of self-efficacy are more likely to take on challenging tasks, set ambitious goals, and put in extra effort, leading to improved performance (Judeh & Abou-Moghli, 2019). Therefore, it can be hypothesized that employee self-efficacy acts as a mediator in the relationship between transformational leadership and firm performance.

This study aims to examine the relationship between transformational leadership, work engagement, and firm performance in the private banking sector in Hyderabad, Pakistan. Work engagement is defined as a positive and fulfilling state of mind characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption in work (Kusumaningrum et al., 2020). Prior research has established the role of work engagement as a mediator between leadership and performance outcomes (Judeh & Abou-Moghli, 2019). Transformational leaders are known for their ability to inspire and motivate employees, creating a positive work environment that fosters work engagement (Judeh & Abou-Moghli, 2019). Through increased work engagement, employees are more likely to exhibit extra effort, job satisfaction, and better performance outcomes (Nguyen, 2020). Therefore, it can be postulated that work engagement mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and firm performance in the private banking sector in Hyderabad, Pakistan. Based on the existing review of the literature, the following hypotheses are formulated:

Hypothesis 1: Transformational leadership is positively and significantly related to self-efficacy.

Hypothesis 2: Transformational leadership is positively and significantly related to work engagement.

Hypothesis 3: Self-efficacy will positively mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and firm performance.

Hypothesis 4: Work engagement will positively mediate the relationship between transformational leadership and firm performance.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

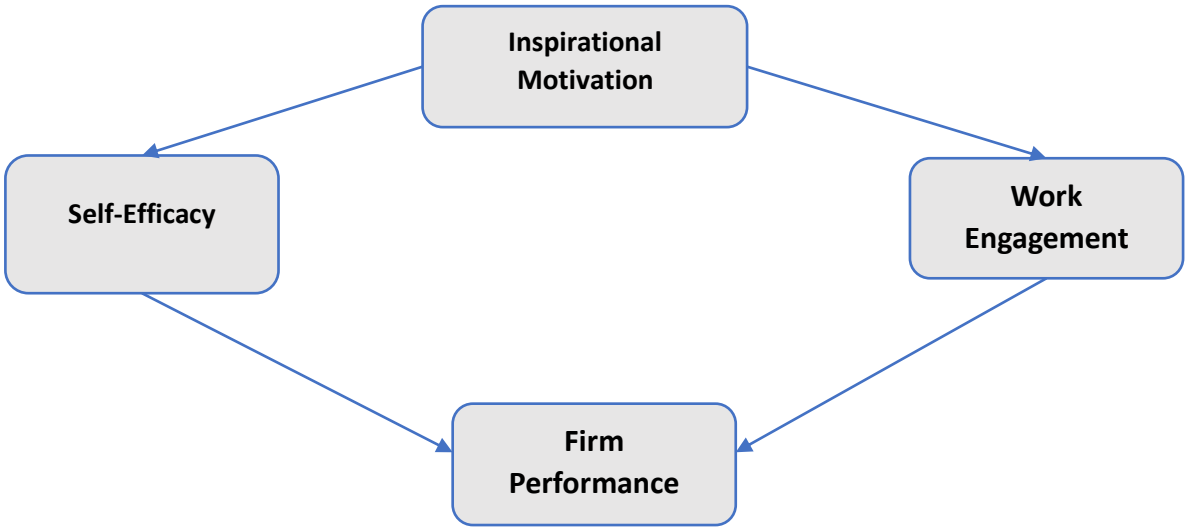

Figure 1. *Conceptual Framework*

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This research utilizes a quantitative explanatory approach and employs a non-probability convenient sampling technique to gather data through a closed-ended questionnaire. Data was collected from top and middle-level executives from three randomly selected banks (HBL, Meezan Bank, and UBL Bank). 180 questionnaires were distributed and 156 were included in the analysis, while the remaining were excluded due to incomplete responses. The questionnaire items are adapted from previous studies on transformational leadership (Moolenaar et al., 2010), self-efficacy (Jones, 1986) work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2002), and firm performance (Hancott, 2005). The transformational leadership construct is measured with 12 items, while self-efficacy and work engagement have 4, 15, and 9 items, respectively. Respondents are required to use a seven-point Likert scale to indicate their level of agreement, which ranges from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree." The inferential statistical method chosen for this research is Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which is conducted using Smart PLS. SEM is a multivariate analysis technique that examines the associations between several independent and dependent variables (Hair et al., 2016). The collected data is subjected to inferential statistics to test the research hypotheses.

