

The Influence of Leadership on Employee Performance: A Qualitative study of one hospitality industry in Lusaka District, Zambia

By

Aline Chikwaba¹ and Marien Matafwali²

Abstract: This study examines the crucial role of leadership in enhancing employee performance within the hospitality industry, focusing on one hotel in Lusaka District, Zambia. A qualitative method was employed involving interviews and focus group discussions with 20 respondents. The findings reveal the significance of active listening, leading by example, recognition, and appreciation as essential leadership traits. Moreover, the study highlights the importance of continuous employee training, effective collaboration, strong communication, and positive organizational culture in optimizing corporate performance. The research emphasizes the pivotal role of leadership in shaping organizational outcomes and enhancing employee well-being.

Keywords: Leadership, Employee Performance, Hospitality Industry, Lusaka District

1.1 Background of the Study

This study investigates the impact of leadership on employee performance within Stay Easy Hotel in Lusaka, encompassing both managers (supervisors) and general workers, including cleaners, chefs, gardeners, and receptionists. Despite the heightened attention to employee performance in recent times, there exists a notable dearth of fundamental scholarly research in this domain, leading to a lack of consensus in terminology and understanding of how management practices influence employee performance. Concurrently, contemporary discourse has seen leadership face scrutiny as an effective means of managing employees and organizational affairs, prompting a shift towards the concept of managing human capital. This necessitates the deliberate application of advanced leadership concepts to foster effective staff management. Historical studies by Ejuu (2003) and others underscored the significance of leadership in long-term success, particularly in demanding work contexts, signaling a departure from traditional views of leadership towards recognizing individuals as valuable human capital essential for organizational success.

The concept of managing human capital is gradually replacing the traditional understanding of staff, necessitating the adoption of advanced leadership concepts (Ejuu, 2003). Research underscores the essential role of leadership in long-term success, despite the lack of consensus in defining it (Armstrong, 2004; Levine & Crom, 1993). This link between leadership styles and employee performance is critical, as highlighted by Northouse (2010) and Kerns (2004), emphasizing the need for effective leadership to optimize productivity. However, foundational research in understanding and measuring performance metrics remains sparse (Ismajli et al., 2015).

Based on this backdrop, it becomes imperative to explore how leadership practices within Stay Easy Hotel influence the performance trajectories of its diverse workforce. By examining the interactions between leaders and employees, this study seeks to elucidate the mechanisms through which leadership styles, communication strategies, and organizational culture impact employee engagement, job satisfaction, and ultimately, performance outcomes.

1.2 Research Problem

Strong leadership is necessary for many firms in order to increase employee performance (Torrington, Laura, & Taylor, 2008). Employee performance is consistently impacted by this issue. Despite the extensive literature on leadership and employee performance, there remains a notable gap in understanding the specific effects of leadership within the hospitality industry, particularly in the context of hotels in Lusaka. While numerous studies have explored leadership's impact on employee performance across various sectors (Avolio & Gardner, 2005; Yukl, 2013), there is a scarcity of research focusing on the hospitality sector in Zambia. This gap in knowledge hinders the

development of tailored leadership strategies that can effectively enhance employee performance in this specific setting.

1.3 Research Objectives

RO1: To explore the leadership attributes perceived as essential for effective leadership within the organization.

RO2: To identify the key competencies necessary for contemporary leaders to optimize corporate performance.

RO3: To examine how the organizational culture at StayEasyHotel influences employee performance.

RO4: To assess the impact of leadership on various aspects of employee performance and satisfaction.

1.4 Research Questions

RQ1: What attributes and behaviors do employees consider crucial for effective leadership?

RQ2: What are the essential competencies that modern-day leaders need to cultivate for organizational success?

RQ3: How does the organizational culture within StayEasy impact employees' performance and job satisfaction?

RQ4: How does leadership influence employee productivity, job satisfaction, motivation, and retention at StayEasy Hotel?

Methodology

2.1 Research method

This study adopted a qualitative approach. In line with Creswell's (2014) conceptualization of research methodologies as comprehensive frameworks guiding the systematic collection and analysis of data. Qualitative research methodology, as emphasized by Banister et al. (2011), prioritizes understanding social phenomena through detailed exploration and interpretation of participant perspectives, without imposing preconceived notions or biases. Given the nature of leadership dynamics and their impact on employee performance, qualitative methods are particularly suitable for this study as they allow for in-depth examination of contextual factors and individual experiences. Furthermore, the exclusive focus on a single outlet in Lusaka, Zambia, ensures a concentrated investigation, enhancing the depth and richness of the qualitative data collected.

2.2 Research Onion

Saunders, Lewis, & Thornhill (2019) developed the research onion, a comprehensive framework for developing effective research methodologies, backed by their extensive research experience. Its usefulness is in the fact that the research onion can be used in an array of scenarios and is adaptable for any form of research methodology (Bryman, Social research methods, 2012). The research onion, a key component of the research methodology, outlines the inductive research approach used in this case study through interviews.

2.3 Research Paradigm

Since employee performance encompasses motivation, productivity, contentment, and retention, comprehensive exploratory research of leadership and its immediate effect on workers' performance was necessary to set each objective (Robson, 2002). Exploratory research is a helpful tool for finding out additional information, examining things from new angles, or raising concerns and assessing events from a different standpoint. An effective use of the research technique covered in the methodological approach was made possible by exploratory research, which allowed the research problem to be examined in more detail.

2.4 Research Strategy

Qualitative research made up the study. Semi-structured interviews were used for this. According to the research layout, the researcher conducted semi-structured interviews and facilitated a focus group discussion for the chosen sample in order to collect data. Every research topic was addressed and discussed using the qualitative responses. This study consisted of a case study that was created and contained a detailed analysis of a certain agenda.

As stated by Zikmynd, Babin, Carr & Griffin (2013), a case is only the documented past of a particular individual, business, group, or occasion. It could typically describe the steps that a specific company takes when it faces a significant decision or situation, such as introducing a new product or managing an internal conflict.

2.5 Sampling Frame and Sample size

To answer the research questions and achieve the goals, the researcher needs to follow the sample plan. According to Zikmynd, Babin, Carr, and Griffin (2013), the sampling procedure that was employed was non-probability sampling, which is an approach to sampling in which units of the group being collected are chosen depending on judgment or functionality; the possibility that any particular individual in the general population will be opted for is unknown (Cresswell 2017). Convenience sampling was deliberately used. This sample technique allowed for the faster and less expensive completion of the investigation to obtain conclusive proof. The researcher's goal was to understand how supervisors apply leadership methods and how these strategies affect employees' performance.

