



# Organisational Alignment as a Strategic Enabler in Advancing Employee Championing Behaviour Via Transformational Leadership

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## ABSTRACT

This research explores the role of organisational alignment as a catalyst that strengthens the relationship between transformational leadership and employee championing behaviour. In today's dynamic business environment, employees who actively advocate organisational goals and drive change are essential for sustaining innovation and adaptability. While transformational leadership inspires such proactive behaviour, its impact often depends on how well an organisation's systems, culture, and strategy are aligned. Grounded in social exchange theory, role theory, and person-organisation fit theory, this research examines how alignment enhances the translation of leadership vision into employee advocacy. Using a quantitative survey design, data were collected from employees across various sectors in South India and analysed through structural modelling techniques. The study integrates structural and psychological perspectives to explain how organisational alignment and factors such as trust, empowerment, and motivation enable employees to champion change. The findings contribute to leadership and organisational behaviour literature by positioning alignment as a critical enabler that connects leadership intent with employee action, offering valuable insights for building cohesive and high-performing organisations.

**Keywords:** Transformational Leadership, Organisational Alignment, Employee Championing Behaviour, Leadership Effectiveness, Organisational Coherence

**JEL Classifications:** D14, G53, M50

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In today's dynamic and uncertain business environment, organisations rely not only on formal leadership but also on employees who actively champion change and embody organisational values. Employee championing behaviour defined as proactive, voluntary advocacy for organisational initiatives plays a pivotal role in fostering innovation, adaptability, and sustained success (Islam et al., 2021). Such behaviours generate internal momentum and positive peer influence, facilitating smoother change implementation. However, these behaviours do

not emerge spontaneously; they are shaped by both inspirational leadership and a supportive organisational context. Among leadership paradigms, transformational leadership (TL) has been widely recognised for its effectiveness in nurturing discretionary and change-oriented behaviours (Wang et al., 2017; Gumusluoglu and Ilsev, 2009). Through its dimensions of idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration (Bass and Riggio, 2006), transformational leadership cultivates a shared vision and motivates employees to transcend self-interest for collective goals. Empirical studies consistently link TL to higher engagement,

creativity, and organisational citizenship behaviour (Gumusluoglu and Ilsev, 2009; Wang et al., 2017). Yet, leadership alone cannot fully explain why some employees actively champion organisational change while others remain passive. Organisational alignment (OA) the coherence between an organisation's strategy, structure, culture, and systems may serve as the critical catalyst that transforms leadership influence into championing behaviour (Blokland and Reniers, 2021). When alignment exists, employees perceive consistency between the organisation's stated mission and everyday practices, fostering trust, motivation, and ownership of change initiatives. Conversely, misalignment between vision and practice can create cognitive dissonance, weakening leadership impact and diminishing advocacy.

Despite the well-established influence of TL on employee outcomes, limited empirical work has examined how OA shapes or amplifies this relationship. The present study addresses this gap by exploring how organisational alignment mediates or moderates the link between transformational leadership and employee championing behaviour (Kuntadi et al., 2023). The study's significance lies in integrating organisational alignment into the transformational leadership behaviour framework, offering a holistic understanding of how structural and cultural coherence enhances leadership effectiveness. Practically, it provides actionable insights for managers seeking to build cultures of advocacy and ownership within their teams. Focusing on organisations in South India where collectivist culture, hierarchical structures, and relational dynamics influence leadership and alignment processes this study contributes region-specific evidence to global leadership discourse. It positions organisational alignment as the missing link that enables transformational leadership to convert vision into sustained employee advocacy, thereby advancing both theory and practice in leadership and organisational behaviour.

## 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Organisational alignment refers to the degree of coherence and mutual reinforcement among an organisation's strategy, structure, systems, culture, values, and processes (Kathuria et al., 2007; Baker and Jones, 2008). Research distinguishes between vertical alignment, involving congruence among strategic goals, structures, and leadership behaviours, and horizontal alignment, emphasizing consistency across units, cultures, and internal processes (Al-Surmi et al., 2020). Both forms have been associated with improved organisational performance and employee motivation (Kathuria et al., 2007). Strategic alignment literature is grounded in Contingency Theory, which posits that organisational effectiveness depends on the fit among key elements such as structure and environment, and Dynamic Capabilities Theory, which emphasises the ability to realign resources and adapt to change (Baker and Jones, 2008; Street et al., 2018).

