

An investigation into the relationship between Perceived Leadership Behaviour and Employee Engagement

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Abstract

Kahn (1990) defined employee engagement at work as the process of organisational members tying their identities to their job responsibilities, as reported in the Academy of Management Journal. Schaufeli et al., (2006) considers leadership as one of the important variables influencing employee engagement. A strong leader may motivate their subordinates to achieve the company's objectives (Batista-Taran et al., 2009a). According to House and Dessler (1974), leadership is centred on how followers view their leader concerning three key areas of perceived leadership behaviour: initiating structure, leadership consideration, and leadership participation. One key educational leadership tactic is to maintain a good rapport between professors and the institution's head. Teachers' perceptions of the leadership styles employed by the Head of the Institution may directly impact their work and, in the long run, their involvement and ability to enhance student achievement. Employers may motivate their employees to perform at the highest level by rewarding and acknowledging their achievements. Teaching excellence needs to be acknowledged and rewarded if teaching quality is to be maintained and improved (Gupta et al., 2015).

This study primarily aims to examine the relationship between employee job engagement and perceived leadership behaviour (PLB), as defined by Schaufeli, Salanova, Gonzalez-Roma, and Bakker (2002), and House and Dessler (1974), respectively. Using a standardised questionnaire, 514 faculty members from higher education institutions in Mumbai were surveyed to collect primary data, which was then analysed using SPSS version 26. The data were examined through multiple regression analysis, hierarchical regression, and Pearson correlation analysis. The results show that initiating structure ($B=0.414$, $p=0.00$) is a significant predictor of employee engagement.

Keywords: Perceived Leadership Behaviour, Employee Engagement, initiating structure, leadership consideration, leadership participation.

1. Introduction

Originally used in business and consultancy, the term "engagement" has recently gained popularity in academia. In recent years, academic authorities have increasingly recognised work engagement as a legitimate concept (Bakker & Schaufeli, 2008). An article titled "Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work" from the Academy of Management Journal was the first to use the term engagement. "The harnessing of organisational members' selves to their work roles; in engagement, people employ and express themselves physically, cognitively, and emotionally during role performances" is how Kahn defines employee engagement (Kahn, W.A. 1990). This definition emphasizes the degree of emotional bond that employees have with their workplace.

According to Macey and Schneider (2008) and Schaufeli and Salanova (2011), employee engagement refers to an employee's emotional connection to their work and workplace. As such, it is conceptually different from commitment to a job or employer, from the satisfaction that comes with that employment, and from plans for that work, such as plans to stay or leave. Disengaged workers have a higher chance of getting sidetracked and losing focus at work. Employee disengagement can be attributed to toxic workplace cultures and poor leadership (Mendes & Stander, 2011).

Leaders are crucial motivators, a major source of employee satisfaction and motivation, and ultimately a source of job engagement, according to Bakker et al. (2011). Therefore, in order to successfully increase employee engagement at work, a leader must embrace an open and flexible style. James and associates (2008) state that in order to practice an open and flexible leadership style, individual leaders might need to adjust workplace protocols. (Bakker et al., 2011) assert that leaders are essential motivators, a significant source of employee motivation and pleasure, and ultimately a source of job engagement. Therefore, one must adopt an open and flexible leadership style to successfully raise employee engagement at work. The researcher hopes that the study has made a contribution to a better understanding of teachers' engagement and has brought new insights into understanding the role of employee perception of leadership behaviour.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Employee Engagement

Employee engagement refers to an individual's passion, commitment, and mental and emotional connection to their work, teams, and business (Vestal, 2012). According to (Perrin, 2003) engagement entails both emotional and logical considerations pertaining to one's job and entire work experience. Mmako & Schultz, (2016) highlights the influence of clearly defined goals, vision, mission, organisational image, and organisational identity on the engagement levels of employees. Regular performance reviews, opportunities for training and development, and praise and recognition were the top three factors influencing employee engagement. (Shoko & Zinyemba, 2014). Management of the institution must foster an environment that stimulates engagement because this is likely to increase employee commitment and productivity, and make human capital management more efficient (Waigwa & Kwasira, 2014).

