

Leadership and Employee Engagement: Proposing Research Agendas Through a Review of Literature

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Abstract

Leadership is one of the most studied topics in the organization sciences, and employee engagement one of the more recent. However, the relationship between leadership and employee engagement has not been widely investigated. As many organizations invest significant resources in retaining, developing, and engaging employees, human resource development (HRD) professionals are tasked to develop and partner with leaders to deliver those strategies effectively. Thus, a comprehensive understanding on the relationship and mechanism between leadership and engagement is essential to HRD professionals informing leaders on how best to cultivate positive results in followers. In this vein, this research conducted an extensive review of empirical and conceptual studies that examined the relationship between leadership and employee engagement, analyzed/synthesized the studies into integrated frameworks for the leadership–engagement relationship, and proposed future research agendas.

Keywords

employee/work engagement, transformational leadership, leader–member exchange

Many of the most pressing global challenges facing global firms today are directly related to human capital challenges (Tarique & Schuler, 2010). “As different sectors

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of the economy confront shortfalls of experienced talent, the leaders in those organizations will most likely be compelled to take more aggressive steps to attract and retain talent” (Rothwell, 2002, p. 32).

In recent years, one of those steps has included increased attention to employee engagement as an element of talent management as Hughes and Rog (2008) inform us that

[T]he more highly engaged the employee, the more likely he or she will be to say positive things about the organization, thereby contributing to the development of a positive employer brand; want to remain within the organization . . . minimizing turnover . . . regularly exert a superior level of effort . . . [and] potentially influencing such variables as service quality, customer satisfaction, productivity, sales, [and] profitability. (p. 749)

Meanwhile, Hay’s (2002) article, “Strategies for Survival in the War for Talent,” captured results of survey data from 330 companies in 50 countries on employee perceptions and intentions toward their employers, and found that many employees “leave their jobs because they are unhappy with their boss” (p. 53). Tims, Bakker, and Xanthopoulou (2011) put it this way, that daily fluctuations in leadership may influence employees’ self-beliefs (i.e., personal resources) and work experiences (i.e., employee engagement).

The implication of these findings should lead scholars and practitioners in human resource development (HRD) and organization development (OD) to explore the potential connection between leadership and employee engagement. The importance of this investigation is best described by Shuck and Herd (2012) who stated that

[V]ery little research could be located that examined the relation, conceptual or empirical, specifically between leadership and employee engagement throughout the broader human resource literature base, and no article could be located in any of the Academy-sponsored journals that included both the key phrases leadership and employee engagement. (pp. 159-160)

In other words, there remains a gap in understanding what leadership behaviors could affect engagement-encouraging cultures as well as the processes around which leader behaviors bring about higher levels of engagement, which is in line with the more drastic argument that there is no research directly linking leader behaviors and follower engagement (Xu & Thomas, 2011).

By examining current literature that studied the relationship between leadership and employee engagement, we attempted to fill the aforementioned knowledge gap while offering a comprehensive understanding of that relationship to leaders in organizations and HRD/OD professionals for possible talent management consideration. In so doing, we established the purpose of this study to (a) analyze the empirical and conceptual studies that examined the relationship between leadership and employee engagement in organizations, (b) offer a synthesis and critique of the leadership–engagement relationship researched in the literatures, and (c) propose agendas for future research.

Method

This study used the literature review method in that it is a relevant research approach for summarizing and synthesizing the extant body of literature related to a certain phenomenon (Chermack & Passmore, 2005).

Description of Selection Process

With Torraco's (2005) framework as a guide, searching and choosing relevant literature was considered as the first step. The following is an outline of the literature selection process, specifying (a) where articles were found, (b) when the search was implemented, (c) who conducted the search, (d) how the articles were found, (e) how many articles appeared and the final number of selected articles, and (f) why the articles were finally selected (Callahan, 2010; Kim, Kolb, & Kim, 2012).

This study used multiple databases encompassing 39 smaller database subsets (e.g., ABI/INFORM Complete, ProQuest Education Journals, PsycINFO, and PsycARTICLES) to extract as many relevant articles as possible. The first author conducted the initial search in April, 2013, using the abovementioned databases. As it relates to keyword combinations, the main focus of this study is on the relationship between leadership and employee engagement. Unlike leadership being a clear term used by both academy and practice, the term employee engagement could be interchangeably used by other similar terms such as work engagement, job engagement, role engagement, or personal engagement (Kim, Kolb, & Kim, 2012; Kim, Park, Song, & Yoon, 2012). Therefore, the search keywords determined were the combinations of (a) leadership with (b) "employee engagement," "work engagement," "job engagement," "role engagement," or "personal engagement." To make clear the scope of review, this study focused on the peer-reviewed articles published in English in which any of the exact keywords appeared either in the abstract or title. There was no specific time period selected, but it is noteworthy that employee engagement in the academic literature was first introduced in 1990 (Shuck & Wollard, 2010). The initial search conducted using the keyword combinations yielded 81 sources throughout the databases.

Subsequently, the staged review, an approach to analyze the literature by first implementing an initial review of abstracts and then completing an in-depth review of articles (Torraco, 2005), was used to review the 81 searched articles by relevance to the current study purpose. When performing the staged review, the primary focus was on whether an article examined and discussed the leadership–engagement relationship either empirically or conceptually. If an abstract merely or unclearly described the relationship without in-depth or relevant discussion, the articles were excluded. Duplicated articles were also removed. Through this process, 20 articles out of 81 were finally chosen for further review—16 empirical and 4 conceptual articles.

Data Organization and Analysis

These 20 articles were analyzed and synthesized. A summary of the literature appears in Table 1. Articles were listed in chronological order beginning with 2008. The summary

includes authors, purpose, sample information, and key findings from the studies. We examined and synthesized the relationship between leadership and employee engagement through a lens of how leadership has influences on employee engagement.

Leadership and Engagement

This section presents the studied relationship between leadership and engagement, by first providing an overview of the respective key concepts and then reporting the findings on their relationship.