Transformational leadership (Bass and Bass Bernard, 1985; Bass, 1990) is characterised by idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, which collectively encourage employees to internalize organisational goals and demonstrate enhanced performance outcomes (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Empirical

evidence consistently links transformational leadership to positive discretionary behaviours such as innovation, organisational citizenship behaviour, work engagement and performance (Nohe & Hertel, 2017). To explain these effects, research has identified mediating mechanisms—including trust, psychological empowerment, and intrinsic motivation—that translate transformational leadership into proactive employee outcomes (Llorente-Alonso et al., 2024; Spreitzer, 1995). Moderating influences such as perceived organisational support, gender, and cultural context also shape these relationships.

Building on this stream, employee championing behaviour (ECB) is a more targeted form of discretionary action in which employees advocate organisational initiatives and defend values beyond formal job duties. Although conceptually related to OCB and innovation, ECB involves active promotion and change-driving efforts. Empirical studies examining its antecedents remain limited, with existing work largely conceptual rather than validated empirically (Dinda and Wahyuni, 2023). This reinforces the need to investigate how leadership triggers championing behaviour through more complex organisational mechanisms.

While transformational leadership research highlights psychological mediators, organisational alignment remains relatively underexplored in leadership-behaviour relationships. Strategic alignment studies demonstrate alignment's role in enhancing performance, clarity of objectives, and employee motivation (Al-Surmi et al., 2020), yet rarely connect alignment to discretionary behaviours such as championing. Existing studies predominantly focus on structural or strategy-IT alignment rather than alignment of culture, values, communication, and leadership behaviours—dimensions crucial for fostering coherence and discretionary effort. Recent research underscores alignment's value in linking individual action to organisational intent and guiding structural adaptation (Gede and Huluka, 2023; Khuzwayo and Mashau, 2025; Olieka and Juma, 2025; Kathuria and Lucianetti, 2024). Psychological mechanisms such as trust, role clarity, person-organisation fit and intrinsic motivation explain how alignment strengthens employee commitment and proactive behaviour (Alriyami et al., 2024; Llorente-Alonso et al., 2024; Manolache & Epuran, 2023; Wang et al., 2024).

The theoretical foundations supporting these mechanisms include Social Exchange Theory, which highlights reciprocity, trust, and empowerment (Tripp, 2023; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005), Role Theory, which links role clarity to positive outcomes (Manolache and Epuran, 2023; Raza et al., 2023), and Person-Organisation Fit Theory, which explains commitment and innovation when individual-organisational values align (Kristof, 1996; Kristof-Brown et al., 2023). Together, they indicate that transformational leadership may be insufficient without supporting organisational alignment that reduces ambiguity and reinforces shared goals.

Despite evidence that transformational leadership drives discretionary behaviours and alignment strengthens motivation and clarity, empirical studies integrating organisational alignment into the transformational leadership → championing behaviour pathway are scarce, particularly within non-Western and South

Indian contexts. Moreover, the multidimensional nature of alignment (strategy, structure, culture, communication) remains insufficiently examined regarding behavioural consequences such as championing. Understanding alignment as a mediator or moderator can offer deeper insight into the mechanisms translating leadership into employee-driven change.

### 2.1. Hypotheses

- H<sub>1</sub>: Transformational leadership positively influences employee championing behaviour.
- H<sub>2</sub>: Organisational alignment positively moderates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee championing behaviour, strengthening the effect when alignment is high.
- H<sub>3</sub>: Organisational alignment mediates the relationship between transformational leadership and employee championing behaviour, such that transformational leadership enhances alignment, which in turn promotes championing behaviour.

The mediating or moderating effects of organisational alignment operate through psychological mechanisms such as trust, role clarity, person-organisation fit, psychological empowerment, and intrinsic motivation, grounded in social exchange theory, role theory, and person-organisation fit theory.

