



**THE EFFECTS OF LEADERSHIP STYLES ON EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT  
IN SMALL AND MEDIUM ENTERPRISES IN NIGERIA**

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## **ABSTRACT**

Leadership styles refers to the approach a leader adopts in mobilising and motivating employees towards achieving a specific goal. Employee engagement on the other hand refers to the extent an employee is emotionally, cognitive and behaviourally attached to an organisation which influences his/her productivity. There are different types of leadership styles, however this study focused on four namely; Transformational, Democratic, Autocratic and Transactional. This study therefore tried to investigate the impact of leadership styles on employee engagement with reference to selected Small and Medium scale Enterprises (SMEs) in Nigeria. The study adopts the qualitative research methodology which uses interpretivism philosophy, descriptive research design and qualitative survey research strategy. Data was collected via the conduct of interviews with four (4) employees of different SMEs in Nigeria. The results of the study revealed that amongst the four leadership styles transformational leadership was more significant in engaging employees, this is because transformational leadership has the capacity to keep employees satisfied and provoke commitment which are significant factors that stimulate employee engagement. The transformational leader provides more material (pay, bonuses, financial incentives) and non-material motivations (working conditions, career development opportunities, leadership responsibilities) which enhances job satisfaction. Transformational leaders are also able to instil a feeling of value and sense of belonging amongst employees, thus making them more committed to the organisation. When employees are satisfied and are committed, they become more engaged and are better productive. The research thus recommends that leaders should adopt the transformational style as it is better at stirring up employee engagement for better productivity.

DECLARATION

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## **LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS**

CCN – Corporate Commission of Nigeria

EE- Employee Engagement

SMEs- Small and Medium-Term Enterprise

UK- United Kingdom

USA- United States of America

WW I and II – World War I and II



## **CHAPTER ONE**

### **GENERAL BACKGROUND OF THE STUDY**

#### **1.1. Introduction**

This chapter discusses the overall background of the study. The study seeks to investigate the impact of leadership styles on employee engagement as such, there are two conceptual frameworks used (Leadership styles and Employee engagement). These two conceptual frameworks are relevant to the study as they include the two variables that are needed to undertake the study. The independent variable (Leadership styles) and dependent variable (employee engagement) (Antonio, 2017). In Independent variable there are 4 leadership styles: Democratic, authoritative, transactional and transformational (Bagheri, 2017).

In dependent variables five (5), aspects are discussed which productivity, meeting deadlines, are resolving conflicts, achieving organizational goals and executing assigned tasks (Bagheri, 2017).

Within the frameworks the research background is noted, which further breaks down to the research objectives and research questions. The significance and justification of the study are also included in this chapter. The chapter concludes by stating the proposed content of each chapter of the study.

#### **1.2. Background of the Study**

Leadership, though having various definitions, is an essential part of human society and organization. Leadership seeks to ensure that all aspects of an organization are harmonized and targeted towards goal attainment, this is why Russel (2005), noted that leadership is the personal influence that is implemented by one individual or more than one person thorough the

communication process towards the attainment of goals of the company. Apart from this another Hassan et al, (2015) have explained leadership the ability which may influence the people to follow the guidance or adhere to one's decision. The potency of leadership thus makes high and quality leaders sort for throughout organizations (Russel, 2005).

Within an organization, leadership has many roles, one of which is employee engagement. Employee engagement refers to the level of commitment, value and emotional attachment which an employee has for an organization (Schuler, Beutell and Youngblood, 2008). It measures the degree to which an employee feels physically, emotionally and mentally attached to an organization. Employee engagement has many benefits which includes; increased motivation, better work habits, productivity, less employee turnover, better customer engagement and overall an increase in performance of the organization (Ruganzi, 2017). According to Schuler, Beutell and Youngblood (2008), without employee engagement an organization may not achieve what it hopes to achieve neither will the employee gain what they hope to gain. Which such an importance of employee engagement, several studies (Antonio, ,2017, Bakker and Leiter, 2010, Biron and Boon, 2013 ) have tried to investigate on the type of leadership style which can stir up the right kind of engagement amongst employees as leadership style effects the general operational presentation of the efficiency of employees to attain the goal. Most studies Odumeru and Ogbonna (2013), Barling and Cooper (2008), Joyce and Judge (2004), have tried to give an explanation of democratic, authoritative, autocratic, transactional and transformational. More details of these will be provided in the literature review.

The four leadership styles has been a subject of academic research, various scholars have sought to explain which leadership style is more effective in eliciting employee engagement for Barling and Cooper (2008), they mentioned that democratic leadership style often than not enhances feeling of belongingness amongst the employees, this is through participation in

decision making and listening to their point of view, this thus increases employee engagement in an organization, as employees become more committed to organizations where they are valued for their contributions. Robert (2015), investigated that authoritative leadership style did more at engaging employees, as employees were more inclined towards a firm, affirmative and committed leader who sets quality goals and seek better ways to motivate employees to achieve them. Odumeru and Ogbonna (2013), on the other hand noted that transactional leadership style was effective at engaging employees through compliance to terms of employment and legal contracts. Further, Joyce and Judge (2004), notes that transformational leadership through vision, inspiration and charisma was able to engage employees better. Despite all the above scholars' authentic claims, there exist a major gap as there is yet an academic research that discusses the best type of leadership style that makes employees more engaged with references to Small and Medium Term Enterprises in Nigeria. According to the investigation, there are many small and medium-sized companies in Nigeria. The entire number of SMEs was 263,000 (Seriki and Murphy, 2019). The main portion for donating to the companies of Nigeria may comprise a micro-sized company that can hire more than nine staff. Allowing to the investigation of SME development and organization in Nigeria, it was observed that the companies are extremely attentive on the development of strong leadership which can promote and manage the events of the company by charming the staff in the work. It was detected that there are constant specialized growth agendas that are perceived in the SME of Nigeria that can achieve the companies casually. Some concerns suggest that the development of leadership may require to be conceptualized from the present context of corporate. There is a difference between the idea of management and leadership accountabilities in SME (Bagheri, 2017). There are new startups in Nigeria which are characterized based on simple structures that are non-formalized where leadership can influence the production of an employee in terms of engagement and performance.

In the fast-moving changing and the modest worldwide market situation, small and medium enterprises are established to apply an inspiration on the economies (Sommer, 2015). SME may deliver the frugality with economic development and invention. SME has donated towards job formation and the economic prosperity of the nations. The investigation was done which shows that SME plays the main role to foster economic growth, generate opportunities for employment and reduce the level of poverty (Arinaitwe, 2006). Karadakil, Goud, and Thomas (2015), have elaborated on the failure and success of the business that may depend on the style of leadership which is employed by the leaders, they noted that companies need leadership to monitor the processes of the company. Societies may necessitate effective frontrunners who are talented of looking at the people in the correct track to attain the vision and mission and endure realistic to the standards of the company. Frontrunners are the problematic solvers who may guide the company through the trials and accomplish more through the others.

The capability to tie the employees to work towards the goals of the company is the role of an active leader who may work for the success of the company. Great leaders may communicate the future path of the company to the group of the people and ask them to do the work to achieve the common goals. Nigeria and Hitt (2005), specified that leadership is the main and significant role in the achievement of the business and the performance of the business and the employee in a competitive environment. The achievement of the company or the presentation of the employee is influenced by the differences in the styles of leadership. As have been explained, all of these leadership styles can influence the engagement an employee (Johnson and Klee, 2007).

In relation to the above therefore, this study is carried out to investigate what leadership style is more effective at engaging employees with reference to SMEs in Nigeria. The interactive nature of the research with links leaders to employees intends to discover and ascertain

empirically leadership styles that increases or decreases commitment levels of employees to firms.

