

Leadership Styles and Employees' Commitment in the Hospitality Sectors: The Case of Four-Star Hotels in Hawassa City, Sidama, Ethiopia

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Abstract

The purpose of this study was to investigate the association between leadership styles on employee commitment in four-star hotels in Hawassa City, Sidama regional state. The study used a descriptive and explanatory research design and collected quantitative data from employees in four-star hotels. The findings revealed that the commitment level of employees in the hotels was moderate, with autocratic leadership being the dominant style. Democratic, transformational, and laissez-faire leadership styles had positive and significant associations with three dimensions of employee commitment, while autocratic leadership style had a positive and significant effect on affective commitment. However, transactional leadership style had a negative and significant effect on employee commitment. The researcher recommended that transformational and democratic leadership styles have to be emphasized in the hotel industry to enhance employee commitment and retention.

Key- terms; leadership, leadership- styles, employee- commitment, Hospitality

Introduction

Leadership critically determines organizational success, particularly in competitive global markets where effective leadership enables managers to influence employee behavior, drive motivation, and achieve goals (Naile & Selesho, 2014). Leadership integrates attitudes, behaviors, skills, and values, tailored to the needs of employees and organizations (Alkhatani, 2016). Leadership styles, including transformational, transactional, laissez-faire, autocratic, and democratic approaches, significantly impact employee commitment and organizational outcomes. This study explores how leadership styles influence employee commitment in 4-star hotels in Hawassa, Ethiopia, using

advanced methodologies like Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) and Structural Equation Modeling (SEM).

Leadership is the ability to inspire and motivate employees toward achieving organizational goals (Gurr & Drysdale, 2020). It involves influencing behaviors to ensure success, which is particularly important in sectors like hospitality, where demands are unpredictable and often require rapid, ad hoc managerial responses (Wood, 1994; Al-Ababneh, 2013). Employee commitment, defined by Vance (2006) as the willingness to persist with organizational goals, is critical for reducing turnover, absenteeism, and dissatisfaction. Meyer and Allen (1997) categorized commitment into three types: affective (emotional attachment), continuance (costs associated with leaving), and normative (sense of obligation).

Transformational leaders inspire employees to exceed expectations by fostering motivation, empowerment, and individual growth (Udin, 2023). This style positively influences job satisfaction, performance, and organizational culture (Eliyana et al., 2019; Khan et al., 2020). Transactional leadership relies on structured exchanges, rewards, and punishments to drive employee performance (Abu Nasra & Arar, 2020). While this style ensures alignment with goals, it often negatively affects long-term engagement and performance (Devanadhen, 2015). The study hypothesizes:

Laissez-faire leadership emphasizes minimal interference, granting employees autonomy and decision-making power (Northouse, 2013). While this approach fosters independence, it risks neglecting necessary guidance and support, potentially leading to reduced commitment (Iqbal et al., 2021).

Autocratic leaders make decisions unilaterally, often excelling in crisis situations requiring quick, decisive actions (Ebrahim, 2018). However, this style can stifle innovation and employee morale when overused (Khudhair et al., 2022). Democratic leaders engage employees in decision-making, fostering collaboration, innovation, and problem-solving (Bhatti et al., 2012). This style enhances job satisfaction, team performance, and organizational commitment (Jiang, 2014; Hilton et al., 2021). In the hospitality industry, leadership is pivotal for attracting and retaining employees, a critical need given high turnover rates and the sector's reliance on human resources (Hayes & Niemeyer, 2009). Research highlights that commitment influences key attributes like retention, absenteeism, and job

satisfaction (Chew & Chan, 2008; Meyer et al., 2002). Transformational and democratic leadership styles are particularly suited to this industry, promoting a positive work environment and employee engagement (Liggett, 2020; Tajpour & Razavi, 2023).