2.6 Sample Size

The total sample size for the qualitative research was twenty (20). The twenty interviewees were selected to conduct semi-structured interviews who are responsible for monitoring the performance of the hotel staff.

2.7 Data Collection

The data collection procedure for this study, guided by Creswell's (2014) framework, involved several stages. Firstly, a comprehensive research plan was established to outline the objectives and methods for capturing relevant information. Subsequently, data were collected through semi-structured interviews, which allow for qualitative, open-ended responses and facilitate in-depth exploration of the subject matter (Creswell, 2014). The interviews were conducted with both managers and general workers of StayEasy Hotel, focusing on their perspectives on leadership and its impact on employee performance. The researchers also conducted 2 focus group discussions. To supplement the interview data and encourage further exploration of key themes, two focus group discussions were also conducted with the general workers. This approach facilitated group dynamics and collective sharing of experiences and perspectives (Creswell, 2014). Throughout the data collection process, the researcher adhered to established guidelines for interviewing to ensure consistency and rigor (Yin, 2003). By utilizing semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions, this study aimed to gather rich, qualitative data that offer insights into the complex interactions between leadership and employee performance within the context of Stay Easy Hotel.

2.8 Data Analysis

Creswell (2014) emphasizes the importance of data processing and analysis in generating, validating, and interpreting research findings, a process that begins with data collection. The study utilised qualitative methods and thematic data analysis to present findings based on research questions, categorising them into common themes. To provide an in-depth understanding, the respondents were coded using the following: the first category included two managers who used the code name M (M1, M2). The second category comprised of ten general workers, such as receptionists, gardeners, hotel personnel, housekeepers, and cashiers, who were coded as GW for general workers, and the third category comprised of a focus group discussion of eight respondents, who were coded as FGD.

Qualitative data encompasses every non-numerical or unquantified data and can be derived from any research strategy. By enabling the researcher to construct theory using the data acquired, qualitative data analysis processes aid in rendering the data relevant (Saunders, Philip, & Thornhill, 2009).

Below is a figure on the steps involved in the thematic analysis process:

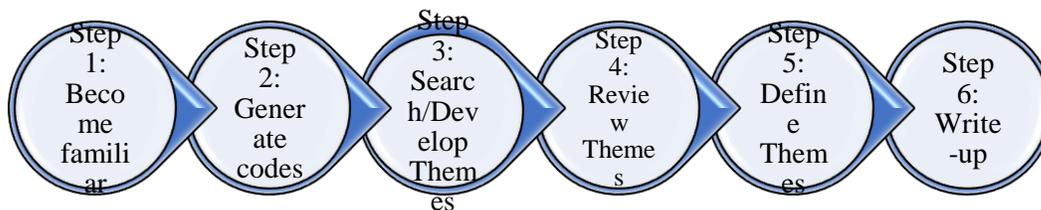


Figure 1.3: 6 STEPS PROCESS ON THEMATIC ANALYSIS

Creswell (2014) stated that one way to analyse qualitative data is through thematic analysis. Usually, it is used in relation to a collection of texts, such as transcripts, or interviews. In order to find recurring themes—topics, concepts, and patterns of meaning—the researcher carefully scrutinizes the data. The most popular method of thematic analysis involves six steps: familiarization, coding, generating themes, reviewing themes, defining, and labelling themes, and writing up. There are other ways of carrying out thematic analysis as well. By using this procedure, guarantees that the analysis is free from bias related to confirmation.

2.10 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations are integral to research involving human participants, ensuring their well-being, rights, and integrity are protected throughout the study process (Zikmynd, Babin, Carr, & Griffin, 2013). The following ethical considerations were addressed in this study:

Accessibility and Permissions: Obtaining ethical clearance from the relevant authorities of the university, and securing permission from organizational management, in this case, StayEasy Hotel, was essential to conduct the research ethically and legally.

Privacy and Confidentiality: To protect participants' privacy, identities were anonymized using codes, and explicit consent was obtained from each respondent. Moreover, participants' right to confidentiality and anonymity during data collection was honored. A confidentiality agreement was also signed to ensure the protection of sensitive information and safeguard the interests of both participants and the organization.

Informed Consent: Ensuring that participants fully understood the nature and purpose of the study, as well as their rights as participants, was crucial. Obtaining informed consent from each participant, which includes explaining the study's objectives, potential risks and benefits, and the voluntary nature of participation, was essential.

Data Handling and Storage: Ethical guidelines regarding the collection, storage, and handling of data were followed diligently. Measures were implemented to securely store and protect participants' data from unauthorized access or disclosure.

Avoidance of Harm: Efforts were made to minimize any potential harm or discomfort to participants throughout the study. Participants were assured of their right to withdraw from the study at any point without facing any adverse consequences.

Findings

3.1 Introduction

The findings from the data collection are presented in this chapter as required by the methodological decisions about the sample size. The chapter discusses the sample's responses to the semi-structured interview guide's queries. In order to provide answers to the queries on the interview guide, the interview guide was employed as the research instrument. In order to accomplish the goal of this research, the interview guide's repose was employed to address the objectives of the research.

3.1.1 Profiles of Respondents

This section highlights the demographics of the twenty respondents. It identifies the genders, ages, educational qualifications, employment status as well as their years of service.

3.1.2 Gender of Respondents

Table 4.1 below illustrates gender of the respondents. Out of the twenty respondents who participated in the study, twelve were females and eight were males. It may be inferred from this data that while both genders were fairly represented, a higher proportion of women than men were interviewed.

Gender	Frequency
Females	12
Males	8
Grand Total	20

Table 1: respondents' gender

3.1.3. The Age and Gender of respondents

Table 4.2 below displays an additional breakdown of those who participated by gender and age spectrum.

Age (years)	Female	Male	Grand Total
20-29	5	3	8
30-39	2	3	5
40-49	3	1	4
50 and above	2	1	3
Grand Total	12	8	20

Table 2: Age and Gender of the respondents

The data reveals a total of 20 respondents, with a balanced distribution across various age groups and genders. Among female respondents, the majority (5) are aged between 20-29 years, followed by 2 in the 30-39 age range, 3 in the 40-49 age range, and 2 aged 50 and above. Similarly, male respondents show a similar trend, with 3 falling in the 20-29 age bracket, 3 in the 30-39 age range, 1 in the 40-49 age range, and 1 aged 50 and above. These findings suggest a diverse representation of experiences and perspectives across different age groups and genders, laying a foundation for a comprehensive analysis of the research objectives.

