



INFLUENCE OF LEADERSHIP STYLES ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN MARSABIT COUNTY KENYA

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ABSTRACT

Employees who are engaged in their work and committed to their organizations give companies crucial competitive advantages. A discrepancy exists between the perceived importance of engagement and the actual level of engagement in organizations today. Leadership styles are thought to influence employee engagement. Therefore this study was to investigate the influence of leadership styles on employee engagement in Marsabit County, Kenya. The study was guided by the following specific objectives: to establish the extent in which transformational leadership style influence employee engagement in Marsabit County, Kenya, To establish how transactional leadership style influences employee engagement in Marsabit County, Kenya. The study took an estimated period of six months from April, 2024 to September, 2024. The study adopted a descriptive research design. The target population consisted of the County Wards Management, Marsabit County Employees and Community Leaders from Marsabit County which was 305 respondents, the total number of respondents in this study was 173 and since the sample was drawn from all cadres of respondents, the population was regarded homogeneous. The sampling technique employed was stratified random sampling. Primary data was gathered directly from respondents and for this study the researcher used a questionnaire. Descriptive analysis was used; this included the use of weighted means, standard deviation, relative frequencies and percentages. Descriptive statistics was used to summarize the data. This included percentages and frequencies. Tables and other graphical presentations were used appropriately to present the data that was collected for ease of understanding and analysis. The findings regarding the influence of transformational leadership style on employee engagement in Marsabit County, Kenya, align with existing literature that emphasizes the positive relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement. The analysis of transactional leadership style's influence on employee engagement in Marsabit County, Kenya, reveals insights that resonate with existing literature. It is recommended that organizations invest in leadership development programs focused on cultivating transformational qualities among leaders. It is also recommended that organizations integrate elements of transformational leadership into their practices. Future research on the influence of leadership styles on employee engagement in Marsabit County, Kenya, should explore the intersection of cultural dynamics and leadership effectiveness.

Key Words: Leadership Styles, Employee Engagement, Transformational Leadership Style, Transactional Leadership Style, Marsabit County

Background of the Study

Employees are very important inputs in the production process and service delivery in any given sector. Their skills, roles and satisfaction at the place of work influence the competitive edge of the firm within the industry. For employees to play their part effectively, it is important that they are satisfied, motivated and managed in a way that enhances their level of engagement with the employer. Firms need to create conducive working environment and institute policies which support employee engagement. The extent to which members of the organization contribute in harnessing the resources of an organization equally depends on how well the managers or leaders of the organization understand and adopt appropriate leadership style in performing their roles as managers and leaders. Thus efficiency in resource mobilization, allocation, utilization and enhancement of organizational productivity depends, to a large extent, on leadership styles among other factors (Chuang, 2020).

Employee engagement is a matter that arouses concern to leaders and managers due to its influence on organizational wellbeing (Welch, 2021). It is now recognized that human capital is a source of competitive advantage in many cases over and above technology and finance (Macey, Schneider, Barbera, & Young, 2021). Technology has quickly reduced or eliminated many operational sources of competitive advantage because it is conveniently available to as many as can afford it. The focus is increasingly shifting to human capital as an avenue to competitive advantage that is difficult to imitate. In addition, this decade has witnessed enormous increase in layoffs with the intention of “doing more with less” (Macey *et al.*, 2021). In the current environment of increasing global competition and slower growth prospects, raising employee engagement is seen as a key strategy for organizational success. This is key in enhancing employee engagement especially when trying to improve performance with fewer employees and dollars (Datche & Mukulu, 2020).

Mazzarella and Smith (2019) describe leadership style as the manner a leader leads, which is reflected in some of the things managers do which include: how they communicate leadership, exercise power and authority and the effect these have on staff. Based on the above definition, leadership style may be described as the way a leader influences his/her followers either by commanding or motivating them to achieve the set goals. Owens (2019) opines that leadership style is determined by what the manager does to motivate his/her subordinates to put in their best to accomplish the set mission and vision.

Transactional Style: Transactional leaders focus mainly on the physical and the security needs of subordinates. The relationship that evolves between the leader and the follower is based on bargaining exchange or reward systems (Bass & Avolio, 2018).

Transformational Style: Transformational leaders encourage subordinates to put in extra effort and to go beyond what they (subordinates) expected before (Burns, 2018). The subordinates of transformational leaders feel trust, admiration, loyalty, and respect toward leaders and are motivated to perform extra-role behaviors (Bass, 2020; Katz & Kahn, 2018).

Statement of the Problem

Robinson *et al.*, (2019) argues that there is very little academic and empirical research on employee engagement, a topic that has become so popular. While engagement is still a relatively new area of research, it has been discovered that engagement considerably predicted job satisfaction and employee commitment to the organization (Saks, 2021). Soieb, Othman and D’Silva (2018) state that in recent years, employee engagement has become a topic that keeps coming up and often debated by top management in both the private and public sector. Townsend and Gebhardt, (2018) have specifically identified that to increase the level of employee engagement, effective leadership has been acknowledged as an essential prerequisite and even demonstrates a possible link to organization performance.

Although there is a growing body of literature investigating employee engagement, scholars have noted that academic research lags behind practitioner developments and this is particularly notable with respect to the role of leadership styles in employee engagement (Macey & Schneider, 2018; Robinson et al., 2019). While there has been initial research on the relationship of leadership dimensions with engagement, this literature is limited in that measures of engagement have not been provided for scrutiny (Xu & Thomas, 2021).

Although research has been carried out on employee engagement in the United States public sector and worldwide (Crabtree & Robison, 2018; Hoffman & Tschida, 2022), no research has been conducted concerning the effects of leadership styles on employee engagement in Marsabit County in Kenya, thus the need for this research study to be carried out. In highlighting the effects of leadership styles on employee engagement, this study aims to draw the managers and researchers attention to the importance of the relationship between leadership styles and employee engagement within the County governments, which ultimately affect job and organizational performance and job and organizational commitment.

Objectives of the Study

The general objective of this research was to investigate the influence of leadership styles on employee engagement in Marsabit County, Kenya.

The study was guided by the following specific objectives:

- i. To establish the extent in which transformational leadership style influence employee engagement in Marsabit County, Kenya.
- ii. To establish how transactional leadership style influences employee engagement in Marsabit County, Kenya.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Theoretical Review

The Transformational Leadership Theory

The transformational leadership theory was originally initiated by Burns (1978) by distinguishing between ordinary (*transactional*) leaders, who bartered tangible rewards for the work and loyalty of followers, and extraordinary (transformational) leaders who engaged with followers, paid attention to higher order intrinsic needs, and increased awareness in relation to the importance of particular outcomes and new ways of how such outcomes could be attained. Transformational leaders inspire followers to modify their expectations, perceptions and motivation to work which results in the attainment of organizational goals.