From this review, it is evident that transformational leadership is a well-established antecedent of discretionary and proactive employee behaviours (innovation, OCB, engagement). Organisational alignment is similarly recognised as enhancing organisational effectiveness, employee motivation, clarity, and fit-but its role specifically in facilitating championing behaviour remains insufficiently empirically tested. The multidimensional alignment construct needs operationalization in leadership studies. There is opportunity for research that integrates theories (SET, Role Theory, P-O Fit) to test whether and how alignment conditions or mediates TL → Employee Championing Behaviour, particularly in the cultural and organizational context of South India Figure 1.

### 2.2. Theoretical Framework

The theoretical foundation of this study integrates social exchange theory, role theory, and person-organisation fit theory to explain how transformational leadership (TL) influences employee championing behaviour (ECB) and the role of organisational alignment (OA). According to Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 2017; Cropanzano and Mitchell,

2005), employees reciprocate inspiring and supportive leadership with discretionary advocacy behaviours such as championing. Role Theory suggests that OA enhances clarity and coherence between organisational goals and daily actions, enabling employees to confidently engage in proactive change behaviours. Person-organisation fit theory (Kristof, 1996) proposes that alignment of values increases psychological ownership and intrinsic motivation, promoting ECB. Collectively, these perspectives suggest that while TL directly encourages ECB, its impact is amplified when OA strengthens trust, clarity, and value congruence, positioning OA as both a mediator and moderator in the TL → ECB relationship.

## 3. METHODS

### 3.1. Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional survey design to examine how transformational leadership (TL) influences employee championing behaviour (ECB), both directly and indirectly through organisational alignment (OA) and key psychological mechanisms (trust, role clarity, person-organisation fit, psychological empowerment, and intrinsic motivation). The conceptual model was tested using a structural equation modelling (SEM) framework with regression-based bootstrapped mediation and moderation analyses. A total of 200 full-time employees were taken as the study sample, representing multiple sectors. In SEM research, many scholars cite a sample size of 100-200 as sufficient for models of moderate complexity (Wolf et al., 2013). Given this study includes three latent constructs with six indicators each, strong reliability values ( $\alpha \geq 0.83$ ), and substantial effect sizes, the sample size of  $n = 200$  is considered adequate to produce stable parameter estimates and acceptable model fit (Table 1). Participants were selected through non-probability convenience sampling due to practical constraints in accessing working professionals. This approach is common in organizational behaviour research where random sampling is rarely feasible (Etikan et al., 2016). Employees from varied industries were reached via professional networks, yielding 200 valid responses. Although this limits generalizability, the sample's diversity and strong reliability scores (Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.83-0.88$ ) support the credibility of the findings. Respondents ranged in age from 22 to 59 years ( $M = 36.4$ ,  $SD = 8.7$ ), and 48% identified as male, 48% as female, and 4% as other. Participants represented a mix of job levels-

**Table 1: Scale summary: Constructs, sources, and reliability statistics**

Section	Construct	Source	No. of items	Example item	Cronbach's $\alpha$	Principal component analysis variance explained
A	Organisational alignment	Kaplan and Norton (2006); Beer (2020)	6	"Leaders across levels send consistent messages about priorities."	0.83	0.64
B	Transformational leadership	Bass and Avolio (1994)	6	"My leader communicates a clear and compelling vision of the future."	0.88	0.68
C	Employee championing behaviour	Van Dyne and Pierce (2004); Kim et al. (2018)	6	"I proactively promote positive changes within my organization."	0.86	0.70

executives (24%), managers (28%), analysts (20%), coordinators (14%), and others (14%). Participation was voluntary and anonymous. All responses were collected using a five-point Likert scale (1 = Strongly Disagree, 5 = Strongly Agree).

All scales demonstrated strong internal consistency and satisfactory factor unidimensionality. Data were analysed using regression-based SEM model.

### 3.2. Reliability and Validity

Cronbach’s  $\alpha$  and PCA were used to confirm internal consistency and construct validity.

### 3.3. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

Means, standard deviations, and inter-construct correlations were computed.

