

IMPACT OF LEADERSHIP STYLE AND EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT ON ORGANIZATIONAL PERFORMANCE

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Abstract: Leaders' style of leadership and Employee engagement on organizational performance is analyzed from two perspectives namely Human Resource Management (HRM) and Organizational Behaviour (OB). Leadership is one of the most important mechanisms of management and behavior that affects the attitudes, motivation, commitment, cooperation and performance of employees in an organization. Employee engagement, in turn, reflects the level of cognitive, emotional and behavioural contribution employees make to their organization and their work. The paper is based on a conceptual model that employee engagement is a mediating relationship between leadership style and organizational performance. The transformational leadership, transactional leadership, democratic or participative leadership and laissez-faire leadership types are explained and discussed in relation to the employee motivation, communication, psychological involvement, job satisfaction, and the discretionary effort. Transformational and participative leadership in general results in better conditions for engagement as they focus on vision, support, recognition, participation and development. While transactional leadership can help to boost performance when goals, standards, rewards are clear, too much laissez-faire leadership can diminish role clarity and accountability. The paper also reveals employee engagement as an important mechanism that ties leadership behaviour to employee outcomes like productivity, service quality, innovation, retention and organizational citizenship behaviour. The research results indicate that the leadership development and engagement programs are not separate and managers should see them as two aspects of the HR and OB role. These can increase engagement and contribute to the sustainable performance of the organisation: a people-centred leadership style; fair HR systems; meaningfulness of the work; communication; and recognition and development opportunities.

KeyWords- Leadership style, employee engagement, organizational performance, transformational leadership, organizational behaviour, human resource management, employee motivation, job satisfaction.

1. Introduction

Organisations are confronted with a situation of technological shift, shifting employee expectations, talent wars and increasing demands for sustainable performance. In such an environment, the financial resources, technology or formal structures alone are not enough to account for organizational performance. Employee's psychological involvement is also important, as is the behaviour of leaders. HRM is the policies and practices which are implemented in the organization to acquire, develop, motivate and retain employees and Organizational Behaviour is the explanation of the employee's and group's behavior in an organizational environment. Thus, it can be considered that both leadership style and employee engagement serves as a suitable starting point for linking HRM with OB.

Leadership-related aspects affect the interpretation of organizational objectives, the employee's work experience and response to problems. A leader who can articulate a compelling vision, who is responsive to employee feedback, who offers an employee some help and who expresses appreciation for an employee's contribution can foster an environment where employees will bring more to the job beyond what's required. On the other hand, lack of consistency in leadership, ineffective communication, over-control or under-control by leaders can decrease trust and undermine employee engagement. Leadership is not a mere act of authority, it is a process which influences attitudes, relationships and motivation.

The performance of an organisation is multi-dimensional. It involves productivity, profitability, quality, innovation, customer satisfaction, employee retention and attaining strategic goals. There are multiple ways in which these outcomes can be impacted by leadership and engagement. They will improve communication and role clarity through good leadership, they will make more decisions at their discretion if they are engaged and if they are engaged as a team, enhance teamwork, problem solving and service quality. These relationships are important and make leadership and engagement particularly significant for HR professionals and organizational leaders today.

This paper aims to analyse the connection between Leadership Style, Employee Engagement and organizational performance. Time is required to discuss how the key leadership styles relate to employees' behaviour, to understand how engagement is a connecting process, and to explore HR/OB practices that can build the connection. The paper is conceptual and literature-based, and the contribution of the paper is to link leadership behaviour with the concept of employee engagement in the organizational performance context.

2. Conceptual Foundation

Leadership, engagement and performance are all interconnected and can be explained with three concepts. Leadership is the ability to influence others to accomplish a set of goals. Employee engagement is the extent and intensity of a worker's mind and body dedication to their job. Organizational performance is the extent to which an organization meets the desired results in an efficient and sustainable way. The work environment is influenced by leadership, the work environment influences engagement, engagement influences performance and success – all reinforcing.

