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Exploring the Perception of Employees on Leadership Style and Employee Engagement in the Gauteng Department of Education

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This research report is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management by Coursework and Research Report to the Faculty of Commerce, Law, and Management, University of the Witwatersrand

2026

Declaration

I, **Goodwill Chuma** (Student No: 2346819), declare that the work contained in this mini dissertation titled **"Exploring the Perception of Employees on Leadership Style and Employee Engagement in the Gauteng Department of Education"** is my original work and has not previously in its entirety or part, been submitted at any university for or towards any a degree or qualification.



Goodwill Chuma

Date - 2026/01/22

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From the bottom of my heart, I would like to thank the following individuals who helped make this research possible:

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Abstract

To evidently inform planning, it is critical that organisations determine the type of leadership style adopted. The study focused on governance styles and the different positionalities in the workspace and how that impacts leadership styles. It also weighed on the notion of effective policy implementation and how the governance of policy implementation might provide insights into leadership styles that weigh and inform the implementation of policies in a stable/inclusive working environment. The study was designed with three distinct goals. The first goal was to identify the leadership style or styles that are most frequently used in GDE. The second goal of the study was to determine the level of participation in departmental planning and decision-making among probationary employees and recently hired staff members. Finally, it sought to ascertain the connection between the engagement of probationary employees and leadership styles.

Using a quantitative methodology, the study gathered information from 39 out of 114 GDE probationary employees. Data was gathered by sending probationary employees a Google link. Regression analysis and descriptive statistics were computed using SPSS IBM version 29.0. The findings indicate that transformational and transactional leadership philosophies are primarily used by GDE managers. Employee engagement and transformative, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles are positively and significantly correlated. Employee engagement is positively and significantly impacted by both leadership philosophies. Therefore, employing a transformational, transactional, or laissez-faire strategy will be associated with higher employee engagement outcomes, depending on the context in which a leader decides to use their style. Therefore, it's crucial to know which style to employ in which circumstance. Furthermore, the descriptive statistics show how very involved the probationary staff members of GDE are.

Keywords: leadership styles, employee engagement

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List of Abbreviations

ANOVA	Analysis of variance
ASD	Assistant Director
CD	Chief Director
CES	Chief Education Specialist
DCES	Deputy Chief Education Specialist
DDG	Deputy Director General
DD	Deputy Director
D	Directo
EEA	Employee Equity Act
GDE	Gauteng Department of Education
LRA	Labour Relations Act
MEC	Member of Executive Committee
MLQ	Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire
NDP	National Development Plan
SES	Senior Education Specialist
SPSS	Statistical package for social sciences
UWES	Utrecht Work Engagement Scale
WSG	Wits School of Governance

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Introduction and Background Information

This study investigated how employees perceive leadership styles and the level of employee engagement at the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE). This study employed a quantitative approach, focusing on departmental governance styles and the adoption and extent of engagement approaches during policy implementation processes at GDE. The perspectives will aid in understanding which leadership approach is commonly adopted and how effectively employees engage in various methods. This was accomplished through engaging probationary staff members about their experiences with employee engagement and leadership style.

Endeavouring for a conducive work environment greatly benefits both the employer and the employee (Lyman, Biddulph, Hopper, Horton, Mendon, Thorum, & Smith, 2021; Bhuvanaiah & Raya, 2014). On one hand, it encourages and safeguards employee commitment, while on the other hand, it guarantees the fulfilment of the organisation's goals. Any work environment with measures in place for the provision of support regarding amongst other things, employee involvement, encouraging employee participation, and provision of a platform for interdependent tasks (participative work designs) is strongly attributed to the flexibility of employees while at the same time enabling job satisfaction and productivity (Scott, Bishop & Chen, 2003; Vance, 2006). The extent of employees' engagement and commitment to the organisation has some direct correlation to the economic well-being of a given country (Maleka, Mpofu, Hlatywayo, Meyer, Carr, & Parker, 2019).

The accomplishment of this relies mostly on the strategies put in place by those with power and authority to make the decisions and influence the direction of an organisation, as noted by Tanwar (2019:431), who states that "Leadership style is a very important factor to regulate effective working environment". Tanwars' study argues that we are in an era where organisations with quality leaders are the ones that can enjoy competitive advantage given the pace at which the global environment is evolving. According to Scott, Bishop, and Chen (2003), given the apparent benefit of adopting the employee engagement model, finding a reputable organisation that does not take advantage of employee engagement initiatives has proven difficult. Moreover, those who have implemented the design have indicated a wide spectrum of benefits ranging primarily from the improvement in the performance of individuals

and that of a team to high employee attendance and productivity, to mention but a few (Scott, Bishop, & Chen, 2003).

Nonetheless, such benefits may not be realised in certain organisations because of factors such as, but not limited to, employee unwillingness to engage, exhaustion, a lack of meaningful relationships, or a sense that there are not enough prospects for progress as well as lack of commitment to the organisation (Dabir & Azarpira, 2017). Employee engagement is predominantly laced with the connection workers have with one another (Gallup, 2022). An organisation must devise new and up-to-date mechanisms to ensure that it keeps in pace with the ever-changing, highly competitive environment (Brauns, 2015). This could be achieved through the turn of events in existing organisational governance systems, such as the creation of or enabling an environment and the promotion of an inclusive culture that is, amongst other things, grounded in equity and inclusiveness and is consensus oriented.

The emphasis in several studies, such as that by Rantakari (2012), Chandani, Mehta, Mall, and Khokhar, (2016), and Shah (2014), is that the indispensable and valuable role played by employees in bringing about innovative ideas to the benefit of an organisation has been widely acknowledged. This has led to prioritisation and investment in promoting cultures and practices that encourage employees to take the initiative instead of entrusting such authority to a few individuals within an organisation, especially the executives (Hansen, Amundsen, Aasen, & Gressgård, 2017). Central to the concept of employee engagement is the mutual benefit of both employees and employers in terms of job satisfaction and productivity, respectively (Kok, Lebusa, & Joubert, 2014; Ngomane, 2002). Additionally, an environment that ensures inclusivity in employees voicing their respective ideas despite their position or job level has been identified as a major influencer of the organisation's relatively superior pronouncement and success (Burris, 2012).

Efforts have been made over the years by different authors globally such as Grant (2019), Akanji, Mordi, Ajonbadi, and Mojeed-Sanni (2018), Manmeet and Poh (2022), Mazzetti and Schaufeli (2022), Thanh, Quang, and Anh (2022) and Rothmann, and Rothmann (2010) to broadly understand the impact of the adoption of the participative work designs model across private and government organisations. Their results indicate that adopting the model can lead to substantial improvements in employee engagement across both private and government organisations by fostering psychological safety, promoting transformational

leadership, and enhancing the perceived meaning of work. These factors collectively contribute to a more motivated and productive workforce.

Results from various studies have addressed some, but not all, aspects of the subject matter. The South African government, through its Labour Relations Act (LRA) No. 66 of 1995, has made provisions to promote employee participation, particularly in the decision-making process within various government departments (Vettori, 2005). In the South African context, this has been accomplished through employee representation through established forums or unions (Satgar, 1998).

As evident in positions advertised by GDE, the South African Council of Educators (SACE) certificate is the primary prerequisite for employment to most managerial positions. The credential is exclusive to trained or certified educators. One can, therefore, arguably conclude that the approved department's organogram prefers most managers with in-depth subject knowledge and direct teaching experience. Additionally, managers with extensive experience working in schools comprise the majority of the workforce at GDE's head office. It is important to acknowledge the need for change when transitioning from a teaching role at school to an office-based role, especially concerning the management-level employees' leadership style. Norbraten (2020) argues that tasks can vary greatly between organisations and even among leadership roles, and there may be a lack of clarity regarding what a role comprises or is capable of. A change which might necessitate a transition in the style of leadership.

According to Ejere (2013), the type of leadership employed in an organisation may support good governance and the successful or unsuccessful execution of policies, which is directly or indirectly attributed to leadership. In studying the determinants of employee engagement, Anitha (2014) found that the primary factors influencing employee engagement are the working environment and relationships with teams and coworkers, which substantially impact employee performance. It is, therefore, fundamental to understand whether government departments adopt participatory strategies in their planning to ascertain the effectiveness and efficiency of delivering services to citizens. The study, thus, attempts to explore probationary employees' perception of leadership style and employee engagement in the GDE processes.

1.2 Research Problem Statement

Despite the South African government's pronouncement of building a public service instilled with innovation, volunteerism, and service culture in line with the National Development Plan (NDP) (Isike & Ogunnubi, 2017). Employment of a new and/or young workforce that often

come from different educational backgrounds and have been exposed to latest tools, trends and way of thinking has failed to bring about the much-needed transformation within the public sphere of South Africa. These are capabilities that, if actively utilised in planning and implementing policies and programmes, have been attributed to positively impacting the organisational goal (Obiekwe, Zeb-Obipi, & Ejo-Orusa, 2019).

A large and growing number of studies, including the ones by Moletsane, Tefera, and Migiro (2019), Hoole and Hotz (2016), Zhang (2011), Nanjundeswaraswamy (2021), Saad, Sudin, and Shamsuddin (2018) and Bija (2020), amongst others, have been explored greatly across the world. These studies focused more on the correlation and/or significance of actively engaging employees in organisational decision-making processes and the impact thereafter concerning employee job satisfaction, effectiveness, and efficiency. Their result shows that employee engagement is highest among top management and those who have been with the organisation for a longer duration, and there is a relationship between employee engagement and organisational performance. However, such exploration had very little, if anything, to do with the level of engagement of the newly employed workforce within the public sphere in the departmental planning processes.

Like any institution or organisation that endeavours to deliver quality services to the targeted beneficiaries, GDE has a fundamental role to play in ensuring the continuous delivery of quality education to all learners across the Gauteng province (Gauteng Education Annual Report, 2022/23). It can be argued, based on the findings of the studies listed above, that the achievement of the role of GDE depends to some extent on the existence and implementation of a participatory or engagement approach to planning and implementing activities. The strategy, according to García, Gonzales-Miranda, Gallo, and Roman-Calderon (2019), has been adopted to improve employee job satisfaction amongst other things.

Given the limited nature of resources, ensuring effectiveness and efficiency to ascertain sustainable, satisfactory delivery of much-needed services to the public has been one of the South African government's priorities (Kroukamp, 2017). Perceptions of leadership styles and employee engagement are important in establishing the types of styles adopted within an organisation and how the leadership qualities affect policy execution, which is central to the organisation's main purpose of existence. The investigation of the leadership style of the education fraternity and the engagement of newly hired officials is hardly the subject of empirical research.

It is consequently critical to recognise new employees' perceptions and experiences regarding governance qualities and engagement and how these may influence policy implementation. The findings of this study will serve as a basis for future departmental policies aimed at preparing leaders for the effective implementation of diverse policies. As a result, exploring the leadership style and how the GDE utilises the newly employed workforce in its processes adds to the existing body of knowledge on leadership style and the impact of employee engagement.

1.3 Research Purpose

The purpose of this research was to explore the perceptions of leadership style and employee engagement in departmental planning and implementation processes of employees under probation. An investigation will, therefore, assist GDE in assessing the involvement of relatively new employees as one of the essential aspects for job satisfaction, effectiveness, efficiency, and the realisation of the department's overarching goal in the end. Additionally, this may serve as the basis for all-inclusive, evidence-informed measures necessary to achieve the departmental goal.

Ultimately, the focus of the study was on governance styles and the different positionalities in the workspace and how that impacts leadership styles. It also attempted to weigh in on the notion of effective policy implementation and how the governance of policy implementation might provide insights into leadership styles that inform the implementation of policies in a stable and inclusive working environment.

1.4 Research Objectives

The main aim of the research study was to determine the leadership style and assess the perception of the employees under probation on their engagement in the departmental planning and implementation processes within the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) of South Africa.

The study’s objectives were:

- To determine the leadership styles commonly practised by the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) managers.
- To establish the extent to which newly employed personnel are involved in the departmental decision-making processes.

- To determine the relationship between leadership styles and employee on probation engagement.

1.5 Research Question

Understanding how governance styles and the adoption of participatory approaches in an organisation impact the work environment and policy implementation process is important. The principal research question for this study was: What are the perceptions of employees under probation regarding leadership style and employee engagement in planning and implementation processes within the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE)?

The following were the research sub-questions:

- What leadership style/s are most frequently used by the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) managers in their daily operations?
- To what extent are the newly employed personnel involved in the departmental decision-making processes within the GDE?
- How do different leadership styles influence the engagement levels of employees wo are on probation in the GDE?

1.6 Structure of the Study

There are six chapters in this study. The problem statement and the study topic are presented in the first chapter. A synopsis of the study's significance, goals, conceptual explanations, and study delimitations is also included. The literature review presented in Chapter 2 encompasses a broad perspective on employee engagement and leadership style. The third chapter of the study covers the research approach, paradigm, research design, research tools and their applications, sampling strategies, data analysis procedures, limitations, positionality and feasibility, ethical considerations, validity, and reliability. The results are presented in detail in Chapter 4. An analysis of the results from Chapter Four is presented in Chapter Five. The sixth chapter of the research report provides a summary, main conclusions, and suggestions informed by the study's findings.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This chapter critically evaluates existing literature strictly related to the study's subject matter in a global context, covering different aspects of employee engagement, which refers to involvement or participation within an organisation. This literature review gives an important foundation for constructing the proposed research.

2.2 Leadership and Management

The literature has long debated the similarities and differences between leadership and management (Toor & Ofori, 2008; Toor, 2011; Algahtani, 2014; Wajdi, 2017). It is, therefore, critical within the context of this study to reflect on some of the discussion of the two concepts. Toor (2011) discovered substantial differences between the two concepts, arguing that they are independent phenomena and processes in which leaders and managers perform a variety of tasks and roles within an organisation. According to Perrin (2010), a manager is a leader who lacks certain important attributes and specialises in one field. Among other things, managers design and implement plans and decisions, coordinate the work of others, and steer efforts towards anticipated goals.

According to Kappa (as cited by Algahtani, 2014), strong organising, negotiating, and delegating abilities are among certain attributes a manager must possess to be effective. Zaleznik (2004), the emphasis of a culture of management is on control and reason around solving problems regardless of whether their focus is on objectives, assets, structure of the organisation, or personnel. Key to a manager is identifying issues that need to be resolved and establishing strategies considered best for getting things done. Arntzen (2016) suggests that a leader helps bring out the best in others, enabling them to make better decisions.

Toor (2011) defines leadership as seeking long-term change, gaining authority through personal power and relational influence, and empowering individuals, whereas management seeks to maintain order, relies on position power and institutional hierarchy to carry out commands, and imposes authority. These studies revealed that leadership and management overlap and complement each other, and concluded that, for organisational effectiveness, both leaders with managerial acumen and managers with leadership qualities are essential.

2.3 Leadership Style

The concept of leadership style has been broadly discussed in a global context, and its importance is apparent across the literature (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014; Yahaya & Ebrahim, 2016; Bhargavi & Yaseen, 2016; Saad *et al.,* 2018; Iqbal, Anwar, & Haider, 2015). While various authors define leadership style differently, what is common in all the definitions is that it is a crucial ingredient in the success of an organisation. Hussain and Hassan (2016) define leadership style as the "unique way of leading" which determines how well or badly an organisation performs. The leadership behaviour will determine such performance (Dotse & Asumeng, 2014). According to Belias and Koustelios (2014:39), the term "leadership" describes a process of influence that affects how members of a group or organisation behave, decide on goals for the group, and interact dynamically with superiors.

Amutha (2017) emphasised the critical role of leadership style for an organisation to succeed and defined leadership style as "a leader's style of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating people to accomplish goals". No matter the leadership style a person chooses to adopt, the organisational goals must be met. Maloş (2012) argues that in practice, there is not a clear distinction between the different leadership styles; rather, a variety of mixed styles are a function of the numerous variables that may appear during a leadership process. Amongst the key variables influencing the degree of employee commitment is the leader (Juchnowicza & Kinowska, 2018), and the achievement of both organisational goals and individual employee targets or objectives depends on the presence of a suitable leadership style (Teshome, 2021).

Examining transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles across a single continuum (the broad spectrum of leadership theory) may offer a means to simultaneously investigate how these various leadership philosophies may affect leadership efficacy in the context of an organisation (Samad, Reaburn, Davis, & Ahmed, 2015). The sections on the various types of leadership styles provide a general definition and discussion of the three principles. Amutha (2017) deduces that leadership is always scenario-specific; therefore, each style is significant in certain contexts.

2.3.1 Theories of Leadership

The concept of leadership theories is multifaceted and includes the Great Man, traits, style, and behaviour, to mention but a few. The choice of discussing the above leadership style theories is since they are part of the key theories. Amutha (2017) notes that the Great Man theory

emerged in the mid-19th century, positing that leadership qualities are inherent and that great leaders are not created; they are born. According to this notion, excellent leaders are individuals who are born into leadership roles (Amutha, 2017). The trait leadership theory states that some people are either born with or develop traits that will enable them to succeed in leadership positions (Fleenor, 2006). Style and Behavioural theory consider how rewards and penalties could influence behaviour change (Nawaz & Khan, 2016).

Contingency theory states that no single profile or collection of persistent attributes is directly linked to good leadership (Dinibutun, 2020). Lastly, Greenleaf, whose works have impacted a whole generation of institutional leaders and management specialists, introduced the theory of Process Leadership in the early 1970s. According to Nawaz and Khan (2016), the process leadership theory includes aspects such as servant leadership, learning organisations, principle-centred leadership, and charismatic leadership. Additionally, this theory states that effective leadership is instead the result of the interaction between individual attributes and the external environment (Nawaz & Khan, 2016).