DATA ANALYSIS

The research survey was composed of 156 participants, the majority of whom were men (120 respondents). The most represented age group was 35-45, accounting for about 72% of the sample. Additionally, it was found that most of the participants had master's degrees. To analyze the reliability of the study's items, the mean, standard deviation, and Cronbach's alpha were computed. As observed in Table 1, all the constructs had high internal consistency, with Cronbach's alpha score above 0.7. However, in order to ensure the accuracy and validity of the findings, a thorough investigation was conducted on the latent variables of the study.

Table 1. Central Tendencies and Reliability Analysis

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Mean	Std. Deviation
Transformational Leadership	0.752	4.11	1.32
Work Engagement	0.763	3.92	1.26
Self-efficacy	0.791	3.74	1.21
Firm Performance	0.802	4.18	1.35

The correlations between the latent variables and their indicators are highlighted in Table 2. These are also called factor loadings or regression weights (Hair et al., 2010) and illustrate the strength of the relationship between the variables and indicators. Higher values suggest a stronger association between the latent variable and its indicators. The outer loadings are a vital

component in evaluating the validity of the measurement model (Kibria et al., 2021), as they offer an understanding of the connection between the variables and their indicators.

Table 2. Outer loadings (Factor Loading Analysis)

Items Code	TL	SE	WE	FP
TL1	0.797			
TL2	0.765			
TL4	0.812			
TL5	0.794			
TL6	0.788			
TL7	0.810			
TL8	0.807			
TL9	0.787			
TL10	0.765			
TL11	0.751			
TL12	0.709			
SE1		0.812		
SE2		0.765		
SE3		0.831		
SE4		0.809		
WE1			0.732	
WE2			0.754	
WE3			0.714	
WE6			0.789	
WE7			0.765	
WE9			0.812	
WE13			0.801	
FP1				0.765
FP2				0.743
FP3				0.723
FP4				0.789
FP6				0.802
FP7				0.792
FP9				0.784

Table 3 presents the outer loadings of the indicators for the two main latent variables of the research. The loadings for both "Transformational Leadership" and "Work Engagement" have a strong presence in their respective latent variables. According to Hair et al. (2016), a significant loading must be equal to or greater than 0.7. This criteria is met for all indicators except a few (TL3, WE4, WE5, WE8, WE10, WE11, WE12, WE14, and WE15) which have been excluded from the loadings. To assess the reliability of the latent variables, the research also calculated the Average Variance Extracted (AVE). This is a technique used in SmartPLS to estimate the amount of variance in an observed variable that is accounted for by the latent construct. As explained by Hair et al. (2016), AVE values range from 0 to 1, with higher values indicating higher reliability of the construct. In the context of this research, all indicators have significant values for AVE.

In addition to reliability, the study also analyzed divergent validity. This is a statistical approach used to ensure that the constructs being assessed measure various aspects of the same phenomenon. This is done by measuring the correlations between the constructs and determining if they are significantly different from each other. According to Hair et al (2016), a DV value of 0.7 is considered significant. In this research, all DV values have significant values, indicating that the constructs being measured are indeed different from each other.

Table 3. Covariance and Internal Consistency of Constructs

Variable	AVE	Divergent	Composite Reliability	Cronbach's Alpha
Transformational Leadership	0.671	0.819	0.786	0.753
Work Engagement	0.682	0.825	0.764	0.738
Self-efficacy	0.576	0.758	0.790	0.763
Firm Performance	0.694	0.833	0.811	0.789

Cronbach's alpha and composite reliability are two statistical measures used to assess the reliability and consistency of a test or questionnaire. Both measures aim to gauge the internal consistency of a set of items that measure the same construct. Cronbach's alpha is calculated by summing the correlations between each item and all other items in the set and then dividing the sum by the number of items. It provides an overall measure of the reliability of the test, with a higher value indicating better internal consistency. This measure was developed by Baghozzi and Yi in 1988 and has since been widely used in research.