3.1.4 Educational Qualifications of Respondents

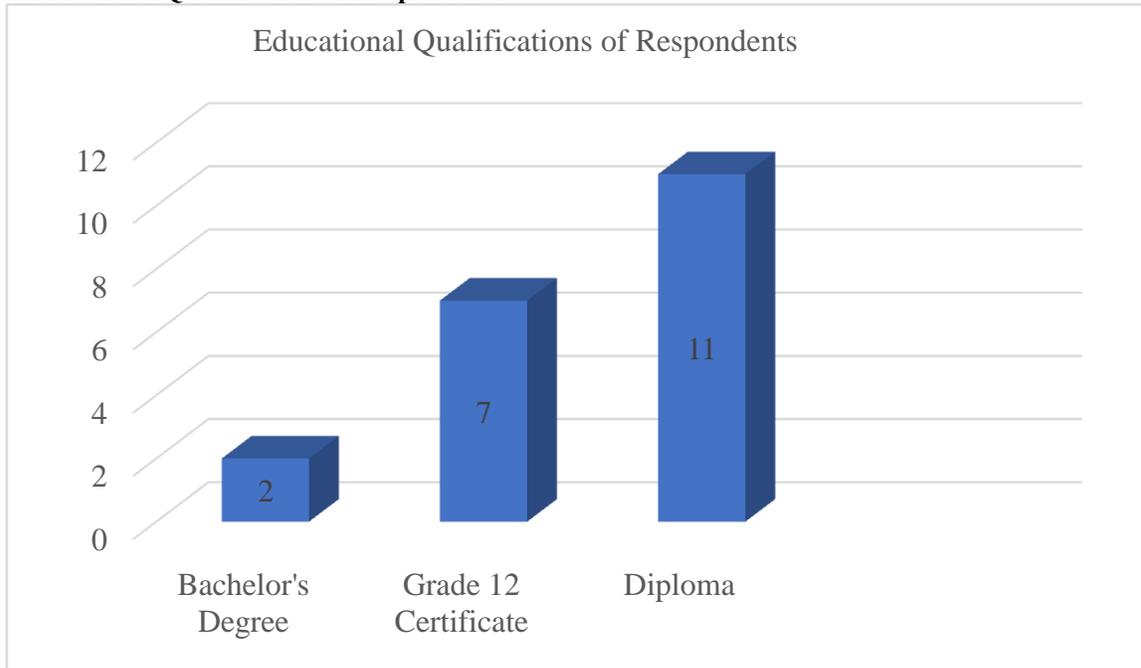


Figure 5: Educational qualifications of respondents

Figure above illustrates the educational qualifications of the respondents. The respondents were asked to indicate the highest degree of education they completed by choosing from a list of credentials, whether or not they corresponded with Zambia's educational system. The findings showed that the respondents' educational backgrounds varied, with seven holding certificates, eleven holding diplomas, and two respondents holding bachelor's degrees. Diploma holders were seen to be at the highest level, while only a few had earned a bachelor's degree (the minority).

Employment Status

The table below (Table 4.3) displays the employment status of the twenty respondents. Out of the twenty respondents, sixteen were on full time employment, whilst four were part time employees. None of the participants were on contracts or casual workers.

<i>Employment Status</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
<i>Full-time</i>	16
<i>Part-time</i>	4
Total	20

Table 23: Employment status of respondents

Work experience .

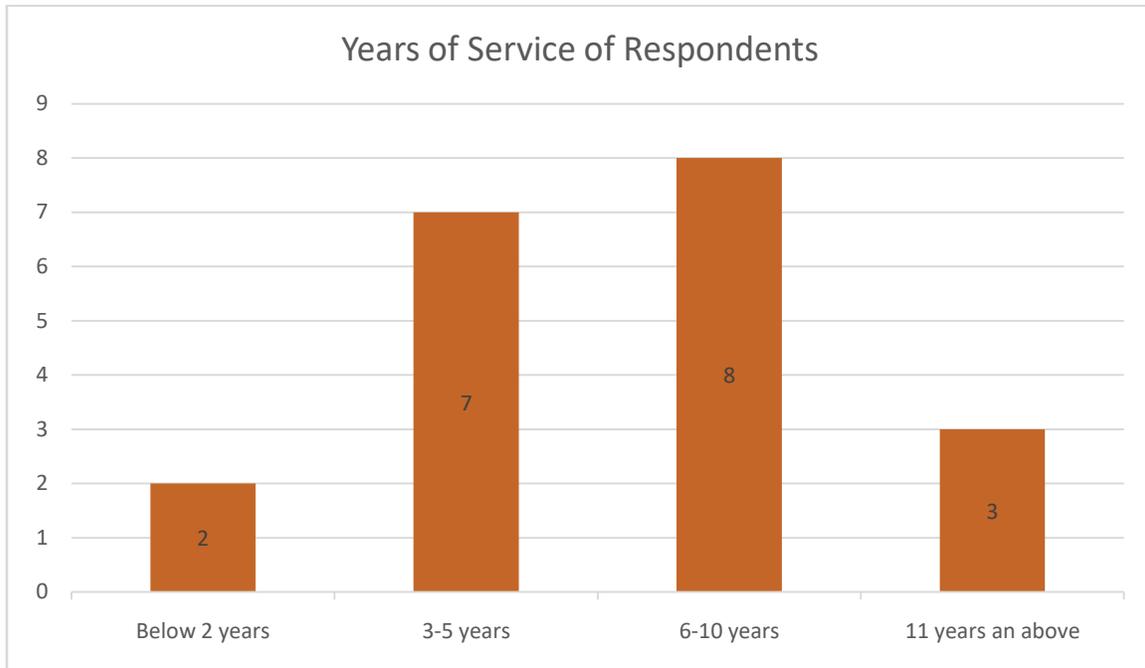
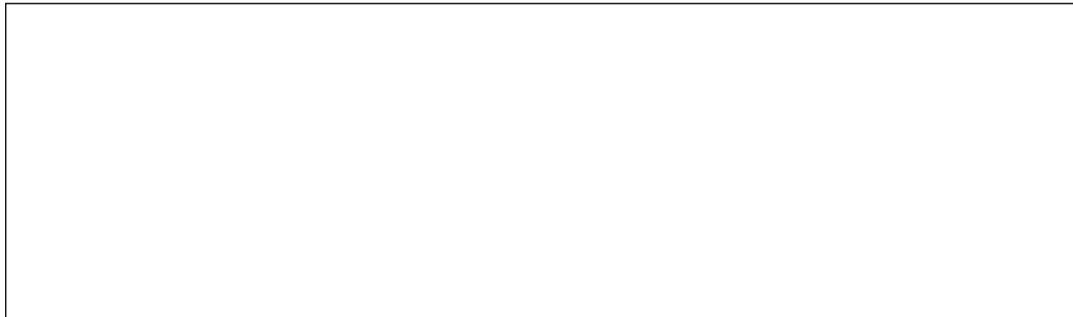


Figure 2: Respondents' years of service

Figure above illustrates the years of service of the respondents. Respondents were asked to state their years of service at Stay Easy, and the results were as follows; two respondents have worked at the company for two years or below, seven have worked between 3-5 years, eight has worked at the company between 6-10 years and three have worked at StayEasy for eleven years and above

4.2 Research Question 1: What attributes do employees perceive crucial for effective leadership?

The first research question of this study focused on attributes employees perceive crucial for effective leadership. The results revealed that there was a repetition of certain attributes that each of the respondents mentioned. The themes are as follows.



