

---

# *Leadership and Employee Engagement in Global Workplaces: A Review of Contemporary Behavioural Research*

*Arunima Krishna*

College of Communication, Boston University, 640 Commonwealth Ave, Boston, MA 02215-1300, USA  
Email: krishna.arunima@gmail.com

## **Abstract**

*The increasing globalisation of work and the rise of remote and hybrid organisational structures have amplified the importance of effective leadership in shaping employee engagement. In multicultural and technologically mediated environments, leadership plays a critical role in influencing employee motivation, well-being, and performance outcomes. This review aims to synthesise contemporary behavioural research on the relationship between leadership and employee engagement in global workplaces. Adopting a narrative review approach, the study integrates findings from recent theoretical and empirical literature across organisational behaviour, leadership studies, and cross-cultural management. The review focuses on three key themes: leadership styles, underlying behavioural mechanisms, and cross-cultural dynamics. It examines how leadership approaches such as transformational, servant, and authentic leadership influence engagement through mechanisms including psychological safety, trust, and meaningful work. Additionally, it highlights the moderating role of cultural contexts and diversity in shaping leadership effectiveness and engagement outcomes. The findings suggest that transformational and inclusive leadership styles are particularly effective in fostering sustained engagement in global settings. The study contributes to both theory and practice by offering an integrative framework that connects leadership behaviours with psychological and contextual factors influencing engagement. It also provides practical insights for organisations seeking to enhance engagement through culturally responsive and adaptive leadership strategies. The review concludes by emphasising the need for future research to adopt longitudinal, cross-cultural, and interdisciplinary approaches to better understand leadership in evolving global workplaces.*

**Keywords:** Leadership; Employee Engagement; Global Workplaces; Organizational Behaviour Cross-Cultural Management; Behavioural Research

## **1. Introduction**

The modern business environment is becoming more and more globalised and digitalised, and remote and hybrid work is becoming more popular (Contreras et al., 2020; Kniffin et al., 2021). Instead, organisations are currently working in different cultural and geographical settings, and it has demanded leaders to handle multicultural teams, virtual teamwork and fast-changing work settings (Hofstede, 2016; House et al., 2004). All these changes have had a big impact on the traditional employee-employer relationship, whereby more emphasis has been placed on flexibility, adaptability and well-being of the employees (Kowalski and Ślebarska, 2022). In these highly versatile and interrelated environments, it has become a vital issue to comprehend the behavioural motivation of worker performance and organisational performance (Bakker and Albrecht, 2018).

In this sense, employee engagement has become a key construct in organisational research and practice that indicates the extent to which workers are cognitively, emotionally and behaviourally involved in their working positions (Kahn, 1990). There has been a large mass of literature that shows that engaged workers can lead to increased organisational performance, such as increased productivity, innovation and retention (Harter et al., 2002; Christian et al., 2011). Engagement is also becoming more of a strategic asset to enhance organisational resilience and competitive capability in changing settings (Bakker and Albrecht, 2018; Saks, 2019). Nevertheless, the nature of engagement is complex and context-specific and is determined by various psychological, interpersonal, and organisational factors (Bailey et al., 2017).

Leadership is a central issue, which is essential in shaping these factors and is a major mechanism by which organisations shape the attitudes and behaviours of employees (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015). Leadership behaviours influence perceptions of employees regarding their roles, motivation and building relationships with work and organisation (Decuyper and Schaufeli, 2021). Effective leadership promotes both psychological safety and trust and significant work experiences, which have been positively associated with engagement (Albrecht et al., 2023; Ashfaq et al., 2025). On the other hand, poor or inappropriate leadership practices can also lead to disengagement and poor performance of the organisation (Saks, 2019). The role of leadership in shaping the level of engagement in organisations is becoming more complex as organisations are becoming more global and technologically mediated (Contreras et al., 2020).

Regardless of the long-standing research, the literature on leadership and employee engagement is still fragmented in terms of theoretical insights, disciplinary and cultural contexts (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015). The literature tends to concentrate on individual leadership styles or individual engagement results without appropriately incorporating behavioural processes, cross-cultural interactions, and technological factors. Moreover, most of the empirical data is based on Western organisational contexts, which restricts its application to different workplaces around the world (Hofstede, 2016). The rapid emergence of digital workplaces and multicultural workforce organisation offers even greater support to the need for a more all-encompassing and integrative concept of the role of leadership in engagement (Contreras et al., 2020).

To overcome these limitations, the current review aims to combine contemporary research on behaviour to develop an all-encompassing strategy to the leadership-engagement relationship in global workplaces. In particular, it aims to study the impact of various styles of leadership on engagement, investigate the mediating behavioural processes that mediate this interaction, and determine the importance of cultural and contextual variables in mediating such interactions. Incorporating the insights of various theoretical frameworks and empirical research, the review can help advance the field of knowledge in global human behaviour research and offer a more detailed perspective on the role of leadership in promoting employee engagement in the more complex organisational contexts.

## **2. Conceptual Foundations**

### **2.1 Leadership in Organisational Context**

It is known that leadership is one of the main factors that define whether an organisation is effective and influences the attitude, behaviour and performance outcome of employees (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015). Initial definitions had conceptualised leadership as an act of influence whereby one could lead group activity to achieve goals. The classical theories of leadership, like trait and behavioural approaches, focused on the innate leader qualities and the visible actions as the factors of leadership effectiveness. These opinions were to be further referred to as contingency and situational models that stressed the situational compatibility of leadership style and environmental needs.

In contemporary organisational situations, leadership is beginning to be considered a dynamic, relational and socially constructed process (Decuypere and Schaufeli, 2021). Modern-day models, including transformational, servant, ethical, and authentic leadership, are based on values, emotional intelligence, and employee motivation and empowerment capabilities. Such a leadership style is transformational that targets the articulation of visions, intellectual stimulation and individual attention that enhance employee motivation and engagement (Cetin & Kinik, 2015). Similarly, servant leadership aims at developing followers and their well-being, and the leadership practices are aligned with the ideals of ethics and humanism (Eva et al., 2019).

The metamorphosis of the traditional to the modern leadership paradigm is a reflection of the changes in the organisational structure overall: globalisation, knowledge-based work and increased diversity in the workforce (Hofstede, 2016; House et al., 2004). Leaders working in global workplaces must negotiate cultural intricacy, virtual teams, and swift technological changes, and adaptable and inclusive leadership styles are needed.

## **2.2 Employee Engagement**

Employee engagement is a vital construct of organisational behaviour that has been used to indicate how much the employees are psychologically committed to their work roles. The groundbreaking work by Kahn (1990) took the conceptualisation of engagement through harnessing the physical, mental, and emotional self of employees in the performance of a specific role. On this, Rich et al. (2010) described job engagement as a multidimensional concept which takes into consideration cognitive, emotional and behavioural elements that promote performance outcomes.

