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SUSTAINING SUCCESS BEYOND THE FOUNDER: A SYNERGISTIC FRAMEWORK OF AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP AND SELF-DETERMINATION THEORY

Hemchandra Betchoo*

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Abstract

Purpose: This paper analyzes leadership evolution at Infosys (global IT leader) and its impact on organizational culture and employee motivation. It identifies challenges from the firm's foundational leadership model and proposes an integrated framework that connects Authentic Leadership and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) to address motivational and cultural deficits in a mature, founder-influenced technology firm.

Methodology/Approach: The study employs a qualitative documentary case study design. The 49-document evidence corpus was assembled through a systematic search of EconBiz and ProQuest databases supplemented by purposive grey literature sampling. Corpus assembly is documented using PRISMA-adapted screening procedures to ensure selection transparency. A two-cycle thematic coding procedure mapped emergent categories onto the Competing Values Framework (CVF), Schein's cultural layers, authentic leadership constructs and SDT's basic psychological needs with two-level triangulation applied throughout.

Findings: Infosys's transformational leadership model drove early success but documentary evidence is consistent with a persistent gap between Clan-oriented espoused values and Hierarchy-driven operational practices. This cultural tension shows patterns consistent with SDT predictions about need-thwarting of autonomy, competence and relatedness.

Implications for theory and practice: The study contributes a three-level theoretical chain absent from existing literature: authentic leadership behaviors reduce the CVF clan-hierarchy gap, which satisfies SDT's basic psychological needs and restores intrinsic motivation. For practitioners, the framework specifies behavioral changes at senior and middle-management levels within a structured three-phase implementation sequence.

Originality and value: Existing scholarship addresses authentic leadership, CVF cultural typologies, and SDT as separate domains. This study connects all three into a single diagnostic framework, derives context-sensitive propositions for leadership evolution in founder-influenced technology firms, and specifies those propositions for longitudinal mixed-methods testing.

Keywords: authentic leadership, transformational leadership, self-determination theory

JEL: M12, M14, M54, M13

1. Introduction

The effective integration of leadership, organizational culture, and employee motivation is a critical determinant of sustained success within the fiercely competitive global Information Technology (IT) sector. Firms in this domain must perpetually navigate rapid technological advancements, shifting client demands and a global talent market that necessitates sophisticated human capital strategies (Gupta & Shapiro, 2014; Yukl & Gardner, 2020). Infosys, founded in 1981, provides a prominent example of an entity that has burgeoned from a modest startup into a global leader in digital services and consulting (Barney, 2010). With operations spanning over 56 countries and a workforce exceeding 317,000, its historical trajectory reflects an enduring commitment to ethical practices and robust employee development (Velamuri & Mitchell, 2005; Infosys, 2023) (Figure 1).

Despite its considerable record of achievement, Infosys confronts a spectrum of significant human resource challenges that test its corporate resilience and adaptive capacity (Barney, 2010; McGiboney, 2018) (Figure 2). These firm-specific issues, such as talent retention in a hyper-competitive market and fostering genuine inclusion across global operations, are intensified by the relentless pace of technological change and pervasive globalization. Such pressures are not unique to Infosys but represent broader leadership challenges confronting all global corporations.

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Figure 1: Overview of Infosys.
Source: Publicly available information on Infosys (the mentioned sources)

These include the imperative to manage an increasingly diverse workforce, adapt strategies to unpredictable change, and navigate fluid organizational boundaries (Lumby & Coleman, 2007; Leavy, 2021) (Table 1). A notable period of the leadership crisis at Infosys, documented by observers such as Babu and Rentala (2018) and Singh (2016), underscores the profound need for robust leadership frameworks capable of addressing these multifaceted internal and external pressures. Leadership profoundly shapes organizational culture, the complex system of shared values and behavioral norms that guide an organization (Schein, 1985, as cited in Panda & Gupta, 2001) and is a primary determinant of employee motivation. While Self-Determination Theory (SDT) offers a robust framework for understanding intrinsic motivation (Miner, 2005) and Authentic Leadership provides a compelling model for ethical conduct (Northouse, 2022), the synergistic integration of these frameworks as a comprehensive strategy for organizational reorientation remains an underexplored domain in existing scholarship. Literature often examines these theories in isolation or in contexts dissimilar to mature, founder-influenced technology firms navigating significant market and leadership transitions (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, as cited in Storey, 2004).

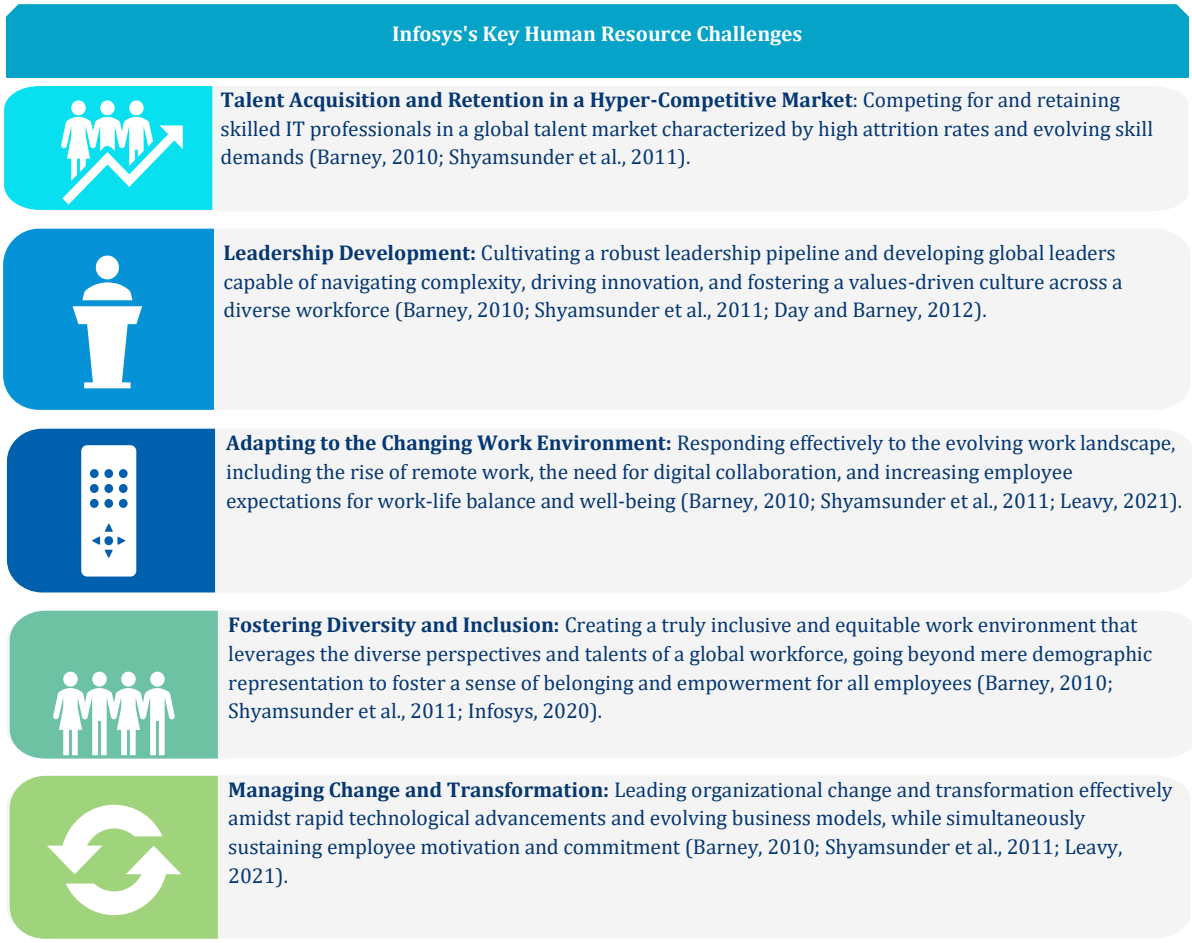


Figure 2: Infosys Key Challenges.

Source: Publicly available information on Infosys

Table 1. *Key 21st-Century Leadership Challenges for Global Organizations*

Challenge	Description	Key Supporting Literature
Managing Demographic Diversity & Fostering Inclusion	Increasingly diverse workforces (ethnicity, gender, age, etc.) requiring genuine inclusion, belonging, and equity, not just representation.	(Lumby & Coleman, 2007; Loon, 2023)
Adapting to Rapid Pace of Change	Accelerating technological, market and social changes demanding organizational agility, continuous learning, and adaptive leadership.	(Hiebert & Klatt, 2001; Yukl & Gardner, 2020; Leavy, 2021)
Navigating Fluid Organizational Boundaries	Growing interconnectedness, interdependencies and customization leading to less defined organizational perimeters and increased complexity.	(Lumby & Coleman, 2007; Dugan, 2024)
Integrating Diverse Leadership Theories & Practices	Proliferation of varied leadership theories creating challenges for cohesive, evidence-based leadership development and consistent application.	(Storey, 2004; Dinh et al., 2014)
Decision-Making in Complexity & Uncertainty	Increased ambiguity and interconnectedness within organizational systems require leaders to make effective decisions with incomplete information.	(Hiebert & Klatt, 2001; Dugan, 2024)
Maintaining Ethical Standards Globally	Ensuring consistent ethical conduct and values alignment across diverse cultural contexts and varying regulatory environments.	(Storey, 2004; Velamuri & Mitchell, 2005)
Developing and Retaining Talent in a Competitive Landscape	Intensified global competition for skilled knowledge workers requiring sophisticated talent management, engagement, and retention strategies.	(Barney, 2010; Shyamsunder et al., 2011; McGiboney, 2018)

Source: Compiled by author

This paper addresses the underexplored integration of SDT and Authentic Leadership as a comprehensive strategy for organizational reorientation. It analyzes the predominant leadership style at Infosys, traces its cultural consequences, and identifies its motivational outcomes, then proposes a theoretically grounded framework centered on Authentic Leadership and SDT. The scientific contribution operates at three connected levels that existing literature addresses only separately. Avolio and Gardner (2005, as cited in Storey, 2004) establish that authentic leader behaviors shape follower trust but do not map those behaviors onto specific cultural configurations or specify a motivational mechanism. Deci and Ryan (2000, as cited in Miner, 2005) provide that mechanism with strong empirical grounding yet treat leadership as one contextual input among several; the cultural architecture in which leadership operates remains unspecified. Cameron and Quinn (2011) provide that architecture through the Competing Values Framework (CVF) but do not theorize the motivational consequences of inter-quadrant tensions for employees' basic psychological needs. The present framework traces a single chain across all three levels: authentic leadership behaviors reduce the clan-hierarchy gap in the CVF, which expands the conditions under which autonomy, competence, and relatedness are satisfied; this produces the motivational outcomes SDT predicts (Miner, 2005; Dinh et al., 2014; Northouse, 2022). No prior study connects all three levels within a single diagnostic framework, nor applies that connection to a documented post-founder leadership transition in the technology sector.

The research is guided by the following questions:

R1: How has Infosys's historically transformational leadership shaped its organizational culture, diversity practices, and employee motivation?

R2: What are the key strengths and limitations of Infosys's current approach to leadership and culture when addressing 21st-century challenges?

R3: What are the primary antecedents of employee demotivation at Infosys?

R4: How can Authentic Leadership principles and Self-Determination Theory (SDT) be leveraged to foster a more adaptive, inclusive and motivating organizational environment at Infosys?

2. Literature Review

An understanding of leadership, organizational culture, and employee motivation is paramount for dissecting the multifaceted challenges confronting modern organizations. Key theoretical frameworks within these domains provide the necessary grounding for an insightful examination of complex organizational dynamics. This review critically synthesizes relevant literature to build a theoretical foundation for analyzing the evolution of leadership at a global enterprise such as Infosys.

2.1 Evolving Perspectives on Leadership

The study of leadership (Table 2) encompasses a diverse array of styles, from highly directive, autocratic approaches characterized by centralized control to significantly delegative, laissez-faire models that grant followers considerable autonomy (Maloş, 2014; Northouse, 2022). While autocratic leadership can facilitate rapid decision-making in crises, its sustained application in knowledge-intensive environments is widely critiqued for stifling innovation and morale (Busse, 2014; Northouse, 2022). Conversely, democratic or participative styles, which actively involve followers, are often associated with higher job satisfaction and innovation but can be more time-consuming (Hiebert & Klatt, 2001; Ojo, 2009).

