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Table of Contents

CHAPTER 1	4
1.1 Focus, Context, and Importance of the Study	4
1.2 Research Aim and Objectives.....	5
1.3 Rationale for the Study	5
1.3.1 Academic Rationale.....	5
1.3.2 Applied/Business Rationale	6
1.3.3 Personal Rationale	6
1.4 Research Methodology	7
1.5 Structure of the Dissertation	7
CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW	8
2.1 Introduction	8
2.2 Leadership	8
2.2.1 Leadership Styles	9
2.3 Employee Engagement	10
2.3.1 Concept of Employee Engagement	11
2.3.2 Importance of Employee Engagement.....	11
2.4 Relationship Between Leadership Style and Employee Engagement	12
2.4.1 Previous Studies.....	13
2.5 Theoretical Framework	14
2.5.1 Social Exchange Theory (SET).....	14
2.5.2 Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model.....	15
2.6 Research Gap.....	15
2.7 Conceptual Framework	16
2.8 Research Hypotheses.....	16
CHAPTER 3	17
3.1 Introduction	17
3.2 Research Philosophy	18
3.3 Research Approach	18
3.4 Research Methodology	19
3.5 Research Method	19
3.6 Population and Sampling	19
3.7 Research Instrument (Questionnaire Design).....	20
3.8 Data Analysis	21
3.9 Ethical Considerations	21
3.10 Chapter Summary	21

CHAPTER 4	22
4.1 Introduction	22
4.2 Demographic Profile of Respondents	22
4.2.1 Gender of Respondents.....	22
4.2.2 Age of Respondents	23
4.2.3 Current Role	23
4.2.4 Department of Respondents	23
4.2.5 Employment Type of Respondents	24
4.3 Leadership Style Findings	25
4.4 Analysis of Employee Engagement	26
4.4.1 Enjoyment of Work	27
4.4.2 Effort and Concentration	27
4.4.3 Organisational Pride and Extra Effort.....	27
4.5 Factors Influencing Employee Engagement	28
4.6 Reliability Analysis.....	29
4.7 Validity Assessment.....	30
4.8 Correlation Analysis and Hypothesis Testing.....	31
4.9 Discussion of Findings	32
4.10 Summary of Findings	33
CHAPTER 5	34
5.1 Introduction	34
5.2 Conclusion	34
5.3 Recommendations	34
5.4 Limitations of the Study	35
5.5 Recommendations for Future Research	36
7. References.....	37
8. Appendix.....	40

CHAPTER 1

1.1 Focus, Context, and Importance of the Study

Leadership is widely recognised as an important organisational factor associated with employee behaviour, organisational effectiveness and business performance (Yukl, 2013; Northouse, 2021; Gameda and Lee, 2020). Effective leadership can support organisational objectives by motivating employees, strengthening workplace relationships while creating working conditions that encourage commitment and development (Bass and Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2021). These responsibilities are particularly important in competitive and changing organisational environments in which employees and managers must respond to developing business demands.

Leadership is especially relevant within the hospitality industry because employees play a direct role in service provision and client experiences. Hospitality organisations depend heavily on their workforce to maintain service quality and organisational performance, while employees may also experience challenging workloads, customer expectations and operational pressures (CIPD, 2023). Leadership practices may therefore be particularly important in forming employees' workplace experiences within this environment.

Employee engagement is also an important organisational consideration because it is associated with employee commitment, performance and wellbeing (Kahn, 1990; Saks, 2006). Kahn (1990, p. 694) describes engagement as employees expressing themselves physically, cognitively and emotionally through their work roles. Engaged employees are generally characterised by greater involvement, enthusiasm, and commitment, whereas low engagement may be associated with reduced motivation, dissatisfaction, and intentions to leave the organisation (Maslach and Leiter, 1997; CIPD, 2023). Understanding employee engagement is therefore particularly relevant to hospitality organisations that depend on employees to provide consistent service.

This research is conducted within Compass Group UK, a major food and support services organisation operating across sectors including healthcare, education, business, defence and leisure (Compass Group UK, 2024). Its assorted operations and reliance on employees through different working environments provide an appropriate organisational setting for examining leadership and employee engagement. Differences in managerial practices and workplace experiences across teams provide an appropriate context for investigating these relationships.

Specifically, this research examines the relationships between transformational leadership, Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), authentic leadership and employee engagement within Compass Group UK. Examining these leadership approaches within the same organisational context provides an opportunity to understand how employees' perceptions of leadership are

associated with their engagement. The findings may contribute context-specific evidence while also providing practical insights which might support leadership practices and employee engagement within the organisations.

1.2 Research Aim and Objectives

Research Aims

The aims of this study are:

1. To identify the leadership styles used by managers at Compass Group UK, with a particular focus on transformational leadership, Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), and authentic leadership.
2. To examine the relationship between these leadership styles and employee engagement within Compass Group UK.

Research Objectives

To achieve these aims, the study will:

1. Identify the leadership styles practised by managers at Compass Group UK.
2. Examine the relationship between transformational leadership, Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), authentic leadership, and employee engagement.
3. Identify the key factors that influence employee engagement within Compass Group UK.

These objectives will direct the research process and support the investigation of how leadership styles influence employee engagement within Compass Group UK (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill 2019).

1.3 Rationale for the Study

1.3.1 Academic Rationale

This research is academically relevant because, although the relationship between leadership and employee engagement has been widely examined, additional investigation is needed within specific organisational contexts (Saks, 2006; Northouse, 2021). My research focuses on transformational leadership, Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), and authentic leadership and examines their relationships with employee engagement within Compass Group UK.

Through examining these three leadership approaches within the same organisation, this research intends to provide context-specific evidence about leadership and employee engagement within a hospitality-related environment. The study therefore contributes to

existing research by extending insight into these relationships within Compass Group UK. At the same time, the literature review examines detailed theoretical, methodological, and contextual gaps.

1.3.2 Applied/Business Rationale

Strong leadership affects employee attitudes, conduct, and performance, which makes it crucial for organisational success from a practical standpoint (Northouse, 2021; Yukl, 2013). According to research, devoted workers are more productive, devoted, and eager to support company objectives (Saks, 2006; CIPD, 2025). Additionally, companies that have high employee engagement often have better customer satisfaction, lower employee turnover, and better operational effectiveness (Saks, 2006).

For Compass Group UK, understanding how leadership styles affect employee engagement may provide important insights for leadership development and organisational decision-making (Compass Group UK, 2024). The findings may help managers identify effective leadership behaviours, improve communication with employees, and formulate strategies that support employee motivation and commitment (Bass and Riggio, 2006; Northouse, 2021). Ultimately, improving employee engagement may contribute to better service delivery, enhanced organisational performance, and long-term organisational effectiveness.

1.3.3 Personal Rationale

The personal motivation for undertaking this research stems from an interest in leadership and human resource management within the hospitality industry. Leadership is an essential element of organisational success and has a considerable influence on employee experiences and workplace outcomes (Yukl, 2013; Northouse, 2021). By exploring the relationship between leadership style and employee engagement, this study provides an opportunity to gain a greater understanding of organisational behaviour and management practices.

In addition, the research will enable the development of valuable academic and professional skills, including literature evaluation, questionnaire design, data analysis, critical thinking, and report writing (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019; Creswell, 2014). These skills will support future academic achievement and career development within management and business-related fields.

1.4 Research Methodology

This study adopts a positivist research philosophy because it focuses on the collection and analysis of objective, measurable data to examine relationships between variables (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019). The study also follows a deductive approach, which begins using established theories and tests them through empirical investigation (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019).

A quantitative research method will be employed because it enables the collection of numerical data and supports statistical analysis of relationships between leadership style and employee engagement (Creswell, 2014). Structured survey questionnaires will be used to gather data distributed to employees and managers within Compass Group UK. Purposive sampling will be used to select participants with relevant leadership experience (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019). Ethical principles including informed consent, confidentiality, anonymity, and voluntary participation will be maintained throughout the study (Creswell, 2014).

1.5 Structure of the Dissertation

This dissertation is divided into five chapters.

Chapter One: Introduction provides the background to the study and introduces the research topic. It outlines the research aim and objectives, explains the rationale for the study, presents an outline of the research methodology, and illustrates the significance of investigating the impact of leadership style on employee engagement within Compass Group UK.

Chapter Two: Literature Review critically reviews the existing literature on leadership styles and employee engagement. The chapter examines relevant theories, concepts, and previous studies, identifies key themes and debates, and exposes gaps in the literature that justify the need for this research.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology explains the research philosophy, research approach, and research design adopted for the study. It discusses the methods used for data collection and analysis, sampling strategy, ethical issues, and measures taken to maintain reliability and validity.

Chapter Four: Findings and Discussion presents the results of the research and analyses the findings in relation to the research objectives. The findings are discussed alongside existing literature and relevant theories to evaluate their significance and implications.

Chapter Five: Conclusion and Recommendations concludes the dissertation by addressing the research aim and objectives and stressing the key findings of the study. The chapter also delivers practical recommendations for organisations, identifies limitations of the research, and suggests directions for future research.

CHAPTER 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Leadership and employee engagement have become central topics in organisational and management research because they influence employee performance, organisational effectiveness, and long-range business success. In increasingly competitive environments, organisations require effective leadership to motivate employees, manage organisational change, and attain strategic objectives (Northouse, 2021). At the same time, employee engagement has attracted considerable attention because committed employees are more committed, productive, and willing to contribute beyond their formal job responsibilities (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Previous studies indicate that leadership style plays a key role in affecting employee attitudes and behaviours, chiefly within service industries where employee performance directly affects customer satisfaction (Judge and Piccolo, 2004). This chapter reviews the existing literature on leadership and employee engagement by examining leadership concepts, leadership styles, employee engagement theories, empirical studies, and the conceptual foundations supporting this research. It concludes by identifying the research gap that justifies investigating the relationship between leadership style and employee engagement within Compass Group UK.

2.2 Leadership

Leadership is widely recognised as a principal factor influencing organisational performance, employee behaviour, and the achievement of organisational goals (Yukl, 2013; Northouse, 2021). Effective leadership entails influencing, motivating, and directing individuals to work towards collective targets while creating a positive working environment that supports organisational success (Northouse, 2021). In the hospitality industry, where service quality depends heavily on employee performance, effective leadership is necessary for maintaining ambitious standards of customer service and operational output.

Leadership has been studied extensively over time, resulting in the development of various theories and perspectives that explain how leaders influence individuals and organisations

(Antonakis, 2012). These theories provide the platform for understanding leadership within different organisational contexts. However, because this study concentrates on employee engagement, only the leadership styles that have been consistently identified in the literature as having a significant influence on employee engagement are examined in this chapter.

2.2.1 Leadership Styles

Leadership styles refer to patterns of behaviour used by leaders to influence, motivate and guide employees towards organisational goals (Northouse, 2021). Leadership approaches can affect communication, decision-making and workplace relationships, resulting in different organisational outcomes (Judge and Piccolo, 2004). This study considers transformational leadership, Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) and authentic leadership because previous literature has associated these approaches with employee engagement.

Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership entails inspiring employees through a common vision, encouraging innovation and providing individualised development (Bass, 1985). Rather than relying primarily on formal authority, transformational leaders seek to motivate employees through recognition, encouragement and personal development (Bass and Riggio, 2006). Research has associated this approach with improved motivation, job contentment and engagement, particularly where employees value opportunities for development and involvement (Carasco-Saul, Kim and Kim, 2015).

Researchers should not assume a positive outcome across all workplaces. Employees may respond differently depending on their working conditions, personal backgrounds and available resources. Transformational leadership may therefore contribute to engagement without necessarily being its sole determinant.

Leader–Member Exchange (LMX)

LMX theory focuses on the quality of relationships developed between leaders and individual employees (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995). High-quality exchanges are characterised by trust, mutual respect and communication, which may encourage employees to feel appreciated and committed. Such relationships can also facilitate cooperation along with engagement within service-based workplaces (Carasco-Saul, Kim and Kim, 2015).

One drawback of LMX is that managers may develop varying degrees of relationships with specific staff members. As a result, certain workers can have more access to or assistance

from their leader than others. This calls into question uniformity and whether the advantages of LMX are felt equally by all members of the workforce.

Authentic Leadership

Authentic leadership emphasises self-awareness, transparency, ethical behaviour and consistency between leaders' values and actions (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Through honest communication and balanced decision-making, authentic leaders may create conditions that encourage employees to trust management and become more involved in their work.

Previous research has consequently associated authentic leadership with positive employee attitudes and engagement. However, there are similarities between authentic leadership and various leadership philosophies. For instance, while employee encouragement is linked to transformational leadership, trust and supportive relationships are equally essential to LMX. This conceptual overlap may make it difficult to distinguish the distinct impact of each leadership style on engagement.

Overall, the three approaches present different explanations concerning effective leadership: transformational leadership emphasises inspiration and development, LMX focuses on relationship quality, and authentic leadership emphasises openness and moral consistency.

However, the literature generally reports associations rather than proving that leadership directly causes engagement. Engagement may also be influenced by workload, job resources and working conditions (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008). In addition, findings from other organisational contexts may not fully reflect hospitality environments characterised by customer demands and operational pressures. These limitations support examining the three leadership approaches within the specific context of Compass Group UK.

2.3 Employee Engagement

Employee engagement refers to the level of employees' emotional, cognitive, and behavioural attachment to their work and organisation (Kahn, 1990). Dedicated employees are motivated, committed, and willing to contribute beyond their formal job responsibilities, improving both individual and organisational performance (Albrecht, 2010).

In the hospitality industry, employee engagement is particularly important because employees' attitudes and behaviours directly affect service quality and customer satisfaction (Bakker and Albrecht, 2018). Research suggests that leadership is one of the main factors influencing employee engagement, as leaders shape employees' motivation, trust, and commitment (Saks, 2006). Therefore, this study considers how transformational leadership,

Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), and authentic leadership influence employee engagement within Compass Group UK.

2.3.1 Concept of Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is a multidimensional concept concerned with the extent to which employees invest themselves in their work. Kahn (1990) conceptualised engagement as the simultaneous investment of physical, cognitive and emotional energies into work roles.

Employees are therefore considered engaged when they demonstrate effort, concentration and emotional involvement in their work.

Kahn (1990) further proposed that engagement depends on three psychological conditions: meaningfulness, psychological safety and psychological availability. Employees tend to engage when they consider their work worthwhile, feel at ease expressing themselves and have sufficient physical and emotional resources to perform their roles. This approach depicts engagement as being influenced by employees' psychological experiences within the workplace.

In contrast, Schaufeli et al. (2002) conceptualised engagement as a positive work-related state characterised by vigour, zeal and absorption. Vigour represents energy and toughness, dedication concerns enthusiasm and commitment, while absorption reflects concentration and immersion in work. Although this perspective has similarities with Kahn's approach, it places greater emphasis on employees' motivational state.

The difference between these perspectives creates an important debate within the literature. If researchers define and measure engagement differently, findings across studies may not be directly comparable. It is therefore difficult to assume that all studies referring to "employee engagement" are measuring the same construct. Furthermore, engagement should not automatically be equated with greater effort, as sustained demands without sufficient recovery may contribute to burnout rather than positive engagement (Maslach and Leiter, 1997).

For this study, Kahn's (1990) conceptualisation is particularly relevant because the research considers employees' effort, concentration and emotional connection to their work. Adopting a clearly defined perspective also helps address the conceptual inconsistency identified within the wider engagement literature.

2.3.2 Importance of Employee Engagement

Employee engagement is widely recognised as a major driver of organisational performance because engaged employees demonstrate higher levels of motivation, commitment, and

productivity than disengaged employees (Schaufeli et al., 2002; Bakker and Albrecht, 2018). Organisations with highly engaged employees frequently experience enhanced customer satisfaction, stronger organisational commitment, lower employee turnover, and increased overall performance (Albrecht, 2010). Consequently, employee engagement has become a strategic priority for organisations seeking to achieve sustainable competitive advantage. The importance of employee engagement is especially clear within the hospitality industry, where service quality depends largely on employees' attitudes and interactions with customers. Employees frequently work under difficult conditions, including irregular working hours, emotional labour, and high customer expectations. In organisations such as Compass Group UK, committed employees are more likely to provide excellent customer service, cooperate effectively with colleagues, adapt to operational obstacles, and maintain ambitious standards of food quality and service delivery. As a result, employee engagement contributes directly toward customer satisfaction, organisational reputation, and business performance.

Research suggests that organisations can strengthen employee engagement by creating supportive working environments which encourage employee development, effective communication, recognition, and wellbeing (Bakker and Albrecht, 2018). Leadership is widely recognised as one of the most important organisational factors influencing engagement because leaders shape employees' workplace experiences, motivation, and commitment. Consequently, organisations that invest in effective leadership practices are more likely to develop an engaged workforce able to deliver elevated levels of performance. Despite its recognised benefits, employee engagement should not be viewed solely as a means of improving organisational performance. Maslach and Leiter (1997) argue that excessive workloads, insufficient organisational support, and prolonged job demands can contribute to burnout, reducing employee wellbeing and engagement. This perspective stresses the significance of balancing organisational performance expectations with adequate employee support to sustain engagement in the long term.

Overall, the literature demonstrates that employee engagement benefits both employees and organisations. For hospitality organisations, maintaining an engaged workforce is essential for providing high-quality customer service, improving organisational performance, and supporting long-lasting business success. Given that leadership is widely recognised as a major factor influencing employee engagement, the following section analyses the relationship between leadership style and employee engagement.

2.4 Relationship Between Leadership Style and Employee Engagement

Leadership style plays an important role in influencing employee engagement by shaping employees' motivation, commitment, and workplace experiences (Judge and Piccolo, 2004). Effective leaders establish a supportive work environment that encourages employees to contribute constructively to organisational goals.

Transformational leadership is widely recognised as one of the strongest predictors of employee engagement. Leaders who inspire, motivate and support employees encourage higher levels of commitment and performance (Carasco-Saul, Kim and Kim, 2015).

Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) also has a positive relationship with employee engagement. High-quality relationships based on trust, respect and support help employees feel appreciated and increase their engagement at work (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Similarly, authentic leadership promotes employee engagement through ethical behaviour, transparency, and honesty. Employees who trust their leaders are more likely to feel committed and motivated in their roles (Walumbwa et al., 2008).

Overall, the literature suggests that transformational leadership, Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) and authentic leadership positively influence employee engagement. Therefore, these three leadership styles form the focus of this study at Compass Group UK.

2.4.1 Previous Studies

Previous research provides substantial evidence of an association between leadership and employee engagement. Saks (2006) found that organisational support can encourage employees to invest greater effort in their work, while Albrecht (2010) stresses the importance of encouraging workplace conditions in fostering engagement and organisational commitment. However, these findings also indicate that broader organisational conditions shape engagement and cannot be attributed solely to leadership.

Transformational leadership has received considerable attention in the literature. Studies have reported positive relationships with employee motivation, commitment, performance, and engagement (Judge and Piccolo, 2004; Wang et al., 2011; Breevaart et al., 2014; Buil et al., 2019; Gameda and Lee, 2020). Collectively, these studies suggest that inspirational and developmental leadership behaviours may contribute to positive employee outcomes.

Nevertheless, the consistency of positive associations should be interpreted cautiously, as evidence of a relationship does not necessarily establish that transformational leadership directly causes higher engagement.

Research on Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) and authentic leadership also report positive employee outcomes. Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) emphasise the importance of high-quality leader–employee exchanges, while Walumbwa et al. (2008) identify psychological processes

through which authentic leadership may influence employee attitudes and behaviours. Carasco-Saul, Kim and Kim (2015) similarly identify leadership as an important contributor to engagement. These studies offer different explanations for how leadership may matter, indicating that a single mechanism does not explain the relationship between leadership and engagement.

An additional limitation is the variation in organisational settings examined across previous studies. Leadership behaviours that are effective in one sector or workplace may not produce identical outcomes elsewhere because employee experiences are influenced by factors such as job demands, resources and working conditions (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008). This is particularly relevant to hospitality, where operational pressures and service demands may shape how employees experience both leadership and engagement.

Overall, however, the evidence should not be interpreted as demonstrating a simple causal relationship. Differences in organisational context and alternative influences on engagement mean that further context-specific investigation remains necessary. Comparatively limited research has examined transformational leadership, LMX and authentic leadership together within a single hospitality organisation, justifying the examination of these relationships within Compass Group UK.

2.5 Theoretical Framework

This study is based on the Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model and Social Exchange Theory (SET). These theories provide the theoretical framework for investigating how genuine leadership, transformational leadership, and Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) affect employee engagement. By elucidating how leadership influences employee engagement, they also aid in the formulation of the study's conceptual framework and research hypotheses.

2.5.1 Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Social Exchange Theory suggests that positive relationships between leaders and employees encourage employees to respond with higher levels of commitment and engagement (Saks, 2006). When leaders demonstrate trust, fairness, support and recognition, employees are more likely to reciprocate through greater motivation and engagement. This theory is particularly relevant to Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) and authentic leadership, as both emphasise high-quality relationships, trust and mutual respect between leaders and employees.

2.5.2 Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model

The Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model explains that employee engagement increases when employees have sufficient job resources to cope with workplace demands (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008). Leadership is considered an important job resource because effective leaders provide guidance, support, feedback, and opportunities for development. This theory is especially relevant to transformational leadership, which motivates and develops employees, while also supporting the positive effects of LMX and authentic leadership on employee engagement.

Overall, Social Exchange Theory and the JD-R Model provide the theoretical basis for this study by explaining how transformational leadership, Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), and authentic leadership influence employee engagement. These theories also underpin the study's conceptual framework and the hypotheses developed to examine the relationships between the selected leadership styles and employee engagement within Compass Group UK.