The mental aspect of engagement is the level of concentration, preoccupation, and intellectual interest in work activities. Cognitively engaged employees are more attentive and are engrossed in their duties. The emotional dimension measures enthusiasm, pride, attachment to the organisation and work role, whereas the behavioural dimension measures discretionary effort, persistence and proactive work behaviours.

More recent studies have highlighted leadership as a factor in the development of these aspects of engagement. Leaders affect workers with regard to how they view their jobs, get inspired and distribute hard work. Engaged employees will tend to demonstrate greater productivity, creativity, organizational commitment, and engagement is a strong factor of organisational success in the competitive global markets (Bakker and Albrecht, 2018; Christian et al., 2011).

## **2.3 Theoretical Frameworks**

The connections between leadership and employee engagement rely on a number of theoretical frameworks that underpin the connection between leaders and employees in terms of their attitudes and behaviours.

Social Exchange Theory (SET) offers a backbone towards the concept of leadership and employee relations. As settled in the contribution by Kieserling (2018), SET presupposes the foundation of social interactions on mutual exchange of resources, such as support, trust, and recognition. Employees will tend to reciprocate with supportive and fair behaviours seen by their leaders by becoming more engaged and committed (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005; Kieserling, 2018).

The Self-Determination Theory (SDT) is concerned with intrinsic motivation and the satisfaction

of the lower psychological needs, namely, autonomy, competence, and relatedness. Leadership practices which contribute to these needs raise the intrinsic motivation of employees, which increases their level of engagement (Deci and Ryan, 2000). An illustration is that empowering leadership promotes autonomy, and supportive leadership promotes relatedness. The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model describes engagement as an activity of job demands and resources. The effects of job demands are mediated by job resources (supportive leadership, feedback, and autonomy) and facilitate engagement (Adil and Baig, 2018). The model is intimately connected with the Conservation of Resources (COR) Theory, which highlights the importance of resource accumulation and protection in employee well-being and engagement (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll et al., 2018).

The Transformational Leadership Theory also explains the influence of the leaders in terms of engaging the workers by inspiring them, building trust, and resolving the personal and organisational interests. Transformational leaders also create higher levels of psychological empowerment and meaningful work experiences, essential motivators of engagement (Saira et al., 2021). Combined, these theoretical views offer an in-depth explanation of how leadership behaviours become translated into employee engagement via psychological, motivational, and relational processes.

To synthesise these theoretical links, Table 1 is a systematic overview of the major theories, their primary ideas, and how they apply to leadership and employee engagement in organisations.

**Table 1: Key Theories Linking Leadership and Employee Engagement**

<b>Theory</b>	<b>Key Concepts</b>	<b>Relevance to Leadership</b>	<b>Implications for Employee Engagement</b>
Social Exchange Theory (Kieserling, 2018; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005)	Reciprocity, trust, mutual obligations	Leaders build relationships through support and fairness	Employees reciprocate with higher engagement and commitment
Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2000)	Autonomy, competence, relatedness	Leaders support psychological needs through empowerment	Enhances intrinsic motivation and sustained engagement
Job Demands-Resources Model (Adil & Baig, 2018)	Job demands, job resources	Leaders provide resources such as feedback and support	Balances stress and promotes engagement
Conservation of Resources Theory (Halbesleben et al., 2014; Hobfoll et al., 2018)	Resource acquisition and protection	Leaders help employees gain and conserve resources	Reduces burnout and enhances engagement
Transformational Leadership Theory	Vision, inspiration, individualised consideration	Leaders motivate and inspire followers	Drives emotional and cognitive engagement
Job Engagement Framework (Rich et al., 2010)	Cognitive, emotional, behavioural engagement	Leadership influences all engagement dimensions	Leads to improved performance and commitment

### **3. Leadership Styles and Their Behavioural Impact**

The styles of leadership play a crucial role in defining the extent of employee participation in terms of motivation, psychological moods, and work behaviours. The existing literature highlights the fact that different leadership styles have varying behavioural outcomes,

particularly in complex and dynamic organisational contexts (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015). This section is a critical evaluation of some of the leadership styles and their usefulness in regard to employee engagement.

### **3.1 Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leadership is commonly considered to be one of the most efficient types of leadership to increase employee involvement. It is characterised by vision articulation, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration (Cetin & Kinik, 2015). Transformational leaders create a sense of purpose and congruence between the personal and organisational objectives that contribute greatly to engagement.

Empirical research has shown that transformational leadership has a positive effect on daily work engagement and enhances psychological empowerment and intrinsic motivation (Breevaart and Bakker, 2018; Saira et al., 2021). Such leaders have higher chances of employees exhibiting proactive behaviours, creativity and commitment to the organisation. Moreover, transformational leaders enhance the identification of the employees with the organisation, and this relationship mediates the leadership-performance outcomes (Buil et al., 2019).

Nonetheless, even with its advantages, transformational leadership can have constraints within a highly structured setting where routine jobs dominate because focus on vision and change might not necessarily be consistent with stability in operations.

### **3.2 Transactional Leadership**

Transactional leadership is based on an exchange relationship between leaders and followers that emphasize on performance, rewards, and corrective actions (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). This style is based on contingent reward systems and management-by-exception to make sure the tasks are accomplished in an efficient way.

Although transactional leadership might be useful to sustain performance levels and role clarity in the short term, its effect on the higher levels of engagement is quite limited (Saks, 2019). It does not play a significant role in promoting emotional or cognitive attachment; instead, it mainly affects behavioural engagement through compliance. Employees can be in compliance with the expectations but have low chances of demonstrating discretionary effort or intrinsic motivation (Bakker and Albrecht, 2018).

However, in some situations, transactional leadership may be used as a complement to transformational leadership, especially in structured or performance-oriented settings which require clear expectations and accountability. It is powerful in that it is stable as opposed to active in long-term engagement.

### **3.3 Servant Leadership**

The concept of servant leadership focuses on the needs of employees, their growth, and well-being. The style embraced by leaders who practice this approach is to empower the employees, build trust, and encourage ethical conduct. This anthropocentric principle is very much in line with the modern organisational principles, especially in multi-cultural and multi-national places of work (Kiersch and Peters, 2017).

It has been proposed that servant leadership is one of the leadership styles that greatly increases employee engagement by establishing good relational relationships and psychological safety (Eva et al., 2019). The employees feel appreciated and encouraged, and this enhances their emotional attachment and desire to serve beyond the required duties in the job. Moreover, servant leadership creates a collaborative and inclusive culture; this is essential in cross-cultural settings (Stahl and Maznevski, 2021).