Conversely, authoritarian styles such as autocratic leadership may hinder employee innovation but can be beneficial in high-pressure situations requiring immediate responses. The laissez-faire approach, while fostering autonomy, risks reducing guidance and undermining commitment in structured environments. Transactional leadership, with its focus on rules and outcomes, is effective for short-term tasks but lacks the vision needed for sustained organizational growth.

To better understand these dynamics, this study uses CFA and SEM, offering robust insights into the relationships between leadership styles and employee commitment. These advanced techniques provide a nuanced understanding that surpasses traditional correlation or regression analysis. The study's findings will address gaps in understanding leadership's role in Ethiopia's hospitality sector, particularly in 4-star hotels in Hawassa. By identifying the most effective leadership styles for enhancing commitment, organizations can adopt tailored strategies to improve employee retention, satisfaction, and performance. This is especially relevant post-COVID-19, as the industry rebuilds and adapts to new challenges (Kužnin & Walker, 2019; Köseoglu et al., 2021).

Research Methodology

Study design

The study utilized a descriptive and explanatory research design, focusing on the effects of leadership styles on employee commitment within a four-star hotel.

Study population

The target population for this research consisted of employees working at a four-star hotel in Hawassa City. The sample frame was created using a list of all official employees from the hotel, provided by the Human Resource Department.

Sample Size

A total of 403 employees from four-star hotels were selected using a simple random sampling technique.

Data collection Tools

To collect quantitative data, the researcher designed a structured survey questionnaire targeting employees in four-star hotels and resorts in Hawassa City. We employed a scale with 28 items to assess leadership styles which has eight domains.

Table 1. Reliability and Convergent Validity

Item	Number of items	Cronbach's alpha>.70	composite reliability>.70	Construct validity AVE Value >.5
Transformational leadership (TFL)	3	.81	.84	.68
Laissez-faire leadership (LFL)	3	.74	.85	.71
Transactional leadership (TNL)	3	.88	.83	.54
Autocratic leadership (AL)	4	.91	.85	.70
Democratic leadership (DL)	3	.90	.90	.82
Affective commitment (AC)	4	.91	.92	.88
Continuance commitment (CC)	4	.89	.87	.80
Normative commitment (NC)	4	.90	.91	.86

Table 1 shows that all variables have high Cronbach's alpha coefficients, indicating good internal consistency, with all values exceeding the acceptable threshold of 0.70. The composite reliability values also exceed 0.70, confirming the reliability of the variables. Additionally, the average variance extracted (AVE) values are above the recommended 0.50 threshold, ensuring that the variables effectively measure their intended constructs.

CFA was used to test the factorial structure of the before hypothesized eight-factor measurement model (Figure 1). All these factors were allowed to correlate. Each of the 54 measures was allowed to load only on the main factor of interest not on any other factors. CFA was used to test the factorial structure of the hypothesized eight-factor measurement before deleting the item that had a factor loading of less than .50.