Based on the perspectives of Kahn (1990) and Schaufeli et al. (2002), employee engagement can be divided into three categories- cognitive (being attentive at work & feeling absorbed and involved), emotional (feeling connected to one's job while working, and demonstrating dedication and commitment), and physical (being physically involved in a task and demonstrating vigour and a positive affective state)

2.2 Perceived Leadership Behaviour and Employee Engagement

The term "leadership" is frequently used when addressing a person's capacity to guide a team, workgroup, department, or organisation (Basnet, 2018). The concept of perceived leadership was developed by House and Dessler in the year 1974, based on Robert House's Path-Goal Theory of Leadership (Batista-taran et al., 2009b; Bourini et al., 2019; Engelbrecht et al., n.d.; Nadeem & Mudasir, 2012). The Path-Goal Theory is concerned with how leaders affect their followers' perceptions of their personal and professional objectives, as well as the best ways to get there (Sulamuthu & Yusof, 2018). In the field of Higher Education, leadership has

changed from an administrative role to one with a variety of duties and responsibilities, some of which include influencing the organisational culture and motivating teachers (Mitonga-Monga et al., 2012). The role of the leader and immediate supervisor in fostering employee engagement has been highlighted by many researchers. A study conducted by Dapke & Patole (2014) among 130 professionals from an IT company suggested that organisations should invest in training people managers in mentoring and leadership abilities so they may form enduring relationships with their employees. Engaged employees are more likely to have a superior relationship with their leaders/managers, which results in their optimistic attitude in the organisation (Khan & Lakshmi, 2018). A study conducted by Theses & Kay Hardman (2011) concluded that teachers' day-to-day activities to encourage students are influenced by how they feel their school leadership values and supports them. Mitonga-Monga et al. (2012) in their study confirms that the involvement of employees in an organization is greatly influenced by how employees perceive their leader's behavioural style. A High-Quality Teaching Staff is attracted, supported, engaged, and retained by Effective Principals (Balakrishnan, C., Masthan, D., & Chandra, 2013).

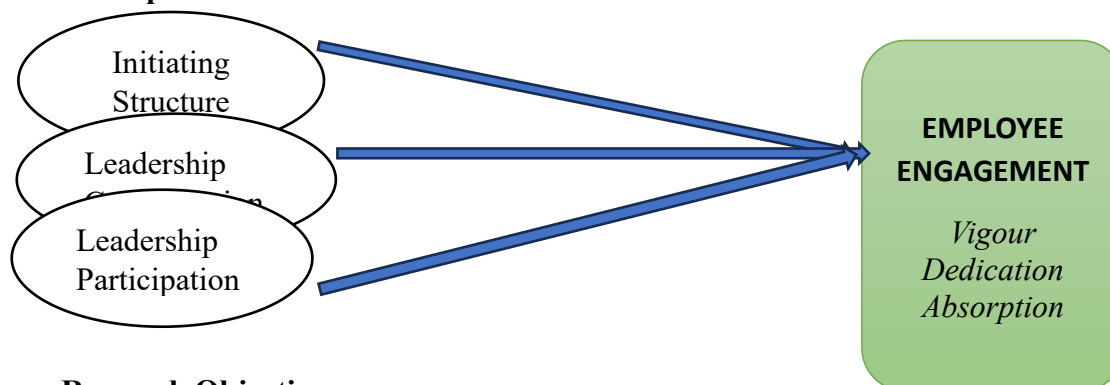
The theory of Perceived Leadership behaviour, advocated by House & Dessler 1974 emphasises employees' perceptions about their leader concerning initiating structure, leadership consideration and leadership participation. Initiating structure, also known as instrumental leadership, is the style of leadership in which the leader acts in a way that makes it clear what is expected, who is responsible for what, and how to do it (Sarstedt et al., 2020). Initiating structure is one of the key aspects of leadership behaviour that places focus on task orientation (Tang & Naumann, 2015) and defining the role of their subordinates to achieve a goal (Jeremy Mitonga-Monga, 2012). According to Venkatesh (2013), leadership consideration is a behaviour characterised by actions demonstrating concern for group members, such as showing appreciation, fostering self-esteem, and mutual trust (House et al., 2014). This leadership behaviour can create an environment that is supportive and friendly. It can also be defined as a leadership behaviour that allows for the inclusion of staff opinions and ideas during the decision-making process, resulting in an atmosphere that is friendly and psychologically helpful (Duong et al., 2018; Rafferty & Griffin, 2006; Shabbir et al., 2021). The consideration style describes how much leaders put an emphasis on the needs, respect, comfort, and pleasure of their followers.