RQ1 T1: Should be a good listener

The findings on the characteristics of a good leader highlighted a fundamental leadership trait of being a good listener. Across various perspectives, it becomes evident that effective leadership hinges on the ability to attentively engage with others' viewpoints.

Most of the respondents highlighted that a good leader is one who should be a good listener. The following are the narratives.

In support of this theme one respondent from the management (M1) category had this to say:

"It is important that as a leader I should be able to listen to the views and opinions of my subordinates, it not only improves the morale of my employees, but can also better the services we offer to our customers as they are the ones who on a daily basis interact with our customers and know how to meet the needs of our customers efficiently."

One of the general workers (GW6) had this to say:

"When a leader is able to listen to what I have to say it allows us to build a mutual and beneficial relationship and helps to prevent conflicts as well as misunderstandings within the workplace."

Other respondents had this to say:

"As an employee, it makes me feel of no value when my opinions are not heard." - Employee (GW7)

"Leadership around here motivates me as they give me duties that are not supposed to be mine, so that at the end of the day I know about things that are not within my table." - **Employee (GW3)**

"I believe a leader needs to listen to my needs; sometimes, I could have ideas that they might not have considered. Listening to me could lead to improvements in the company." - **Employee (M2)**

"If I'm not performing my duties efficiently, I expect to be told, and when I'm performing well, I expect to be recognized. Feedback from my boss makes it easier for me to do my work." - **Employee (FGD2)**

RQ1: Theme 2: Leading by example

The second recurring theme stated by the respondents is that a good leader should be able to lead by example and set standards to be followed, not only by their subordinates, but also by themselves.

Some of the views given by the respondents for example, (GW2) included the following as indicated in transcribed verbatim.

"A leader has to have the ability to help subordinates in any department, for example in housekeeping, they're supposed to make sure that what they are doing they can do it as well."

A member from management (M2) had this to say:

"If my actions and what I'm saying are inconsistent it could lead to my subordinates being frustrated and there would be lack of trust between us, which can then lead to them performing their duties half-heartedly."

Other respondents had this to say:

"As an employee, I believe a leader has to have the ability to help me in any department. For example, in housekeeping, they're supposed to make sure that what they are doing, they can do it as well." - Employee (GW2)

"If my actions and what I'm saying are inconsistent, it could lead to my frustration and a lack of trust between us, which can then lead to me performing my duties half-heartedly." - Employee (GW6)

"As an employee, I need my leader to create open lines of communication and encourage trust and cooperation among us. If they are unable to effectively communicate with me, a lot of mistakes can be made, and I won't be able to carry out my tasks efficiently." - Employee (GW9)

RQ1 Theme3: Appraises/Appreciates good work performance of his/her subordinates

An attribute that majority of the respondents were in consensus with is that a good leader needs to be able to appreciate good work performance of all their subordinates and give recognition where it is due. Some of the views given by the respondents included the following:

One manager (M2) affirmed that:

"When my employees know that their efforts are recognised as well as appreciated, it makes them feel that their work is valued."

Furthermore, another respondent (FGD4) asserted that:

"If I felt like I was not getting the recognition I deserve in the organisation, I would be better off working elsewhere, as it's very important to me that my hard work is recognised."

(M1) further explained that:

"Appreciating the good work of my employees improves overall workplace morale and when other employees see that their colleagues are being appreciated it will create a ripple effect within the workplace."

"Appreciating the good work of my employees improves overall workplace morale and when other employees see that their colleagues are being appreciated it will create a ripple effect within the workplace." - Employee (M2)

"If I felt like I was not getting the recognition I deserve in the organisation, I would be better off working elsewhere, as it's very important to me that my hard work is recognised." - Employee (FGD4)

"Appreciating the good work of my employees improves overall workplace morale and when other employees see that their colleagues are being appreciated it will create a ripple effect within the workplace." - Employee (M1)

"When my hard work and efforts are recognised it not only improves the confidence I have in myself, but pushes me to keep on doing better, not only for my personal gain, but for that of the company." - Employee (GW9)

3.3 RQ2: What are the essential competencies that modern-day leaders need to cultivate for optimum corporate performance?

The second research question focused on cardinal competencies that modern-day leaders need to possess in order for corporate performance to be at its highest. The main purpose of this objective is to identify and analyse competencies or attributes of leaders that leads to the success of the company. The themes of this objective are listed below.



RQ2 Theme 1: Training of employees

More than half of the correspondents agreed with the fact that a leader needs to regularly train his or her employees, as this is one of the most efficient ways to build and enhance on the knowledge and skills of employees.

Some of the views given by the respondents for example, (M1) comprised of the following transcribed verbatim.

"Investing in training pays off tremendously. Employees receive training that not only helps them advance their abilities but also demonstrates to them the value they provide to the organization. Providing continuous and pertinent training to my staff helps boost productivity and performance at work."

A general worker (FGD3) added the following observation:

"When my skills are further developed, I feel motivated because the manager is adding more value to me and is increasing my skills set. It also raises my chances of being promoted."

RQ2 Theme 2: Ability to collaborate and promote teamwork

Effective collaboration is a crucial component of leadership. Through collaboration, leaders can combine the talents and abilities of team members, empowering the group to work together toward common objectives.

Among the opinions expressed by the respondents, for instance (GW1), were the following, which have been verbatim recorded.

"So, the key competencies of a good leader, firstly I would say needs to encourage teamwork, and should not be seen as a leader, but should be one who is able to work and collaborate with their subordinates in performing certain tasks dutifully."

The following was said by a respondent (M2):

"As a leader I need to be able to create open lines of communication and encourage trust and cooperation among my employees. If I am unable to effectively communicate effectively with my employees a lot of mistakes can be made, and they won't be able to carry out their tasks efficiently. Mistakes are costly."

