Original Article

Relationship between work engagement and leadership in the bakery industry in Piura, Peru

ABSTRACT

Using a quantitative, non-experimental, cross-sectional research design, this study analyzed the relationship between leadership styles based on the Full-Range Model and work engagement in the bakery industry in the city of Piura in 2022. A sample of 60 workers were administered the Castro Solano *et al.* (2004) Leadership Styles Questionnaire (CELID) and the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). The results revealed a strong correlation between leadership styles and work engagement, highlighting the influence of the motivational leader's role in guiding the rewards and benefits that enable motivated, committed and energetic employees to engage in their work. Specifically, transformational leadership and transactional leadership were found to have a positive impact on work engagement.

Keywords: leadership styles; engagement; talent retention; model; organization.

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INTRODUCTION

One of the most important sectors in the food industry is the industrial bakery. In Peru, the average consumption of bread is 25 kg, with consumption in the following areas: coast (25.8 kg), highland (24.1 kg), jungle (18.7 kg), metropolitan Lima and Callao (24.5 kg), with higher consumption in the coast (Pulso PUCP, 2023). This increase has generated great demand and competitiveness, favoring the positioning of facilities and attracting and retaining employees for optimal management. Currently, the need to adapt to the constant changes in technological, commercial and management aspects requires the creation of new strategic models to succeed in the market. This implies the need for talented leaders and work teams to face new challenges.

It is in this context that human resource management emphasizes the importance of the relationship between work engagement and leadership in organizations (Megawaty *et al.*, 2022; Saputra & Mahaputra, 2022). Work engagement (Schaufeli & Bakker, as cited in Ruiz Bejarano, 2021) is considered a positive and rewarding work-related state of mind characterized by energy, dedication, and immersion in work. It is considered to be extrinsic and depends to a greater extent on the individual relationship that the subjects have with their organizational context. It is also related to the degree to which the employee is committed to the organization and is expressed in fulfilling functions and responsibilities (Zahay *et al.*, 2021; Rojas *et al.*, 2023; Arias-Gonzáles, 2021).

Therefore, it is essential to have employees who are committed to the organization, who promote active participation and who feel satisfied with their work, as this is a significant problem in the organization (Grego-Planer, 2022; Chan *et al.*, 2022). Employees showing an affective attachment to their work is related to the type of leadership exercised, and that the lack of this commitment is not only related to the economic aspect (Meirinhos *et al.*, 2023; Oh *et al.*, 2023; Onesti, 2023). Therefore, since the lack of commitment is influenced by the dynamics of the work and the type of leadership exercised within it (Santiago-Torner & Rojas-Espinosa, 2021; Arteaga & Limo, 2022),

it is important for organizations to design strategies to make employees improve their commitment to their functions.

In recent years, statistics have shown that people are fulfilling their roles in their jobs, but they are not fully engaged. According to Oxford Economics (2020), only 13% of employees worldwide say they feel engaged; by 2030, 75% are expected to feel more motivated and engaged (Human Resources Observatory, 2021). This is in addition to the findings that in Peru, 12% have reported implementing a program to increase their organizational commitment; however, only 7% have managed to achieve levels of excellence (Gestión, 2015). Thus, these figures have a direct impact on the relationship between the employees and the objectives of the companies in Peru.

Almutairi (2020) in Saudi Arabia examined the correlations between leadership self-efficacy and organizational commitment and found that there is a positive relationship between leadership self-efficacy and affective commitment. Leadership self-efficacy was found to correlate positively with normative commitment. It is emphasized that leaders should increase their self-efficacy and create an environment conducive to teamwork and innovation in order to improve teachers' organizational commitment. This is also mentioned by Martins *et al.* (2023) in Portugal, who developed a research focused on the study of the effect of leadership (transformational and transactional) on turnover intentions and whether this relationship is mediated by organizational commitment. The results show that transformational leadership has a negative and significant effect on intending to leave and a positive and significant effect on affective commitment.

The role of the leader is fundamental to achieving strategic results and healthy relationships within the organization in order to have a committed, motivated and satisfied work team. This premise allows us to define leadership as the dynamic in which the leaders of organizations drive the development of corporate objectives. It encompasses the authentic way in which the functions are exercised in front of collaborators (Alvesson & Jonsson,

2018; Abbas *et al.*, 2022; Lyubykh *et al.*, 2022). Therefore, the leadership model that prevails in the organization is an influential aspect of employee performance and business profitability (Amankwaa *et al.*, 2022; Freze *et al.*, 2023).