2.6 Research Gap

Despite extensive research on leadership and employee engagement, several gaps justify this research. First, a theoretical gap exists because transformational leadership, Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) and authentic leadership are frequently examined separately rather than together. This matters to this research because examining all three leadership approaches provides a broader framework for understanding their relationships with employee engagement at Compass Group UK (Judge and Piccolo, 2004; Walumbwa et al., 2008; Gemedu and Lee, 2020).

Second, a methodological gap exists because previous studies have used different approaches to conceptualise and measure employee engagement (Kahn, 1990; Schaufeli et al., 2002). This matters to this research because differences in measurement can make findings difficult to compare. In addition, previous evidence largely identifies relationships between leadership and engagement rather than establishing causation. Therefore, this research focuses on examining the strength and direction of the relationships between the selected leadership styles and employee engagement rather than claiming that leadership directly causes engagement.

Third, a contextual gap exists because comparatively limited research has examined these relationships within hospitality and food-service environments. This matters to this research because employees in these environments experience specific working conditions, including

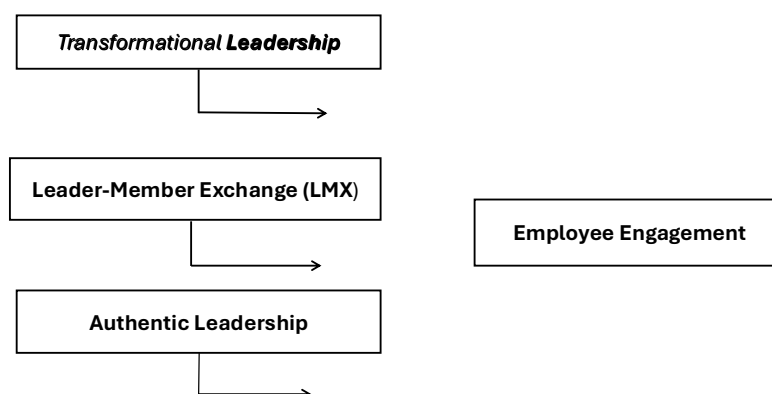
customer interaction, operational pressures, and varied working patterns, which may affect their perceptions of leadership and engagement.

Finally, limited published research has examined transformational leadership, LMX, authentic leadership and employee engagement specifically within Compass Group UK. This research therefore addresses the identified theoretical, methodological, and contextual gaps by examining the relationships between the three leadership styles and employee engagement among employees within Compass Group UK.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework provides the structure for examining the variables in this research. Transformational leadership, Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), and authentic leadership are the independent variables, while employee engagement is the dependent variable. Their inclusion is based on evidence from the literature indicating associations between leadership behaviours and employee engagement (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015; Buil et al., 2019).

In this research, the framework is applied to Compass Group UK to examine the strength and direction of the relationship between each leadership style and employee engagement. It therefore provides the basis for the hypotheses tested in this study.



2.8 Research Hypotheses

Based on the literature review and the conceptual framework, this study examines the relationship between leadership styles and employee engagement within Compass Group UK. Previous studies suggest that transformational leadership, Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), and authentic leadership can positively influence employee engagement through mechanisms such as motivation, trust, supportive leader–employee relationships and positive work behaviours (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995; Carasco-Saul et al., 2015; Buil et al., 2019). Therefore, the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: Transformational leadership has a positive relationship with employee engagement.

H2: Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) has a positive relationship with employee engagement.

H3: Authentic leadership has a positive relationship with employee engagement.

Variable	Example Survey Items
Transformational Leadership (IV1)	My manager inspires me to do my best; My manager encourages new ideas; My manager supports my development.
Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) (IV2)	My manager listens to my opinions; My manager treats me with respect; I have a good working relationship with my manager.
Authentic Leadership (IV3)	My manager is honest; My manager acts fairly; My manager keeps promises
Employee Engagement (DV)	I enjoy my work; I am motivated to do my job well; I am proud to work for Compass Group UK;

CHAPTER 3

3.1 Introduction

This chapter explains the research methodology adopted to investigate the impact of leadership style on employee engagement in the hospitality industry, with a particular focus on Compass Group UK. It outlines and justifies the research philosophy, research approach, quantitative methodology and survey research method used to address the research objectives (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). The chapter further describes the target population, sampling technique, questionnaire design, data collection procedures, and data analysis methods employed in the study. Finally, it discusses the ethical considerations that guided the research process, including informed consent, confidentiality, and voluntary participation. Collectively, these methodological choices provide a systematic and

transparent framework that enhances the reliability and validity of the study and enables future researchers to replicate the research (Creswell, 2014; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

3.2 Research Philosophy

Research philosophy refers to the beliefs and assumptions that guide how knowledge is developed and interpreted throughout the research process (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). It influences the selection of research methods and ensures the research design aligns with the study's objectives (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

This study adopts a positivist research philosophy. Positivism assumes that reality is objective and can be measured through the systematic collection and analysis of observable data (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). It emphasises objectivity, hypothesis testing, and statistical analysis, making it well suited to quantitative research (Bryman, 2016). Positivism is appropriate because this study examines employees' perceptions of their managers' leadership styles and employee engagement using structured questionnaires. Collecting standardised responses from employees, supervisors, and managers enables objective analysis of the relationship between leadership styles and employee engagement. Overall, the positivist philosophy provides an appropriate foundation for the quantitative methodology adopted in this study.

3.3 Research Approach

A research approach provides the logical process through which a study is conducted and explains how theory is applied to empirical research (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). The two main research approaches are deductive and inductive. A deductive approach begins with existing theories and examines whether they are supported by empirical evidence, whereas an inductive approach develops new theories from observations and emerging patterns (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

This study adopts a deductive research approach because it is based on established theories and examines the relationship between leadership styles and employee engagement. Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model provide the theoretical foundation for the study by explaining how supportive leadership behaviours influence employee engagement. These theories are applied within the context of Compass Group UK to test the proposed relationships between the study variables rather than develop new theory (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

The deductive approach is appropriate because it enables the study hypotheses to be tested using quantitative data collected through a structured questionnaire. This provides a systematic and objective approach to examining the relationship between leadership styles and employee engagement.

3.4 Research Methodology

This research will adopt a quantitative methodology to examine the relationships between transformational leadership, Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), authentic leadership, and employee engagement within Compass Group UK. A quantitative methodology will be appropriate because the study will statistically analyse the numerical data it collects to identify patterns and examine relationships between the research variables (Bryman, 2016). The quantitative methodology will also align with the positivist philosophy and deductive approach adopted in this research. It will enable the proposed hypotheses to be tested using measurable data and will provide a systematic approach to addressing the research aim and objectives (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

3.5 Research Method

A structured questionnaire will be used as the primary data-collection method for this research. The questionnaire will be distributed to employees, supervisors, and managers at Compass Group UK to collect information about their perceptions of leadership behaviours, employee engagement and workplace factors associated with engagement.

The questionnaire will provide a standardised method of data collection because all participants will respond to the same set of questions. This will support consistency across responses and facilitate subsequent statistical analysis (Bryman, 2016). The questionnaire will also provide an appropriate method for collecting data from participants within the available data-collection period.

Overall, the structured questionnaire will provide the quantitative data required to address the research objectives and test the proposed relationships between the study variables.

3.6 Population and Sampling

This study will include these participants because they have relevant experience of leadership practices within the organisation and can provide information about leadership styles and employee engagement (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

A non-probability purposive sampling technique will be used to select participants who have relevant knowledge and experience of the research topic (Bryman, 2016). This approach will enable the researcher to recruit participants who are currently employed at Compass Group UK and therefore have direct experience of the workplace and its leadership practices.

The study will aim to distribute approximately 70 questionnaires to employees, supervisors, and managers at Compass Group UK. Participation will be voluntary, and the final sample size will depend on the number of completed questionnaires returned within the available data-collection period. The use of purposive sampling and the anticipated sample size may limit the generalisability of the findings to the wider Compass Group UK workforce (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

3.7 Research Instrument (Questionnaire Design)

This study will use a structured questionnaire designed to collect quantitative data from employees, supervisors, and managers at Compass Group UK. The questionnaire will be organised into four sections. The first section will collect demographic information, including job position, age, gender, department, and employment type. The second section will measure the independent variables: transformational leadership, Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) and authentic leadership. The third section will measure the dependent variable, employee engagement, using statements based on the physical, cognitive, and emotional dimensions of engagement (Kahn, 1990). The last section will examine participants' perceptions of key factors associated with employee engagement, including leadership support, recognition, communication, training and development, trust in managers, career development opportunities, fair treatment, and teamwork.

The questionnaire will be used to measure participants' responses. The leadership style and employee engagement sections will use a scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). In contrast, the factors associated with the employee engagement section will use a scale ranging from 1 (Not Important) to 5 (Very Important). The Likert scale is widely used in quantitative research because it provides a simple and consistent method for measuring participants' perceptions and attitudes (Bryman, 2016).

The questionnaire will use a five-point Likert scale to measure participants' responses. Clear, concise wording and closed-ended questions will support consistency in responses and facilitate statistical analysis. This design will support the collection of organised quantitative data required to address the research objectives (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

3.8 Data Analysis

The data collected from the completed questionnaires will be coded and entered into IBM SPSS Statistics for analysis. Descriptive statistical techniques, including frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations, will be used to summarise participants' demographic characteristics and questionnaire responses.

The study will use Cronbach's alpha to assess the internal consistency of the questionnaire scales. It will also use Pearson's correlation analysis to examine the direction and strength of the relationships between transformational leadership, Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), authentic leadership and employee engagement. The analysis will assess statistical significance at the 5% level ($p < .05$).

The results will be presented using tables and charts where appropriate to support clear interpretation. These analytical techniques will enable the research objectives to be addressed systematically and the proposed hypotheses to be tested (Bryman, 2016; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

3.9 Ethical Considerations

The researcher will follow ethical principles to protect participants' rights and privacy. Participation will be voluntary, and the researcher will inform participants about the study's purpose before obtaining consent. Participants may withdraw from the study at any time without consequence (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

To protect participant identities, the researchers will not collect personal information and will treat all responses confidentially. The researcher will use data solely for academic purposes and store it securely throughout the research process.

3.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has outlined and justified the research methodology adopted to investigate the impact of leadership style on employee engagement within Compass Group UK. It explained the selection of the positivist research philosophy, deductive research approach, quantitative methodology and survey research method. The chapter also described the population and sampling strategy, questionnaire design, data analysis procedures, and ethical considerations adopted to ensure the credibility of the research. Collectively, these methodological choices provided a systematic framework for collecting and analysing the

data. Following data collection, the questionnaire responses will be analysed using the procedures outlined in this chapter, and the findings will be presented in Chapter 4.

CHAPTER 4

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings from the questionnaire survey conducted among employees, supervisors, and managers at Compass Group UK. Of the 70 questionnaires distributed, 36 were completed and returned, giving a response rate of 51.4%. The analysis therefore reflects the responses of these participants and should be considered in light of the achieved sample size.