Employees are looked at as strategic resources from an HRM perspective because their knowledge, skills, attitudes, and relationships may impact the capacity of the organization (Al-Kasasbeh, 2024). The infrastructure in which leadership operates is provided by HR processes such as selection, training, performance management, rewards and career development. However, it's not guaranteed that formal HR practices will help to foster engagement. HR policies are cascaded throughout the organization through employees' interactions with their supervisor/manager. Therefore, line managers play a crucial role as a link between organizational HR strategy and employee experience.

OB's view is that motivation, power, communication, group processes, and trust and organizational culture are associated with leadership. Leadership practices have the potential to impact employee perceptions of supportive and fair organisations. Can also affect psychological safety which is important when employees are asked to make suggestions, report mistakes, investigate accepted procedures, ask questions, etc. Therefore, a supportive leader can create a set of behavioural conditions that help to set the stage for learning and innovation.

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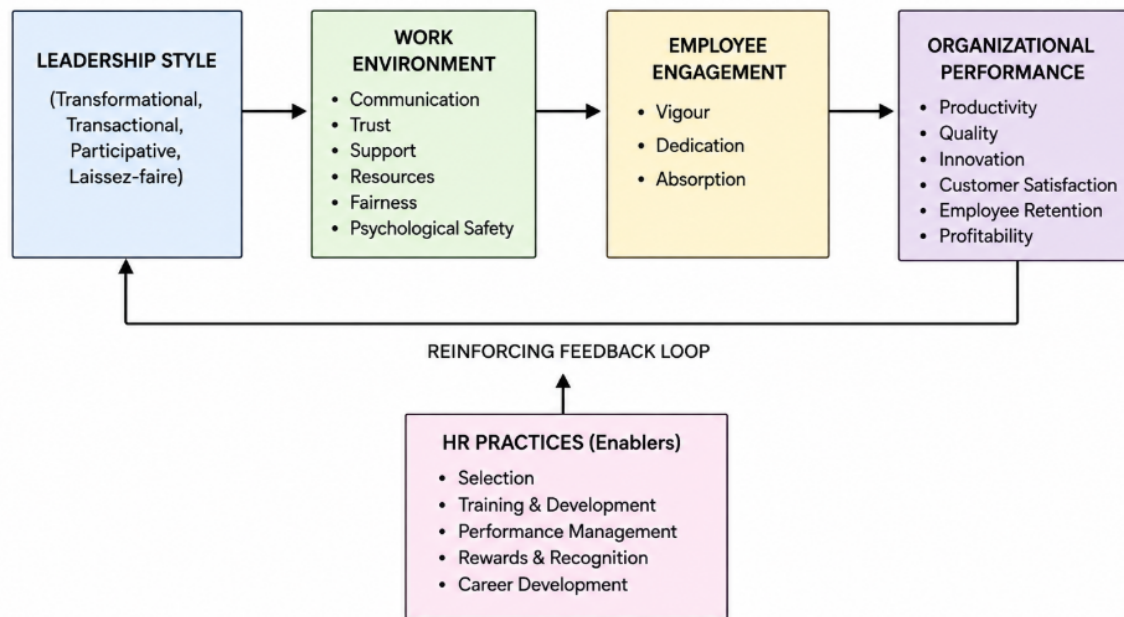


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework (Source: Computed by Researchers)

The Job Demands-Resources perspective provides a suitable framework to understand engagement. The demands of the job are workload, time pressure and emotional demands while the resources of the job are autonomy, feedback, social support, learning opportunities and adequate tools. Leadership can have an impact on a number of these resources (Singh and See, 2022). Leaders can increase resources by providing feedback, clarification, removing barriers and facilitating development, and maintain employee energy and engagement.

The social exchange theory also assists in the understanding of the relationship. Staff can be treated with respect, supported, recognised and fairly treated and this can lead to positive attitudes and behaviours from staff towards leaders. Engagement thus can become a two-way street (Mayangsari, 2022). Staff feel more invested in and committed to their organisation and leaders when they feel they are valued.