Leadership is therefore a cross-cutting variable in all business contexts (Ausat *et al.*, 2022; Lee *et al.*, 2022). Emphasis is placed on the styles of leadership due to its cross-cutting nature. One of the most significant and influential is transformational leadership, according to Bass (1985), who describes it as a process that occurs in the leader-follower relationship. It is characterized by charisma, so that followers identify with the leader and want to emulate him.

Managers with this style of leadership tend to go above and beyond for their employees, focusing on important goals. In this style of leadership, employees work out of sheer dedication and a deep sense that their work helps the organization accomplish much more than the rewards they receive. A study in China developed by Iqbal *et al.* (2021), has found that when a transformational leadership style is developed, there are significant improvements in the commitment shown by employees in organizations, as it generates greater motivation to do things and consideration that they are taken into account in the planning and development of activities, increasing their creativity and performance.

This type of leader constantly challenges his staff in an intellectual way, which stimulates their creativity and, at the same time, gives them feedback as a leader who emphasizes his position. Likewise, there is an authentic and real concern for employees, as the interaction with his employees is the main axis of his leadership; he focuses his expectations in search of a common goal, thus fulfilling everyone and his own role, which has a direct and indirect impact on the organization.

This style of leadership is characterized by a high degree of mutual benefit and is guided by the principles of "leading by example" and "serving others."

It is crucial to emphasize that transformational leadership is based more on the leader's beliefs, values, and individual qualities than on a simple process of exchange with his or her employees. These leaders have the ability to induce changes in the culture, vision and strategy of the organization, in addition to promoting the generation of innovative ideas in terms of products and technology.

Transactional leadership emphasizes recognizing the required roles and tasks. As a result, transactional leaders clarify the requirements that are necessary for the fulfillment of the goals and how these goals will be achieved if the follower puts in the necessary effort (Avolio and Bass, 2004). This style identifies the needs and wants of followers, which are clearly explained in order to satisfy them in exchange for the fulfillment of specific goals and objectives. Thus, both the leader and followers benefit, the former through the fulfillment of tasks and the latter through the rewards for their work performance. Thus, transactional leaders are quite focused on the here and now, on the smooth running of the organization, and on maximizing its efficiency.

The laissez-faire leadership style is characterized by being more flexible. It allows team members to work autonomously. It can be effective when group members have expertise in their area of work and when leaders provide ongoing supervision. However, this approach can also be conducive to miscommunication due to its laissez-faire approach.

On the other hand, work engagement is a positive and rewarding mental state related to work, characterized by energy, dedication and immersion in the work, according to Schaufeli and Bakker cited in Ruiz Bejarano (2021). In other words, it is not a momentary and episodic state, but a longer lasting and predominant emotional and cognitive state that is not oriented towards an object, a situation, a person or a particular behavior. Therefore, the engagement of the employees requires that the organization focuses on the staff to identify with their own work, which influences the actions they take towards the achievement of the organizational goals and the company itself (Messarina, 2019; Portilla, 2017).

In this regard, the objective of this study is to establish the relationship between

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leadership and work engagement in the industrial bakery sector. The results obtained will be able to identify the most effective relationship between the leadership style of its leaders and human capital to improve the culture of the organization, increase commitment and improve the work environment. The information presented in this paper is relevant because there is no evidence that research has been conducted in the industrial bakery sector. It is also intended to serve as a background for future studies or as a tool for problem solving.

METHODS

The study was applied to the bakery industry, which is formally established in the Peruvian territory, in the city of Piura. The research follows a quantitative approach because a hypothesis is posed through data collection, which is then contrasted with statistical data in order to define behavioral models and verify theories (Hernández-Sampieri *et al.*, 2018). It also follows a non-experimental design because the researcher studies the variables in their natural state without interference or manipulation (Hinojosa Mamani, 2024, p.142); besides being cross-sectional because the data were obtained on a single occasion and at a single point in time.

The population consisted of employees working in production, sales and logistics. A non-probabilistic purposive sampling was used, where all employees were selected according to predetermined criteria, such as: seniority of more than one year. The sample size was 60 employees aged between 21 and 55 years. Inclusion criteria: the minimum experience of the workers was one year; people with time and availability to participate in the study. Exclusion criteria were those who did not complete all instruments and those who marked double answers.