Overview of Leadership and Engagement

Leadership. The *Encyclopedia of Management* (2009) states that leadership is probably the most frequently studied topic in the organizational sciences. As an exhaustive discussion of all major leadership theories is beyond the scope of this article, a brief review of the historical leadership theories will be summarized as follows: (a) In the 1930s, *Trait Theories* held that individual characteristics of leaders are different from those of non-leaders; (b) during the 1940s and 1950s, *Behavioral Theories* stated that the behaviors of effective leaders are different from the behaviors of ineffective leaders, and that two major classes of leader behavior are task-oriented and relationship-oriented behaviors; (c) in the 1960s and 1970s, *Contingency Theories* indicated that factors unique to each situation determine whether specific leader characteristics and behaviors will be effective; (d) the 1970s also introduced *Leader–Member Exchange* (LMX), stating that leaders form high-quality relationships with some subordinates but not others, and that the quality of leader–subordinates relationship affects numerous workplace outcomes; (e) during the 1970s and 1980s, *Charismatic Leadership* emerged holding that effective leaders inspire subordinates to commit themselves to goals by communicating a vision, displaying charismatic behavior, and setting a powerful personal example; and (f) *Transformational Leadership Theory* emerged in the 1970s and identified four aspects of effective leadership, which include charisma, inspiration, intellectual stimulation, and consideration (*Encyclopedia of Management*, 2009).

In the literature reviewed here, the most pervasive framework was transformational leadership, which resulted in nine articles. “Transformational leaders achieve results in one or more ways: They may be charismatic to their followers and thus inspire them; they may meet the emotional needs of each employee; and/or they may intellectually stimulate employees” (Bass, 1991, p. 21). Citing the work of Bass and Avolio (1997), Bogler, Caspi, and Roccas (2013), transformational leadership has five subfactors:

Idealized influence—attributed—the socialized charisma of the leader; idealized influence—behaviour—the actual actions taken by the leader to bring people to follow his or her vision; individual consideration—paying personal attention; inspirational motivation—energizing the followers by viewing the future with optimism and stressing

Table 1. Summary of Studies Investigating the Relationship Between Leadership and Engagement.

Authors	Purpose	Sample (N)	Key findings
Moss (2008)	Studied the relationship between transformational leadership and engagement	N = 160 (employees in the public and private sectors)	As this promotion focus increased, the positive association between vision and vigor became more pronounced.
Macey and Schneider (2008)	To present a conceptual framework on the engagement construct subsumes and the research traditions	Conceptual study (N/A)	Not all investments in job design and/or the training and performance management of leaders in organizations with the goal of improving engagement levels will be productive for all employees.
Attridge (2009)	Outlined efforts organizations should consider to improve employee engagement.	Conceptual study (N/A)	Providing appropriate support and resources from both co-workers and supervisors, and removing difficult job demands and stress from the organization culture, foster transformational leadership.
Whitford and Moss (2009)	Studied the relationship between individual characteristics, leadership style	N = 165 (employees from small, medium, and large public and private organizations in Australia, North America, Europe, Asia, South Africa, and South America)	Visionary leadership was positively associated with work engagement; personal recognition correlated positively with work engagement.
Zhu, Avolio, and Walumbwa (2009)	Investigated the relationship between transformational leadership and followers' work engagement	N = 188 (48 top executive leaders and 140 following senior managers) in various industries in South Africa	Follower characteristics did significantly predict the transformational leadership–follower engagement.

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Authors	Purpose	Sample (N)	Key findings
Alarcon, Lyons, and Tartaglia (2010)	Studied a conceptual model of the antecedents and consequences of engagement	N = 163 (38% military officers, 32% enlisted personnel, 30% civilians)	Leadership's influence on engagement was fully mediated by role clarity and organizational culture.
Babcock-Roberson and Strickland (2010)	Examined charismatic leadership, work engagement, and OCB	N = 91 (undergraduate participants in a larger Western university)	The relationship between charismatic leadership and work engagement was significant
Walumbwa, Wang, Wang, Schaubroeck, and Avolio (2010)	Investigated the relationship of authentic leadership with organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and work engagement	N = 516 (129 supervisors and 387 direct reports from two telecommunication firms in China)	Authentic leadership significantly predicted rated OCB and work engagement
Serrano and Reichard (2011)	Affirmed that leaders play an important role to aid employees feeling energized and involved	Conceptual study (N/A)	Identified the four specific pathways to increase employees' engagement
Tims, Bakker, and Xanthopoulou (2011)	Examined the influence of supervisors' leadership style on followers' daily work engagement	N = 42 (consultants at two different employers in the Netherlands)	There was a positive relationship between day-level transformational leadership and day-level work engagement with a full mediation of day-level optimism but nullified the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship
Wefald, Reichard, and Serrano (2011)	Studied the interrelationships of work engagement within a number of antecedents including but not limited to personality, leadership	N = 382 (employees and managers at a mid-sized financial institution)	The effect of transformational leadership on intentions to leave was mediated by Schaufeli's engagement

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Authors	Purpose	Sample (N)	Key findings
Xu and Thomas (2011)	Investigated the relationship between leadership and engagement	N = 414 (employees in New Zealand)	Relationship-oriented leadership factors were all positively associated with engagement
Salanova, Lorente, Chambel, and Martínez (2011)	To examine the relationship between transformational leadership extra-role performance mediated by self-efficacy and work engagement	N = 297 (nurses in Portugal)	The influence of transformational leadership on extra-role performance was fully mediated by work engagement
Shuck and Herd (2012)	Examined the conceptual relation between leadership behavior and the development of employee engagement	Conceptual study (N/A)	Providing attention to followers' basic needs along with a willingness to respond to them can improve engagement, an approach based on leader emotional intelligence
Alok and Israel (2012)	Investigated the relationship between authentic leadership, work engagement, and psychological ownership in organizations	N = 117 (workers in India)	Authentic leadership indirectly affects work engagement through promotive psychological ownership in organizations
Aryee and Walumbwa (2012)	Studied the extent to which transformational leadership contributes to employees' work engagement	N = 193 (subordinate-supervisor participants in China)	Results were all positive and significant with the paths from transformational leadership to work engagement
Hartog and Belschak (2012)	Investigated the effects of ethical leader behavior on engagement.	N = 369 (169 in the first part of the study, 200 in the second part of the study)	Work engagement was significantly related when controlling for ethical leadership

(continued)

Table 1. (continued)