Kiersch and Peters (2017) emphasise the idea that servant leadership, combined with authentic leadership principles, can positively impact the outcomes of leadership development and engagement. However, critics assert that servant leadership can be questioned in an organisation that is highly competitive or hierarchical, where decisive authority is appreciated.

### 3.4 Authentic Leadership

Self-awareness, transparency, ethical behaviour and alignment of values and actions define leadership as true (Winton et al., 2022). Leaders who are truly trusted are those who demonstrate that they are able to care about the employees and that their actions are ethically acceptable.

This type of leadership is essential to promote psychological safety and meaningful work experiences, which are essential sources of engagement (Winton et al., 2022). With true leadership, employees are more likely to reach a high emotional and cognitive engagement since it will result in higher trust and perceived organisational support (Ashfaq et al., 2025).

Long-term engagement is also a possibility of true leadership in terms of providing a safe and ethical workplace. It could be, though, culturally contingent since in other cultures, the notions of authenticity and transparency might vary (Hofstede, 2016).

### 3.5 Digital and Remote Leadership

The increased popularity of digital and remote leadership styles has been brought about by the advent of digital transformation and work-from-home (Contreras et al., 2020; Kniffin et al., 2021). The strategies demand leaders to operate virtual teams, use technology and remain engaged without being physically present.

Digital leadership focuses on communication, flexibility and technological competency. Leaders have to be able to establish virtual spaces with trust, collaboration and engagement across geographical locations. Remote leadership also demands more emphasis on results over processes, which moves towards autonomy-based over traditional supervision (Kowalski and Ślebarska, 2022).

Although digital leadership may increase flexibility and inclusiveness, the major issue with digital leadership includes diminished social interaction, communication obstacles, and possible disengagement (Kniffin et al., 2021). Strategies that leaders should embrace to ensure that they are not out of touch with the employees include frequent feedback, virtual rewards, and integrative communication, among others (Men et al., 2020).

All in all, the comparative analysis of leadership styles demonstrates that transformational, servant, and authentic leadership styles are more useful in creating a profound and prolonged engagement, whereas the transactional leadership style is helpful to encourage compliance and immediate performance. Digital leadership is introducing a new set of dynamics that necessitate hybrid practices that entail both traditional and contemporary aspects of leadership.

In order to further elaborate on these differences, Table 2 presents a comparative study of the leadership styles, their traits, engagement and constraints.

**Table 2: Comparative Analysis of Leadership Styles**

Leadership Style	Key Characteristics	Impact on Employee Engagement	Limitations
Transformational Leadership (Cetin & Kinik, 2015; Breevaart & Bakker, 2018; Buil et al., 2019; Saira et al., 2021)	Vision-driven, inspirational, individualised support	High cognitive, emotional, and behavioural engagement promotes empowerment and innovation	Less effective in routine or highly structured environments
Transactional Leadership	Reward-based, performance-focused, corrective actions	Enhances behavioural engagement through compliance and task completion	Limited emotional and cognitive engagement; short-term focus
Servant	Employee-	Strong emotional	May lack

Leadership (Eva et al., 2019; Kiersch & Peters, 2017)	centric, ethical, supportive	engagement, trust, and psychological safety	decisiveness in competitive or hierarchical settings
Authentic Leadership (Winton et al., 2022)	Transparency, self-awareness, and ethical consistency	Builds trust, enhances emotional and cognitive engagement	Cultural variability in perception of authenticity
Digital/Remote Leadership	Technology-driven, flexible, communication-focused	Supports engagement in virtual settings through autonomy and connectivity	Risk of isolation, communication gaps, and reduced social bonding

#### **4. Behavioural Mechanisms Linking Leadership and Engagement**

Although the styles of leadership give the structural basis of influencing employee engagement, the performance is achieved at the level of underlying behavioural and psychological processes. These processes describe the manner in which leadership practices are converted to employee attitudes, motivation and performance (Decuyper and Schaufeli, 2021). Recent studies recognise psychological safety, motivation and meaningfulness, trust and leader member exchange (LMX) and emotional intelligence as important mediating processes (Albrecht et al., 2023; Ashfaq et al., 2025).

##### **4.1 Psychological Safety**

Psychological safety is defined as a collective attitude that the workplace is a safe place to risk interpersonal actions and employees can share ideas, concerns and mistakes without being afraid of adverse outcomes (Albritton et al., 2019). Leadership is an essential factor in ensuring such an environment is created with the help of supportive communication, openness and inclusivity (Albrecht et al., 2023).

It has been empirically indicated that psychological safety can greatly boost learning behaviour, collaboration, and engagement, especially when working in a team and cross-cultural context (Albritton et al., 2019). Leaders who foster employee involvement and who allow them to make errors will provide an environment where employees feel appreciated and are willing to share their ideas. This feeling of security has a direct effect on cognitive and emotional involvement through the decrease of anxiety and enhancement of involvement.

Also, psychological safety has been defined as a crucial feature in maintaining engagement in organisational change scenarios as employees tend to become more open to change when they feel the environment is conducive to it (Albrecht et al., 2023). Therefore, leadership actions favouring openness and trust are needed in order to foster engagement via psychological security.

##### **4.2 Motivation and Meaningfulness**

Meaningfulness and motivation are of paramount importance as key psychological motivators of employee engagement. Engagement is closely linked with the opinion of the employees that their work is meaningful and consistent with their personal values (Motyka, 2018). These perceptions can be altered by leadership through designing jobs, recognition and having a clear vision (Buil et al., 2019).

The studies show that meaningful work can raise both emotional and cognitive engagement and, as a result, increase the performance outcomes (Motyka, 2018; de Castro et al., 2021). Leaders who convey the importance of tasks and align personal efforts to organisational objectives create a sense of purpose among the staff. This is of particular concern in the global work environment, where dissimilar cultural values may determine the perceived meaningfulness (Hofstede, 2016).

Besides, a leadership style such as authentic and sustainable leadership can be used to motivate through the support of the key principles and mental propping (Oh et al., 2018; Ashfaq et al., 2025). Such strategies increase intrinsic motivation that encourages the workers to exert additional effort and commitment in their work. Meaningfulness is thus a very important avenue through which leadership can enhance engagement.

#### **4.3 Trust and Leader–Member Exchange (LMX)**

The Leadership–Employee relationships are based on trust, with the latter being strongly connected with the Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) theory (Cropanzano and Mitchell, 2005). LMX focuses on the quality of relations between leaders and subordinates, with the highest quality being trust and mutual respect and the lowest quality being transactional (Rockstuhl et al., 2012).