2.3.2 Types of Leadership Styles

Mitonga-Monga, Coetzee and Cilliers (2012) argue that one cannot place more emphasis on the importance of leaders in ensuring that employees and limited organisational resources are used in the best possible way to achieve organisational goals. Their study revealed that the leader's leadership style has a significant impact on employee performance and the employee-leader relationship. Employees' perspectives on the degree of engagement were shown to be substantially correlated with judgments of employees' and leaders' conduct styles. There is a significant association between perceived leadership style and employee engagement (Gangai & Agrawal, 2017). According to Nanjundeswaraswamy and Swamy (2014), the success or failure of an organisation is centered on the leader, and one who is effective has a positive influence on those they lead, benefiting the organisation.

Several studies investigating the concept of leadership style have argued that an organisation is as good or effective as its leader. This literature has mostly focused on leadership style as an independent variable against variables such as job satisfaction, performance, and behaviour (quality of work life), to mention a few. According to Sakiru, Othman, Silong, Abdullahi, Agbana, Kia and Ndidi (2013), among the various types of leadership, managers mostly adopt the transformational style, and there is a relationship between leadership styles and job commitment by employees in an organisation.

According to Maloş (2012), providing instructions is a necessary part of understanding and adapting to various leadership styles, and there are different leadership styles from which one can choose. The exploratory research conducted by Kleefstra (2019) on the various types of leadership described in the literature between 2013 and 2018 found that over 600 distinct leadership styles were mentioned in 380 articles by authors from diverse regions. However, the overview of the three leadership theories, as cited in Kleefstra (2019), reflects on distinct types of leadership styles: Transactional, Autocratic, Task/goal-oriented, Transformational, Democratic, Relationship/people-oriented, and laissez-faire leadership style.

Amutha (2017) argues that factors such as employees, attitudes, behaviours, and the skills of leaders, to mention but a few, determine the style of leadership a particular leader adopts. According to Kleefstra (2019), among the various leadership styles mentioned, transformational leadership is the most frequently cited type, often in conjunction with transactional leadership, followed by effective, ethical, authentic, servant, laissez-faire, and charismatic leadership styles. In particular, the study looked at the following leadership styles: transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership. In briefly describing these leadership styles, the democratic style, according to Cherry (2006), is the type of leadership style that creates democratic leaders who agree with the idea of involving the group in elaborating decisions.

The main benefit of the democratic leadership style is that it encourages members to share their thoughts (involve), motivate, and provide a platform to subordinates for creativity towards organisational goals. However, the leader still provides concluding remarks on the decision-making process (Al Khajeh, 2018). According to Bass (as cited in Kleefstra, 2019), the transformational leadership style comprises four components: individualised consideration, cerebral stimulation, inspirational motivation, and idealised impact. Transformational leaders are referred to as those who have an appealing vision for their team and mentally stimulate others regarding the individual needs of team members (Amah, 2018). They exhibit traits like management that support subordinates and lay out a plan of action that enhances employee engagement (Batista-Taran, Shuck, Gutierrez, & Baralt, 2013).

Employees under a transformational leader are likely to receive individual attention from them and, in turn, react by exceeding expectations and supporting the leader's aims and objectives (Adeniji, Osibanjo, Salau, Atolagbe, Ojebola, Osoko, & Edewor, 2020). Transformational leaders appear to be more self-assured in their ability to pave the way for an

engaged culture, according to the results of the analysis of leadership philosophies. The actions of transformational leaders include presenting a clear vision for enhancing employee engagement levels and demonstrating supportive management practices.

Secondly, the laissez-faire leadership style, also referred to as delegative leadership, involves the leader assigning decision-making responsibilities to subordinates while deciding whether to provide necessary guidance (Tosunoglu & Ekmekci, 2016). One of its main characteristics is the provision of relatively little guidance by leaders (Bwalya, 2023). Lastly, transactional leadership is a relatively new style that demonstrates how leaders prioritise inspiring their followers through a system of rewards and punishments (Nanjundeswaraswamy & Swamy, 2014). According to Bwalya (2023), one of the transactional leaders' key features is that employees understand what is expected of them as it establishes clear expectations and performance benchmarks. Those who adhere to the set standards and meet or exceed expectations receive incentives, and those who do not are punished. It is a leadership approach that is widely employed today. The leaders under this style are more focused on the task (Kleefstra, 2019). Transactional leaders established the framework, while transformational leaders expanded upon it to create a more cohesive team that was better equipped to handle the demands of volatile international market forces (Batista-Taran, Shuck, Gutierrez, & Baralt, 2009).

2.3.3 Leadership Style Interaction with Governance

In the context of Good Corporate Governance (GCG), in particular, the impact of leadership style on governance is profound and complex. Effective leadership has a direct impact on the implementation of good governance principles (Yuliastuti, Ayu, & Tandio, 2020). Accountability, honesty, equity, and openness are some of the values that define good governance. According to Ottman and Abdul (2014), leadership styles that adhere to the above-mentioned principles have a higher chance of successfully implementing effective governance. Transformational leadership is recognised for its capacity to improve governance processes and cultivate community trust (Yuliastuti *et al.,* 2020; Dong, Mahfudnurnajamuddin, Semmaila, & Latief, 2019).

Good governance and leadership style are strongly positively correlated, suggesting that effective leadership can lead to better governance results (Dong *et al.,* 2019; Soetjipto, Ermayanti, & Anasthasia, 2019). The accomplishment of governance objectives can be indirectly facilitated by leadership philosophies that enhance employee satisfaction (Hatta,

Rachbini, Riskarini, & Mandagie, 2018; Othman & Abdul, 2014). It is noted that one particularly successful approach to advancing good governance is servant leadership. Better governance and public service delivery may result from this strategy, which puts the needs of the people first and motivates leaders to interact with the community (Pillay & Kikasu, 2024; Jatmiko & Amalia, 2022).

The accomplishment of governance objectives can be indirectly aided by leadership philosophies that raise employee happiness (Hatta *et al*., 2018; Othman & Abdul, 2014). It is noted that one particularly successful approach to advancing good governance is servant leadership. A key component of promoting good governance is ethical leadership. Strong moral leaders can encourage their followers to act morally and ethically, which improves governance procedures (Othman & Abdul, 2014; Yuliastuti *et al.,* 2020).

Intellectual stimulation, personalised attention, idealised influence, and inspirational motivation are the four primary actions of transformational leaders. These actions inspire employees to feel appreciated, think imaginatively, and dedicate themselves to the objectives of the organisation. Transformational leaders may inspire workers to work successfully and efficiently by fostering a culture of trust and respect, which is crucial for good governance (Ngabito, Aneta, Tahir, & Abdussamad, 2021).

In summary, an organisation's leadership style has a significant impact on how effectively its governance procedure's function, particularly when considered in relation to factors such as organisational culture and the application of good governance principles. While ethical leadership cultivates a culture of integrity and accountability, transformational and servant leadership styles are linked to favourable governance outcomes. Transformational leadership is vital to the advancement of good governance because it fosters employee engagement, responsibility, and moral conduct, which are necessary for the efficient provision of public services.

2.4 Employee Engagement

Employee engagement, according to the State of the Global Workplace Report, "reflects the involvement and enthusiasm of employees in their work and workplace" (Gallup, 2022:164). According to Batista-Taran *et al.* (2013), the term "engagement" refers to the intimate involvement with and framework of the job experience. The concept of employee engagement has captured the attention of academics and practitioners equally over the last two decades (Mani & Mishra, 2019). While defining the term "employee engagement" may differ from one

author to another, one apparent issue emanating from the two explanations of the term above is that it has more to do with "involvement".

According to Gallie and Zhou (2020), employee involvement is associated with two primary practices. These involve employees in immediate task activities and their influence on organisational operations. Zondo (2020) argues that workers' participation and commitment can be encouraged through well-implemented and managed employee engagement. Xia's (2022) employee engagement is justified by the requirement for a high-performing workforce, which reduces expenses related to disengagement, such as training, turnover, and poor performance, thereby increasing profitability. Batista-Taran *et al.* (2013) argue that engagement impacts various organisational outcomes, such as retention and productivity.

Therefore, having engaged employees has become crucial at a time when organisations look to their employees to take the initiative, bring innovation, and be proactive with solutions to current needs (Deepalakshmi, Tiwari, Baruah, Seth, & Bisht, 2024). Among engaged employees, job satisfaction is higher, there is a lower desire to change employers, and a greater level of commitment to the organisation. According to a survey, engaged workers believe they can have a positive economic impact on the organisation, resulting in higher productivity and retention rates. This suggests that organisations must continually invest in their workforce (Batista-Taran *et al.,* 2013).

2.4.1 Effect of Employee Engagement

While there is a considerable number of empirical research that broadly explores the topic of employee engagement (participation/involvement) in general, particularly regarding decision-making within an organisation (Storey, Ulrich, Welbourne, & Wright, 2009; Marquard, 2010), these studies have not primarily focused on the newly employed workforce in an organisation. The findings from these studies show that employee engagement is comparatively low in the organisations studied. This relatively low employee engagement level has been from a management point of view attributed to employee reluctance to participate in organisational decision-making undertakings (Breeze & Wiepking, 2020).

The report by Batista-Taran *et al.* (2013) notes that when employees' fundamental needs are met, it makes them feel like they have a chance to contribute to an organisation. It also gives them a sense of belonging and a chance for learning and development, which is critical in encouraging employee engagement. There is a positive relationship between extremely engaged employees and their passion for their jobs and the workplace, with direct benefits in

advancing the organisation's goals (Batista-Taran *et al.,* 2013). According to the Mindset Management Programmes report (2014), in an international context, the notion of engagement is at a critical level, and South Africa is no exception.

According to Cawe (2006), for a country within a developmental state like South Africa, it is most likely that several factors exist that pose a serious challenge to making the concept of employee engagement effective. These factors might be attributed, but are not limited to leadership skills, issues around labour conflict, resilience to transformation, and socioeconomic issues affecting people at a personal level, like poverty, unemployment, and proper education, to mention a few, with indirect effects on the notion of employee engagement. Employees' reluctance to engage stems not from disinterest, but rather from other factors, such as uncertainty about their roles, conflicting work priorities, and the perception that such opportunities are insincere. On the other hand, employees attributed it to the unwillingness of employers or management to involve them in these processes (Breeze & Wiepking, 2020).

The significance of investments by organisations, whether public or private, in establishing the best possible ways to ensure inclusive involvement, meaning both management and subordinates in decisions in a manner that enables the attainment of the overarching organisational goal, cannot be overstated (Kuye & Sulaimon, 2011). Research reveals that new employees score higher in engagement levels in an organisation. This may partly be attributed to the optimism and zeal that most people experience when starting a new job (Kular, Gatenby, Rees, Soane, & Truss, 2008).

The implementation of employee engagement strategies has been proven to lead to contentment on the job and a thriving workplace (Mitonga-Monga *et al.,* 2012). Therefore, in the realisation of effective employee involvement, organisations should develop policies and create a culture that largely makes, amongst other things, provisions for and involve everyone in all undertakings, discourages working in silos but push for frequent interactions (Scott *et al.,* 2003). This requires managers to be well-capacitated and acknowledge and embrace employee engagement's important role in an organisation. This will, in return, facilitate effectiveness and efficiency as well as an organisational competitive advantage in a sustainable manner (Sharma & Sharma, 2021).

The positive relationship between employee involvement and job satisfaction, as mentioned above, is corroborated by García *et al.* (2019). According to their study, employees

value the opportunity to make meaningful contributions through the knowledge they have acquired in their respective areas of work, and likewise, this may lead to job satisfaction. Essentially, various types of participation in job decision-making processes directly and positively affect job satisfaction and organisation goals (García *et al.,* 2019). However, the opposite is the case for work environments where a platform for employees to voice their thoughts on organisational matters is non-existent (Ngomane, 2002). This has been attributed to a negative impact on employee job satisfaction, relationships, and motivation with employers' undesired or relatively unsatisfactory performance (Kok *et al.,* 2014).

Kok *et al*. (2014) argue that central to the effectiveness of employee engagement in achieving organisational goals is the wide spectrum of proceedings, ranging from acceptance and willingness to actively involve, support, and participate in all organisational processes by both employees and managers. It is the responsibility of all within an organisation to play a critical role in ensuring an environment that enables a conducive working atmosphere. Management is at the forefront when it comes to ensuring that such an environment and culture are created within an organisation (Sougui, Bon, Mahamat, & Hassan, 2016). Like any other area in an organisation that occasionally requires improvement for it to stay relevant, the development of both managers and employees regarding employee involvement practices should be implemented for a better return on investment (Kok *et al.,* 2014).

Zondo (2020) argues that a process that engages employees tends to lead to a working environment that promotes the participation of workers as well as commitment which, if implemented properly, has a direct relationship with the way employees perform to stay competitive, organisations must revisit and amend the respective existing systems to include strategies and policies that encourage the engagement of employees (Zondo, 2020). One study (Tchapchet, Iwu, & Allen-Lle, 2014) that focuses on different organisations has found involvement or rather participation of employees to be the solution for those institutions that struggle. Among the key findings in their study is the strong positive effect of employee participation on the institution's performance and the attainment of its broader goals, such as producing a satisfactory number of graduates.

Work-dedicated and engaged employees contribute significantly to organisations, leading to increased productivity and reduced employee turnover (Ngonyama & Ruggunan, 2015). In this manner, it is not business as usual that organisations of all sizes and types have put significant approaches and practices that cultivate commitment and responsibility in their

employees. In simple terms, the concept of employee engagement is referred to as how much employees completely involve themselves in their work, just as the strength of their obligation to the organisation and the job or the degree of employees' responsibility, work exertion, and want to remain within an organisation (Vance, 2006; Gollan & Xu, 2015; Govender & Bussin, 2020; Ngonyama & Ruggunan, 2015; Adeniji *et al.,* 2020). The authors add that a leadership dimension that is engaged aids in employee motivation raises employee engagement, and boosts performance and innovation.

2.4.2 Global Employee Engagement

Every year, Gallup conducts research and develops the State of the Global Workplace report. This is done through the proprietary formula that calculates the proportions of engaged, not engaged, and actively disengaged employees by applying a unique methodology based on extensive research into the connection between the engagement factors, through the Gallup twelve questions (Q12), and various work-related outcomes. The trend analysis data on Global Workplace engagement between 2009 and 2022 are presented in the figure below.

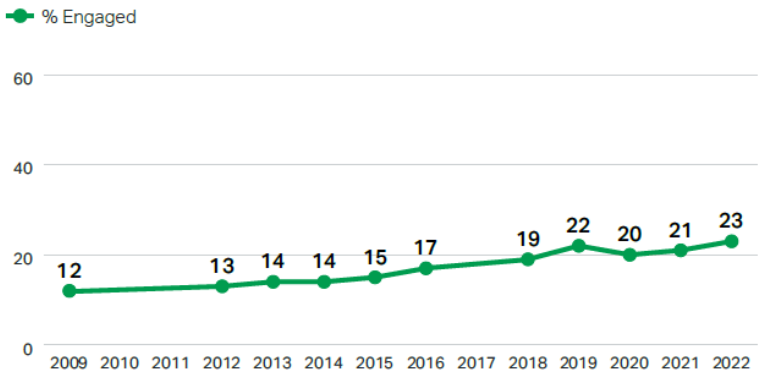


Figure 1: Global employee % engaged based on Gallup Q¹² items (Source: Gallup Report, 2023)

Data on employee engagement from the 2023 worldwide survey is shown in Figure 1 above. Approximately 23% of employees are engaged at work. Comparably, at the regional level (Sub-Saharan Africa), 20% of workers are engaged, while South Africa has improved by 2% from 24% in the year 2022 to 26% in 2023. This has resulted in a shift upwards from seventh in 2022 to fifth in 2023. The results suggest that South African employees are among the least engaged globally. While such an increase points in the right direction, arguably, a concerted and coordinated effort still needs to be put in place in both the public and private sectors to promote the culture of engaged employees.

2.4.3 Drivers and Characteristics of Employee Engagement

Amongst other things, Kular *et al.* (2008) point to allowing employees to voice their concerns and ideas as one of the obvious and crucial drivers of employee engagement. Furthermore, it was noted that employees want to be constantly informed about what is going on in their organisation. Kular *et al.* (2008) also state that employees are more likely to feel engaged at work when they experience a sense of connection to the employer. The study by Cawe (2006) identified leadership, management, and communication as the variables that encourage employee engagement.

Figure 2 below illustrates the essential factors that define an actively engaged workforce. These elements can be utilised at an organisational level as a measuring instrument to determine the level of employee engagement. The findings subsequently inform the development of strategies to enhance employee engagement, ultimately leading to an efficient workforce and the achievement of organisational objectives.