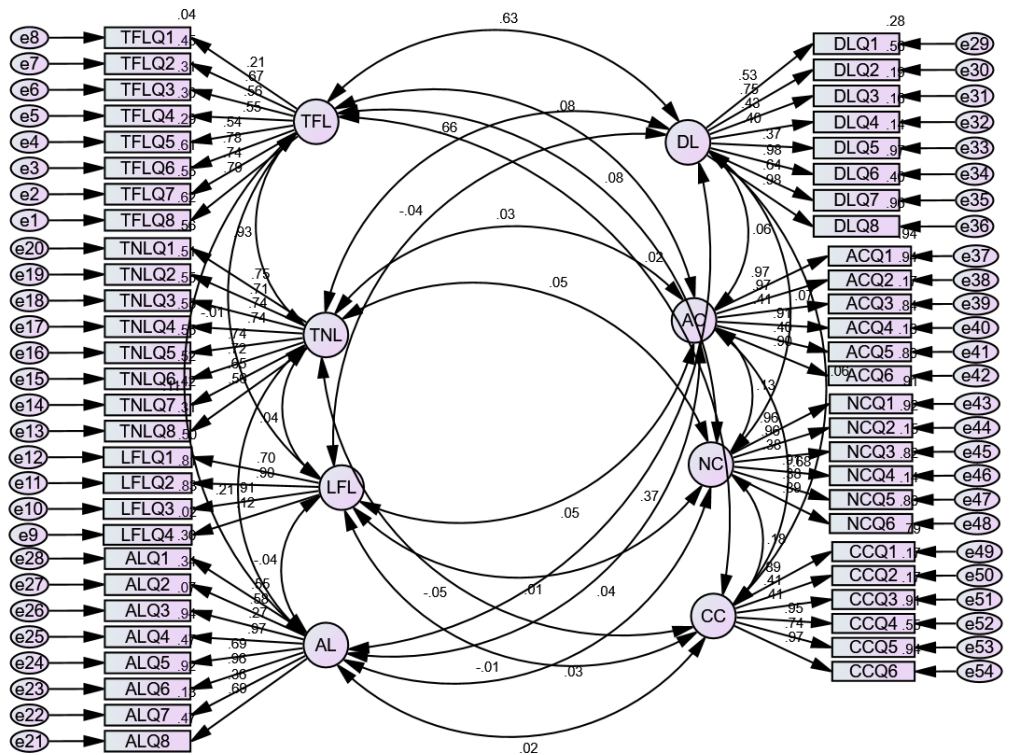
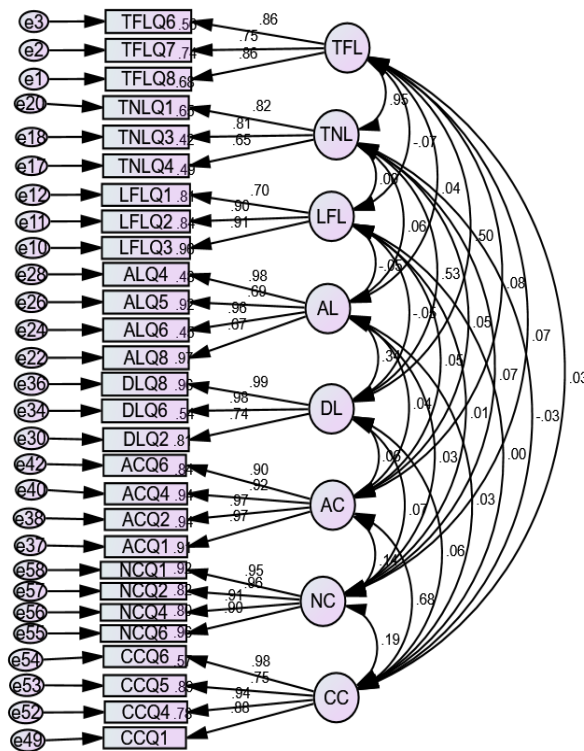
Figure 1. *Measurement model before deleting the indicators it's loading less than 0.5*

Figure 2 showed the loading factors of eight constructs with 28 latent variables after removing items with loadings below 0.50, as per Tabachnick and Fidell (2007), who suggest loadings above 0.71 are excellent, 0.63 very good, 0.55 good, 0.45 fair, and 0.32 poor. All these factors were allowed to correlate. Each of the 28 items was allowed to load only on the main factor of interest not on any other factors. Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) was performed using AMOS, and 23 items (LS5) were removed due to low factor loadings (<0.50).

Figure 2. *The Measurement Model of the Study*

In this study, all indicators significantly loaded onto their respective factors. Model fit indices, including CMIN/df, GFI, CFI, TLI, IFI, SRMR, RMSEA, and PCLOSE, all met acceptable thresholds (Uiiiman, 2001; Hu & Bentler, 1999; Bagozzi & Yi, 1988; Jöreskog & Sörbom, 1996). The eight-factor model (autocratic, democratic, transformational, transactional leadership, laissez-faire, affective commitment, normative commitment, and continuance commitment) showed a good fit, with the following data: CMIN/df = 1.67, GFI = 0.911, IFI = 0.946, TLI = 0.97, CFI = 0.98, SRMR = 0.036, RMSEA = 0.041, and PCLOSE = 0.99.