3. Staff Attitude & Employee conduct

Leaders have different styles in decision-making, motivating followers, the exercise of authority and communication of expectations. Within the context of this discussion there are four general styles of leadership that are important: Transformational, transactional, democratic/participative, and laissez faire leadership.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational Leadership is about vision, inspiration, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration. Transformational leaders motivate staff to look past the “here and now” to the goals of the organization. They can generate new concepts, develop, and demonstrate confidence in staff abilities. This sort of behaviour can help reinforce intrinsic motivation as they know that they are making a difference rather than simply doing something for an end. Transformational leaders also stimulate their employees to think out of the box and look for alternative solutions to problems. This is especially beneficial in organizations that are subject to constant changes. If the leaders have confidence in their employees and are promoting their thinking, the staff might be more open to innovative ideas.

Transactional Leadership

The transactional leadership is more of an exchange-based leadership, between the leader and the employee. Objectives, criteria, incentives and sanctions are explicitly communicated. Transactional leadership can be effective when there is a definite and measurable outcome and when there is a need for action to be consistently and responsibly taken. Set goals and establish clear expectations to reduce confusion and clarify to employees what they should be doing. For example, targets can be given to employees to increase their performance, and they can be

rewarded for achieving their targets. These types of systems can assist companies develop self-control and responsibility. However, if the driving force is external motivation (rewards and punishments), employees may simply comply and not do more in terms of engagement. However, a transactional type of leadership may be an addition to developmental leadership.

Democratic/Participative Leadership

Democratic/Participative leadership gives employees autonomy to make decisions and values their opinions and expertise. Ownership is strengthened by participation as workers are engaged in decisions that affect their work. It can also be used to help improve information quality; there could be knowledge out there that is not obviously apparent to senior leaders amongst the front line. In this sense, participation can contribute to building trust, commitment and engagement. There may be emergency situations where leaders need to act without the assistance of others, or situations in which they need to take action rapidly. Good managers will therefore have to understand when employees need to be involved and when direct decision making is needed.

Laissez-Faire Leadership

Laissez Faire Leadership: leadership in which little direction or intervention is provided. High level autonomy can be required for experienced professionals with high levels of expertise, who may be able to make decisions on how work is carried out.

But if there are too few leaders, there is role ambiguity, lack of coordination and lack of feedback. They may have questions regarding priorities and standards. Thus, don't assume independence means managerial neglect. Good autonomy typically relies on objectives, resources and easy support. Leaders need to be available when required and staff need to be empowered to make decisions.

Leadership and Interpersonal Relations

Other interpersonal relationships are also affected by the leadership style. Leaders' responses to errors, dissent, success and individual issues are observed by staff. It's a leader who addresses problems positively that can create learning, a leader who blames can demoralize communication. The correct answer is NOT that one leadership style always works. The effectiveness of leadership relies on the context, task features, maturity of employees, and organizational culture and environmental factors. However supportive environments with participative, clear expectations, and recognition and development, are more likely to promote sustained engagement.

4. Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is a positive and active state of an employee who puts himself into his job. This early concept of Kahn was psychological conditions of human entry into role performance. Later views have seen engagement as a positive state of work, defined as vigour, dedication and absorption. These views highlight that engagement goes beyond satisfaction and organizational membership.

A resilient workforce is more likely to have the energy and strength to try harder and persist in difficult times if they are happy. Dedication involves a sense of significance, enthusiasm, pride and challenge (Hochreiter *et al.* 2022). Persons who are committed to work tend to feel their work to be meaningful and important. Attention to concentration and engrossment in work is the absorption. Staff who are absorbing may be very motivated to work on their jobs and duties. These are the dimensions that together account for the reasons why engagement can impact on performance. Having enthusiastic staff who are committed and focused is a key element to be able to contribute effectively.

Within the workplace, there are multiple things that impact engagement and involvement. The most critical one is the support of the leaders because it is the supervisors who construct the day-to-day. The other is real work; when an individual knows what he is doing is important, his working will be better. Other elements of engagement that can be further supported include autonomy, feedback, recognition, career opportunities, fair treatment, supportive colleagues and appropriate resources. However, it can be destroyed by overwork, lack of communication, role conflict, insecurity and unfairness. There are behavioural consequences to engagement. Employees can exhibit organizational citizenship behaviours like assisting others, solving problems on one's own, offering suggestions. There is a link between innovation and engagement—care about results and opportunities for improvement. It can also help to retain employees as those who feel purpose, supported and developed are less likely to leave.

