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BA Leadership and Management Skills for the Workplace

Title: ***The impact of Leadership Styles on Employee Engagement: A Case Study of Magna Exteriors, Banbury. / Reflective essay.***

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Dissertation submitted as part of the requirements for the award of BA Leadership and Management

November 2025

As part of my dissertation, this is a reflection on my research journey using Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988), which provides a structured framework for learning through stages of description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion, and action planning.

Description

The purpose of my dissertation was to investigate the impact of different leadership styles-transformational, transactional, and situational/adaptive on employee engagement within Magna Exteriors Banbury. I adopted a quantitative, deductive research approach, collecting data through paper-based questionnaires distributed to managers, team leaders, and production operators. I achieved 72 valid responses, representing an 80% response rate. The data were analysed using Microsoft Excel through descriptive statistics, averages and comparative charts to explore engagement outcomes across hierarchical levels. The findings showed that transformational and adaptive leadership styles correlated most strongly with employee engagement, while transactional leadership was predominant in operational roles. Engagement levels declined down the hierarchy, with managers reporting the highest engagement and operators the lowest.

Feelings

At the beginning, I felt both motivated and anxious. I was excited to research an issue that directly affects my workplace, but I felt uncertain about my academic and analytical skills, particularly regarding quantitative methodologies. I also worried about whether employees would participate and whether workplace relationships might affect responses. I felt pressure to uphold ethical responsibility and ensure confidentiality, especially because respondents included supervisors and colleagues. As the surveys were returned and clear trends appeared in the data, my confidence increased. During the analysis stage, I initially felt overwhelmed and frustrated when manually coding and checking data, but seeing the final charts and patterns gave me pride and a strong sense of achievement.

Evaluation

Several aspects of the research process worked well. The high response rate increased the credibility of the findings and using paper-based questionnaires improved accessibility for operators who may have been less responsive to digital formats. Using validated tools such as the MLQ and UWES enhanced academic reliability (Avolio and Bass, 2004; Schaufeli, 2017). Ethical procedures were successful in building trust, supporting the guidance of Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019). However, relying only on quantitative data limited the depth of interpretation, as I could not explore the reasons behind observed differences. Excel

also limited analytical possibilities compared with more advanced software such as SPSS, and manual data handling introduced potential error.

Analysis

Through reflection, I learned the importance of systematic planning and time management in research. I recognised that research validity depends on methodological alignment and ethical transparency (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The process helped me understand the real organisational impact of leadership, supporting theories by Bass and Riggio (2006) regarding the positive relationship between transformational leadership and engagement. This work also strengthened my analytical, academic and organisational skills.

Conclusion

Overall, the research experience significantly improved my confidence and professional competence. I realised that leadership style has a measurable effect on engagement and that research is a developmental learning process requiring perseverance and critical reflection. I also recognised the value of balancing structure with adaptability in both research and workplace practice.

Action Plan

In future research, I would adopt a mixed-methods approach by adding interviews or focus groups to explore the underlying reasons behind quantitative patterns (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). I intend to develop skills in SPSS to enable deeper statistical analysis and improve efficiency. Professionally, I plan to apply my learning by encouraging stronger communication, recognition strategies and leadership development initiatives within Magna Exteriors to support engagement improvement.

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