Good LMX relations promote better emotional attachment, commitment and engagement. When employees believe in their leaders, they tend to contribute more ideas, get feedback, and do other discretionary actions that are beneficial to the organisation (Rockstuhl et al., 2012). Fairness, transparency and support are leadership behaviours that are essential in creating this trust.

According to recent research, perceived organisational support and employee well-being, as well as engagement, are also boosted by leadership-based trust (Ashfaq et al., 2025). Trust is even more important in global and multicultural situations since in these situations, cultural differences may affect the perception of leadership credibility and relational expectations.

Trust and LMX, therefore, are important relational processes that can mediate the effect of leadership on the results of engagement.

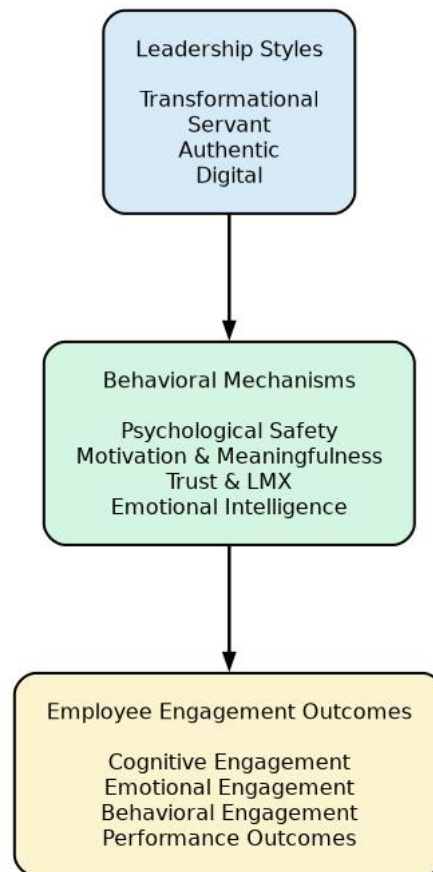
#### **4.4 Emotional Intelligence**

Emotional intelligence (EI) is the skill to perceive, discern and control one's own feelings and those of others. Highly emotionally intelligent leaders are in a better position to address the needs of their employees, handle conflicts, and promote good working relations at the workplace (Ashfaq et al., 2025).

Emotionally intelligent leadership boosts the level of engagement by making work environments supportive and understanding. Empathic and emotionally aware leaders are more able to respond to employee concerns, and this results in greater satisfaction and commitment. This is especially applicable in international workplaces where there is cultural diversity, and various forms of emotions and styles of communication should be sensitive (Ang and Van Dyne, 2015).

Furthermore, emotional intelligence is a contributing factor to other behavioural processes, including psychological safety and trust (Albrecht et al., 2023). Effective leaders in managing emotions will generate safer work environments and establish robust interpersonal relationships, which will indirectly lead to increased engagement.

In general, these processes of behaviour demonstrate that leadership affects engagement in a complex psychological and relational process rather than directly. Openness and participation, motivation and meaningfulness, relational bonds, and interpersonal dynamics are supported by psychological safety, intrinsic engagement, trust and LMX, and emotional intelligence, respectively. A combination of these mechanisms constitutes an entire trajectory between leadership and engagement outcomes (Decuyper and Schaufeli, 2021).



**Figure 1: Leadership-Engagement Behavioural Framework**

Figure 1 is used to illustrate these relationships and provides a conceptual framework where leadership styles can affect the behavioural mechanisms, which subsequently lead to employee engagement outcomes.

## 5. Cross-Cultural Perspectives in Global Workplaces

Leadership and employee engagement are entrenched in cultural contexts in an economy that is becoming more globalised (Hofstede, 2016; House et al., 2004). The cross-cultural differences determine the perceptions of leadership behaviours, employee reactions, and engagement. These dynamics are imperative in the formulation of effective methods of leadership in global workplaces.

### 5.1 Cultural Dimensions

The frameworks of cultural dimensions offer a basic instrument to understand cross-cultural distinctions in organisational behaviour. Hofstede's (2016) cultural dimensions theory highlights the following dimensions: power distance, individualism/collectivism, uncertainty avoidance, masculinity/femininity, and long-term orientation as determinants of workplace values and behaviours (Hofstede, 2016). These dimensions determine the expectations of leadership, the style of communication, and the pattern of engagement of the employees.

Equally, the GLOBE study builds on the works of Hofstede by exploring leadership in 62 societies, and determining those models of leadership that are culturally approved (House et al., 2004). The GLOBE model makes it clear that the effectiveness of leadership depends on the cultural norms, and different societies attach importance to such attributes as charisma, team orientation, and participative leadership.

The concept of cultural intelligence (CQ) is also an additional element to these frameworks that dwells upon the ability of a person to operate in a culturally diverse environment (Ang and Van Dyne, 2015). High-CQ leaders have a greater ability to adjust their behaviours to a variety of cultural settings, which increases their participation in international teams.

### **5.2 Leadership Effectiveness Across Cultures**

The effectiveness of leadership in different cultural settings is significantly different based on the differences in values, expectations, and relational norms. As an example, transformational leadership can be most efficient in individualistic cultures with the emphasis on autonomy and innovation, whereas the relational and group-oriented leadership styles might be more effective in collectivist cultures (House et al., 2004).

Studies have shown that effective leadership styles should be in line with the cultural expectations. According to Aldhaferi (2017), culturally intelligent leadership is more flexible and effective in different organisational settings. Managers who understand cultural peculiarities are able to build trust, communicate, engage and communicate easier.

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory has cultural variations as well. A meta-analysis conducted by Rockstuhl et al. (2012) revealed that the strength and implications of LMX relationships vary among cultures, especially between individualistic and collectivist cultures. Relational harmony and group cohesion are more important in engagement in collectivist cultures, and personal achievement and autonomy are more important in individualistic cultures (Hofstede, 2016).

Therefore, in international workplaces, leadership performance relies on the style of leadership, as well as the cultural congruence thereof.

### **5.3 Global Variations in Employee Engagement**

Employee engagement is not a universal homogenous construct; it is different in different cultural settings because of the differences in values, motivations and expectations of work (Bailey et al., 2017). Some cultures have intrinsic motivations to engage, which may be personal development and independence, whereas others may relate to social networks, employment opportunities, and community objectives (Hofstede, 2016).

The recent studies have noted that expatriates and international workers are characterised by specific patterns of engagement that are determined by the adaptation to the culture and organisational support. As an example, van Bakel et al. (2024) have discovered that the willingness of expatriates to go the extra mile depends on organisational factors and cultural adjustment processes. This highlights the need to contextualise engagement in the context of global mobility as well as cross-cultural experiences.