Bass (1985) expanded the idea of transformational leadership when he disagreed with Burns' notion of transactional and transformational leadership as opposites on a continuum. He was of the opinion that the two are separate concepts and that good leaders display characteristics of both (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Bass therefore expanded upon Burns original ideas and developed what is today referred to as Bass' Transformational Leadership Theory. According to him, transformational leadership can be defined depending on the impact such leaders will have on followers. Under certain conditions, such leaders help their followers to rise above their own self-interests and offer extra effort for purposes of achieving the organization's mission (Bass, 1985).

According to Bass (1990), transformational leadership takes place when leaders broaden and lift the concerns of their followers to higher levels, make them understand and be willing to agree with and welcome the reason why their organization exists. Transformational leadership promotes capacity development for the employees and brings higher levels of personal commitment amongst them to their jobs and organization goals. Transformational leadership characterized by four elements namely; idealized influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration (Bass, 1985). Such leaders devote a

lot of energy to leading their employees and also value and respect the gifts and abilities of their workers. As a result, transformational leaders earn trust, respect and admiration from their followers. Transformational leadership theory suggests that leaders over and over again look for ways of engaging their followers.

However, despite the fact that empirical research supports the idea that transformational leadership positively influences follower and organizational performance (Diaz-Saenz, 2011), a number of scholars criticize it (Beyer, 1999; Hunt, 1999; Yukl, 1999; Yukl, 2011). For example, Yukl (1999) noted that the underlying mechanism through which transformational leaders exercise influence at work was not clear and that little empirical work existed examining the effect of transformational leadership on work groups, teams, or organizations. He also argued that there was an overlap between the constructs of idealized influence and inspirational motivation as noted by Hunt (1999) and Yukl (1999).

Transactional Leadership Theory

Transactional leadership is founded on the traditional, bureaucratic authority and legitimacy where followers get certain valued outcomes upon acting in accordance with the wishes of their leader. These exchanges allow leaders to accomplish their performance objectives, complete required tasks, maintain the current organizational situation, motivate followers through contractual agreement, direct behavior of followers toward achievement of established goals, emphasize extrinsic rewards, avoid unnecessary risks, and focus on improve organizational efficiency (Jim Allen McCleskey, 2014). Burns (1978) first carried out a study on transactional leadership which indicated that transactional leaders are those who want to motivate followers through processes and actions that attract or appeal to their self-interests. Bass (1985) conceptualized that transactional leadership results in followers meeting expectations placed on them, upon which their end of bargain is fulfilled leading to their being rewarded accordingly.

The relationship between leader and follower in transactional leadership is based on a number of implicit bargains, explaining of expectations for role clarification purposes, and assignments and task-oriented goals. The transactional leader assists followers acquire the skills and experience to efficiently and effectively do what is expected of them in a specific task and in their specified follower role. The leaders assist followers accomplish tasks by acting as role models in attitudes and behaviors that promote the efficient and effective completion of the task given. Transactional leaders thus concentrate their energies on task completion and compliance and depend on organizational rewards and punishments to manipulate employee performance (Trott & Windsor, 1999).

Transactional leadership is usually illustrated by theories like management by exception and contingent rewards (Barling, Slater, & Kelvin Kelloy, 2000). However, the transactional leadership works if the leader is interested in finding answers to questions like whether the followers are properly equipped to propel the organization forward and their individual roles in it, whether they are aware of what to do, what they do, and why they do it, and whether they find meaning in their work (Wagner & Harter, 2006). Such questions are necessary in getting to know and appreciate how leadership affects the development of employee engagement.

Transactional leadership theory has been criticized as one that applies a one-size-fits-all universal approach to leadership theory construction and thus disregards contextual factors related organizational challenges (Yukl, 2011; Yukl & Mahsud, 2010). Additionally, transactional leaders are concerned with processes rather than forward-thinking ideas. This leadership is applied to the lower-level needs and is managerial in style. This is probably why Burns (1978) argued that transactional leadership practices lead followers to short-term relationships of exchange which tend toward temporary exchanges of gratification that are shallow and often create resentments between the participants. Transactional leaders tend to think inside the box when solving problems. Transactional leadership is primarily passive. The

behaviours most associated with this type of leadership are establishing the criteria for rewarding followers (contingent reward) and maintaining the status quo (management by exception) (Odumeru & Ogbonna, 2013).

Empirical Review

Influence of Transformational Leadership Style on Employee Engagement

Transformational leadership is characterized by charismatic, inspirational and motivational aspects of a leader. Followers have complete faith in charismatic leaders, feel proud to be associated with them, and trust their capacity to overcome any obstacle. Inspirational leadership involves the uptake and heightening of motivation among followers. Barbuto (2020) defines transformation leadership as inspiring changing mind of the workers to work towards a given goal. Transformational leaders garner trust, respect and admiration from the followers.

Akeke (2021) observed that a transformational leader is one that has integrity, defines clear goals, encourages steps to clear communication, coherently expresses a vision and sets a good example. This type of a leader is inspirational and encourages, motivates, and supports employees, often recognizing and rewarding people for their good work. Transformational leaders combine the best practices of most other leadership styles and bring out the best in their employees because they create a conducive work environment and are trusted (Bass, 2020). In practice, they are supported by transactional leaders who work as managers, making sure tasks are accomplished and the job gets done. The transformational leadership style is one of the most popular leadership style today and can be applied to a wide range of business set ups (Mokhber, bin Wan Ismail & Vakilbashi, 2020) established four primary behaviors that constitute transformational leadership: idealized influence (charismatic influence), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration.

Idealized Influence

This ideology system expects leaders to gain great compatibility of his/her followers without settling on the assets and leader support required to achieve explicit undertaking specify by the firm. In this manner employees acknowledge freely the requests and mandates given by their leader paying little mind to the difficulties in question (Chu & Lai, 2021). This ideology supposedly is a mirror with regards to connection of transformational leadership and by and large firm performance. Anyway this isn't the situation, as it is observed to just influence certain regions of business achievement, for example, representative duty and job satisfaction in order to realize a feeling of inspiration at work (Chen, 2019). Henceforth, the need to separate how idealized influence impacts the results of different firms is fundamental. Therefore, our study intends to show how idealized influence which is a subset of transformational leadership whether it has an influence on the employee engagement in the County governments in Kenya, which we shall get to see at the end of this study.