### **1.3. Statement of the Research Problem**

Now a day's invention and conversion of the private and community sector have raised the worry on the way of leading and outcome (Bass et al, 2003). In every company private or public they aim to achieve and get better results. Many researchers have shown that work performance or job along with leadership are very crucial in societies. Many variables may direct or indirect impact on the work performance and engagement of the workers such as satisfaction and motivation. It has been recognized that there are deprived skills of organization and leadership in SME or Nigeria which are recognized as the acute problem. According to the investigation, it was determined that there was a managerial weakness which is the main aim that donates to the letdown of the small industry. It was perceived that the achievement of any company is linked with the presentation of the management and leader as leadership shows the main part to found the firm and takes the efficiency at the top. Many issues are rising which is related to minor and medium-sized enterprises in Nigeria as the services of the leaders are appraised in SME in Nigeria as the factor of achievement. The main emphasis of this research is within the background to classify the part of the leadership styles by discovering the part of the leadership styles of the employees and managers in the companies of Nigeria.

### **1.4. Research Objectives**

Within the context of leadership, the central objective of this study is to discover empirically what leadership style best engages employees in the SMEs sector of Nigeria. The study makes emphasis on democratic, autocratic, transactional and transformational leadership and their role in enhancing employee commitment while focusing on employee engagement variables.

Other research objectives include:

- i. To review literature pertaining leadership styles and employee engagement
- ii. To review theoretical constructs of leadership and employee engagement
- iii. To empirically examine the influence of the style of leadership on employee's satisfaction commitment and motivation
- iv. To empirically discover the link between Leadership style and employee turnover levels in SMEs of Nigeria.

### **1.5. Research Questions**

The study will be targeted towards answering the following research questions

- i. What does existing literature say about leadership styles and employee engagement?
- ii. What are theoretical constructs that explain leadership styles and employee engagement?
- iii. What is the influence of leadership style on employee satisfaction, commitment and motivation
- iv. What significant link exist between leadership style and employee turnover levels in SMEs of Nigeria.

### **1.6. Significance of Research**

The significance of the investigation could be analysed by evaluating the management of the team and assuring the productivity in the occurrence of the front-runner who is accomplished of providing the image to their assistants. It is held that frontrunners can get and set energetic objectives for the workers and authorize them for accomplishing the objectives of the company. The scope of the study is to classify the effect of the leadership style for handling the efficiency



of team members. The research will attempt to give insight into the leadership styles on employee engagement of minor and medium-sized enterprises in Nigeria. The study would be practically and theoretically which is significant to the general public.

### **1.7. Justification of the Study**

The purpose of the training is to inspect the effect of the style of leadership on the engagement of an employee in the SME of Nigeria, inspect the influence of the style of leadership and role of democratic leadership outcome in SME of Nigeria towards employee's satisfaction and motivation, to scrutinize the facilitating role of the motivation of an employee amongst employee performance, engagement and leadership and evaluate the link amongst the employee engagement and leadership in SME of Nigeria. The study was planned to inspect how leadership styles may affect the engagement of employees of small and medium enterprises in Nigeria. SME may exert a strong influence on the thrifths of Nigeria.

### **1.8. Research Methodology**

To investigate the impact of leadership styles on employee engagement the researcher adopted the qualitative research method, which relies on collecting detail and in-depth data from people. The qualitative research method proved useful in providing tangible responses for answering the research questions (Saunders et al, 2019).

The researcher conducted interviews with different employees in various SMEs in Nigeria. The criteria for inclusion will be limited to only employees who have worked in firms for two (2) above, this is because they will have more knowledge concerning the research topic.

For the purpose of this dissertation, analysis will be doe through the thematic process, this enabled the researcher obtain quality data that enhanced the achievement of the overall aim of the study.

## **1.8. Research Outline**

The research will be subdivided into 5 chapters

Chapter one will be the introductory chapter and it will discuss the background of the study research problem, objectives and research questions, significance and justification of the study

Chapter two will critically review literature as well as theoretical constructs to the research

Chapter three will concentrate on research methodology including research paradigms, designs, data collection and analysis

Chapter four will be the presentation of data, analysis and discussion of findings

Chapter five will be the conclusion and recommendations as well as prospects for future research.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter is dedicated to making a review of existing literature on the subject matter, this is to identify the extent of which variables of the study has been researched on and further identify grey areas which can be improved on. The literature review is broken down two sections, Conceptual Review and Theoretical review. The conceptual review critically reviews issues relevant to the two basic concepts of the research (Leadership and employee engagement) the essence of this is to provide us with variables which can be used to measure this concepts and further aid in the synthesis of the research objectives. The theoretical review on the other hand provides an empirical explanation of theories of both variables, this was done to give the research a focus as well as an empirical link to the problem of the study. This chapter concludes by explaining the implications of the literature review to the entire research.

#### **2.2. Conceptual Review**

##### **2.2.1. Concept of Leadership**

The intellectual study of leadership has its origins amongst the ancient Egyptians, Greek Philosophers (Socrates, Aristotle, Plato), and even the Arabian Civilization (Ibn Khaldun in 1377). However, it was not until the twentieth century that an elaborate understanding of the nature and importance of leadership emerged. As social problems and drive to development surfaced in the early 1930's citizens often turned to their leaders for direction, Ozerza, and Tinaztepeb (2014), noted that it was not uncommon for individuals especially in Great Britain, France, and the Netherlands to send delegates to their leaders to request for solutions to societal

problems, this further gave rise to the social- scientific approach to leadership. Academic centers such as Iowa in the 1930s, Michigan and Ohio in the 1950s began studying leadership, the effectiveness of leadership and what particular trait makes a good leader (Almohameed, 2014, Avolio, Reichard, Hannah, et al 2009)

According to Chowdhury (2014) Leadership is most likely the most written about subject amongst social scientists as man essentially and extrinsically must live in societies governed by leaders. Despite being such important, leadership has not yet be given an adequate definition due to different variables, complexities, and dynamics associated with leadership, as leadership itself covers the entirety of the social process (Avolio, Reichard, Hannah, et al 2009).

Almohameed (2014), explained that due to the difficulty in getting a definition of leadership, scholars thus focused on explaining leadership via different trait leaders exhibits, thus leadership theories such as transformational, transactional, Democratic, authoritative and situational leadership emerged, this gave a more behavioural and trait centred analysis of leadership. This, however, was insufficient, as leadership could not only be limited to behaviours and traits of certain individuals, thus at the end of the twentieth century, major attempts were made to integrate leadership theory into models and styles of leadership, thus the concept of "leadership styles" emerged, furthermore research by Cattell, (1943) and Allport (1961), reflected that leaders also needed certain skills to undertake their task, behaviours, traits, and styles were inadequate in explaining leadership, they further drew out frameworks which came to be an addition to leadership studies, thus the concept of leadership skills was established.

From the above, it is evident that leadership has gone through several transformations hence the difficulty in drawing up a specific and universal definition. Since the twentieth-century leadership has currently been defined and redefined by different scholars, hence there is no

singular and universally accepted definition of leadership, each definition is peculiar to the author who defines it.

Since the topic of this research is management based, a management-based approach to defining leadership will be adopted.

Keskes (2014), defined leadership as the relationship between an individual and a group of people based on a common interest and need to achieve certain goals, Yukl (1994), explained that leadership can be classified as the process of influencing people and directing them towards their aspirations, furthermore, Cole (2005:3), defined leadership as a dynamic process whereby an individual influences others to voluntarily contribute towards the realisation and attainment of common goals". From the three definitions, it is evident that an essential factor of leadership is the ability to influence or direct a group to achieve a goal, this means that leadership plays an important role towards the outcome of goals in an organisation as such Aldoory and Toth (2004), noted that it is the responsibility of leadership to provide all necessary materials to motivate, satisfy and commit group members towards giving their best to achieve goals. It is thus evident that leadership is important and plays an important role as an intervention that drives people towards goal attainment and achievement. Leadership thus includes leadership styles and leadership skills.