Moreover, there are both opportunities and challenges of engagement with multicultural teams. Cultural diversity has the ability to improve creativity and innovation, but also can create barriers in communication and conflict in case of ineffective management (Stahl and Maznevski, 2021). Leaders should hence embrace inclusive approaches that capitalise on diversity and reduce the possible setbacks.

### **5.4 Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI)**

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) are now the key elements of organisational strategies, which are to contribute to better engagement within global workplaces (Stahl and Maznevski, 2021). DEI programs aim to provide an environment in which people of different backgrounds feel respected, appreciated, and welcomed.

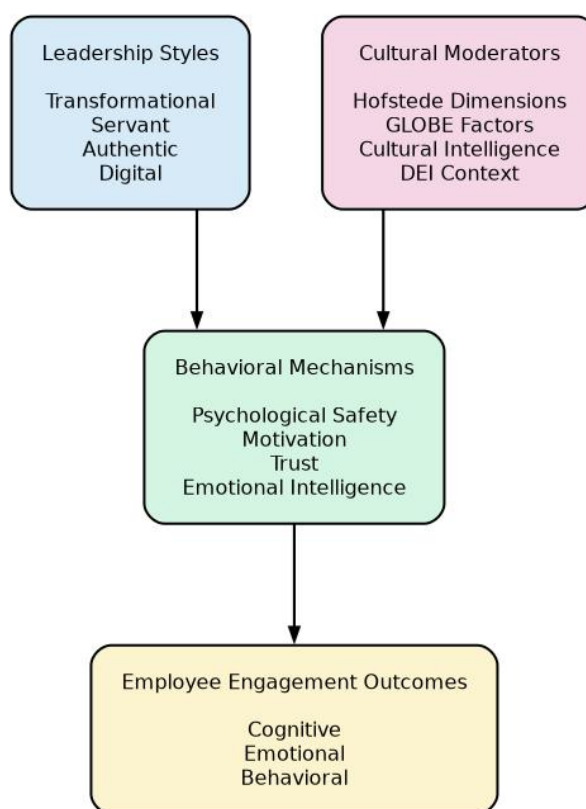
Leadership is an important factor in advancing DEI by fostering inclusive behaviours, fair practices, and cultural sensitivity (Ang and Van Dyne, 2015). DEI leaders create a sense of psychological safety and belonging, both essential engagement drivers (Albrecht et al., 2023). Inclusive leadership will make sure that different views are heard and incorporated in the decision-making process.

Cultural intelligence is especially topical in the context of the development of the DEI initiatives

since it helps leaders to overcome cultural barriers and build inclusive environments (Ang and Van Dyne, 2015). Additionally, companies that successfully deal with diversity have a greater chance of attaining greater levels of engagement, innovation, and performance.

Nevertheless, the application of DEI to the global environment must be done cautiously, with cultural diversities kept in mind, since the view of fairness, inclusion, and diversity might be viewed differently in different societies (Hofstede, 2016). The leaders should thus have culturally adaptive practices to DEI that are in line with the local norms but globalised.

In general, the cross-cultural approaches emphasise that the leadership-engagement relationship is not universal but is moderated by cultural factors. The aspects of culture, flexibility in leadership, and inclusiveness all influence the engagement experience at workplaces in the global environment (House et al., 2004; Ang and Van Dyne, 2015). Leaders who become culturally intelligent and apply context-sensitive strategies are in a better position to enhance engagement in a variety of environments.



**Figure 2: Cultural Moderation Model**

In order to illustrate the presence of such moderating value of culture, Figure 2 illustrates a conceptual model that accounts for the presence of cultural factors in the relationship between leadership and employee engagement.

## 6. Technology and Evolving Work Contexts

The fast growth of digital technologies and the transition to remote and hybrid work models have fundamentally changed the organisational structures and leadership practices (Contreras et al., 2020; Kniffin et al., 2021). The changes have transformed how leaders interact with their employees, how leaders communicate their expectations, and how leaders can interact with employees in more virtual settings. The convergence of technology and leadership is therefore significant in comprehending how to keep employees engaged in the modern work environment.

### **6.1 Remote and Hybrid Work Leadership**

Remote and hybrid working practices are becoming salient, especially after the COVID-19 pandemic, due to the redefinition of leadership roles and expectations. The application of information and communication technologies (ICTs) to influence groups and individuals has become an important concept in this regard, known as e-leadership (Contreras et al., 2020). The managers in remote areas will be required to access online materials to keep in touch, coordinate the activities and monitor performance. Unlike traditional leadership, which is mainly a body-present leadership style, remote leadership embraces the elements of trust, autonomy and management by result. Research indicates that effective remote leadership results in greater engagement, which includes flexibility and the flexibility of employees to work autonomously (Kowalski and Ślebarska, 2022). However, working remotely has other issues, such as social isolation, a lack of team spirit, and work-life balance (Kniffin et al., 2021). Leaders ought to therefore have policies that encourage connection and well-being that incorporate regular virtual check-ins, open communication and rewarding of employee contributions (Men et al., 2020).

### **6.2 Digital Communication and Engagement**

The central place in employee engagement in virtual settings is played by digital communication. Social media within the organisation, the use of collaborative tools and communication devices may enable the leaders to maintain contact with the employees, and make them feel part of the organisation. According to the research, the favourable effect of the internal social media usage on employee engagement is linked to the enhancement of information sharing, cooperation, and organisational identification (Men et al., 2020). Online platforms enable leaders to convey organisational vision and offer feedback and acknowledge accomplishments in real-time, thus enhancing emotional and cognitive connections (Bakker and Albrecht, 2018). However, overuse of digital communication may result in information overload and low quality of communication. Leaders ought to strike a balance between being present and not talking too much. Digital communication must be responsive and consistent, and should be understandable to the employees' needs.

### **6.3 Human–Technology Interaction**

The decisive factor influencing engagement in the digital workplace is the human-technology interaction. Technology not only eases the working process, but it also influences the experiences of employees and how they view leadership. Diverse and complex geographical borders require virtual teams to be highly dependent on digital tools, involving leaders to address diversity, coordination and trust (Gilson et al., 2015). The usability of digital tools, quality of virtual collaboration, and the degree to which technology facilitates meaningful work are critical to successful human-technology interaction.

Moreover, technology can also be used to improve engagement by providing flexible working schedules and access to resources, but it also brings about problems like technostress and a lack of face-to-face contact (Kniffin et al., 2021). Leaders should thus make sure that technology is employed as an enabler and not as a barrier to engagement. The changing work environment promotes the necessity of flexible leadership strategies that combine technological ability with human-oriented principles (Contreras et al., 2020). Leaders who successfully utilise technology without losing close personal ties are in a better position to encourage continued involvement in online spaces.