Sundi (2018) in his study utilized the exploratory way to deal with research on the impacts of transformational leadership on employee engagement in Uganda. The example comprised of 170 respondents. His findings demonstrated that there is a positive and critical impact of idealized effect on employee engagement. This was additionally upheld by an study done by Chou, Jiang and Wang (2019) where they found that without a doubt administrators ought to show progressively charming practices to upgrade better performance among the subordinates and in groups they have been acclimatized into. The study recommended that further investigation is required to explore the impact that leadership behavior contributes to the performance of project teams. Therefore, it is because of such findings that we are carrying out this study so as to get the clear picture of whether transformational leadership style influences on the employee engagement in the County governments in Kenya.

Datche and Mukulu (2020) analyzed the impacts of transformational leadership on the commitment of civil service employees in Kenya. The data was gathered from a sample size of 252 government workers. The specialists utilized cross-sectional overview and stratified random sampling. They issued structured questionnaire to the respondents. Regression and ANOVA were utilized for investigation. The outcomes uncover that in spite of the fact that transformational leadership is decidedly identified with worker commitment when all is said and done, however there was a negative connection between glorified impact and employee engagement. This investigation was on the civil service employees and not in private sector and thus not disclosing to us whether similar findings could be generalized to County governments in Kenya. The vast majority of the studies discovered that idealized influence had a positive noteworthy relationship with employee engagement. This is a good finding which shows that our study is relevant and thus there is an impact that idealized influence has on performance and therefore, we shall have the study specifically aligned to the employee engagement in the County governments in Kenya.

Idealized influence is the conduct related with leaders of charming qualities as they get their workers to respect their magnetic character and thusly get the enthusiasm to take after their leaders (Bass & Riggio, 2021). They additionally are tutors and good examples of their followers at work places. The followers will in general appreciate the charisma in different leaders and consequently these leaders' faces less resistance during their line of obligation as leaders from their followers since their adherents trust and regard their leaders (Renjith, Renu & George, 2020). When followers trust their leaders, this is a gain on the organization because whatever the leaders say, then my study will get to find out whether employees having trust on the leaders which is the aim of transformational leadership style has an influence on the employee engagement in the County governments in Kenya.

Inspirational Motivation

As indicated by Kent, Crotts, and Azziz (2021), inspirational motivation helps leaders to stay determined to accomplish the objectives and goals of the organizations without being diverted by any conditions that may emerge along the way. Yukl (2020) saw inspirational motivation practices as a method for communication which includes the utilization of symbols to attract the follower efforts, and trim wanted character. Banjeri and Krishnan (2020) contends inspirational motivation as morals, expressing that leaders will in general settle on ethical decisions when they show worry for business and follower objectives and motivation respectively. In inspiring their workforce, the administration of a firm can build goodwill at the group level by making a business culture that is friendly to employees. A worker friendly firm can move both inspiration and business loyalty. Proper leadership has the duty of enhancing inspiring motivation and improving job satisfaction. In their study, Salanova and Kirmanen (2020) clarify that an individual can be motivated without leadership yet leadership can't prevail without the inspiration of the follower's side. Therefore, it can be seen that it is true that inspirational motivation is an important aspect in relation to the employee engagement in the County governments in Kenya and thus our study will stress to gather facts on this findings among others.

Doody and Doody (2022) expressed that the inspirational motivation rotated around getting followers to smooth out their own objectives with those of the firm. Their findings discovered that both the firm and workers profit by this type of transformational leadership. It is foremost that all firm should advocate for trust and make an empowering domain that achieves employee satisfaction in their particular industry. They accepted that inspirational motivation goes about as a column where information is shared; which is a fundamental component in accomplishing firms' objectives (Rawung, Wuryaningrat, & Elvinita, 2020). We can hereby deduce this very important findings and be glad with the fact that our study will be of importance and this shows that other studies such as the one carried out by Doody and Doody confirm to what we are

studying that there is an influence to the employee engagement in the County governments in Kenya by inspirational motivation.

Ndisya and Juma (2021) analyzed the utilization of components of transformational leadership at Safaricom. The authors utilized structured questionnaire and proportionate stratified sampling was utilized to gather information from a sample size of 109 respondents. The investigation found a positive connection between inspirational motivation and staff performance. Respondents on average mostly agreed with the presence of motivation to achieve business objectives and destinations, support for team building, leader's demonstration of the tasks employees ought to do, and helping workers find meaning in their work. This implies the adjustments in the inspirational motivation had significant changes in employee engagement with the end goal that when helpful inspiration builds, there would be a comparative increment in employee engagement. The study suggested that there is need on the business administration to enhance its employees' reaction to improve administration to the business. Additionally, there ought to be further study in finding out whether transformational leadership style has an influence on the employee engagement in the County governments in Kenya because we can see that there is a gap in knowledge and we seek to fill this gap at the end of our study.

Rajhans (2022) researched the connection among communication and motivation and its general effect on the staff performance using an empirical survey in the business. The outcomes demonstrated that business communication plays an important role in worker inspiration and performance of staff. The study prescribed that there must be upward and downward communication in a firm with the goal that creative proposals from the staff are utilized to help the management in decision making and improvement of the business. This leads us to conclude that most of the studies on transformational leadership are mainly focused on employee engagement and therefore leaving a gap in determination of whether transformational leadership style has an influence of the employee engagement in the County governments in Kenya, which this study seeks to fill.

Intellectual Stimulation

Intellectual stimulation is important style leaders ought to understand and master it properly. This ideology is a powerful tool that can be used by a leader to motivate and empower their followers to diagnose various situations or rather challenge properly without the fear of failing. When employees are entrusted to carry on by themselves, they tend to gain a sense of trust and confidence in their abilities thereby encouraging them to be creative and face problems head on. This also helps as employees tend to stick longer in various firm hence low staff turnover. Therefore, firms are able to plan and achieve set goals through dedicated and hardworking employees (Anjali *et al.*, 2020). This therefore confirm to us that intellectual stimulation positively effects on employee engagement and thus adding weight to our study showing that it is positive and will get to show that intellectual stimulation influences on employee engagement in the County governments in Kenya.