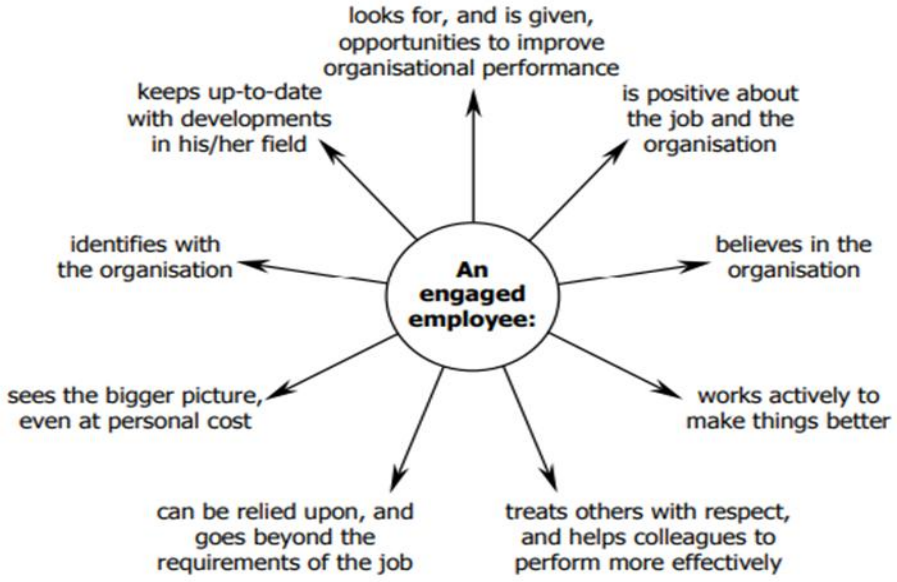


Figure 2: Characteristics of an engaged employee (Source: Robinson, Perryman & Hayday, 2004)

According to a study by Hoole and Hotz (2016) on the incentive categories that most accurately predict work engagement and the connection between total rewards and work engagement in South Africa, only career management and performance significantly affected work engagement. Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) identified three aspects of work engagement outlined in the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). These are vigour, dedication, and

absorption. The study by Rothmann and Rothmann (2010) found the key predictors of employee engagement to be organisational support (manager relationship, participation, communication, information, and role clarity), growth opportunities (variety, learning opportunities, and autonomy), as well as social support and advancement. The growth opportunities had the most impact on staff engagement.

The findings above agree with those of Malesedi, Tefera and Migiro (2019:129). However, unlike the former study, this study found personal feelings to have a major influence on employee engagement and "a moderately positive correlation between employee engagement and productivity". Based on these results, it is recommended that organisations consider and find interventions for crucial forecasters to create a favourable work environment and achieve their objectives. For a deeper understanding of employee engagement, Figure 3 illustrates essential elements that contribute to employees' sense of engagement within an organisation. The graph demonstrates a diverse array of factors influencing employee engagement, from offering support and development opportunities to achieving a fair balance in how employees are treated and compensated and clear communication of organisational expectations.

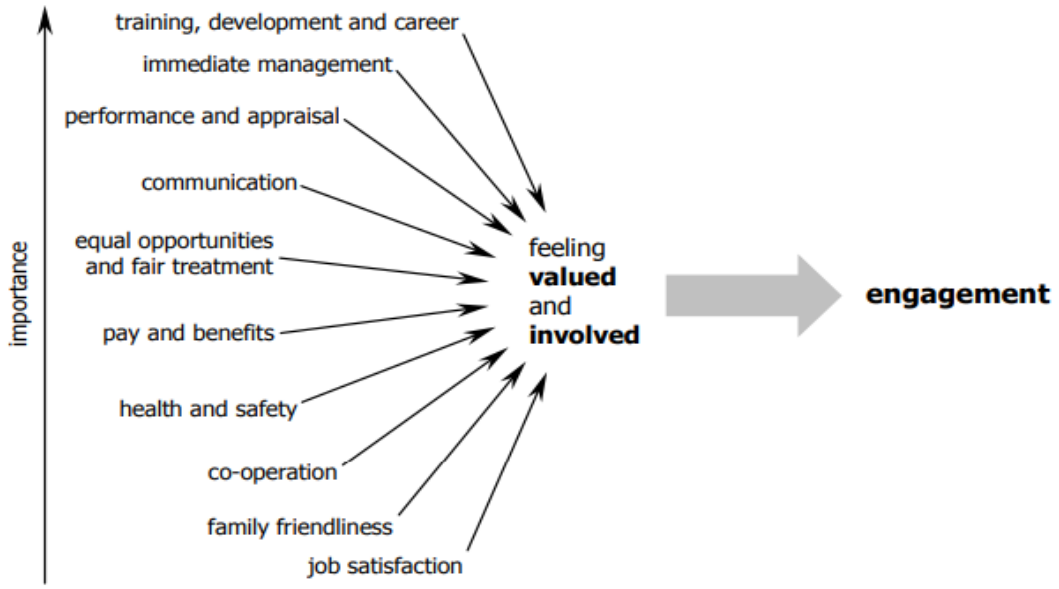


Figure 3: The drivers of employee engagement: a diagnostic tool (Source: Robinson, Perryman & Hayday, 2004)

According to Robinson, Perryman and Hayday (2004:21), "the strongest driver of engagement is a sense of feeling valued and involved." A different set of drivers can be identified within various employee groups within a single organisation. They also state that "there is a clear link

between employees' experiences and general perceptions of working life and their sense of being valued and involved and therefore to their engagement levels, as engagement is closely linked to feeling valued and involved". The article concludes that it is very important for organisations to put measures in place to continuously track the level of engagement of employees and come up with strategies to ensure higher levels of staff engagement in both the task and the organisation (Robinson et al., 2004:21).

According to Mdletshe (2020), employee engagement is influenced by idealised impact, motivating inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration, and having several leadership philosophies increases employee engagement. She further argues that employees are like leaders who instil values in others, uplift them, build credibility, and give employees a sense of direction, thereby uniting them with the mission and vision of the organisation and inspiring people to comprehend and commit to the vision. All this supports the idea that transformative leadership affects employee engagement.

The study by Juchnowicza and Kinowska (2018) establishes the importance of leadership styles in fostering employee engagement and argues that organisations must make sensible use of human resources at their disposal due to the mounting strain on the economic landscape. Due to the intricacy of leadership and engagement concepts, comprehensive tools are necessary, and any improper leadership habits that have the potential to sabotage employee engagement must be addressed. All in all, employee engagement is related to how an employee perceives the leadership style of their immediate supervisor. When transactional leadership styles are perceived, a negative relationship exists, whereas employee engagement is positively correlated when visionary or transformational leadership styles are perceived (Zhang, 2011).

Based on the identified characteristics as well as the drivers of an engaged employee, a leader has a considerable positive role to play. However, the success or failure of a leader in promoting and/or ensuring that employees are engaged lies to some extent in the choice of style of leadership adopted. Leaders should take into cognisance the fact that there is no single leadership style that is appropriate in all circumstances; therefore, leaders should be flexible in implementing leadership style and consider the situation first.

2.4.4 Enhancing Employee Engagement Level

Anyone in a leadership position should use leadership styles that can boost employee engagement, since various aspects of leadership style impact different aspects of employee engagement. In the end, managers should apply various techniques to determine their staff's

preferred leadership style (Teshome, 2021). Batista-Taran *et al*. (2013) posits that the time has come for organisations to start fostering an engaged workplace culture instead of merely encouraging employees to work hard, and to avoid having a disengaged workforce. Knowing how to raise employee engagement levels is crucial, and leaders of an organisation are in a key position to increase their respective employees' engagement levels.

Amongst the strategies to improve employee engagement, Teshome (2021) argues that organisations should, in their planning, provide the necessary platform aimed at bringing about employee engagement reviews regularly. At an organisational level, management should promote a culture of sharing good practices and ideas between teams, ensure that employees have a voice, endeavour to understand the employees' learning styles and preferences, provide career paths and opportunities for growth and recognise top performers. Adeniji *et al*. (2020) state that a leader should first recognise that different circumstances will call for different leadership philosophies to be adopted to improve employee engagement, motivation, and performance. Thus, a leader who is aware of the various leadership philosophies is knowledgeable about which ones are most important to use at a particular moment, and this does not compromise the employees' engagement levels.

When workers know what is expected of them, have the necessary tools to complete their tasks, participate in opportunities for development and feedback, and believe they contribute substantially to the organisation, they become engaged (Batista-Taran *et al*., 2013). According to Xia (2022), to increase employee engagement, organisations should work to prevent potentially harmful leadership practices and coordinate the complementarities of all aspects of transactional and transformational leaders. The author further argues that to encourage employee engagement, the holistic approach to leadership suggests alternating between transactional and transformational leadership styles rather than substituting one for the other.

It is clear from the various sources that have been reflected above that central to the notion of enhanced employee engagement is the presence of a leader who first acknowledges that engaging employees is very important for attaining the overarching organisational goals in the most effective way possible. Additionally, leaders ought to embrace and complement as opposed to supplement the adoption of the variety of styles of leadership that largely promote employee engagement.

2.4.5 Interaction between Employee Engagement and Governance

The literature reveals a direct relationship between employee engagement and good governance. Pointing out that good governance practices have a direct positive relationship with employee engagement and not engagement having an impact on governance (Gifford & Young, 2021; Oshilim & Akpesiri, 2015; Ngwane & Paul-Dachapalli, 2022). This relationship can be understood through various paradigms, including but not limited to organisational commitment, identification, and motivation. Good governance practices, such as the perceived fairness of processes, have been found to influence employee engagement significantly. The authors argue that when employees perceive their organisation as operating fairly and transparently, they are more likely to feel engaged and committed (Gifford & Young, 2021; Oshilim & Akpesiri, 2015; Ngwane & Paul-Dachapalli, 2022).

According to Ngwane and Paul-Dachapalli (2022), the relationship between employee engagement and governance is crucial for enhancing public sector performance, as effective governance practices that prioritise employee engagement can lead to improved service delivery and a more motivated workforce. Fundamentally, good governance practices play a critical role in fostering employee engagement by promoting fairness, supportive leadership, and a strong organisational identity. Elements that not only ascertain organisational employee satisfaction but also contribute to overall organisational performance.

In line with the findings above, Aini and Djoko (2022) reiterate that the relationship between employee engagement and governance is significant. However, contrary to the findings above, as evidenced by their research, it is not good governance that influences employee engagement, but rather high employee engagement that positively influences the implementation of good governance. In their argument, the authors indicate that engaged employees are more likely to complete their tasks effectively, which in turn contributes to better governance practices. The study indicates that when employees feel a strong connection to their work and organisation, they are more likely to take responsibility for their roles and be receptive to feedback, thereby enhancing governance. Therefore, fostering employee engagement is essential for achieving good governance and better overall performance and service delivery (Aini & Djoko, 2022).

2.4.6 Saks' Multidimensional Model

The initial exploration study in the scholarly world to examine the causes and effects of employee engagement was conducted by Saks. The Saks approach explicitly focuses on the

notion of employee engagement rather than viewing the construct from a burnout perspective, in contrast to other paradigms. This model distinguishes between organisational and job-related employee engagement. Saks (2019) names the following job characteristics as potential antecedents of engagement: autonomy, task identity, skill variety, task relevance, and feedback; perceptions of organisational and managerial support; rewards and recognition; procedural fairness; and distributive justice.

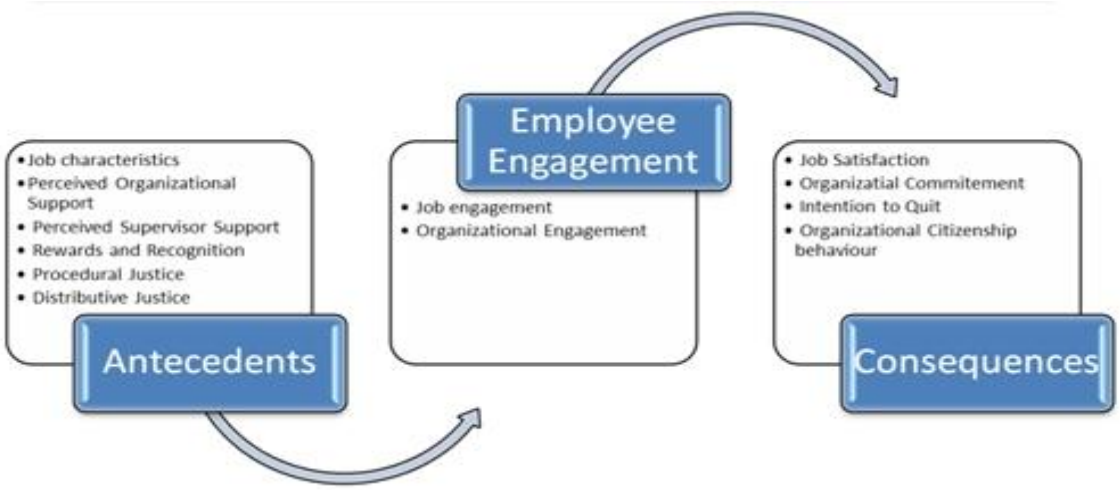


Figure 4: A model of the antecedents and consequences of employee engagement (Saks, 2009)

Belias and Koustelios (2014) posit that a considerable number of factors determine an organisation's functionality. Imandin, Bischoff and Botha (2015) have found that leadership styles influence employee engagement. It is, therefore, imperative to understand the existing common leadership style and the extent to which employees are engaged at an organisational level and adopt best practices for effectiveness and efficiency.

2.5 Probationary Employees

Probation is defined as "an agreed fixed period between an employer and an employee during which the employer has the opportunity to determine a newly appointed employee's ability to perform as expected" (Huysamen, 2019:34). Cohen (2002) and Bhorat and Cheadle (2009) argue that probation provides a platform for testing the capabilities of the newly employed while affording the employer a chance to ensure recruitment of the right candidate. According to schedule 8 section 8 of the Labour Relations Act (LRA), amended by s. 57 of Act No. 42 of 1996 and by s. 56 of Act No. 12 of 2002, before the confirmation of an employee's employment

in an organisation, one of the most used systems to ensure permanent employment of the most suitable candidate is subjecting the new employee to the probation process.

In South Africa, respective government departments at all spheres or levels develop their probation policy. However, such policies are informed by some of the following legislative/policy frameworks: the Constitution of South Africa Act 108 of 1996; the Employment Equity Act (EEA) 55 of 1998; the Labour Relations Act 55 of 1995; the Code of Good Practice - Dismissal, schedule8 to the Labour Relations Act. The primary reason behind the concept of probation is suitability, personal attributes, and performance evaluation (Henri Klopper, 2018). Probation is not in any way meant to judge the newly employed, but rather, to help them align with the values and culture of an organisation (Labour Relations Act; Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998).

As the probation unfolds, the employer should reasonably assess the performance of the employee and create a suitable environment for the new employee to effectively execute his or her duties (Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998). However, in cases where the new employee is found to be performing below expectations, the employer should engage and initiate intervention to support the new employee in any way necessary (Labour Relations Act). Should the employee fail to improve in the key aspects of probation (suitability, personal attributes, and performance), it is within the employers' jurisdiction to either afford the employee more time to prove him/herself by extending the probation period or dismiss the employee (Labour Relations Act; Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998).

The latter should only be implemented after improvement interventions have been provided to the employee with no return on investment over time (Bhorat & Cheadle, 2009). Based on the assessment evidence, those with power can then decide whether to confirm the probation (permanently employed) or not (Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998; Labour Relations Act).

2.6 Effect of Leadership styles on Employee engagement

Juchnowicza and Kinowska (2018) argue that the existing literature on leadership concepts lacks a single, comprehensive, and empirically supported model of leadership activity that results in employee engagement. A study by Kusani, Sukaris, Suwardana, Kalista and Laily (2020) revealed that while leadership style has an impact on employee engagement, employee engagement, in turn, has an impact on employee performance, and employee engagement can act as a mediator between the effects of leadership style and performance. Studies by

Anggraini, Rosyihuddin and Desembrianita (2021), Ariyani and Hidayati (2018), and Mansor, Mun, Farhana and Tarmizi (2017) investigated the style of leadership with a greater impact on employee engagement, and the effect and influence of a transformational leadership style on work engagement, demonstrating that transformational leadership style is the most common style adopted and have a strong and positive impact on employee engagement (Maundu, Namusonge, & Simiyu, 2018).

On the contrary, there is no discernible impact of transactional leadership styles on employee engagement, which is contrary to the findings of the study on "the effect of perceived transactional leadership style on employee engagement by Marwan, Milhem, Muda and Ahmed (2019), who found the Palestine ICT industry's employee engagement to be impacted directly and positively by the transactional leadership style. Unlike the above authors, Singh's (2019) study established that the transformational leadership style primarily promotes employee engagement and trust within an organisation. The same was found in studies by Wanjala, Njoroge, and Bulitia (2017) and Akhigbe, Finelady and Felix (2014), indicating that the transactional leadership style has a significant effect on employee satisfaction, organisational commitment, and other dimensions of the transactional leadership style.

According to Adeniji *et al*. (2020), employee engagement and leadership qualities greatly impact job performance, which is relatively higher under the transformational leadership style than the transactional model. The transformational leadership style has been recognised as the most effective leadership approach (Xia, 2022). According to Mazzetti and Schaufeli (2022), team success and work engagement may be predicted by engaging leadership. More precisely, a common perception of increased availability of team resources, including but not limited to performance feedback, trust in management, communication, and decision-making participation, as well as greater psychological capital such as self-efficacy, optimism, resilience, and flexibility, may be fostered by being exposed to a leader who inspires, strengthens, and connects team members.

Therefore, active leadership may be crucial in the mechanisms that result in employee engagement at the team and individual levels (Mazzetti & Schaufeli, 2022). In the Vietnamese public sector, the laissez-faire leadership style was found to have a significant negative relationship with innovative work behaviour and an insignificant relationship with task performance and work engagement. This contrasts with the considerable impacts of transformational and transactional leadership styles on department-level work engagement.

The results of this study indicate that while the laissez-faire leadership style should be avoided or used sparingly, transformational and transactional leadership styles should be implemented (Thanh, Quang, & Anh, 2022). This has led to the adoption of transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire leadership philosophies by public sector executives in Vietnam, enhancing worker engagement.