Furthermore, a respondent (GW9) stated that:

"In my opinion collaboration enhances problem-solving and if I'm able to freely communicate with the manager I can easily ask for clarification on certain things I'm not sure about, instead of doing the wrong thing. Collaboration also allows me to be more creative. There are certain things that the manager can also learn from their subordinates which can be implemented within the company."

RQ2 Theme 3: Being a good communicator

Since leaders inspire and motivate those around them, leaders need to be competent communicators. Without these abilities, someone in leadership positions would never be comprehended or heard. Consequently, one crucial non-technical ability that any leader needs to have is having good communication skills.

Among the opinions expressed by the respondents were the following:

For instance, (GW7) contained the following, which is shown in the verbatim transcription:

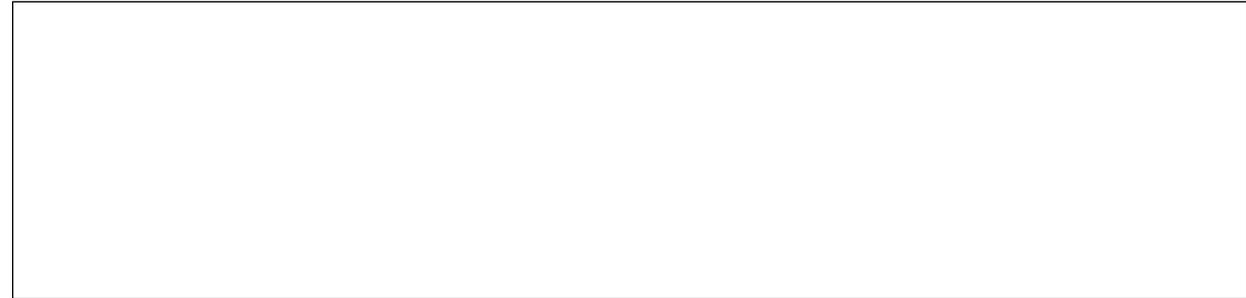
"A leader should be able to communicate effectively because it makes me feel of no value when my opinions are not heard."

One other respondent (FGD1) stated that:

“Managers are better at leading their teams when they have excellent communication skills. Good communicators make managing conflicts and fostering relationships much simpler.”

3.4 RQ3: How does the organizational culture within Stay Easy impact employees' performance?

This research question investigated the opinions and viewpoints of the participants about how an organization's culture influences workers' performance. The values, attitudes, behaviours, and customs that define a company's identity are referred to as its organizational culture. There were quite a number of themes that emerged from the findings.



RQ3 Theme 1: Increased Productivity

There was consensus with the fact that employees are encouraged and motivated by this to engage more fully in their professional responsibilities and interpersonal connections. Moreover, it results in a highly engaged workforce, which boosts output (productivity).

The following is what respondents had to say on the theme under discussion, for example provided by (M1):

“Positive organisational culture in my opinion leads to an increase in productivity. People will be more engaged and productive the more vibrant the culture. People generally perform better when they are content and engaged in activities they enjoy. And they yield more when they perform well.”

A respondent (GW4) went on to say that:

“The culture here at StayEasy is a friendly environment that allows for open communication. This pushes me to be extremely productive and perform my tasks quickly and efficiently.”

RQ3 Theme 2: Encouragement of Creativity and Innovation

An organization that fosters creativity is better able to leverage the innate creativity of its workforce and respond to challenges and opportunities in novel, creative, and competitive ways.

One respondent (GW8) commented that:

“A culture that promotes creativity within the company will allow me to share ideas that can be implemented and can lead to an improved way of conducting business.”

In addition (M2) stated that:

“I don't know everything and so I can learn a lot from my employees, that's why it's important for there to be a culture that encourages creativity in the company.”

RQ3 Theme 3: Enhanced Job Satisfaction

Strong organizational cultures foster shared values of employees that support the achievement of the missions and objectives of the organization. When workers are able to finish the responsibilities that have been delegated to them by the company, they will be able to gain work recognition and job satisfaction.

One respondent from the management (M1) category said the following in favour of this theme:

“Employees who work for companies with strong cultures, like StayEasy have a purpose and a cause to support. It's this internal drive that encourages workers to get really involved in their work.”

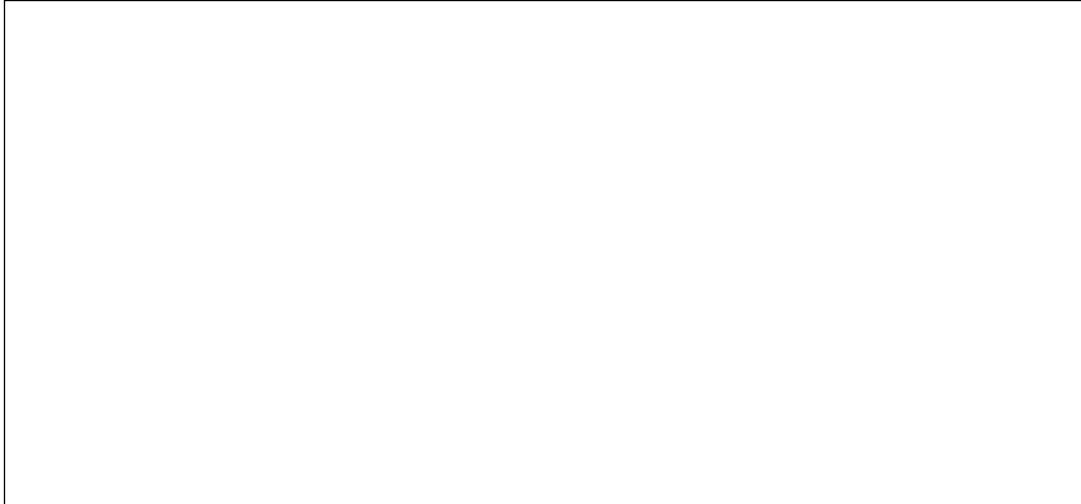
However, one respondent (FGD8) argued that:

“Organisational culture does not affect my work, nor does it lead to job satisfaction, as I simply enjoy the work I do in the workplace.”

3.5 RQ4: How does leadership influence employee productivity, job satisfaction, motivation, and retention at Stay Easy Hotel?