According to Stone, Russell and Patterson (2018), leaders with intellectual stimulation always influence his/her followers to re-examine the current assumptions and initiate change and new way to approach issues at place of work. Bass and Avolio, (2019); Bass, (2021) argue that leaders engaging in intellectual stimulation find themselves to have taught and influence his/her followers in his quest of seeking new knowledge and creative ideas for solving firms problems. According to Avolio and Bass (2019) an intellectually stimulating leader is one who discern, comprehend, conceptualize, and articulate to their associates the opportunities and threats facing their firm and its strengths, weaknesses, and comparative advantages. Through this, they further influence their followers to seek innovative and creative ways to solve old problems.

Yasin *et al.*, (2019) found out that intellectual stimulation can be used as a tool for the development of more innovations and increase employee engagement in his in his study on the

relationship between intellectual stimulation. Kirui, Iravo, and Kanali (2020) investigated the influence of intellectual stimulation and individual consideration in effective employee engagement. The study was conducted in all the 22 branches of Post Bank and National Banks within the Rift Valley, Kenya. The study used primary means of collecting data by employing quantitative approaches with a target population of 137 employees. A questionnaire was used as instrument for data collection. Analysis involved both descriptive and inferential statistics. A regression analysis was carried out and the r^2 value of 0.6374 implied that 63.7% of the variations in the effective employee engagement in state-owned banks can be explained by the variations in independent variables. Further, by quick standard error tests, the individual coefficients of the regression function were found to be significant in influencing effective employee engagement. This study was in Kenya but in the banking sector only, this therefore leaves the County governments un-researched and the County governments being a major source of employment in our nation, it should not be ignored and much attention needs to be directed to the sector and see what influences its growth and adopt the findings.

Individualized Consideration

Zacher *et al.*, (2019) found out that when a leader creates a serene environment for his/her followers to shine then one consider that leader to poses the individualized consideration attributes. Snell, Stanley, Zhang, and Almaz (2018) attributed the higher levels of engagement and motivation of employees to individual consideration as it had massive effect on the overall firm success (Snell *et al.*, 2018). According to Kirkbride (2021), leaders with individualized consideration develop their followers by mentoring, coaching and teaching. He further postulates that an individualized consideration leader exhibits serious concerns for his/her followers, gets to know and understand well about his/her followers and pays attention to their concerns and new ideas. This therefore sets a positive basis for us to pay more attention on this study and find out how individualized consideration as a style affects the employee engagement in the County governments in Kenya.

In as research done by Crompton (2022) on the effects of mentorship on organizational performance and growth, a clear direct relationship between employee engagement and indirect relation between mentorship and firm was established. Employees were found to gain a sense of confidence in handling tasks at work resulting into productivity. The findings showed the importance of qualitative approaches by realizing that mentorship experience and knowledge, in addition to trust fostered throughout relationships are as important to outcomes as results. The study further suggested that firms and institutions who have embraced mentorship programs report substantial benefits that lead to employee engagement. Thus, the findings made on the impact of individualized consideration on employee engagement will then be expounded in this study so as to find the influence of individualized consideration on employee engagement in the County governments in Kenya.

Yukl (2018) argues out that leaders with individualized consideration always tend to champion an urge for change and growth amongst his/her followers. All leaders need to perform assessment on employee's performance and develop corrective actions to be implemented so as to improve employee engagement. Therefore, putting in place a system for rewarding and recognizing desired behaviors of accountability, ownership and participation, is paramount. According to Osseo-Asare, Longbottom and Murphy (2020) leaders need further education and training on all firm spheres so as to have an impact on its followers and entire firm. This suggests that effort is needed to understand the impact of the critical role that leadership plays as a driver of quality and performance improvement.

The research which was conducted by Sundi (2018) concluded that the transformational leadership has significant and positive effect on employee's working performance. Tatilu, *et al.*, (2019) mentioned that transformational leadership has an effect on employee's working performance which is applied to companies that want to grow. Pane and Astuti (2019) concluded that there is a significant effect on the performance of transformational leadership

transformational implemented by the employees. The leadership was able to give effect to improve employee's working performance. The level of professionalism of leadership will bring the business able to compete in such a tight competition era.

Maharani *et al.*, (2020) in her research concluded that transformational leadership significantly affects the performance of the employees, the stronger the leadership the higher employees' performance. Ekaningsih (2019) concluded that transformational leadership significantly affects employee's working performance, which means that transformational leadership can improve employee's working performance. With such findings, it add a great impact in the knowledge field and proves it positive for our study to expound the study and find out the impact of transformational leadership style on employee engagement in the County governments in Kenya.

Influence of Transactional Leadership Style on Employee Engagement

Transactional leadership style is concerned about reward and punishment system in leadership, whereby the leader has the power to manipulate the followers in exchange of something of value (Arham, 2019). According to Arham (2019), transactional leadership can be referred to as the type of leadership where the leaders explain what is required from employees and what compensation they will get when they accomplish these requirements. A leader is known as a transactional leader if he/she is always willing to give something in return (Uchenwamgbe, 2018). This can include a number of things like promotion, pay raise, performance reviews, new responsibilities Wu (2019) see transactional as the leadership style that incentives (or punishments) are put in place and role definitions and work requirements are set up to guide or incentivize subordinates so as to achieve goals. The major problem with this type of leadership is the expectation. Hence, transactional leadership can be defined as the exchange of targets and rewards between the management and the employees (Ojokuku, *et al.*, 2022). The focus of transactional is on the lead between leader and employees. Also, transactional by itself allows the subordinates to be able to meet their needs, as well as to reduce the anxiety and only focus on the vision of the firm, such as building high-quality and service and finding ways to reduce the cost of production. Therefore, transactional leadership is a relationship between leader and subordinate is a gratification exchange design and have a purpose to give maximum benefit to each individual in the firm.

Contingent Reward

Contingent reward enables the followers to perceive the consistency in leadership behavior as well as the reliability of their leaders. The leader assigns or secures agreements on what needs to be done and promises rewards or actually rewards others in exchange for satisfactorily carrying out the assignment (Avolio, 2019). Those rewards are connected to the followers' needs, which are identified by the leader and linked to what the leader wants to accomplish. The workers can rely on the honoring by their leaders for their efforts through instrumental support or assistance in confrontations with superiors. CR builds the basis of the receptivity of transformational leadership (Bass & Avolio, 2020). This therefore sets a positive basis for us to pay more attention on this study and find out how contingent rewards as a form of transactional leadership style effects on the employee engagement in the County governments in Kenya.