According to the study by Yang (2015), the laissez-faire style of leadership was found to have a significant impact on employee commitment. Contrary to these findings, Tosunoglu and Ekmekci (2016) found that laissez-faire leadership is strongly and directly linked with a reduction in employee trust level within an organisation. This negative impact is attributed to leaders' failure to meet employees' expectations due to a lack of presence and involvement. Similar negative results were reflected by Robert and Vandenberghe (2021), who found that the Laissez-faire leadership style negatively relates to the contribution dimension of organisational commitment. This relationship is only significant when an employee's relational self-esteem is high.

A study by Juchnowicza and Kinowska (2018) establishes the importance of leadership styles in fostering employee engagement and argues that organisations must make sensible use of human resources at their disposal due to the mounting strain on the economic landscape. Due to the intricacy of leadership and engagement concepts, comprehensive tools are necessary, and any improper leadership habits that have the potential to sabotage employee engagement must be addressed. Employee engagement should be influenced by the actions of the leader informed by the circumstances. The results of the investigations show that leaders significantly affect employee engagement (Juchnowicz, Gruževskis, & Kinowska, 2020)

According to a quantitative investigation into how transactional and transformational leadership styles impact the engagement of Malaysian employees. Employee engagement was found to be positively reflected by both transformational and transactional leadership, with transformational leadership having a greater impact on employee engagement than transactional leadership (Padmanathan, 2010). The finding is also supported by Batista-Taran, Shuck, Gutierrez, and Baralt (2013), who indicate that increased unit performance correlates with transactional and transformational leadership styles.

Gemeda and Lee (2020) found that the transactional leadership style had a strong positive link with employee task performance, while the transformational leadership style had a substantial positive relationship with employees' innovative work behaviour and work

engagement. The connections have demonstrated that leaders who engage in capacity building through coaching and challenging staff members and those who excite and motivate followers by communicating visions, goals, as well as shared values foster innovative behaviour. On the other hand, leaders who prioritise employee compliance through supervision may have an impact on task performance.

Contrary to findings in most studies, the results from the study conducted by Manmeet and Poh (2022) show that the transactional style closely surpasses the transformational leadership style as the most common leadership style in Malaysia. While leaders claim to practise transactional leadership, there is a good chance that they will combine transactional and transformational leadership because they have had to adapt their style in response to a variety of factors, including the state of the organisation, tasks within it, the seniority of employees, their capabilities, diversity, the degree of empowerment they practice, and the guidance that employees need.

Silva and Mendis (2017) suggested that transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership behaviours play a crucial role in informing the extent of engagement at an organisational level in the insurance sector of Sri Lanka. The results of their study revealed a positive connection between employee engagement and transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles. Tims, Bakker, and Xanthopoulou (2011) and other literature posit that an important prerequisite for an employee to be engaged is the presence of transformational leaders. Mozammel and Haan's (2016) study's findings do not align with the existing body of knowledge on transformational leadership style and employee engagement, as it demonstrated that implementing a transformational leadership style in a workplace does not guarantee that employees will be highly engaged.

Leadership style has been identified to have a direct impact on the success or failure of an organisation. One noteworthy conclusion from research that has only looked at one leadership style is that it has a positive link or impact on the dependent variable of interest, which in this case is employee engagement, job satisfaction, and organisational performance/commitment. However, much of the literature that has studied transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire leadership styles has found that transformational leadership has a significant positive impact. Transactional leadership can have a positive or negative impact and laissez-faire leadership has a mostly negative impact.

It is evident from the literature that transformational leadership is the most effective and utilised leadership style, with a considerable and positive relationship with employee engagement and organisational performance. It shows that transformational leadership surpasses transactional and laissez-faire approaches in boosting employee engagement. Yet, laissez-faire is the least productive. As a result, leaders might find it more effective to blend transformational and transactional leadership styles based on the specific situation.

Chapter 3: Research Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The primary objective of this study was to determine the fundamental role played by involving probationary employees in the Gauteng Department of Education. Various logical approaches to addressing the developed research problem are essential to facilitate sampling, data collection, and analytical processes. This section presents several proposed procedures to be used in this study to play a central role in sample selection, data collection, and data analysis to address this study's main objective, to mention a few.

3.2 Research Approach

McNabb (2017) notes that the research approach is the third step in the research process, which entails choosing a methodology that generates the most effective answer to the research question and a technique that delivers the most cost-effective way of gathering the necessary data. Three components make up the research approach: a mixed, qualitative, and quantitative approach (McNabb, 2017). For this study, a quantitative research strategy was adopted. According to Rubin and Rabbie (2017), the quantitative approach is characterised by logical research methodologies and seeks to support or undermine accepted scientific hypotheses.

To identify patterns, affiliations, or causal linkages, this technique entails estimating factors and evaluating connections between them and enabling ease of accomplishment of research objectives that are subjective in nature (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2018; Rubin & Rabbie, 2017; Levy, 2017). The quantitative method was adopted for the data collection and analysis process. The study drew from both primary and secondary sources of data. Secondary data from various studies were used to provide background information on leadership styles and employee engagement. The information was collected from peer-reviewed research papers (Journals) and other credible sources.

For primary data, a questionnaire was developed, and quantitative data were collected through a closed-ended, structured questionnaire. This was administered to a sample of probationary employees within the GDE to allow for greater precision in reporting the results. Before administering the questionnaire to the target population, the developed instrument was piloted, and adjustments were made to the questionnaire to incorporate lessons learned during the pilot to ensure the collection of credible information.

3.3 Research Paradigm

According to Olsen, Lodwick and Dunlop (1992), "A paradigm implies a pattern, structure and framework or system of scientific and academic ideas, values and assumptions" (as cited in Antwi and Hamza, 2015: 218). Kumatongo and Muzata (2021) note that positivism, interpretivism, post-positivism, critical theory (including ideology), constructivism, and/or pragmatics are among the categories of research paradigms. Within the quantitative research approach, there are two types of paradigms: positivism and post-positivism. This study adopted a post-positivist paradigm to explore probationary employees' experiences and perceptions regarding their engagement and leadership style.

The basis for the post-positivism paradigm is that "although the object of our inquiry exists outside and independent of the human mind, it cannot be perceived with total accuracy by our observations; in other words, complete objectivity is nearly impossible to achieve but still pursues it as an ideal to regulate our search for knowledge" (Khaldi, 2017:18). The study concentrated on probationary employees' perceptions as opposed to that of the entire population of employees within GDE, which will result in a limited picture of leadership and engagement in the department. As stated by Mackenzie and Knipe (2006), the researcher assumes that several established ideas influence this research apart from those that are investigated, hence the post-positivism paradigm.

3.4 Research Design

Levy (2017) defines research design as a method for organising and conducting research so that developed research questions can be considered to following real-world circumstances and justifications while considering the research environment and constraints. This has an impact on situating choices, which are crucial in nature and determine the overall scope of the research. According to Bryman (2012), there are five general research designs: experimental, comparative, case study, longitudinal, and cross-sectional. The design adopted for this study is cross-sectional, which is mainly associated with questionnaires and/or structured interviewing.

However, apart from the data-gathering techniques mentioned above, others may also be used, such as structured observation and analysis of already existing official statistics or data from documents. The study by Kesmodel (2018) indicated that a cross-sectional design, where data is collected at one point without before-and-after comparisons, does not involve manipulation of the independent variable in any way.

3.5 Research Tools and Their Application

According to Cohen *et al*. (2018), instruments for data collection are a step in the execution of research strategies. The choice of the data collection tool depends on how well a certain tool fits the study strategy and the research's main objective. How useful the instrument is equally crucial to the fitness of the research instrument. The effectiveness of the designed tool is crucially determined by time, cost, and the respondents' capacity or the researcher's ability to interact with the instrument (McNabb, 2017). This quantitative study employed a closed-ended, structured questionnaire, designed and administered to employees under probation in GDE via a Google Form link.

The information obtained from the literature review informed the data collection instrument. The link to the developed Google form was sent to all the obtained email addresses of employees under probation, as reflected in the GDE database. The survey was completed by the respondents at their convenience time and submitted to the researcher for processing. The questionnaire was broken down into three (3) sections to provide the format for the data collection. The first section focused on demographic information, including the respondents' age, gender, work experience, academic qualifications, and designations. After that, the second section sourced information on the probationary employees' experience and perceptions regarding the leadership style/s commonly practised in GDE.

Bass and Avolio's Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ-5X) was employed to gauge leadership styles and answer inquiries about employee engagement. The scale comprises sections with dimensions corresponding to different leadership styles. The second section, which addresses six key factors that can be viewed as the essence of leadership, was developed following Likert's leadership model since that model was the focus of this research. The model has six concepts: motivation, interaction, communication, decision-making, interaction, setting goals, and controlling.

Primary data collection was conducted through a designed closed-ended questionnaire, which was then sent to all 116 probationary employees to achieve a high response rate. However, out of 116, two (2) of the email addresses did not go through, making the questionnaire recipients one hundred and fourteen (114). A letter indicating that approval was granted to the researcher to conduct the research in respect of the study was granted by GDE and shared with the relevant officials when requesting access to the database of the employees

under probation. The onus rested with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the target population officials involved.

For this research study, transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire styles were considered independent variables, while employees' engagement was the dependent variable.

3.6 Sampling Techniques

Since it is nearly impossible to collect data from every member of the study population, Sheppard (2021) explains that a sample is a subset of the participants in the study or events. This subset serves as a proxy for the total population in the study. The study adopted a purposeful sampling technique, and the targeted population of this study was drawn from GDE head office employees under probation holding other positions, except senior management and/or above.

During the data collection period, the population size of the probationary employees within the GDE head office, as per the departmental database, stood at one hundred and sixteen (116). The criteria for choosing employees under probation were informed by the newly employed workforce's essential role of positively impacting the goal of the organisation through new and innovative ideas. The literature on leadership styles and employee engagement seldom focuses specifically on recently hired employees. Managers and other decision-makers were excluded because the objective was to capture the employee perspective rather than managerial attitudes or organisational policies. To determine the sample size deemed to represent the entire population of the targeted group, the researcher utilised the sample size calculator. The determination of the appropriate sample size depends on the desired confidence level and the margin of error one is willing to tolerate. The respondents' rate for this study stood at 34.2% (39 out of 114). For this study, a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error were adopted, corresponding to a representative sample size of ninety (90) respondents.

3.7 Process of Data Analysis

According to Cohen *et al*. (2018), data analysis typically involves reducing the enormous amount of data gathered to make it more comprehensible. A few steps in this procedure employ statistical methods on the primary or secondary data collected. Data analysis is the process that involves transforming raw data or information gathered into comprehension, clarification, and interpretation of the underlying research question or study hypothesis (Kabir, 2016). This process typically involves a continuous cycle that lasts from the start of the study cycle to the

finish; therefore, it depends on regular expansion, refinement, extraction, augmentation, and revision (Cohen *et al*., 2018).

As the first step of the data analysis process, the collected data was captured, collated, categorised, and cleaned by editing. Data was coded numerically and transcribed into the latest version 29 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). IBM software was utilised for the data analysis process. This more reliable and comprehensive data analysis programme guarantees efficient analysis and timely completion of research projects, particularly quantitative research projects that require the creation of relevant graphs and Tables about the research question. Descriptive statistics, including frequency distribution, regression analysis, reliability analysis, and correlation, were employed to analyse the data and explain the findings.

The subsequent phase of the data analysis involved establishing means, standard deviations, and Cronbach's Alpha coefficients. To determine the relationship between employee engagement characteristics and leadership styles, the third phase involved calculating the Pearson correlation coefficient, with a practical impact size determined at $r > 0.30$ (medium effect) and a cut-off alpha value of 95% confidence interval level ($p < 0.05$) for statistical significance. The fourth phase of the analysis involved identifying the biographical groups that differed considerably from one another in terms of the means of the most important association found in the second phase.

Additionally, regular multiple regression analyses were conducted to determine if the leadership style variables function as significant predictors of the overall employee engagement variables. R2 values greater than 0.13 (medium effect) at $p < 0.05$ were considered practically significant for this investigation. To identify the differences in leadership style and employee engagement variables, analysis of variance (ANOVA) was employed in the final step, with an F-value ($p < 0.05$) used as the cutoff point. Employee engagement is the dependent variable in the context of the study framework, and leadership styles are the independent variable. The selection of SPSS is grounded on its simplicity and comprehensiveness, enabling anyone to work successfully on quantitative data regardless of size (Bryman, 2016).

3.8 Limitations, Feasibility and Positionality

The success of the study depended on the voluntary participation of the target population, which in this case consisted of employees under probation within the GDE. A high response rate was not achieved, and as a result, the validity of the collected data might be compromised. Securing a date to defend the proposal was hard given the high number of students undergoing

the process, which delayed other research processes, such as data collection, analysis and report writing. The researcher used to work for the GDE and within the unit that processes requests to conduct research within the department and was close enough to fast-track the approval to conduct research in the department. Thereafter, the researcher commenced data collection as soon as the research proposal process was finalised.

Additionally, the researcher had access to the department's database of all employees under probation, making it easy to communicate with participants through the provided emails. The researcher has undergone the probation process more than once in their career, which has influenced the choice of topic to some extent. The researcher was aware that while these experiences are crucial for carrying out the study, they may also introduce biases. Having worked in an organisation where the researcher collected data made comprehending the situation simpler and provided insight in a way that an outsider might not have. However, being familiar with it could also cause the researcher to overlook crucial information, as they may become too accustomed to it. Therefore, the researcher was constantly mindful of his connection with the department while collecting and analysing data and while writing the report and considered whether such biases affected the lenses through which the researcher viewed the data.

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The employees under probation within the GDE were approached with an introductory letter (participants' information sheet) to seek their permission to carry out the research. The researcher introduced himself to the potential participants of the study by attaching a letter of introduction, a consent form, and an approved ethics certificate. The letter of introduction informed the participants of the study's purpose. A consent form is created to protect the participant and researcher (Sheppard, 2020). It ensures the participant's privacy and confidentiality while outlining potential risks. It provides the researcher with evidence that the participants voluntarily chose to participate in the study and were aware of its aim and any associated risks.

Additionally, the researcher ensured that all procedures to be undertaken in the study conformed to the ethical standards of the Wits School of Governance (WSG). The study prioritised the respondents' rights to informed consent, anonymity, and confidentiality during data analysis, the report's writing, data safekeeping, and the utilisation of the data only for the research and not for any other purpose, as well as the right to discontinue participation. The

proposal for this study was presented and submitted to the institution's ethical committee for approval.

3.10 Validity and Reliability

Standard procedures were used throughout the study to ensure validity and reliability. Data was collected using a pre-tested questionnaire and analysed in the standard statistical software packages with the assistance of an experienced statistician. Results were presented in an honest and unbiased fashion (Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014). Cronbach's alpha accepted rule of thumb is that the closely the reliability coefficient approaches 1.0, the more appropriate the data are, making the internal consistency reliability of the measures considered good (Ali, Jangga, Ismail, Kamal, & Ali, 2015). After testing the reliability of the data collection method, the final version of the questionnaire was administered to the targeted population for participation in the survey.

Chapter 4: Presentation of Research Findings

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the structured survey questionnaire and the quantitative data analysis from the sampled respondents of employees under probation in the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) to address the research objectives and questions reflected in 1.4 and 1.5. The most recent version, 29 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS), was used to transcribe the numerically coded data. IBM software was employed in the process of data analysis. To analyse the data and interpret the results, descriptive statistics such as frequency distribution, regression analysis, reliability analysis, and correlation were used. Because the study was quantitative, the results are presented in figures and tables below.

It presents the survey's findings on the most popular leadership philosophies used by GDE, the connection between employee engagement and leadership philosophies, and the level of engagement among GDE probationary employees. The chapter's discussion, conclusion, and recommendations are influenced by the findings listed below.

4.2 Respondents' demographic profiles

The demographic factors were assessed in the first section of the survey that was sent to the participants. These factors included designation, work experience, age, gender, and educational attainment. The purpose of this was to gather the respondents' profiles. The frequency distribution % is one of the estimates used to determine the demographic characteristics of the study's respondents. The software programme SPSS IBM version 29.0 was used to compute this.

4.2.1 Gender

The gender analysis of research participants who are probationary workers of the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) is shown in Figure 5 below. As seen, women made up most respondents, 25 (64.1%), with men making up the remaining tiny percentage, 14 (35.9%).

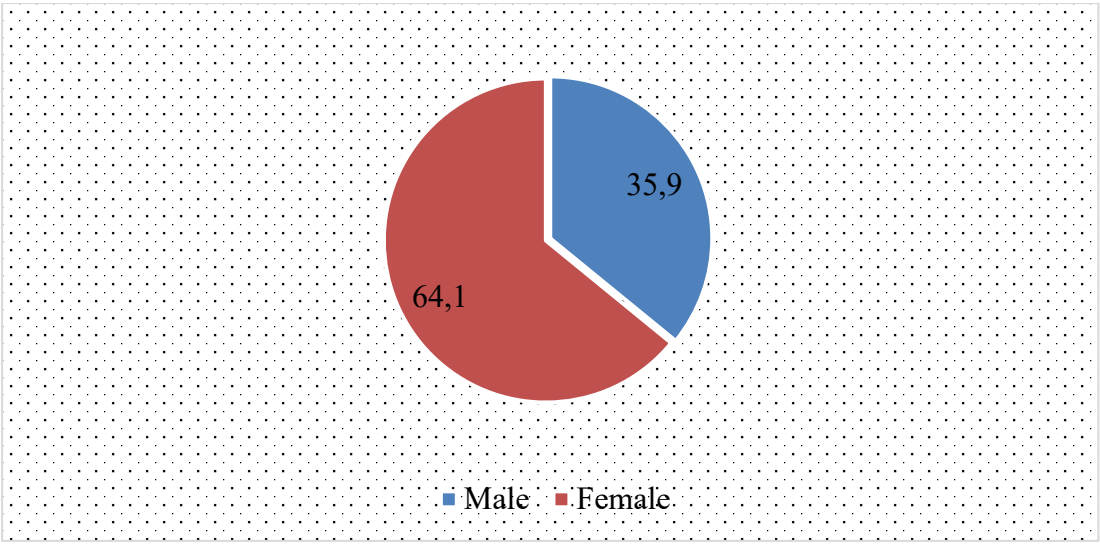


Figure 5: Respondents' percentage distribution broken down by gender

4.2.2 Age

The findings of the examination of the respondents' ages are shown in Figure 6 below. 18 (46.2%) of the total respondents (n–39 of 114) were in the 31–40 age range. Then, 14 (35.9%) of respondents were in the age range of 21–30, and the last group of respondents (7) was those who were 41 years of age or older, at 17.9%. Young people made up the bulk of the responders. This is expected given that the study's target sample consists of probationary employees, who are primarily found in entry-level and junior-level roles.