#### **a. Leadership styles**

Bruno (2013), noted that for a leader to be effective, he/she must consciously explore different approaches and must display a mastery of different techniques which will enable him efficiently harmonise, mobilise his followers and drive them towards goal achievement. Each leader must thus adopt a leadership style that enables him/her to manage a task, relationships, and behaviour amongst followers, as such, leadership styles can be defined as a specific

approach that leaders adopt towards influencing, mobilising, inspiring and directing their teams (Cole, 2005). Keskes (2014), notes that leadership style is a key determinant in success or failure of any organisation as leaders are to adopt leadership styles that positively resonate amongst followers in terms of motivation, direction, and commitment. Several leadership styles exist, below is a review of major leadership styles

**Democratic leadership:** Democratic leaders are those who like to engage everyone in decision making and seek the opinions of everyone on the team. They are more of "what do you think" kind of leaders, they seek and share information with employees and mostly care about employees' perceptions towards a particular course of action. This kind of leadership is associated with participatory decision making and it is most useful in promoting team spirit and cooperation amongst employees. It also fosters harmony, creativity, and helps employees grow and develop (Barling and Cooper, 2008).

**Authoritative leadership:** unlike democratic leadership, authoritative leadership does not seek opinions of employees, they expect employees to follow their decisions, this is more associated with visionary and confident leaders. Authoritative leaders set expectations and energize employees to follow. Authoritative leadership style is very useful in getting employees to see a bigger picture of the organization by dousing the air of uncertainty surrounding the organization and championing the real course of actions which compels employees into cooperation and hence organizational performance (Barling and Cooper, 2008).

**Transactional leadership:** as the name implies refers to leadership by "transaction" legal contracts and terms of employment. This leadership style mainly deals with the rules of employment and enforces compliance through rewards and punishment. According to Petermonde (2012), transactional leaders do well by instilling in employees the necessity to

abide by organizational principles, however, they can only keep employees motivated and engaged in the short-term.

**Transformational leadership:** is where a leader influences a team by creating a vision and guiding the team towards achieving it. According to Barling and Cooper (2008), transformational leadership style builds on the behaviour, visions, plans, and desire for change by the leader, these qualities which the leader possesses inspire the followers and influences them to perform beyond their perceived capabilities. Thus, within an organization transformational leadership can inspire employees to achieve unexpected and remarkable results

**Situational Leadership:** According to Petermode (2012), situational leadership style involves the ability of a leader to change from one type of style to another depending on the situation, according to him a leader should be task-oriented and employee-oriented. Each leader must know when to change from being task-oriented to being employee-oriented, an effective leader can switch between orientations based on the maturity of his/her followers and how they cope with him. Afshinpour (2014), noted that with this style, leadership can effectively develop interdependence and competence amongst employee as the employer-employee relationship will be high due to confidence employees have in their employers, Farmer (2012), further noted that when using the situational leadership organisational success can be easily achieved as leaders know how best to motivate employees in each situation.

## **b. Leadership Skills**

According to Cronje & Willem (2010), leadership skills are more of abilities rather than approaches used in organising individuals towards achieving a common goal. They look at intrinsic talents, gifts that a leader possesses which are essential in inspiring, motivating, and

influencing individuals. Some quarters of leadership scholars like Mathooko (2013), Hughes, Ginnett, and Curphey (2012), believe that leadership skills cannot be learned because they are gifts which nature benevolently bestows on a particular individual, However, another section of leadership scholars Ulrich, Zenger & Smallwood (2013) and Silverthorne (2001), note that leadership skills can be learned and further developed by anyone who deems fit. As a result of this argument, scholars are divided on the type of leadership skill a leader should possess.

According to Katz (1974), for a leader to be effective in any form of responsibility, he/she requires conceptual, technical, and human skills. Katz notes that these skills are all related and their development is intertwined, they all have specific value and uses; however, they are complementary. Technical skill to Katz involves having specialised knowledge on how to use specific analytical tools within a particular area or discipline, technical skills enables a leader to adopt the appropriate facility while trying to carry out a specific duty. Conceptual skill is the ability of a leader to bring together bits of unrelated information and harmonise/organise it into a comprehensive way which can be understood by employees, this skill is mainly necessary for planning and decision making. Finally, human skill to Katz involves the ability to deal effectively and interpersonally with individuals, a leader needs to be a team builder and a team member, also the leader must be able to communicate effectively with subordinates, supervisors, peers and external group. Human skill thus enables the leader to have good and cordial relations with other relevant individuals within and outside the organisation.

Katz leadership skills are more developed and renowned; however, other scholars have put forth their leadership skills, Brown, Treviño & Harrison (2005), notes that leadership skills include; personal mastery, self-reflexivity, inspiration and trustworthiness, social skills as good listening, willing to trust, building and maintaining mutual relations. Bennis (2003), also noted that leadership skills include interpersonal skills, good judgments, and character.



From the above, leadership style and skills will be explored in this study to ascertain the level to which these can affect employee engagement. As it is known from the above while leadership skills entail technical, conceptual and human skills, leadership styles involve authoritarian, democratic, transformational, transactional and situational leadership. This will be used to measure the quality of leadership in SMEs in Nigeria.

### **2.2.2. Employee Engagement**

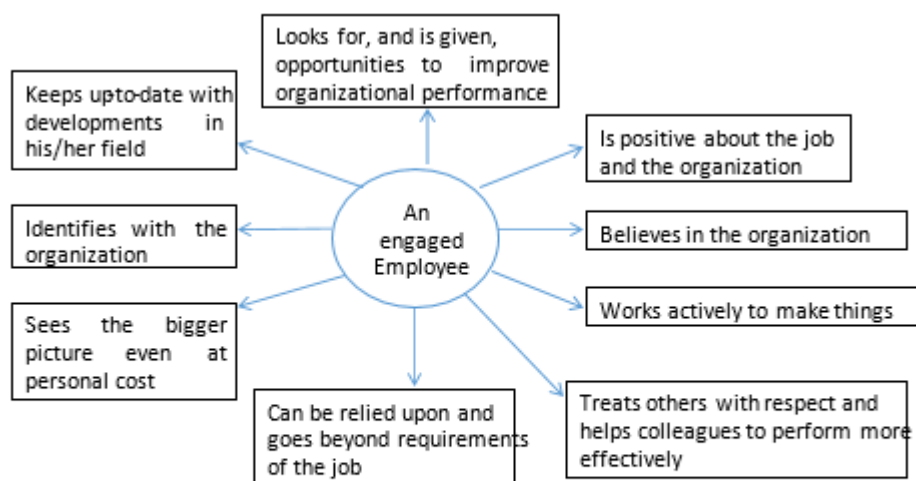
As a new concept, employee engagement has generated a lot of attention from researchers within the human resource field this is because employee engagement is both a term used in academic analysis and practical human resource management, as such the term has grown in popularity and has evolved through different processes all in an attempt to conceptualise, measure and define it (Macey and Schneider, 2008).

Employee engagement is a new concept in the field of management, the concept is traced back to Kahn (1990), who defined it as the level of commitment and involvement of employees towards an organisation and the value they have for it. Mortimer (2009), further noted that employee engagement refers to the combination of commitment employees have to a business or organisation and its values, and also the willingness of employees to abide by such values.