Authors	Purpose	Sample (N)	Key findings
Song, Kolb, Lee, and Kim (2012)	Examined transformational leadership, employee engagement, and organizational knowledge creation	N = 432 (employees and middle-level managers of six for-profit organizations in various industries in South Korea)	Transformational leadership was a significant predictor to explain organizational knowledge creation with engagement as a partial mediator
Vincent-Höper, Muser, and Janneck (2012)	Examined transformational leadership on subjective occupational success mediated by work engagement.	N = 1,132 (530 women and 602 men, respectively)	A partial mediation effect of work engagement between transformational leadership and employee's occupational success
Yuan, Lin, Shieh, and Li (2012)	Examined the effects that transformational leadership has on building customer relationships development.	N = 1,980 (660 employees and 1,320 customers of an IT company in Taiwan)	The perceptions of transformational leadership were significantly associated with increases in work engagement

ambitious goals; and intellectual stimulation—motivating people to think of innovative and extraordinary solutions to problems. (p. 379)

Two articles used authentic leadership, a concept which emerged “from the intersection of the leadership, ethics, and positive organizational behavior and scholarship literatures” (Walumbwa, Avolio, Gardner, Wernsing, & Peterson, 2008, p. 92), and is described as

[A] pattern of leader behavior that draws upon and promotes both positive psychological capacities and a positive ethical climate, to foster greater self-awareness, an internalized moral perspective, balanced processing of information, and relational transparency on the part of leaders working with followers, fostering positive self-development. (p. 94)

Both ethical leadership and charismatic leadership had one article emerge from the literature search. According to Brown, Treviño, and Harrison (2005),

Ethical leaders are models of ethical conduct who become the targets of identification and emulation for followers. For leaders to be perceived as ethical leaders and to influence ethics related outcomes, they must be perceived as attractive, credible, and legitimate. They do this by engaging in behavior that is seen as normatively appropriate (e.g., openness and honesty) and motivated by altruism (e.g., treating employees fairly and considerately). Ethical leaders must also gain followers’ attention to the ethics message by engaging in explicit ethics-related communication and by using reinforcement to support the ethics message. (p. 120)

Finally, according to Conger, Kanungo, & Menon (2000),

Charismatic leadership is an attribution based on follower perceptions of their leader’s behavior. The observed behavior of the leader is interpreted by followers as expressions of charisma in the same sense as a leader’s behaviors reflect that individual’s participative, people, and task orientations. (p. 748)

The Conger–Kanungo model distinguishes the charismatic leadership of a manager from other leadership roles along two dimensions. The first are the followers’ perceptions of the manager’s greater desire to change the status quo. The second is a heightened sensitivity on the leader’s part to environmental opportunities, constraints, and followers’ needs . . . Furthermore, charismatic leadership is distinguished from other forms by the followers’ perceptions of the manager’s formulation of a shared and idealized future vision as well as his or her effective articulation of this vision in an inspirational manner. It is the shared perspective of the vision and its potential to satisfy follower needs that form the basis of attraction to the charismatic leader. (pp. 748-749)

Whether leadership is specifically defined one way or the other, the overarching assumption is that employees are strongly influenced by their leaders in their perceptions and behaviors, and, therefore, “the quality of the relationship that develops between a leader and a follower is predictive of outcomes at the individual, group, and organizational levels of analysis” (Gerstner & Day, 1997, p. 827). In other words, leadership is theoretically a key antecedent of many subsequent factors including

employee engagement (Xu & Thomas, 2011), which lead to desirable consequences such as organizational performance or individual well-being.

Engagement. Kahn (1990) first introduced the concept of personal engagement as occurring when “people employ and express themselves, physically, cognitively or emotionally during role performances” (p. 964), which became the foundation for defining what is now referred to as employee engagement—a term that is interchangeable with personal engagement, role engagement, work engagement, employee engagement, and job engagement. Discussing psychological availability that “measures how ready people are to engage given the distractions they experience as members of social systems” (p. 714), Kahn argued that this availability hinges on the physical, emotional, or psychological resources accessible in a given moment.

With increasing interest in operationalizing the concept, Schaufeli, Salanova, González-Romá, and Bakker (2002) defined engagement as a positive, fulfilling, work-related state of mind that is characterized by vigor, dedication, and absorption. They went on to say that

Vigor is characterized by high levels of energy and mental resilience while working, the willingness to invest effort in one’s work, and persistence even in the face of difficulties. Dedication is characterized by a sense of significance, enthusiasm, inspiration, pride, and challenge . . . [and] absorption is characterized by being fully concentrated and deeply engrossed in one’s work, whereby time passes quickly and one has difficulties with detaching oneself from work. (p. 74)

Expanding the scope of the definition from the individual to organizational level, Shuck and Wollard (2010) defined engagement as “an individual employee’s cognitive, emotional, and behavioral state directed toward desired organizational outcomes” (p. 103).

These modern operationalized developments of Kahn’s original thoughts on engagement may very well be the key to understanding inherent elements for its cultivation and offer potential implications on how organizations manage employee engagement from both the leader and subordinate perspectives.

Findings on the Leadership–Engagement Relationship

This section presents findings from the reviewed studies on the relationship between leadership and employee engagement.

Transformational leadership and engagement. Moss (2008) studied whether transformational leadership promotes a sense of security in followers among 160 employees in the public and private sectors. The study evaluated the transformational leadership style of the participant’s immediate supervisors, and then assessed the participant’s own self-esteem, attachment style, belief in a just world, regulatory focus, and work engagement using regression analysis. The results indicated that when leaders demonstrate emotional support and provide recognition for follower contributions, followers

feel securely attached and believe in a just world thus shifting their focus from potential losses to potential gains. As this promotion focus increased, the positive association between vision and vigor became more pronounced ($t = 4.15, p < .001$), but not significant when promotion focus was low. None of the transformational leadership behaviors were related to self-esteem; and supportive leadership was inversely related to anxious attachment ($\beta = -.43, p < .05$).