On the other hand, composite reliability is a measure specifically used in SmartPLS to assess how reliable a composite measure is when it consists of multiple indicators. It is calculated by taking the average of the corrected item-total correlations of all the indicators in the composite. Like Cronbach's alpha, a higher value for composite reliability indicates better internal consistency. According to Hair et al. (2010), "a significant value for composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha is 0.7. In the context of this research, all indicators have a significant value for both measures, indicating that they are measuring the same construct and are reliable." This further strengthens the validity of the research findings.

Measurement Model Test

Measurement models are an integral part of structural equation modeling, used in Smart PLS literature reviews to assess the effectiveness of measurement instruments and validate the obtained results (Hair et al., 2022). These models play a critical role in examining the reliability and validity of measures, ensuring the accuracy of the findings. In this study, the measurement model serves as a tool to evaluate the measures used and their ability to accurately capture the

underlying concepts. It also aids in identifying and addressing any potential issues with the measures before conducting the analysis. Therefore, measurement models are crucial in ensuring the soundness and credibility of Smart PLS studies, making them a fundamental component of the research process (Hair et al., 2022).

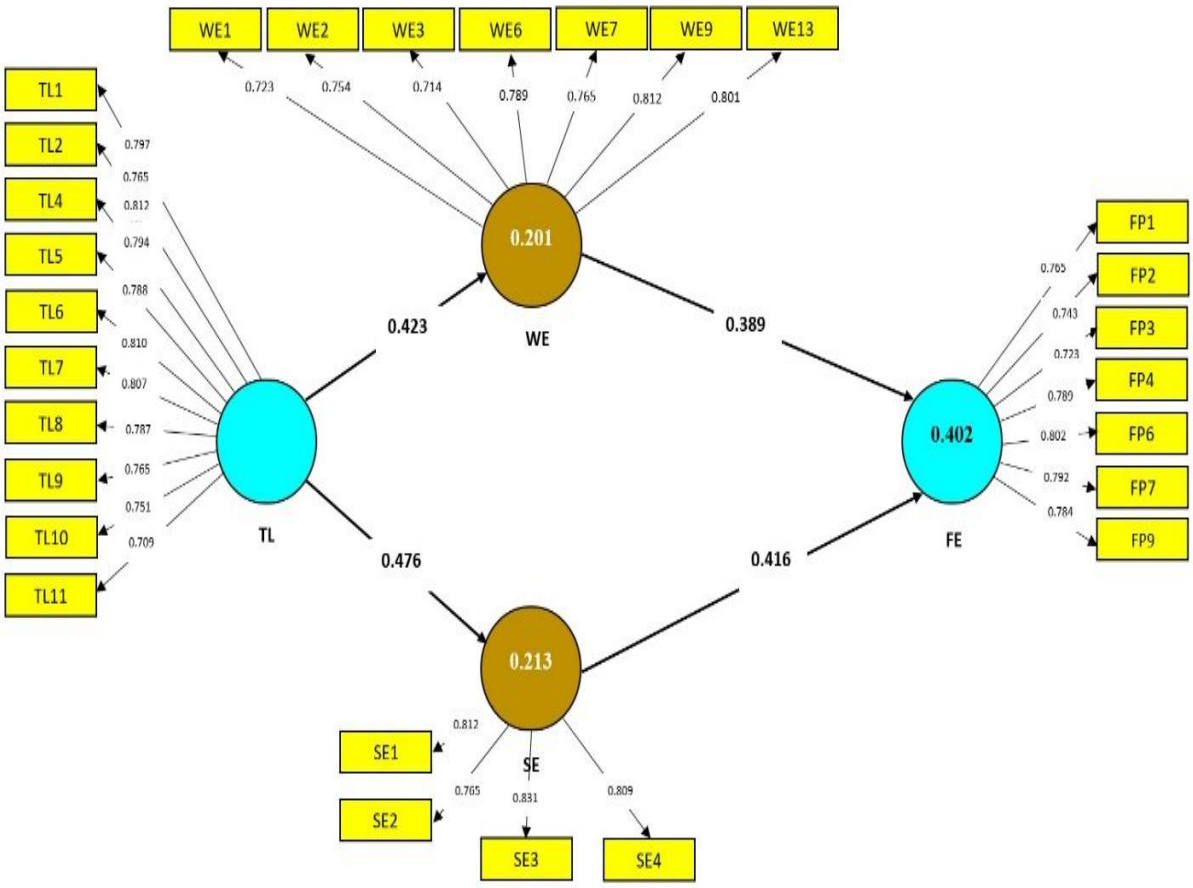

Figure 2. *Measurement Model*

Table 4. R Square and F Square Analysis (Model Fit Test)

Latent Variables	R Square	F Square
Transformational Leadership	--	0.345
Work Engagement	0.201	0.216
Self-efficacy	0.213	0.211
Firm Performance	0.402	--

Model fit is an essential aspect of SmartPLS analysis, and it is often evaluated using two commonly used measures, namely R-Squared (R2) and F-Squared (F2). R2 represents the percentage of variance in the dependent variable that can be explained by the independent variables in the model, while F2 measures the percentage of variation in the dependent variable that can be accounted for by the latent variables in the model (Kothari, 2004). In the context of

this research, the model fit testing showed significant results, with an impact value of 0.345 for the independent variable TL, indicating a strong contribution towards the model. Furthermore, the mediation variables, WE and SE, also showed significant values of 0.201 and 0.213 as R square and 0.216 and 0.211 as F square, respectively, further supporting the robustness of the model. Lastly, the dependent variable FP had an impressive value of 0.402 for F square, indicating a high percentage of variance explained by the model.

The significant values obtained for all the variables suggest that the model has been suitably constructed with relevant and influential variables. Hence, it can be concluded that the model provides a good fit and accurately represents the relationships between the variables under study.