In a more elaborate definition Robinson, Perryman, and Hayday (2004) defined employee engagement as the positive attitude employees have towards an organisation, this is manifested in commitment, satisfaction, and willingness to carry out more tasks for the success of that organisation. According to them, an engaged worker is fully aware of the business context in which he/she works and is willing to put in their best to ensure that performance is improved within the organisation. They further noted that employee engagement is essential to business success hence managers need to develop and nurture engagement. This means that engagement

is a two-way relationship between an employer and an employee, the management tries to engage employees while engaged employees perform more for the organisation hence increasing the chances of the organisation to attain its goals and achieve organisational success. In line with this, Haid and Sims (2008), noted that when employees are engaged they are more satisfied with their jobs, therefore, they are more committed, enthusiastic, and apply much energy to work. The figure 1 below is a diagrammatical representation of how engaged employees act

**Figure 1. Behaviours of Engaged Workers**



Source: Robinson, Perryman & Hayday (2004)

Aswathappa (2005), noted that employee engagement is a process of helping and motivating employees to develop their behavioural, technical, managerial knowledge and harnessing this in form of skills and ability to achieve organisational goals and objectives. Further Saks (2006), defined employee engagement as a process and extent by which employees are properly absorbed into the role they perform in an organisation. It is a positive feeling which employees display towards their jobs and also the motivation which translates into the efforts they put into ensuring that their task is performed well. Employee performance is a well-functioning

technique that is used to improve organisational performance. It consists of ways by which employees are allowed to connect with their employers, colleagues, and other personnel in an organisation. Konard (2006), discusses that engaged employees often reflect greater physical, cognitive and emotional attachment to their work.

From the above it can be noted that employee engagement has to do with the level and degree of commitment an employee has to his/her organisation, it manifests in several ways including the show of value, willingness, motivation, and satisfaction by an employee. It also can manifest through emotional, cognitive, and behavioural attachments an employee has to the organisation. Employee engagement thus becomes relevant to modern human resource management practice as it can fundamentally increase the efficiency of employees to achieve organisational goals. The knowledge of commitment levels (emotional, cognitive and behavioural attachments) which signify employee engagement will therefore be used to collect primary data while trying to discover and understand employee engagement levels in SMEs in Nigeria. Adequate information is going to be drawn from motivation levels, commitment levels and emotional, cognitive and behavioural attachments.

### **2.2.3. Factors influencing Employee Engagement**

Seeing the importance of employee engagement, it is expedient that managers take different measures to ensure that employee engagement is achieved. Saks (2006), noted that for organisations to improve their employee engagement level they must focus on employee perceptions of the workplace, and put in place those measures which will make employees have a positive perception about the workplace, he mentioned measures such as employee welfare, training, and development, work-life balance, opportunities for career development and adequate remuneration as factors that can improve employee perceptions. In the same vein, Markos and Sridevi (2010), noted that when employees are provided with adequate

development (training, skills, and learning) there is a high possibility for such employees to be more engaged as they will know the technical aspects of carrying out their duties.

By elaborating on the above, Bhatia (2011), noted that training and development are essential for employee engagement as it increases employee understanding of organisational strategy thereby enabling employees to contribute better to their work. Engaged employees can contribute immensely towards achieving financial goals as well as customer satisfaction, thus job description must be accurately explained to employees at the time of recruitment, furthermore, more training should be given to employees to enable them to be updated with new and relevant skills in carrying out duties. Bhatia (2011), also mentioned that managers should have a method of tracking achievements periodically, this will enable them to identify more engaged employees and those who are not based on their performance as it could be that employees who are not performing well may not be thoroughly aware of how to carry out their job. Acquiring technical knowledge on a job is not well sufficient to ensure employee performance, as by necessity every employee should have a working knowledge of what they are expected to do in the workplace. Constant training to develop skills to carry out task depends mainly on the kind of task at hand, thus with or without training employees can be or not be engaged

The above is what led to Robinson, Perryman, and Hayday (2004), to focus on leadership as an essential part of increasing the level of employee engagement. They noted that employee engagement had a strong effect on employee behaviours and attitudes and is often derived from strong relationships employees build with employers. Thus, the way employers relate with employees can affect their engagement. Democratic, cordial, transformational employers have been researched to have more engaged employees than autocratic employers. Furthermore, employers who often look out for the welfare of employees by creating a healthy work

environment through financial and non-financial incentives were more likely to have a better-engaged workforce than leaders who do not.

Garber (2007), noted that a significant form for engaging employees is through communication, he noted that communication had a place to play in creating positive employer and employee relation, he further noted that organisations that had healthy communication patterns provided the room for information to flow down from employers to employees, thus enabling employees to know what is expected of them. Good communication patterns also allow for the flow of information from down to up in terms of feedback, hence employers know the extent to which employees are coping with whatever policy is put in place. Garber further pointed out that with good communication patterns employee engagement will continue to increase. In the same vein Zajkowska (2012), succinctly noted that good communication enables employees to perform their duties with proper information on what is expected of them, hence increasing productivity, retention, and profit of the organisation.

Lockhead and Stephen (2004), noted that apart from communication, good working culture, recognition, job design, compensation and benefits, teamwork, rewards are factors that can significantly increase employee engagement for a long period. These factors increase the sense of value of employees, it creates a feeling of self-belonging which thus propels them to do more for the organisation.

Markio and Sridevi (2010), discussed a combination of factors which they feel was important for employee engagement. Firstly, they mentioned two-way communication between management and employee this was essential in making analytical responses between the both, secondly, they mentioned managers interest in employees well-being by providing them with opportunities to grow and meet-up with basic and emotional needs, thirdly, they mentioned adequate rewarding of good performance through financial and non-financial incentives,

finally, they noted that employers should build a strong and distinctive corporate culture which encourages employees to work hard towards attaining organisational goals. Markio and Sriidevi's discussion on ways of engaging employees further depicts that money alone cannot engage employees, this goes in line with Biro (2014), who noted that money cannot stand alone as an engaging factor, it must be mixed with values, trust, mission, welfare, and purpose.

From the above, it can be deduced that a combination of communication, employee welfare, training, and development, work-life balance, opportunities for career development, good working culture, recognition, job design, compensation and benefits, teamwork, rewards and adequate remuneration are factors that enhance employee engagement, this factors will be essential while collecting primary data for the study, as critical attempts will be made to discover the relationship between these factors in the case study and how they enhance employee engagement in SMEs in Nigeria.

## **2.3. Theoretical Review**

### **2.3.1. Review of Leadership Theories**

Based on the complexities of defining leadership several philosophers have carried out studies on leadership. Their aim was to study the impact of leadership on culture, history, and civilisations of humans to proffer theoretical descriptions of leadership. As a result of countless studies, several leadership theories have been established, this section will, however, review the major ones

The first leadership theory to be propounded was the Great-Man theory, this theory explores common traits of leaders that have existed for centuries by looking at leaders, heroes, and champions which have been successful in winning wars or alleviating the suffering of people. Carlyle (1874), was one of the proponents of the Great man theory, he opined that not every

human is ordained to be a leader, in the sense that only humans born with heroic and leadership potentials were to be leaders. The Great-Man theory thrived in the late 19th and early 20th century as it practically explained why certain leaders like Alexander the Great, King James II were considered successful, however after the World war I and World war II, the theory was significantly challenged and criticised. Macgregor (2003), noted that the major criticism of the theory was in relation with gross moral flaws committed by so-called "Great-men", the activities of Napoleon, Hitler, Mussolini served as an eye-opener to the fact that "Great-Men" were also capable of committing "great crimes" against humanity, thus the Great Man theory cannot be an adequate representation of what leadership entailed (Malik, Saleem and Naeem, 2016).