According to Odumeru and Ifeanyi (2018), contingent reward refers to leaders who highlight the job that must be accomplished clearly and provide rewards based on the performance of the individual. These type of leaders associate the goal to rewards, clarify what is expected, make available the resources required, set goals that are supported by everyone and provide different types of gifts for a fruitful performance. The goals and objectives set for their subordinates are SMART (specific, measurable, attainable, realistic, and time bound). The authors further add that transactional leaders are concerned with how things are being done rather than forward-thinking ideas. These types of leaders focus on conditional rewards or

contingent. Contingent appreciations are given when the set goals are attained within the specified time, ahead of time, or to keep subordinates working at an excellent speed in varying times throughout to the end of specified time. Contingent punishments are given when performance quality or quantity goes down below production expectations or goals and tasks are not fulfilled at any chance.

Arif and King (2018) and Arham (2019) all agree on the following key components of transactional leadership: contingent reward: this shows the degree to which leaders tell others what to do in order to be rewarded, emphasize what leaders expect from them; management-by-exception (active) mode: leaders act as monitors to search and watch for deviations from rules and standards and take corrective measures; and management-by exception (passive) mode: leaders here will only intervene when procedures are not followed and standards are not met. According to Bass, *et al.*, (2018) effective transactional leadership style is characterized by transactions or exchanges the promise of reward for good performance, and discipline for poor performance. Transactional leadership, present in many businesses, may help clarify everyone's roles and responsibilities, and because team members are judged on performance, ambitious people motivated by external rewards often thrive. Some of its measures can also de-motivate employees. For example, it doesn't offer much in terms of inspiration, to motivate people to go beyond the basics; therefore employees might get complacent and develop a tendency to achieve minimal expectations that only would help them avoid penalties (Bass, 2020).

Howell and Avolio (2018) observe that if managers do not effectively follow-up on the contingent reward promises, they display behavioral inconsistency and are therefore viewed as ineffective leaders. Bass, *et al.*, (2018) mention that transactional leaders are counterproductive in an evolving work environment. Likewise, Howell and Avolio's (2018) study suggests that transactional leadership style is negatively related to unit performance. This therefore sets it clear that there is a gap in knowledge because some studies promote transactional leadership style while some do not, thus a study should be done to make the position clear based on the population of the affected group, whereby this research will target to achieve.

The transactional leadership style involves a social exchange process between a leader and subordinate. The exchange is established and maintained if the benefits, according to the business and the employees, outweigh the costs. The leader and subordinates perceive each other as being potentially instrumental in the fulfilment of each other's needs (Pastor & Mayo, 2018). There is a psychological contract between the leader and follower and so the employees are managed in a relationship characterized by give-and-take dependencies (Kent, Crotts & Azziz, 2021). Therefore, it can be seen that it is true that contingent reward is an important aspect in relation to the employee engagement in the County governments in Kenya and thus our study will stress to gather facts on this findings among others.

The relationship maintained is such that one gives in order to receive and this is the reason why employees are provided with material or psychological rewards restricted to the fulfilment of the contractual obligations. The leader promotes uniformity by providing extrinsic, positive or negative rewards to employees and the employees' receipt of the rewards or avoidance of the punishment is contingent on their successful completion of the task (Daft, 2021). Therefore, it can be seen that it is true that contingent rewards is an important aspect in relation to the employee engagement in the County governments in Kenya and thus our study will stress to gather more facts on this findings among others.

Management-by-Exception

Management by exception (MbE) describes a leader who only acts if there are deviations of standards, his motto is if it is not broken don't fix it (Bass, 2020). The most 'positive' reward in this case is the absence of criticism. MbE may appear in a more active way (management by exception active - MbEa) when there is active monitoring and correction before things go

wrong, or in passive way (management by exception passive - MbEp) when executives wait passively and react when mistakes or problems occur (Bass & Avolio, 2019). The active manager arranges to monitor and correct deviations; the passive manager waits for them to occur before taking corrective action (Bass & Avolio, 2018). Therefore, this makes management by exception a good sample to find out whether a leader who leads by exception has an influence on the employee engagement in the County governments in Kenya, therefore, this study will seek to fill this gap.

Transactional leader pays particular attention to the work of their followers with the aim of wanting to find faults so that they can have them corrected (Minett, Yaman). This leadership style is most appropriate in managing crisis situations in a firm. It also helps in dealing with emergence situations for better outcome (Ojokuku *et al.*, 2022). This leadership style is appropriate in activity transaction because it reduces the faults and keeps high quality through insisting on high compliance levels (Karamat, 2018). This is a good finding and it add to the knowledge, our study will also stress to find the influence of transactional leadership style on the employee engagement in the County governments in Kenya.

Longe (2019) revealed that transactional leadership style has a positive impact on the employee engagement. The transactional leadership style helps in creating as well as sustaining the context in which business and human capabilities are maximized as the employees are always able to achieve the tangible and intangible rewards. This leadership style particularly helps in creating an environment that is optimal for performance and also articulates the compelling vision that enhances the overall employee engagement (Longe, 2019). According to the research conducted by Sofi and Devanadhen (2020), transactional leadership was not found to have a direct impact on the performance of the firm. This leadership style does not encourage creativity and innovation among the employees and hence, the employees do not perform as per the expectations of the firm. There are however many criticisms of the leadership model because it causes the short-term relationship between leaders and employees. In this connection, allowing the process of gratification also can bring hatred between leader and employees (Yazeed, Ali, & Al- Shibami, 2018). This therefore confirm to us that management by exception positively effects on employee engagement and thus adding weight to our study showing that it is positive and will get to show that management by exception influences on employee engagement in the County governments in Kenya.

Liu, Liu and Zeng (2021) note that a transactional leader usually operates within the strict confines of an existing system rather than trying to change it through attempting to satisfy the current needs of employees. According to them, such leaders tend to focus on exchanges and contingent reward behaviour; paying close attention to deviations, mistakes and irregularities; and taking actions to make corrections. They maintain that transactional leaders have an inclination towards risk avoidance and focus on time constraints, standards and efficiency. These kinds of leaders have a tendency to deal with deviations with unsympathetic criticisms, resulting in the subordinates being scared of trying new methods (Liu, Liu & Zeng, 2021). Therefore, it can be seen that it is true that management by exception is an important aspect in relation to the employee engagement in the County governments in Kenya and thus our study will stress to gather facts on this findings.

Due to the instructive environment, subordinates are not expected to go beyond their leader's initial expectations, nor are they motivated to try out creative solutions to change the status quo (Liu, Liu & Zeng, 2021). In other words, subordinates are not encouraged to be creative and innovative and this signals that leaders are not open to new ideas which might clash with the existing plans. Due to the nature of this style and the characteristics of the subordinates, it may be found that certain work details are overstressed.