To integrate such dynamics, Table 3 provides a systematic review of the major issues, leadership approaches, and the consequences of engagement in digital workplaces.

**Table 3: Leadership Strategies in Digital Work Environments**

<b>Challenges</b>	<b>Leadership Strategies</b>	<b>Engagement Outcomes</b>
Remote work isolation	Regular virtual check-ins,	Improved emotional engagement

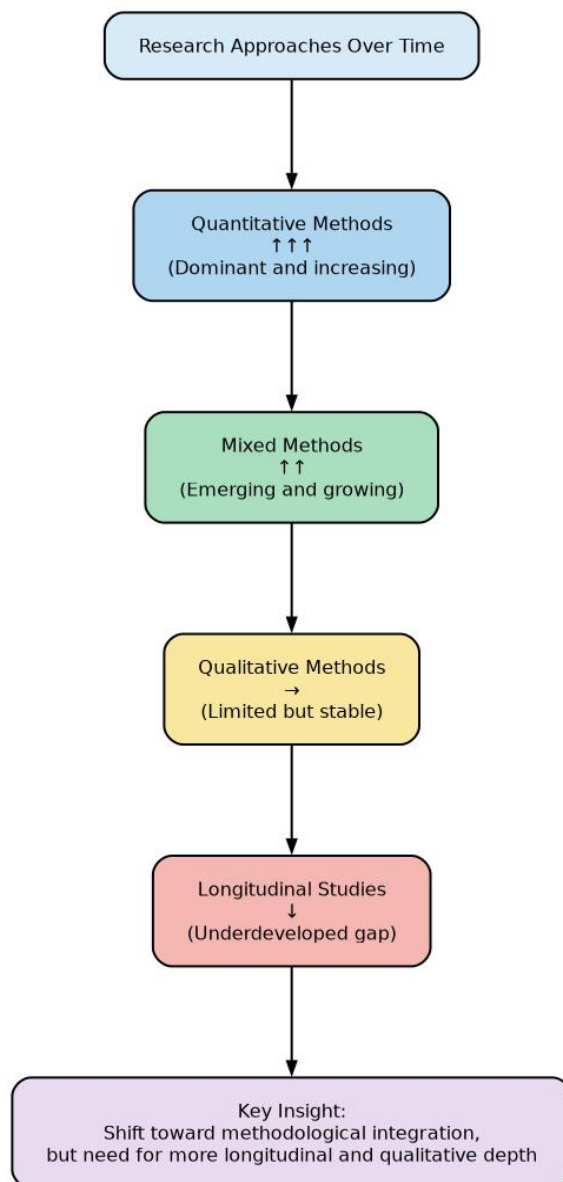
(Kniffin et al., 2021)	team-building activities	and team cohesion
Lack of face-to-face supervision (Contreras et al., 2020)	Trust-based leadership, autonomy support	Increased cognitive engagement and accountability
Communication gaps in virtual teams (Gilson et al., 2015)	Use of collaborative tools, clear communication protocols	Enhanced collaboration and behavioural engagement
Information overload (Men et al., 2020)	Structured communication, prioritisation of messages	Reduced stress and improved focus
Work–life balance challenges (Kowalski & Ślebarska, 2022)	Flexible work policies, well-being support	Higher satisfaction and sustained engagement

## 7. Methodological Trends in Existing Research

Research on leadership and employee engagement has experienced an immense methodological development in the last 20 years, in line with the increasing complexity of organisational situations and the demands of well-developed empirical data (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015; Decuyper and Schaufeli, 2021). The literature review demonstrates that the quantitative research designs continue to prevail, and the literature is dominated by the use of survey-based research methods and statistical modelling. The use of cross-sectional studies is so ordinary, and in most cases, they employ the use of standardised scales to assess leadership styles and outcomes of engagements (Christian et al., 2011). These methods have facilitated the ability to collect data in large numbers and to generalize but they lack capturing dynamic and context-specific processes. Over the past few years, a gradual move towards more advanced methods of analysis, such as structural equation modelling (SEM), multilevel analysis, and mediation/moderation models, has occurred (Decuyper and Schaufeli, 2021). The approaches enable the researchers to study complicated correlations among leadership actions, psychological processes, and engagement results. Nevertheless, even with these improvements, the excessive use of self-reported data brings about the issues of common method bias and the validity of the results (Bailey et al., 2017).

There has also been a focus on cross-cultural and interdisciplinary solutions, particularly with globalisation and increasing workforce diversity. Studies based on cross-national data and comparative studies provide valuable information on how the cultural setting affects the performance and participation of leadership. The interdisciplinary perspectives, a blend of the knowledge offered by psychology, sociology and management, have also added further knowledge to the field since more detailed explanations of employee behaviour have been offered. However, there are still a number of shortcomings in the current literature. One of the major gaps is that longitudinal research determining the modification of engagement over time is unavailable. Most of the works are snapshots and cannot enable one to understand the dynamics of cause-and-effect relationships and time development. Additionally, the qualitative methods lack representation, but they can be employed to get to know more about the experiences of employees and the contextual factors.

These gaps are beginning to be addressed by new emerging research methods. The mixed-method designs (quantitative and qualitative) are on the rise because they provide a more in-depth view of leadership and engagement (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015). Although there are still a few, longitudinal studies have become considered critical in capturing changing dynamics in the workplace (Decuyper and Schaufeli, 2021). Moreover, new opportunities to investigate engagement in technologically-driven settings are provided by the utilisation of digital analytics, big data, and real-time monitoring instruments (Decuyper and Schaufeli, 2021). All in all, although more sophisticated methodologies have made the field stronger, more varied, context-sensitive, and longitudinal studies are necessary to be able to be more comprehensive and capture all the dynamics of leadership and employee engagement in the global workplace.



**Figure 3: Trends in Research Approaches**

Figure 3 shows how there has been a shift in the research approaches in the literature on leadership and employee engagement. It laments the prevalence of quantitative methods and the new application of mixed methods, and points to the relative lack of longitudinal research.

Figure 3 shows the trend of research, as the arrows show. The increasing arrows (↑ ↑ ↑) demonstrate that quantitative approaches are prevailing and gaining favour, whereas mixed methods (↑ ↑) are on the rise. The horizontal arrow (→) hints that qualitative methods are not changing but are restricted. The descending arrow (↓) underlines the fact that longitudinal studies are yet underdeveloped, and this is where there is a big gap in terms of monitoring changes with time.

## 8. Practical Implications

These lessons of integrating leadership and employee engagement literature provide several practical lessons to organisations which must operate both in dynamic and global environments (Bakker and Albrecht, 2018; Saks, 2019). These implications have an implication on organisational practices, leadership development, as well as interventions on the policy level, which necessitate that they must be adaptive and culturally responsive (Hofstede, 2016; House et al., 2004).