Table 4. *Fit measurement model of the study*

Fit index	Recommended value	Sources	Model result
P	In significant	Bagozzi and Yi(1988)	.000
CMIN/df	3-5	Less than 2 (Ullman,2001) to5 (schumacker&Lomax,2004)	1.67
GFI	>.90	Hair et al (2010)	.911
IFI	>.90	Hu &Bentler(1999)	.946
TLI	>.90	Bentler(1990)	.97
CFI	>.90	Bentler(1990)	.98
SRMR	<.08	Hu &Bentler(1998)	.036
RMSEA	<.08	Hu &Bentler(1998)	.041
PCLOSE	>.5	Joreskog&Sorbom(1996)	.99

Given the large sample size of 403 participants, the significant CMIN/df value is expected, and a ratio above 250 is considered acceptable (Hair et al., 2006). The chi-square to degrees of freedom ratio also meets the recommended fit level. As all fit indices align with the acceptable thresholds, no further revisions were necessary. The CFA results strongly support the reliability of the original eight-factor structure (28 items) used to assess the impact of leadership styles on employee commitment.

Result

Data was collected using questionnaires and analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 26 and AMOS version 24. The findings were presented using tables and figures. Before testing the CFA and SEM the researcher assessed both the univariate and multivariate normality of the data were tested before conducting CFA and SEM. Confirmatory factor analysis was also employed to test the fit of the measurement mod. Based on Confirmatory factor analysis all indicators significantly loaded above 0.60 and also almost all assumptions fell under the acceptable range. The demographic profiles of respondents in terms of sex, age, educational background, marital status, work experience, and family size are presented below:

Table 2. Demographic characteristics of respondents

	Variables	Frequency	Percentage
Sex	Male	219	54.3
	Female	184	45.7
	Total	403	100
Age	20- 30	202	50.1
	31-40	185	45.9
	41-50	15	3.7
	Above 51	1	0.2
	Total	403	100
Marital status	Married	167	41.4
	Single	231	57.3
	Divorced	5	1.2
	Total	403	100
Education level	less than or equal to 12	4	1.0
	Diploma	95	23.6
	Degree	292	72.5
	Masters	12	3.0
	Total	403	100
Work experience	less than or equal to 1year	41	10.2
	2 years	202	50.1
	3 years	121	30.
	4 years and above	39	9.7
	Total	403	100

Table 2 shown the majority of the respondents were male, with a smaller proportion being female. Most of the respondents were between the ages of 20 and 40, indicating a young and productive age group. The majority of respondents were single, which may have positively impacted their job performance. Over half of the participants had a first-degree education, and the majority had worked for 2-4 years, indicating experience in the hotel industry. The study included operational-level workers from different departments. Overall, the findings suggest that the respondents were well-represented and their demographics and work-related characteristics may have positively influenced their commitment and performance. The findings showed that respondents were eligible to fill out the questionnaires, which in turn ensured the acceptability of the data reliability.

Descriptive Analysis of Leadership Styles

This section presents the analysis of leadership styles obtained from the results. Among the different leadership styles the three main types, namely transformational, transactional, laissez-faire, autocratic, and democratic leadership have been studied.

Table 3. Transformational leadership practices

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation
Transformational leadership style	3.64	0.65
Transactional leadership style	3.54	0.872
Laissez-faire leadership style	2.5	0.904
Autocratic leadership style	3.806	.907
Democratic leadership style	3.472	.896
Continuance commitment	3.49	.938

The survey results presented in Table 3 indicate that transformational leadership is widely practiced in a four-star hotel, with a mean score of $M=3.64$ and a standard deviation (SD) of 0.65. Among the survey statements, respondents rated "the supervisor considers the moral and ethical consequences of decisions" highest, with a mean of $M=3.83$ and $SD=0.066$. This highlights employees' appreciation for ethical leadership and the significance of considering the broader impact of decisions.

