

# **The Influence of Leadership Styles on Employee Engagement in a Hotel Unit**

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## **EXTENDED ABSTRACT**

**Purpose** – The purpose of this study is to examine tstry. Given the industry's labor-intensive nature and dependence on human interactions (Guchait et al., 2023), the study aims to determine how the quality of relationships between leaders and employees impacts engagement levels and, consequently, organizational performance and customer satisfaction.

**Theoretical framework** – The study is based in leadership theories, particularly the LMX theory, which explores the dynamics of leader-follower relationships (Scandura and Graen, 1984; Northouse, 2014). The research also draws on the concept of employee engagement (Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova, 2006; Schaufeli, 2021), emphasizing its critical role in service-oriented industries like hospitality, where human capital is fundament to competitive advantage.

**Design/methodology/approach** – This is a descriptive correlational study that employs a quantitative research approach. Data were collected through a survey distributed to 265 employees from two five-star hotels in the Algarve region of Portugal. The survey included the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9) to measure engagement (Schaufeli, Bakker, and Salanova, 2006) and a 7-item LMX scale to assess the quality of leader-member relationships (Scandura and Graen, 1984). The

sample was analyzed based on sociodemographic variables, and correlations between LMX quality and engagement were examined.

**Findings** – The study found a positive correlation between the quality of LMX and employee engagement. Employees who reported higher quality relationships with their leaders also exhibited higher levels of engagement.

**Research, practical & social implications** – The study contributes to the theoretical understanding of LMX and engagement in the hospitality industry, highlighting the critical role of leadership in promoting employee engagement. Practically, the findings suggest that hotel managers should focus on improving leader-employee relationships to increase engagement, reduce turnover, and enhance service quality. Social implications include potential improvements in employee well-being and customer satisfaction, leading to better overall performance in the hospitality industry.

**Originality/value** – This study adds to the limited research on the relationship between LMX and engagement in the hospitality industry, providing empirical evidence of their interconnection. It offers valuable insights for hospitality management, emphasizing the importance of leadership in driving employee engagement and, ultimately, business success.

**Keywords** - Leader-Member Exchange, Employee Engagement, Hospitality Industry, Leadership, Human Capital.

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