Zhu, Avolio, and Walumbwa (2009) investigated (a) the relationship between transformational leadership and followers' work engagement, and (b) whether the leadership–engagement relationship is stronger when positive follower characteristics are higher versus lower. They analyzed the survey data collected from 188 participants (48 top executive leaders and 140 following senior managers) in various industries in South Africa using confirmatory factor analysis (CFA), and hierarchical linear modeling (HLM), and found that follower-rated transformational leadership was significantly correlated with follower work engagement ($r = .58, p < .01$) and with self-rated follower characteristics ($r = .32, p < .01$). After controlling for follower-rated transformational leadership, follower characteristics had a positive effect on follower work engagement ($\gamma = .18, p < .05$). Follower characteristics significantly predicted the transformational leadership–follower engagement slope ($\gamma = .31, p < .05$). Controlling for follower characteristics rated by leader and aggregated follower characteristics rated by followers, the difference score was significantly related to follower work engagement ($\gamma = -.02, p < .01$). These findings indicate “an interesting linkage between transformational leadership and other employee attitudinal outcomes” (p. 610), where there is a symbiotic and influential relationship between followers and leaders.

Tims et al. (2011) examined how supervisors' leadership style influences followers' daily work engagement with 42 consultants (15 men and 27 women) at two different employers in The Netherlands. They tested whether (a) day-level transformational leadership style has a positive relationship with followers' day-level employee engagement and (b) whether each of day-level self-efficacy and day-level optimism mediates the relationship between day-level transformational leadership and day-level employee engagement. From the multi-level analysis of the general questionnaire and daily survey data collected from participants for five consecutive workdays, the study revealed the significant positive relationships on the daily level between transformational leadership and employee engagement ($\gamma = .14, p < .05$), self-efficacy and engagement ($\gamma = .56, p < .001$), and optimism and engagement ($\gamma = .30, p < .001$). However, the direct relationship between transformational leadership and engagement was non-significant. That is, the results supported the positive relationship between day-level transformational leadership and day-level work engagement with a full mediation of day-level optimism, but nullified the mediating role of self-efficacy in the relationship.

Wefald, Reichard, and Serrano (2011) studied the interrelationships of multiple conceptualizations and measures of work engagement within the nomological network. They examined the antecedents of personality, leadership, and perceived organizational support and outcomes of turnover intentions, affective commitment, and job satisfaction among 382 employees and managers at a mid-sized financial institution.

The data were collected by way of an online survey and analyzed using structural equation modeling (SEM). They measured engagement with two different published scales—a short version of the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) from Schaufeli et al. (2002) and a four-item scale by Britt, Thomas, and Dawson (2006)—and alternatively with Shirom's (2003) Vigor Scale consisting of five physical strength, four emotional energy, and three cognitive liveliness items. They found that all the measures of engagement were positively related to job satisfaction ($r = .35-.70, p < .01$). When engagement was entered into the regression, the effects of conscientiousness and extraversion on job satisfaction became non-significant. The effect of extraversion on intentions to leave was mediated by Britt's engagement (Step 1, $\beta = -.11, p < .05$; Step 2, $\beta = -.01, p = .81$) and so was the effect of conscientiousness on intentions to leave (Step 1, $\beta = -.15, p < .01$; Step 2, $\beta = -.04, p = .39$). The mediated regression results indicated that the effect of transformational leadership on intentions to leave was mediated by Schaufeli's engagement (Step 1, $\beta = -.20, p < .01$; Step 2, $\beta = -.08, p = .09$).

Salanova, Lorente, Chambel, and Martínez (2011) conducted a study with 297 nurses in Portugal to examine the relationship between supervisors' transformational leadership and staff nurses' extra-role performance as mediated by nurse self-efficacy and work engagement. From the data analysis using SEM, they found that at least partial mediation exists in the relationship researched. The influence of transformational leadership on extra-role performance was fully mediated by work engagement, with the results that "all the inter-correlations among the study variables were positive and many of them were also statistically significant" (p. 2261). The model explained 12% of the variance of self-efficacy, 19% of work engagement, and 2% of extra-role performance with fit indices, $\chi^2(5984) = 119.24$, root mean square error of approximation (RMSEA) = .06, goodness-of-fit index (GFI) = .94, and comparative fit index (CFI) = .97.

Aryee and Walumbwa (2012) studied the extent to which transformational leadership contributes to employees' work engagement among 193 subordinate-supervisor participants in China. Paper questionnaires were translated from English into Chinese to collect the data, then translated back to English for data analysis which used SEM. They found several indirect effects of transformational leadership on work engagement (i.e., via responsibility, meaningfulness, and innovative behavior) with the bias-corrected percentile method. The following results also were all positive and significant with the paths from transformational leadership to work engagement ($\beta = .36, p < .01$), experienced meaningfulness of work, ($\beta = .64, p < .01$), and experienced responsibility for work outcomes ($\beta = .62, p < .01$). In addition, experienced meaningfulness of work to work engagement ($\beta = .36, p < .01$) and experienced responsibility for work outcomes to work engagement ($\beta = .27, p < .05$) were also positive and significant.

Song, Kolb, Lee, and Kim (2012) examined transformational leadership, employee engagement, and organizational knowledge creation among 432 employees and middle-level managers of six for-profit organizations in various industries in South Korea. The participants completed a web-based self-reported survey, and the data collected were analyzed using several multivariate data analysis approaches including

hierarchical multiple regression and SEM. They found that transformational leadership independently played as a significant predictor to explain organizational knowledge creation with the direct impact of transformational leadership on organizational knowledge creation ($\gamma = .11, p < .01$) being significantly smaller than the indirect impact through the employee engagement variable. That is, the full mediation of employee engagement was not supported, and rather work engagement partially played a mediator role.

Vincent-Höper, Muser, and Janneck (2012) examined the indirect effect of transformational leadership on subjective occupational success mediated by work engagement. Their study applied a gender-sensitive approach among 530 women and 602 men, respectively. The online questionnaire data collected from the participants over the course of 4 months were analyzed using chi-square, standardized root mean square residual (SRMR), RMSEA, and CFI. Their results showed that the partially mediated model provided a marginally better fit to the data than the fully mediated model, and a considerably better fit than the non-mediated model, all of which led to the conclusion of a partial mediation effect of work engagement between transformational leadership and employee's occupational success. The results are as follows: (a) full mediation model, $\chi^2(84) = 397.41$, SRMR = .07, RMSEA = .06, and CFI = .97; (b) partial mediation model, $\chi^2(82) = 375.71$, SRMR = .06, RMSEA = .06, and CFI = .97; and (c) non-mediated model, $\chi^2(38) = 253.09$, SRMR = .07, RMSEA = .07, and CFI = .96.