### **8.1 Organisational Implications**

Employee engagement is a strategic focus of organisations that should be combined with performance, innovation, and sustainability. The mechanisms that improve engagement (such as psychological safety, meaningful work, and building trust) must be consistent with the leadership practices. The organisations can build engagement by creating favourable working environments that enable free communication, collaboration, and participation of employees in decision-making (Bailey et al., 2017).

Moreover, the introduction of digital technologies requires organisations to reorganise work and communication processes to make sure that they are involved in remote and hybrid settings. In order to stay engaged, there is a need to make available in-use technology tools, effective communication channels, and to promote work-life balance. The process of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) should also be incorporated into the essence of the business of organisations to foster the sense of belonging and engagement of diverse workforces of various cultures (Stahl and Maznevski, 2021).

### **8.2 Leadership Development**

The leadership development programs must be supportive of the dynamics of the global and technology-based workplaces. Some of the competencies that ought to be included in the conventional leadership training are cultural intelligence, emotional intelligence, and digital leadership capabilities. The leaders must be ready to manage various teamwork, cross-cultural and encourage diverse environments (Hofstede, 2016).

Relational and transformational leadership behaviours that promote employee motivation and engagement should be part of training programs. The development of these competencies can be especially effective with the help of coaching, mentoring and experiential learning methods (Kiersch and Peters, 2017). Moreover, companies ought to promote perpetual learning and flexibility amongst the leaders to address the highly dynamic work environment (Decuyper and Schaufeli, 2021).

This is necessary to produce leaders who could strike a balance between the performance-oriented goals and the interests of the employees to achieve sustainable engagement outcomes (Saks, 2019).

### **8.3 Policy and Global Workforce Management**

Companies must come up with systems that allow flexible employment terms, employee protection, and just operations on an international scale. Remote and hybrid work have a number of issues that should be tackled by the policies, such as workload management, norms of digital communication, and support systems (Contreras et al., 2020).

The management of international labour requires modification of the company policies and the cultural realities at the local level. Global uniformity might not be effective in all regions; organisations ought to take a middle ground between international uniformity and local flexibility (House et al., 2004). This includes tailoring of leadership practices and engagement strategies in regard to cultural values and expectations.

Moreover, organisations should also invest in systems that monitor and analyse the involvement of employees in different geographical locations so that they can make decisions that are informed (Men et al., 2020). With this blend of leadership styles and facilitating policies, organisations are able to create workplaces that promote long-term commitment and organisational outcomes in foreign workplaces.

## **9. Research Gaps and Future Directions**

Although there has been a lot of advancement in the relationship between leadership and employee engagement, there are still a number of research gaps. The gaps are critical to the development of more all-encompassing and contextually applicable insights, especially in international and technologically changing workplaces (Hofstede, 2016; Contreras et al., 2020).

One of the weaknesses is the absence of cross-cultural longitudinal studies. There is a lack of longitudinal research to study the dynamics and causal relationships with time, and most of the existing research is cross-sectional. There is a need to do longitudinal studies across a variety of cultural settings to gain a better understanding of how leadership and engagement change over time, particularly during an organisational change (House et al., 2004).

Technology-based leadership is another new field of research. Although the digital tools have revolutionised leadership practices, there is a paucity of empirical studies that have investigated the impact of technology on the leadership-engagement relationship. The emerging digital leadership competencies, virtual communication, and human-technology interaction in remote and hybrid settings should be examined in future.

Also, more behavioural and experimental research designs are required because the existing research bases its study on self-reported data (Bailey et al., 2017). More information on causal mechanisms can be obtained through experimental and observational methods. Further research with an interdisciplinary approach combining psychology, sociology, and information systems can enhance the comprehension of engagement.

Recent studies emphasise examining contextual and individual factors linking leadership and engagement (Decuypere & Schaufeli, 2021). In general, integrative, longitudinal and interdisciplinary approaches should be incorporated in future studies to enhance theoretical and practical contributions in global workplace settings.

## **10. Conclusion**

This review has critically discussed the connection between leadership and employee engagement in global workplaces by combining modernised behavioural theories, leadership styles, and contextual effects. The results indicate that leadership is a central source of engagement, which works via the essential behavioural processes of psychological safety, motivation, trust, and emotional intelligence. Transformational, servant, and authentic leadership forms seem to be especially effective in establishing a profound and long-lasting engagement, whereas digital leadership gains more and more relevance in work settings that rely more on technology. The relevance of the cultural context is also highlighted in the review, which shows that cross-cultural differences, diversity, and inclusion practices are important factors influencing leadership effectiveness and engagement. This article, by integrating the insights of various theoretical frameworks, such as the social exchange theory, self-determination theory, and the job demands-resources model, adds to the study of human behaviour in the world by providing a unified view of the connections between the behaviours of leaders and psychological and contextual influences on engagement. Moreover, the paper emphasises the changing environment of work and the necessity of adapting to culturally savvy and technologically skilled leadership strategies. In general, the review provides both theoretical and practical insights, highlighting that effective leadership in international workplaces requires a balance between performance orientation and employee well-being. Flexible, human-focused and inclusive leadership will play an important role in keeping employees engaged and ensuring long-term organisational success in the context of organisations still working within dynamic and intricate environments.

## **References**

1. Adil, M. S., & Baig, M. (2018). Impact of job demands-resources model on burnout and employee's well-being: Evidence from the pharmaceutical organisations of Karachi. *IIMB management review*, 30(2), 119-133.
2. Albrecht, S. L., Furlong, S., & Leiter, M. P. (2023). The psychological conditions for employee engagement in organizational change: Test of a change engagement model. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 14, 1071924.
3. Albritton, J. A., Fried, B., Singh, K., Weiner, B. J., Reeve, B., & Edwards, J. R. (2019). The role of psychological safety and learning behavior in the development of effective quality improvement teams in Ghana: an observational study. *BMC health services*