Transactional leadership focuses on the exchange relationship between leaders and followers, where rewards are contingent upon performance (Molero et al., 2007; Northouse, 2022). Its reliance on extrinsic motivators, however, may not inherently foster deep engagement or motivation beyond basic compliance, limiting its effectiveness in dynamic industries (Storey, 2004). In contrast, transformational leadership seeks to inspire followers to achieve extraordinary outcomes by appealing to higher ideals and values (Bass, 1985, as cited in Molero et al., 2007). Its key characteristics include idealized influence (acting as a role model and earning trust), inspirational motivation (articulating a compelling vision), intellectual stimulation

(encouraging creativity and challenging assumptions), and individualized consideration (acting as a coach or mentor) (Northouse, 2022). The leadership of visionary founders, such as N.R. Narayana Murthy at Infosys, is often analyzed through this lens, credited with establishing core values and driving initial success (Barney, 2010; Rath, 2014).

Table 2. *Comparative Overview and Critiques of Key Leadership Styles*

Leadership Style	Core Attributes	Primary Limitations/Critiques from Literature
Autocratic / Authoritarian	Centralized control; leader makes decisions independently; direct supervision. (Demirtas & Karaca, 2020; Maloş, 2014)	Stifles creativity and morale; risk of fear-based environment; ineffective for complex problem-solving. (Busse, 2014; Northouse, 2022)
Democratic / Participative	Shared decision-making; encourages collaboration and follower input. (Demirtas & Karaca, 2020; Ojo, 2009)	Can be time-consuming; may lead to indecision if not managed well; effectiveness depends on follower readiness. (Northouse, 2022)
Laissez-faire	Minimal guidance; high follower autonomy. (Maloş, 2014; Sandling, 2015, as cited in Demirtas & Karaca, 2020)	Risk of lack of direction, low productivity if followers lack skills/motivation. (Bolden et al., 2003; Maloş, 2014)
Transactional	Motivates via rewards/punishments; focuses on exchanges, performance monitoring. (Busse, 2014; Northouse, 2022)	May not foster intrinsic motivation or creativity; can be perceived as mechanistic. (Molero et al., 2007; Storey, 2004)
Transformational	Inspires vision; intellectual stimulation; individualized consideration; charismatic influence. (Northouse, 2022)	Potential for manipulation (pseudotransformational); leader dependency; lacks conceptual clarity in some areas. (APO, 2008; Northouse, 2022)

Source: Compiled by author

Despite its documented benefits, the transformational leadership theory is not without limitations. A significant critique is its potential to foster dependency on a singular, charismatic figure. This can create organizational vulnerabilities, particularly during succession or if the leader's vision becomes detached from organizational reality (Bhansali et al., 2014; Singh, 2016). This "heroic leadership" bias can be viewed as elitist and may struggle to sustain intrinsic motivation across large, geographically dispersed workforces (Molero et al., 2007; Northouse, 2022). Furthermore, the theory has been criticized for a lack of conceptual clarity in some of its dimensions and for the potential for manipulation by "pseudotransformational" leaders who lack a strong ethical grounding (Northouse, 2022). These critiques highlight a critical gap: the need for a leadership model that retains inspirational qualities while promoting greater resilience, ethical consistency, and distributed capacity.

2.2 The Emergence of Authentic Leadership

Addressing some of the limitations of prior models, Authentic Leadership has emerged as a significant theoretical development emphasizing leader genuineness (Northouse, 2022; Storey, 2004). It is defined by four key components: (1) self-awareness, a realistic understanding of one's own values, strengths, and impact on others; (2) an internalized moral perspective, where behavior is guided by internal moral standards rather than external pressures; (3) balanced processing, the objective analysis of all relevant information before making decisions; and (4) relational transparency, presenting one's true self authentically to others (Walumbwa et al., 2008, as cited in Dinh et al., 2014; Northouse, 2022). This approach is argued to cultivate deeper levels of psychological safety and follower engagement by building trust and fostering a supportive ethical environment (Loon, 2023; Dugan, 2024). While still a developing theory, its focus on ethical grounding and genuine relationships offers a compelling framework for fostering sustainable and resilient leadership cultures. However, the effectiveness of any leadership style, including authentic leadership, is contingent upon the organizational context in which it is enacted, primarily the prevailing organizational culture.

2.3 Understanding Organizational Culture and Diversity

Integral to any organization's operational and strategic landscape is its culture, a complex tapestry of shared assumptions, collective values, espoused beliefs, and ingrained norms that collectively shape employee behavior and dictate organizational dynamics (Schein, 1985, as cited in Panda & Gupta, 2001; Dinh et al., 2014; Khalid et al., 2023). Leadership style acts as a critical catalyst and a primary architect in the formation, maintenance, and evolution of this pervasive culture (Panda & Gupta, 2001; Storey, 2004). The CVF (Figure 3), developed by Cameron and Quinn (2011), provides a widely utilized typology by categorizing organizational cultures along two primary dimensions: an internal focus (emphasizing integration, coordination, and employee well-being) versus an external focus (emphasizing competition, market positioning, and customer interaction) and a fundamental preference for organizational flexibility and discretion versus stability and control. This framework yields four distinct cultural archetypes: Clan (collaborative, people-oriented), Adhocracy (innovative, risk-taking), Market (results-driven, competitive), and Hierarchy (structured, efficient), each associated with particular leadership approaches and core values. The CVF posits that while organizations may exhibit a dominant cultural type, they often possess elements of all four and the effectiveness of a particular cultural profile is contingent upon the organization's strategy and external environment (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Singh, 2020). The inherent tension within the CVF lies in its acknowledgment that organizations must often balance these competing values. For example, the need for innovation (Adhocracy) with the need for control and efficiency (Hierarchy), which presents a significant leadership challenge (Storey, 2004). Effective leaders, therefore, must be adept at diagnosing their current culture and navigating these tensions to foster an environment conducive to achieving strategic objectives (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). Further enriching this understanding, Schein's model of organizational culture (as cited in

The Competing Values Framework (CVF) acknowledges the inherent tensions between opposing values within organizations, highlighting the **need for a balance between different cultural types for effective functioning** (Cameron and Quinn, 2011). It categorizes cultures into the following four types based on two key dimensions: **Internal/External Focus** and **Control/Flexibility**. Understanding the dominant cultural type and its interplay with other types can provide valuable insights into an organization's strengths and weaknesses.

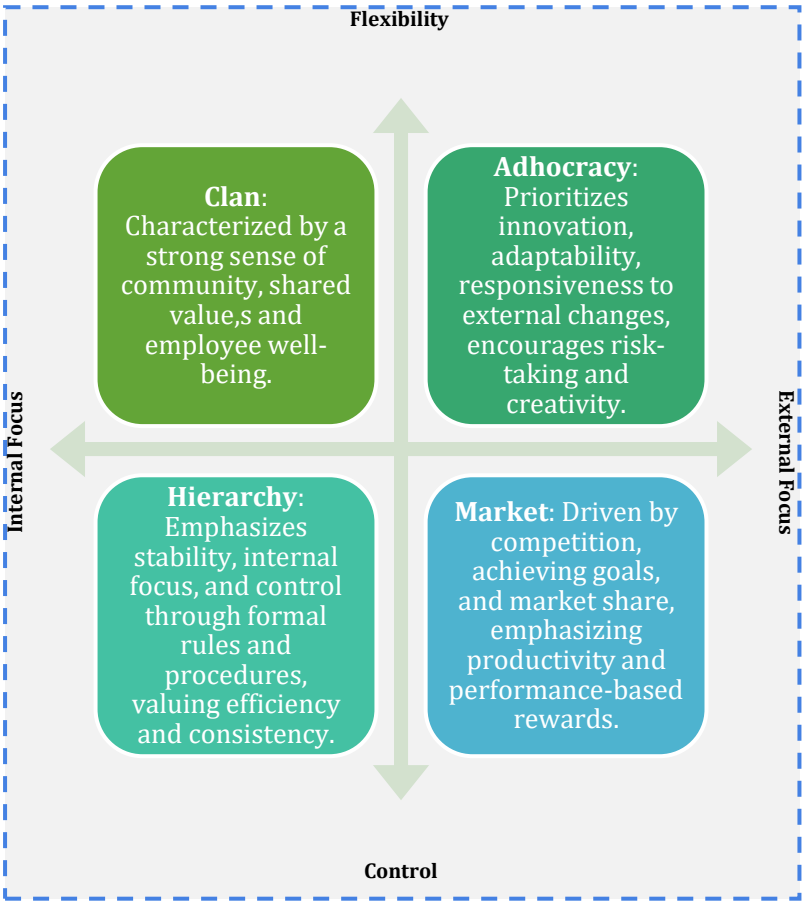


Figure 3. *CVF*
Source: Adapted from Cameron and Quinn (2011)

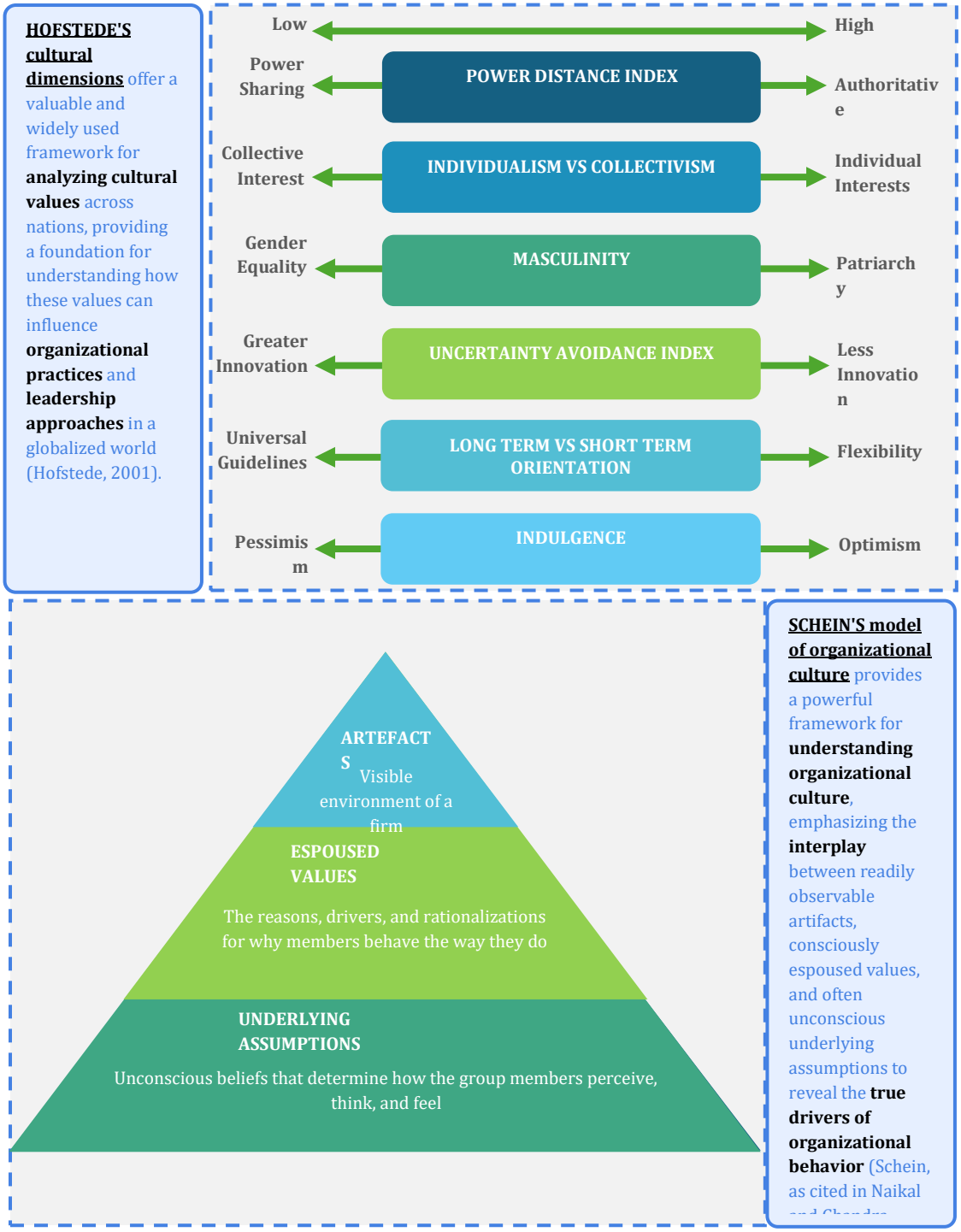


Figure 4. *Schein's and Hofstede's Cultural Frameworks*
Source: Author's adaptation of mentioned sources

Mamatha & Geetanjali, 2020; Naikal & Chandra, 2013; Panda & Gupta, 2001) presents (Figure 4) a layered perspective, distinguishing between (a) observable artifacts (the most visible level, including physical structures, language, technology, rituals, stories, and overt behaviors), (b) consciously espoused values (the stated justifications for actions, such as strategies, goals, and philosophies like Infosys's C-LIFE values), and (c) deeply embedded, often unconscious, basic underlying assumptions (the taken-for-granted beliefs about reality, human nature and relationships that form the core of culture and are often the most difficult to change).