Yuan, Lin, Shieh, and Li (2012) examined the effects that transformational leadership has on building the development of customer relationships. The data collected in three phases from 1,980 participants in Taiwan (660 employees and 1,320 customers of an IT company) were analyzed with CFA and latent growth modeling (LGM). Their findings indicated that the perceptions of transformational leadership were significantly associated with increases in work engagement ($\beta = .21, p < .01$), increases in work engagement were significantly related to increases in service performance (SP; $\beta = .26, p < .01$), and increases in SP development were significantly related to increases in customer relationships (CR; $\beta = .19, p < .01$).

Authentic leadership and engagement. Walumbwa, Wang, Wang, Schaubroeck, and Avolio (2010) investigated the relationship of authentic leadership with organizational citizenship behavior (OCB) and work engagement with a focus on the intervening mechanisms of empowerment and identification with supervisor. Separate questionnaires for supervisors and direct reports were created and distributed to each group (129 supervisors and 387 direct reports from two telecommunication firms in China), respectively, in three waves, with a lag of 2 weeks. The analysis of the collected data using HLM showed that (a) authentic leadership significantly predicted rated OCB ($\beta = .20, p < .01$) and work engagement ($\beta = .26, p < .01$), (b) authentic leadership significantly predicted followers' level of empowerment ($\beta = .25, p < .01$) and identification with supervisor ($\beta = .40, p < .01$), and (c) both empowerment and identification with supervisor were significantly related to rated OCB (empowerment: $\beta = .16, p < .01$; identification: $\beta = .19, p < .01$) and followers' work engagement (empowerment: $\beta = .39, p < .01$; identification: $\beta = .24, p < .01$). However, the

effect of authentic leadership on rated OCB and followers' work engagement were both no longer significant. Given the control for company type—which can influence both empowerment and authentic leadership—and follower-rated power distance,

testing the indirect effect of authentic leadership on OCB and work engagement, respectively, required a significant relationship between authentic leadership and both identification with supervisor and empowerment and a significant relationship between both identification with supervisor and empowerment and OCB as well as work engagement. (p. 909)

Alok and Israel (2012) reported research among 117 workers (82 men and 35 women) in India that investigated (a) the relationship between authentic leadership, work engagement, and psychological ownership in organizations (PO-Org), and (b) how psychological ownership interferes with the relationship between authentic leadership and work engagement. An Authentic Leadership Questionnaire (ALQ), a 16-item theory-driven survey instrument, was used to measure authentic leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2008) and the 9-item UWES was used to measure work engagement (Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2006). From the correlation coefficient and mediated regression analysis of the online survey data, they found that participants experienced moderate to high levels of authentic leadership, promotive PO-Org, preventive PO-Org, and work engagement. Authentic leadership correlated negatively ($r = -.25, p < .01$) with preventive PO-Org and positively ($r = .52, p < .01$) with promotive PO-Org. Preventive and promotive PO-Org share negative correlation as well ($r = -.23, p < .05$). The results showed that authentic leadership indirectly affects work engagement through promotive PO-Org.

Ethical leadership and engagement. Hartog and Belschak (2012) investigated the effects of ethical leader behavior on engagement. They first tested a model that suggests work engagement acts as a mediator in the relationship between ethical leadership and employee initiative among 169 participants. The second part of their study examined whether ethical leadership always forms an authentic expression of an ethical identity among 200 participants. Both study groups were given questionnaires in Dutch. The results from CFA indicated that work engagement is significantly related to the dependent variable when controlling for ethical leadership (initiative: $\beta = .33, p < .01$; counterproductive behavior: $\beta = -.50, p < .01$). Also, the main effects (beta weight) of ethical leadership decrease substantially when work engagement was added to the equation and dropped to a non-significant level.

According to Hartog and Belschak (2012),

These results suggest a strong identification-related motivational component in the ethical leadership process. Ethical leaders affect follower's self-concept and identity by highlighting how follower efforts are linked to attaining important moral goals and values. This makes work more meaningful in followers' eyes. (p. 43)

Charismatic leadership and engagement. Babcock-Roberson and Strickland (2010) performed research that examined charismatic leadership, work engagement, and OCB. They sought “to replicate recent work that links charismatic leadership to OCB and to extend the knowledge of this link by exploring the potential mediating mechanism of work engagement” (p. 314). Ninety-one undergraduate participants in a larger Western university completed questionnaires, and the data collected were analyzed using a series of regression equations. They found that the regression for charismatic leadership and work engagement was significant ($\beta = .40, p < .01$), where charismatic leadership accounted for 16% of the variance in work engagement ($R^2 = .16$); work engagement was positively related to OCB ($\beta = .41, p < .01$), where work engagement accounted for 16% of the variance in OCB ($R^2 = .16$); and the regression for charismatic leadership and OCB was significant ($\beta = .26, p < .05$), where charismatic leadership accounted for 7% of the variance in OCB ($R^2 = .07$). They also found that when work engagement was entered into the equation, the relationship between charismatic leadership and OCB was no longer statistically significant, indicating a full mediation of work engagement.

Other forms of leadership and engagement. Whitford and Moss (2009) studied the relationship between individual characteristics, leadership style, and workplace attitudes in virtual and traditional environments among 165 employees from small, medium, and large public and private organizations operating in Australia, North America, Europe, Asia, South Africa, and South America. The participants completed an online survey, and the data collected were analyzed using moderated multiple regression analysis. They looked at the relationship between visionary leadership and work engagement with promotion focus. From a results standpoint, the authors looked at one of two orientations that individuals could adopt to pursue goals: promotion or prevention. The former is driven to fulfill hopes and aspirations rather than duties and obligations; the latter is the opposite. When followers and leaders work at different locations, visionary leadership was positively associated with work engagement, if prevention focus was low. However, when followers and leaders worked at the same site, a divergent pattern emerged. That is, visionary leadership was positively associated with work engagement only if prevention focus was high; and personal recognition correlated positively with work engagement especially if prevention focus was elevated. A moderated multiple regression analysis was performed to ascertain whether performance orientation affected the relationship between personal recognition and work engagement as well as whether spatial distance moderated the interaction. When leaders and followers worked in different locations, personal recognition was positively related to work engagement, especially if performance orientation was high. This pattern was not present when leaders and followers worked in the same location; in that situation, personal recognition was positively related to work engagement only if performance orientation was low.