The findings are organised according to the research objectives, covering respondents' demographic characteristics, leadership styles, employee engagement, and factors influencing engagement. Tables and figures are used to present the results clearly, while the accompanying analysis focuses on interpreting key patterns rather than repeating the statistical outputs (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). The findings provide the basis for the subsequent discussion in relation to the relevant literature and research objectives (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

4.2 Demographic Profile of Respondents

This section outlines the demographic profile of the respondents in terms of gender, age, current role, department, and employment type. These characteristics provide an overview of the study sample and help contextualise the interpretation of the findings relating to leadership styles and employee engagement (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

4.2.1 Gender of Respondents

The gender distribution was relatively balanced, with women representing 47.2% of the sample and men 44.4%. A small proportion of respondents identified as non-binary (5.6%) or preferred not to disclose their gender (2.8%). This balanced distribution suggests that the survey captured perspectives from both male and female employees, reducing the likelihood that a single gender group influences the findings. However, the limited number of respondents in the remaining categories means that comparisons between all gender groups are not appropriate. Consequently, gender is presented to describe the study sample rather

than to explain differences in leadership perceptions or employee engagement (Bryman, 2016).

4.2.2 Age of Respondents

The respondents represented a broad range of age groups, with the largest proportion (25.0%) aged 26–35 years. Respondents aged 36–45 years and 46–55 years each accounted for 22.2%, while 16.7% were aged 18–25 years and 13.9% were aged over 55 years. The distribution indicates that the study included employees at different career stages, providing a range of workplace experiences. Nevertheless, the study did not investigate whether age influences employee engagement; therefore, these findings should be interpreted with caution regarding any relationship between age and the study variables (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

4.2.3 Current Role

Staff members formed the largest respondent group (36.1%), followed by managers (27.8%), supervisors/team leaders (19.4%), and respondents selecting "Other" (16.7%). The inclusion of participants from different organisational levels provides a broader understanding of leadership within Compass Group UK, as the sample includes both employees who are managed and those with leadership responsibilities. However, the relatively small number of respondents within each category means that differences between roles should be interpreted cautiously and should not be generalised beyond the study sample (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

4.2.4 Department of Respondents

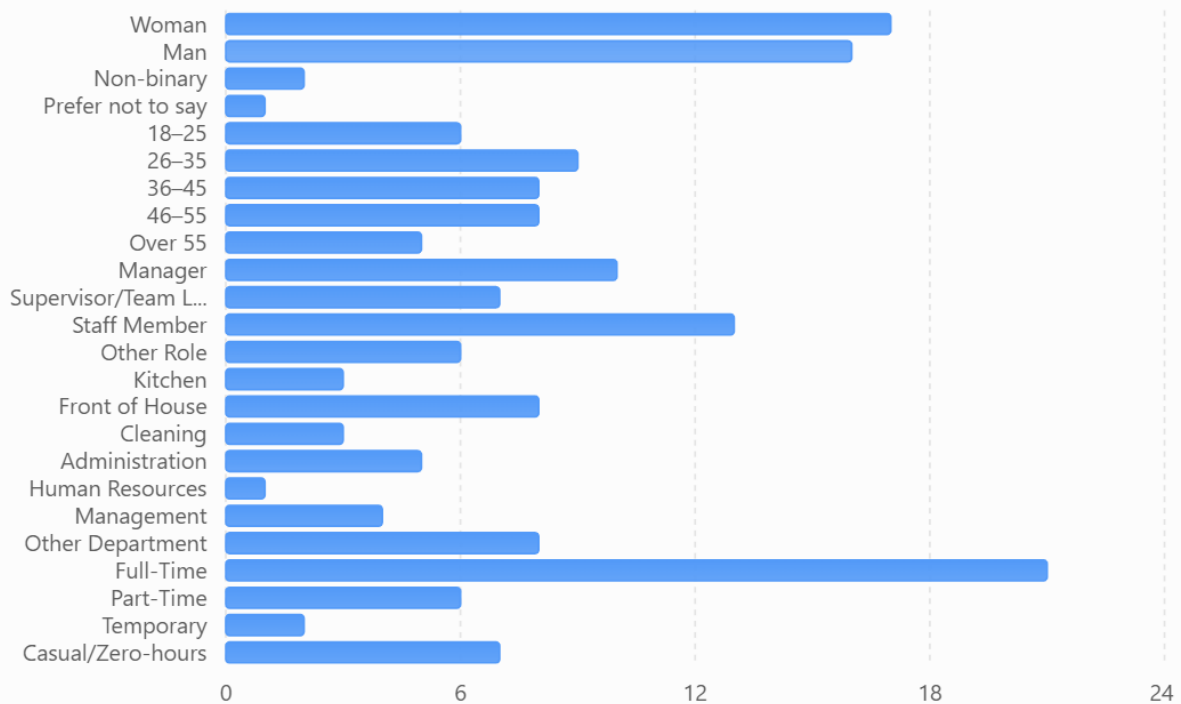
Respondents were drawn from a range of departments across Compass Group UK. The Front of House and Other categories each represented 22.2% of the sample, followed by Administration (13.9%), Management (11.1%), and both Kitchen and Cleaning departments (8.3% each). Human Resources accounted for the smallest proportion of respondents (2.8%). This distribution indicates that the study captured views from both operational and administrative areas of the organisation. The higher representation of Front of House employees may reflect the operational structure of hospitality organisations, where customer-facing roles commonly represent a considerable proportion of the workforce. Nevertheless, the limited representation of some departments means that departmental comparisons should be interpreted with caution (Bryman, 2016).

4.2.5 Employment Type of Respondents

More than half of the respondents (58.3%) were employed on a full-time basis. The remaining participants were employed on casual/zero-hours contracts (19.4%), part-time contracts (16.7%), and temporary contracts (5.6%). The higher proportion of full-time employees suggests that the findings primarily reflect the experiences of permanent members of staff. However, the inclusion of part-time, temporary, and casual employees provides a broader understanding of leadership and employee engagement across different employment arrangements. Given the relatively small number of respondents in some employment categories, comparisons between contract types should be interpreted cautiously and regarded as descriptive of this sample only (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

Demographic Profile of Respondents

Summary of respondents by gender, age, role, department and employment type (n = 36).



Source: Questionnaire survey (n = 36).

4.3 Leadership Style Findings

This section analyses respondents' perceptions of the leadership behaviours practised by managers at Compass Group UK. The nine questionnaire statements measured three leadership dimensions: transformational leadership, Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), and authentic leadership. Responses were recorded on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). The purpose of the analysis is not only to identify which responses were most common, but also to explain what the patterns may suggest about employees' experiences of leadership (Bryman, 2016; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

Overall, the findings indicate that many participants experienced positive leadership behaviours, as agreement responses were generally more common than disagreement responses. This may indicate that managers were often perceived as supportive, respectful, and open in their interactions with employees. These behaviours may have been rated positively because employees are more likely to respond favourably when managers encourage, listen to their views, and communicate clearly.

However, some respondents selected neutral or negative responses. This suggests that employees may not have experienced leadership behaviours consistently across the organisation. One possible explanation is that Compass Group UK operates across different departments, locations, and managerial structures, meaning employees may have different relationships with their immediate managers. Differences in workload, communication practices, managerial experience, and team culture may also explain why some respondents reported fewer positive experiences. These explanations are possible interpretations only, as the present study did not test departmental or managerial differences directly.

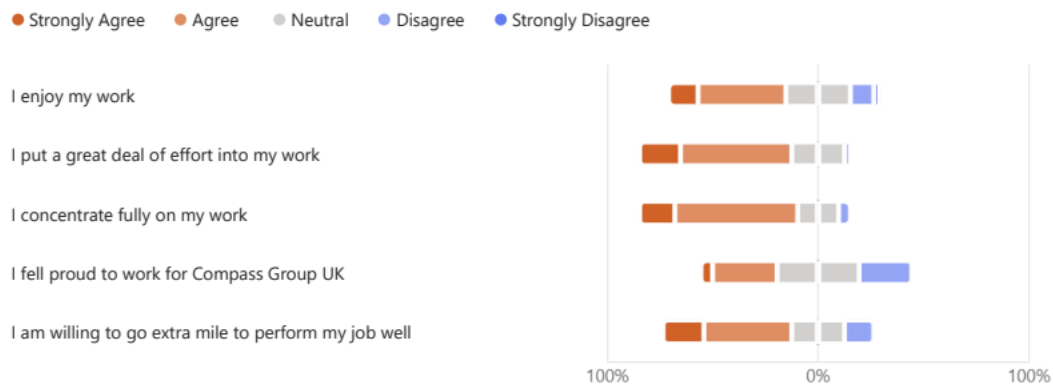
The findings therefore require interpretation with caution. The results reflect the views of the thirty-six respondents and cannot be assumed to represent all employees at Compass Group UK. Nevertheless, the analysis provides useful evidence about which leadership behaviours were most strongly perceived within the sample and helps address the first research objective.



4.4 Analysis of Employee Engagement

This section presents the findings on employee engagement at Compass Group UK. The analysis addresses the second research objective by examining employees' responses to five statements covering enjoyment of work, effort, concentration, organisational pride and willingness to go the extra mile. Responses were measured using a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Tables and figures are used to present the findings, while the discussion focuses on the main patterns identified in the responses (Bryman, 2016; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

The findings show some differences in employees' levels of engagement. These differences may be linked to employees' individual experiences, their working environment and the leadership practices they experience. For example, employees who receive support, recognition and clear communication from their managers may feel more positive and committed to their work. In contrast, employees experiencing greater work pressures or less managerial support may report lower levels of engagement. However, these are possible explanations and cannot be confirmed from the descriptive results alone.



4.4.1 Enjoyment of Work

Most respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the statement "I enjoy my work." This finding suggests that many employees experience positive feelings towards their daily work activities. One probable reason is that supportive leadership and positive working relationships encourage employees to find their work more meaningful and satisfying. Nevertheless, the presence of neutral and negative responses indicates that not all employees share the same experience, suggesting that individual or workplace factors may influence job satisfaction.

4.4.2 Effort and Concentration

Responses to the statements "I put a great deal of effort into my work" and "I concentrate fully on my work" were predominantly positive. This suggests that many respondents are committed to performing their roles effectively and maintaining a high level of attention during their work. This may reflect employees' sense of responsibility and commitment to delivering quality service within the hospitality environment. However, a small number of neutral and negative responses suggest that workload, motivation, or other organisational factors may influence employees' ability to maintain consistently elevated levels of engagement.

4.4.3 Organisational Pride and Extra Effort

The findings also indicate generally positive responses to the statements "I feel proud to work for Compass Group UK" and "I am willing to go the extra mile to perform my job well." These responses suggest that many employees demonstrate emotional commitment towards the organisation and are prepared to contribute beyond their basic job requirements.