### 3.4. Hypothesis Testing

- H<sub>1</sub>: TL → ECB (direct effect) - simple regression
- H<sub>2</sub>: TL × OA → ECB (moderation) - hierarchical regression with interaction term
- H<sub>3</sub>: TL → OA → ECB (mediation) - bootstrapped indirect effects (500 resamples).

### 3.5. Diagnostics

Variance inflation factor (VIF) <5 for all predictors indicated no multicollinearity. 95% bootstrap confidence intervals were used to test indirect effect significance.

## 4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Descriptive statistics and inter-construct correlations results are presented in Table 2.

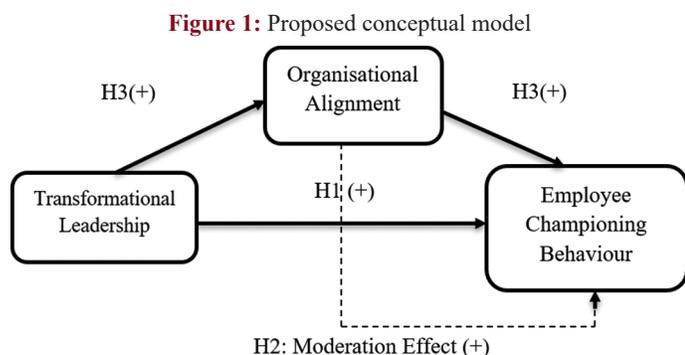
### 4.1. Hypothesis Testing

H<sub>1</sub>: Transformational leadership → Employee championing behaviour

**Table 2: Descriptive statistics and inter-construct correlations**

Variable	M	Standard deviation	1	2	3
TL	3.84	0.74	—		
OA	3.77	0.71	0.58**	—	
ECB	3.92	0.68	0.61**	0.53**	—

P<0.01 for all correlations. TL: Transformational leadership, OA: Organisational alignment, ECB: Employee championing behaviour, SD: Standard deviation



Regression analysis showed a significant positive effect of TL on ECB

( $\beta = 0.62$ , SE = 0.07,  $t = 8.86$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ,  $R^2 = 0.38$ ). Hence, H1 was supported.

H<sub>2</sub>: Moderating role of organisational alignment

The interaction term (TL × OA) was significant ( $\beta = 0.14$ , SE = 0.06,  $t = 2.31$ ,  $P = 0.022$ ), indicating that OA strengthens the TL-ECB relationship. The overall model explained 47% of variance in ECB ( $R^2 = 0.47$ ). Hence, H2 was supported.

H<sub>3</sub>: Mediating role of organisational alignment

Bootstrapped mediation analysis (500 resamples) showed:  
 a-path (TL → OA):  $\beta = 0.58$ ,  $P < 0.001$   
 b-path (OA → ECB controlling for TL):  $\beta = 0.29$ ,  $P < 0.001$   
 Direct path (TL → ECB controlling for OA):  $\beta = 0.45$ ,  $P < 0.001$

Indirect effect: 0.17 (95% CI [0.08, 0.28]).

The confidence interval did not include zero, confirming partial mediation.

Thus, H<sub>3</sub> was supported.

### 4.2. Discussion

The findings provide strong empirical evidence that transformational leadership (TL) significantly enhances employee championing behaviour (ECB) both directly and indirectly. The strong TL → ECB effect ( $\beta = 0.62$ ) reinforces the central premise that inspirational and empowering leadership mobilizes employees to actively advocate organizational initiatives rather than merely comply with instructions. This outcome highlights the continuing relevance of transformational leadership in fostering employee-driven change and innovation, particularly in dynamic environments where proactive commitment is essential. A major contribution of this study lies in demonstrating the pivotal role of organizational alignment (OA) as both a mediator and moderator in strengthening the TL-ECB linkage. The moderating influence of alignment ( $\beta = 0.14$ ,  $P < 0.05$ ) suggests that leadership impact is amplified when organizational systems, structures, and communication are coherent and mutually reinforcing. The mediation results show that transformational leaders enable championing behaviour by fostering alignment across strategic, structural, and cultural dimensions, confirming that consistency between espoused values and organizational practices builds credibility, trust, and clarity (Deci and Ryan, 2013). This supports the perspective that alignment functions as a structural conduit through which leadership intentions translate into coordinated action. The role of psychological mechanisms further explains how TL influences advocacy. Trust, empowerment, intrinsic motivation, role clarity, and person-organization fit emerged as key pathways transforming leadership influence into discretionary behaviour (McAnally and Hagger, 2024; Hoxha and Ramadani, 2024; Dennerlein and Kirkman, 2023). These findings affirm that