Alarcon, Lyons, and Tartaglia (2010) studied a conceptual model of the antecedents and consequences of engagement with 163 participants associated with a military organization (38% military officers, 32% enlisted personnel, and 30% civilians). The

data were collected by electronic assessment, then analyzed with SEM. It was found that the hypothesized model had a poor fit, $\chi^2(8) = 113.40, p < .001$, CFI = .71, RMSEA = .26, SRMR = .21. As the direct path between leadership and engagement was not significant, the direct path from leadership to engagement was deleted for the model modification. In addition, based on the modification indices, authors included the following paths: role clarity predicting peer group and organizational climate predicting peer group. Thus, the revised model adequately fit the data with fit indices, $\chi^2(7) = 31.50, p < .001$, CFI = .94, RMSEA = .10, SRMR = .05. Furthermore, a χ^2 difference test indicated that the second model fit the data significantly better than the first model ($\Delta\chi^2 = 81.90, p < .01$). Their results indicated that leadership's influence on engagement was fully mediated by role clarity and organizational culture.

Xu and Thomas (2011) investigated the relationship between leadership and engagement among 414 employees in New Zealand. A web survey was conducted to measure leader competencies using the John Robertson & Associates (JRA) 360-degree feedback measure and employee engagement using the JRA's Employee Engagement Scale consisting of six items—two items each for the cognitive, emotional, and behavioral components of engagement. The data collected were analyzed using multiple regression analysis. They found that leadership behaviors overlap considerably in their relationship with employee engagement, that tenure was not a significant predictor of engagement, and that leadership position was significant ($\beta = .37, p < .001$), and remained so when the other leadership competencies were factored in ($\beta = .34, p < .001$). Of the leadership factors, only supports (of) team (decisions) was significant ($\beta = .48, p < .01$). The three leadership factors explained an additional 22% of variance. In summary, the correlation results showed that the relationship-oriented leadership factors (supports team, displays integrity), the task-oriented leadership factor (performs effectively), and holding a leadership position were all positively associated with engagement whereas tenure had no relationship with engagement.

Conceptual studies on leadership and engagement. Serrano and Reichard (2011) surmise that leaders could play an important role in establishing a work environment in which employees feel energized and involved. To help leaders fulfill the role, they identified the following four specific pathways that may increase their employees' engagement: "(1) designing meaningful and motivating work, (2) supporting and coaching employees, (3) enhancing employees' personal resources, and (4) facilitating rewarding and supportive coworker relations" (p. 180).

In keeping with this train of thought, Attridge (2009) outlined efforts organizations should consider to improve employee engagement. The efforts include, better job design, providing appropriate support and resources from both co-workers and supervisors, and removing difficult job demands and stress from the organization culture. Macey and Schneider (2008) supported the idea that job setting is a contributor to employees' feelings of persistence, vigor, energy, dedication, and absorption.

Shuck and Herd (2012) stated that leaders who desire to produce engaging climates should develop self-awareness (i.e., an understanding of what they say and how they act), the conceptual cornerstone of emotional intelligence, and in many

ways of leadership that promotes engagement, and give attention to followers' basic needs with a willingness to respond to them. They noted a limitation by stating that it may be challenging for those who have not focused inwardly on personal development or outwardly on people management beyond task completion or performance management.

Discussion

This section consists of three categories. It begins with an assessment of strengths and weaknesses of the reviewed literature and then provides an analytical synthesis of what we examined. Following the synthesis and assessment, we offer future research agendas based on our review of these studies. It is important to note that although this article attempted to use Torraco's (2005) framework, and Callahan's (2010) selection process for rigor and replication in the literature review methodology, it might have missed some useful articles. This issue could be remedied by considering a pearl-growing searching method—identifying keywords in the selected articles, and using them for additional search—an extended keywords search (e.g., managers' roles and behaviors).

Assessment of Strengths and Weaknesses of the Reviewed Literature

Leadership styles and engagement. As evidenced throughout this review, an overwhelming portion of the literature surrounding the leadership–engagement relationship looked at transformational leadership in relation to engagement. In other words, unlike the strong research basis of transformational leadership, the literature provided little empirical examination on leadership styles such as ethical leadership in the context of the leadership–engagement relationship. Moreover, ethical leadership studies have often focused on the influence of the direct manager's own ethical approach on the follower's decisions as exemplified in Hartog and Belschak's (2012) argument that ethical leaders affect followers' self-concept and identity, and in Jones's (1991) statement, "human beings may respond differentially to moral issues in a way that is systematically related to characteristics of the issue itself" (p. 372). Given these issues, further investigation into ethical leadership, or insincere managerial ethical stances in association with employee engagement, could broaden empirical research in these areas. For example, it would be useful to explore the circumstances behind inauthentic ethical leadership contextualized within an organization's overt and covert ethical policies. In so doing, follower engagement may prove to be an important link between the business ethics and HRD disciplines.

In addition, the reviewed literature illustrated a singular approach to examining the relationship between leadership and engagement. Taking a research approach that examines one leadership style with engagement assumes that leaders in their day-to-day work use one leadership approach. In reality, although some leaders may have a dominant style, leadership decisions may call for the adoption of various styles depending on particular situations. The implications of these temporary shifts in

leadership styles or the use of combined leadership approaches has not been studied with engagement. With the exception of Xu and Thomas (2011), who differentiated between relationship-oriented factors (supports team, displays integrity), and the task-oriented factor (performs effectively) in leadership, none of the authors considered ways in which multiple or changing leadership styles influence engagement. Further research that examines the effects of multi-styled leadership that combines transformational, authentic, ethical, and charismatic leadership, for example, or a dyad of any leadership styles on engagement could enrich our understanding of the complexity of leadership choices and the implications on followers.

Furthermore, most of the reviewed studies were consistent in arguing that leadership is significantly correlated with and/or is affecting employees' work engagement directly, or via mediation. Although presenting an overarching snapshot about their relationship, these arguments are still an incomplete answer to questions such as "whether the positive relationship is present over time?" and "which one really causes the other?" In fact, the possibilities mentioned were (a) transformational leaders might temporarily affect employees in a positive way, but the opposite occurs in the long-term due to their continued challenging expectations (Vincent-Höper et al., 2012), and (b) an employees' engagement could potentially affect leaders' rather than the reverse (Hartog & Belschak, 2012). Moreover, more than half of the empirical studies (9 out of 16) pointed out their cross-sectional research design as a limitation, and subsequently called for a longitudinal approach to future research as a way of addressing this limitation. Without any longitudinal studies, many of the research findings and inferences on leadership and engagement remain narrowly focused and inconclusive. Substantial insight can be gained through a longitudinal approach to studying engagement and leadership, and will richly expand the body of literature.