The instrument used was the CELID ("Leadership Styles Questionnaire") (Appendix B) (Castro Solano *et al.*, 2004). The scale consists of 34 items that operationalize the three leadership styles that will be part of this research: transformational, transactional and laissez faire leadership. The questionnaire has been validated by Llagsahuanga (2020), in his study on the management style of the

Full-time School N° 15285 María Auxiliadora, Sullana-Piura, using a sample of 96 people. The content of the instrument was validated by expert evaluation. The mean value of the instrument was 0.96, which indicates a very high level of validity. The instrument reliability shows that the instrument used has an acceptable reliability, based on the Cronbach's alpha coefficient of 0.75 for the whole instrument.

The Ultrech Work Engagement Scale (UWES), which has been validated in Peru by Laureano Anquipa *et al.* (2020) among university teachers, will be used as a measure of engagement. This instrument was developed by Schaufeli *et al.* (2002). The abbreviated version consisting of 09 items will be applied, which allows estimating the commitment to work in the Organization's employees. This questionnaire consists of five response alternatives, from never to always, and measures three dimensions of the construct: vigor, dedication, and absorption. For this study, Cronbach's alpha for the total scale was 0.88.

The research was first developed by requesting permission from the managers to conduct the research and provide facilities for data collection. Then, the Area Managers were informed about the research and coordinated the execution of the research, taking into account the duration, which in this case was 25 minutes and was provided individually, ensuring the anonymity and confidentiality of the responses. The data collection technique was an online survey using Google Forms, but guided and accompanied by a Human Resources Assistant to explain the study and dispel doubts. Once the application was completed, the data obtained were entered into Microsoft Excel and the SPSS program version 26 was used for processing.

RESULTS

Descriptive and inferential statistical methods were used to examine the data. In the descriptive analysis, the mean, median and standard deviation of both variables and their dimensions were determined (see Table 1).

In the inferential part, the normality test was performed first, using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test, with a significance level of 0.05.

According to the results of the evaluation, the correlation test was chosen. If both variables and dimensions showed a normal distribution, the Pearson correlation test was chosen (see Table 2). It shows that there is a direct and significant relationship between these two variables of 0.388** and a P value of 0.002. This indicates that the leadership style has a significant impact on the affective attachment of the employees to the organization, the sense of belonging and identification with the company, generating a high level of engagement, showing greater commitment and motivation to their work.

Consistently, the analysis of variance (F-test = 6.636; p < 0.001) is statistically significant (see Table 3). Table 4 shows that each of the independent variables is found to be influential in work engagement. In fact, transformational leadership (t= 2.969; p<0.004) and transactional leadership (t= 2.875; p<0.000) have a direct relationship with the dependent variable. This implies that in industrial bakery companies in the city of Piura, leadership is based on the fact that leaders directly give responsibilities to their work team, motivating them through benefits or rewards, due to the naturalness of the same, to achieve the established production and sales quotas per month.

This leads to evidence that the leadership style with the highest relevance is Transactional Leadership (41.6%), which means that employees perceive the managers of the company in question to be transactional leaders. In this style, employees perceive that the leader generates rewards for meeting specific goals or performance criteria (see Table 5).

DISCUSSION

The results of the study contribute to the understanding of work engagement and its relationship with leadership. It has been demonstrated that transformational and transactional leadership styles have a positive effect on work engagement by creating an affective bond between employees and the organization. These results are in line with the results of the previous analysis. Beraún Vásquez and Castillo Blanco (2024) emphasize that the transformational leadership style is the only one that directly influences work engagement, which has important implications for strengthening human management in

Table 1
Descriptive Variables of Leadership Styles and Work Engagement

	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Workplace Engagement	60	12.4918	1.07773
Transactional Leadership	60	14.4754	1.83127
Laisse Faire Leadership	60	15.5082	2.68094
Transactional Leadership	60	16.4262	2.19438

Note. Prepared by the author.

Table 2
Pearson Correlation between Leadership Styles and Work Engagement Variables.

Variables		Leadership Styles	Work Engagement
Leadership Styles	Pearson Correlation	1	.388**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.002
	N	60	60
Work Engagement	Pearson Correlation	.388**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.002	
	N	60	60

Note. **. Correlation is significant at 0.01 level (2-tailed). Prepared by the author.

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industrial bakery organizations, based not only on administrative practices, but also on talent management practices that allow attracting, developing and retaining talent.

Similarly, research by Mohammed and Ghada (2016) shows that transformational leadership has a positive impact on employee commitment, especially through constant training, acting as a reference in values and promotion of teamwork contribute to competence.