Participative leadership or leadership participation is a non-directive approach to defining roles that is comparable to more direct instrumental leadership. It takes into account how much a leader involves their followers in decision-making by soliciting their opinions and suggestions (House et al., 2014). A research study of employees in the Education Sector of Pakistan (Khaliq et al., 2016) reveals that there is a significant relationship between work engagement and leadership participation. Roden (1998) conducted a comparative study on the initiating structure and consideration leadership styles and observed that a leader with a consideration style of leadership promotes trust, cordial relationships, and support, whereas a leader accepting the initiating structure style of leadership focuses on the accomplishment of tasks. Strom et al. (2014) believed that although leaders assume various types of leadership styles to lead and guide their employees, leadership behaviour and its influence are seldom investigated.

These studies unequivocally demonstrate that administrators who possess specific qualities—such as trust, the ability to communicate a clear vision and goals, high moral standards,

respect for their staff and coworkers, and an inclusive, caring, and participatory working style—are effective leaders.

3. Conceptual Model



4. Research Objectives

1. To measure the level of Employee Engagement among the employees (faculty members) working in organisations under the study.
2. To study the relationship between the dimensions of Perceived Leadership Behaviour and Employee Engagement amongst employees (faculty members).
3. To suggest measures to enhance employee engagement among the faculty members.

5. Hypothesis

The hypothesis proposes the influence of Perceived Leadership behaviour (Initiating Structure, Leadership Consideration and Leadership Participation) on Employee Engagement. Researchers like (Baron, 2012; Batista-taran et al., 2009; Sadeghi & Phihie, 2013; Venkatesh, 2013) identified the positive and significant relationship between perceived leadership behaviour and employee engagement

1H₁ - There is a significant relationship between Initiating Structure and Employee Engagement among the faculty in Higher Education

2H₁ - There is a significant relationship between Leadership Consideration and Employee Engagement among the faculty in Higher Education

3H₁ - There is a significant relationship between Leadership Participation and Employee Engagement among the faculty in Higher Education

6. Research Methodology

6.1 Primary Data: The research methodology adopted for this study involved a quantitative approach, with data collected from 514 employees working in the Higher Education Sector in Mumbai using a structured questionnaire. The link to the questionnaires was sent online, which is in the Google-linked form, and also hard copies of the questionnaire were given directly, as per the availability of the respondents. The sample size was calculated using power analysis. G*Power shows that the minimum sample size required for the model is 109.

6.2 Measuring instrument: The perceived leadership construct has its conceptual base in the path-goal theory of leadership (House 1971; House and Dessler 1974). It has three constructs - Initiating Structure (7 items) (**Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.910$**), Leadership consideration (10 items) (**Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.941$**), and Leadership participation (5 items)(**Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.942$**). It was measured on a 5-point scale of Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree (All 22 items, **Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.968$**). Employee engagement was measured using the Utrecht work

engagement scale (UWES) developed by Schaufeli et al (2002). It comprises of 17 items that measure three dimensions of job engagement: (1) vigour (six items) (e.g., “At my work, I feel bursting with energy”), (2) dedication (five items) (e.g., “I am enthusiastic about my job” and (3) absorption (six items) (e.g., “Time flies when I'm working”). They were measured on a five-point scale of Never to Always/Every Day (**Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.977$**). Cronbach's α coefficient values of each construct ranged from 0.790 to 0.977 above the recommended level of .70 as suggested by Hair et al., 2015.

6.3 Secondary Data: The researcher also used secondary data that was gathered through a literature review. Databases such as J-Stor, Academia.edu, Directory of Open Access Journals (DOAJ), Science Direct, and Emerald Insight were explored for research articles and papers.