HR managers need to know that there's a difference between employee engagement and employee happiness. An employee might feel a sense of belonging to the workplace and feel motivated but not feel committed to the workplace goals. Similarly, a worker may feel unmotivated to work even when he takes his responsibilities very

seriously. Sustainable engagement is a mixture of good energy and good contribution (Boccoli et al. 2023). Leadership is especially important as engagement must come from more than just single HR initiatives. You can have a wellness initiative, employee engagement survey or recognition programme, but if the employees are getting poor supervisory behaviour on a daily basis, then this may not be as effective.

5. Impact on Organizational Performance

There are a few individual and collective mechanisms that affect organizational performance, involving leaders and engagement. Individual employee relations with engaged employees are more likely to include effort, persistence and attention to quality. Within the team, engaged employees can help foster a team culture of collaboration, teamwork, knowledge sharing and problem solving. Organizational level, these behaviours can aggregate to better productivity, service, innovation and retention.

Productivity

One of the starkest implications is productivity. Clear priorities and elimination of obstacles from the way result in engaged employees who are ready to put in their efforts to carry out a task effectively. This can also result in better management of time and resources, if you know what you're getting into and have an appreciation for what is valuable. Therefore, there is a potential for engagement to complement formal performance management as a way to make employees personally responsible for performance.

Service Quality

Service quality is particularly relevant in institutions should staff members have customer-contacts, patients, students or other target groups. Employees' interpretation and response to service standards and customer needs are affected by leadership. Higher engagement leads to greater attention, reactivity and problem solving for employees (Joo et al. 2023). This can then further create a relationship between employee experience and customer experience in service-oriented organizations.

Innovation

The other important outcome is innovation. Involving employees in the process of innovation requires them to perceive problems, generate ideas and experiment with different solutions. Participative and transformational leadership can promote psychological safety and recognize initiative, encouraging these behaviours (Okatta *et al.* 2024). Staff may be tempted not to contribute new ideas even when they are there if staff are not given the freedom to speak up without fear of criticism.

Employee Retention

Employee retention – performance impacts too. High turn-over can result in recruitment expenses, training needs, workload and loss of institutional knowledge. Employee intentions to stay can be improved through development and recognition of employees, as well as leaders providing support for their careers. This can be supported by engagement employees who feel engaged with their work and organization are likely to have increased attachment.

Organizational Citizenship Behaviour

Organizational citizenship behaviour can also aid performance. Sometimes employees do good work outside the scope of their official job description, such as helping their colleagues, providing information or offering to do additional work. These behaviours can aid to improve coordination and teamwork (Guo and Hou, 2022). These discretionary behaviours are more likely to happen if there is engagement, but organizations need to not take advantage of employees' engagement and require them to give their all at no cost to the organization.

The relationship thus is bi-directional. Consequent to that, performance can lead to higher engagement, which can lead to good leadership and ultimately higher levels of confidence and commitment among employees and in the organization (Sypniewska *et al.* 2023). However, the relationship can become a difficulty if organizational systems aren't aligned with leadership messages. For example, an HR system may be limited to individual accomplishments, and a leader may motivate people to be involved. Therefore, it is crucial that leadership, culture and HR practices dovetail into one another.

6. Support Increased Leadership and Engagement

Recruitment and Selection

Recruitment and selection can help to recruit people who have interpersonal, communication and ethical skills that are suitable for leadership. Technical competency is not the only measure of leadership because being able to coach, communicate, manage conflict and establish trust are also significant attributes (Muttalib et al. 2023). Hence, the

selection of managers should be based on behavioural competencies for companies. Employing technically competent employees does not necessarily mean that you will take care of the relationships between the employees and their supervisors, which is likely to result in sub-optimal relationships between them.

Training and Development

Training and development is essential to leadership capability development. Programmes can include communication and emotional intelligence, coaching and feedback, conflict management, leadership of change or decision making.

Learning can be out of the classroom. Managers can be assisted in using leadership concepts in real situations using mentoring, coaching, job rotation, action learning, and structured feedback.