Scales and measures. In reviewing 16 empirical studies, many different instruments were developed and/or used to measure leadership and engagement. In detail, there were four distinct instruments to measure leadership: (a) the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) for transformational leadership, (b) authentic leadership using the 16-item ALQ for authentic leadership, (c) the 10-item Ethical Leadership Scale (ELS) for ethical leadership, and (d) the 20-item Conger-Kanungo Charismatic Leadership Scale for charismatic leadership. With regard to employee engagement, six different measures were developed and/or used with some modifications: (a) UWES, (b) Gallup Workplace Audit (GWA) Scale, (c) Shirom's Vigor Scale, (d) JRA Employee Engagement Scale, (e) the Britt et al. Scale (Britt et al., 2006), and (f) the Alarcon et al. Scale (Alarcon et al., 2010). A majority of studies (i.e., 12 out of 16) used several versions of the UWES (i.e., UWES-17, 15, 11, or 9; Schaufeli et al., 2002; Schaufeli et al., 2006). To be more specific, nine studies (e.g., Hartog & Belschak, 2012; Tims et al., 2011) utilized three sub-dimensions of engagement such as vigor, dedication, and absorption (UWES-9 [7], UWES-17[1], and UWES-15 [1]), whereas three studies (Moss, 2008; Salanova et al., 2011; Whitford & Moss, 2009) only adapted two sub-dimensions (i.e., vigor and dedication) with UWES-11. Wefald et al. (2011) used not only UWES-9 but also Britt et al.'s (2006) 4-item scale and Shirom's 12-item Vigor

Scale (physical strength [5], emotional energy [4], and cognitive liveliness [3]); Walumbwa et al. (2010) and Zhu et al. (2009) used the 12-item GWA Scale developed by Gallup organization; Xu and Thomas (2011) used the 6-item JRA Scale (emotional [2], cognitive [2], and behavioral [2] components); Alarcon et al. (2010) created and used their own scale with 9 items.

These multiple approaches to capturing the concepts of leadership and engagement demonstrate a strong scholarly interest in their diverse aspects and relationship with other critical components. At the same time, however, this multitude also implies a weak theoretical agreement on the scales and measures. For example, whereas UWES is widely used by many as a validated instrument to measure engagement (Kim et al., 2012; Shuck, 2011; Song et al., 2012), there are also criticisms of the UWES (e.g., not fully capturing Kahn's original concept of engagement; Rich, LePine, & Crawford, 2010; Shuck, 2011) and controvertible use of sub-dimensions of UWES (i.e., three-factor scale vs. two-factor scale). As such, a variety of leadership styles and measurements might not be free from critiques of epistemological inquiries into the way they are conceptualized. Although this study focused mainly on the intersection of leadership and engagement without attempting to review, critique, and integrate all the theories and instruments, such an activity would be a valued contribution to more holistic understandings of the concepts.

External validity. As a whole, all the reviewed studies involved a large number and (geographical/occupational) diversity of participants and offer a firm ground for comparative and comprehensive understandings of the concepts researched. However, this cannot be interpreted as the secured external validity of all the findings necessary for robust theorization about the leadership–engagement relationship, considering that each of the elements and their relationships was examined separately in a specific context. One limitation discussed by many studies reviewed (e.g., Aryee & Walumbwa, 2012; Babcock-Roberson & Strickland, 2010; Hartog, & Belschak, 2012; Yuan et al., 2012) is the lack of substantial depth in addressing whether the study findings might have similar implications in other settings. Therefore, attempts for overarching conceptualization and/or empirical verification of external validity of the findings would be a desirable subsequent step to this integrated literature review.

Synthesis of the Reviewed Literature

Transformational leadership and engagement. Transformational leaders are ideally influential, inspirationally motivational, intellectually stimulating, and considerate of individuals in leading followers (Shuck & Herd, 2012). Based on the synthesis of a number of conceptual frameworks for leadership and employee engagement, Shuck and Herd (2012) asserted that “transformational leadership might be an appropriate theory to conceptualize behavioral engagement, a result of cognitive and emotional engagement, in a leadership context” (p. 164). In fact, as presented thus far, it has been found in many studies that transformational leadership has a positive relationship with employee engagement at the individual level. Specifically, employees

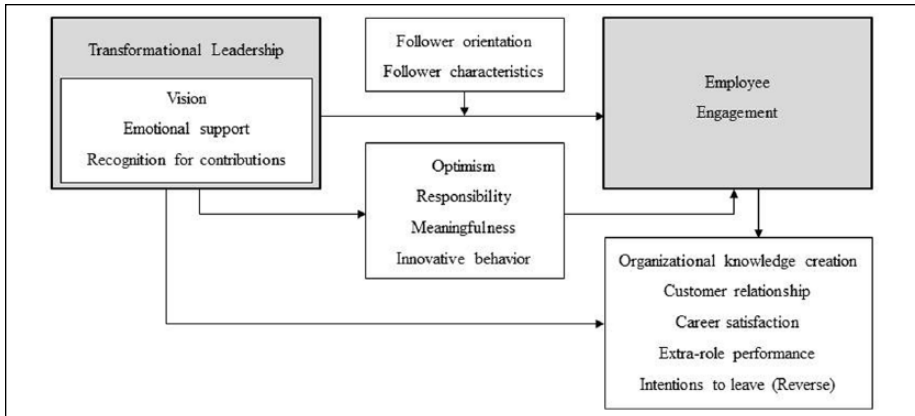


Figure 1. Relationships associated with transformational leadership and employee engagement.

become more engaged when transformational leadership is demonstrated through boosting up their optimism (Tims et al., 2011) and their responsibility, meaningfulness, and innovative behavior (Aryee & Walumbwa, 2012); employee engagement became lower when the leader's perception of the follower's characteristics is less favorable than the follower's self-evaluation (Zhu et al., 2009); followers get securely attached and confident in a just world when leaders demonstrate emotional support and provide recognition for follower contributions, leading employees to become more vigorous (Moss, 2008).