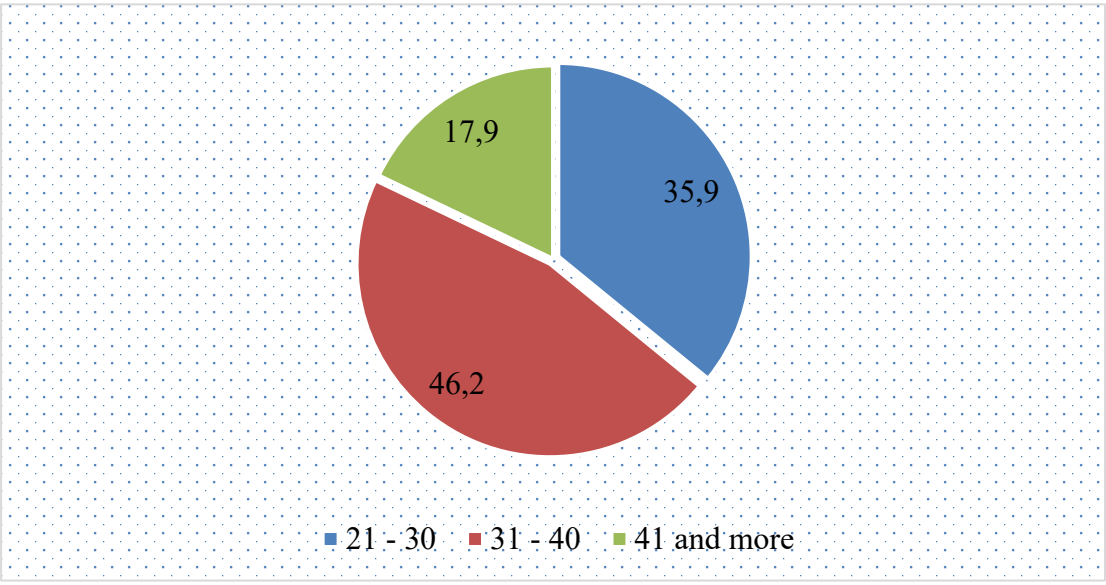


Figure 6: Age-based percentage distribution of respondents

4.2.3 Work experience

The analysis's outcome, which is depicted in Figure 7 below, provides information on the respondents' years of work experience (probationary employees). The results show that 20 (51.3%) of the respondents served a probationary period of about one to two years. The remainder of 19 (48.7%) respondents have been employed in GDE for less than a year. Although the difference is negligible, it is noteworthy that those who have been with the organisation may have had more interactions with its leaders than those who may be regarded as new.

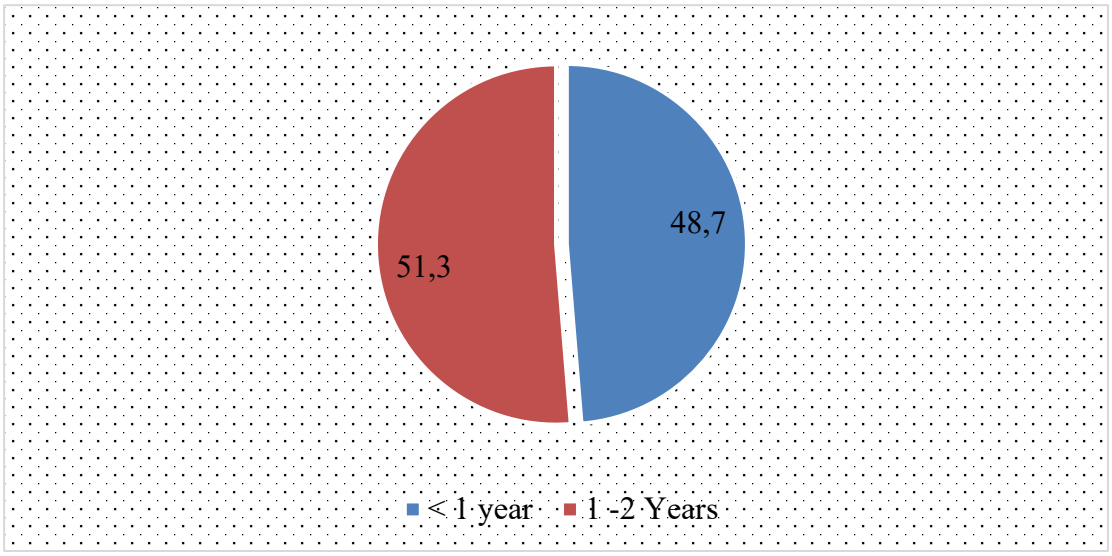


Figure 7: Respondents' percentage distribution based on work experience

4.2.4. Highest level of education

As can be seen in Figure 8 below, the analysis conducted to ascertain the respondents' greatest degree of education revealed that 13 (33.3%) of the respondents held an honours degree. Only 7 (18%) of the respondents reported having any further qualifications, compared to approximately 10 (25.6%) who held a degree and 9 (23.1%) who held a master's degree. There was not a single doctorate among the sample's respondents.

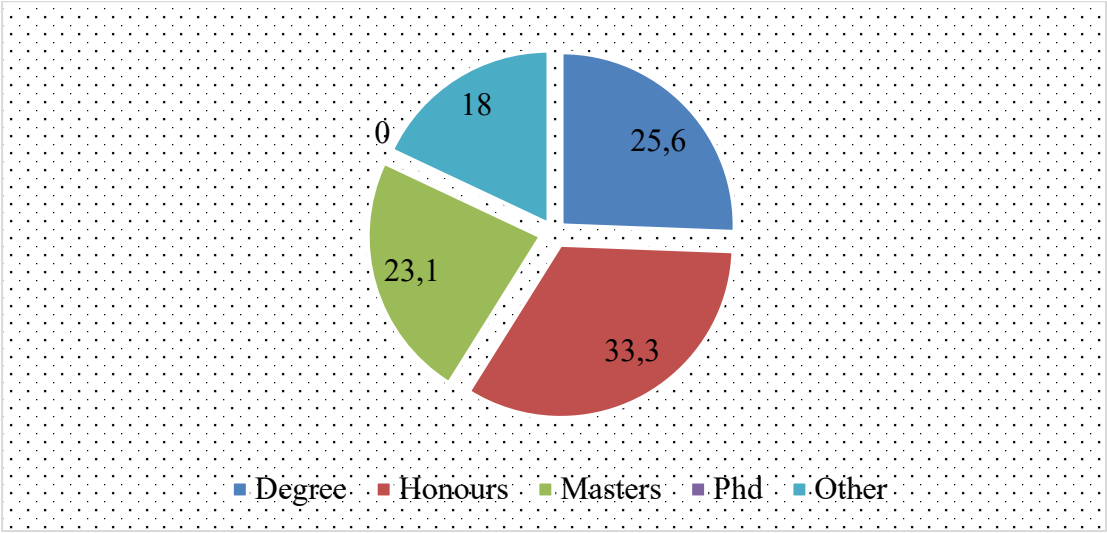


Figure 8: Respondents' percentage distribution by highest level of education

4.3 Descriptive statistics

For every one of the four primary constructs, descriptive statistics were conducted. These included employee engagement, transactional leadership, laissez-faire leadership, and transformational leadership. The results of the descriptive statistics are shown below under the study topic or goal.

4.3.1 Test of Normality

By calculating the mean values of each respondent's responses, the variables from the original dataset were transformed. As a result, four additional sets of variables (Employee engagement, transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and Laissez-Faire leadership style) were created. After that, the newly altered set of variables was transferred or imported into SPSS IBM version 29.0 for examination. To determine if the data is normally distributed, a normality test was first performed. The data was found to be normally distributed, as indicated by the results in Table 1 below, which prompted the use of parametric techniques like Pearson correlation and linear regression. The researcher would have used the non-parametric techniques of ordinary regression and Spearman rank correlation if the data had not been normally distributed.

Table 1: Test of Normality for distribution

	Shapiro-Wilk		
	Statistic	**df**	**Sig.**
Transformational	,964	39	,249
Transactional	,977	39	,589
Laissez-Faire	,970	39	,363
Employee Engagement	,968	39	,321

*. This is a lower bound of a true significance.
a. Lilliefors Significance Correction

Mishra, Pandey, Singh, Gupta, Sahu and Keshri (2019) state that Shapiro Wilk should be used if the sample size is less than 50 and Kolmogorov Smirnov should be used for data sets or sample sizes larger than 50. Because there are fewer than 100 data points in this investigation, the researcher used Shapiro Wilk. The data generated for the variables are normally distributed using a 5% level of significance, as indicated by the fact that the significance or P value for each variable is greater than 0.05 based on the outcome of the Test of Normality. Pearson correlation and linear regression were used in this investigation.

4.4 Cronbach's Alpha coefficient test for reliability and internal consistency

Since the survey's questions were based on a Likert scale, it is crucial to verify the score's dependability. Internal consistency and reliability were examined in the data for each section of the questionnaire on employee engagement, transactional, laissez-faire, and transformational leadership. The Cronbach's Alpha analysis results, which were intended to assess the dependability of the data gathered, are shown in Table 2 below. According to Saidi and Siew (2019), an acknowledged rule of thumb for Cronbach's alpha is that the closer the reliability coefficient approaches 1.0, the more relevant the data are, and the measures' internal consistency reliability is deemed good.

The analysis's findings in Table 2 below indicate that both the independent variables, transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles and the dependent variable, employee engagement, had Cronbach's Alpha coefficients that were excellent and extremely close to 1.0.

Table 2: Cronbach's Alpha coefficient test for reliability and internal consistency

Variable	Cronbach's Alpha	Number of items
Transformational	,900	8
Transactional	,714	8
Laissez-faire	,879	7
Employee engagement	,956	17

4.5 Leadership styles that are commonly practised by managers at Gauteng Department of Education (GDE)

To ascertain the typical leadership philosophies employed by managers in the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE), the Mean, Standard Deviation, and Frequency are shown here. Variation for the three independent variables the leadership styles of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. This was calculated using the answers provided for each variable, which were graded on a five-point Likert scale that went from strongly agree to agree to neutral to disagree to strongly disagreement. The conclusion about the typical leadership style used at GDE was reached using the mean scores of the three factors (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire).

4.5.1 Transformational approach to leadership

The four primary components of the transformational leadership style are intellectual stimulation, individual consideration, inspiring drive, and charisma or idealised influence (Mokhber, bin Wan Ismail, & Vakilbashi, 2015). The implementation of the four aspects that facilitate understanding of the transformational leadership style and its impact on employee engagement is demonstrated by the results. According to the findings in Table 3 below, 9 (23.1%) of respondents strongly agreed 14 (35.9%) agreed that managers clearly communicate, 9 (23.1%) strongly agreed and 15 (38.5%) agreed that leaders in the relevant units inspire change. Approximately 8, which equates to twenty per cent and a half 8 (20.5%) agreed, and 19 (48.7%) strongly agreed that managers exchange ideas and viewpoints. About 19, which equates to 48.7 of the respondents agreed, and 8 (20.5%) strongly agreed that managers should include their teams.

A little over 5 (12.8%) of respondents strongly agreed, and 15 (38.5%) agreed that their bosses foster mutual respect and trust. Of those questioned about whether managers give advice to staff members, 7 (17.9%) strongly agreed, and 18 (46.2%) agreed. Of those who agreed that the organisation is dedicated to professional development, 7 (17.9%) strongly agreed, and 21 (53,8%) agreed. Then, 16 (41.0%) agreed, and 3 (7.7%) strongly agreed that management should take responsibility for all actions and decisions. The analysis's findings, which are displayed in Table 3, reveal that, overall, respondents agreed with roughly 34 (87.5%) of the questions pertaining to the characteristics of the transformational leadership style. They also indicated that managers in the GDE exhibited the four components of the style that are,

individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, and charisma or idealised influence.

Table 3: Frequency, Mean and Std. deviation for transformational leadership style

Frequency, Mean and Std. deviation.								
Statements	**N**	**SD**	**D**	**N**	**A**	**SA**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Managers inspire change.	39	2,6%	20,5%	17,9%	35,9%	23,1%	3,56	1,142
Managers clearly communicate	39	5,1%	12,8%	20,5%	38,5%	23,1%	3,62	1,138
Managers share ideas and opinions	39	5,1%	5,1%	59%	20,5%	48,7%	3,74	1,019
Managers engage team members	39	0	20,5%	10,3%	48,7%	20,5%	3,69	1,030
Managers inspire trust and respect	39	10,3%	7,7%	30,8%	38,5%	12,8%	3,36	1,135
Managers provide guidance to employees.	39	0	17,9%	17,9%	46,2%	17,9%	3,64	,986
The organisation is committed to professional development.	39	2,6%	7,7%	17,9%	53,8%	17,9%	3,77	,931
Managers take responsibility for overall action and decisions	39	5,1%	17,9%	28,2%	41,0%	7,7%	3,28	1,025

N=Size of Sample, SD=Strongly Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree

The five-point Likert scale, which ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree for each item, was also used to measure the characteristics of transformational leadership styles. The top 5 statements that respondents primarily agreed with, out of those that explain various aspects of the transformational leadership style, are as follows:

- "The organisation is committed to professional development" with a mean value of 3.77 and a standard deviation of .931.
- "Managers share ideas and opinions" with a mean value of 3.74 and a standard deviation of 1.019.
- "Managers engage team members" with a mean value of 3.69 and a standard deviation of 1.030.

- "Managers provide guidance to employees" with a mean value of 3.64 and a standard deviation of .986.
- "Managers clearly communicate" with a mean value of 3.62 and a standard deviation of 1.138.

4.5.2 Transactional approach to leadership

The three primary characteristics of a transactional leadership style are dependent reward, passive management by exception, and active management by exception. (Hasija, Hyde, & Kushwaha, 2019). The application of the four aspects that are helpful in comprehending the transactional leadership style and its function in influencing employee engagement is demonstrated by the results in Table 4 below. The results revealed that when asked whether managers respect structure and order, 9 (23.1%) of respondents strongly agreed and 20 (51.3%) agreed; managers closely oversee employees, with 10 (25.6%) of respondents strongly agreeing and 17 (43.6%) agreeing.

Managers set standards to maximise production; 9 (23.1%) strongly agreed and 18 (46.2%) agreed. Then, 12 (30.8%) agreed and 9 (23.1%) strongly agreed that managers impose their orders and instructions on staff members. About 4 (10.3%) of respondents strongly agreed, and 10 (25.6%) agreed that employees receive prizes or punishments to encourage the accomplishment of organisational goals. Of those who agreed, 4 (23.1%) strongly agreed and 14 (35.9%) believed that managers set all work procedures and methods. Six of the respondents (15.4%) strongly agreed, while 20 (51.3%) agreed that managers issue commands and explain procedures. Of those who believed that managers encourage and reward creativity, 6 (15.4%) strongly agreed and 15 (38.5%) agreed.

Table 4: Frequency, Mean and Std. deviation for transactional leadership style

Frequency, Mean and Std. deviation.								
Statements	**N**	**SD**	**D**	**N**	**A**	**SA**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Managers value order and structure	39	5,1%	7,7%	12,8%	51,3%	23,1%	3,79	1,056
Managers closely supervise employees	39	5,1%	10,3%	15,4%	43,6%	25,6%	3,74	1,117
Managers set standards to maximise productivity	39	2,6%	15,4%	12,8%	46,2%	23,1%	3,72	1,075
Managers impose their own orders and instructions on employees.	39	10,3%	10,3%	25,6%	30,8%	23,1%	3,46	1,253

Employees are given rewards or punishments to motivate achievement of organisational objectives.	39	5,1%	30,8%	28,2%	25,6%	10,3%	3,05	1,099
Managers dictate all the work methods and processes	39	2,6%	17,9%	20,5%	35,9%	23,1%	3,59	1,117
Managers give orders and clarify procedures.	39	2,6%	7,7%	23,1%	51,3%	15,4%	3,69	,922
Managers encourage and reward creativity	39	20,5%	10,3%	15,4%	38,5%	15,4%	3,18	1,393

N=Size of Sample, SD=Strongly Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree

The five-point Likert scale, which ranges from strongly agree to strongly disagree for each item, was also used to measure the aspects of transactional leadership style. The top 5 statements that respondents primarily agreed with, out of those that define various aspects of the transactional leadership style, are as follows:

- "Managers value order and structure" with a mean value of 3.79 and a standard deviation of 1.056.
- "Managers closely supervise employees" with a mean value of 3.74 and a standard deviation of 1.117.
- "Managers set standards to maximise productivity" with a mean value of 3.72 and a standard deviation of 1.075.
- "Managers give orders and clarify procedures" with a mean value of 3.69 and a standard deviation of 0.922.
- "Managers dictate all the work methods and processes" with a mean value of 3,59 and a standard deviation of 1.117.