This may be because employees perceive positive relationships with their managers or identify strongly with organisational goals. However, the variation in responses indicates that all participants do not equally share this level of commitment.

Overall, the employee engagement findings suggest that respondents generally reported positive levels of engagement across the five measured dimensions. Nevertheless, caution is necessary when interpreting the results because they reflect the perceptions of thirty-six respondents and cannot be generalised to the wider Compass Group UK workforce. The relationship between employee engagement and leadership styles is examined further in the following sections in relation to the study's research objectives and hypotheses.

4.5 Factors Influencing Employee Engagement

The Job Demands–Resources (JD–R) Model and Social Exchange Theory (SET) help explain the factors associated with employee engagement. In particular, they highlight the importance of workplace resources, managerial support and positive working relationships.

Overall, respondents considered all five factors important, with most responses falling within the Very Important and Important categories. This suggests that employee engagement may be associated with several workplace factors rather than one factor alone.

Communication with managers was one of the factors that respondents valued most. Clear communication helps employees understand expectations and gives them opportunities to receive feedback or raise concerns. This may be particularly important in hospitality, where employees often work in busy environments and are expected to maintain consistent service standards.

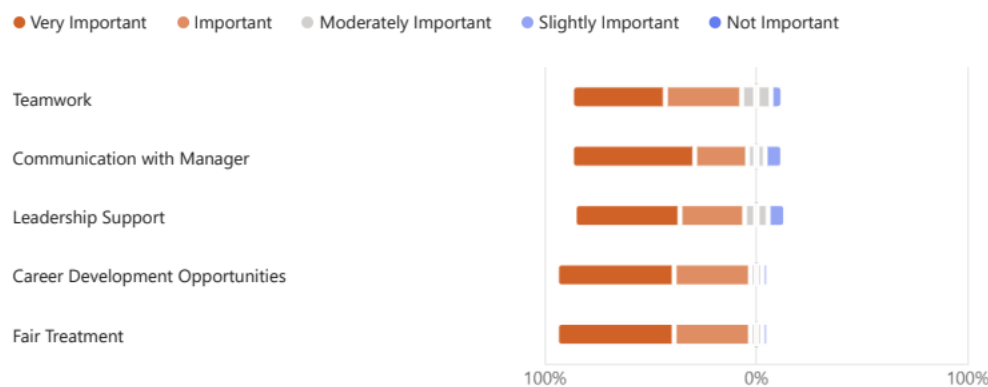
Managerial support was also considered important. Employees may feel more motivated when managers provide guidance, encouragement and assistance when needed. Feeling supported may also help employees manage workplace demands and feel that their contribution is valued. This is consistent with Social Exchange Theory, which suggests that employees may respond to supportive treatment with greater effort and engagement (Saks, 2006).

Teamwork was another important factor respondents identified. Hospitality employees often need to work closely with colleagues from different roles and departments. Good teamwork can support communication, reduce pressure, and help employees feel part of a team. However, the findings only show that respondents considered teamwork important; they do not demonstrate that teamwork directly causes higher engagement.

Fair treatment was also rated highly. Employees who feel that they are treated fairly and respectfully may develop greater trust in their managers and organisation. However, experiences of fairness may differ between employees and departments, and this study did not examine these differences statistically.

Career development was also considered important. Opportunities for training, progression and personal development may help employees feel that the organisation is investing in their future. This is consistent with the Job Demands–Resources Model, where development opportunities and managerial support can be viewed as valuable job resources that support engagement (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008).

Overall, the findings show that communication, managerial support, teamwork, fair treatment and career development were considered important by respondents. Together, these findings suggest that employee engagement is associated with both leadership and wider workplace experiences. However, the results reflect respondents' perceptions and do not demonstrate that these factors directly cause higher employee engagement (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).



4.6 Reliability Analysis

The internal consistency of the questionnaire scales was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. Values of approximately 0.70 or above are generally considered to indicate acceptable internal consistency (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

The results showed satisfactory reliability across all constructs. Transformational leadership produced a Cronbach's alpha of 0.835, while Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) and authentic leadership produced values of 0.776 and 0.746 respectively. The combined nine-item leadership scale showed strong internal consistency, with an alpha of 0.911. Employee

engagement achieved an alpha of 0.789, while the five items measuring factors influencing employee engagement produced an alpha of 0.898.

Overall, the results indicate that the questionnaire scales had acceptable to excellent internal consistency and were sufficiently reliable for the subsequent analysis.

Reliability Analysis of Study Variables

Variable	Cronbach's α	Reliability
Transformational Leadership	0.835	Good
Leader-Member Exchange	0.776	Acceptable
Authentic- Leadership	0.746	Acceptable
Employee Engagement	0.789	Acceptable/Good
Factor Influencing Employee Engagement	0.898	Good

4.7 Validity Assessment

Validity refers to the extent to which a research instrument adequately measures the concepts it is intended to measure (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019). In this study, the questionnaire was assessed for content and construct validity.

Content validity was supported by aligning the questionnaire items with the concepts examined in the literature review and conceptual framework. The leadership questions addressed behaviours associated with transformational leadership, Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) and authentic leadership, including managerial support, communication, trust, respect and encouragement. Employee engagement was assessed using items related to enjoyment of work, effort, concentration, organisational pride, and willingness to make additional effort. Therefore, the questionnaire covered several relevant dimensions of the constructs investigated in the study.

Evidence supporting construct validity is more limited. The questionnaire items align conceptually with the leadership and engagement constructs, and the reliability analysis showed acceptable internal consistency for the proposed scales. However, reliability alone does not establish construct validity. A stronger statistical assessment would normally require techniques such as factor analysis or comparison with previously validated measurement scales (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Given the relatively small sample of 36 respondents, the findings should be interpreted with considerable caution. Consequently, the study does not claim that statistical testing confirmed construct validity. Overall, the questionnaire demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency and reasonable content validity, while the absence of formal statistical testing of construct validity is acknowledged as a limitation.

4.8 Correlation Analysis and Hypothesis Testing

Pearson's correlation analysis examined the relationships between leadership styles and employee engagement at Compass Group UK. Composite scores were calculated for transformational leadership, Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), authentic leadership and employee engagement using the relevant questionnaire items. Pearson's correlation coefficient (r) was used to determine the direction and strength of each relationship; the analysis assessed statistical significance at the 5% level ($p < .05$) (Bryman, 2016; Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

Hypothesis	Relationships	Pearson's r	p-value	Decision
H1	Transformational Leadership ↔ Employee Engagement	0.720	< .001	Supported
H2	LMX ↔ Employee Engagement	0.784	< .001	Supported
H3	Authentic Leadership ↔ Employee Engagement	0.607	< .001	Supported

The correlation identified positive and statistically significant relationships between all three leadership styles and employee engagement. Transformational leadership showed a strong positive relationship with employee engagement ($r = .720$, $p < .001$), supporting H1. This indicates that respondents reporting higher levels of transformational leadership also tended to report higher levels of employee engagement.

LMX demonstrated the strongest relationship with employee engagement ($r = .784$, $p < .001$), supporting H2. This finding suggests that positive manager–employee relationships

characterised by listening, respect and trust were particularly closely associated with employee engagement within the sample.

Authentic leadership also showed a positive and statistically significant relationship with employee engagement ($r = .607$, $p < .001$), supporting H3. Although this relationship was weaker than those observed for LMX and transformational leadership, it remained substantial and indicates that open communication, consideration of different viewpoints and consistency in managerial behaviour were associated with higher engagement.

Overall, the statistical results supported all three hypotheses. LMX produced the strongest association with employee engagement, followed by transformational leadership and authentic leadership. However, these findings demonstrate association rather than causation and should be interpreted cautiously given the relatively small sample of 36 respondents (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

4.9 Discussion of Findings

The findings indicate that leadership is associated with employee engagement within the Compass Group UK sample, although the three leadership approaches showed different levels of association. Rather than suggesting that one leadership style alone determines engagement, the results highlight the importance of different managerial behaviours and the quality of employees' experiences with their managers.

Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) showed the strongest relationship with employee engagement. This supports Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995), who emphasise trust, respect and the quality of relationships between managers and employees. This may be particularly relevant in hospitality and food-service settings, where employees often depend on their immediate managers for guidance and coordination during daily operations. For Compass Group UK, the finding suggests that positive day-to-day relationships with managers may play an important role in how employees experience their work. However, an alternative explanation is that employees who are already more motivated and engaged may also be more likely to develop positive relationships with their managers. Therefore, the direction of this relationship cannot be established from the findings.

The strong association between transformational leadership and engagement is also consistent with Bass and Riggio (2006), who highlight motivation, encouragement and

employee development. In a hospitality environment, these behaviours may be valuable because employees are required to maintain service standards while responding to customer needs and operational demands. However, employees' responses may also reflect other aspects of their working experience, meaning that the relationship cannot be attributed entirely to transformational leadership.

Authentic leadership was positively associated with engagement but showed a weaker relationship than the other two leadership approaches. This is consistent with Walumbwa et al. (2008), who emphasise openness, transparency and consistency in leadership. One possible interpretation is that employees value these qualities but place greater importance on their direct interactions and relationships with managers. Alternatively, differences in how respondents understood or experienced authentic leadership behaviours may have affected their responses.

The wider findings suggest that leadership operates alongside other workplace conditions in shaping employees' experiences. Viewed through the Job Demands–Resources Model, factors such as support and development opportunities can provide resources that help employees manage workplace demands (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008). This is particularly relevant in hospitality, where effective service often depends on cooperation, coordination and employees having appropriate support to perform their roles.

Overall, the results suggest that positive leadership and good manager–employee relationships are important aspects of engagement within the Compass Group UK sample. However, engagement is likely to be shaped by a combination of leadership, working conditions and individual experiences. The findings should therefore be interpreted as evidence of relationships between the variables rather than proof that particular leadership behaviours directly cause higher employee engagement.

4.10 Summary of Findings

This chapter presented and analysed the findings from 36 respondents at Compass Group UK. The results showed generally positive perceptions of leadership and employee engagement, while the reliability analysis demonstrated acceptable to good internal

consistency across the study measures. Hypothesis testing identified significant relationships between each of the three leadership styles and employee engagement, with LMX showing the strongest association. The findings therefore addressed the research objectives and provided the basis for the conclusions and recommendations presented in the following chapter.

CHAPTER 5

5.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study by considering the research's overall contribution in relation to the research aim and objectives. It summarises the main conclusions, presents practical recommendations for Compass Group UK, discusses the study's limitations, and identifies areas for future research.

5.2 Conclusion

This research examined the relationships between transformational leadership, Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), authentic leadership, and employee engagement within Compass Group UK. The results showed that all three leadership styles had positive and statistically significant relationships with employee engagement. Therefore, H1, H2 and H3 were supported.