7. Data Analysis & Findings

7.1 Demographic Profile of the Respondents

55.4 per cent were female (285 respondents) and 44.6 per cent were male (229 respondents). The maximum number of respondents (n= 197, 38.3%) is in the age group of 31-40. Respondents in the age group of 20-30 and 41-50 were at par with each other i.e., 24.1% and 23.2 % respectively. the age group 50 and above accounted for only 14.4% of the respondents (n= 74). Thus, the study involves respondents from a fairly younger middle-aged group. More than 50% of the respondents had only post-graduation (269) as their highest qualification. A Master's degree is the minimum qualification required for the post of assistant professor. 27.8 % of the faculty who responded possessed a Doctoral Degree (143), and 19.8% had M.Phil. (102) as their highest qualification. 38.5 % are employed in the teaching profession for less than 5 years(198). Respondents having work experience of 5-10 years (139) accounted for 27%. A smaller percentage of respondents, i.e., 14% and 12.3% have experience of 10-15years (72) and more than 20 years (63), respectively. A negligible 8.2% have teaching experience of 15-20 years (42). A major percentage (i.e., 53.5%) constitutes respondents having permanent status. 23% are temporary, and 18.3% are on an Ad-hoc or Contract basis. 5.3% of respondents are visiting faculty who work on a clock-hour basis. Ad-hoc or contract-based employees are appointed temporarily, usually for a year.

7.2 Research Objective – 1 To measure the level of Employee Engagement (Emp-Eng) among the employees (faculty members) working in institutions under the study.

Table: Mean and Standard deviation scores of latent variables

Variables	Mean	Std. Dev	Variables	Mean	Std. Dev
Vigour	5.3613	1.49842	Initiating Structure	3.9217	.87476
Dedication	5.6159	1.50615	Leadership Consideration	3.7532	.96144
Absorption	5.4965	1.51917	Leadership Participation	3.7378	1.03554
Emp- Eng	5.4943	1.50245	PLB	3.8115	.91102

Source – Primary Data

The above table shows the mean scores of latent variables and their dimensions. The high scores of Dedication (M=5.61, SD=1.50) as compared to Vigour and Absorption demonstrate that the respondents are strongly involved in their work and experience a sense of inspiration and pride in carrying out their duties. High mean scores of initiating structure (M= 3.92, SD=

0.87) denote that respondents are in favour of a leadership behaviour that is more task-oriented and very clear in stating the responsibilities and objectives, and clarifying expectations to their subordinates. The mean scores of Leadership Consideration and Leadership Participation are on par with each other (3.75 & 3.74, respectively)

7.3 Hypothesis Testing

Relationship between Employee Engagement and the dimensions of Perceived Leadership Behaviour

Table 1: Pearson correlation coefficient between the Employee Engagement and dimensions of Perceived Leadership Behaviour

	E-ENG	INS	LEC	LEP
Employee Engagement (E-ENG)	1			
Initiating Structure (INS)	.277**	1		
	.000			
Leadership Consideration (LEC)	.224**	.738**	1	
	.000	.000		
Leadership Participation (LEP)	.228**	.658**	.862**	1
	.000	.000	.000	

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Source – Primary Data

The Pearson correlation test was used to find out the correlation of the variables. Each of these subscales was examined for statistical significance with the employee engagement scale. The employee engagement scale was positively correlated with initiating structure ($r = .277$, $p < .001$), Leadership consideration ($r = .224$, $p < .001$), and Leadership participation ($r = .228$, $p < .001$). The strongest correlation is between Leadership Consideration (LEC) and Leadership Participation (LEP), and the weakest is between LEC and Employee Engagement.

Table – 2 Model Summary (Dimensions of PLB & Employee Engagement)

<i>Model</i>	<i>R</i>	<i>R Square</i>	<i>Adjusted R Square</i>	<i>Std. Error of the Estimate</i>
1	.285 ^a	0.081	0.076	1.44435

a- Initiating Structure, Leadership Consideration, Leadership Participation.