A critical insight from Schein's model and a frequent point of analysis in organizational studies (Panda & Gupta, 2001), is the potential for disconnects between espoused values and

enacted behaviors or underlying assumptions. Such incongruence can lead to employee cynicism, undermine cultural cohesion, and significantly reduce organizational effectiveness. For instance, an organization might espouse values of employee empowerment (a Clan characteristic) but its underlying assumptions and enacted leadership behaviors might reinforce highly centralized decision-making processes (a Hierarchy characteristic), leading to a palpable cultural contradiction.

Complementing these organizational models, Hofstede's framework of national cultural dimensions (Hofstede, 2001) offers insights into broader societal value systems that can influence organizational subcultures, particularly within multinational corporations like Infosys operating across diverse national contexts (Yadav & Katiyar, 2012; Wong-MingJi et al., 2014). Hofstede identified dimensions such as Power Distance (the extent to which less powerful members accept and expect unequal power distribution), Individualism versus Collectivism (the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups), Uncertainty Avoidance (tolerance for ambiguity and unstructured situations), Masculinity versus Femininity (assertiveness and competition versus caring and quality of life), and Long-Term versus Short-Term Orientation. These national cultural predispositions can shape employee expectations regarding leadership styles, communication protocols, and decision-making processes and interact significantly with the formal organizational culture (Wong-MingJi et al., 2014; Bonsu & Twum-Danso, 2018). The combined conceptual frameworks of the CVF, Schein's model, and Hofstede's dimensions, offer a multi-level approach to analyzing the complexities of organizational culture. Within this cultural milieu, diversity and inclusion (D&I) emerge as considerations of paramount strategic importance. Diversity encompasses the spectrum of individual differences, operating on multiple levels from internal characteristics like age, gender, race, and ethnicity, to external dimensions such as education, work experience, and religion and even organizational factors like functional expertise and tenure (Lumby & Coleman, 2007; Gardenswartz & Rowe, 2003, as cited in Dinh et al., 2014). When effectively harnessed and managed, diversity can enrich organizational culture by bringing a variety of perspectives to decision-making processes, fostering innovation, and enhancing problem-solving capabilities (Hiebert & Klatt, 2001; Storey, 2004; Dinh et al., 2014). However, as Lumby and Coleman (2007) and Loon (2023) argue, fostering a truly inclusive environment requires moving beyond mere demographic representation or "managing diversity" as a compliance issue. It involves actively cultivating a workplace where all employees feel valued for their uniqueness, respected, and empowered to contribute their insights and experience a genuine sense of belonging and psychological safety (Barney, 2010; Dugan, 2024). The prevailing organizational culture and the dominant leadership styles profoundly moderate the effectiveness of D&I initiatives, determining whether diversity becomes a strategic asset that fuels creativity and market understanding, or a source of unresolved tension, exclusion, and missed opportunities (Lumby & Coleman, 2007; Bonsu & Twum-Danso, 2018).

2.4 Theoretical Underpinnings of Employee Motivation

Employee motivation is a cornerstone of individual performance and organizational productivity. Foundational theories provide frameworks for understanding the drivers of human behavior in the workplace. Maslow's Hierarchy of Need**s** (Figure 5), for example, posits a hierarchical progression of five innate needs: physiological (e.g., adequate salary, safe working conditions), safety (e.g., job security, benefits), social (belongingness, positive interpersonal relationships), esteem (self-respect, recognition from others, status), and self-actualization (achieving one's full potential, personal growth) (Miner, 2005; Petri & Govern, 2013). According to this theory, lower-level needs must be largely satisfied before higher-level needs become primary motivators (Miner, 2005). While intuitively appealing and offering a broad understanding of human needs, Maslow's theory has faced scholarly criticism for the rigidity of its hierarchy and limited empirical validation of its strict sequential progression in diverse workplace contexts (Miner, 2005; Brown,

2018). The universality of the hierarchy across different cultures has also been questioned (Petri & Govern, 2013).

Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (Figure 5), also known as the Motivation-Hygiene Theory, offers another influential perspective by distinguishing between factors that cause job satisfaction (Motivators) and those that merely prevent job dissatisfaction (Hygiene Factors) (Miner, 2005; Brown, 2018). Motivators are intrinsic to the job itself and include aspects like achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and opportunities for advancement and growth. Hygiene factors, conversely, are extrinsic to the job, relating to the work context, such as company policies, supervision quality, salary, interpersonal relations, and working conditions (Miner, 2005). Herzberg argued that improving hygiene factors can reduce dissatisfaction, but only the presence of motivators can truly enhance job satisfaction and drive higher levels of motivation (Petri & Govern, 2013). This theory was instrumental in popularizing concepts like job enrichment. However, it has been critiqued for its methodological underpinnings (reliance on the critical incident technique which may bias responses by attributing positive outcomes to oneself and the negative ones to the environment) and for potentially oversimplifying the relationship between factors like salary, which some research suggests can act as both a hygiene factor and a motivator depending on the context and individual perceptions (Miner, 2005).

Responding to the limitations of earlier theories and building on extensive empirical research, SDT has emerged as a prominent macro-theory of human motivation (Deci & Ryan, 2000, as cited in Miner, 2005; Petri & Govern, 2013; Dugan, 2024). SDT (Figure 5 and 6) emphasizes the critical role of intrinsic motivation which stems from engaging in activities that are inherently interesting or enjoyable. It identifies three fundamental and universal psychological needs whose satisfaction is essential for fostering such motivation: autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Autonomy represents the need for volition, to experience oneself as the origin of one's behavior and to feel a sense of choice and psychological freedom in one's actions and decisions. Competence involves the need to feel effective in one's interactions with the environment, to master challenges and to experience opportunities to express and develop one's capabilities. Relatedness encompasses the need for connection with others, to feel a sense of belonging, to be cared for by and care for others and to feel respected as a member of a social group (Deci & Ryan, 2000, as cited in Miner, 2005; Dugan, 2024). SDT posits that when these innate psychological needs are satisfied within a social context, individuals experience enhanced intrinsic motivation, well-being, engagement, greater persistence, and more optimal psychological functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2000, as cited in Petri & Govern, 2013; Miner, 2005). Conversely, environments that thwart these basic needs can undermine motivation, leading to amotivation or controlled forms of extrinsic motivation (e.g., behavior driven solely by external rewards or punishments) and potentially result in maladaptive outcomes such as disengagement and burnout (Miner, 2005; Dugan, 2024). Table 3 provides a critical evaluation of these key motivation theories, summarizing their core components, leadership implications, and key scholarly critiques based on the provided literature.

SDT holds particular relevance for knowledge-intensive sectors like the IT industry, where creativity, problem-solving, and sustained high-quality engagement are paramount for success (Barney, 2010; Leavy, 2021). Its nuanced framework emphasizes the importance of psychological nutriments over simpler job satisfaction factors or purely extrinsic reward systems, which can sometimes undermine intrinsic motivation if not carefully administered (Deci, Koestner, & Ryan, 1999, as cited in Miner, 2005). The theory boasts strong empirical support across diverse domains, including the workplace and provides actionable guidelines for creating work environments that foster high-quality motivation (Miner, 2005; Yukl & Gardner, 2020). However, complexities in its practical application, such as balancing autonomy with organizational needs for control and the precise measurement of need satisfaction and

intrinsic motivation, persist as areas of ongoing research and practical consideration.

Conversely, various organizational and situational factors can act as significant antecedents of employee demotivation by directly undermining these basic psychological needs. These include poorly designed jobs that lack autonomy, variety, or clear goals, thus frustrating the needs for autonomy and competence (Hiebert & Klatt, 2001; Miner, 2005). Dysfunctional organizational cultures characterized by poor communication, lack of trust, or excessive control can thwart all three needs, i.e., autonomy, competence and relatedness (Brown, 2018; McGiboney, 2018).

Table 3. *Critical Evaluation of Key Motivation Theories and Leadership Implications*

Motivation Theory	**Core Components & Explanation**	**Leadership Implications**	**Key Criticisms/Limitations from Literature**
Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs	Five-tier hierarchy: Physiological, Safety, Social, Esteem, Self-Actualization. Lower needs must be met before higher needs motivate. (Miner, 2005; Petri & Govern, 2013)	Ensure basic needs are met (salary, security); foster belonging; provide recognition; offer growth opportunities. (Miner, 2005)	Rigid hierarchy lacks strong empirical support; cultural limitations; difficulty in assessing individual need levels. (Miner, 2005; Brown, 2018)
Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory	Motivators (intrinsic: achievement, recognition, work itself, responsibility, growth) lead to satisfaction. Hygiene factors (extrinsic: policy, supervision, salary) prevent dissatisfaction. (Miner, 2005)	Enrich jobs with motivators; ensure adequate hygiene factors to prevent dissatisfaction. (Miner, 2005; Brown, 2018)	Methodological criticisms of original studies; does not fully account for individual differences or factor overlap (e.g., salary as motivator). (Miner, 2005; Petri & Govern, 2013)
Self-Determination Theory (SDT)	Intrinsic motivation fostered by satisfying three basic psychological needs: Autonomy (volition, control), Competence (efficacy, mastery), Relatedness (connection, belonging). (Miner, 2005; Dugan, 2024)	Foster autonomy (choice, empowerment); enhance competence (development, feedback); nurture relatedness (supportive environment, teamwork). (Miner, 2005; Yukl & Gardner, 2020)	Complexity in application due to interacting components; measurement challenges for intrinsic motivation and need fulfillment; individual differences in need strength. (Miner, 2005)

Source: Compiled by author

Inadequate support from leadership, insufficient resources to perform tasks effectively, or a lack of recognition for effort and achievement directly impact feelings of competence and relatedness (Hiebert & Klatt, 2001; McGiboney, 2018). Furthermore, generally ineffective or even destructive leadership styles, such as those that are overly autocratic, neglectful, or abusive, are potent sources of demotivation as they systematically undermine employees' psychological needs (Molero et al., 2007; Busse, 2014; McGiboney, 2018). Within the IT sector, the relentless pace of technological evolution, intense market competition, and high-pressure project environments can amplify these demotivators if not managed proactively (Panigrahi & Joshi, 2016; Shyamsunder et al., 2011). A comprehensive understanding of these antecedents, as they manifest across general organizational, industry-specific and company-specific layers, is crucial for diagnosing and addressing motivational deficits effectively.

2.5 Synthesis, Gaps and Propositions

The reviewed literature reveals a compelling logical pathway for organizational evolution. The extensive reliance on visionary, often founder-centric, transformational leadership, a hallmark of early-stage success for companies like Infosys (Barney, 2010), can inadvertently stifle distributed leadership and create vulnerabilities during transitions (Singh, 2016). The intensity of this leadership style, if not balanced with transparent accountability and genuine relational authenticity, faces challenges in fostering deep-seated intrinsic motivation across a diverse, global workforce (Avolio & Gardner, 2005, as cited in Storey,