4.5.3 Laissez-faire approach to leadership

The application of the factors that are helpful in comprehending the laissez-faire leadership style and how it affects employee engagement is demonstrated by the results in Table 5. The table shows that, while 4 (10.3%) strongly agreed and 17 (43.6%) agreed that managers stay out of the way of their subordinates' work, 8 (20.5%) respondents strongly agreed and 21 (53.8%) agreed that managers offer the necessary tools and resources. Then, 9 (23.1%) of respondents agreed, and 5 (12.8%) strongly agreed that managers allow employees to make decisions. Besides, 17 (43.6) percent agreed and 5 (12.8%) strongly agreed that managers encourage staff members to use their newly acquired talents and abilities in their day-to-day work.

Approximately 10 (25.6%) of respondents strongly agreed, and 35.9% agreed that their managers encourage them to think of innovative and more efficient ways to accomplish tasks. Also, 4 (10.3%) strongly concurred, and 18 (46.2%) agreed that managers push employees to take calculated risks to complete their work. Of those who believed that they have the power to make judgements that raise the calibre of their work, 5 (12.8%) strongly agreed, and 20 (51.3%) agreed.

Table 5: Frequency, Mean and Std. Deviation for Laissez-Faire leadership style

Frequency, Mean and Std. Deviation.								
Statements	**N**	**SD**	**D**	**N**	**A**	**SA**	**Mean**	**Std. D**
Managers provide the necessary tools and resources	39	5,1%	17,9%	2,6%	53,8%	20.5%	3,67	1,155
Managers stay out of the way of subordinates to do work.	39	7,7%	20,5%	17,9%	43,6%	10,3%	3,28	1,146
Managers allow employees to make decisions	39	7,7%	28,2%	28,2%	23,1%	12,8%	3,05	1,169
Managers encourage employees to apply their new abilities and skills in their daily work.	39	7,7%	12,8%	23,1%	43,6%	12,8%	3,41	1,117
My manager encourages me to come up with new and better ways of doing things.	39	5,1%	12,8%	20,5%	35,9%	25,6%	3,64	1,158
My manager encourages me to take informed risks in getting my work done.	39	2,6%	28,2%	12,8%	46,2%	10,3%	3,33	1,084
I have the authority to make decisions that improve the quality of my work.	39	2,6%	12,8%	20,5%	51,3%	12,8%	3,59	,966

N=Size of Sample, SD=Strongly Disagree, N=Neutral, A=Agree, SA=Strongly Agree

The five-point Likert scale, which ranges from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree" for each item, was also used to measure aspects of a laissez-faire leadership style. The top three sentences that best encapsulate the laissez-faire leadership style, according to the respondents, are as follows:

- "Managers provide the necessary tools and resources" with a mean value of 3.67 and a standard deviation of 1.155.

- "My manager encourages me to come up with new and better ways of doing things" with a mean value of 3.64 and a standard deviation of 1.158.
- "I have the authority to make decisions that improve the quality of my work" with a mean value of 3.59 and a standard deviation of 0.966.

4.5.4 Overall descriptive statistics of the variables

Using the mean values for each variable, Table 6 below displays the descriptive statistics of the three variables. When the mean score falls between 0 and 1.89, it is understood as extremely low; between 1.90 and 2.69, it is interpreted as low; between 2.70 and 3.49, it is read as moderate; between 3.50 and 4.2, it is interpreted as high; and between 4.30 and 5.00, it is interpreted as very high, according to Zaki and Ahmad (2017). The more respondents agreed with the statements made, the higher the mean score. The analysis's conclusion shows that, among the three leadership style variables, the mean scores for transformational and transactional leadership are high, at 3.5833 and 3.5288, respectively. The laissez-faire leadership style is ranked lowest, with a mean score of 3.4249.

Table 6: Descriptive Statistics for leadership styles

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Transformational leadership	39	1,75	5,00	3,5833	,80721
Transactional leadership	39	1,88	5,00	3,5288	,65611
Laissez-faire leadership	39	1,29	5,00	3,4249	,84927
Valid N (listwise)	39				

N= Sample Size

Thus, it can be said that, while there are no appreciable differences between the three leadership philosophies (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire), the combination of transformational and transactional philosophies is most frequently employed in GED, whereas laissez-faire philosophies are only occasionally used.

4.6 Relationship between leadership styles and employee on probations' engagement

Testing the variables for relationships with each of the study questions and the related variables is covered in the sections that follow. The Pearson's correlation coefficient test was performed to determine the strength of the link between the independent variables (leadership styles) and

the dependent variable (employee engagement). A Pearson's correlation coefficient test was utilised to determine the strength of the link between leadership styles and employee engagement to calculate the correlation coefficient.

According to Mukaka (2012:69), "Correlation is measured by a statistic called the correlation coefficient, which represents the strength of the putative linear association between the variables in question". Variable relationships can have strengths ranging from -1 to +1 (Schober, Boer, & Schwarte, 2018). The coefficient was determined or derived as an unassumed measure of a linear relationship for this investigation.

4.6.1 Correlation between transformational leadership style and employee engagement

The Pearson correlation between employee engagement and transformational leadership style is shown in Table 7, with a Pearson's r value of .794. At the .001 level, the mean score was significant. This suggests that employee engagement and transformative leadership style have a strong and positive relationship. Given that p is less than .05., the correlation is statistically significant, as indicated by the significance value (2-tailed) of <,001.

Table 7: Transformational leadership style and employee engagement correlation

		Transformational	**Employee Engagement**
Transformational	Pearson's Correlation	1	,794**
	Sig. (2 tailed)		<,001
	N	39	39
Employee Engagement	Pearson's Correlation	,794**	1
	Sig. (2 tailed)	<,001	
	N	39	39

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

4.6.2 Employee engagement and transformative leadership style correlation

Pearson's correlation between employee engagement and the transactional leadership style is seen in Table 8. The correlation coefficient magnitude (Pearson r value of .852) between employee engagement and transactional leadership style is displayed in the Table. This indicates that there is a significant and positive link between the transactional leadership style and employee engagement, with the mean score being significant at the .001 level. Given that p is less than .05, the correlation is statistically significant, as indicated by the significance value (2-tailed) of <,001.

Table 8: Transactional leadership style and employee engagement correlation

		Employee Engagement	Transactional
Employee Engagement	Pearson's Correlation	1	,852**
	Sig. (2 tailed)		<,001
	N	39	39
Transactional	Pearson's Correlation	,852**	1
	Sig. (2 tailed)	<,001	
	N	39	39

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

4.6.3 Employee engagement and the Laissez-Faire leadership style are correlation

Pearson's correlation between employee engagement and transactional leadership style is shown in Table 9, and the r value of .894 indicates a strong positive link between employee engagement and laissez-faire leadership. Given that p is less than .05, the correlation is statistically significant, as indicated by the significance value (2-tailed) of <.001.

Table 9: Employee engagement and laissez-faire leadership style correlation

		Employee Engagement	Laissez-Faire
Employee Engagement	Pearson's Correlation	1	,894**
	Sig. (2 tailed)		<,001
	N	39	39
Laissez-Faire	Pearson's Correlation	,894**	1
	Sig. (2 tailed)	<,001	
	N	39	39

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

4.7 Multiple regression analysis

The three leadership philosophies of transformational leadership (independent variable X1), transactional leadership (independent variable X2), and laissez-faire leadership (independent variable X3) were tested for their impact on employee engagement (dependent variable Y) using multiple regression analysis.

The following is the regression equation:

$$Y = b0 + bX1(TRANSF) + bX2(TRANSACT) + bX3(LAISSEZF)$$

4.7.1 Model summary for regression to determine the impact of leadership styles on employee engagement

Table 10 below shows the results of regression analysis for the interaction between leadership style and employee engagement. Based on an examination of the average values obtained from the sets of statements/questions corresponding to the dependent variable (employee engagement) and independent variables (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire). The effect of the independent factors (leadership styles) on the dependent variable (employee engagement) was ascertained by regression analysis. Table 10 shows that the model accounts for 85.3% of the variation concerning transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles and their effects on employee engagement. This is indicated by the coefficient of determination (R2) of .853.

Table 10: Regression analysis for impact of leadership styles on employee engagement

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
4	,923[a]	,853	,840	,31894	2,810

a. Predictors: (Constant), Laissez-Faire, Transactional, Transformational
b. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

4.7.2 An overview of the transformative leadership style and how it affects employee engagement

The model summary for the regression relevant to the effect of transformational leadership styles on employee engagement is displayed in Table 11 below. With a coefficient of determination (R2) of .726 for the transformational leadership style and its effect on employee engagement, the model explains 72.6% of the variation in the data, while the remaining 27.4% could be because of the effect of extraneous variables.

Table 11: Regression analysis for transformational leadership style and employee engagement

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	,852[a]	,726	,719	,42309	2,256

a. Predictors: (Constant), Transformational
b. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

4.7.3 An overview of the transactional leadership style and how it affects employee engagement

The model summary for the regression relevant to the effect of transactional leadership styles on employee engagement is presented in Table 12 below. With a coefficient of determination (R2) of .631, the model can account for 63.1% of the variation in the relationship between the transactional leadership style and employee engagement, while the remaining 36.9% could possibly be because of the effect of extraneous variables.

Table 12: Regression analysis for transactional leadership style and employee engagement

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	,794[a]	,631	,621	,49138	2,413

a. Predictors: (Constant), Transactional
b. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

4.7.4 Overview of the Laissez-Faire leadership style and how it affects employee engagement

The model summary for the regression relating to the effect of laissez-faire leadership styles on employee engagement is shown in table 13 below. With a coefficient of determination (R2) of .799, the model can account for 79.9% of the variation in the relationship between the transactional leadership style and employee engagement, while the remaining 20.0% could be because of the effect of extraneous variables.

Table 13: Regression analysis for Laissez-Faire leadership style and employee engagement

Model	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate	Durbin-Watson
1	,894[a]	,799	,794	,36205	2,647

a. Predictors: (Constant), Laissez-Faire
b. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

4.7.5 ANOVA for regression to determine the impact of leadership styles on employee engagement

An analysis of variance (ANOVA) was performed in the last phase to determine the differences in the employee engagement and leadership style variables, with F ($p < 0.05$) serving as the cutoff point. The result of the analysis is shown in table 14 below.

Table 14: ANOVA

Model		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
4	Regression	20,621	3	6,874	67,572	<,001[b]
	Residual	3,560	35	,102		
	Total	24,181	38			

a. Predictors: (Constant), Laissez-Faire, Transactional, Transformational
b. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

4.7.6 Regression coefficient for assessing how leadership philosophies affect employee engagement

Table 15 shows that the result of the regression equation is Y = 0 +,2891 +,3012 +,2263. The explanation provides the role that the independent variables, i.e., transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles play in forecasting the employee engagement results. There are differences in the co-efficient values among the three independent variables. As a result, the three independent factors produce various outcomes in terms of employee engagement based on the .309, .186, and .499 standardised co-efficient (Beta) Figures. The three leadership philosophies differ statistically, but all the philosophies demonstrate a positive standardised coefficient.

The general rule is that the closer the beta coefficient is to +1 or -1, the stronger the relationship. A beta of 0 indicates no relationship. Therefore, transactional leadership style has a strong positive relationship with employee engagement, since it has the Standardised Beta Coefficients of .186 compared to the .309 and .499 for transformational and Laissez-Faire leadership styles, respectively.

Table 15: Coefficient for impact of leadership philosophies on employee engagement

		Unstandardised Coefficients		**Standardised Coefficients**		
Model		B	Std. Error	Beta	t	Sig.
4	(Constant)	,117	,289		,404	,689
	Transformational	,301	,118	,304	2,557	,015
	Transactional	,226	,129	,186	1,753	,088
	Laissez-Faire	,468	,121	,499	3,877	<,001

a. Dependent Variable: Employee Engagement

4.8 The extent to which employees under probation are engaged

This section ascertains whether GDE probationary employees participate in the organisation's planning and decision-making processes. The descriptive statistics, including the mean and

standard deviation, calculated from the employee engagement sets of questions asked of respondents in the research survey, are used to determine the degree of such involvement. The five-point Likert scale was used to rate these sets of questions, ranging from strongly agree to strongly disagree. The responses from the respondents made it possible to calculate the mean score, which was then used to draw conclusions about the newly hired workforce's involvement in GDE.

4.8.1 The percentage and frequency of employee engagement

According to the results shown in Figure 9 below, over 20 (53.0%) of respondents (41.0% agreed and 12.8% agreed) said they felt free to express their opinions without fear of retaliation, and over 24 (64.0%) of the respondents (43.6% agreed and 20.5% strongly agreed) that people in GDE work together to complete tasks. Following this were respondents who felt that their manager encourages cross-functional collaboration to achieve organisational goals, those who felt more accepted and involved, and that there is effective communication between managers and subordinates, respectively, making up over 23 (61.0%) of the respondents (46.2% agree and 15.4% strongly agreed), about 23 (59.0%) of the respondents (46.2% agree and 12.8% strongly agreed), and 22 (56.5%) of the respondents (46.2% agree and 10.3% strongly agreed).

Less than half of the respondents 16 (41.0%) agreed, and 3 (7.7%) strongly agreed that workers who are impacted by decisions are consulted when deciding what work should be done.

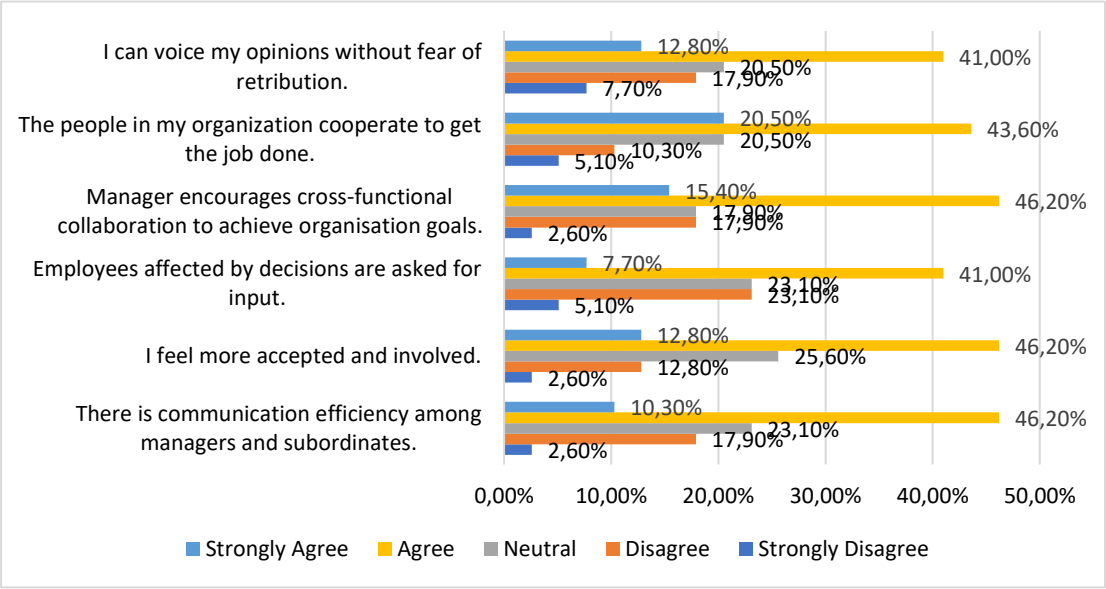


Figure 9: Survey responses for employee engagement statements

According to results shown in Figure 10, fourteen (35.9%) of respondents agreed, and 30,80% strongly agreed that managers actively support their career development and that they receive ongoing feedback that helps them improve their performance. More than half of the participants, 15 (38.5%), agreed and 5 (12.8%) strongly agreed that managers incorporate team input into decision-making processes that impact their jobs. Less than half of the respondents 13 (33.3%) agreed, and 5 (12.8%) strongly agreed that suggestions made by employees are taken seriously. Then, 15 (38.5%) of the respondents agreed overall, and about 3 (7.7%) strongly agreed that they have the freedom to recommend changes to their jobs or have a say in how their work is divided.