Linear multiple regression analysis was conducted to understand the strength of correlation among the dependent variable, employee engagement, and dimensions of the independent variable, perceived leadership behaviour. The results in Table 2 value of $R = 28.5\%$ which indicates that the model is 28.5% fit. R-squared reflects the effect of the independent variable on the dependent variable and is 8.10%. It means that perceived leadership and its dimensions combined have only an 8.10% effect on employee engagement. Additionally, it indicates that the variation remains unexplained; therefore, the model's fit may be enhanced by including additional independent variables.

Table 3: ANOVA- Employee Engagement and Dimensions of PLB

ANOVA ^a						
Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	94.101	3	31.366	15.035	.000 ^b
	Residual	1063.928	510	2.086		
	Total	1158.024	513			
a. Dependent Variable: E-ENG						
b. Predictors: (Constant), Initiating Structure, Leadership Participation, Leadership Consideration						

Table 3 shows that the overall model is fit and significantly useful in explaining employee engagement, $F(3, 510) = 15.035$, $p < 0.05$

Table 4 Coefficients – Dimensions of PLB and Employee Engagement

		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	3.559	0.299		11.904	0
	INS	0.414	0.108	0.241	3.818	0.000
	LEC	-0.088	0.146	-0.057	-0.604	0.546
	LEP	0.173	0.122	0.119	1.419	0.157

The table 4.9.4 displays how much perceived leadership behaviour and its dimensions contribute or predict towards the regression model, The p value (< 0.05) of initiating structure ($B=0.414$, $p=0.00$) shows that it is a significant predictor of employee engagement whereas the relationship of Leadership consideration and Employee engagement is not significant, negative and weak ($B=-0.088$, $p=0.546$). The relationship of Leadership participation and Employee engagement is also not significant and negligible, leading to a 17% chance of influence on E-ENG ($B=0.173$, $p=0.157$).

The 'B' column in the coefficients table gives the coefficients for each independent variable in the regression model. Initiating Structure ($B1=.414$) as Initiating Structure increases by one unit, employee engagement increases by 0.414 units. Leadership Consideration ($B2 - 0.088$) as Leadership Consideration increases by one unit, Employee Engagement decreases by 0.088 units. Leadership Participation ($B3= .173$) as Leadership Participation increases by one unit, Employee Engagement increases by 0.173 units.

The regression equation is

$$\text{Employee engagement} = 3.559 + 0.414 *(\text{Initiating Structure}) - 0.088 *(\text{Leadership Consideration}) + 0.173 *(\text{Leadership Participation})$$

The hypothesis tests whether Perceived Leadership Behaviour (PLB) has a significant relationship with Employee Engagement (E-ENG). Linear regression analysis was used to test hypothesis H_1 .

PLB significantly predicted E-ENG, $F(1, 512) = 36.169$, $p < 0.001$, which indicates that the PLB does play a significant role in determining E-ENG ($b = .424$, $p < .001$). These results

indicate that there is a positive impact of PLB. Moreover, the $R^2 = .066$ depicts that the model explains 6.6% of the variance in E-Eng. Table 5 shows the summary of the findings.

Table – 5 Hypothesis Result Summary

Hypothesis	Regression Weights	Beta Coefficient	R^2	F	t-value	p-value	Hypotheses Supported
H1	PLB → E-ENG	.424	.066	36.169	6.014	.000	Yes

Note: * $p < 0.05$. PLB – Perceived Leadership Behaviour, E-Eng – Employee Engagement

The final predictive model

$$\text{Employee Engagement} = 3.880 + 0.424(\text{Perceived Leadership Behaviour})$$

This research explicitly confirms the positive associations between perceived leadership behaviour and employee engagement. The leadership dimension, initiating structure ($p=0.00$), a task-oriented construct, was the significant and strongest predictor. This indicates that the respondents are satisfied with leaders that are who outline the role he/she expect from the staff members and also who plan, establish ways of getting things done, and emphasise on achievement of organizational goals. These findings were in line with (Gaudet & Tremblay, 2017; Zhang et al., 2014). In contrast to this (Awan, 2011) identified that leadership was negatively correlated to engagement when tasks are highly structured.