HYPOTHESIS TESTING

In Smart PLS, coefficient analysis is a valuable tool for examining the relationships between predictor and dependent variables (Hair et al., 2010). It evaluates the strength and direction of these relationships and determines how much of the dependent variable's variance can be explained by each predictor variable (Baghozzi & Yi, 1988). This analysis enables researchers to identify the most influential predictors in predicting the dependent variable.

An algorithm is a set of instructions that outlines a sequence of steps for solving a problem or completing a task (Hair et al., 2020). It is commonly used in various fields such as data analysis, machine learning, and artificial intelligence. Another statistical tool frequently utilized in data analysis is bootstrapping. This technique estimates the distribution of a statistic by repeatedly sampling the same data with replacement and calculating the statistic of interest (Hair et al., 2020). The result is an approximation of the population distribution of the statistic, which is useful for estimating confidence intervals and other measures of statistical accuracy.

Table 5. Path Coefficient Analysis

Variable	Beta	Standard Error	T Statistics	P Values
TL -> WE	0.423	0.072	7.113	0.096
TL -> SE	0.476	0.085	7.532	0.067
TL - (WE) -> FP	0.389	0.093	5.191	0.139
TL - (SE) -> FP	0.416	0.062	7.102	0.110

Based on research by Hair et al. (2010), a T-statistic higher than 1.96 at a significance level of 0.05 indicates a significant relationship between variables. The results in Table 5 show that all variables have significant connections with each other. For instance, the coefficient of Transformational Leadership (TL) and Work Engagement (WE) is 0.423, which is stronger

than the significance level of 0.05. The T-value is also higher than 1.96, indicating a significant relationship. Therefore, the hypothesis is supported.

Similar meaningful results were observed in the relationship between TL and Self-Efficacy (SE), with a beta value of 0.476 and a significant T-value of 7.532. Furthermore, the mediating effect of WE and SE on the relationship between TL and Firm Performance (FP) is also significant. The beta values of 0.389 and 0.416 suggest a positive mediation effect, with corresponding T-values of 5.191 and 7.102, respectively. These findings further support the significance of the proposed relationships.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The findings of this study confirm the hypothesized associations between transformational leadership, work engagement, and firm performance. These results align with previous studies that have also established a significant positive correlation between transformational leadership and work engagement (Nguyen, 2020). Transformational leadership has been shown to encourage and motivate followers, creating a sense of direction and purpose, which consequently leads to enhanced work engagement (Meria et al., 2022).