Management by Exception (MBE) Active

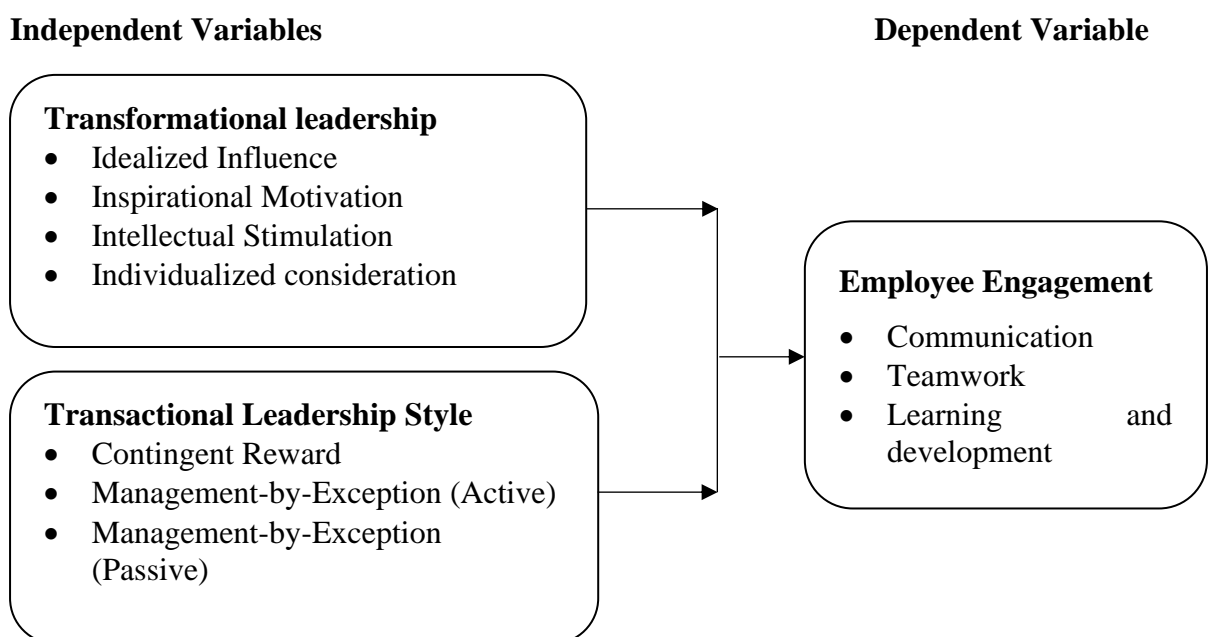
The second component of transactional leadership is management by exception active, which refers to leaders who actively monitor the work of followers and ensure that the standards set are met (Antonakis Avolio & Sivasubramaniam, 2018). This is where leaders examine and monitor for any error or mistakes that happen and apply corrective action once the problem happen. MBE active can be supported by processes such as performance management using key performance indicators and monitoring performance regularly, giving clear instructions on what is expected on the job using a detailed job description, holding meetings with employees, assigning projects with guided supervision etc. All these can make an employee feel encouraged. According to Adam (2020) management by exception (active) refers to leaders who actively observe the task of supporters and make sure that quality and quantity is met. Transactional leaders actively watch the job of their subordinates, monitor from getting out the rules and policies and taking corrective action to avoid faults.

Management by Exception (MBE) Passive

The third component is management by exception (passive) which refers to leader styles where the leaders only intervene when problems arise. According to Adam (2020), management by exception (passive) refers to leaders who come to play only when problems occur. Transactional leadership highlights the transaction that takes place between leaders and followers. Its main focus is to motivate people through common agreement (Bass, 2017). As such a transactional leader would have great difficulty developing a strong emotional relationship with his or her followers or motivating them to perform beyond their ability. This type of leader takes action only after a mistake has occurred. Under this category, transactional leaders are seen only when standards are not met or when the performance does not match what is expected. They may even use punishment as a response to performance that is not acceptable. There are times when employees complain that manager’s only notice and talk to them when something has gone wrong. For instance, one can be a good worker delivering on their targets on time year after year yet the leader does not give a word of praise or appreciation. The one time that the particular employee falls behind on a deadline, the manager complains a lot without regard for the merit of the particular situation or the past record. In essence, this means that this manager is practicing management by exception (passive).

Conceptual Framework

Figure 2.1 Conceptual Framework



Source: Author (2024)

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study adopted a descriptive research design. The target population consisted of the County Wards Management, Marsabit County Employees and Community Leaders from Marsabit County which was 305 respondents. The study adopted Yamane (2008) formula so as to achieve a finite population. Based on the Yamane's formula, 173 respondents from Marsabit County formed the sample size from which inferences from the population was drawn. The sampling technique employed was stratified random sampling. This was because the respondents were stratified into three categories namely:- County Wards Management, Marsabit County Employees and Community Leaders. Primary data was gathered directly from respondents and for this study the researcher used a questionnaire. Descriptive analysis was used; this included the use of weighted means, standard deviation, relative frequencies and percentages. The Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) computer software was also used for analysis to generate data array that was used for subsequent analysis of the data. SPSS has descriptive statistics features that assist in variable response comparison and give clear indications of response frequencies. The data was coded to enable the responses to be grouped into various categories. Descriptive statistics was used to summarize the data. This included percentages and frequencies. Tables and other graphical presentations were used appropriately to present the data that was collected for ease of understanding and analysis.

DATA ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION

A higher response rate generally indicates better engagement and more accurate data collection, while a lower response rate might suggest that the communication wasn't compelling or that there were potential barriers to participation the respondents were 97.69% while the non-respondents were 2.31% of the sample size.

Transformational leadership style influence employee engagement

Idealized Attributes in Transformational Leadership Style

The table presents data on the idealized attributes (charisma) of leaders as perceived by employees, reflecting key elements of transformational leadership. Transformational leadership is characterized by leaders who inspire and motivate their teams by instilling pride, gaining trust, and earning respect.

Table 1: Idealized Attributes

Idealized Attributes (charisma)	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
My leaders instill pride in others for being associated with them.	3.27	1.162	1.35
My leaders display a sense of power	2.68	1.694	2.869
I have complete faith in my leaders	2.61	1.379	1.9
Leaders act in ways that build others' respect for them.	1.95	1.313	1.724
Valid N (listwise)			

Table 1 shows that, In Marsabit County, Kenya, the data shows that leaders' ability to "instill pride in others" has a relatively high mean score of 3.27, with a standard deviation of 1.162, indicating moderate agreement among employees. The variance of 1.35 suggests some diversity in responses. However, leaders' "display of power" has a lower mean of 2.68 and a higher standard deviation of 1.694, indicating greater variability in how employees perceive their leaders' sense of power. Trust in leadership is slightly lower, with a mean score of 2.61 and a standard deviation of 1.379, showing some skepticism or lack of faith in leaders. The lowest mean score, 1.95, reflects leaders' ability to build respect, with a standard deviation of 1.313, suggesting that this is the most inconsistent aspect of leadership as perceived by employees.

