



# Leadership Style and Employee Motivation: Unveiling the Key to Productivity in Fast-Food Restaurants

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## Abstract

Leadership style significantly influences employee motivation, particularly in fast-food restaurants, where high-paced environments and repetitive tasks impact job satisfaction and performance. This study examines the relationship between leadership styles and employee motivation in fast-food restaurants. A quantitative survey was conducted with 113 employees using convenience sampling from various fast-food outlets to assess their perceptions of leadership effectiveness and Motivation. Data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistical methods. The findings indicate that Leadership style has the most substantial positive effect on employee motivation, fostering inspiration, recognition, and professional growth. These results highlight the importance of adopting a balanced leadership approach to enhance employee motivation and productivity in fast-food establishments. The study offers valuable insights for managers seeking to improve employee engagement and retention in the service industry.

**Keywords:** Leadership Style, Employee Motivation, Fast-Food Industry, Quantitative Survey

## Abstrak

Gaya kepemimpinan secara signifikan memengaruhi motivasi karyawan, khususnya di restoran cepat saji, di mana lingkungan yang serba cepat dan tugas yang berulang memengaruhi kepuasan kerja dan kinerja. Studi ini meneliti hubungan antara gaya kepemimpinan dan motivasi karyawan di restoran cepat saji. Survei kuantitatif dilakukan terhadap 113 karyawan menggunakan sampel mudah dari berbagai gerai makanan cepat saji untuk menilai persepsi mereka tentang efektivitas dan motivasi kepemimpinan. Data dianalisis menggunakan metode statistik deskriptif dan inferensial. Temuan menunjukkan bahwa gaya kepemimpinan memiliki efek positif paling substansial pada motivasi karyawan, menumbuhkan inspirasi, pengakuan, dan pertumbuhan profesional. Hasil ini menyoroti pentingnya mengadopsi pendekatan kepemimpinan yang seimbang untuk meningkatkan motivasi dan produktivitas karyawan di tempat makan cepat saji. Studi ini menawarkan wawasan berharga bagi manajer yang berusaha meningkatkan keterlibatan dan retensi karyawan di industri jasa.

**Kata-kata kunci:** Gaya Kepemimpinan, Motivasi Karyawan, Industri Makanan Cepat Saji, Survei Kuantitatif



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## INTRODUCTION

The fast-food industry is characterized by a high-paced work environment, standardized operations, and a firm reliance on employee performance to maintain service quality and customer satisfaction. Given the demanding nature of this industry, employee motivation plays a crucial role in ensuring productivity and reducing turnover rates (Aeni & Kuswanto, 2021). Leadership style is a key factor influencing Motivation, as different leadership approaches can shape employee attitudes, engagement, and commitment to their work (Kartini et al., 2021). Understanding how leadership styles affect employee motivation in fast-food restaurants is essential for improving management strategies and fostering a positive work environment (Khaliq et al., 2021).

Leadership styles are commonly categorized into transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership (Zhao et al., 2021). Transformational Leadership is characterized by the ability to inspire, challenge, and intellectually stimulate employees while fostering a strong leader-follower relationship (Eliyana et al., 2019). Transformational Leadership, on the other hand, relies on structured supervision, rewards, and punishments to maintain efficiency and productivity (Jiatong et al., 2022). Laissez-faire leadership is defined by a hands-off approach, where minimal guidance and oversight are provided to employees (Zhang et al., 2023). Each leadership style has different implications for employee motivation, particularly in a fast-paced work setting such as fast-food restaurants (Hundie & Habtewold, 2024).

The fast-food industry presents unique leadership and employee motivation challenges due to its repetitive work, low wages, and high employee turnover. Studies have shown that employee motivation in the service industry is linked to job satisfaction, commitment, and performance (Arif, 2021). However, limited research explicitly focuses on how leadership styles influence Motivation in fast-food restaurants. While previous studies have explored Leadership and Motivation in broader hospitality and service industries, the specific dynamics of fast-food operations require further investigation (Maheswari et al., 2022; Mon & Herman, 2024).