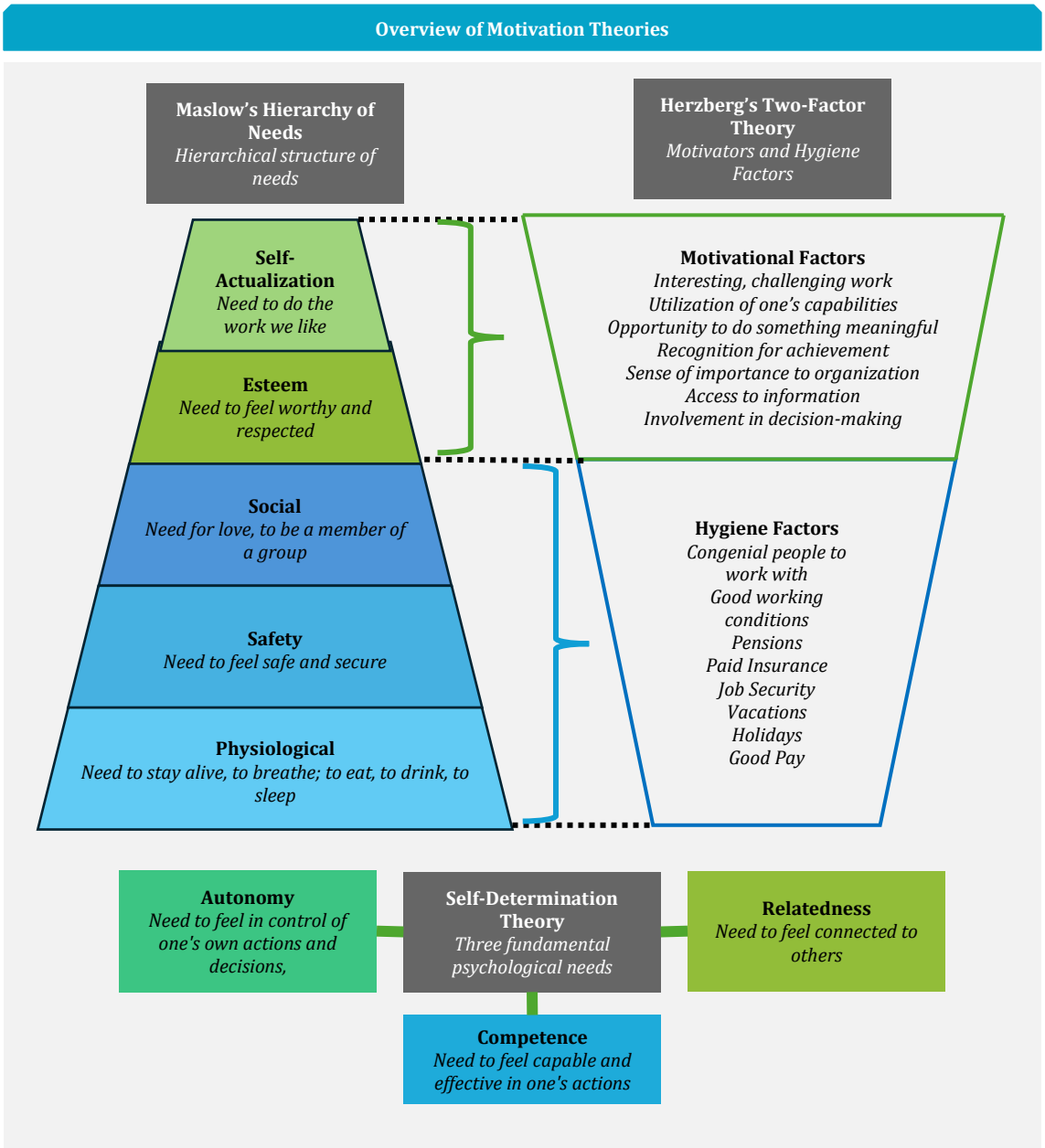


Figure 5. *Overview of Motivation Theories*
Source: Author's adaptation of Miner (2005), Dugan (2024), Petri and Govern (2013) and Spies (2014)

2004). These scholarly critiques suggest that as such organizations mature, their foundational leadership paradigm may become a source of limitation. This dynamic creates cultural tensions, often manifesting as a conflict between espoused values of flexibility and empowerment (Clan/Adhocracy) and the operational realities of control and competition (Hierarchy/Market).

Authentic Leadership, with its core emphasis on leader genuineness, ethical conduct, and relational transparency (Northouse, 2022), presents a theoretically sound avenue for addressing the limitations inherent in an over-reliance on singular, charismatic leadership.

Simultaneously, SDT provides the most precise diagnostic lens (Figure 7) for understanding the motivational consequences of the cultural and leadership dynamics. It suggests that motivational deficits are not arbitrary but stem directly from the thwarting of fundamental psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Miner, 2005).

Therefore, based on this synthesis of identified theoretical tensions and their implications for modern organizations, this study proposes the following guiding propositions:

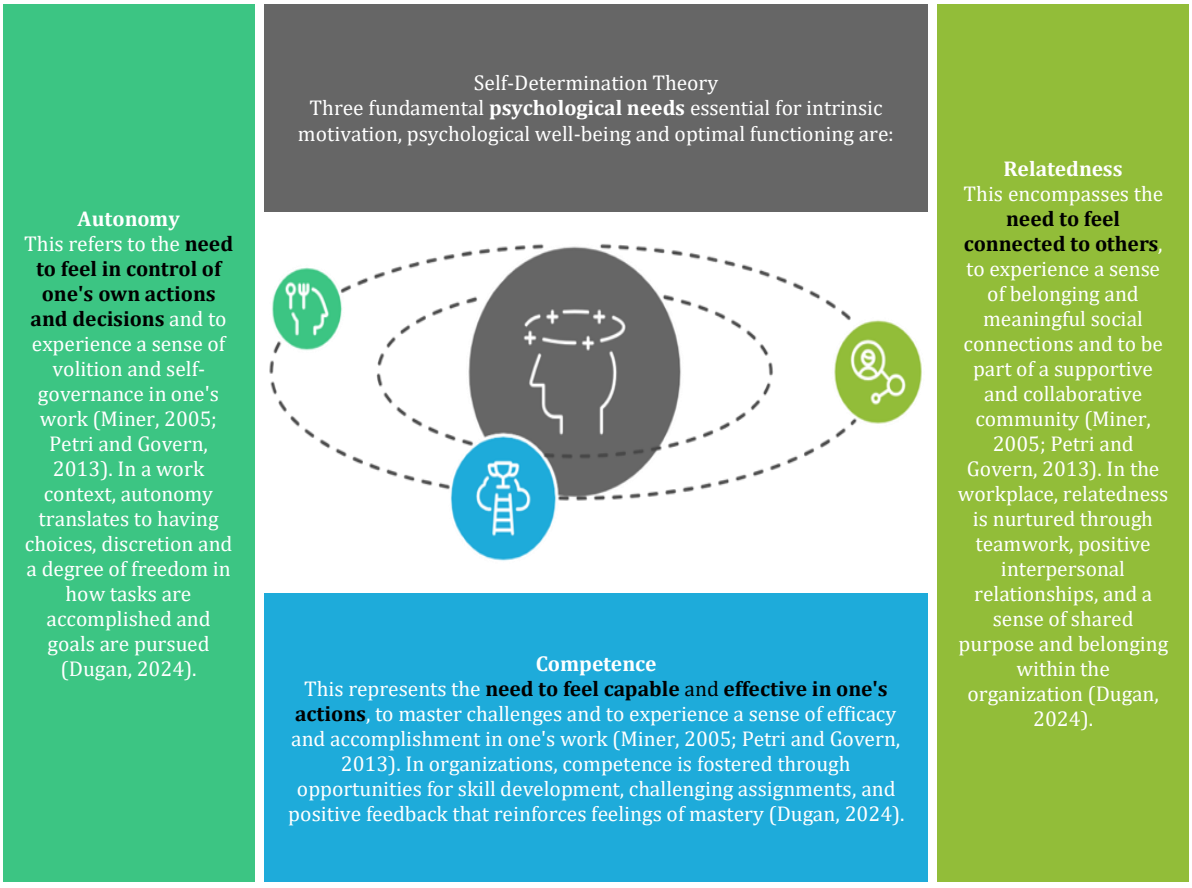


Figure 6. SDT. *Source:* Author's adaptation of Dugan (2024), Miner (2005) and Petri and Govern (2013)

P1: Infosys's historically transformational leadership style, while foundational to its initial growth and core value system (Velamuri & Mitchell, 2005; Barney, 2010), currently exhibits discernible limitations in fostering the organizational adaptability and deep-level, authentic inclusion necessary for sustained success, aligning with scholarly critiques concerning founder-dependency (Singh, 2016).

P2: An organizational culture at Infosys that more systemically emphasizes adhocracy (innovation, agility) and clan (collaboration, well-being) characteristics, as defined by the CVF (Cameron & Quinn, 2011), will better support sustained innovation and enhance the overall employee well-being.

P3: The systematic application and cultivation of Authentic Leadership principles (Walumbwa et al., 2008, as cited in Dinh et al., 2014) throughout all levels of the Infosys organization will more effectively address the identified limitations of its current leadership paradigm by countering over-reliance on singular visionaries and fostering greater trust and psychological safety (Northouse, 2022).

P4: Strategically leveraging the core tenets of SDT (Deci & Ryan, 2000, as cited in Miner, 2005) to consciously design work processes and leadership practices that consistently enhance employee experiences of autonomy, competence, and relatedness will significantly improve intrinsic motivation and deepen employee engagement within Infosys.

3. Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative, descriptive, and analytical documentary case design centered on Infosys. The methodological approach follows theory-building qualitative case study logic, suited to research objectives that seek to understand complex leadership and cultural dynamics within their organizational context rather than test predefined hypotheses across

large samples (Dinh et al., 2014; Yin, 2018; Yukl and Gardner, 2020).

unusually rich longitudinal record of leadership transitions, cultural initiatives, and human resource practices spanning more than

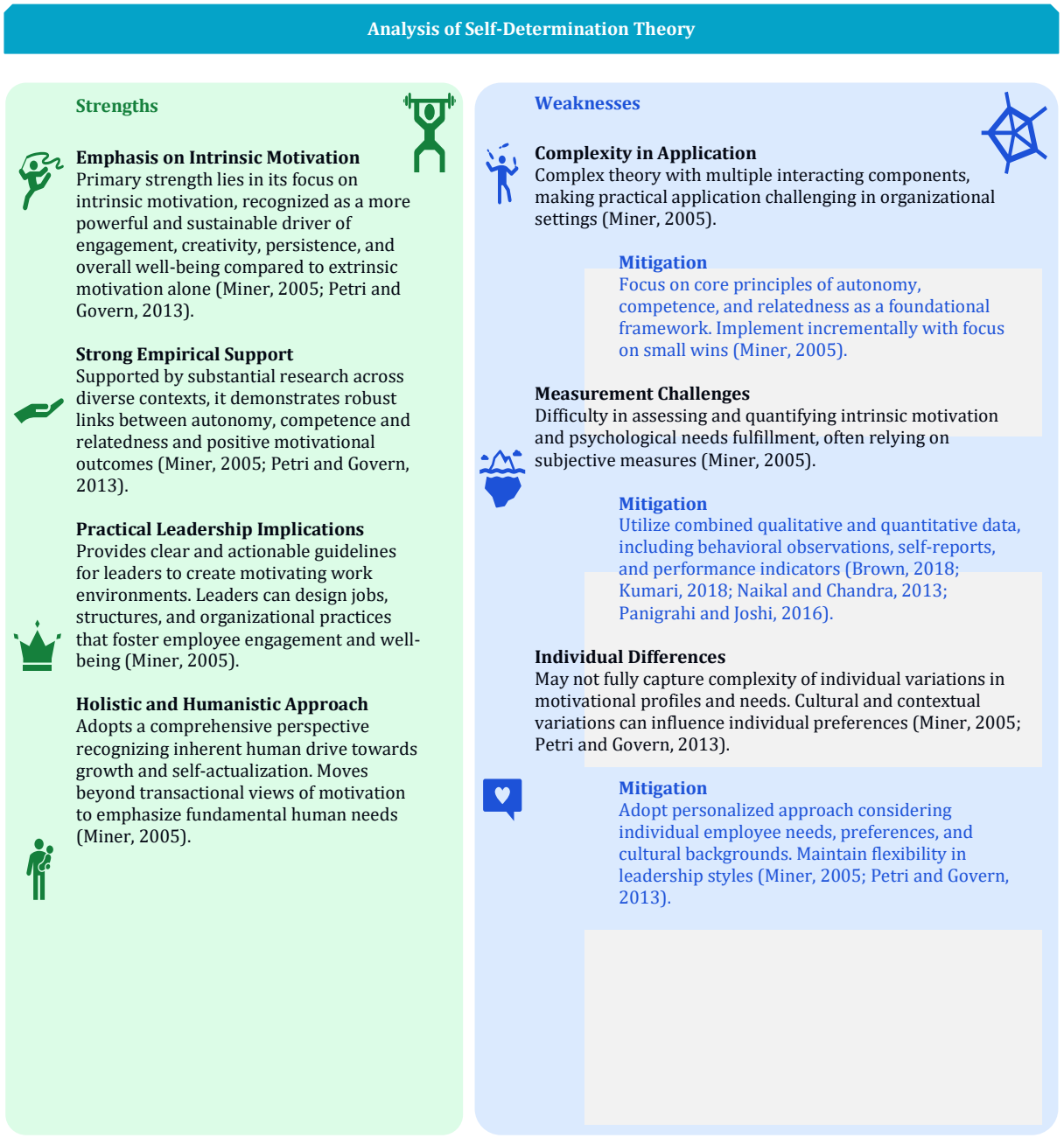


Figure 7. Strengths and Weaknesses of Applying SDT. Source: Author's synthesis of the mentioned sources.

The empirical base consists of publicly available secondary data. The 49-document corpus was assembled through systematic database search and purposive grey literature sampling, with corpus assembly documented using PRISMA-adapted screening stages to ensure selection transparency. For a large, listed corporation such as Infosys, reliance on secondary data is defensible. Corporate reporting, independent case analyses, and industry commentaries together provide an

two decades (Barney, 2010; Gupta and Shapiro, 2014).