On the other hand, transactional leadership in this study has a positive relationship with commitment, which has been confirmed by Arias-Gonzáles (2021), who states that this style rewards actions and the fulfillment of objectives, generating commitment in its collaborators. In other words, in companies of the industrial bakery sector, leadership is focused on the supervision and organization of all activities so that the group has an adequate performance. It is evident that in these organizations, employees are encouraged to perform their functions by means of two things basically: rewards or punishments, aspects that make the development of functions superficial (Abbas and Ali, 2023; Jacobsen *et al.*, 2022; Khairy *et al.*, 2023).

In order for employees to develop greater engagement through personal initiative, it is necessary to change these practices of enforcing functions that often lead to routine and turnover.

Table 3
Anova on Leadership Styles and Engagement

		ANOVA[a]				
	Model	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	18.039	3	6.013	6.636	.003[b]
	Residual	51.651	57	.906		
	Total	69.690	60			

a. Dependent Variable: ENGAG

b. Predictors: (Constant), TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADER, ABSENT LEADER

Note. Prepared by the author.

Table 4
Regression Analysis

		Coefficients[a]				
	Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error	Beta		
1	(Constant)	11.346	1.563		7.260	.000
	LIDER_TRANSFORMACIONAL	1.332	.448	.342	2.969	.004
	LIDER_TRANSACCIONAL	1.557	.453	.320	2.875	.000
	LIDER_LAIZZE FAIRE	-.799	.414	-.223	-1.929	.059

Note. a. Dependent Variable: ENGAG, b. Predictors in the Model: (Constant), TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADER, ABSENT LEADER. Prepared by the author.

Table 5
Leadership Style Percentages

	Variable	Fi	%
Leadership Styles	Transformational Leadership	24	40.0%
	Transactional Leadership	25	41.6%
	Absent Leadership	11	18.4%

Note. Prepared by the author.

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This implies that industries should focus on identifying and understanding the leadership model that prevails in their organization, an aspect that influences employee performance and business profitability (Amankwaa *et al.*, 2022; Freze *et al.*, 2023).

As a complement to this section, the practical implications of these results are emphasized, since leadership is a cross-cutting axis in the organizations of the different sectors, making the development of various strategies to promote participative and transformational leadership, where employees are involved in the development of the different processes of the companies, imperative. The importance of the treatment and quality of interpersonal relationships in work contexts, characteristics that significantly improve the level of commitment of people in their work, is examined.

Despite the significant contributions, limitations have been identified, like the size of the sample, the limited access for the generation of research projects on the field, because of the majority of micro and small enterprises (MSMEs) and the high turnover of personnel. Therefore, in order to generalize the results to different organizations, research is needed to expand the sample and use a probability sample. It would be good for further research to consider these variables in order to propose theoretical models that can explain the level of work engagement, since job knowledge training and quality of interpersonal relationships are probably related processes.

CONCLUSIONS

The following conclusions can be drawn from the research:

- In the bakery industry, when the leader rewards employee actions and goal achievement, work engagement is high.

- Conversely, when the leader does not make decisions or take actions to meet production and sales quota goals, there is low "work engagement".

- When the leader guides, motivates, and teaches, it results in employees with more service time and job satisfaction.

In fact, according to the results, the following is suggested:

- It is recommended that further research be conducted to expand and deepen the knowledge as scientific guidelines in the industrial bakery sector, due to the lack of information on the emphasis of human talent that is accessed, to promote strategies to promote an organizational culture of success, through the leadership style that promotes the well-being of the employee and that allows not only work based on time control or a hierarchical culture, but more flexible.

- Design and implement an improvement plan focused on strengthening the organizational culture, with the goal of achieving positive results at the leadership and engagement levels, as these are the main axes of work in all entities.

- A Leaders Program should be generated to empower and strengthen the soft and strategic skills of leaders to motivate, guide employees to development and intellectual stimulation, innovation in processes for production and sale of bakery, taking care of internal and external customers of the entity.

- Industrial bakery companies should focus on implementing human talent management processes with the intention of developing employees through training and development programs that allow them to become experts in the production area, as well as succession plans that allow them to grow and identify with the organization through their employer brand, onboarding, employee experience and thus increase their engagement levels.

- It is recommended to implement an incentive and emotional salary system that will positively affect the quality of life, personal and family life of emplo-

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yees as part of the corporate culture and strengthen the fulfillment of their duties.

The usefulness of these results lies in the fact that it was found that the leadership exercised is a transversal axis in all companies, regardless of their name or the type of business they are engaged in. People significantly improve their performance and commitment to their work when there is transformational leadership that integrates and involves employees in the development of the different organizational processes. Therefore, it is important to develop activities to change these leadership practices.

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Conflict of interest

Author contributions