A key research gap exists in understanding how leadership styles directly impact motivation levels in fast-food restaurants, particularly regarding which leadership approach is most effective in sustaining employee engagement and productivity. While transformational Leadership is often associated with positive employee outcomes, its feasibility in high-turnover, low-wage environments such as fast-food restaurants remains underexplored (Mansour & Elziny, 2020; Reyaz, 2024; Simbolon et al., 2020; Zulmariad et al., 2022). Similarly, while

transactional Leadership is prevalent in fast-food operations, its long-term effectiveness in fostering intrinsic Motivation is questionable (Aesah et al., 2023; Zhao et al., 2021). Another gap in existing literature concerns the impact of laissez-faire leadership in fast-food settings. While previous studies suggest that a lack of managerial involvement can lead to lower Motivation and job satisfaction, there is limited empirical evidence assessing this in the context of fast-food restaurants (Aeni & Kuswanto, 2021; Arifuddin et al., 2023; Kartini et al., 2021). Understanding the implications of minimal leadership intervention in this industry is crucial for designing effective management practices that ensure productivity without excessive control.

The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the fast-food industry. Despite its economic significance, this sector has received relatively little attention in leadership and motivation studies. This study aims to provide empirical insights into the relationship between leadership styles and employee motivation within this context. The findings will contribute to leadership theory and practical management strategies in fast-food operations.

Furthermore, this research seeks to identify the optimal leadership style for enhancing employee motivation in fast-food restaurants, considering work stress, task repetition, and employee expectations. Unlike previous studies that have primarily examined Leadership in broader hospitality settings, this study narrows its focus to fast-food restaurants, allowing for more industry-specific conclusions (Putra & Cho, 2019). The study will explore whether different leadership styles affect various dimensions of Motivation, including intrinsic and extrinsic. While transformational Leadership is often linked to intrinsic and transactional Leadership to extrinsic Motivation, the extent to which these relationships hold in fast-food settings remains unclear (García et al., 2022; Vidigal et al., 2022). By analyzing these relationships, the study will provide a deeper understanding of how Leadership can be tailored to enhance both motivation types in this industry.

This study addresses a significant gap in Leadership and Motivation research by focusing on the fast-food sector. A quantitative approach will provide insights into the effectiveness of different leadership styles in fostering employee motivation and productivity. The findings will have practical implications for managers and policymakers seeking to improve workforce retention and performance in fast-food establishments.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Leadership style is crucial in shaping organizational outcomes, particularly in industries reliant on service quality and employee performance, such as fast-food restaurants. Leadership styles determine how managers interact with employees, set expectations, and drive Motivation (Huertas-Valdivia et al., 2019; Jony, 2019). Three primary leadership styles, transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire, have been widely studied regarding employee motivation and productivity. Each style influences employees differently, impacting their engagement, job satisfaction, and performance (Kusnadi et al., 2020; Setiawan et al., 2021).

Transformational Leadership is characterized by a leader's ability to inspire and intellectually stimulate employees while fostering strong relationships (Udovita, 2020). Leaders who adopt this style create a vision encouraging employees to exceed expectations and remain committed to their work (Bairawati & Prapanca, 2023). Transformational Leadership has been linked to higher levels of intrinsic Motivation, as employees feel valued and empowered in their roles (Mansour & Elziny, 2020; Reyaz, 2024). In fast-food restaurants, where work can be monotonous, transformational Leadership may help maintain Motivation by creating a positive work culture.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) by Ryan et al. (2018) provides a theoretical foundation for understanding the relationship between leadership style and employee motivation. SDT posits that Motivation is influenced by fulfilling three psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Transformational Leadership supports these needs by empowering employees, fostering personal growth, and creating meaningful workplace relationships (Salikhova et al., 2020; Van Den Broeck et al., 2021)

Employee motivation in fast-food restaurants is influenced by various factors, including leadership style, job design, and organizational culture (Dipietro et al., 2020; Lee & Kim, 2017; Mon & Herman, 2024; Vidigal et al., 2022). Given the high turnover rates in the industry, motivated employees are essential for maintaining service quality and operational efficiency. Studies suggest that Leadership is crucial in creating a work environment that fosters Motivation, engagement, and retention (Bairawati & Prapanca, 2023; Setiawan et al., 2021). Managers who adopt effective leadership styles can enhance employee morale, reduce turnover, and improve overall productivity.

Leadership effectiveness directly impacts employee performance, particularly in high-pressure environments like fast-food restaurants. Transformational Leadership enhances

performance by fostering Motivation and engagement (Juliana & Djakasaputra, 2019; Purwanto & Juliana, 2022). Transactional Leadership ensures that employees meet performance targets but may not encourage creativity or initiative (Khan et al., 2020; Sanapang et al., 2022). Laissez-faire leadership often leads to poor performance due to the absence of managerial oversight (Chukwura, 2016; Natarajan et al., 2017; Rashid et al., 2020).