3.1 Documentary Corpus

The documentary corpus was assembled through two complementary sampling logics. The academic literature component was identified through a systematic search of EconBiz and ProQuest databases. The Boolean string *(infosys) AND (leadership OR culture OR*

motivation OR governance) was applied to title, abstract and keyword fields. This search produced 1,865 records. Screening proceeded in three stages. Stage one: title and abstract review excluded records outside the domains of leadership, organizational culture, employee motivation, governance or the IT services sector. Stage two: a deduplication pass removed conference abstracts without retrievable full text and sources published before 1985, the threshold chosen to ensure theoretical currency while capturing Bass (1985, as cited in Molero et al., 2007) and Schein's foundational work (as cited in Panda and Gupta, 2001). Stage three: full-text review excluded sources that treated Infosys only incidentally rather than as a primary case or principal theoretical context. Twenty-one peer-reviewed and case-based sources were retained.

The second sampling logic addressed firm-specific context not available in peer-reviewed literature alone. The study employed purposive sampling for grey literature, including Infosys corporate reports, ESG disclosures, and established industry or practitioner analyses. These documents were selected for their direct relevance to Infosys's leadership, culture, governance, and employee motivation. Together, the two streams produced a final corpus of 49 documents: 21 peer-reviewed academic and teaching case study sources, 17 corporate reports and ESG documents, and 11 industry and practitioner analyses, as shown in the PRISMA flow diagram at Figure 8.

3.2 Coding Procedure

The analysis followed a structured two-cycle thematic coding procedure. An initial sensitizing framework was derived from the literature on transformational and authentic leadership (Northouse, 2022), organizational culture and the CVT (Cameron & Quinn, 2011) and SDT (Miner, 2005; Petri & Govern, 2013). In the first cycle, all 49 documents were read in full. The segments were openly coded for leadership events such as founder interventions, CEO transitions and crisis episodes; cultural artefacts and espoused values such as the "Zero Distance" programme, performance systems and ERGs; and motivational conditions such as attrition reports, engagement data, and work-life balance concerns. Open codes were then grouped iteratively into higher-order categories, including "founder-centric influence", "clan-hierarchy tensions", "voice and participation" and "need-thwarting work conditions" consistent with established practice for qualitative case analysis (McGiboney, 2018; Storey, 2004).

The unit of analysis was defined as a thematic segment: a continuous passage addressing one coherent topic relating to leadership behavior, cultural conditions, or motivational experience at Infosys, ranging from a single declarative sentence to a bounded paragraph. Table 4 presents four illustrative coded excerpts from the corpus, documenting the first-cycle open code and second-cycle deductive code applied, consistent with the coding log maintained as part of the audit trail.

3.3 Thematic Analysis

In the second coding cycle, the emergent categories were explicitly mapped onto the theoretical lenses adopted. The segments describing leadership behavior and succession episodes were classified as predominantly transformational, transactional, or authentic, using the constructs and critiques from Northouse (2022), Molero et al. (2007), and Dinh et al. (2014). Cultural manifestations were located within CVF quadrants and Schein's three layers to surface discrepancies between espoused values and underlying assumptions (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Panda & Gupta, 2001; Mamatha & Geetanjali, 2020). Reported and inferred employee experiences were interpreted through SDT by coding for indicators of autonomy, competence, and relatedness support or frustration (Miner, 2005; Petri & Govern, 2013).

3.4 Triangulation

Triangulation operated at two levels. At the source level, the claims originating in Infosys's own reports were cross-checked against independent academic case studies, diagnostic surveys, and industry analyses to identify convergences and tensions; for instance, Infosys (2020; 2023) was compared with

Kumari (2018), Panigrahi and Joshi (2016) and Singh (2016).

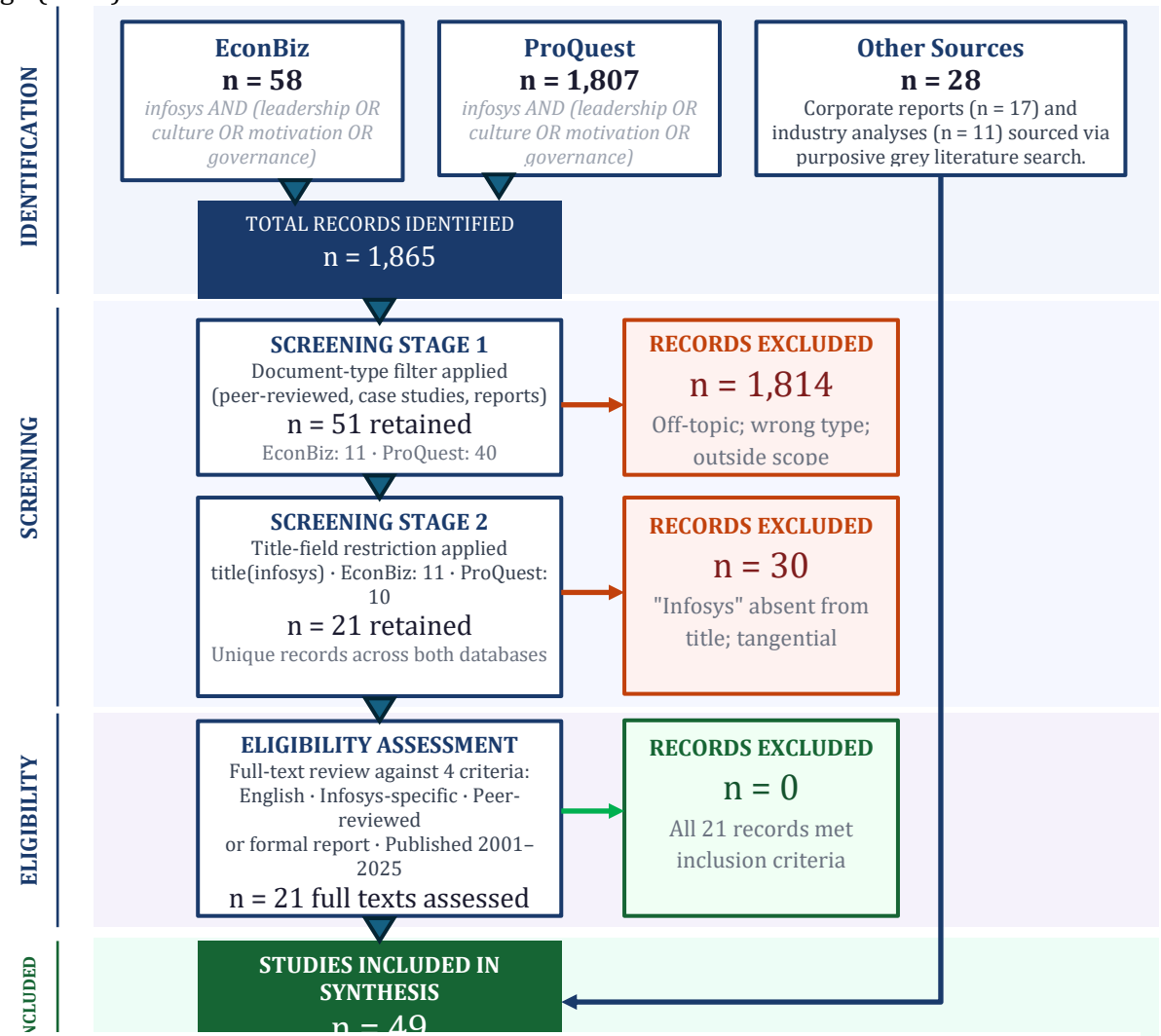


Figure 8: *PRISMA flow Diagram for this study.* Source: Author's own proposition

Table 4. *Illustrative Coded Excerpts from the Analysis*

Source	Evidence	First-Cycle Code	Second-Cycle Code	Theoretical Lens
Singh (2016)	Founders publicly challenged the incoming CEO's strategic direction, invoking moral authority over board-level governance	Founder authority override	Founder-centric influence; succession vulnerability	Transformational leadership limitations (Northouse, 2022)
Kumari (2018)	Employees reported frustration at absent feedback channels and limited ability to influence project decisions	Limited employee voice	Autonomy thwarting	SDT: autonomy frustration (Miner, 2005)
Infosys (2020)	C-LIFE values and empowerment language featured prominently while operational evidence points to centralized decision-making	Espoused-enacted gap	Clan values versus Hierarchy operations	CVF / Schein (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Panda & Gupta, 2001)
Panigrahi & Joshi (2016)	Delivery-role employees described high workload pressure and insufficient	Inadequate recognition; skills demand	Competence thwarting	SDT: competence frustration (Miner, 2005)

	recognition of individual achievement

Source: Compiled by author

At the interpretive level, thematic conclusions were accepted only where at least two different document types supported the same pattern; corporate disclosure was required to align with independent case evidence before a conclusion was accepted. This two-level triangulation does not eliminate the constraints of secondary data but strengthens the credibility of the inferences drawn.

3.5 Audit Trail

Throughout the analysis, an audit trail was maintained as a coding log documenting code definitions and shifts in category structure as familiarity with the corpus deepened. All coding was conducted manually using a structured Microsoft Excel workbook containing five fields per row: source identifier, verbatim extract, first-cycle open code, second-cycle deductive code, and theoretical lens. This study employed a single-coder design; no systematic inter-rater reliability check was conducted which is a recognized constraint of single-researcher qualitative inquiry (Miner, 2005). Four procedural safeguards replaced the inter-rater mechanism.

First, coding rules were documented in full before each cycle commenced.

Second, second-cycle deductive codes were applied only where verbatim text excerpts directly supported the categorization.

Third, all thematic conclusions required convergent support from at least two distinct document types within the triangulation protocol described above (Dinh et al., 2014).

Fourth, the completed codebook was evaluated against Lincoln and Guba's (1985) four trustworthiness criteria: credibility through source triangulation; transferability through thick contextual description of the Infosys case; dependability through the sequenced coding log; and confirmability through reflexivity memos that separated raw documentary evidence from interpretive inference at each analytical stage. These safeguards reduce but do not eliminate the interpretive latitude inherent in the single-coder design and readers should weigh the findings accordingly.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 The Transformational Legacy and its Emergent Limitations

The analysis confirms that Infosys's foundational leadership, shaped profoundly by its founders, predominantly exhibited the characteristics of a transformational style (Barney, 2010; Rath, 2014). This paradigm was instrumental in the company's formative years, fostering a culture centered on strong ethical conduct, an employee-centric philosophy, and a clear strategic vision (Velamuri & Mitchell, 2005). Key traits attributed to co-founder N.R. Narayana Murthy, including a focus on long-term sustainability, a profound emphasis on values, and a commitment to employee empowerment through pioneering initiatives like the Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs), were pivotal in building the company's initial success and widely respected culture.

However, as Infosys matured into a large, globally scaled enterprise, inherent limitations within its long-standing transformational and often founder-centric model became increasingly apparent (Bhansali et al., 2014; Singh, 2016). The dependence on key, highly influential leaders, a recognized potential pitfall of the transformational style (APO, 2008; Northouse, 2022), created distinct organizational vulnerabilities. These became particularly evident during the periods of leadership transition, which were marked by uncertainty and challenges to the established cultural norms (Singh, 2016; Babu & Rentala, 2018). The well-documented leadership crisis that Infosys experienced in the period 2014-2017 served as a critical juncture. This crisis manifested as public disagreements between the founders and the new CEO, a direct consequence of a culture where the founder's vision was seen as the ultimate authority, making it difficult for a successor to implement

new strategic directions without perceived conflict (Singh, 2016; Babu & Rentala, 2018). The pattern of events points to the structural fragility of a leadership model heavily reliant on a singular, charismatic vision, highlighting a discernible degree of organizational inflexibility.

This vulnerability raises a crucial question for organizations built on strong, visionary leadership: at what point does a foundational strength become a structural liability? The Infosys case suggests this transition occurs when global scale and market dynamism demand a more distributed and resilient form of leadership. These findings affirm the proposition that Infosys's historically transformational leadership, despite its foundational strengths, now demonstrates clear limitations in fostering the agility and deep, authentic inclusivity essential for navigating modern global business complexities (P1). A strategic pivot towards authentic leadership would represent not an abandonment of inspirational qualities but an augmentation with deeper self-awareness, ethical consistency, and relational authenticity at all leadership levels. Such a shift would foster a more distributed and resilient leadership capacity (P3) (Table 5).

4.2 Cultural Tensions and Diversity Dynamics

An examination of Infosys's organizational culture (Table 6), utilizing the (CVF, reveals a blended profile with the concurrent operation of Clan, Hierarchy, Market, and Adhocracy characteristics (Cameron & Quinn, 2011). This blend reflects the company's attempts to balance competing priorities in a dynamic environment, with its C-LIFE values intended to guide behavior across all quadrants (Barney, 2010; Velamuri & Mitchell, 2005). The critical evaluation reveals significant tensions between the espoused values and operational realities. For instance, the espoused Clan values of employee empowerment and open communication, evidenced by initiatives like "Zero Distance" (Lobo, 2015), often conflict with the operational realities of a strong Hierarchy culture. This hierarchy, with its emphasis on structured processes like the "PSPD" model (Owens, 2011; Singh, A., 2020), can inadvertently impede the genuine collaboration and bottom-up innovation that Clan and Adhocracy initiatives aim to foster. This disconnect is a likely contributor to reported instances of employee dissatisfaction and disengagement (Kumari, 2018; Singh & Kataria, 2021).