The exploration of RQ4, focused on the influence of leadership on employee productivity, job satisfaction, motivation, and retention at Stay Easy Hotel, aimed to gain insights into employees' perceptions regarding the direct impact of leadership on productivity. The findings unequivocally affirmed this belief, with all employees concurring that effective leadership indeed enhances productivity. Within this research question, several key themes surfaced such as: Shared Goals and Alignment, where leadership aligns teams towards common objectives; Setting Realistic

Targets, highlighting the importance of leadership in establishing achievable goals; and Building Trust, underscoring the role of leadership in fostering trust among team members. These themes collectively shed light on the intricate relationship between leadership and its influence on various facets of employee performance and satisfaction within Stay Easy Hotel.



RQ4 Theme 1: Ensuring that everyone in the company is working towards the same goal

Teams that are in harmony comprehend each other's objectives and priorities. Members are better able to concentrate their attention on the things that really matter, which helps them spend less time and energy on unimportant chores. When a team is aligned, everyone is on the same page and has the same goal in mind.

Respondents' opinions on the topic under debate are presented, with an example offered by (M1):

"It is my job to ensure that all my employees are working to achieve a shared goal. It would not make sense for example if various employees here at StayEasy are working to achieve different goals as it would cause a lot of confusion."

Another respondent (GW10) stated that:

"It's important for leadership to make sure that we are working to achieve the same targets by checking in with all employees and seeing if anyone needs help or clarification when performing duties. Keeping lines of communication open between the manager and employees also ensures that everyone is still working toward the same objective."

RQ4 Theme 2: Setting realistic targets

Setting realistic goals gives workers definite benchmarks to strive for, which can help them perform better. Employees that prioritize their work and manage their time more effectively will produce greater results and be more productive. Among the opinions expressed by the respondents were the following:

As an illustration, (GW3) included the following, which is displayed in the verbatim transcription:

"When people in leadership are setting goals or objectives that we need to achieve, for example achieving five-star ratings in the upcoming year. In setting this goal we need to be realistic, currently we're a four-star rated hotel, so obviously the next stage would be to be a five-star hotel. If we had ratings of two, it would make no sense to jump from two to five."

A respondent (FGD3) elaborated as follows:

"Establishing goals that are realistic helps us achieve our goals faster. This helps us stay motivated and focused on the road to achieve said goals."

RQ4 Theme 3: Building the trust of all employees

When there is a sense of trust at work, both employers and employees gain. In a day of constant change, trust in leadership provides the solid base that allows workers and their companies to adapt and prosper. Employees are encouraged and assured that they are receiving fair and courteous treatment when they have faith in their superiors. The following represents a few of the respondent's points of view, which have been transcribed verbatim:

One of the managers (M2) commented that:

"There's a saying I go by, which is a leader who isn't trusted will not be followed. When my employees trust me it builds loyalty as well as credibility."

Respondent (GW5) remarked that:

“If I don't trust my employer and my employer doesn't trust me the work environment would not be conducive, and I would not be able to perform my duties diligently.”

RQ4 Theme 4: Acknowledging and valuing suggestions.

Although what it means to be heard might vary from person to person, when workers are involved in decision-making processes, they typically feel heard. Giving workers a say in how things are done gives them a sense of authority over their working life and a sense that their thoughts are appreciated.

Given this, (M1), one of the respondents, stated the following:

“Like I said, my voice is heard. When I have a suggestion it is valued. There's nothing like okay, hold own we need to enquire from this position, no. What I suggest, as long as I weigh it with my colleagues it is heard.”

(FGD7) commented that:

“When what I suggest is implemented by top management I feel satisfied with the role that I play in this company, (...) my ideas affect the overall success of StayEasy.”

RQ4 Theme 5: Recognition of diligent efforts.

Employee recognition enables employees to understand how much their employer appreciates them and their contributions to the team's and the business's overall success.

For example, a respondent (M2), stated that:

“Appreciating the good work of my employees improves overall workplace morale and when other employees see that their colleagues are being appreciated it will create a ripple effect within the workplace.”

(FGD2) added that:

“When my employer recognises my efforts by for example making me employee of the month motivates to work even harder. It also makes me feel satisfied with the role I play here at StayEasy.”

RQ4 Theme 6: Consistent provision of feedback.

Frequent feedback fosters a sense of support and appreciation for workers, which can increase job happiness. Below is word for word responses to the objective under question.

(FGD5) commented:

“If I'm not performing my duties efficiently I expect to be told and when I'm performing well I expect to be told. Feedback from my boss makes it easier to do my work.”

Another respondent, (M1), added on to say:

“When I give regular feedback to my employees it creates employee engagement, I have noticed that engaged employees are happier employees.”

The study's findings illuminate the critical attributes for effective leadership, emphasizing the importance of attentive listening, leading by example, and recognizing good work performance. Moreover, it underscores essential competencies for modern leaders, including employee training, promoting collaboration, and effective communication. The impact of organizational culture on employee performance is evident, with positive cultures fostering productivity, creativity, and job satisfaction. Furthermore, the influence of leadership on employee productivity, job satisfaction, motivation, and retention is profound, highlighting the significance of shared goals, realistic targets, trust-building, suggestion acknowledgment, diligent effort recognition, and consistent feedback provision. These insights offer valuable guidance for leadership development and organizational enhancement strategies within Stay Easy Hotel, facilitating a conducive work environment and optimizing overall performance.

Discussion

The findings from the current study addressing attributes crucial for effective leadership highlight several consistent themes echoed by the respondents. Firstly, there is a unanimous agreement among participants that a good leader should possess strong listening skills. This aligns with previous research by Northouse (2018), which emphasizes active listening as a fundamental trait of effective leadership. Similarly, the notion of leading by example emerged prominently in the study, with respondents emphasizing the importance of leaders setting standards through their own behavior. This finding resonates with the work of Yukl (2013), who highlights the significance of leaders serving as role models for their subordinates. Finally, the theme of recognizing and appreciating good work performance among subordinates was reiterated by the respondents. This aligns with the research conducted by Randel, et al (2018); DuBois, et al (2015); Bass & Riggio (2006), who all argue that effective leaders exhibit behaviors that acknowledge and reward the contributions of their team members. The research findings of the current

study of employee attributes perceived as essential for effective leadership within the organization indicated that leadership plays a huge role in how productive employees are. Ineffective leaders cannot frequently uplift and encourage their staff, which can result in low morale and disengagement, both of which have a detrimental effect on output and the overall performance of the company. This result also supports Win (2016) who stated that the leader or supervisor has the final say over an employee's performance effectiveness (Burke & Cooper 2006).