H1: Transformational Leadership positively affects employee motivation in fast-food restaurants.

## **METHOD**

This study employs a quantitative research approach with a cross-sectional survey design to examine the impact of leadership styles on employee motivation in fast-food restaurants. Data was collected from 113 employees using convenience sampling to identify trends and relationships between Leadership and Motivation (Sekaran & Bougie, 2020). A structured questionnaire, adapted from validated scales such as the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire by (Awan et al., 2020 Duman & Ozgen, 2018) and the Work Motivation Scale by (Gustafsson & Bowen, 2017; Khan et al., 2020; Mickelson et al., 2019) was used to measure transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles as independent variables, while employee motivation (intrinsic and extrinsic) served as the dependent variable. Responses were rated on a 5-point Likert scale and collected anonymously to encourage honest feedback.

The data was analyzed using Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) with SmartPLS 4 software to assess the relationships between leadership styles and employee motivation. This analysis included descriptive statistics, reliability testing (Cronbach's Alpha), validity testing, and path analysis to determine the significance of the hypothesized relationships (Hair et al., 2014). However, the study is limited by its small sample size, self-reported nature, and cross-sectional design, which may affect generalizability. Despite these limitations, the research offers valuable insights for managers in the fast-food industry, highlighting leadership strategies that can enhance employee motivation and overall productivity.

## **RESULTS AND DISCUSSION**

The demographic analysis reveals that the sample comprises 113 employees, with a higher proportion of females (67%) than males (33%). Most respondents are young professionals, with 63% aged 20-25 years and 37% aged 25-30 years, indicating a workforce primarily composed

of early-career individuals. The exclusive focus on employees ensures relevance to workplace-related studies but limits generalizability to non-working populations. Additionally, gender imbalance and age concentration may introduce biases, mainly if perceptions and experiences vary across different demographic segments. These factors should be considered when interpreting the study's findings.

**Table 1.** Demographic Data

No.	Criteria	Answer	Frequency	Percentage (%)
1.	Gender	Male	50	33%
		Female	63	67%
2.	Job	Employee	113	100%
3.	Age	20-25	91	63%
		25-30	22	37%

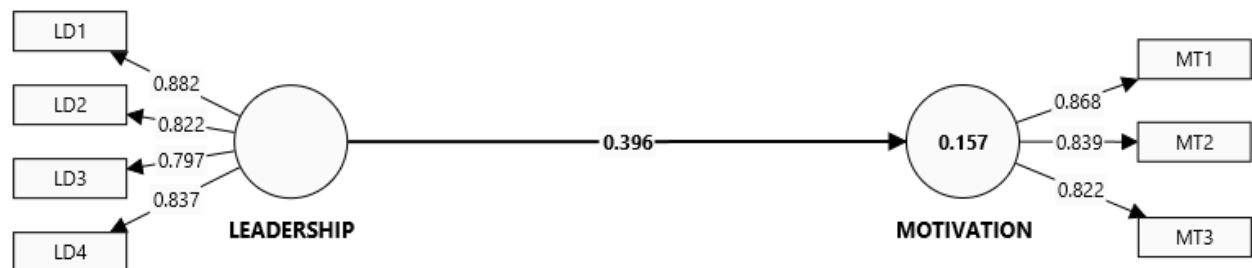
Source: Data Processing Results (2024)

**Table 2.** Reliability and Validity Test

	Cronbach's alpha	Composite reliability (rho_a)	Composite reliability (rho_c)	Average variance extracted (AVE)
Leadership	0.855	0.857	0.902	0.697
Motivation	0.8	0.825	0.881	0.711

Source: Data Processing Results (2025)

Based on Table 2 and Figure 1, The reliability and validity test results indicate that both Leadership and Motivation constructs exhibit strong internal consistency and convergent validity. Cronbach's Alpha values for Leadership (0.855) and Motivation (0.800) exceed the acceptable threshold of 0.7, confirming reliability. Similarly, Composite Reliability (Rho\_A and Rho\_C) values for both constructs are above 0.8, further validating measurement consistency. The Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values for Leadership (0.697) and Motivation (0.711) exceed the 0.5 benchmark, demonstrating sufficient convergent validity. These findings confirm that the measurement model is reliable and valid for further analysis.