- research, 19(1), 385.
4. Aldhaferi, A. (2017). Cultural intelligence and leadership style in the education sector. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 31(6), 718-735.
  5. Ang, S., & Van Dyne, L. (2015). *Handbook of cultural intelligence: Theory, measurement, and applications*. Routledge.
  6. Ashfaq, F., Abid, G., Ilyas, S., & Faseeh, A. (2025). Fueling work engagement through sustainable leadership: Examining sequential mediation of perceived organizational support and mental health. *Human Systems Management*, 44(2), 287-301.
  7. Bailey, C., Madden, A., Alfes, K., & Fletcher, L. (2017). The meaning, antecedents and outcomes of employee engagement: A narrative synthesis. *International journal of management reviews*, 19(1), 31-53.
  8. Bakker, A. B., & Albrecht, S. (2018). Work engagement: current trends. *Career development international*, 23(1), 4-11.
  9. Breevaart, K., & Bakker, A. B. (2018). Daily job demands and employee work engagement: The role of daily transformational leadership behavior. *Journal of occupational health psychology*, 23(3), 338.
  10. Buil, I., Martínez, E., & Matute, J. (2019). Transformational leadership and employee performance: The role of identification, engagement and proactive personality. *International journal of hospitality management*, 77, 64-75.
  11. Carasco-Saul, M., Kim, W., & Kim, T. (2015). Leadership and employee engagement: Proposing research agendas through a review of literature. *Human Resource Development Review*, 14(1), 38-63.
  12. Cetin, M. O., & Kinik, F. S. F. (2015). An analysis of academic leadership behavior from the perspective of transformational leadership. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 207, 519-527.
  13. Christian, M. S., Garza, A. S., & Slaughter, J. E. (2011). Work engagement: A quantitative review and test of its relations with task and contextual performance. *Personnel psychology*, 64(1), 89-136.
  14. Contreras, F., Baykal, E., & Abid, G. (2020). E-leadership and teleworking in times of COVID-19 and beyond: What we know and where do we go. *Frontiers in psychology*, 11, 590271.
  15. Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M. S. (2005). Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review. *Journal of management*, 31(6), 874-900.
  16. de Castro, V. B., Sridharan, B., Watty, K., & Safari, M. (2021). The impact of learner engagement on performance outcomes: a longitudinal study in accounting education. *Accounting & Finance*, 61, 1639-1664.
  17. Deci, E. L., & Ryan, R. M. (2000). The "what" and "why" of goal pursuits: Human needs and the self-determination of behavior. *Psychological inquiry*, 11(4), 227-268.
  18. Decuyper, A., & Schaufeli, W. (2021). Exploring the leadership-engagement nexus: A moderated meta-analysis and review of explaining mechanisms. *International journal of environmental research and public health*, 18(16), 8592.
  19. Eva, N., Robin, M., Sendjaya, S., Van Dierendonck, D., & Liden, R. C. (2019). Servant leadership: A systematic review and call for future research. *The leadership quarterly*, 30(1), 111-132.
  20. Gilson, L. L., Maynard, M. T., Jones Young, N. C., Vartiainen, M., & Hakonen, M. (2015). Virtual teams research: 10 years, 10 themes, and 10 opportunities. *Journal of management*, 41(5), 1313-1337.
  21. Halbesleben, J. R., Neveu, J. P., Paustian-Underdahl, S. C., & Westman, M. (2014). Getting to the "COR" understanding the role of resources in conservation of resources theory. *Journal of management*, 40(5), 1334-1364.
  22. Harter, J. K., Schmidt, F. L., & Hayes, T. L. (2002). Business-unit-level relationship between employee satisfaction, employee engagement, and business outcomes: a meta-

- analysis. *Journal of applied psychology*, 87(2), 268.
23. Hobfoll, S. E., Halbesleben, J., Neveu, J. P., & Westman, M. (2018). Conservation of resources in the organizational context: The reality of resources and their consequences. *Annual review of organizational psychology and organizational behavior*, 5, 103-128.
  24. Hofstede, G. (2016). Culture's consequences: Comparing values, behaviors, institutions, and organizations across nations. *Collegiate Aviation Review*, 34(2), 108.
  25. House, R. J., Hanges, P. J., Javidan, M., Dorfman, P. W., & Gupta, V. (Eds.). (2004). *Culture, leadership, and organizations: The GLOBE study of 62 societies*. Sage publications.
  26. Kahn, W. A. (1990). Psychological conditions of personal engagement and disengagement at work. *Academy of management journal*, 33(4), 692-724.
  27. Kiersch, C., & Peters, J. (2017). Leadership from the inside out: Student leadership development within authentic leadership and servant leadership frameworks. *Journal of leadership education*, 16(1), 148-168.
  28. Kieserling, A. (2018). Blau (1964): exchange and power in social life. In *Schlüsselwerke der netzwerkforschung* (pp. 51-54). Wiesbaden: Springer Fachmedien Wiesbaden.
  29. Kniffin, K. M., Narayanan, J., Anseel, F., Antonakis, J., Ashford, S. P., Bakker, A. B., ... & Vugt, M. V. (2021). COVID-19 and the workplace: Implications, issues, and insights for future research and action. *American psychologist*, 76(1), 63.
  30. Kowalski, G., & Ślebarska, K. (2022). Remote working and work effectiveness: a leader perspective. *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 19(22), 15326.
  31. Men, L. R., O'Neil, J., & Ewing, M. (2020). Examining the effects of internal social media usage on employee engagement. *Public Relations Review*, 46(2), 101880.
  32. Motyka, B. (2018). Employee engagement and performance: a systematic literature review. *International Journal of Management and Economics*, 54(3), 227-244.
  33. Oh, J., Cho, D., & Lim, D. H. (2018). Authentic leadership and work engagement: the mediating effect of practicing core values. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 39(2), 276-290.
  34. Rich, B. L., Lepine, J. A., & Crawford, E. R. (2010). Job engagement: Antecedents and effects on job performance. *Academy of management journal*, 53(3), 617-635.
  35. Rockstuhl, T., Dulebohn, J. H., Ang, S., & Shore, L. M. (2012). Leader-member exchange (LMX) and culture: A meta-analysis of correlates of LMX across 23 countries. *Journal of applied psychology*, 97(6), 1097.
  36. Saira, S., Mansoor, S., & Ali, M. (2021). Transformational leadership and employee outcomes: the mediating role of psychological empowerment. *Leadership & organization development journal*, 42(1), 130-143.
  37. Saks, A. M. (2019). Antecedents and consequences of employee engagement revisited. *Journal of Organizational Effectiveness: People and Performance*, 6(1), 19-38.
  38. Stahl, G. K., & Maznevski, M. L. (2021). Unraveling the effects of cultural diversity in teams: A retrospective of research on multicultural work groups and an agenda for future research. *Journal of international business studies*, 52(1), 4.
  39. van Bakel, M., Noesgaard, M. S., & Michailova, S. (2024). "Willing to go the extra mile": an exploration of antecedents of assigned expatriates' work engagement. *Journal of Global Mobility: The Home of Expatriate Management Research*, 12(3), 369-393.
  40. Winton, B. G., Whittington, J. L., & Meskelis, S. (2022). Authentic leadership: making meaning and building engagement. *European Business Review*, 34(5), 689-705.