This persistent tension between a collaborative ethos (Clan) and a control-oriented operational model (Hierarchy) reflects a strategic struggle to reconcile the need for creative, agile teams with the demands for predictable, scalable global delivery. The evidence suggests that a more deliberate and consistent cultivation of Adhocracy (to enhance innovation and agility) and Clan (to bolster collaboration and well-being) characteristics, while strategically balancing the necessary elements of Hierarchy and Market focus, would better serve Infosys's long-term goals. This detailed analysis lends robust support to the second proposition (P2).

Within this complex cultural milieu, the management of diversity and inclusion (D&I) presents another layer of challenge. While Infosys publicly champions D&I principles and possesses a remarkably diverse global workforce with employees from 144 nationalities (Infosys, 2020), a critical evaluation of its specific practices reveals areas for development. A historically male-dominated leadership structure persists (Singh, A., 2020) and the absence of specific, high-visibility leadership programs for underrepresented groups raises questions about the strategic depth of D&I integration (Singh & Kataria, 2021) (Table 7). The hierarchical and market-driven pressures that create these cultural tensions also create systemic barriers that limit the full enactment of D&I initiatives. A culture that operationally prioritizes rigid processes over espoused collaboration will invariably struggle to foster the psychological safety required for genuine inclusion (Loon, 2023; Lumby & Coleman, 2007). Furthermore, the historical evolution of leadership styles has had an inconsistent impact on the sustained progress of these initiatives. While foundational values supporting D&I were established early, consistent strategic prioritization has fluctuated, often influenced by broader organizational changes and leadership transitions (Figure 9).

Table 5. *Comparative Analysis of Infosys's Transformational Leadership Manifestations and Authentic Leadership Principles*

Feature	Transformational Leadership at Infosys (Observed & Espoused)	Authentic Leadership Principles (Proposed Enhancement)
Leader Focus	Primarily on inspiring followers, articulating a shared vision (e.g., Murthy's vision for a globally respected corporation, Barney, 2010) and driving organizational change through idealized influence and inspirational motivation (Northouse, 2022).	Focuses on leader self-awareness, relational transparency, internalized moral perspective, and balanced processing (Northouse, 2022). Emphasizes leader genuineness and integrity as foundational.
Ethical Grounding	Strong emphasis on ethical conduct and values (C-LIFE values: Integrity, Transparency, Fairness - Barney, 2010; Velamuri & Mitchell, 2005). Ethics often driven by founder's strong moral compass (Rath, 2014).	Places ethical grounding and integrity at the core of leadership, derived from an internalized moral perspective and consistent values-actions alignment (Demirtas & Karaca, 2020; Dugan, 2024).
Follower Development	Focus on individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation to develop follower potential and empower them (e.g., ILI programs, Day & Barney, 2012; emphasis on learning, Owens, 2011).	Emphasizes follower self-awareness and authentic growth. Empowers followers to develop their authentic selves, fostering intrinsic motivation and purpose-driven leadership (Northouse, 2022; Dugan, 2024).
Culture Building	Fosters a positive organizational culture characterized by trust, ethical conduct, and innovation through values-driven leadership and employee empowerment (Barney, 2010; Gupta & Shapiro, 2014). Culture often strongly reflects founder's influence.	Fosters a culture of authenticity, transparency, and ethical integrity. Creates a workplace where genuineness, ethical behavior, and open communication are deeply ingrained (Northouse, 2022; Dugan, 2024).
Response to Crisis/Change	Historically, founder-led transformational leadership provided stability and vision during early growth (Bhansali et al., 2014). Later transitions revealed vulnerabilities due to founder-centricity (Singh, 2016).	Offers a more distributed and sustainable approach. Authentic leadership, rooted in individual leader authenticity, can be developed across the organization, mitigating risks of over-reliance on a single figure (Storey, 2004; Dugan, 2024).

Source: Compiled by author

4.3 Diagnosing Demotivation through Self-Determination Theory

Sustaining optimal levels of employee motivation across an extensive and diverse global workforce remains a persistent and multifaceted challenge for Infosys. The antecedents of demotivation are best understood not as a simple list of problems, but through a layered framework that illustrates their interconnected nature. As depicted in Figure 10, these factors manifest across general organizational, industry-specific, and company-specific layers. At the broadest level are universal organizational demotivators, such as unfavorable job design or ineffective leadership, which can affect any company (Miner, 2005; Busse, 2014). These are amplified by pressures specific to the IT services sector, including the relentless pace of technological change and intense talent competition (Barney, 2010; Shyamsunder et al., 2011). Ultimately, these general and industry-specific forces converge to create specific root causes of diminished motivation observed within the Infosys operational context. These include the pervasive uncertainty from rapid organizational change, limitations in employee voice, inadequacies in recognition and reward systems, persistent work-life balance issues, and significant mismatches between employee expectations and subsequent organizational realities (Panigrahi & Joshi, 2016; Brown, 2018; McGiboney, 2018; Patel, 2023).

Interpreting these Infosys-specific findings through the robust theoretical lens of SDT provides valuable diagnostic insights into the underlying psychological mechanisms at play. Many of the identified demotivators prevalent at Infosys appear to act by directly thwarting one or more of the three fundamental psychological needs posited by SDT: autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Miner, 2005; Petri & Govern, 2013).

Table 6. *Evaluation of the Orientations of Infosys' ORGANISATIONAL CULTURE using the CVF*

Culture Type & CVF Characteristics	Evidence of Manifestation at Infosys	Critical Evaluation and Contradictions
Clan (Collaborative, employee-focused, teamwork, mentoring)	• InfyRadio and InfyBubble (Krishnan et al., 2012): Internal platforms fostering employee engagement and open communication. • "Zero Distance" program (Lobo, 2015): Bottom-up innovation initiative encouraging employee contributions. • Open Communication (Cappelli et al., 2010): Espoused value of transparency, exemplified by practices like Murthy's 360-degree reviews. • Leading by Example (Owens, 2011): Senior leaders taking pay cuts during downturns demonstrates shared sacrifice and reinforces a community feel.	While Infosys promotes a collaborative image, reports of employee dissatisfaction (Kumari, 2018; Singh & Kataria, 2021) and high attrition suggest a disconnect between espoused values and lived experiences. The hierarchical structure may impede genuine collaboration. Communication breakdowns during the leadership crisis (Babu & Rentala, 2018) further question the consistency of openness.
Hierarchy (Structured, process-oriented, control, efficiency)	• Infosys Leadership Institute (ILI) (Infosys, n.d.; Owens, 2011): Structured training programs emphasizing a systematic approach to leadership development. • "PSPD" model (Owens, 2011; Singh, A., 2020): Model of Predictability, Sustainability, Profitability, and De-risking reflects a focus on structured processes and risk management. • Formalized processes and controls (Chakravarthi & Reddy, 2013): Use of formal management control systems (MCS) to guide employee behavior. • Ethical Conduct (Velamuri & Mitchell, 2005): Strong emphasis on rules and ethical guidelines (e.g., refusal to pay bribes) aligns with a need for control and minimizing ambiguity.	The emphasis on structure and control, while contributing to efficiency and stability, can hinder agility and innovation. This rigidity may have contributed to the leadership crisis (Singh, 2016) and difficulties in adapting to change. It creates a palpable tension with espoused Adhocracy values.
Market (Results-oriented, competitive, achievement, customer focus)	• "Global delivery model" (Bhansali et al., 2014): Prioritizes cost-effectiveness and efficiency in delivering IT services to clients globally. • Emphasis on achieving business goals (Rajeshwari & Prasad, 2019): Strong focus on meeting and exceeding client expectations. • Performance management systems (Singh, A., 2020; Zipporah, 2022): Use of metrics and results-oriented performance systems to drive disciplined execution.	While essential for competitiveness, the strong market orientation can create a high-pressure environment (Panigrahi & Joshi, 2016) and potentially lead to an overemphasis on short-term results at the expense of employee well-being. Dissatisfaction with salary and promotion opportunities highlights the need for a more balanced approach.
Adhocracy (Innovative, adaptable, risk-taking, experimentation)	• "Zero Distance" program (Lobo, 2015): Encourages innovation by empowering employees to contribute ideas and solutions. • "Live Enterprise" model (Leavy, 2021): Emphasizes agility, responsiveness to change and continuous evolution. • Emphasis on Training & Learning (Day & Barney, 2012; Zipporah, 2022): Investment in ILI's personalized programs and continuous training enhances skills and adaptability, reflecting a growth mindset.	While Infosys promotes innovation through these initiatives, integrating them into core operations has proven challenging (Leavy, 2021). The hierarchical structure may create resistance to the risk-taking and experimentation characteristic of a true adhocracy culture. The effectiveness of training in fostering true adaptability needs further evaluation regarding empowerment to apply new knowledge.

Source: Compiled by author

For instance, organizational environments characterized by frequent, unpredictable change and predominantly top-down communication flows (Brown, 2018; Kumari, 2018) can directly undermine an employee's crucial sense of **autonomy**. Similarly, systems involving inadequate recognition or offering limited opportunities for meaningful skill utilization (Panigrahi & Joshi, 2016) can diminish employees' feelings of **competence**.

Table 7. *Evaluation of DIVERSITY DIMENSIONS at Infosys*

Diversity Dimension	Evidence from Documents	Critical Evaluation and Contradictions
Gender **Representation of different genders**	**Target of 45% women employees by 2030 (Infosys, 2020):** This publicly stated goal demonstrates Infosys recognizes the need for greater female representation. **Infosys Women's Inclusivity Network (IWIN) (Infosys, 2020):** IWIN, an Employee Resource Group, supports women's career development and advancement through mentorship, networking, and advocacy for gender-equal policies.	Despite these efforts, Infosys faces the challenge of a **historically male-dominated leadership** (Singh, A., 2020). The **absence of specific leadership programs designed for women** (Singh & Kataria, 2021) raises concerns about the depth of commitment to gender diversity. While ERGs like IWIN are valuable for support and advocacy, they may **not be sufficient** to address systemic issues and drive significant change in leadership representation.
Nationality/Ethnicity Representation of different ethnic/racial backgrounds	**Global workforce of 144 nationalities (Infosys, 2020):** Infosys highlights its global reach and diverse workforce by nationality. **Local hiring practices (Gupta and Shapiro, 2014):** Recruiting locally in each region suggests an effort to reflect regional demographics within global teams. **Multicultural ERG (Infosys, 2020):** This ERG aims to connect employees from various ethnic and cultural backgrounds, providing a platform for sharing experiences and fostering a sense of community.	While a globally diverse workforce is positive, the **lack of specific data on ethnic and racial representation at different levels**, particularly in leadership, hinders a thorough assessment of diversity. The activities and impact of the **Multicultural ERG are not well-defined** in the documentation, making it difficult to evaluate its effectiveness.
Generational Representation of different age groups	**Acknowledgment of generational differences (Krishnan et al., 2012):** Infosys recognizes the varying communication styles, work preferences, and values of different generations. **Young Employee Network (YEN) (Infosys, 2020):** YEN provides a platform for younger employees to connect, network, and integrate into the company culture, organizing events and activities targeted towards their interests. **YEN - Young and Young at Heart (Infosys, 2020):** YEN network for all ages.	The focus on YEN for younger employees, while beneficial, **lacks the corresponding initiatives for intergenerational collaboration.** This represents a missed opportunity to leverage the diverse experiences and perspectives of different age groups and foster knowledge transfer. More structured programs promoting cross-generational teamwork and mentorship are needed.
Disability and LGBTQIA+ Inclusion of persons with disabilities and LGBTQIA+ individuals	**InfyAbility ERG (Infosys, 2020):** This ERG supports employees with disabilities and their allies, advocating for accessibility and inclusive practices. **iPRIDE ERG (Infosys, 2020):** iPRIDE supports LGBTQIA+ employees and allies, fostering belonging and advocating for inclusive policies. **Signatory to UN Standards of Conduct (Infosys, 2020):** This public commitment signals support for LGBTQIA+ rights in the workplace.	While ERGs and the UN Standards commitment are positive, **concrete data on their impact on workplace culture and inclusivity is lacking.** Measuring the effectiveness of these initiatives through employee surveys, representation data, and promotion rates is crucial to understand their true impact.
Cognitive Diversity in thinking styles and problem-solving approaches	**Focus on talent acquisition and learning (Owens, 2011):** Infosys prioritizes attracting talent, suggesting a recognition of diverse skillsets and perspectives, but without explicit focus on cognitive diversity. **Use of cross-functional teams (Lobo, 2015):** Cross-functional teams can bring together individuals with diverse backgrounds and potentially foster different thinking styles.	**The lack of explicit programs promoting cognitive diversity** suggests a missed opportunity. While talent acquisition and cross-functional teams may inadvertently introduce cognitive diversity, **deliberate efforts to cultivate and leverage diverse thinking styles** for enhanced innovation are not apparent.