**Figure 1.** Outer Model

Based on Table 3, The HTMT ratio of 0.467 between Motivation and Leadership falls well below the 0.85 threshold, indicating strong discriminant validity between the two constructs. This suggests that while Motivation and Leadership are related, they measure distinct concepts without excessive overlap. The low HTMT value confirms that the constructs are not redundant and can be analyzed separately, ensuring the structural model's robustness. These results support the appropriateness of the measurement model for hypothesis testing and further structural equation modeling (SEM) analysis.

**Table 3.** HTMT Ratio

	Heterotrait-monotrait ratio (HTMT)
Motivation <- > Leadership	0.467

Source: Data Processing Results (2024)

Based on Table 4, The Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) values for all indicators range from 1.620 to 2.501, well below the commonly accepted threshold of 5.0, indicating that multicollinearity is not a concern in this model. The values suggest that each independent variable contributes uniquely to the analysis without excessive correlation with other predictors. The highest VIF value (2.501 for LD1) remains within an acceptable range, confirming that the model does not suffer from significant collinearity issues. These results support the reliability of regression estimates, ensuring that the relationships among variables can be interpreted without bias due to multicollinearity.

**Table 4.** Multicollinearities

	VIF
LD1	2.501
LD2	2.028
LD3	1.644
LD4	2.054
MT1	1.620
MT2	1.784
MT3	1.764

Source: Data Processing Results (2024)

Based on Table 5, The R-Square value of 0.157 indicates that 15.7% of the variance in Motivation is explained by the independent variables included in the model, while the Adjusted R-Square of 0.149 accounts for the number of predictors, suggesting a slight adjustment for model

complexity. Although the explanatory power is relatively low, it still signifies that the independent variables have a measurable impact on Motivation. However, the remaining 84.3% of variance is influenced by other factors not included in the model, indicating the need to explore additional predictors further to enhance explanatory power.

Table 5. R Square

	R-square	R-square adjusted
Motivation	0.157	0.149

Source: Data Processing Results (2024)

Based on Table 6, The f-square value of 0.186 indicates that Leadership has a small effect size on Motivation, based on the (Cohen, 1988) classification, where 0.02 represents a small effect, 0.15 a medium effect, and 0.35 a significant impact. While Leadership does contribute to explaining Motivation, the effect is not particularly strong. This suggests that although Leadership plays a role in influencing Motivation, other factors may have a more significant impact. Further investigation into additional predictors could provide a more comprehensive understanding of what drives Motivation in the given context.

Table 6. f Square

	Leadership	Motivation	Category
Motivation	0.186		Small effect size

Source: Data Processing Results (2024)

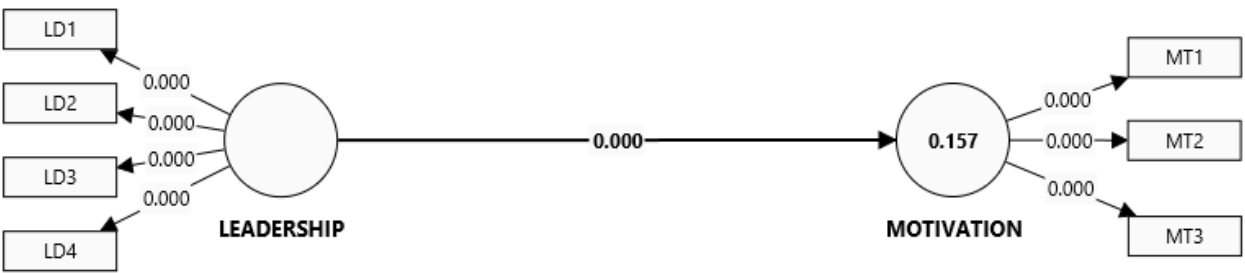


Figure 2. Inner Model

Table 7. Hypothesis Test

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	Standard deviation (STDEV)	T statistics ( O/STDEV )	P values	Result
Leadership - > Motivation	0.396	0.412	0.078	5.066	0.000	Supported

Source: Data Processing Results (2024)



Based on Table 7 and Figure 2, The hypothesis testing results indicate that Leadership has a significant positive effect on Motivation ( $\beta = 0.396$ ,  $p = 0.000$ ), with a T-statistic of 5.066, which exceeds the critical value of 1.96, confirming statistical significance. The standard deviation (0.078) suggests a relatively low variability level, reinforcing the estimate's robustness. Since the p-value is below 0.05, the relationship is considered significant, meaning that higher levels of Leadership are associated with increased Motivation. This finding supports the theoretical assumption that effective Leadership enhances employee motivation, emphasizing the importance of leadership practices in fostering a motivated workforce.