In terms of the mediating role of employee engagement, transformational leadership is partially mediated by employee engagement in influencing the organization's performance improvement in creating knowledge (Song et al., 2012), customer relationship (Yuan et al., 2012), and employee's career satisfaction (Vincent-Höper et al., 2012), and it is fully mediated in influencing employees' extra-role performance positively (Salanova et al., 2011) and intentions to leave reversely (Wefald et al., 2011).

Figure 1 illustrates a comprehensive framework that encompasses all the discussed relationships between transformational leadership and employee engagement.

Other leadership styles and engagement. Besides transformational leadership, many other leadership styles have been studied to examine the psychological mechanisms underlying the leadership–engagement relationship, and it has been presented that the effectiveness of leadership on followers' engagement may vary depending on other factors.

Leadership becomes more effective in engaging employees through clarifying roles and fostering organizational culture (Alarcon et al., 2010); authentic leadership has a positive relationship with employee engagement with such factors at play as empowerment and identification with supervisor (Walumbwa et al., 2010), and psychological ownership in organizations (Alok & Israel, 2012); the relationship- and task-oriented

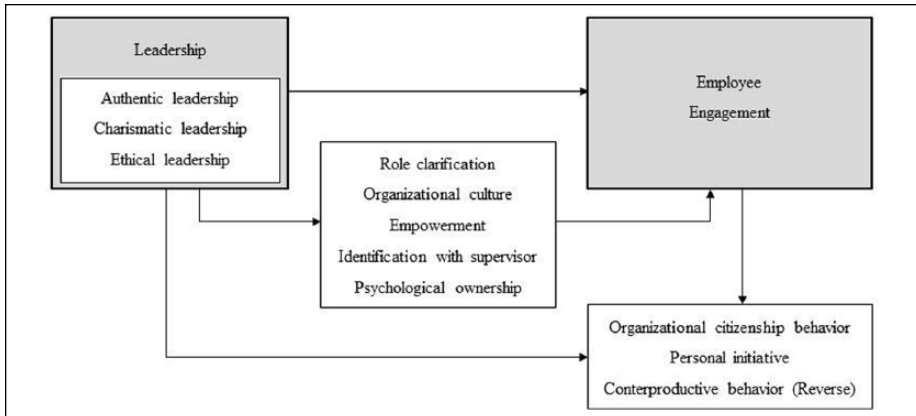


Figure 2. Relationships associated with leadership and employee engagement.

leadership behaviors, as well as the leadership position itself, were significantly related with engagement (Xu & Thomas, 2011).

In terms of the mediating role of employee engagement, again, charismatic leadership increases employee engagement and, in turn, promotes OCB (Babcock-Roberson & Strickland, 2010); ethical leadership has a significant relationship, through mediation of work engagement, with more personal initiative and less counterproductive behavior of employees (Hartog & Belschak, 2012).

These arguments between many leadership styles and employee engagement are also illustrated as a comprehensive framework in Figure 2.

Moderator of leadership–engagement relationship. It is notable that leadership influences employee engagement by transforming followers’ self-concept with the moderation of LMX (Aryee & Walumbwa, 2012). To put it differently, whether the quality of LMXs in the organization is high may interact with (i.e., moderates) many organizational dynamics such as employee engagement in a significantly different direction. These are consistent with previous findings on a leader influence on followers’ self-perception (e.g., Tims et al., 2011; Zhu et al., 2009).

At the same time, the cultivation of a secure environment is also essential to the impact of leadership on followers’ engagement (Alarcon et al., 2010; Moss, 2008). There are a myriad of transactions that occur between leaders and employees in the organization, and these transactions can result in mutually rewarding benefits when leaders create an atmosphere for trust- and respect-based fair exchanges (Bass, 1985).

When taken together, the way leaders view and are viewed by followers, the degree they influence followers’ perceptions, and the quality of the work environment they cultivate can all impact the effectiveness of leadership and enhancement of employee engagement.

Recommendations for Future Research

First, empirical research is invited to validate the presented frameworks that integrated the research findings on the relationship between leadership and engagement. More specifically, although Figures 1 and 2 are the frameworks that synthesized the findings from all of the empirical studies reviewed, it is insufficient to postulate that the integrated frameworks are also empirically valid because neither of them has been tested as a whole. Given the understandings that dynamics of the sum of the parts may be not equal to those of the whole (Smuts, 1926; Woods, 1998), and that leadership should be understood from the holistic perspective (Campbell, 2007; Covey, 2004), research of this kind will contribute to comprehending the bigger picture of the leadership–engagement relationship.

Second, more empirical explorations are recommended to examine the leadership–engagement relationship from the perspectives of many leadership styles or an integrated one as a whole, besides the ones using only a particular leadership style. For example, it would be informative to compare which leadership style is more effective for employee engagement—which might be different for task completion—given that leadership is defined, demonstrated (or perceived by followers), and measured in multiple ways. An integrated approach would also be desirable for either an equitable understanding of a variety of leadership styles or a comprehensive understanding of leadership as a whole. This argument is supported by the assertion that leadership can hardly be explained using a characteristic domain or two and that leadership research should move further to embracing the ideas of the specifically defined styles into the integrated concept of leadership itself (Avolio, 2007). This multiple perspectives or integrated approach to leadership stretches to the issue of measurement as well. Rather than coming up with more new leadership styles and corresponding instruments, recommended are research endeavors to pursue the theoretical and then instrumental integration on the basis of knowledge and insights that have accrued.

In addition, the moderation effect could be another area worth examining in the leadership–engagement context. A certain leadership style may have an interaction (i.e., work better or worse) with a specific factor than others as the gender (Vincent-Höper et al., 2012), the spatial distance (Whitford & Moss, 2009), follower characteristics (Zhu et al., 2009), and the promotion focus (Moss, 2008) showed the interaction effect with leadership. Hypothetically speaking, charismatic leadership may have a stronger influence on engaging relatively younger or male employees, whereas ethical leadership might work better with relatively older or female employees. A more dramatic example to consider could be that authentic leadership may be positively related to employee engagement in Eastern cultures and negatively in Western cultures. Research attempts to explore such questions—which go beyond the relationship study—could provide in-depth insights and help with externally valid theory building regarding the leadership–engagement relationship. Research of this kind is especially meaningful in this diversified world where values and their effects that appear to be universal to one are perceived differently by another.

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