Idealized Behaviors in Transformational Leadership Style

The table on idealized behaviors offers insights into how transformational leadership is experienced by employees in Marsabit County, Kenya, particularly focusing on leaders' ability to motivate and guide their teams with purpose, values, and vision.

Table 2: Idealized Behaviors

Idealized Behaviors	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
Leaders specify the importance of having a strong sense of purpose	2.8	1.755	3.081
My leaders consider the moral consequences of decisions	2.87	1.71	2.923
My County leaders emphasize the importance of having a collective sense of mission	2.16	1.543	2.379
My leaders talk about the most important values	3.16	1.085	1.178
My leaders provide appealing images of what employees can do.	3.18	1.793	3.216

Table 2 reveals that leaders are fairly effective in "talking about the most important values" (mean = 3.16) and "providing appealing images of what employees can do" (mean = 3.18), suggesting that employees perceive their leaders as having strong value-driven communication and inspiring vision. However, the higher standard deviation (1.085 and 1.793, respectively) shows variability in how consistently these behaviors are applied.

On the other hand, the perception of leaders' ability to "specify the importance of having a strong sense of purpose" has a mean of 2.8, indicating a moderate but inconsistent emphasis on purpose, as shown by the high standard deviation (1.755) and variance (3.081). The moral considerations of decisions also have a similar mean (2.87) and standard deviation (1.71), pointing to moderate engagement with ethical leadership, yet with some inconsistency across the board.

The lowest mean, 2.16, reflects leaders' ability to emphasize a "collective sense of mission." This suggests that while individual values are highlighted, leaders may not be as effective in fostering a shared, collective vision for the county, which is a critical element of transformational leadership.

Inspirational Motivation in Transformational Leadership Style

The table on inspirational motivation provides insights into the ability of leaders in Marsabit County to inspire and energize employees, a core element of transformational leadership.

Table 3: Inspirational Motivation

Inspirational Motivation	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
My county leader's express confidence that goals will be achieved	1.8	0.398	0.158
My leaders talk optimistically about the future	1.9	1.348	1.816
My leaders talk enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished	3.49	1.311	1.718
My leaders articulate a compelling vision of the future	3.6	1.25	1.563
My leaders make others feel good to be around them.	3.64	1.226	1.503
Valid N (listwise)			

Table 3 shows that leaders perform well in "articulating a compelling vision of the future" (mean = 3.6) and "making others feel good to be around them" (mean = 3.64), suggesting that employees generally perceive their leaders as capable of creating a positive and engaging environment. However, the standard deviations (1.25 and 1.226) and variances (1.563 and

1.503) indicate some variation in how consistently employees experience these aspects of leadership.

Leaders are also rated highly in "talking enthusiastically about what needs to be accomplished," with a mean of 3.49, indicating a generally positive outlook and communication about tasks, although the standard deviation of 1.311 suggests some inconsistency in this behavior.

However, the data shows lower ratings in other key areas of inspirational motivation. Leaders' ability to "express confidence that goals will be achieved" has the lowest mean of 1.8, with very little variability (standard deviation = 0.398), indicating a widespread perception that leaders may not instill much confidence in achieving goals. Similarly, the mean score of 1.9 for leaders "talking optimistically about the future" reflects a generally weak expression of optimism, though with more variability (standard deviation = 1.348) among employees' perceptions.

Individual Consideration in Transformational Leadership Style

The table on individual consideration provides insights into how leaders in Marsabit County focus on the development and individual needs of employees, an essential component of transformational leadership.

Table 4 Individual Consideration

Individual Consideration	Mean	Std. Deviation	Variance
My leaders spend much of the time teaching	2.89	1.66	2.755
My leaders treat employees as individuals rather than just members of a group	3.74	1.411	1.991
Our county's leaders help employees to develop their strengths	1.75	1.202	1.444
My leaders help us to think about old problems in new ways	1.75	1.186	1.407
Our leaders let us know how they think we are doing	2.95	1.689	2.851
Valid N (listwise)			

The data shows that leaders are perceived to treat employees as individuals rather than just members of a group, with the highest mean of 3.74. This suggests that leaders make efforts to recognize individual differences, which is a critical factor in enhancing employee engagement. However, the standard deviation of 1.411 indicates some inconsistency in how uniformly this behavior is perceived across the organization.

Conversely, leaders are rated lower in terms of helping employees develop their strengths, with a mean score of 1.75. This reflects a significant gap in personal development support, which is essential for employee growth and engagement. Similarly, the ability of leaders to "help us think about old problems in new ways" is also rated at 1.75, suggesting that there is limited encouragement for innovative thinking and problem-solving, a key aspect of transformational leadership.

The data also indicates that leaders spend a moderate amount of time teaching (mean = 2.89), with a high standard deviation (1.66), reflecting variability in how much attention is given to mentoring and guiding employees. Furthermore, leaders' feedback to employees on their performance has a mean score of 2.95, showing that while feedback is provided, it may not be frequent or clear enough for all employees, as evidenced by the high standard deviation of 1.689.

Discussion

Transformational leadership style influence employee engagement

The findings regarding the influence of transformational leadership style on employee engagement in Marsabit County, Kenya, align with existing literature that emphasizes the

positive relationship between transformational leadership and employee engagement. Transformational leaders inspire and motivate their followers by creating a vision and fostering an environment of trust and respect (Bass & Riggio, 2018). This aligns with the data showing that employees in Marsabit who perceive their leaders as supportive and inspirational exhibit higher engagement levels, as they feel more connected to their work and the organization's goals.

Research conducted by Avolio and Yammarino (2018) highlights that transformational leadership enhances employees' intrinsic motivation, leading to increased job satisfaction and commitment. In the context of Marsabit County, the emphasis on collaboration and open communication inherent in transformational leadership is particularly beneficial, as it resonates with the diverse demographic makeup of the workforce, fostering inclusivity and empowerment. This is supported by studies indicating that inclusive leadership practices positively affect engagement, especially in multicultural settings (Nembhard & Edmondson, 2017).