In terms of transactional leadership, it also appears to be prominent in the four-star hotel, with a mean score of $M=3.54$ and $SD=0.872$. This is consistent with literature on transactional leadership, which focuses on the use of rewards and punishments to motivate employees (Bass & Avolio, 1995, 2004; Higgins, 1994). Notably, the statement "My supervisor expresses satisfaction when I meet expectations" received the highest rating among transactional indicators, with a mean of $M=3.76$ and $SD=0.99$, suggesting that employees value recognition and feedback for achieving performance goals.

In contrast, the laissez-faire leadership style is practiced to a low extent in the hotel, with an overall mean and standard deviation of $M=2.5$ and $SD=0.904$. The respondents rated the statement "my manager is always absent when he is highly needed" at a low extent, with a mean score of $M=2.61$ and $SD=0.897$.

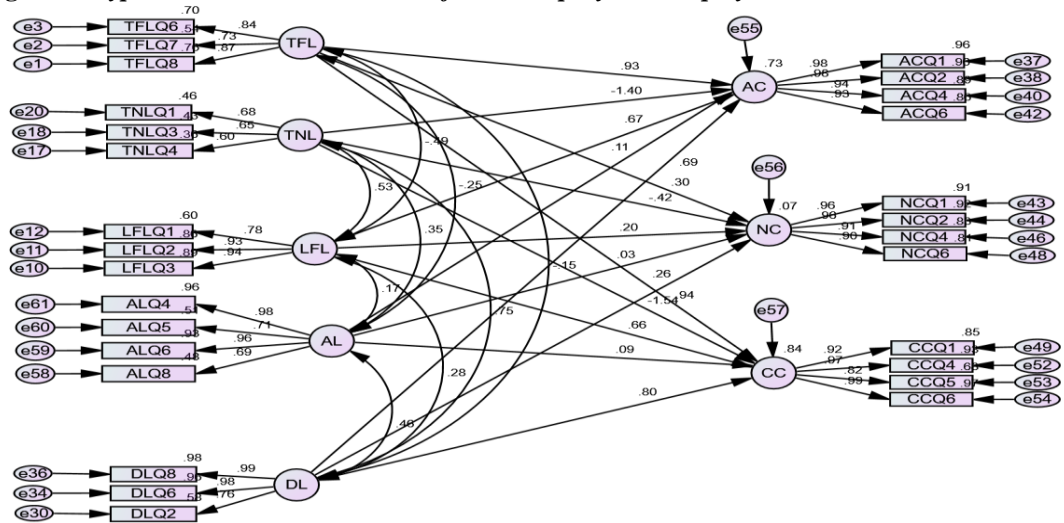
The data indicate that supervisors in this study are generally perceived as autocratic leaders. The autocratic leadership style practiced at the four-star hotel in Hawassa is significant, with an overall mean score of $M=3.806$ and $SD=0.907$. This suggests a fair amount of agreement among respondents about the supervisor's leadership style, indicating that employees experience a high level of control and one-way communication in the hotel.

Conversely, the democratic leadership style is practiced to a large extent, with an overall mean score of $M=3.472$ and $SD=0.896$. Among the survey statements, respondents rated "my supervisor has a good relationship with the employees" as the most significant, with a mean score of $M=3.60$ and $SD=0.895$. This suggests that employees value positive and supportive relationships with their supervisors. Based on the descriptive analysis of leadership styles, the researcher examined the dominant leadership style practiced in the four-star hotel in Hawassa. The findings reveal that the autocratic leadership style had the highest mean score of 3.806 ($SD=0.907$) compared to other styles, indicating that most respondents perceive the leader's behaviors as moderately inclined toward the autocratic style. However, it is important to note that all assessed leadership styles had mean scores above 3, suggesting they are perceived as at least moderately relevant in leadership contexts. According to Zaidation (2009), a mean score below 3 is considered low, a score from 3 to 3.79 is considered moderate, and a score above 3.8 is considered high. It is also noteworthy that the laissez-faire leadership style had the lowest mean score of 2.5, indicating it is rated lower than the other styles.