high-quality leader-follower relationships encourage reciprocal commitment and advocacy, and that employees champion change when they feel valued, supported, and psychologically secure. Collectively, the results offer a dual-path explanatory framework—structural alignment and psychological empowerment—that advances understanding of how leadership shapes proactive behaviour (Ongcoy, 2023, Kathuria and Lucianetti, 2024).

## 5. CONCLUSION

This study provides empirical support for a dual-path model linking transformational leadership, organizational alignment, and psychological mechanisms to employee championing behaviour. The results confirm that transformational leadership exerts a strong direct influence on advocacy while also shaping behaviour through system-level alignment and psychological empowerment. (Dennerlein and Kirkman, 2023; Ongcoy, 2023) Integrating organizational alignment as both mediator and moderator expands leadership theory beyond individual behaviour to include structural coherence as a determinant of leadership effectiveness. Future research may adopt longitudinal or experimental designs to enhance causal inference and examine changes in championing behaviour over time. Multilevel modelling could explore how team-level alignment and leadership climate interact with individual perceptions.

Further studies may also examine contextual moderators such as organizational life-cycle stages or cultural values to deepen understanding of when and for whom alignment most strongly reinforces leadership influence. By combining leadership capability with aligned organizational systems, organizations can build resilient workforces capable of sustaining innovation, change readiness, and collective commitment.

### 5.1. Theoretical Contributions

This study contributes to leadership and organizational behaviour literature in three ways. It extends transformational leadership theory into a non-Western, collectivist setting, demonstrating that the core elements of TL vision, inspiration, and individualized concern retain effectiveness even within hierarchical cultural contexts.

It bridges strategic alignment and behavioural perspectives, positioning organizational alignment as a key mechanism enabling leadership to influence employee advocacy—an integration rarely explored empirically.

It introduces a dual-path model linking structural alignment and psychological empowerment as complementary drivers of championing behaviour, enriching theoretical clarity on how leadership translates into meaningful behavioural outcomes.

### 5.2. Practical and Policy Implications

The results underscore that leadership effectiveness depends on both behavioural capability and systemic alignment. For practitioners, this implies that inspirational leadership must be matched by coherent organizational structures and communication systems. Leaders should reinforce alignment through goal cascading, integrated communication platforms, cross-functional coordination forums, and explicit performance linkages to reduce ambiguity and strengthen trust

(Mayer et al., 1995). For HR and policy development, organizations should embed empowerment and alignment principles into policies governing performance appraisal, internal communication, learning systems, and participative decision-making. HR policies can institutionalize feedback loops, recognition systems encouraging innovation, and structured mechanisms supporting psychological safety and trust. Given the multi-industry sample, sector-specific insights are particularly relevant: Service and education sectors may emphasize empowerment and relationship-based leadership to build trust and advocacy, Manufacturing and process-driven industries may prioritize alignment through standardized systems, coordinated workflow practices, and cross-functional integration., Technology and digital transformation environments may combine agile structures with empowerment-based leadership development to encourage rapid adaptation and championing of change initiatives. At an institutional policy level, organizations undergoing strategic change, digital transformation, or restructuring can leverage OA metrics and leadership capability frameworks to cultivate internal champions who accelerate implementation and acceptance of change.

### 5.3. Limitations of the Study

While the study offers valuable insights into how transformational leadership and organisational alignment influence employee championing behaviour, its scope is naturally bounded by the cross-sectional design and the specific organisational context in which data were collected. The findings reflect perceptions at a single point in time and within a South Indian setting, which provides contextual depth but also suggests opportunities for future research to explore longitudinal patterns or comparative perspectives across cultures and sectors. The study's focus on employee self-reported experiences enabled rich behavioural insight, yet future work may benefit from integrating additional data sources such as supervisor assessments or objective performance indicators to complement perceptual measures.

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