Performance Management

A support of desired leadership behaviours should also be in place in performance management systems. Managers can lose sight of employee growth and engagement when their short-term financial objectives get in the way.

Indicators of performance can, therefore, be based on team development, retention, employee feedback, collaboration, inclusion and achievement of people-related goals.

Rewards and Recognition

Rewards and recognition have a positive influence on employee experience. Fair and transparent rewards can help to reinforce the perception of organizational justice; and recognition can help to communicate that people matter (Zhou et al. 2022). It doesn't always have to be monetary and opportunities to develop, increased responsibility, and increased visibility can also be used to reinforce positive behaviour if it is taken at a timely moment.

Employee Voice

Employee voice mechanisms are also a key HR intervention. To manage the employee experience (Asif and Shaheen, 2022) an organization can use engagement surveys, pulse surveys, suggestion systems, and town-hall meetings. Action is the key to the value of measurement. Trust can fall when feedback is provided and no response. So, it's the job of the leaders to disseminate the results, set priorities and demonstrate progress.

Career Development

Engagement is also heavily related to career development. Employees who feel there is potential for learning and development are more likely to be willing to invest in their job. This can be achieved by HR through creating competency frameworks, leadership pipelines, internal mobility and individual development plans. Lastly, HR should make sure that policies are uniform and leadership practices are the same. Values are manifested in hiring and retention practices, rewards and promotions, and management decisions, and are visible to employees as they are part of a culture. It is hard to maintain people's engagement if the difference between the message and management in practice is evident.

7. Employee Engagement

HR practices and organizational context may be considered as facilitating conditions which can help or hinder these relationships. The framework indicates that there are several dimensions of leadership that could influence engagement. This is an area of emphasis on the role of leadership, communication, trust, motivation, employee engagement and organizational performance. This section highlights the importance of leadership, communication, trust, motivation, employee engagement and organizational performance. Leaders have the power to influence the engagement through values and attributes of effective communication, trust, recognition, autonomy, involvement, feedback, support and development.

Engagement then looks like performance in the form of increased effort, quality, teamwork, problem solving and organizational citizenship and retention.

The following propositions can be used as a basis for further empirical study:

P1: A leader's style is related to employee engagement.

P2: Leadership style has a high level of correlation with employee engagement.

Employee engagement is positively related to leadership, defined by four components: vision, support, participation and development (P2).

P3: There is a positive link between employee engagement and organizational performance.

P4: Employee engagement lies between leadership style and organizational performance.

P5: There are further HR practices that make this positive relationship between leadership and engagement even better – these include training, recognition, performance management and career development.

P6: If employees require a lot of direction and support, too much *laissez faire* leadership is negatively correlated with role clarity, and with employee engagement.

These propositions can be explored with a quantitative survey design. Leadership style may be assessed using a validated leadership scale and engagement may be assessed using a validated dimension of engagement (vigour, dedication and absorption). Perceived productivity, service quality, innovation, retention and achievement of organizational objectives are all metrics that can be used to measure organizational performance (Jerab and Mabrouk, 2023). Statistical techniques such as correlation, regression and mediation analysis can then be used to examine the proposed relationships.

The use of a mixed method approach may provide additional information. Quantitative data could be used to assess the level of relationship; interviews or focus groups for reasons of positive or negative response to specific leadership behaviours. It would be useful, if it is context sensitive and can vary across sectors, culture, organizational scale and employee group, as it does in the case of leadership effectiveness.

8. Managerial Implications

The HR and OB viewpoint have a number of practical implications from the manager's point of view.

First, companies need to create leaders that can manage people and perform tasks. Leaders should give autonomy, support and develop as well as setting up clear expectations. Business-like work will get the "doing of the job" but not the "doing of the business."

Secondly, managers must have a vision. When employees know how they fit into the bigger picture of the company's goals, they will be more likely to buy in (Nguyen et al. 2023). Meetings of the team, face to face and feedback sessions with leaders can help to connect daily activities with the organization's goals.

Thirdly, appreciation needs to be created in the leaders. There is a need for recognition to be timely, accurate and genuine. Staff need to be aware of the behaviours or achievements that are being recognised and why it is important. Awards can be used to strengthen employee and supervisor motivation and relationship.