Previous research supports the strong connection between transformational leadership and self-efficacy (Zeeshan et al., 2021), asserting that transformational leaders can nurture the confidence and self-belief of their followers, leading to improved self-efficacy and overall performance (Safrizal et al., 2020). Additionally, the mediation of work engagement and self-efficacy in the relationship between transformational leadership and firm performance, as demonstrated by this study, is consistent with prior findings (Nguyen, 2020). The study emphasizes the crucial role of these factors in mediating the association between transformational leadership and firm performance, highlighting their significance as motivators for employee performance (Zeeshan et al., 2021).

The findings of this research have significant implications for organizations. It is crucial for leaders to prioritize the development of their transformational leadership skills in order to inspire and motivate their employees. This can lead to increased levels of work engagement and self-efficacy, which ultimately can result in improved firm performance. To promote this, organizations can invest in training and development programs that specifically focus on enhancing transformational leadership skills among their leaders. However, it is important to acknowledge that this study has some limitations. The data was collected from a single source, which may limit the generalizability of the results. For future research, longitudinal design and data collection from multiple sources could further validate the proposed relationships.

Additionally, this study only considered three variables and future studies could explore other possible mediators or moderators of the connection between transformational leadership and firm performance (Smith et al., 2021).

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

One limitation of this study is its small sample size. The use of a convenient sampling technique may have led to limited generalizability of the findings to other private banks in Pakistan. Future research should aim to use larger and more diverse samples to increase the generalizability of the results. Another limitation is the use of a self-reporting questionnaire which may have led to response inaccuracies in the data collected. Future studies could include other methods of data collection, such as interviews or observations, to provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between transformational leadership and firm performance in the private banking sector.

Moreover, this research was conducted in a specific geographical location, namely Hyderabad, Pakistan. Therefore, the findings may not be applicable to other cities or countries. Future studies could explore the impact of transformational leadership on firm performance in different cultural and organizational contexts. Another potential direction for future research could be to investigate the role of other potential mediators, such as employee motivation or job satisfaction, in the relationship between transformational leadership and firm performance. Additionally, longitudinal studies could be conducted to examine the long-term effects of transformational leadership on firm performance.

IMPLICATIONS

- Organizational leaders should focus on developing their transformational leadership skills in order to positively influence employee work engagement and self-efficacy. This will ultimately lead to greater firm performance.
- The findings suggest that work engagement and self-efficacy have significant mediating roles in the relationship between transformational leadership and firm performance. Thus, organizations should focus on promoting a positive work environment that enhances employee work engagement and self-efficacy.
- Organizations should invest in training and development programs that focus on enhancing transformational leadership skills among managers and leaders. This can lead to improved employee attitudes and behaviors, which can subsequently improve firm performance.

- The results also highlight the importance of considering employee attitudes and behaviors, such as work engagement and self-efficacy, as key factors in the relationship between leadership and firm performance. Leaders should be aware of the impact of their leadership styles on these attitudes and behaviors in order to promote a positive work environment.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study demonstrate that transformational leadership has a significant and positive effect on work engagement, self-efficacy, and firm performance. Work engagement and self-efficacy also play a significant mediating role in this relationship. These findings support the notion that transformational leadership can have a significant impact on employee attitudes and behaviors, which can ultimately lead to improved firm performance.

The findings suggest that leaders can enhance employee work engagement and self-efficacy by adopting transformational leadership behaviors and practices. This highlights the importance of developing transformational leadership skills among leaders and managers in organizations. Additionally, the results highlight the need for organizations to create a positive work environment that fosters employee work engagement and self-efficacy. By promoting a positive work environment, organizations can facilitate the development of transformational leadership and improve employee attitudes and behaviors, ultimately leading to better firm performance. Overall, this study emphasizes the importance of transformational leadership in promoting positive attitudes and behaviors among employees, which can ultimately lead to improved firm performance. It also highlights the critical role of work engagement and self-efficacy in mediating this relationship.

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