As a result of the criticisms of the Great-man theory, another theory was put forward- the trait theory, although the premise of the theory was similar to the Great-man, the trait theory focused more on traits which were by birth and could be developed (Ekvall and Arvonen, 1991), Khan, Khan and Khan (2016), noted that according to the trait theory, leaders poses certain attributes that set them apart from their followers, the Great-man theory mainly focused on physical traits like attractiveness, charisma, height, courage etc, to the trait theorist this was insufficient, they, therefore, added certain traits that linked leaders to the people such as empathy, good-will, intelligence, legitimacy, idealism, determination etc. According to the trait theorist a leader's effectiveness in displaying these traits makes him/her a genuine leader, these traits also could be experienced or learned. The trait theory became a fundamental component of leadership theory for most of the early 20th century (Malik, Saleem and Naeem, 2016). The major criticism of the Trait theory was it was very similar to the Great-man and it failed to give a common explanation for leadership, especially seeing that different leaders emerge in different situations and different levels of life, Khan, Khan and Khan (2016), noted that the Trait theory focused more on leadership at the national level while failing to address leadership in firms and

industries which were a major feature of the early 20th century due to the industrial revolution. The trait theory was thus inadequate.

Between the mid and late 20th century, more development in the academia and research was done, new procedures for carrying out research such as empiricism, scientific logicalism and positivism were established. There was thus the need for researchers to adopt these methods to improve the credibility and authenticity of their studies (Manz, and Sims, 1990). Leadership theorist thus inculcated scientific and empirical process to the study of leadership, this gave rise to the behavioural theory, major works within the behavioural theory are the Iowa Michigan and Ohio studies. Behavioural theory was a significant departure from the Great man and Trait theories, the behavioural theory focused more on the behaviours of leaders and how these behaviours can be learned (Cole, 2005). The behavioural theory further noted that leadership existed everywhere where humans organised themselves, thus they focused on leadership at both national, industrial, and associational levels (Yukl, 1994). Iowa studies were significant in providing behaviours of leaders in relation to power and the use of the power to lead followers, as such, they discussed leaders' behaviours as authoritarian, democratic etc. Michigan studies looked at that behaviour of leaders in relation to job and human resources, thus, they provided the two orientations of leaders which are Job-centered and Employee Centred. Ohio studies looked at leadership behaviour from the dimension of initiating structures and considerations. The behavioural theory was criticised by dwelling much on human behaviours which cannot be studied accurately with scientific methods as humans were dynamic and subject to change. However, the criticisms, the behavioural school laid the foundation for further empirical and scientific theories in leadership which significantly shaped contemporary leadership studies.



From the behavioural school came further theories like Blake and Mouton (1964) Managerial grid theory, Fried Fiedler (1967) developed the contingency modeling of leadership, Robert House (1971) developed the path-goal theory while Max Weber (1980), developed the Charismatic leadership theory, these theories are explained in the table below:

**Table 1. Modern Theories to the study of Leadership**

S/N	THEORY	PROPONENTS	EXPLANATION
1	The Managerial Grid	Robert R. Blake and Jane Mouton 1964	The Managerial Grid tries to classify leadership styles that focus on a leader's concern for task accomplishment and people at the same time. Concern for production involves results, the bottom line, performance, mission, and profits. Concern for people involves group members and co-workers. Each of these concerns are in varying degrees along a continuum from 1 to 9. Leaders can integrate their concerns for people with production to be opportunistic or paternalistic/maternalistic
2	Contingency Model	Fried Fiedler (1967)	Fiedler (1967) claims that if organizational performance is to be improved, we must cope not only with the leader's style but also with the situational factors which influence him/her. Organizational performance can be improved either by the leader's fit to the situation or the situation's fit to the leader. Fiedler (1961) also states that leadership traits, if exist at all, would be exposed to many outside effects.  Therefore, they are difficult to identify. He argues that a variety of causes may force a man to become a leader, many of which are totally unrelated to personality attributes one of which is inheritance of leadership.
3	Path-Goal Model	Robert House (1971)	Path-goal theory focuses on how leaders influence followers' expectations. Robert House, the originator of the theory, proposes a model in which leader behaviour is acceptable when employees regard it as a source of satisfaction. In addition to this, leader behaviour is motivational when it eliminates factors that hinder goal accomplishment; provides guidance and support to the employees, and grants meaningful rewards in return for success. House claims that the leader should stay on the right path to achieve challenging goals. In contrast to Fiedler, who supports that leaders have one dominant leadership style, House believes that leaders can display more than one.
4	Charismatic Leadership Theory	Marx Weber (1980)	Max Weber maintains that there are three bases of authority which are traditions, rights and privileges and charisma which is synonymous with heroism and an exemplary character of a person. Owing to his character, strength and skill, super human qualities are attributed to a leader who saves his followers from a crisis or a catastrophic event and becomes an idol providing direction and inspiration to his followers. The charismatic leader attaches utmost importance to his vision, speech, capacity to take risks and above all the emotions of his subordinates (Sinha, 1995). Weber identified nine effects which charismatic leaders have on their followers such as group member's trust in the correctness of the leader's beliefs, congruence between the leader's and the group's beliefs, acceptance of the leader, affection for the leader, willing obedience to the leader, identification with and admiration for the leader, emotional involvement of the group member in the mission, challenging goals of the group member and belief in the accomplishment of the mission.

**Source: Table developed by the author of this dissertation**

Contemporary leadership studies focus mainly on leadership and how it impacts individuals, especially within the organisation. Leadership studies is often linked to organisational

performance, employee engagement, organisational productivity, etc. Leadership theories also try to relate the complexities of human behaviours within the organisation and intricacies of leadership.

### **2.3.2. Theories of Employee Engagement**

The relevance of employee engagement in strengthening the organisation's competitive advantage by creating a highly committed workforce that performs its task with passion and enthusiasm has made it an area of some interesting research. Research in employee engagement is concerned with the best possible ways of increasing productivity and profitability by increasing employee commitment. Since employee engagement is a recent concept, it contains few theoretical explanations, the following are the theories of employee engagement;

#### **a. Robinson Model**

Robinson, Perryman and Hayday (2004), created the Robinson model, the major emphasis of this was to engage employees via increasing their feeling of value by the organisation. According to the model, employers can engage their employees by putting some form of policies and practices in the organisation. These include communication, cooperation, development etc. These policies make employees feel valued by the organisation i.e they have an emotional connection with the organisation whereby they feel that the organisation appreciates their efforts, this, in turn, create job satisfaction, friendliness, and commitment amongst employees, employees thus become more engaged and put more effort for the success of the organisation.

**Figure 2. Robinson Model of Employee Engagement**



**Source: Robinson, Perryman and Hayday (2004)**

This model creates a strong relationship between the feeling of value amongst employees and their engagement levels. Markos and Sridevi (2010), notes that when an employee feels valued by the organisation he/she is more likely to be more motivated and committed towards the achievement of organisational goals.

### **b. Schmidt Model of Employee Engagement**

This model was developed by Edward Schmidt in 2004, the model suggests that employee engagement could be increased based on proper recruitment policies, i.e for organisations to engage their employees they must first recruit the right workforce in terms of knowledge, competency, and experience. Furthermore, managers of organisations should work hard at retaining the right workforce through the promotion of welfare, health, and safety. The model focuses much on creating a healthy workplace environment for employees, thus to the model, employee engagement can be achieved firstly by recruiting the right workforce, and secondly

creating a conducive work environment for them. If these two are achieved employee engagement will be high for the overall profitability of the organisation.