Source: Compiled by author

Analysis of Diversity and Inclusion across Leadership Transitions at Infosys

Murthy's Leadership Era

+ Positive Influences

Values-Based Leadership
Prioritized ethical conduct, fairness, and transparency (Rath, 2014; Velamuri and Mitchell, 2005).
Example: Regular Q&A sessions and open forums with employees fostered dialogue and feedback (Barney, 2010).

Employee Empowerment
Focused on empowering employees (Bhansali et al., 2014).
Example: Implementation of Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs) gave employees stake in company success (Babu and Rentala, 2018).

- Challenges

Founder-Centric Culture
Strong founder-centric culture hindered independent leadership development (Bhansali et al., 2014).
Example: Limited succession planning and integration of diverse perspectives (Singh, 2016).

Mitigation: Establish clear succession planning processes and actively seek diverse perspectives in decision-making (Singh, 2016).

Lack of Formalized D&I Programs
Inclusion remained largely implicit, relying on personal values (Rath, 2014).
Example: Persistence of unconscious biases and systemic barriers despite meritocracy focus.

Mitigation: Implement formal diversity training and establish clear diversity goals and metrics (Kumari, Pathak, Watts and Singh, 2021).

Post-Murthy Era

+ Positive Influences

Innovation and Global Operations
Emphasis on innovation and global expansion (Gupta and Shapiro, 2014; Makwana and Dave, 2014).
Example: "Live Enterprise" model promoting agility and responsiveness (Leavy, 2021).

Personalized Leadership Development
Emphasis on development through ILI (Day and Barney, 2012).
Example: Incorporating modules on unconscious bias and inclusive leadership (Shyamsunder et al., 2011).

Continued Support for ERGs
Ongoing ERG activities demonstrating continued support (Infosys, 2020).
Example: iPRIDE's advocacy work, IWIN and InfyAbility support for women and individuals with disabilities.

- Challenges

Inconsistent D&I Prioritization
Fluctuating focus on D&I initiatives.
Example: Limited reporting on D&I initiatives in recent documentation (Infosys, 2020; Singh, 2016).

Mitigation: Elevate D&I as core value, link to business objectives, set measurable goals.

Limited Integration of ERGs
ERGs' influence on decisions needs strengthening (Naikal and Chandra, 2013).
Example: Limited involvement in policy development and implementation.

Mitigation: Formalize ERG roles in organizational decision-making.

Need for Targeted Initiatives
Requirement for specific diversity programs (Kumari et al., 2021).
Example: Programs needed for female leadership, ethnic/racial diversity, intergenerational collaboration.

Mitigation: Develop SMART goals for each diversity dimension, including leadership development.

Leadership Transitions and Instability
Transitions and crises hindering D&I progress (Babu and Rentala, 2018; Singh, 2016).
Example: Frequent leadership changes disrupting ongoing efforts.

Mitigation: Develop robust succession planning prioritizing D&I with clear leadership roles.

Figure 9. *Infosys Diversity Evolution through Leadership Eras.* Source: Author's own synthesis of the mentioned sources.

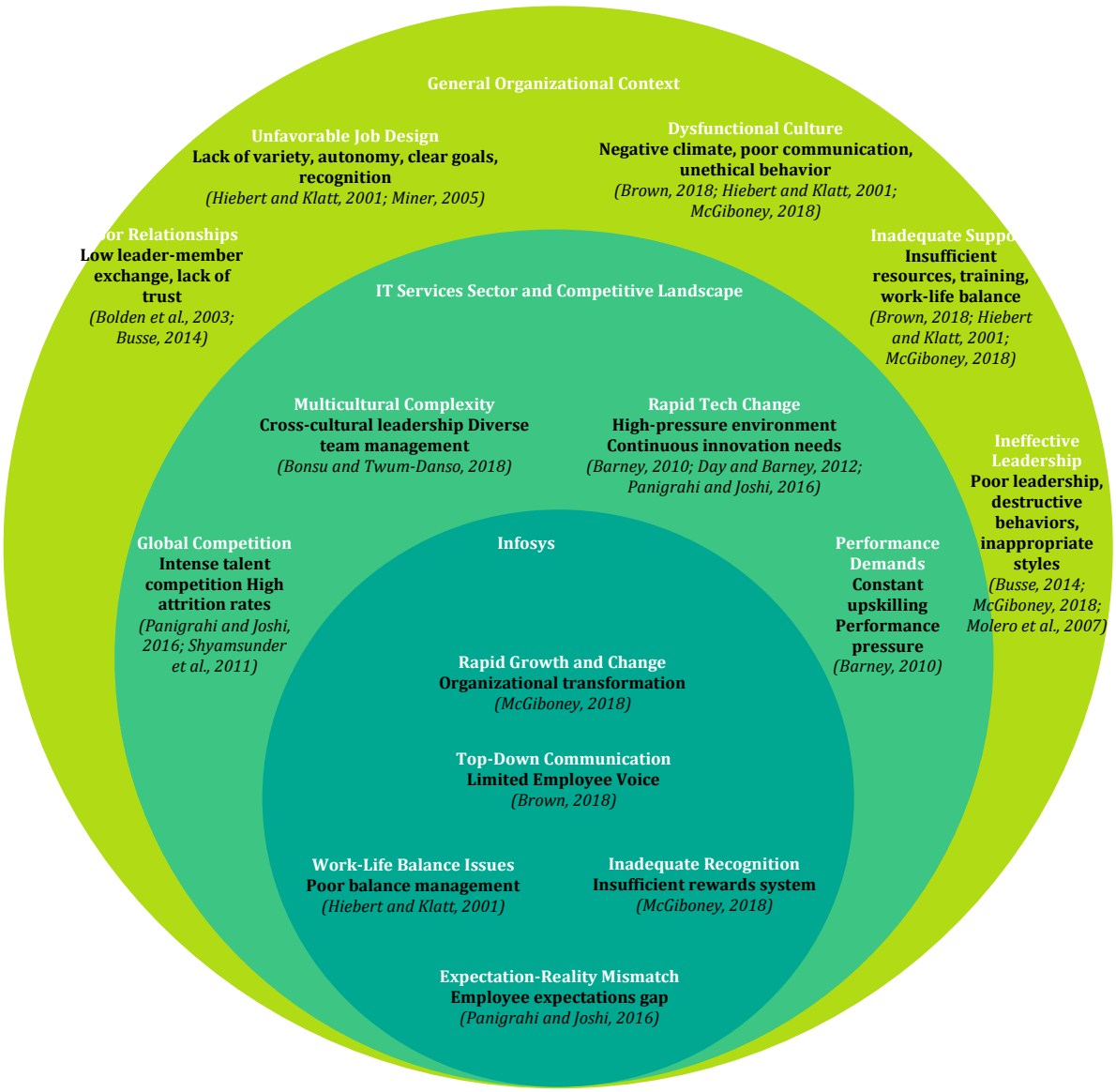


Figure 10. *Layered depiction of ANTECEDENTS and ROOT CAUSES of demotivation.* Source: Author's own proposition based on synthesis of the mentioned sources.

Furthermore, a perceived lack of genuine voice or a weak sense of connection with organizational goals and colleagues can erode essential feelings of **relatedness**. This analytical application of SDT to the specific context of Infosys lends strong support to the proposition that strategically and systematically leveraging SDT principles to enhance these three fundamental psychological needs will significantly improve intrinsic motivation and overall employee engagement within the company (P4) (Table 8).

4.4 The Proposed Pathway: Integrating Authentic Leadership and SDT

The findings converge on a coherent narrative. The inherent limitations of a maturing transformational leadership model contribute to cultural tensions where espoused values of empowerment and collaboration are not fully realized due to hierarchical and market-driven operational pressures.

Table 8. Analysis of Motivational Barriers at Infosys and Corresponding Mitigations

Motivational Barrier / Antecedent	Root Causes at Infosys	Manifestation (Challenges for Leaders & Employees)	Mitigation Strategies & External Benchmarks
Rapid Growth and Change (McGiboney, 2018; Leavy, 2021)	Ambitious growth strategy; fast-paced IT industry; need to adapt to client demands and market trends (Barney, 2010; Leavy, 2021).	**Leaders:** Maintaining consistent culture; adapting leadership styles to a larger, diverse workforce. **Employees:** Feeling overwhelmed and uncertain; disconnect between expectations and realities; burnout (Naikal & Chandra, 2013; Panigrahi & Joshi, 2016).	**Infosys:** Implement proactive and transparent change management strategies; invest in leadership development for change management; foster a culture of agility (Barney, 2010; Kumari, 2018). **Benchmark (IBM/GE):** Focus on employee listening and engagement during change (McGiboney, 2018).
Top-Down Communication & Limited Employee Voice (Brown, 2018)	Traditional hierarchical structure; emphasis on following established processes; "Leaders Teach" program suggesting top-down knowledge flow (Barney, 2010; Kumari, 2018).	**Leaders:** Creating an open communication culture; balancing control with empowerment; fostering bottom-up feedback. **Employees:** Feeling unheard and undervalued; decreased engagement and motivation; frustration (Kumari, 2018).	**Infosys:** Implement regular feedback mechanisms; foster empowerment initiatives; provide leadership training on active listening (Panigrahi & Joshi, 2016; Shyamsunder et al., 2011). **Benchmark (J.C. Penney/Southwest):** Relaxing rules and using servant leadership to foster employee voice (Naikal & Chandra, 2013; Northouse, 2022).
Inadequate Recognition & Rewards (McGiboney, 2018)	Initial focus on rapid growth and financial targets; emphasis on team performance overshadowing individual contributions; salary freezes during downturns (Barney, 2010; Kumari, 2018).	**Leaders:** Designing equitable reward systems; balancing financial/non-financial incentives; recognizing individual contributions. **Employees:** Feeling undervalued; perceived unfair reward system; dissatisfaction with salary and promotion opportunities (Kumari, 2018; Panigrahi & Joshi, 2016).	**Infosys:** Diversify reward systems; implement performance-based differentiation; personalize recognition (Kumari, 2018). **Benchmark (GE/APIL):** Emphasize employee engagement and recognition; utilize diverse incentive schemes (McGiboney, 2018; Naikal & Chandra, 2013).
Lack of Work-Life Balance (Hiebert & Klatt, 2001)	Inherent nature of the demanding IT industry; global nature of business; competitive pressure to deliver high-quality services (Kumari, 2018; Rajeshwari & Prasad, 2019).	**Leaders:** Creating a culture supporting work-life balance; implementing supportive policies; preventing burnout. **Employees:** Experiencing burnout and stress; difficulty managing personal/professional commitments (Naikal & Chandra, 2013).	**Infosys:** Implement flexible work arrangements; focus on workload management; promote employee well-being (Kumari, 2018). **Benchmark (Starbucks):** Adapted to Japanese work-life balance preferences, showing cultural responsiveness (Bonsu & Twum-Danso, 2018).
Mismatch Between Employee Expectations & Reality (Panigrahi & Joshi, 2016; Patel, 2023)	Rapid growth created dynamic organizational realities; emphasis on a strong, uniform culture may not fully address individual differences in values and expectations (Patel, 2023).	**Leaders:** Managing diverse employee expectations effectively; communicating changes transparently; adapting culture to diverse needs. **Employees:** Feeling disillusioned and demotivated; disconnect between personal and organizational values (Panigrahi & Joshi, 2016).	**Infosys:** Ensure clear and transparent communication; provide realistic job previews; offer individualized support for adaptation (Day & Barney, 2012; Kumari, 2018). **Benchmark (Procter & Gamble):** P&G's experience with rumor mishandling highlights the need for transparent communication to manage expectations (McGiboney, 2018).

Source: Author's own proposition based on synthesis of the mentioned sources.

This cultural disconnect, in turn, creates an environment where employees' fundamental psychological needs for autonomy, competence. and relatedness are undermined, leading to the specific motivational challenges observed. The proposed integrated framework of Authentic Leadership and SDT offers a direct and theoretically sound response.

The core tenets of Authentic Leadership, including relational transparency, balanced processing, self-awareness, and an internalized moral perspective, directly counter the identified leadership vulnerabilities of founder-centricity and crisis mismanagement (Storey, 2004; Northouse, 2022). By fostering a distributed capacity for genuine, ethically consistent leadership, this approach builds the trust and psychological safety crucial for navigating complex organizational challenges, thereby supporting the third proposition (P3). Concurrently, a conscious organizational strategy based on satisfying the SDT needs for autonomy, competence. and relatedness provides an actionable pathway to mitigate the identified motivational barriers. This involves designing work processes, feedback systems and collaborative structures that empower employees, recognize their mastery. and foster a strong sense of belonging. The aspirational outcome of such a transformation is a culture that is simultaneously adaptive, inclusive, innovative, ethical. and collaborative. This provides a strategic blueprint for addressing the 21st-century challenges identified in this analysis (Figure 11).