Furthermore, the work of Okwiri et al. (2020) underscores that transformational leadership is essential in navigating challenges faced by organizations in developing regions, such as Kenya, where employee engagement is critical for performance and retention. Their findings suggest that organizations employing transformational leadership practices not only enhance employee engagement but also improve organizational resilience.

Transactional leadership style influence employee engagement

The analysis of transactional leadership style's influence on employee engagement in Marsabit County, Kenya, reveals insights that resonate with existing literature. Transactional leadership, characterized by a focus on reward and punishment based on performance, tends to foster compliance rather than deep engagement (Judge & Piccolo, 2018). In the context of Marsabit, the findings indicate that while employees may respond to the structured environment and clear expectations associated with transactional leadership, this approach often falls short of promoting intrinsic motivation and job satisfaction.

Research by Barbuto and Bowers (2019) supports this observation, noting that transactional leadership can lead to short-term gains in productivity but lacks the emotional and motivational aspects necessary for sustained employee engagement. In Marsabit County, where employees value collaboration and recognition, the limitations of transactional leadership become apparent. The data suggests that employees may feel disengaged due to the absence of personal development opportunities and a lack of emotional connection with their leaders.

Furthermore, a study by Buil et al. (2019) highlights that while transactional leadership can effectively manage routine tasks, it is less effective in fostering innovation and proactive behavior among employees. This aligns with the experiences of employees in Marsabit, who may desire a more empowering leadership style that encourages their participation in decision-making and values their contributions.

Conclusion

Transformational leadership style influence employee engagement

The influence of transformational leadership style on employee engagement in Marsabit County, Kenya, as reflected in the data, appears to be significant but with areas of inconsistency. Leaders demonstrate some key attributes of transformational leadership, such as treating employees as individuals (mean = 3.74) and articulating a compelling vision for the future (mean = 3.6). These behaviors are positively linked to higher employee engagement, as they foster a sense of purpose and belonging. However, there are notable weaknesses, such as the lack of confidence expressed in goal achievement (mean = 1.8) and limited emphasis on personal development and innovation (means = 1.75 for both). These gaps suggest that while leaders may inspire through vision and recognition, they struggle to build trust, foster

innovation, and provide individualized support consistently, which are crucial for sustaining high levels of engagement. Overall, transformational leadership in Marsabit County has a moderate influence on employee engagement, with strong areas in vision and recognition but room for improvement in trust-building, optimism, and developmental support.

In conclusion, the findings indicate that transformational leadership style significantly influences employee engagement in Marsabit County, Kenya. Employees who perceive their leaders as inspirational and supportive tend to exhibit higher levels of engagement, driven by a sense of purpose and belonging. The data suggests that transformational leaders, who prioritize collaboration, open communication, and individual consideration, create an environment where employees feel valued and motivated to contribute to organizational goals. This style fosters trust and respect, which are essential for cultivating a committed workforce. However, challenges remain, particularly in addressing the diverse needs of employees across various demographics, including age, gender, and educational backgrounds. By further enhancing transformational leadership practices and ensuring they align with the expectations of all employees, organizations in Marsabit County can strengthen engagement and ultimately improve overall performance and satisfaction within the workplace.

Transactional leadership style influence employee engagement

In conclusion, the analysis suggests that transactional leadership style has a notable but limited influence on employee engagement in Marsabit County, Kenya. While this leadership approach emphasizes clear structures, reward systems, and the fulfilment of specific tasks, its effectiveness in fostering deep employee engagement appears constrained. Employees may respond positively to the clarity and direction provided by transactional leaders, especially in achieving short-term goals and maintaining productivity. However, the lack of emphasis on emotional connection, personal development, and collaborative input can hinder overall engagement levels. As the workforce in Marsabit County seeks more meaningful connections and opportunities for growth, organizations may need to complement transactional practices with elements of transformational leadership to cultivate a more engaged and motivated workforce. By integrating both leadership styles, organizations can enhance employee satisfaction and commitment, ultimately leading to better organizational outcomes.

In conclusion, while transactional leadership may provide some organizational structure and clarity, its influence on employee engagement in Marsabit County appears limited. To enhance engagement levels, organizations should consider integrating elements of transformational leadership, which are more conducive to creating an inclusive and motivated workforce.

Recommendation

Transformational leadership style influence employee engagement

To enhance the positive influence of transformational leadership on employee engagement in Marsabit County, it is recommended that organizations invest in leadership development programs focused on cultivating transformational qualities among leaders. Training should emphasize the importance of inspiring and motivating employees, fostering a shared vision, and building trust through open communication. Additionally, organizations should encourage leaders to engage in regular feedback sessions with employees, allowing for a two-way dialogue that reinforces a sense of belonging and value. Implementing mentorship initiatives can also facilitate personal growth and professional development, aligning individual aspirations with organizational goals. Furthermore, creating an inclusive culture that acknowledges and rewards innovative ideas can significantly enhance employee motivation and commitment. By prioritizing these strategies, organizations in Marsabit can harness the full potential of transformational leadership, leading to increased employee engagement and overall organizational success.

Transactional leadership style influence employee engagement

To address the limitations of transactional leadership in enhancing employee engagement in Marsabit County, it is recommended that organizations integrate elements of transformational leadership into their practices. While transactional leadership can provide structure and clear expectations, fostering a more dynamic work environment is crucial. Leaders should be encouraged to recognize and reward employee contributions not only through formal mechanisms but also through informal appreciation and recognition. Training programs that emphasize the importance of building relationships and fostering open communication can help leaders understand the value of employee input. Additionally, incorporating regular performance reviews that focus on individual growth and development can shift the focus from mere compliance to engagement and motivation. By blending transactional leadership with more participative and transformational elements, organizations can create a more engaged workforce that feels valued and invested in their roles, ultimately leading to improved organizational performance.

Recommendation for further Study

Future research on the influence of leadership styles on employee engagement in Marsabit County, Kenya, should explore the intersection of cultural dynamics and leadership effectiveness. Given the region's diverse cultural landscape, studies could examine how different leadership styles resonate with various employee demographics and how cultural factors influence engagement levels. Additionally, longitudinal studies could provide insights into the long-term impacts of specific leadership styles on employee morale and organizational performance. Moreover, comparative studies across different sectors such as public versus private organizations could shed light on how contextual factors affect leadership efficacy. Lastly, qualitative research that includes employee perspectives could enrich understanding of how leadership styles are perceived and their direct impact on engagement, leading to more tailored and effective leadership development initiatives.

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