Fourth, employee voice must be a part of the regular management routine. Leaders should seek suggestions, listen to them and explain if they cannot be acted on. Involvement is not a sign-off on ideas, it's an opportunity for employee contribution.

Fifth, survey an organisation to measure engagement for a few reasons, and for not more than one. Action plans should come from the measurement of the engagement (Abdullahi et al. 2022). Managers can pinpoint a couple of important problems and assign them to someone and let employees know how things are going.

Sixth, leadership development needs to be ongoing. Feedback should be given to the managers by their teams, peers and supervisors. Leaders may not be able to see these behaviours, which can be discovered through coaching and mentoring. The development should not be restricted to skills but also involve self-awareness and ethical responsibility.

Finally, organisations must be mindful that engagement may turn into a double-edged sword in that it can also become an occupational hazard. Absence of being engaged is not the cause of having to take other employees or facilities. The contribution of employees and the support they can offer the organization must be balanced in order to sustain the performance. The leaders and HR teams should be aware that engagement initiatives are backed by realistic workloads, adequate resources, and fair working policies.

9. Limitations and Suggestions

This paper is not empirical (does not use primary organizational data), but rather conceptual/ Literature-based. Hence, it does not provide any inferences or predictions about the magnitude of the relationships between leadership style, engagement and performance in any given company or industry. Empirical studies in various sectors could overcome these shortcomings in the coming years (Aboramadan *et al.* 2022). Comparative studies could study the role of leadership in the manufacturing sector, the healthcare industry, education, banking, hospitality, and technology and public organizations. A second cross-cultural field for research would be to see if the reactions of employees to participative, transformational or transactional leadership are influenced by cultural values.

It would be helpful to have longitudinal research as relationships around leadership and engagement may change over the years. A cross-sectional survey will not establish definitively that the relationship between engagement and performance and changes in leadership behaviour is causal, but will identify correlations. The measures before and after leadership development interventions could be used in longitudinal designs.

Additional studies are possible on digital and hybrid workplace. Working remotely changes the nature of communications, visibility, independence and collaboration in the team. Leaders will need some changes in approach if they are dealing with employees distributed across the globe to establish trust and engagement. New factors can be the information overload of digital communication and of less informal communication.

Another approach could be the investigation of psychological safety, organizational justice, perceived organizational support, as mediators or moderators (Soelton, 2023). These constructs can explain why there is a diverse range of outcomes related to the application of similar leadership behaviours with staff. Finally, there should be a measure at the organizational level in future studies that is connected to an employee level measure. Although the perception of the employee is very significant, objective measures such as turnover, absenteeism, productivity, customer satisfaction and customer quality can provide a clearer picture of the situation in any organization.

10. Conclusion

Organizational behaviour and human resource management are connected with leadership in a deep way, that is employee engagement has a strong correlation with leadership. Leadership influences employees' social and psychological context in which they work and engagement represents the level of effort, attention and commitment that employees give to their work. This interaction influences the functioning of the organisation in terms of productivity, quality, innovation, retainment and cooperative behaviour.

The suggested leadership styles for building a positive climate for engagement are transformational and participative leadership and the emphasis of purpose, support, participation, recognition and development. Transactional leadership can be useful in situations where it's important to establish clear expectations, standards and accountability, while at other times, too much laissez faire leadership can create uncertainty when employees can benefit from direction.

A context-sensitive approach which is able to balance the requirements of the tasks with the employees' requirements is thus very likely to be the most effective approach. It is important to not take employee engagement as an isolated HR initiative. It can come about as a result of organizational experiences on a daily basis, like organizational leadership, job design, recognition, fairness, communication, development and access to resources.

HRM has the potential to improve engagement by building strong leadership, performance management and reward mechanisms, employee voice and development and learning opportunities.

The message on a deeper level is that if leaders create an environment where their employees can perform well, they can perform well. A leader provides guidance and encouragement, staff respond in an energetic, committed and positive way, systems are in place and support each other. So, for organisations looking to deliver sustained performance, it is necessary to take a holistic viewpoint of building their people strategy and involve their staff.

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