In this sample, LMX showed the strongest relationship with employee engagement, highlighting the importance of positive manager-employee relationships. The findings also showed that respondents considered communication, managerial support, teamwork, fair treatment and career development important to their engagement. This suggests that, within the context of this research, employee engagement is associated with both leadership behaviours and wider workplace factors. Overall, this research achieved its aim by providing evidence of the relationships between the selected leadership styles and employee engagement within Compass Group UK. The findings provide useful insight into the leadership behaviours associated with engagement among the employees who participated in this study. However, the results show association rather than causation, and this should be considered when interpreting the research conclusions.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings of this research, several recommendations are proposed for Compass Group UK. The recommendations reflect the leadership behaviours and workplace factors that respondents identified as important to their engagement.

The findings indicate that respondents valued managerial support and development opportunities. Therefore, Compass Group UK should continue to provide leadership training that helps managers support employees, encourage their involvement and recognise their contributions. Greater attention to employee development may also strengthen positive leadership experiences within the organisation.

Respondents identified communication with managers as an important factor. Compass Group UK should therefore encourage regular communication between managers and employees through feedback sessions, team discussions and opportunities for employees to express their views. These practices may strengthen working relationships and are consistent with the principles of Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) (Graen and Uhl-Bien, 1995).

The findings also showed that respondents considered fair treatment important to employee engagement. Managers should therefore communicate decisions clearly and treat employees consistently and respectfully. Promoting transparency and integrity in managerial behaviour is also consistent with authentic leadership principles (Walumbwa et al., 2008). Finally, this research identified career development, teamwork, and recognition as relevant factors. Compass Group UK should continue to provide training and development opportunities, encourage cooperation between employees and recognise individual and team contributions. These actions may provide employees with valuable workplace resources that support engagement (Bakker and Demerouti, 2008).

5.4 Limitations of the Study

This study has several limitations. First, the final sample consisted of 36 respondents from the 70 questionnaires distributed. Although the responses provided sufficient data for the analysis undertaken, the relatively small sample limits the extent to which the findings can be generalised to the wider Compass Group UK workforce.

Second, this research used purposive sampling, meaning that participants were selected based on their relevance to the study rather than through random selection. Consequently, not every employee had an equal opportunity to participate, which may have introduced sampling bias and reduced the sample's representativeness (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

Third, the research relied on self-reported questionnaire responses. The findings therefore represent respondents' perceptions of leadership and employee engagement and may have been influenced by individual experiences, interpretation of the questions or response bias (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Finally, although correlation analysis was used to examine the relationships between leadership styles and employee engagement, correlation does not establish causality. Therefore, this research can identify the direction and strength of relationships between the variables but cannot conclude that a particular leadership style directly caused changes in employee engagement. Consequently, researchers should interpret the results within the scope of the research design and sample.

5.5 Recommendations for Future Research

Future research should include a larger and more representative sample drawn from multiple Compass Group UK locations or other organisations within the hospitality and food service industry. This would improve the generalisability of the findings and allow comparisons across different organisational settings. Future studies could also extend the statistical analysis by using regression to examine the predictive relationships between leadership styles and employee engagement, while considering other factors associated with engagement (Bryman, 2016).

Interviews or focus groups could provide richer insights into how employees experience leadership behaviours in relation to their engagement and identify factors that structured questionnaires may not fully capture (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Finally, future research could examine whether demographic factors, such as age, job role, department and employment type, are associated with differences in leadership perceptions and employee engagement. Examining these differences could provide a more detailed understanding of whether the relationships identified in this research vary according to employee characteristics.

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8. Appendix

APPLICATION FOR ETHICAL APPROVAL

RESEARCH STUDENTS

This form is to be completed by the student within **SIX** months for full-time students and **TWELVE** months for part time students, after the commencement of the research degree or following progression to Part Two of your course.

Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

This document is also available in Welsh.

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk, with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

In order for research to result in benefit and minimise risk of harm, it must be conducted ethically. A researcher may not be covered by the University's insurance if ethical approval has not been obtained prior to commencement.

The University follows the OECD Frascati manual definition of **research activity**: "creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of man, culture and society, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications". As such this covers activities undertaken by members of staff, postgraduate research students, and both taught postgraduate and undergraduate students working on dissertations/projects.

The individual undertaking the research activity is known as the "principal researcher".

Ethical approval is not required for routine audits, performance reviews, quality assurance studies, testing within normal educational requirements, and literary or artistic criticism.

Please read the notes for guidance before completing ALL sections of the form.

This form must be completed and approved prior to undertaking any research activity. Please see Checklist for details of process for different categories of application.

SECTION A: About You (Principal Researcher)

1	Full Name:	Carmela Del Tufo			
2	Tick all boxes that apply:	Member of staff:	☐	Honorary research fellow:	☐
	Undergraduate Student	☒	Taught Postgraduate Student	☐	Postgraduate Research Student
3	Institute/Academic Discipline/Centre:	IICL			
4	Campus:	London			
5	E-mail address:	2314052@student.uwtsd.ac.uk			
6	Contact Telephone Number:	07445601201			
	For students:				

7	Student Number:	2314052
8	Programme of Study:	BA (HON) Leadership and Management
9	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Md KALAM

SECTION B: Approval for Research Activity

1	Has the research activity received approval in principle? (please check the Guidance Notes as to the appropriate approval process for different levels of research by different categories of individual)	YES	☒	NO	☐
					Date
2	If Yes, please indicate source of approval (and date where known): Approval in principle must be obtained from the relevant source prior to seeking ethical approval	Research Degrees Committee	☐		
Institute Research Committee		☐			
Other (write in)		☒	11/05/20265		

SECTION C: Internal and External Ethical Guidance Materials

	Please list the core ethical guidance documents that have been referred to during the completion of this form (including any discipline-specific codes of research ethics, location-specific codes of research ethics, and also any specific ethical guidance relating to the proposed methodology). Please tick to confirm that your research proposal adheres to these codes and guidelines. You may add rows to this table if needed.	
1	UWTSD Research Ethics & Integrity Code of Practice	☒
2	UWTSD Research Data Management Policy	☒
3	<i>[List any other relevant documents here]</i>	☐

SECTION D: External Collaborative Research Activity

If there are external collaborators then you should gain consent from the contact persons to share their personal data with the university. If there are no external collaborators then leave this section blank and continue to section E.

1	Institution					
2	Contact person name					
3	Contact person e-mail address					
4	Is your research externally funded?	YES	☐	NO	☐	
5	Are you in receipt of a KESS scholarship?	YES	☐	NO	☐	
6	Are you specifically employed to undertake this research in either a paid or voluntary capacity?	Voluntary	YES	☐	NO	☐
7		Employed	YES	☐	NO	☐
8	Is the research being undertaken within an existing UWTSD Athrofa Professional Learning Partnership (APLP)?	If YES then the permission question below does not need to be answered.	YES	☐	NO	☐

9	Has permission to undertake the research has been provided by the partner organisation?	(If YES attach copy) If NO the application cannot continue	YES	☐	NO	☐
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Where research activity is carried out in collaboration with an external organisation

10	Does this organisation have its own ethics approval system?	YES	☐	NO	☐
	If Yes, please attach a copy of any final approval (or interim approval) from the organisation (this may be a copy of an email if appropriate).				

SECTION E: Details of Research Activity

1	Indicative title:	Impact of Leadership Style on employee engagement. Case study: Compass Group UK		
2	Proposed start date:	From 12 July 2026	Proposed end date:	18 August 2026
	Introduction to the Research (maximum 300 words per section) Ensure that you write for a <u>Non-Specialist Audience</u> when outlining your response to the points below: <i>Purpose of Research Activity</i> <i>Proposed Research Question</i> <i>Aims of Research Activity</i> <i>Objectives of Research Activity</i> Demonstrate, briefly, how Existing Research has informed the proposed activity and explain <i>What the research activity will add to the body of knowledge</i> <i>How it addresses an area of importance.</i>			
3	Purpose of Research Activity The purpose of this research is to examine the relationship between transformational leadership, Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), authentic leadership and employee engagement within Compass Group UK. The study aims to understand how employees’ perceptions of these leadership approaches are associated with their level of engagement and to identify workplace factors that may influence engagement. (this box should expand as you type)			
4	Research Question What leadership styles are practised by managers at Compass Group UK? What is the relationship between transformational leadership, Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), authentic leadership and employee engagement within Compass Group UK? What key factors influence with employee engagement within Compass Group UK? (this box should expand as you type)			
5	Aims of Research Activity The aims of this study are:			

5	Aims of Research Activity The aims of this study are: 1. To identify the leadership styles used by managers at Compass Group UK, with a particular focus on transformational leadership, Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), and authentic leadership. 2. To examine the relationship between these leadership styles and employee engagement within Compass Group UK. (this box should expand as you type)
6	Objectives of Research Activity To identify the leadership styles practised by managers at Compass Group UK. To examine the relationship between transformational leadership, Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), authentic leadership, and employee engagement. To identify the key factors that influence employee engagement within Compass Group UK. (this box should expand as you type)
	Proposed methods (maximum 600 words) Provide a summary of all the methods that may be used in the research activity, making it clear what specific techniques may be used. If methods other than those listed in this section are deemed appropriate later, additional ethical approval for those methods will be needed. You do not need to justify the methods here but should instead describe how you intend to collect the data necessary for you to complete your project.
7	This study adopts a positivist research philosophy, which focuses on collecting and analysing objective and measurable data to examine relationships between variables . This philosophy is appropriate because the research aims to investigate the relationship between leadership style and employee engagement using quantitative data. In line with this philosophy, the study employs a quantitative research approach to examine the impact of leadership style on employee engagement within Compass Group UK. Quantitative research involves the collection of numerical data that can be statistically analysed to identify patterns, relationships, and trends between variables . This approach is suitable because it enables the measurement of leadership styles and levels of employee engagement through structured survey responses. Primary data will be collected using a structured questionnaire distributed to employees working at Compass Group UK. The questionnaire will consist of closed-ended questions designed to measure employees' perceptions of leadership styles and their level of engagement at work. Responses will be collected using a Likert-scale format, allowing participants to indicate their level of agreement with a series of statements. The survey will be administered electronically through an online platform to facilitate efficient data collection and increase accessibility for participants. Surveys are widely used in business and management research because they enable researchers to gather data from a relatively large number of participants in a cost-effective and efficient manner. The collected data will then be analysed using statistical techniques to examine the relationship between leadership style and employee engagement. (this box should expand as you type)
	Location of research activity Identify all locations where research activity will take place.
8	London UK (this box should expand as you type)
	Research activity outside of the UK

	Research activity outside of the UK If research activity will take place overseas, you are responsible for ensuring that local ethical considerations are complied with and that the relevant permissions are sought. Specify any local guidelines (e.g. from local professional associations/learned societies/universities) that exist and whether these involve any ethical stipulations beyond those usual in the UK (provide details of any licenses or permissions required). Also specify whether there are any specific ethical issues raised by the local context in which the research activity is taking place, for example, particular cultural and/or legal sensitivities or vulnerabilities of participants. If you live in the country where you will do the research then please state this.
9	N/A <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>