**Figure 3. Schmidt Model of Employee Engagement**



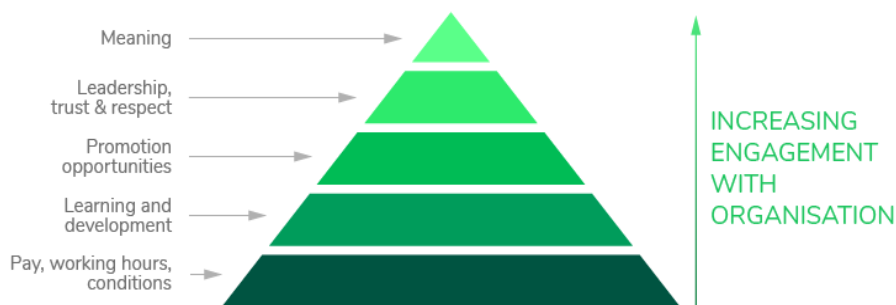
Source: Schmidt (2004)

This model suggests that the employee attitude is central to employee engagement, as when an employer recruits the right people for a job they intrinsically have the right attitude for the job, right attitude enables employees to be easily engaged in their job due to their much positive vibes, therefore once the organisation puts in place the proper work environment, the employee easily is engaged and is more productive.

## b. PENNA Model of Employee Engagement

Penna (2007) provided a hierarchical model for engaging employees, each step of the hierarchy has a particular item which an employee wants to achieve when this is achieved the employee is one step close towards achieving meaning at the workplace and is also engaged to a significant degree. It thus follows that the more the employee moves higher on the pyramid the more they are engaged until they finally achieve meaning at the workplace. When an employee achieves meaning, they become actively engaged, are more productive and can also attract other employees to the organisation.

**Figure 4. PENNA theory of engagement**



**Source: Bhatla (2011)**

## 2.4. Conclusion

This study focuses on the impact of leadership on employee engagement, the literature review succeeded in breaking down the basic research concepts into variables, thus within the concept of leadership, it has been discovered that leadership is made up of leadership styles and skills, also in employee engagement it has been discovered that elements such as communication, welfare, wellbeing, employer and employee relationship is essential for keeping employees motivated. Further the theoretical review, has provided frameworks which both the effectuality and efficiency of leadership and employee engagement can be judged within an organization.

This therefore will be utilized while drafting the methodology and instruments for data collection.

## **CHAPTER THREE**

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

The methodology of the research provides the entire process for carrying out the research. It involves the totality of techniques, procedures, frameworks and approaches utilised by the researcher in achieving the research objective. The use of an appropriate methodology is essential for conducting a research that is authentic and generally accepted. This chapter thus discusses the methodology adopted for this study. The methodology is basically subdivided into research philosophy, research design, research strategy etc.

#### **3.2. Research Philosophy**

Research philosophy has been defined as Saunders (2009), to mean “the development of knowledge and the nature of knowledge”. This meaning sees research philosophy as the foundation of knowledge hence every research needs to have a philosophy as it helps develop knowledge in the academic field.

Crossan (2003), noted that research philosophy is essential to conduct any research, building on this Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Lowe (2002), noted that there three reasons for adopting a research philosophy which are; to help understand and choose a relevant methodology which will be essential in gathering data to answer the research questions, secondly, to enable the researcher in comparing different types of methodologies, hence picking that which is appropriate for his/her research, and limiting the probability of using an unrelated and inappropriate methodology for his/her study. Finally, a good knowledge of research

philosophies enables a researcher to be creative and exploratory in their research thereby contributing to knowledge more academically.

According to Crossan (2003), there are two forms of research philosophy; positivism and interpretivism. Positivism is built on the premise that knowledge is acquired based on physical properties and relations and interpreted through logic and reasons, thus all scientific research must be able to observe and measure the phenomena under study and interpret them based on reasonable facts. In other words, positivism relies on empiricism and objectivism.

Interpretivism on the other hand measures data empirically, however, it provides more flexibility to incorporate subjective analysis. This is because interpretivism relies on the study of not so tangible and observable phenomena, such as consciousness, opinions, and sentiments, languages, etc. According to Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2002), interpretivism integrates human aspects and interests into the study. Since humans are dynamic and subject to change, the interpretivism philosophy provides flexibility in terms of allowing for more subjective factors to determine the nature of a particular phenomenon.

The basic difference between the two is that while positivism is mainly used in the natural sciences, interpretivism is mostly used in behavioural and management sciences, the further difference between the two philosophies are documented in the table below;



**Table 2. Difference between Positivism and Interpretivism**

<b>Positivism</b>	<b>Interpretivism</b>
<b><i>Relationship between society and the individual</i></b>	
<p>Society shapes the individual - <i>'Society consists of 'social facts' which exercise coercive control over individuals'</i></p> <p>People's actions can generally be explained by the social norms they have been exposed to through their socialisation.</p>	<p>Individuals have consciousness and are not just puppets who react to external social forces as Positivists believe.</p> <p>Individuals are intricate and complex and different people experience and understand the same 'objective reality' in different ways</p>
<b><i>General focus of social research</i></b>	
<p>The point of research is to uncover the laws that govern human behaviour, just as scientists have discovered the laws that govern the physical world.</p> <p>Prefer quantitative methods which allow for the researcher to remain detached from the respondents.</p>	<p>The point of research is to gain in-depth insight into the lives of respondents, to gain an empathetic understanding of why they act in the way that they do.</p> <p>Prefer qualitative methods which allow for close interaction with respondents.</p>
<b><i>Preferred research methods</i></b>	
<b>Quantitative</b>	<b>Qualitative</b>
<p>Require research to be valid, reliable and representativeness</p>	<p>Prepared to sacrifice reliability and representativeness for greater validity</p>

**Source: Penny (2014)**

For this study, therefore, the interpretivism research philosophy is adopted, this is because as, Penny (2014), noted interpretivism mostly excels in studying human-related variables in the behavioural and management sciences, this study focuses on “leadership and employee engagement” this are two basic human-related variables hence the interpretivism philosophy will enable the adequate gathering of data to answer the basic questions related to the variables. Furthermore Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2002), noted that data gathered from interpretivism is more reliable and valid since phenomena are studied in a greater level of depth. Both variables of this study (leadership and employee engagement) will thus be studied at great depths using the interpretivism philosophy, therefore increasing the validity of the study as it will critically discuss the manifestations of these variables on the population of the study

### **3.3. Research Design**

According to McNabb (2010), the research design is referred to as a “glue” which unites and holds all aspects of the research together, he further noted that it is a plan or the blueprint for the entire study. This explanation thus emphasizes the need for a research design as, without a proper and standard research design, a proper study of a phenomenon cannot be achieved.

From the above definitions, research design can be referred to as a master plan which specifies the procedures and methods for collecting data, analysing data, and presenting the information discovered from analysis of data. Research design is thus an essential part of research methodology which enables the collection of the right data.

According to McNabb (2010), there are four basic types of research design this are explained in the table below

**Table 3. Types of Research Design**

<b>Research Design</b>	<b>Explanation</b>
<b>Exploratory Design</b>	It is the primary stage of research and the purpose of this research is to achieve new insights into a phenomenon. This research is one which has the purposes of formulating a problem for more accurate investigating a problem for more accurate investigation or for developing a hypothesis. This is applied when there are few or no earlier research/studies to which references can be made for information.
<b>Descriptive Design</b>	This describes phenomena as they exist. It is used to identify and obtain information on characteristic of a particular issue like community, group or people. In other words, this type of research describes social events, social structure, social situations, etc. The observer observe and describe what did he find? Descriptive research answers the questions, what, who, where, how and when. It is used to study the current situation. It is widely used in the physical and natural science. But it is used more common in the social sciences, as in socioeconomic survey and job and activity analysis.
<b>Explanatory Design</b>	When the purpose of the study is to explore a new universe, one that has not been studied earlier, and the research design is called explanatory. The research is mainly concerned with causes or “why” factor about some phenomenon. It does not involve comparison and factors of change
<b>Experimental Design</b>	This is used to test a Research Design of causal relationship under controlled situation. An experiment is an observation under controlled conditions or in other words, This is a design in which some of the variables being studied are manipulated or which seek to control the condition within which persons are observed. Controlling of conditions means that the phenomenon or the condition should not be allowed to change while the experimentation is going on

**Source: McNabb (2010)**

From the above, the appropriate design to adopt for this study will be the descriptive design. As noted above, the descriptive design studies phenomena in its current state and also answers questions that are descriptive in nature such as “what, who, where, how, and when”. This study seeks to understand “leadership and employee engagement” within an organisation, hence the researcher takes critically look at the variables as they currently occur, furthermore based on the research questions posed in chapter one of this study (see chapter one section 1.5), the research questions are majorly descriptive, hence adopting the descriptive design enabled the

researcher to properly understand the variables under study as they affect and influence each other.