Moreover, the exploration of cardinal competencies crucial for contemporary leaders, as framed by the second research question, uncovers essential attributes that contribute to corporate success. Firstly, the imperative of continuous employee training emerged prominently among respondents, echoing the notion that investing in employee development yields significant organizational benefits (Mullins, 2016). This finding aligns with the view that ongoing training not only enhances employee skills but also fosters a sense of value and motivation within the workforce (Kirkpatrick & Kirkpatrick, 2016). Secondly, effective collaboration and teamwork were emphasized as indispensable leadership competencies, consistent with the notion that leaders must facilitate cohesive team efforts to achieve organizational objectives (Katzenbach & Smith, 2015). Encouraging open communication and trust within teams emerged as pivotal for efficient task execution and innovation (West & Anderson, 1996). Lastly, the importance of strong communication skills for leaders was underscored, highlighting the critical role effective communication plays in fostering employee engagement and organizational cohesion (Hackman & Johnson, 2013; Lok & Crawford, 2001). By synthesizing these findings with existing literature, it becomes evident that modern-day leadership success is contingent upon competencies such as training facilitation, collaboration promotion, and effective communication.

The investigation into how organizational culture influences workers' performance reveals several significant themes. Firstly, a positive organizational culture was found to increase productivity by fostering employee engagement and motivation (Schein, 2010). This aligns with the notion that a supportive and vibrant culture encourages employees to perform better and feel valued within the organization (Quinn, 2011). Secondly, cultures that encourage creativity and innovation were found to empower employees to share ideas and contribute to novel approaches to business challenges (Amabile & Kramer, 2011). This finding underscores the importance of organizational culture in stimulating employee creativity and driving organizational adaptability. Lastly, strong organizational cultures were found to enhance job satisfaction by instilling a sense of purpose and alignment with organizational goals among employees (Schein, 2010; Sari, et al 2021). While some dissenting voices questioned the direct impact of organizational culture on their job satisfaction the consensus highlights the significant influence of culture on various aspects of employee performance and satisfaction.

The findings on the influence of leadership on employee productivity emphasised the crucial role of leadership in shaping organizational outcomes. Firstly, effective leadership was found to ensure alignment towards shared goals, fostering clarity and focus among employees in agreement with Dubrin's (2008) ; Yuki (2013) observations. This aligns with the view that effective leadership establishes a clear direction for the organization, promoting coherence and unity among team members . Secondly, leadership's role in setting realistic targets emerged as crucial for motivating employees and driving performance (Locke & Latham, 2019). By establishing achievable goals, leaders enable employees to channel their efforts effectively, thereby enhancing productivity (Latham & Pinder, 2005). Thirdly, building trust emerged as a key function of leadership, as trust forms the foundation for effective collaboration and employee engagement (Mayer et al., 1997). Furthermore, leadership's acknowledgment and valuing of employee suggestions, along with consistent provision of feedback and recognition of diligent efforts, were found to foster a positive work environment and enhance employee motivation and satisfaction (Boyatzis & McKee, 2002). These findings collectively highlight the multifaceted impact of leadership on organizational performance and employee well-being.

In conclusion, the study highlights the pivotal role of organizational culture and effective leadership in shaping employee performance and satisfaction within Stay Easy Hotel. The findings emphasize the importance of fostering a positive work culture conducive to productivity, creativity, and job satisfaction, alongside implementing leadership practices that align teams towards shared goals, build trust, and recognize employee contributions. Based on these insights, recommendations include prioritizing the cultivation of a positive organizational culture, implementing effective leadership strategies to align teams and build trust, and actively engaging with employees to foster motivation and satisfaction. By implementing these recommendations, Stay Easy Hotel can enhance organizational effectiveness and foster a conducive work environment for its employees.

References

- [1]. Aboshaiqah, A. E., Hamdan-Mansour, A. M., Sherrod, D. R., Alkhaibary, A., & Alkhaibary, S. (2014). Nurses' Perception of Managers' Leadership Styles and Its Associated Outcomes. *American Journal of Nursing Research*, 57-62.
- [2]. Achua, C. F., & Lussier, R. N. (2013). *Effective leadership*. Canada: South-Western Publishing.
- [3]. Amussah, A. (2020). *Leadership Styles and its Impact on Employess Performance*. Nicosia.
- [4]. Anyango, A. C. (2015). *Effects of Leadership Styles on Employee Performance*.
- [5]. Armstrong, M. (2004). *Human Resource Management Theory and practice*. London: Bath Press Ltd.
- [6]. Armstrong, M. (2017). *Armstrong's Handbook of Human Resource Management Practice (14th ed.)*. London: Kogan Page.
- [7]. Amabile, T., & Kramer, S. (2011). *The progress principle: Using small wins to ignite joy, engagement, and creativity at work*. Harvard Business Press.
- [8]. Asrar-ul-Haq, M., & Kuchinke, K. P. (2016). Impact of leadership styles on employees' attitude towards their leader and performance: Empirical evidence from Pakistani banks. *Future Business Journal*, 54-64.
- [9]. Avolio, B. J., & Gardner, W. L. (2005). Authentic leadership development: Getting to the root of positive forms of leadership. *The leadership quarterly*, 16(3), 315-338.
- [10]. Banister, P., Bunn, G., Burman, E., Daniels, J., Duckett, P., Goodley, D., . . . Whelan, P. (2011). *Qualitative Methods in Psychology: A Research Guide*. London: Open University Press.
- [11]. Bass, B. M., & Riggio, R. E. (2006). *Transformational leadership*. Psychology press.
- [12]. Bizhan. (2013). The relationship between leadership style and employee performance case study of real estate registration organization of Tehran province Singaporean. *Journal of business economics, and management studies*, 5.
- [13]. Boyatzis, R., & McKee, A. (2002). *Primal leadership: Realizing the power of emotional intelligence*.
- [14]. Bradley, N. (1999). Sampling for Internet Surveys: an examination of respondent selection for Internet Research. *Journal of the Market Research Society*, 387-395.
- [15]. Bryman, A. (2012). *Social research methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [16]. Bryman, A., & Bell, E. (2011). *Business Research Methods*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- [17]. Burke, R. J., & Cooper, C. (2006). *Inspiring Leaders*. London.
- [18]. Celik, H. (2017). The Relationship Between Employee Motivation and Leadership. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 155-179.
- [19]. Cresswell, J. W. (2018). *Research Design: Qualitative, quantitative and mixed methods a pproach (5th ed.)*. Los Angeles, CA: Sage.
- [20]. Creswell, J. (2014). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- [21]. Dudovskiy, J. (2018). *The Ultimate Guide to Writing a Dissertation in Business Studies: A Step by Step Assistance*.
- [22]. Dubrin, A. J. (2008). *Leadership research findings, practice and skills*. Dreamtech Press.
- [23]. DuBois, M., Hanlon, J., Koch, J., Nyatuga, B., & Kerr, N. (2015). Leadership styles of effective project managers: Techniques and traits to lead high performance teams. *Journal of Economic Development, Management, IT, Finance, and Marketing*, 7(1), 30.
- [24]. European Commission. (2016). *Fiscal Sustainability Report 2015*. Directorate General for Economic and Financial Affairs, European Economy, Institutional Paper.
- [25]. Flick, U. (2011). *Introducing Research Methodology: A Beginner's Guide to Doing a Research Project*. London: Sage Publications.
- [26]. Hair, J., Arthur, H., Money, P., Samuel, P., & Mike, P. (2007). *Research Methods for Business*. Chichester: John Wiley & Sons.
- [27]. Hooper, A., & Potter, J. (2011). *Intelligent leadership*. New York: Random House.
- [28]. Howell, J. M., & Frost, P. J. (1989). A laboratory Study of Charismatic Leadership. *Organisational Behaviors and Human Decisions Process*, 243-269.
- [29]. Latham, G. P., & Pinder, C. C. (2005). Work motivation theory and research at the dawn of the twenty-first century. *Annu. Rev. Psychol.*, 56, 485-516.
- [30]. Lok, P., & Crawford, J. (2001). Antecedents of organizational commitment and the mediating role of job satisfaction. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 594-613.
- [31]. Moser, A., & Korstjens, I. (2017). Practical Guidance to Qualitative Research. Sampling, data collection and analysis. *European Journal pof General Practice*, 9-18.