10	Use of documentation not in the public domain: Are any documents NOT publicly available?	NO ☒	YES ☐
11	If Yes, please provide details here of how you will gain access to specific documentation that is not in the public domain and that this is in accordance with the current data protection law of the country in question and that of England and Wales. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

	Does your research relate to one or more of the seven aims of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015?	YES	NO
12	A prosperous Wales	☐	☒
13	A resilient Wales	☐	☒
14	A healthier Wales	☐	☒
15	A more equal Wales	☐	☒
16	A Wales of cohesive communities	☐	☒
17	A Wales of vibrant culture and thriving Welsh language	☐	☒
18	A globally responsible Wales	☐	☒
19	If YES to any of the above, please give details:		
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

SECTION F: Scope of Research Activity

	Will the research activity include:	YES	NO
1	Use of a questionnaire or similar research instrument?	☒	☐
2	Use of interviews?	☐	☒
3	Use of focus groups?	☒	☐

6	Use of computer-generated log files?	☐	☒
7	Participant observation with their knowledge?	☒	☐
8	Participant observation without their knowledge?	☐	☒
9	Access to personal or confidential information without the participants' specific consent?	☐	☒
10	Administration of any questions, test stimuli, presentation that may be experienced as physically, mentally or emotionally harmful / offensive?	☐	☒
11	Performance of any acts which may cause embarrassment or affect self-esteem?	☐	☒
12	Investigation of participants involved in illegal activities?	☐	☒
13	Use of procedures that involve deception?	☐	☒
14	Administration of any substance, agent or placebo?	☐	☒
15	Working with live vertebrate animals?	☐	☒
16	Procedures that may have a negative impact on the environment?	☐	☐
17	Other primary data collection methods. Please indicate the type of data collection method(s) below.	☐	☐
	Details of any other primary data collection method: Survey (this box should expand as you type)		

If NO to every question, then the research activity is (ethically) low risk and **may** be exempt from **some** of the following sections (please refer to Guidance Notes).

If YES to any question, then no research activity should be undertaken until full ethical approval has been obtained.

SECTION G: Intended Participants

If there are no participants then do not complete this section, but go directly to section H.

	Who are the intended participants:	YES	NO
1	Students or staff at the University?	☐	☒
2	Adults (over the age of 18 and competent to give consent)?	☒	☐
3	Vulnerable adults?	☐	☒
4	Children and Young People under the age of 18? (Consent from Parent, Carer or Guardian will be required)	☐	☒
5	Prisoners?	☐	☒
6	Young offenders?	☐	☒
7	Those who could be considered to have a particularly dependent relationship with the investigator or a gatekeeper?	☐	☒
8	People engaged in illegal activities?	☐	☒
9	Others. Please indicate the participants below, and specifically any group who may be unable to give consent.	☐	☒
	Details of any other participant groups:		

	Details of any other participant groups:		
	(this box should expand as you type)		

	Participant numbers and source - Provide an estimate of the expected number of participants. How will you identify participants and how will they be recruited?	
10	How many participants are expected?	70 (this box should expand as you type)
11	Who will the participants be?	All the Compass Group UK employees (this box should expand as you type)
12	The study will focus on employees, supervisors and managers currently working at Compass Group UK because they have relevant experience of leadership practices and employee engagement within the organisation. Potential participants will be approached through the workplace and	The study will focus on employees, supervisors and managers currently working at Compass Group UK because they have relevant experience of leadership practices and employee engagement within the organisation.

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
13	Will you describe the main research procedures to participants in advance, so that they are informed about what to expect?	☒	☐	☐
14	Will you tell participants that their participation is voluntary?	☒	☐	☐
15	Will you obtain written consent for participation?	☒	☐	☐
16	Will you explain to participants that refusal to participate in the research will not affect their treatment or education (if relevant)?	☐	☐	☒
17	If the research is observational, will you ask participants for their consent to being observed?	☐	☒	☐
18	Will you tell participants that they may withdraw from the research at any time and for any reason?	☒	☐	☐
19	With questionnaires, will you give participants the option of omitting questions they do not want to answer?	☐	☐	☒
20	Will you tell participants that their data will be treated with full confidentiality and that, if published, it will not be identifiable as theirs?	☒	☐	☐
21	Will you debrief participants at the end of their participation, in a way appropriate to the type of research undertaken?	☐	☒	☐
22	If NO to any of above questions, please give an explanation			
	(this box should expand as you type)			

	Information for participants:	YES	NO	N/A
24	Will participants be paid?	☐	☒	☐
25	Is specialist electrical or other equipment to be used with participants?	☐	☒	☐

27	Will the research activity involve deliberately misleading participants in any way, or the partial or full concealment of the specific study aims?	☐	☒	☐
28	If YES to any question, please provide full details			
	(this box should expand as you type)			

SECTION H: Anticipated Risks

	Outline any anticipated risks that may adversely affect any of the participants, the researchers and/or the University, and the steps that will be taken to address them. If you have completed a full risk assessment (for example as required by a laboratory, or external research collaborator) you may append that to this form.		
1	Full risk assessment completed and appended?	Yes	☐
		No	☐
2	Risks to participants For example: sector-specific health & safety, emotional distress, financial disclosure, physical harm, transfer of personal data, sensitive organisational information		
	Risk to participants: (this box should expand as you type)	How you will mitigate the risk to participants: (this box should expand as you type)	
3	If research activity may include sensitive, embarrassing or upsetting topics (e.g. sexual activity, drug use) or issues likely to disclose information requiring further action (e.g. criminal activity), give details of the procedures to deal with these issues, including any support/advice (e.g. helpline numbers) to be offered to participants. Note that where applicable, consent procedures should make it clear that if something potentially or actually illegal is discovered in the course of a project, it may need to be disclosed to the proper authorities		
	(this box should expand as you type)		
4	Risks to the investigator For example: personal health & safety, physical harm, emotional distress, risk of accusation of harm/impropriety, conflict of interest		
	Risk to the investigator: (this box should expand as you type)	How you will mitigate the risk to the investigator: (this box should expand as you type)	
5	University/institutional risks For example: adverse publicity, financial loss, data protection		
	Risk to the University: (this box should expand as you type)	How you will mitigate the risk to the University: (this box should expand as you type)	
6	Environmental risks For example: accidental spillage of pollutants, damage to local ecosystems		
	Risk to the environment: (this box should expand as you type)	How you will mitigate the risk to environment: (this box should expand as you type)	

	Disclosure and Barring Service			
	If the research activity involves children or vulnerable adults, a Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) certificate must be obtained before any contact with such participants.	YES	NO	N/A
7	Does your research require you to hold a current DBS Certificate?	☐	☒	☐
8	If YES, please give the certificate number. If the certificate number is not available please write "Pending"; in this case any ethical approval will be subject to providing the appropriate certificate number.			

SECTION I: Feedback, Consent and Confidentiality

1	Feedback What de-briefing and feedback will be provided to participants, how will this be done and when? Participants will be provided with a debriefing statement immediately after completing the survey. The debriefing information will thank them for their participation, explain the purpose of the research in more detail, and remind them that their responses will remain confidential and anonymous. Participants will also be informed that they have the right to withdraw their data within a specified period after participation, where applicable. Contact details of the researcher will be provided so that participants can ask questions or request further information about the study. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
2	Informed consent Describe the arrangements to inform potential participants, before providing consent, of what is involved in participating. Describe the arrangements for participants to provide full consent before data collection begins. If gaining consent in this way is inappropriate, explain how consent will be obtained and recorded in accordance with prevailing data protection legislation. Before taking part in the study, potential participants will be provided with a Participant Information Sheet explaining the purpose of the research, the procedures involved, and what participation will require. The information sheet will explain that participation is voluntary, that participants may choose not to answer any question, and that they have the right to withdraw from the study at any time before the data is analysed without any negative consequences. Participants will also be informed about how their data will be collected, stored, protected, and used for academic purposes only. The information sheet will outline the measures taken to ensure confidentiality and anonymity in accordance with the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Before accessing the survey questionnaire, participants will be required to provide informed consent by completing an electronic consent form. This form will include statements confirming that they have read and understood the participant information, are aware of their rights as participants, and voluntarily agree to take part in the research. Data collection will only begin once consent has been provided. Records of consent will be securely stored alongside the research data and retained in accordance with university ethical guidelines and data protection requirements. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
3	Confidentiality / Anonymity Set out how anonymity of participants and confidentiality will be ensured in any outputs. If anonymity is not being offered, explain why this is the case. The anonymity and confidentiality of all participants will be protected throughout the research process. Participants will not be asked to provide personal identifiers such as their names,

	The anonymity and confidentiality of all participants will be protected throughout the research process. Participants will not be asked to provide personal identifiers such as their names, employee identification numbers, or specific workplace locations within Compass Group UK. Survey responses will therefore be collected anonymously wherever possible. All data collected will be treated as confidential and used solely for academic research purposes. Only the researcher and academic supervisor will have access to the research data. The findings will be reported in an aggregated form, meaning that individual responses cannot be identified in any reports, presentations, or publications arising from the study. Electronic data will be stored securely on password-protected devices and in accordance with the requirements of the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) and the Data Protection Act 2018. Any data that could potentially identify participants will be removed during the analysis process. The data will be retained for the period required by university regulations and then securely deleted. These measures ensure that participants can provide honest responses without concern that their identity or individual views will be disclosed to their employer or any third party. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>
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SECTION J: Data Protection and Storage

	Does the research activity involve personal data (as defined by the General Data Protection Regulation 2016 "GDPR" and the Data Protection Act 2018 "DPA")?	YES	NO
1	"Personal data" means any information relating to an identified or identifiable natural person ('data subject'). An identifiable natural person is one who can be identified, directly or indirectly, in particular by reference to an identifier such as a name, an identification number, location data, an online identifier or to one or more factors specific to the physical, physiological, genetic, mental, economic, cultural or social identity of that natural person. Any video or audio recordings of participants is considered to be personal data.	☐	☒
	If YES, provide a description of the data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
2	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
	Does it involve special category data (as defined by the GDPR)?	YES	NO
3	"Special category data" means sensitive personal data consisting of information as to the data subjects' – (a) racial or ethnic origin, (b) political opinions, (c) religious beliefs or other beliefs of a similar nature, (d) membership of a trade union (within the meaning of the Trade Union and Labour Relations (Consolidation) Act 1992), (e) physical or mental health or condition, (f) sexual life, (g) genetics, (h) biometric data (as used for ID purposes).	☐	☒
	If YES, provide a description of the special category data and explain why this data needs to be collected:		
4	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

5	Manual files (i.e. in paper form)?	☐	☒
6	University computers?	☒	☐
7	Private company computers?	☐	☒
8	Home or other personal computers?	☒	☐
9	Laptop computers/ CDs/ Portable disk-drives/ memory sticks?	☐	☒
10	"Cloud" storage or websites?	☐	☒
11	Other – specify:	☐	☒
12	For all stored data, explain the measures in place to ensure the security of the data collected, data confidentiality, including details of backup procedures, password protection, encryption, anonymisation and pseudonymisation:		
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		

	Data Protection		
	Will the research activity involve any of the following activities:	YES	NO
13	Electronic transfer of data in any form?	☐	☒
14	Sharing of data with others at the University outside of the immediate research team?	☐	☒
15	Sharing of data with other organisations?	☐	☒
16	Export of data outside the UK or importing of data from outside the UK?	☐	☒
17	Use of personal addresses, postcodes, faxes, emails or telephone numbers?	☐	☒
18	Publication of data that might allow identification of individuals?	☐	☒
19	Use of data management system?	☐	☒
20	Data archiving?	☐	☒
21	If YES to any question, please provide full details, explaining how this will be conducted in accordance with the GDPR and Data Protection Act (2018) (and any international equivalents, where appropriate):		
	<i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
22	List all who will have access to the data generated by the research activity:		
	Access to the data generated by this research will be restricted to the following individuals: 1. The researchers – responsible for collecting ,storing, analysing and reporting the data. 2. The Academic supervisor -may access the data for the purpose of academic supervision, guidance, and quality assurance. 3. The University (if required) -authorised university staff or examiners may have access to the data for assessment, or verification purposes in accordance with University regulation. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
23	List who will have control of, and act as custodian(s) for, data generated by the research activity:		
	1. Researchers (Student) – Primary data custodian. 2. Academic Supervisor - Supervisory access and oversight.		