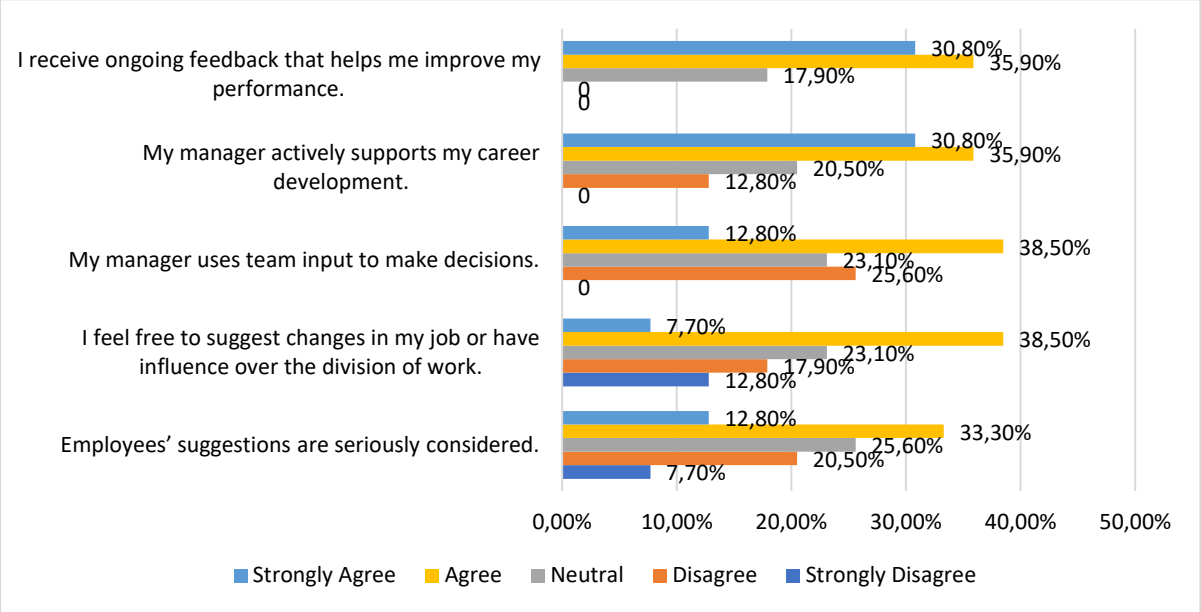


Figure 10: Survey responses for employee engagement statements continue

Figure 11 below illustrates that, of the overall respondents, 24 (61.5%) agreed and 8 (20.5%) strongly agreed that managers communicate the organisation's goals; 23 (59.0%) agreed and 10 (25.6%) strongly agreed that managers ensure team members understand their roles. Also, 23 (59.0%) of respondents agreed to see a connection between the work they do and the organisation's vision and mission, and 8 (20.5%) said they strongly did. Besides, 20 (51.3%) of respondents agreed, and 10 (25.6%) strongly agreed or felt that their supervisors are open to hearing their suggestions and ideas regarding their work.

Regarding whether supervisors notify their staff members when organisational priorities shift to prevent wasting time, 16 (42.0%) of respondents agreed and 11 (28.0%)

strongly agreed with the statement; additionally, 17 (43.6%) of respondents agreed and 7 (17.9%) strongly agreed that supervisors encourage the generation of fresh, creative ideas.

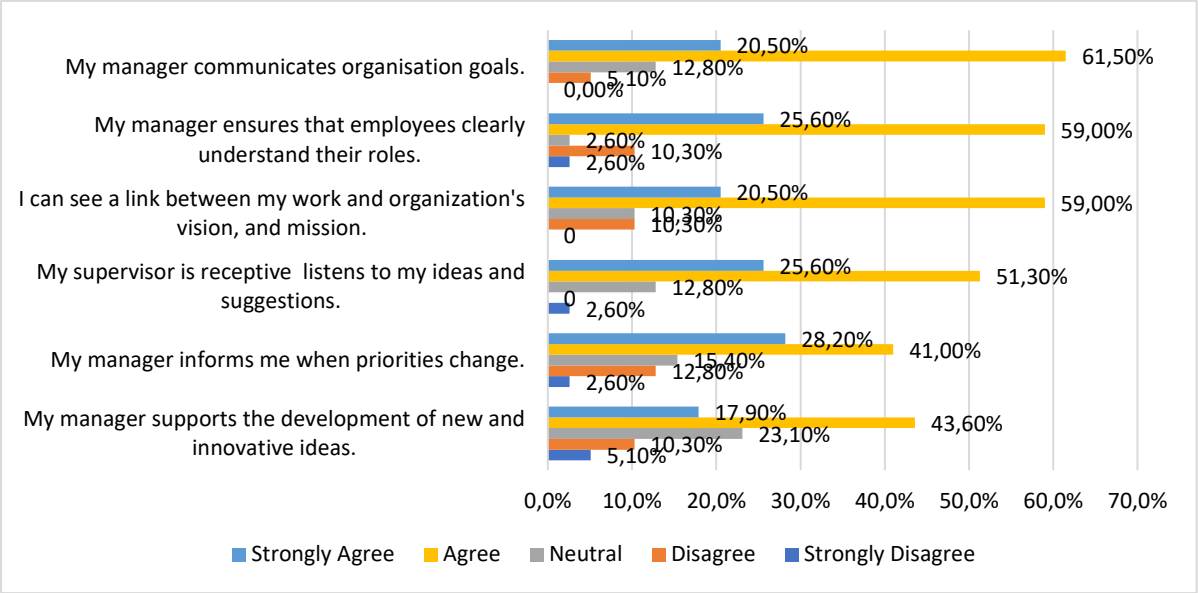


Figure 11: Survey responses for employee engagement statements continue

4.8.2 Descriptive statistics for employee engagement

Table 16 below shows the mean and standard deviation emanating from the descriptive statistics of employee engagement. Using the statements from the questionnaire that was given to the respondents, the mean value of the variable employee engagement was calculated. The analysis yielded a mean value of 3,5958 and a standard deviation of .797 as can be seen in the above Table. The mean value of 3.5958, which falls within the maximum score range of 1 to 5, is regarded as higher. As per Zaki and Ahmad (2017), a mean score of 0 to 1.89 indicates a very low degree of perception, 1.90 to 2.69 is low, 2.70 to 3.49 is moderate, 3.50 to 4.2 is high, and 4.30 to 5.00 is very high.

Table 16: Descriptive statistics for employee engagement

Descriptive Statistics					
	N	**Minimum**	**Maximum**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**
Employee Engagement	39	1,59	5,00	3,5958	,79771
Valid N (listwise)	39				

N=Sample Size

The higher the mean score, the more respondents agreed with the statements made. When the mean is higher than when it is lower, it indicates that the data point is generally more significant or has a larger value. Consequently, it can be said that employees under probation in the Gauteng Department of Education are highly involved in the department's planning and decision-making processes.

4.8.3 Summary

It is critical to comprehend how participatory approaches and governance styles affect an organisation's work culture and policy implementation process. What probationary employees think about leadership style and employee participation in planning and implementation processes at the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) is the main research question this study sought to answer. The findings demonstrate the application of transactional, laissez-faire, and transformational leadership philosophies. On the other hand, moderate use of laissez-faire leadership is contrasted with most of the transformational and transactional leadership. Employee engagement and the two leadership philosophies (transformational and transactional) are significantly correlated, and probationary staff members participate in departmental planning and decision-making.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Research Findings

5.1 Introduction

The primary goal of this research project was to identify the leadership style and evaluate probationary staff members' perceptions of their involvement in departmental planning and implementation processes at South Africa's Gauteng Department of Education (GDE). Following the goals stated in Section 1.4, this chapter discusses the findings from Chapter 5 to determine how they relate to the findings from Chapter 2 (literature review).

5.2 Discussion of demographic information

The study's findings showed that women comprised the majority of the respondents. Historical injustices in the South African context have led to disparities in key sectors that significantly impact the nation's economic activity. Since the beginning of democracy, the South African government has made it a priority to implement laws that promote gender equality in the workplace for all jobs. Most respondents held honours degrees, indicating that the employees in GDE who are on probation are highly educated, with the majority having achieved this level of education.

The greater percentage of research participants who are recently hired suggests that GDE considers the application of the Employment Equity Act (EEA) while making hiring decisions. A noteworthy discovery is that most respondents were young individuals. This makes sense, considering that the target sample for the study included probationary workers, who are mostly employed in entry-level and junior-level positions. Although there is not as much of a difference between those who have worked in the department for less than a year and those who have been with the organisation for one to two years, it is important to note that the latter has interacted with leaders more than those who have been with the organisation for less than a year.

5.3 Discussion on most common leadership style/s practised in GDE

The goal of this section was to determine whether GDE leaders employ a transformational, transactional, or laissez-faire leadership style. Approximately, 380 publications worldwide featured over 600 different types of leadership styles, according to the findings of the exploratory research on leadership styles. According to Kleefstra (2019), the three most frequently mentioned leadership approaches are transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire. Based on descriptive statistics (frequencies) and analysis, it was found that, on average,

respondents agreed with approximately 87.5% of the statements regarding the traits of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles.

Furthermore, they showed that managers in the GDE demonstrated traits associated with both the leadership style, that is, individual consideration, intellectual stimulation, inspirational motivation, charisma or idealised influence, dependent reward, passive management by exception, and active management by exception, as well as that of the laissez-faire style of leadership. The mean and standard deviation for each of the leadership philosophies under consideration corroborate this conclusion. As per the findings of Zaki and Ahmad (2017), a mean score of 0 to 1.89 is considered extremely low; 1.90 to 2.69 is considered low; 2.70 to 3.49 is considered moderate; 3.50 to 4.2 is considered high; and 4.30 to 5.00 is considered very high.

Transformational and transactional leadership styles have high mean scores (M = 3.58 and M = 3.52, respectively), according to the results of descriptive statistics analysis. With a mean score of M = 3.42, the laissez-faire leadership style is ranked lowest. Therefore, it can be concluded that, although the three leadership philosophies (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) do not significantly differ in mean scores, the combination of transformational and transactional philosophies is most used in GED, whereas laissez-faire philosophies are only infrequently used.

These results are encouraging for GDE because research indicates that highly successful leaders typically employ transformational leadership, which is followed by transactional leadership. Researchers Sakiru, Othman, Silong, Abdullahi, Agbana, Kia, and Ndidi (2013) found that managers primarily use the transformational style of leadership among all the different leadership styles. Numerous studies (Anggraini *et al*., 2021; Ariyani & Hidayati, 2018; Mansor *et al*., 2017) that examined the type of leadership with the greatest impact on employee engagement, as well as the influence of a transformational leadership style on employee engagement, also support this finding. According to these studies, the most frequently used leadership style in the organisations under investigation is transformational leadership.

The laissez-faire leadership style is used sparingly, but the transformational leadership style is primarily employed. The transactional leadership style also received a high mean score. Most participants (just over 50%), according to the mean score for the most frequently used leadership style in the GDE, believed that managers do not generally allow employees to make

decisions; however, the findings were not significantly different. This indicates that further development is still necessary. To achieve optimal performance from its workforce, the GDE must enhance employee engagement in planning and decision-making. Enhancing communication channels and holding more departmental meetings where staff members are given a forum to voice their opinions could help raise employee engagement.

Additionally, most respondents believed that managers did not accept accountabilities for all actions and results within their units. Furthermore, the findings reveal that GDE probationary staff members reported neither rewards nor penalties for encouraging staff members to meet organisational goals. As a result, these findings suggest that rather than adhering to a predetermined style, GDE leaders are adaptable in their choice of leadership philosophies and consider the current circumstances. The adoption of all three leadership philosophies is thus made possible by this. Amutha (2017), who maintained that leadership is always scenario-specific and that each style is important in certain settings, concurs with the study's findings.

5.4 Discussion on the extent to which employees under probation are engaged

To determine the degree of engagement of recently hired staff in the departmental decision-making and planning process, the frequency and percentage of the respondents' responses were calculated using the statements from the employee engagement questionnaire. These frequencies showed that most responses typically concur that GDE probationary employees participate in planning and decision-making processes. Furthermore, descriptive statistics, including the mean score value and standard deviation of the variable employee engagement, were calculated to support the findings derived from the frequencies and percentages.

The study's results showed a standard deviation of .79 and a mean score of M = 3.59. According to Zaki and Ahmad's (2017) interpretation of mean scores, this mean value is considered higher because it is inside the maximum score range of 1 to 5. The higher the mean score, the more respondents agreed with the statements. When the mean is higher, it suggests that the data point is generally more significant or has a larger value. Consequently, it can be argued that the personnel under probation in the Gauteng Department of Education are strongly engaged in the department's planning and decision-making operations. The findings are reinforced by that of Kular, Gatenby, Rees, Soane, and Truss (2008), research that indicated that new employees score higher in engagement levels in an organisation, which may partly be ascribed to most people's optimism and zeal when commencing a new job.

Tchapchet *et al.* (2014) also discovered that there is a strong beneficial influence of employee engagement on the performance of the institution and the attainment of the broader aim of the organisation. According to Batista-Taran *et al*. (2013), among engaged employees, job satisfaction is higher, there is a lower desire to change employers, and a stronger level of commitment to the organisation. According to a survey, engaged workers believe they can have a favourable economic impact on the organisation, resulting in higher productivity and retention rates. Batista-Taran *et al*. (2013) states that organisations should keep investing in their employees because when employees' basic needs are satisfied, it gives them a sense of purpose and opportunity to contribute back to the organisation.

This, in turn, gives employees a sense of belonging and a possibility for growth and development, which is crucial in boosting employee engagement. Therefore, a beneficial association exists between strongly engaged employees and their passion for their employment and the workplace, providing a direct advantage in furthering the organisation's mandate. However, less than half of the respondents (48.7%) believed that workers who are impacted by decisions are consulted when deciding what work should be done. This implies that supervisors may be picky about when to involve probationary staff members in GDE or that probationary staff members may be primarily involved in planning rather than making decisions activities.

Furthermore, most respondents believe that employees' proposals are not taken seriously (46.1%) and that they are not free to offer changes to their positions or choose how their work is divided (46.2%). These results highlight a problem that, if addressed by GDE, may lead to a highly engaged workforce. It is impossible to overstate the importance of creating an organisational culture that encourages employee engagement. Such has been shown to significantly improve employee satisfaction and, in addition, organisational success.

5.5 Discussion of the relationship between leadership styles and employee engagement

This section aims to investigate the relationship between employee engagement during probation and the leadership styles employed. According to Kusani *et al*. (2020), employee engagement is impacted by a leader's style. In addition to this, Cawe (2006) argues that research, communication, management, and leadership are the factors that promote employee engagement. This conclusion was corroborated by Rothmann and Rothmann (2010), who discovered that organisational support, which includes employee engagement in planning and

decision-making, is one of the major determinants of employee engagement. The findings of Juchnowicz *et al*. (2020) indicate that leaders have a major impact on employee engagement.

To ascertain whether a relationship existed and, if so, how strong it was between leadership styles and employee engagement, Pearson's correlation coefficient test was used. The results of the Pearson correlation coefficient test found that among the three styles of leadership, the transformative leadership style has a strong and positive relationship. The literature also backed up this correspondence, with different authors concluding that a transformational leadership style is directly correlated with employee participation in planning and decision-making based on the results of their studies (Maundu *et al*., 2018; Zhang, 2011).

Mdletshe (2020), Adeniji *et al*. (2020), Gemeda and Lee (2020), Padmanathan (2010) and Batista-Taran *et al*. (2013) also discovered that idealised impact, inspiring motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration, all attributes of transformational leadership style have an impact on employee engagement. Furthermore, according to a study by Xia (2022), the transformational leadership style is the most successful leadership methodology. Nevertheless, Mozammel and Haan's (2016) findings contradict the existing body of research on transformational leadership style and employee engagement, as they demonstrate that implementing a transformational leadership style in the workplace does not guarantee high levels of employee engagement.

Pearson's correlation coefficient results indicate a strong positive relationship between the transactional leadership style and employee engagement, like the transformational leadership style. The mean score is significant at the .001 level. This finding is consistent with research on the impact of perceived transactional leadership style on employee engagement conducted by Marwan *et al*. (2019), Singh (2019), Wanjala *et al*. (2017) and Akhigbe *et al*. (2014). These studies show that the transactional leadership style has a positive and significant effect on employee satisfaction, organisational commitment, and all other dimensions of the style and that it has a linear correlation with employee engagement.

The results of the study are at odds with those of Maundu *et al*. (2018), who reported no appreciable effect of transactional leadership styles on worker engagement. A quantitative study on the effect of transformational and transactional leadership styles on employee engagement in Malaysia revealed a positive correlation between employee engagement and both transformational and transactional leadership styles. However, transformational leadership had a greater impact on employee engagement than transactional leadership

(Padmanathan, 2010; Batista-Taran *et al*., 2013). Contrary to findings in most studies, the results from the study conducted by Manmeet and Poh (2022) show that the transactional style closely surpasses the transformational leadership style as the most common leadership style in Malaysia.

Like the transformational and transactional leadership styles, Pearson's correlation coefficient for laissez-faire leadership, as indicated by the analysis results, shows an R-value of .894, suggesting a strong positive relationship between employee engagement and laissez-faire leadership. The finding is in line with that of Gangai and Agrawal (2017), who found a significant substantial association between perceived leadership style and employee engagement. However, the results of the study by Thanh *et al*. (2022) and Robert and Vandenberghe (2021) are contrary, as they found that in the Vietnamese public sector, the laissez-faire leadership style had a significant negative relationship with employee engagement.

The results of the regression coefficient indicate that employee engagement was significantly predicted by each of the three leadership styles that were examined: transactional ($\beta = 0.186$; $t = 1.753$; $P<.05$), transformational ($\beta = 0.304$; $t = 2.557$; $P<.05$), and laissez-faire ($\beta = 0.499$; $t = 3.877$; $P<.05$). This suggests that employee engagement is positively and significantly impacted by leadership styles that are transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire. It is crucial to remember, though, that transactional leadership has been shown to have the least impact on employee engagement, while laissez-faire leadership has the most potential effect.

The results of the study by Silva and Mendis (2017) revealed a positive connection between employee engagement and transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles. The findings from much of the literature have shown that transformational leadership has a significant positive impact; transactional leadership can have either a positive or negative impact; and laissez-faire leadership has a mostly negative impact on employee engagement. According to Mdletshe (2020), having several leadership philosophies increases employee engagement. Given the findings of this study, it can be concluded that both transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles have a positive relationship with employee engagement when adopted strategically, informed by the circumstances.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1. Introduction

Organisations must periodically assess the needs and perceptions of both clients and staff to remain relevant and competitive. A platform for coordinating planning, allocating resources, and implementing interventions that have a significant impact on the targeted beneficiaries is provided or made possible by this endeavour. This was accomplished by investigating the perspectives and experiences of the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) probationary staff members. The study concentrated on how employee engagement is impacted by governance styles and the various positionalities in the workplace. It also considered the idea of how to implement policies effectively and how the governance of policy implementation may offer insight into the type of leadership that considers and guides policy implementation in a stable and inclusive workplace.