- [32]. Muhdar, M. H., Maguni, W., Muhtar, M., Bakri, B., Rahma, T. S., & Junaedi, R. W. (2022). The Impact of Leadership and Employee Satisfaction on the Performance of Vocational College Lecturers in the Digital Era. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 157-172.
- [33]. Mayer, R. C., Davis, J. H., & Schoorman, F. D. (1995). An integrative model of organizational trust. *Academy of management review*, 20(3), 709-734.
- [34]. Naile, I., & Selesho, M. J. (2014). The Role of Leadership in Employee Motivation. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 175-182.
- [35]. Northouse, P. G. (2010). *Leadership, theory and practice*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- [36]. Nuhu, K. (2010). *Effects of Leadership Styles on Employee Performance in Kampala District Council*.
- [37]. Locke, E. A., & Latham, G. P. (Eds.). (2013). *New developments in goal setting and task performance* (Vol. 24, p. 664). New York: Routledge.
- [38]. Ismajli, N., Zekiri, J., Qosja, E., & Krasniqi, I. (2015). The importance of motivation factors on employee performance in Kosovo municipalities. *Journal of Political Sciences & Public Affairs*, 3(2), 2-6.
- [39]. Parke, M. R., Weinhardt, J. M., Brodsky, A., Tangirala, S., & DeVoe, S. E. (2018). When daily planning improves performance: The importance of planning type, engagement, and interruptions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 103(3), 300.
- [40]. Pradeep, D. D., & Prabhu, N. R. (2011). The relationship between effective leadership and employee performance. *Journal of Advancements in Information Technology*, 198-207.
- [41]. Quinn, R. E. (2011). Diagnosing and changing organizational culture: Based on the competing values framework. Jossey-Bass.
- [42]. Randel, A. E., Galvin, B. M., Shore, L. M., Ehrhart, K. H., Chung, B. G., Dean, M. A., & Kedharnath, U. (2018). Inclusive leadership: Realizing positive outcomes through belongingness and being valued for uniqueness. *Human resource management review*, 28(2), 190-203.
- [43]. Raja, A., & Palanichamy, P. (2012). Leadership styles and its impact on organisational commitment. *The Journal of commerce*, 15-23.
- [44]. Robson, C. (2002). *Real World Research*. Oxford: Blackwell.
- [45]. Robescu, O., & Iancu, A. G. (2016). The effects of motivation on employees performance in organizations. *Valahian Journal of Economic Studies*, 7(2), 49-56.
- [46]. Saunders, M., Philip, L., & Thornhill, A. (2009). *Research Methods for Business Students*. London: Pearson.
- [47]. Sari, F., Sudiarditha, I. K. R., & Susita, D. (2021). Organizational culture and leadership style on employee performance: Its effect through job satisfaction. *The International Journal of Social Sciences World (TIJOSW)*, 3(2), 98-113.
- [48]. Schein, E. H. (2010). *Organizational culture and leadership* (Vol. 2). John Wiley & Sons.
- [49]. Snippe, T. (2022). *The Effects of Leadership on Employee Retention*. Retrieved from https://www.theseus.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/783115/Snippe_Tom.pdf?sequence=2.
- [50]. Stogdill, R. M. (1974). *Handbook of leadership*. New York: Free Press.
- [51]. Syverson, C. (2011). What Determines Productivity? *Journal of Economic Literature*, 326-65.
- [52]. Torrington, D., Laura, H., & Taylor, S. (2008). *Human Resource Management*. Great Britain: Pearson Education Limited.
- [53]. Torrington, D., Laura, H., & Taylor, S. (2008). *Human Resource Management (7th ed.)*. Great Britain: Pearson Education Limited.
- [54]. Win, K. M. (2016). *The impact of leadership styles on employee performance: analysis of the intervening effect of employee retention to the relationship of leadership styles and employee performance*.
- [55]. Wiles, R., Crow, G., & Pain, H. (2011). Innovation in qualitative research methods: a narrative review. *Qualitative Research*, 11(5), pp.587-604.
- [56]. Yammarino, F. J., & Dubinsky, A. J. (1994). Transformational leadership theory: Using levels of analysis to determine boundary conditions. *Personal Psychology*, 3-4.
- [57]. Yousef, D. A. (2000). Organizational Commitment: A Mediator of the Relationships of Leadership Behavior with Job Satisfaction and Performance in a Non-Western Country. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 6-24.
- [58]. Yukl, G. (2006). *Leadership in organizations*. London: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- [59]. Yukl, G. (2010). *Leadership in Organizations*. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.

- [60]. Zareen, M., Razzaq, K., & Mujtaba, B. G. (2023, May 15). *Impact of transactional, transformational and laissez-faire leadership styles on motivation: A quantitative study of banking employyes in Pakistan*. Retrieved from Public Organization Review: <http://doi.org/10.1007/s11115-014-0287-6>
- [61]. Zikmynd, G. W., Babin, J. B., Carr, C. J., & Griffin, M. (2013). *Business Research Methods*. United Kingdom: Cengage Learning.