## DISCUSSION

Leadership plays a crucial role in shaping employee motivation, particularly in fast-food restaurants, where the work environment is often fast-paced, demanding, and repetitive. Effective leadership styles can influence employees' job satisfaction, engagement, and overall productivity, ultimately impacting service quality and customer satisfaction (Setiawan et al., 2021; Udovita, 2020; Van Den Broeck et al., 2021). This study examines the relationship between leadership style and employee motivation, uncovering key insights into how Leadership can drive employee performance in the fast-food industry.

Leadership style significantly influences employee motivation, as demonstrated in numerous studies. Transformational Leadership, characterized by inspirational Motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualized consideration, and idealized influence, has been widely recognized as a practical approach to enhancing employee motivation (García et al., 2022; Mansour & Elziny, 2020; Reyaz, 2024; Vidigal et al., 2022). Leaders who adopt this style create a vision that employees can connect with, instilling a sense of purpose in their daily tasks (Aeni & Kuswanto, 2021; Khaliq et al., 2021; Zhao et al., 2021). The fast-food industry presents unique challenges, including high employee turnover, work-related stress, and a repetitive work environment (Hancock et al., 2013). Leadership is pivotal in addressing these challenges by fostering a motivating and engaging workplace. Studies show that employees are more likely to remain committed to their jobs when they feel valued, empowered, and supported, reducing turnover rates (Kim & Brymer, 2011).

Research by Arifuddin et al. (2023) and Tang et al. (2024) indicates that supportive leadership, recognition, and employee development opportunities significantly improve Motivation in the fast-food sector. (Baig et al., 2019; Primandaru & Kairupan, 2024) emphasize

that positive leadership behaviors enhance psychological capital and Motivation. His study's results align with previous research, confirming that leadership style significantly impacts employee motivation in fast-food restaurants. The hypothesis testing results demonstrate that Leadership positively influences Motivation, supporting the findings of (Salikhova et al., 2020) on transformational leadership effectiveness. The HTMT ratio confirms discriminant validity, indicating that Leadership and Motivation are distinct but related constructs. Furthermore, the f-square value suggests a small but meaningful effect, indicating that while Leadership contributes to Motivation, other factors also play a role. However, the R-square value suggests that Leadership explains the variance in Motivation, implying that additional variables, such as work environment, compensation, job autonomy, and career development opportunities, may further influence employee motivation (Alblooshi et al., 2020; Mansour & Elziny, 2020; Reyaz, 2024).

## **CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATION**

This study confirms that leadership style significantly shapes employee motivation in fast-food restaurants, where the work environment is fast-paced and demanding. The findings reveal that transformational and participative leadership styles are particularly effective in enhancing Motivation, job satisfaction, and employee engagement. The hypothesis test results indicate a strong positive relationship between Leadership and Motivation. However, the R-square value suggests that Leadership alone does not fully explain employee motivation, implying the presence of other influencing factors such as work environment, job autonomy, and rewards systems. These insights align with previous research, emphasizing that effective Leadership fosters a motivated workforce, improves service quality, and reduces employee turnover.

From a managerial perspective, fast-food restaurant leaders should adopt transformational leadership behaviors, including inspiring employees, recognizing achievements, and fostering teamwork. Additionally, incorporating transactional elements, such as clear goal-setting and structured rewards, can provide a balance that enhances Motivation while maintaining operational efficiency. Managers should also focus on creating a supportive work environment, offering career development opportunities, and giving non-monetary incentives to sustain employee engagement. By implementing leadership training programs,

organizations can equip managers with the necessary skills to drive Motivation and improve overall team performance.

For practical applications, restaurant owners and human resource managers should emphasize leadership development programs, mentorship initiatives, and employee recognition systems to enhance workplace motivation. Employee feedback mechanisms should also be integrated to understand specific motivational drivers and tailor leadership approaches accordingly. Future research should explore additional factors influencing Motivation, such as employee well-being, work-life balance, and digital Leadership in fast-food settings. Furthermore, investigating the moderating effects of organizational culture, generational differences, and leadership adaptability could provide deeper insights into optimizing motivation strategies for sustained productivity and employee retention in the fast-food industry.

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