Respondents exhibited moderate levels of commitment across all three types assessed, with mean scores above 3. According to Zaidation (2009), scores below 3 indicate low commitment, scores from 3 to 3.7 indicate moderate commitment, and scores above 3.8 indicate high commitment. Affective commitment, reflecting emotional attachment to the organization, had a mean score of 3.125, indicating moderate attachment. Normative commitment, based on a sense of obligation, had a mean score of 3.202, suggesting a moderate sense of duty.

Continuance commitment, driven by perceived costs of leaving, scored 3.49, indicating a slightly higher level than affective and normative commitment. Overall, respondents demonstrated moderate commitment, with the highest-level being continuance commitment.

Figure 3. Hypothesized structural model of leadership style on employee commitment



The results indicated the fit indices for the research model as the SEM results showed the fit indices (except for CMIN/df) of the model met the acceptable cut-off values CMIN= 1020.96, DF= 321, $p = .000$, CMIN/df=, 3.18, SRMR= 0.067, CFI= 0.938, IFI= .939, TLI= .927, RMSEA =0.074. Also, the results indicated that the structural model fits the data fairly well. The CMIN/df value showed a statistically significant value; however, it is acceptable with a large data set of 403 samples (Hair et al., 2006).

Table 5. The Estimation for Regression weights of the hypothesized model

			Estimate	S.E.	C.R.	P	Label
AC	<---	TFL	1.964	.183	10.715	***	par_23
AC	<---	TNL	-3.661	.422	-8.668	***	par_24
AC	<---	LFL	1.005	.153	6.578	***	par_25
AC	<---	DL	1.341	.223	6.004	***	par_26
NC	<---	TFL	.507	.128	3.945	***	par_27
NC	<---	TNL	-.870	.251	-3.474	***	par_28
NC	<---	LFL	.242	.105	2.303	.021	par_29
NC	<---	DL	.399	.150	2.656	.008	par_30
CC	<---	TFL	1.742	.171	10.201	***	par_31
CC	<---	TNL	-3.511	.415	-8.464	***	par_32
CC	<---	LFL	.868	.144	6.035	***	par_33
CC	<---	DL	1.356	.214	6.336	***	par_34
AC	<---	AL	.236	.101	2.336	.025	par_42
NC	<---	AL	.055	.107	.517	.605	par_43
CC	<---	AL	.168	.136	1.233	.217	par_44

Transformational leadership (TFL), Transactional leadership (TNL), Laissez-faire leadership (LFL), Autocratic leadership (AL), Democratic leadership (DL), Affective commitment (AC), Normative commitment (NC), and Continuance commitment (CC).

A structural equation model generated through AMOS was used to test the effect of leadership style on employee commitment. A good fit model is accepted if the value of the CMINN/df is <, the goodness of fit (GFI) indices (Hair et al.,2010); the Tucker and Lewis (1973) index(TLI); Confirmatory fit index (CFI) (Bentler,1990) is >.90 (Hair et al.,2010). In addition, an adequate fitting model was accepted if the AMOS computed value of the standardized root mean square residual (RMR) <.08, and root mean square error approximation (RMSEA) is between .05 and .08(Hair et al.,2010) the fit indices for model listed below fell within the acceptable range CMINN/df= 3.18, The goodness of fit (IFI)=, 939 TLI=,927 CFL=.938 SRMR=,.067 and RMSEA=.074