	1. Researchers (Student) – Primary data custodian. 2. Academic Supervisor - Supervisory access and oversight. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
24	Give details of data storage arrangements, including security measures in place to protect the data, where data will be stored, how long for, and in what form. Will data be archived – if so how and if not why not. All research data will be stored electronically on a password-protected computer and/or secure university storage. Access will be limited to the researcher and academic supervisor. Survey responses will be anonymised, and any identifying information will be removed. Data will be stored securely in accordance with the UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018. The data will be retained for the period required by university regulations and then permanently deleted. The data will not be publicly archived as the study is for academic purposes only and involves confidential participant information. <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
25	Please indicate if your data will be stored in the UWTSD Research Data Repository (see https://researchdata.uwtsd.ac.uk/). If so please explain. <i>(Most relevant to academic staff)</i> "No. This is a student research project, and the data will not be deposited in the UWTSD Research Data Repository." <i>(this box should expand as you type)</i>		
26	Confirm that you have read the UWTSD guidance on data management (see https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/library/research-data-management/)	YES	☒
27	Confirm that you are aware that you need to keep all data until after your research has completed or the end of your funding	YES	☒

SECTION K: Declaration

	The information which I have provided is correct and complete to the best of my knowledge. I have attempted to identify any risks and issues related to the research activity and acknowledge my obligations and the rights of the participants.	
	In submitting this application I hereby confirm that I undertake to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice which is published on the website: https://www.uwtsd.ac.uk/research/research-ethics/	
1	Signature of applicant:	Carmela Del Tufo Date:23/06/2026

For STUDENT Submissions:

2	Director of Studies/Supervisor:	Date:
3	Signature:	

For STAFF Submissions:

4	Academic Director/ Assistant Dean:	Date:
5	Signature:	

Checklist: Please complete the checklist below to ensure that you have completed the form according to the guidelines and attached any required documentation:

☒	I have read the guidance notes supplied before completing the form.
☒	I have completed ALL RELEVANT sections of the form in full.
☒	I confirm that the research activity has received approval in principle
☒	I have attached a copy of final/interim approval from external organisation (where appropriate)
☐	I have attached a full risk assessment (where appropriate) ONLY TICK IF YOU HAVE ATTACHED A FULL RISK ASSESSMENT
☒	I understand that it is my responsibility to ensure that the above named research activity will meet the University's Research Ethics and Integrity Code of Practice.
☒	I understand that before commencing data collection all documents aimed at respondents (including information sheets, consent forms, questionnaires, interview schedules etc.) must be confirmed by the DoS/Supervisor, module tutor or Academic Director.

RESEARCH STUDENTS ONLY

Once complete, submit this form via the **MyTSD Doctoral College Portal** at (<https://mytsd.uwtsd.ac.uk>).

RESEARCH STAFF ONLY

All communications relating to this application during its processing must be in writing and emailed to pgresearch@uwtsd.ac.uk , with the title 'Ethical Approval' followed by your name.

STUDENTS ON UNDERGRADUATE OR TAUGHT MASTERS PROGRAMMES should submit this form (and receive the outcome) via systems explained to you by the supervisor/module leader.

Element 2

Process Reflection (Gibbs' Reflective Cycle)

Research Process Reflection

This reflection uses Gibbs' Reflective Cycle (1988) to evaluate my experience of conducting this research project on the relationships between transformational leadership, Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), authentic leadership and employee engagement within Compass Group UK. Gibbs' model provides a structured approach to reflection through six stages: description, feelings, evaluation, analysis, conclusion and action plan (Gibbs, 1988).

Description

The research process involved selecting and refining the research topic, reviewing relevant academic literature, developing the research aim, objectives and hypotheses, designing a quantitative questionnaire, collecting data from employees, supervisors and managers at Compass Group UK, and analysing the findings. The analysis included descriptive statistics, reliability assessment and Pearson's correlation analysis to examine the relationships between the selected leadership styles and employee engagement.

One initial challenge was narrowing the research focus and ensuring the research objectives and hypotheses clearly aligned with the topic. I also had to ensure that the questionnaire adequately addressed transformational leadership, LMX, authentic leadership and employee engagement. I distributed 70 questionnaires, of which 36 were completed and returned.

Feelings

At the beginning of the research, I felt uncertain about conducting an independent research project, particularly when designing the questionnaire and deciding how I should analyse the data. I was also concerned about obtaining enough responses within the available data-collection period and ensuring that the research met the required academic standards. As the research progressed, I became more confident. Receiving 36 completed questionnaires allowed me to proceed with the analysis, although I recognised the limitations associated with the relatively small sample. Completing the statistical analysis and interpreting the results also increased my confidence in working with quantitative data and connecting my findings to the literature.

Evaluation

One positive aspect of the research process was collecting sufficient data to address the research aim and objectives. The questionnaire generated useful information about

respondents' perceptions of leadership and employee engagement, while the reliability analysis demonstrated satisfactory internal consistency across the study variables. Pearson's correlation analysis also enabled me to test the three hypotheses and identify positive and statistically significant relationships between the selected leadership styles and employee engagement.

However, the research also presented challenges. The final sample of 36 respondents limited the generalisability of the findings, and purposive sampling meant the sample could not be considered fully representative of the wider Compass Group UK workforce. I also found time management challenging because completing the literature review, collecting data, analysing the results and writing the dissertation required careful organisation.

Analysis

Completing this research strengthened my understanding of the importance of aligning the literature review, research objectives, methodology and data analysis. I learned that academic research requires more than describing previous studies; it also requires critically evaluating differences, limitations, and gaps in the existing literature.

The statistical analysis was another important learning experience. Using Pearson's correlation enabled me to examine the direction and strength of the relationships between leadership styles and employee engagement. However, I learned that a statistically significant correlation shows an association, not causation. This helped me understand the importance of interpreting statistical findings carefully and avoiding conclusions that go beyond what the research design can support (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 2019).

The research process also increased my awareness of reliability and validity. Conducting Cronbach's alpha analysis helped me understand the importance of assessing the internal consistency of questionnaire scales. At the same time, I recognised that reliability does not automatically establish construct validity and that the relatively small sample limited my ability to assess validity statistically.

Furthermore, conducting the research strengthened my understanding of ethical responsibilities. Maintaining confidentiality and anonymity, obtaining informed consent, ensuring voluntary participation and presenting the findings objectively were important throughout the research process (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

Conclusion

Reflecting on the overall experience, this research improved my knowledge of leadership, employee engagement and quantitative business research. It also strengthened my skills in critical thinking, academic writing, questionnaire design, statistical analysis and interpretation.

Although I faced challenges with sample size, time management, and statistical analysis, addressing them increased my confidence in conducting independent academic research. I also developed a clearer understanding of the importance of recognising my research limitations rather than drawing conclusions not supported by the evidence. These skills will be valuable in both future academic work and my professional development.

Action Plan

If I were to undertake a similar research project in the future, I would begin the literature review and data-collection process earlier to allow more time to collect responses, analyse the data, and critically evaluate the findings. I would also aim to recruit a larger and more representative sample, potentially across multiple locations, to improve the generalisability of the results.

I would further develop my quantitative research skills by learning to apply advanced statistical techniques, particularly regression analysis, to examine predictive relationships while accounting for other factors associated with employee engagement. I would also use a mixed-methods approach that combines questionnaires with interviews or focus groups to understand better employees' experiences that numerical data may not fully capture.

Overall, the experience has shown me the importance of careful planning, critical evaluation, appropriate statistical analysis, and realistic interpretation of research findings. I would apply these lessons to improve the design, analysis and management of future research projects.

RESEARCH POSTER



Student: Carmela Del Tufo
Student ID: 2314052
Module Name: Independent Project



Programme: BA (Hons) Leadership and Management Skills for Workplace
Supervisor: Jean Wang



INTRODUCTION

- Leadership shapes motivated, committed and engaged employees.
- Transformational leadership, LMX and authentic leadership support engagement.
- Employee engagement drives performance, retention and wellbeing, especially in hospitality.
- This study examines leadership styles and factors linked to engagement at Compass Group UK.



METHODOLOGY

- Quantitative, positivist, deductive approach.
- Structured questionnaire for employees, supervisors and managers.
- Purposive sampling.
- Data analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics.



DATA ANALYSIS

- Questionnaire responses coded in IBM SPSS Statistics.
- Descriptive statistics: frequencies, percentages, means, standard deviations.
- Reliability tested using Cronbach's alpha.
- Pearson's correlation tested relationships at 5% level ($p < .05$).



OBJECTIVE

- Identify the leadership styles practised by managers at Compass Group UK.
- Examine the relationships between transformational leadership, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), authentic leadership and employee engagement.
- Identify the main workplace factors influencing employee engagement at Compass Group UK.



RESEARCH FINDING/RESULT



Relationships: All three leadership styles had positive, statistically significant relationships with employee engagement.



Strongest result: LMX showed the strongest relationship ($r = .784$), followed by transformational ($r = .720$) and authentic leadership ($r = .607$), all with $p < .001$.



Hypotheses: H1, H2 and H3 were supported.



Workplace factors: Communication, managerial support, teamwork, fair treatment and career development were important for engagement.



Conclusion: Supportive leadership and positive manager-employee relationships were associated with higher engagement at Compass Group UK.



RESULT



Positive relationships with engagement



LMX strongest ($r = .784$)



H1, H2, H3 supported



Higher engagement with supportive leadership