6.2. An overview of the analysis and findings

Despite the South African government's pronouncement of building a public service instilled with innovation, volunteerism, and service culture in line with the National Development Plan (NDP) (Isike & Ogunnubi, 2017). Employment of a new and/or young workforce that comes with innovative capabilities has failed to bring about the much-needed transformation within the public sphere of South Africa. These are capabilities that, if actively utilised in planning and implementing policies and programmes, have been attributed to positively impacting the organisational goal (Obiekwe, Zeb-Obipi, & Ejo-Orusa, 2019).

A large and growing number of studies, including the ones by Moletsane, Tefera, and Migiro (2019), Hoole and Hotz (2016), Zhang (2011), Nanjundeswaraswamy (2021), Saad, Sudin, and Shamsuddin (2018) and Bija (2020), state that employee engagement is highest among top management and those who have been with the organisation for a longer duration, and there is a relationship between employee engagement and organisational performance. However, such exploration had very little, if anything, to do with the level of engagement of the newly employed workforce within the public sphere in the departmental planning processes. It is consequently critical to assess new employees' perceptions and experiences regarding governance qualities and engagement and how these may influence policy implementation.

The purpose of this research was to explore the perceptions of leadership style and employee engagement in departmental planning and implementation processes of employees under probation. Ultimately, the focus of the study was on governance styles and the different positionalities in the workspace and how that impacts leadership styles. It also attempted to weigh in on the notion of effective policy implementation and how the governance of policy implementation might provide insights into leadership styles that inform the implementation of policies in a stable and inclusive working environment.

The primary objective of the research study was to determine the leadership style and assess the perception of employees under probation regarding their engagement in planning and implementation processes within the Gauteng Department of Education (GDE) of South Africa. The study was designed with three distinct goals. The first goal was to identify the leadership style or styles that are most frequently used in GDE. The second goal of the study was to ascertain the connection between the engagement of probationary employees and leadership styles. And finally, the study sought to determine how much probationary employees or recently hired staff members participate in departmental planning and decision-making.

A cross-sectional design and a closed-ended survey were employed to conclude the study's objectives. Informed by the GDE database, a Google Form link was used to administer the survey to all potential respondents, or probationary employees. After the surveys were received, the data was evaluated to learn more about the probationary GDE employees' impressions of leadership style and employee engagement. It follows that the study's conclusions will undoubtedly help with upcoming departmental policies meant to equip leaders for the successful execution of a variety of policies. Thus, investigating the leadership style and how the GDE integrates the recently hired staff into its operations contributes to the corpus of research on employee engagement and leadership styles.

6.2.1. The most frequently used leadership style/s in Gauteng Department of Education

To establish the most frequently used leadership style/s in GDE, the variables from the original data set were adjusted, and the mean value of each respondent's responses was calculated. This was followed by a descriptive statistics analysis. Following that, SPSS IBM version 29.0 was used to import or transfer the newly modified set of variables for analysis. First, a normality test was run to see if the data was normally distributed. For each of the three key variables (transactional, laissez-faire, and transformational leadership), Cronbach's Alpha analysis was

used to assess the data's internal consistency and reliability. All the variables were found to be excellent and extremely close to 1.0 (i.e., 0.90, 0.71, 0.87, and 0.95) respectively, and thus reliable. Given that the sample size was fewer than 50, Shapiro-Wilk was used.

The results in Table 1 showed that the data was determined to be normally distributed, which led to the application of frequency distribution, mean, standard deviation, and descriptive statistics of the transformational, transactional, and Laissez-Faire leadership styles. The findings shown by the descriptive statistics reveal that while there is no significant difference between the three variables, managers at GDE mostly employ transformational followed by transactional leadership styles.

6.2.2. The relationship between engagement of probationary employees and leadership styles in GDE

From the original data set, four more variables were produced based on both dependent and independent variables. Following that, the parametric techniques such as Pearson's correlation between transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership style and employee engagement, regression analysis, the coefficient for the impact of leadership philosophies on employee engagement, ANOVA, and model summary were performed to conclude the existing relationship between employee engagement in GDE and leadership style/s. The results of the regression analysis show that there is a positive and significant relationship between employee engagement and each of the three leadership philosophies (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire).

The standardised coefficient values show that both leadership styles have a positive and significant effect on employee engagement. Therefore, depending on the setting in which a leader chooses to utilise their style, using a transformational, transactional, or laissez-faire approach will be linked to greater employee engagement outcomes. As such, knowing which style to use in what situation is essential. However, the general rule is that the closer the beta coefficient is to +1 or -1, the stronger the relationship. Therefore, according to the results, transactional leadership style has a strong positive relationship with employee engagement, since it has the Standardised Beta Coefficients of .186 which is closer to -1 followed by transformational leadership style at .309, and Laissez-Faire leadership style at .499.

6.2.3. The extent of engagement of probationary employees in Gauteng Department of Education

The degree of probationary employee engagement in GDE was assessed using descriptive statistics, including the mean and standard deviation, computed from the employee engagement sets of questions posed to research survey participants. These sets of questions were rated on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from "strongly agree" to "strongly disagree." The mean score, which was subsequently utilised to conclude the newly employed workforce's engagement in GDE, was calculated using respondents' responses. The results emanating from the said descriptive statistics reveal that the newly appointed employees or employees under probation in GDE are highly engaged. This could be attributed to the dominant adoption of the transformational leadership style in the organisation amongst other factors.

6.3. Conclusion

This study sets out to investigate how GDE probationary employees perceived their leadership style and level of engagement. Generally, the findings of this study demonstrate that managers at GDE adopt various styles of leadership, ranging from transformational to transactional and laissez-faire, in the implementation of departmental policies. Nonetheless, most leadership approaches are transformative and transactional. Furthermore, the findings demonstrate that GDE managers employ a participatory approach in planning and decision-making procedures, like how they have adopted various leadership philosophies. Finally, there is a clear and favourable correlation between employee engagement and leadership philosophies that are transactional, laissez-faire, and transformational. This link suggests that the choice of leadership style will dictate the degree of participation.

It is worth noting that while there is still room for improvement, particularly in enhancing the engagement level in planning and decision-making, it should be very high. The above findings suggest that the attainment of a high engagement level is possible by addressing areas such as involvement in decision-making when determining employees' work.

Chapter 7: References

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Annexure A: Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

The University of the Witwatersrand,

Wits School of Governance

2 St Davids Pl, Parktown, Johannesburg, 2050

011 717 3520

Dear Sir/Madam,

My name is Goodwill Chuma, and I am a master's student in Master of Management at Wits University in Johannesburg. As part of my studies, I must undertake a research project, and I am **Exploring the perception of employees on Leadership Style and Employee Engagement in the Gauteng Department of Education.** This research project aims to determine the perception of the employee under probation on the leadership style of the Gauteng Department of Education and employee engagement in the departmental planning and implementation processes. I would like to invite you to take part in completing the questionnaire. This activity will involve ticking on the appropriate box and will take around 25 minutes.

You will not receive any direct benefits from participating in this study, and there are no disadvantages or penalties for not participating. You may withdraw at any time or not answer any question if you do not want to. The survey will be completely confidential and

anonymous as I will not be asking for your name or any identifying information, and the information you give to me will be held securely and not disclosed to anyone else. I will be using a pseudonym (false name) to represent your participation, in my final research report. If you experience any distress or discomfort, you can stop completing the questionnaire or resume another time.

If you have any questions afterwards about this research, feel free to contact me at the details listed below. This study will be written as a research report which will be available online through the university library website. If you wish to receive a summary of this report, I will be happy to send it to you upon request (optional). If you have any queries, concerns or complaints regarding the ethical procedures of this study, you are welcome to contact the University Human Research Ethics Committee (non-medical), by telephone + at 27(0)11 717 1408, email Shaun.Schoeman@wits.ac.za

Yours sincerely,

Goodwill Chuma

Goodwill Chuma, 2346819@students.wits.ac.za, 0783532496

Rekgotsofetse Chikane, rekgotsofetse.chikane@wits, +27 11 717 3809

Annexure B: Consent Form

Title of project: Exploring the Perception of Employees on Leadership Style and Employee Engagement in the Gauteng Department of Education.

Name of researcher: Goodwill Chuma.

I, ……., consent to take part in this study. I've been informed about the study and am aware of what participating will entail. I accept what is said below:

(Please tick the relevant options below).

I consent that my participation will be treated confidentially.	YES	NO
I consent to the researcher's use of vague quotes in the research report.	YES	NO
I agree that the data I provide may be utilised confidentially by other researchers for academic reasons after this project has been concluded, pending the receipt of their own ethics clearance.	YES	NO

…… (signature)

…… (name of participant)

…… (date)

…… (signature)

…… (name of the person seeking consent)

…… (date)

Annexure C: Questionnaire

LINKERT SCALE QUESTIONNAIRE							
VARIABLES	**CODES**	**ITEMS**	**SCALE**				
			1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Demographic information	**GEN**	What is your Gender?	Male	Female	Other		
	AGE	What is your Age?	21 - 30	31 - 40	41 & >		
	EDUCATION	What is your level of Education?	Degree	Honours	Masters	Phd	Other
	WORK EXP	How long have you been working for GDE?	< 1 year	1 - 2 years			
	DESIGNATION	What is your occupation?					
Employee Engagement (EE)	**CODES**	**ITEMS**	**AGREEMENT SCALE**				
			SD	**D**	**N**	**A**	**SA**
			1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
	EE1	There is communication efficiency among managers and subordinates.					

	EE2	My supervisor is receptive and listens to my ideas and suggestions when determining my work.					
	EE3	I feel more accepted and involved.					
	EE4	Employees affected by decisions are asked for their input/opinion when determining employees' work.					
	EE5	I feel free to suggest changes in my job or have influence over the division of work.					
	EE6	Employees' suggestions are seriously considered.					
	EE7	My manager uses team input to make decisions.					
	EE8	My manager encourages cross-functional collaboration to achieve organisation goals.					
	EE9	The people in my organisation cooperate to get the job done.					
	EE10	I can voice my opinions without fear of retribution.					
	EE11	My manager communicates organisation goals.					
	EE12	My manager ensures that employees on our team clearly understand their roles.					
	EE13	My manager actively supports my career development.					
	EE14	I receive ongoing feedback that helps me improve my performance.					
	EE15	My manager encourages me to come up with new and better ways of doing things.					
	EE16	I often do work that challenges me and my abilities.					

	EE17	My manager supports the development of new and innovative ideas.					
	EE18	My manager informs me when priorities change to avoid wasting time and effort.					
	EE19	I can see a clear link between my work, and the organisation's vision, and mission.					
Transformational LS (TRANSF)	**TRANSF1**	Managers inspire change					
	TRANSF2	Managers clearly communicate					
	TRANSF3	Managers take responsibility for overall action and decisions					
	TRANSF4	Managers engage team members					
	TRANSF5	Managers share ideas and opinions					
	TRANSF6	Managers inspire trust and respect					
	TRANSF7	Managers provide guidance to employees.					
	TRANSF8	The organisation is committed to professional development.					
Transactional LS (TRANSACT)	**TRANSACT1**	Managers value order and structure					
	TRANSACT2	Managers closely supervise employees					
	TRANSACT3	Managers set standards to maximise productivity					

	TRANSACT4	Managers encourage and reward creativity					
	TRANSACT5	Managers impose their own orders and instructions on employees.					
	TRANSACT6	Employees are given rewards or punishments to motivate achievement of organisational objectives.					
	TRANSACT7	Managers dictate all the work methods and processes					
	TRANSACT8	Managers give orders and clarify procedures.					
Laissez-Faire LS (LSF)	**LSF1**	Managers allow employees to make decisions					
	LSF2	Managers provide the necessary tools and resources					
	LSF3	Managers stay out of the way of subordinates to do work.					
	LSF4	My manager encourages me to take informed risks in getting my work done.					
	LSF5	Managers encourage employees to apply their new abilities and skills in their daily work.					
	LSF6	I have the authority to make decisions that improve the quality of my work.					
	LSF7	My manager encourages me to come up with new and better ways of doing things.					

Annexure D: Ethics Certificate

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

SCHOOL OF GOVERNANCE ETHICS COMMITTEE

CONSTITUTED UNDER THE UNIVERSITY HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON-MEDICAL)

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE: **WSG-2023-66**

PROJECT TITLE: **Exploring the Perception of Employees on Leadership Style and Employee Engagement in the Gauteng Department of Education**

INVESTIGATOR	Goodwill Chuma
SCHOOL/DEPARTMENT OF INVESTIGATOR	School of Governance
DATE CONSIDERED	29 June 2023
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE	Approved unconditionally
RISK LEVEL	Low Risk
EXPIRY DATE	Date of submission of the Research Report

ISSUE DATE OF CERTIFICATE 20 November 2023

CHAIRPERSON Rekgotsofetse Chikane
Rekgotsofetse Chikane

cc: Supervisor:

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Chairperson of the School/Department ethics committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

_____ _____/_____/_____

Signature **Date**

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER ON ALL ENQUIRIES

Annexure E: Approval Letter



GAUTENG PROVINCE
Department: Education
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

8/4/4/1/2

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	13 February 2023
Validity of Research Approval:	08 February 2023– 30 September 2023 2021/344A
Name of Researcher:	Chuma G
Address of Researcher:	4594
	Umgxamu Street Ext 27
	Birch Acres/Kempton Park
Telephone Number:	078 3532 496
Email address:	Goodwill.chuma@gmail.com
Research Topic:	Exploring the perception of employees on Leadership style and Employee Engagement in the Gauteng Department of Education.
Type of qualification	Master of Management: Monitoring and Evaluation
Number and type of schools:	Head Office
District/s/HO	Head Office

Re: Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved to conduct the research. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to both the School (both Principal and SGB) and the District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted.

13/02/2023

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

1. *Letter that would indicate that the said researcher/s has/have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001
Tel: (011) 355 0488
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

2. *The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s must be approached separately, and in writing, for permission to involve District/Head Office Officials in the project.*
3. ***Because of COVID 19 pandemic researchers can ONLY collect data online, telephonically or may make arrangements for Zoom with the school Principal. Requests for such arrangements should be submitted to the GDE Education Research and Knowledge Management directorate. The approval letter will then indicate the type of arrangements that have been made with the school.***
4. ***The Researchers are advised to make arrangements with the schools via Fax, email or telephonically with the Principal.***

5. *A copy of this letter must be forwarded to the school principal and the chairperson of the School Governing Body (SGB) that would indicate that the researcher/s have been granted permission from the Gauteng Department of Education to conduct the research study.*
6. *A letter / document that outline the purpose of the research and the anticipated outcomes of such research must be made available to the principals, SGBs and District/Head Office Senior Managers of the schools and districts/offices concerned, respectively.*
7. *The Researcher will make every effort obtain the goodwill and co-operation of all the GDE officials, principals, and chairpersons of the SGBs, teachers and learners involved. Persons who offer their co-operation will not receive additional remuneration from the Department while those that opt not to participate will not be penalised in any way.*
8. *Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal (if at a school) and/or Director (if at a district/head office) must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.*
9. *Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded before the beginning of the last quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.*
10. *Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.*
11. *It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written parental consent of all learners that are expected to participate in the study.*
12. *The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilising his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institutions and/or the offices visited for supplying such resources.*
13. *The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research report without the written consent of each of these individuals and/or organisations.*
14. *On completion of the study the researcher/s must supply the Director: Knowledge Management & Research with one Hard Cover bound and an electronic copy of the research.*
15. *The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned.*
16. *Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.*

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

.....

Mr Gumani Mukatuni
Acting CES: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: 13/02/2023

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management
7th Floor, 17 Simmonds Street, Johannesburg, 2001
Tel: (011) 355 0488
Email: Faith.Tshabalala@gauteng.gov.za
Website: www.education.gpg.gov.za

Annexure F: Turnitin report

Mr G Chumas' Research Report.docx

ORIGINALITY REPORT

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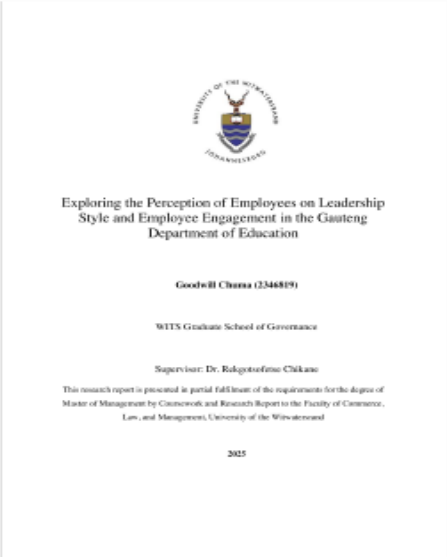
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Character count:	157,072
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Submission ID:	2705948374



Exploring the Perception of Employees on Leadership Style and Employee Engagement in the Gauteng Department of Education

Goodwill Chuma (2346819)

WITS Graduate School of Governance

Supervisor: Dr. Rakgotsofetso Chikane

This research report is presented in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Management by Coursework and Research Report to the Faculty of Commerce, Law, and Management, University of the Witwatersrand

2025