The square multiple correlation was .73 for affective commitment, this shows that 73 % of affective commitment is accounted by autocratic, democratic, transformational, transactional leadership, and laisses-fair leadership styles.The study assessed the effect of autocratic, democratic, transformational, transactional

leadership, and laissez-fair leadership styles on affective employee commitment. The effect of transformational leadership was positive and significant ($\beta = .93$ $t = 10.7$ $p < .001$), consecutively, H1 was supported. The impact of transactional leadership was negative and significant ($\beta = -1.4$ $t = -8.668$ $p < .001$), Hence H4 was supported. The effect of laissez-fair leadership was significant but not negative ($\beta = .67$ $t = 6.578$, $p < .001$), Hence H7 was not supported. The effect of autocratic leadership was positive and significant ($\beta = .11$ $t = 2.336$, $p < .05$), Thus H10 was supported. The effect of democratic leadership was positive and significant ($\beta = .69$, $t = 6.004$, $p < .001$), Hence H13 was supported.

The square multiple correlation was .07 for affective commitment, this shows that 7 % of normative commitment is accounted for by Democratic, Transformational, Transactional, and Laissez-fair leadership styles. The study assessed the effect of autocratic, democratic, transformational, transactional leadership, and laissez-fair leadership styles on normative commitment. The effect of transformational leadership was positive and significant ($\beta = .30$ $t = 3.945$, $p < .001$), As a result H2 was supported. The impact of transactional leadership was negative and significant ($\beta = -.42$, $t = -3.474$ $p < .001$), Hence H5 was supported. The effect of laissez-fair leadership was significant but not negative ($\beta = .20$ $t = 2.303$, $p < .05$), Hence H8 was not supported. The effect of autocratic leadership was positive but not significant because the p-value was $0.605 > 0.05$ ($\beta = .03$ $t = .517$, $p > .05$), $p = 0.605$ Hence H11 was not supported. The effect of democratic leadership was positive and significant ($\beta = .26$, $t = 2.2656$, $p < .05$), Hence H14 was supported.

The square multiple correlation was .84 for continuous commitment, this shows that 84 % of continuous commitment is accounted by autocratic, democratic, transformational, transactional leadership, and laissez-fair leadership styles. The study assessed the effect of autocratic, democratic, transformational, transactional leadership, and laissez-fair leadership styles on continuous employee commitment. The effect of transformational leadership was positive and significant ($\beta = .94$ $t = 10.2$ $p < .001$), Hence H3 was supported. The impact of transactional leadership was negative and significant ($\beta = -1.5$, $t = -8.46$ $p < .05$), Hence H6 was supported. The effect of laissez-fair leadership was significant, but not negative ($\beta = .66$ $t = 6.035$, $p < .001$), Hence H9 was not supported. The effect of autocratic leadership was positive and significant ($\beta = .09$ $t = 1.233$, $p > .05$), Hence H12 was not supported.

The effect of democratic leadership was positive and significant ($\beta = .80$, $t = 6.004$, $p < .001$), Hence H15 was supported.

Table 6. Hypothesis test

Hypothesized relationship	Standardized estimate	t- value	p-value	Decision
H1; TFL --->AC	.93	10.715	***	Supported
H4; TNL--->AC	-1.4	-8.668	***	Supported
H7; LFL--->AC	.67	6.578	***	Not Supported
H10; AL--->AC	.11	2.336	.025	Supported
H13; DL--->AC	.69	6.004	***	Supported
R –Square = 53%				
Affective employee commitment				
H2; TFL --->NC	.30	3.945	***	Supported
H5; TNL--->NC	-.42	-3.474	***	Supported
H8; LFL--->NC	.20	2.303	***	Not Supported
H11; AL--->NC	.03	.517	.605	Not Supported
H14; DL--->NC	.26	2.656	.008	Supported
R –Square = 4%				
Normative employee commitment				
H3; TFL --->CC	.94	10.201	***	Supported
H6; TNL--->CC	-1.5	-8.464	***	Supported
H9; LFL--->CC	.66	6.035	***	Not supported
H12; AL--->CC	.09	1.233	.217	Not Supported
H15; DL--->CC	.80	6.336	***	Supported