Leadership Consideration exhibited a negative beta value ($B=-0.09$, $\beta =-0.06$) and no significant relation ($p=0.55$) with employee engagement. This leadership behaviour is people-oriented. A negative relationship indicates that the respondents do not respond positively to a leader who is friendly and focuses on the needs and expresses appreciation to the employees. This result was in line with (Bhatnagar et al., 2014) whose research revealed that leadership consideration or supportive management is a factor responsible for increasing the engagement of employees. The Beta value for leadership participation is 0.12, indicating that leadership participation has little influence over employee engagement.

6.6 % of the variance in employee engagement was explained by perceived leadership behaviour. Since the p-value was less than 0.05, the null hypothesis was rejected, and it was concluded that there is a significant relationship between perceived leadership behaviour and employee engagement. Results of the study indicate that perceived leadership behaviour, especially initiating structure style, drives employee engagement among employees.

8. Recommendations

Among the three dimensions of employee engagement, Dedication ($M=5.62$) scored higher, followed by Absorption ($M=5.5$) and Vigor ($M=5.4$). A high level of dedication implies that the employees strongly identify themselves with their jobs as they find them fulfilling and motivating. Furthermore, they often feel inspired and proud of their job. Absorption is the situation in which one is totally engrossed and contented in their task; time passes quickly, and it is impossible to disconnect from it. (Schaufeli et al., 2002).

It is recommended to incorporate an Employee Engagement survey as a key part of their five-year plan. Engagement should be considered as an ongoing implemented strategy. According to Gaudet & Tremblay (2017) and House et al. (2014), leaders are considered effective in the process of employee engagement because of the influence that their behavior has on the motivation, ability to perform effectively, and happiness of their subordinates, as well as the increase in goal attainment and clarity on the path to goal achievement. Leaders and administrators must be involved to set a good example for their staff. According to Koppula, (2017) Empowerment has a significant role in engagement. The administrator must create an empowering environment by facilitating better access to college information, encouraging teacher involvement in college choices, encouraging classroom innovation, and providing some resource autonomy. Teachers should be free to introduce innovations into their classrooms and have a say in decisions that benefit them, the school, and their students. The head of the institution should create a clear picture of what success looks like for the company, the team, and the specific employees. They can reward employees for their hard work. Access to possibilities for staff growth should be available. Emphasise employee well-being and flexibility. The employer can create an exceptional mentorship program. A mentor can be an employee with more experience or a highly engaged one who guides and advises a less experienced one.

9. Conclusion

The importance of examining teacher engagement stems from the fact that motivated instructors are more effective educators and are more likely to encourage student involvement (Eyal & Roth, 2011; McDonald, 2015) . The researchers interpreted that leadership consideration was related to the satisfaction of employees, whereas initiating structure had a strong correlation with performance and leader effectiveness. A supportive leader shows regard for the wants and preferences of their staff members by showing interest in their well-being and work environment (House & Dessler, 1974, as cited in Polston-Murdoch, n.d.).

While scores on initiating structure and leadership consideration are frequently independent of one another, Khaliq et al. (2016) found that leaders who scored well on both were more likely to be deemed effective by their superiors and to have positive effects on productivity and group morale. The success of an educational institution is positively impacted by a teacher's dedication to their colleagues, schools, students, and educational activities. If a leader's actions have a positive effect on their followers and inspire them to work for both organisational and personal goals that are important to them, that behaviour is considered effective leadership (Basnet, 2018). leadership ability aids in the development of teachers' and students' behavioural patterns and technical skills, enabling them to adapt to any circumstance they may encounter in the future (Sadeghi & Pihie, 2013).

The findings indicate that the most effective leaders employ a high level of initiating structure and a moderate level of leadership participation. The findings of this study indicate that employees of higher educational institutions in Mumbai value a task-oriented leader.

10. Scope for further study

The wider scope of further research may include the colleges outside the Mumbai district, and a comparison of faculty engagement based on the location of colleges can be made. A

comparative study of the faculties of autonomous colleges and affiliated colleges is suggested. A research study can be undertaken to find the relationship between engagement and other determinants such as work-life balance, communication, organisational culture, etc. A future study could focus on millennials, identifying specific gaps where the relationship between employee engagement and intention to quit is based on other background characteristics.

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