5. Conclusion

Four propositions structured this inquiry. The analysis of Infosys's leadership evolution, cultural dynamics. and employee motivation confirms each of them, as summarized in Figure 12.

Infosys's foundational transformational leadership, while instrumental in establishing a values-driven culture (Barney, 2010; Rath, 2014), now generates founder-centric dependency and constrains distributed leadership capacity at a global scale (Singh, 2016; Babu & Rentala, 2018) confirming proposition P1. P2 is confirmed as a persistent gap that exists between Clan-oriented espoused values and Hierarchy-driven operational practices, documented across corporate disclosures, independent case analyses, and employee-experience studies (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Kumari, 2018; Panigrahi & Joshi, 2016). P3 is also confirmed. The primary antecedents of demotivation at Infosys, namely rapid organizational change, top-down communication flows, inadequate recognition. and expectation-reality mismatches, operate by thwarting the basic psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness (Kumari, 2018; Singh & Kataria, 2021; Miner, 2005; Petri & Govern, 2013). Incidentally, P4 follows from the prior three propositions. Authentic Leadership, grounded in self-awareness, balanced processing, and relational transparency (Northouse, 2022; Walumbwa et al., 2008, as cited in Dinh et al., 2014), addresses each failure mode identified in the analysis. SDT-consistent practices at senior and middle-management levels provide the structured pathway to motivational and cultural reorientation the firm requires (Miner, 2005; Dugan, 2024).

5.1 Implications for Practice and Theory

The framework implies specific leadership and HR design choices rather than a generic shift to "authenticity". At a senior level, authentic-leadership development requires measurable behavioral changes: increased relational transparency in difficult decisions, systematic inclusion of dissenting views in strategic forums, and explicit alignment between the stated values and resource allocation (Northouse, 2022; Dugan, 2024). At a middle-management level, autonomy-supportive practices are operationalized through participative goal-setting, reduced micromanagement in project execution, and developmental feedback linked to competence growth rather than only to short-term utilization metrics (Miner, 2005; Petri & Govern, 2013). Implementation is bounded by contextual conditions: highly regulated client environments, legacy contractual commitments, and macro-economic pressures constrain the structural flexibility that Infosys and comparable firms can offer (Gupta & Shapiro, 2014; Leavy, 2021).

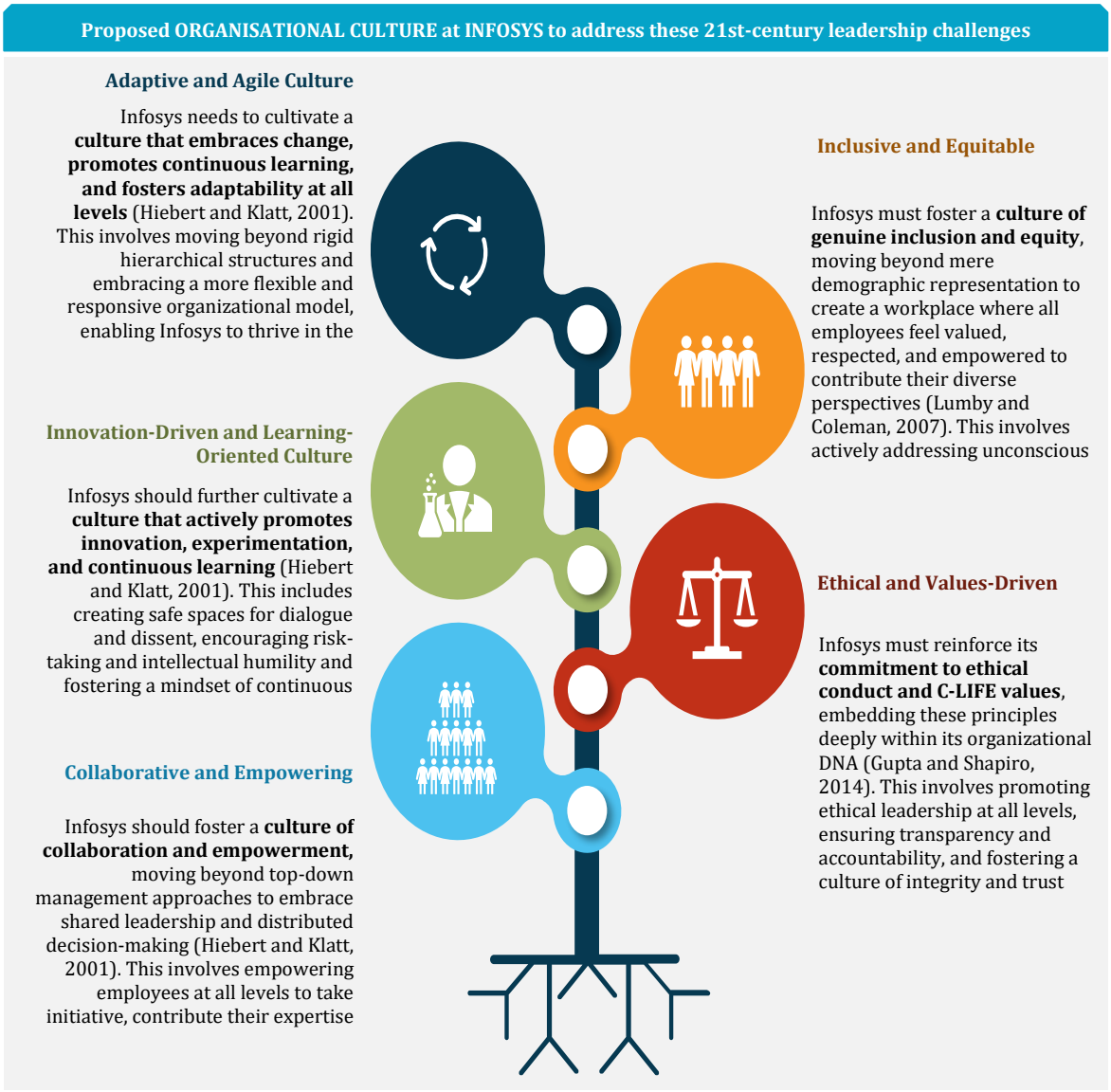


Figure 11. *Proposed Organisational Culture at Infosys.*

Source: Author's own proposition after the analysis of the mentioned sources

Authentic leadership and SDT-consistent practices therefore require calibration against these realities, prioritizing autonomy and voice in domains where client risk is lower while preserving necessary controls in mission-critical delivery.

These recommendations require sequencing to be actionable. Diagnostic work must precede behavioral interventions which in turn must precede structural embedding. Table 9 presents a three-phase sequence with one observable indicator per phase.

The three-level contribution established in the Introduction is operationalized through the Infosys case. The systematically assembled documentary corpus combines corporate disclosures with independent case analyses and peer-reviewed leadership research. Structured two-cycle thematic coding and two-level triangulation were applied throughout. This demonstrates that publicly available secondary evidence can support a theory-driven diagnostic of motivational risk in large founder-influenced firms (Storey, 2004; McGiboney, 2018; Gupta and Shapiro, 2014). The four propositions are specified with sufficient precision to support longitudinal mixed-methods testing and the framework is portable to comparable post-transition organizations beyond Infosys (Dinh et al., 2014; Yukl & Gardner, 2020).

5.2 Limitations of the Study

The conclusions drawn from this research are subject to four limitations that delimit its evidentiary status.

First, the study adopts a single-case design centered on Infosys. This enables analytical depth but precludes statistical generalization; transfer of the proposed framework to other founder-influenced technology firms requires analytical rather than empirical generalization (Dinh et al., 2014; Yukl & Gardner, 2020).

Second, the secondary corpus, assembled through a systematic screening procedure documented using PRISMA-adapted stages, is appropriate for a large listed corporation whose two-decade documentary record provides unusual depth and independence of coverage (Barney, 2010; Gupta & Shapiro, 2014). The specific limitation is not secondary data per se but disclosure bias within corporate documents: annual reports and ESG releases serve organizational legitimacy functions alongside the informational ones, meaning positive leadership and cultural narratives receive greater prominence than the accounts of internal dissent (Gupta & Shapiro, 2014).



Figure 12. *Key findings and insights.*

Source: Author's analysis.

Cross-referencing against problem-focused independent analyses, including Singh (2016), Babu and Rentala (2018) and Kumari (2018), reduces but does not eliminate this bias. Causal claims that individual employees' basic psychological needs are thwarted in the strong SDT sense require primary validation through employee surveys or interviews before they can be advanced beyond the diagnostic level (Miner, 2005; McGiboney, 2018).

Table 9. *Implementation Sequence for Authentic Leadership and SDT-Aligned Practice*

Phase	Focus	Observable Indicator
1) Diagnose (Months 1-6)	Map CVF espoused-enacted gaps; baseline need-satisfaction and authentic-leadership perceptions across business units (Miner, 2005; Cameron & Quinn, 2011)	Executive team formally names and accepts at least three specific espoused-enacted discrepancies
2) Behave (Months 7-18)	Senior leaders apply relational transparency in strategic decisions; middle managers adopt participative goal-setting and developmental feedback linked to competence growth (Northouse, 2022; Petri & Govern, 2013)	Directional improvement in perceived autonomy support and relational transparency scores at six-month re-survey relative to Phase 1 baseline
3) Embed (Months 19-36)	Revise leadership performance criteria to include need-supportive behaviors as a rated competency; integrate authentic-leadership modules into leadership development programs (Day & Barney, 2012; Northouse, 2022)	Year-three need-satisfaction scores show sustained improvement; at least one leadership cohort completes the authentic-leadership self-awareness module

Source: Author's operationalization of Miner (2005), Cameron and Quinn (2011), Day and Barney (2012), Petri and Govern (2013) and Northouse (2022).

Accordingly, the findings resting on convergent corporate and independent evidence carry the strongest evidentiary basis available from secondary sources; the findings drawn from corporate disclosure alone should be treated as provisional; and SDT-based need-thwarting inferences should be read as theoretically informed diagnostic assessments, not as confirmed psychological states.

Third, the absence of systematic measurement instruments means the application of the CVF and SDT is diagnostic and interpretive rather than formally tested. References to clan or adhocracy orientations, or to autonomy and relatedness support, should be read as theoretically informed assessments of likely profiles, not as scale-based empirical findings (Cameron & Quinn, 2011; Petri & Govern, 2013).

Fourth, the author's prior professional affiliation with Infosys (2004–2010) creates potential for confirmation bias, addressed by restricting the empirical base to publicly verifiable documents and explicitly including problem-focused analyses of the firm alongside its own disclosures (Barney, 2010; Kumari, 2018). The findings should accordingly be treated as a theoretically oriented case synthesis rather than a definitive empirical test.

5.3 Directions for Further Research

Future research can extend and test the guiding propositions advanced here in several concrete ways.

First, multi-case comparative studies of large, founder-influenced IT and digital services firms could examine whether similar patterns of founder-centric transformational leadership, clan–hierarchy tension, and need-thwarting demotivators emerge and whether movement towards more authentic, autonomy-supportive leadership correlates with improved motivational and retention outcomes over time. Such designs would permit stronger analytical generalization than a single-case study (Dinh et al., 2014; Yukl & Gardner, 2020).

Second, longitudinal mixed-methods research within Infosys or comparable organizations could combine employee surveys with

qualitative interviews and document analysis. Three validated instruments would operationalise each level of the proposed chain. At the leadership level, the Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (Walumbwa et al., 2008, as cited in Dinh et al., 2014) measures self-awareness, balanced processing, relational transparency, and internalized moral perspective.

At the cultural level, the Organizational Culture Assessment Instrument (Cameron and Quinn, 2011) produces CVF quadrant scores that express the clan-hierarchy gap as a quantifiable variable. At the motivational level, the Basic Psychological Needs Satisfaction and Frustration Scale operationalizes autonomy, competence, and relatedness at the individual employee level (Miner, 2005; Petri and Govern, 2013). These three instruments allow the propositions to become falsifiable hypotheses. One testable hypothesis follows directly: authentic leadership development reduces the CVF clan-hierarchy gap score.

That reduction predicts higher basic need satisfaction scores among delivery-role employees. Higher need satisfaction, in turn, predicts lower voluntary turnover intentions (Dinh et al., 2014; Yukl and Gardner, 2020).

Third, future work could explore how specific diversity dimensions (for example gender, nationality, and generation) moderate the relationship between leadership style, perceived authenticity and need satisfaction in multinational IT firms. This would respond to calls for more nuanced, context-sensitive leadership research that incorporates both power and identity dynamics alongside motivation (Lumby & Coleman, 2007; Loon, 2023; Dugan, 2024).

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