Note. Model fit: CMIN= 1020.96, DF= 321, $p = .000$, CMIN/df=, 3.18, SRMR= 0.067, CFI= 0.938, IFI= .939, TLI= .927, RMSEA =0.074

P value <0.001=***

Discussions

This study explores the influence of various leadership styles on employee commitment in a four-star hotel setting, testing a model with eight constructs: Transformational Leadership (TFL), Transactional Leadership (TNL), Laissez-Faire Leadership (LFL), Autocratic Leadership (AL), Democratic Leadership (DL), Affective Commitment (AC), Normative Commitment (NC), and Continuance Commitment (CC). Data was collected from 403 hotel employees, and results generally supported the proposed model, highlighting that TFL, TNL, LFL, AL, and DL significantly influenced employee commitment dimensions (AC, NC, CC), with some minor revisions needed.

Key findings include a positive relationship between transformational, autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles and the three dimensions of

employee commitment. However, transactional leadership was found to negatively affect affective and continuance commitment, a result consistent with previous studies. Specifically, transformational leadership had a significant positive impact on all three commitment types, supporting earlier research by Erkutlu (2008) on boutique hotels. Conversely, transactional leadership, known for its focus on rewards and punishments, showed a negative relationship with employee commitment, corroborating findings by Sofi & Devanadhen (2015) and Linjuan (2010).

Unexpectedly, autocratic leadership demonstrated a positive effect on affective commitment, aligning with research by Gavrea & Stegorean (2011), which suggests that autocratic leadership can be beneficial in high-pressure situations requiring quick decision-making. However, it did not significantly affect normative or continuance commitment. Democratic leadership, as expected, showed positive effects on all three commitment types, aligning with findings from Elenkov (2012) and Bhargavi & Yaseen (2016), indicating that participative decision-making fosters stronger employee attachment to the organization. Similarly, laissez-faire leadership was positively related to all commitment dimensions, contradicting prior studies that found it to be detrimental.

This research contributes to the literature by providing insights into how leadership styles impact employee commitment in a hotel context. The findings suggest that managers should adopt leadership styles that foster a supportive and engaging work environment, which in turn enhances employee commitment. Transformational, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership are particularly effective in boosting employee engagement, while transactional leadership may hinder commitment.

Conclusions

This study examined the influence of different leadership styles on employee commitment in the context of four-star hotels. The study proposed and tested a model with eight constructs: transformational leadership (TFL), transactional leadership (TNL), laissez-faire leadership (LFL), autocratic leadership (AL),

democratic leadership (DL), affective commitment (AC), normative commitment (NC), and continuance commitment (CC).

Data was collected from 403 hotel employees, and the results generally supported the proposed model with minor revisions. The findings confirmed the significant impact of TFL, TNL, LFL, AL, and DL on the dimensions of employee commitment: AC, NC, and CC.

This study contributes to the existing literature by providing support for the majority of hypotheses and aligning with previous studies' results. It establishes a positive relationship between leadership styles and employee commitment, except for transactional leadership, which showed a negative relationship with affective and continuance commitment. On the other hand, transformational, autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles demonstrated a positive relationship with affective, normative, and continuance commitment.

The practical implications of this research are relevant to organizations, as it offers insights into how different leadership styles can influence specific types of employee commitment. Managers are advised to consider the benefits of adopting transformational, autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles to enhance employee commitment. However, transactional leadership may not yield the same positive effects on commitment.

To sum up, this study highlights the significance of leadership styles in shaping employee commitment and provides valuable guidance for organizations aiming to improve employee engagement and loyalty.

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