Mustafa (2010), noted that the descriptive research design excels in the study of unquantifiable phenomenon such as welfare, leadership, motivation and reward systems, etc. The variables for this study “leadership and employee engagement” are not quantifiable hence, using the descriptive research design is accurate for this study. As such, the descriptive design was used to explore current issues regarding leadership and employee engagement within an organisation through a process of data collection. This enabled a proper description, analysis, exploration, and understanding of the phenomena and how they mutually impact each other.

### **3.4. Research Strategy**

The research strategy is a sequential process that enables the research to be conducted systematically therefore and producing quality results befitting to the academia. The research strategy is thus a step by step plan that integrates both the research philosophy and research design, as Beach and Rasmus (2016), note that research strategy puts both the research philosophy and design in motion. A research strategy is thus essential in completing the research process.

There are several research strategies that a researcher can use such as action, experimental, comparative, cross-sectional, survey, and longitudinal. However Beach and Ramus (2016), notes that a research strategy is chosen after a consideration of the appropriate way in which the research questions will be answered, this thus flows from the research philosophy and research design. The research philosophy (interpretivism) and research design (descriptive design) both support the gathering of primary data. Primary data is mostly collected through

the use of surveys (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe, and Lowe (2002), as such the research strategy chosen for this study is the survey.

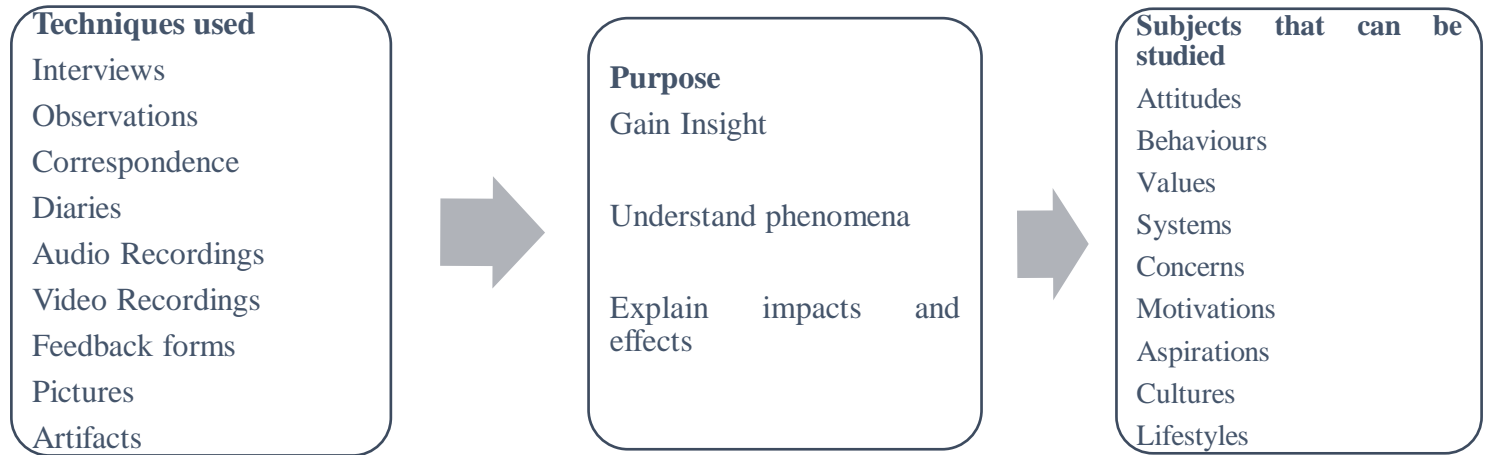
The survey offers the researcher the chance to conduct a systematic study on a population to understand behaviours, phenomena, or manifestations of certain elements on the population. The survey is used in studying a set, sample, or segment of the population which after conclusions are made, the findings or assertions can be generalised on the entire population (Joubish, 2009). Surveys have high representativeness, reliability, and validity thus they are generally accepted in research as Beach and Rasmus (2016), note that they offer reliable, valid data and support generalisation on the entire population.

From the above, it has been established that surveys entail the collection of data from a population, this thus supports the rationale for adopting a survey for this dissertation. The survey will enable the collection of quality data from the population of the study which will provide adequate representation for generalising. Using surveys will to a large extent enable the researcher to carefully generate data that will answer the research questions and further enhance the empirical attainment of research objectives. According to Wimmer and Dommick (2003), surveys can be conducted in two ways; Quantitative and Qualitative.

The survey can be done in two ways; Quantitative and Qualitative. As noted earlier that Beach and Ramus (2016), mention that the research strategy flows from the research philosophy and research design, thus the choice of a survey which is the research strategy must flow from the research philosophy and research design. While Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill (2002), notes that interpretivism supports more qualitative studies. Further McNabb (2010), notes that descriptive design can adopt both quantitative and qualitative strategies. Therefore, for this study, the qualitative survey method will be used. Qualitative survey technique relies on descriptive, narrative, and explanatory accounts and mainly collects data from interviews. The

diagram below reveals an explanation of qualitative surveys (the techniques used, its purpose, and subjects that can be studied using qualitative surveys).

**Figure 5. Qualitative Research**



**Source: McNabb (2010)**

Drawing from the figure above, the qualitative survey will be proper for this study as the purpose of the research is to explain the impacts of leadership on employee engagement as well as gain insights to how leadership is significant to employees, furthermore, the basic subjects which the research studies are motivations, values, commitment, turnover, etc these are unquantifiable phenomena which can only be accessed properly using a qualitative survey.

### **3.5. Population of the Study**

The population of the study refers to a large collection of individuals which are the direct focus of the research. The research is mainly done for the benefit of the population and data is generally collected from them. In selecting the population of the study, Creswell (2003), notes that the population of the study should be directly or indirectly affected by the phenomena under study, this will ensure that they have experiences or “things to say” concerning the phenomena.

This study is based on leadership and employee engagement, the study seeks to understand how leadership style plays a significant role in employee motivation, commitment, and turnover. Using Creswell (2003), criteria for selecting the population of the study, the appropriate population will be the employees, as they are directly influenced by leadership styles in an organisation. .

### **3.6. Sources of Data**

Two types of data will be utilised for the study, the primary and secondary data.

#### **i. Primary Data**

This data will include first-hand information collected directly from the population of the study. Primary data is often preferred due to its high reliability, proficiency, and realistic nature. Since it is collected directly from the population it is considered as a true representation of the phenomena under study. The primary data will be used to answer both research questions and achieve the objectives of the study.

The primary data was collected using qualitative survey technique as explained in section (3.3), the major instrument for the collection of the primary data will be the interviews (this is explained in section). The use of primary data enabled the researcher to get deeper insights into leadership styles, the influence of leadership, and leadership skills which impact employee engagement, thereby boosting the authenticity of the study.

#### **ii. Secondary Data**

The secondary data for this study will be collected from documented or printed materials such as academic articles, journals, media reports, gazettes, conference proceedings. The major use of the secondary data will be to support findings gotten from the primary data. The secondary

data will thus stand to buttress whatever was discovered from the primary data. The secondary data will further be used to draw a correlation between the findings of this study and those of others, to see if there is a new or update in existing knowledge.

### **3.7. Sampling Procedure**

Sampling is referred to as the selection of a sub-section of the entire population which will serve as a representation of the entire population. The information collected from the sub-section thus serves as the unit for generalisation on the entire population, thus whatever conclusions are derived from sub-section is what is accepted to be the case of the entire population (Collis and Hussey, 2013).

There are two processes of sampling in social sciences; Probability and non-probability. Probability sampling offers a more statistically inclined method of sampling which reduces bias as it offers every element of the population a chance to be selected for the study. However, it is mainly utilised for quantitative studies, especially when the population is finite. The nonprobability sampling does not adopt statistical procedures, hence it does not limit errors or bias, it, however, is more acceptable for qualitative data and it provides the chance of getting those with adequate information concerning the topic at hand, therefore leading to the collection of more rich, robust and reliable data.

For this study, nonprobability sampling was adopted. The three types of nonprobability sampling adopted were convenience, judgemental, and snowball sampling. These sampling techniques allowed the researcher to get people who are knowledgeable of the phenomena under study, through consent from the population or through referrals. This enabled the researcher to get qualitative and in-depth data from the sub-set population which will serve as proper mediums of answering the research questions.



### **3.8. Instrument of Data Collection**

The major instrument of data collection was the interview

#### **i. Interview**

The interview is a one on one conversation between the researcher and the interviewee, in a session where questions are asked and the answers documented by the research. The interview excels are eliciting rich and in-depth information from the interviewee this is because the interviewee has the chance to narrate experiences, give examples, make illustrations of concerning questions ask. The interviews also aided the researcher in probing certain theoretical postulations on the interviewee and document responses (Howell, 2013).

The interview for this study was drafted in an open-ended and semi-structured format. This provided questions and probes and allowed the interviewee to answer in whatever way he/she deems fit as long as it is within the confines of the research question. The interviews were targeted at identifying the impacts of leadership on employee engagement, as well as noting the leadership style adopted by leaders in the specific organisation.

Interviews were conducted using online platforms such as Skype and zoom, this is due to the COVID-19 pandemic which had significantly restricted face to face meetings with individuals.

The questions in the interview schedule were drawn in reference to findings from the literature review, hence they contained contextual and theoretical measurement of leadership styles and employee engagement. Appendix A contains the drafted interview schedule which was in line with existing literature.

### **3.9. Method of Data collection**

Data was collected using interviews, employees of different SMEs in Nigeria were used. According to Creswell (2009), while using interviews, the researcher cannot say how many interviews need to be conducted, however, interviews end when saturation of data is attained i.e when interviews lead to similar responses from the interviewees. Thus for this study interviews were conducted until data became saturated.

### **3.10. Method of Data Analysis and Presentation.**

Data analysis involves the process of transforming raw data into interpretable and understandable information.

Qualitative data mainly adopts thematic analysis for its analysis. Thematic analysis implies the grouping of information gotten from the study into themes that reflect research questions and objectives. Thematic analysis is a complex process however it provides fast and easier comprehension of research discussions and findings According to Ihemeje (2006), the thematic analysis involves the transcription of interviews, collating interview responses, sieving interview responses, generating codes, coding the interviews, and generation of themes.

The themes will be synthesised with relevant secondary data which will aid in providing adequate and reliable findings to the research questions and objectives.

### **3.11. Validating the Research Instrument.**

Validity of a research instrument refers to the correctness, credibility in description, conclusion, and interpretation of the research instrument (Maxwell, 1996), Collins and Hussey (2003), note that while validating a research instrument researchers must endeavour to ensure that the findings and conclusion of the research is an accurate representation of what is obtained in the

case study or on the population of the study. In ensuring the validity of the interviews, the representational validity was adopted. This process involved the submission of interviews to a panel of experts who critically assess the instrument in line with theoretical constructs and the ability of the questions to answer what the research intends to. The research instrument was submitted to various academics on leadership and human resource management to probe and critically assess if the questions in the interview schedule are critically drafted and capable of eliciting intended responses.

### **3.12. Ethical Considerations**

Research ethics are considered vital to the conduct of any study, as it determines the extent of acceptable and unacceptable behaviour during the research process. It also enhances the reliability, authenticity of the research. This study will, therefore, adhere strictly to research ethics. Some ethics that were adhered to are;

1. Interviewees safety and their willingness to participate or withdraw from the study at any point in time. Interviewees were duly asked before they were recruited for the study.
2. Maintaining objectivity by ensuring that researcher's sentiment and bias is reduced
3. Respect for intellectual property by acknowledging and properly referencing all consulted sources.
4. Proper data management by ensuring data is collected and stored solely for academic purposes

### **3.13. Limitation of the Methodology**

A significant limitation of the methodology is in its philosophy and hence the research gathering instrument. The philosophy adopted for this study was interpretivism, the philosophy is flexible hence it allows room for subjectivism which does not provide accurate scientific measurement of a phenomena. Using this philosophy thus may not allow the researcher to draw scientific data for the study of leadership styles and employee engagement. This however will be managed by using other statistical data hence boosting the objectivity of this study.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

#### 4.1. Overview

This chapter contains the analysis and discussion, the purpose of this chapter is to present and analyse the data from the primary research. It will outline and deliberate on the data from the interviews before examining these findings in the context of the dissertation's literature review. Data was collected from the conduct of interviews with four (4) employees from different SMEs in Nigeria. The first interviewee was an accountant (ACC) the second was a Sales Manager (SM), the third was a Radiographer (RG), and the fourth a School Teacher (ST).

This section is subdivided into four parts. The first is the analysis of data, here the researcher attempted to collaborate some sections of the interviews that relate to the relationship between the dependent variable i.e leadership styles (transformational, Democratic, Transactional and Autocratic with the dependent variable of the study i.e employee engagement (Employee productivity, meeting up with deadlines, conflict resolution, and organisational goals). This section analysed the specific response of the interviewees with the variables and made a conclusion

The second section discussed the findings in relation to the two variables, hence what was discovered from the analysis of data was further discussed in this section and further synthesizing it with other information gotten from the literature review

The third section gives the answers to the research questions based on the discussion of findings. The section thus explains the answers to the research questions linking it to the discussion of findings.

The final section gives a summary of the research findings.

## **4.2. Analysis of Data**

### **a. Leadership styles and employee productivity**

A key insight from this section was on the influence of leadership styles on employee productivity. ACC noted that “my leader had been able to enhance my productivity through training programmes and fixing me in offices that I’m fit for”, he thus noted that training programmes expose him to the necessary skills to keep him productive and meet up with task.

In a different opinion, SM noted that her leader was more “task-oriented and job-focused, besides she had a dual personality which could change from friendly to ruthless at any moment without the employee knowing”, to SM her leaders personality made more productive as she would not want to get on her leader's bad side

RG, in took a tow with ACC to state that his leader provides room for skill development, and further offers the necessary motivations which are sufficient to keep him on productive, achieve task and goal orientation. He also noted that “the relationship with my leader, was cordial and democratic and transformative”, this made him more productive.

ST said that “my productiveness on the job was not based my leader but my internal motivation to keep up with job task and also achieve the best for my workplace”. He to him, leadership was not so interested in staff welfare as the pay was a bit low compared to other places thus, he noted that if he got a better job, he would leave his current workplace

From the above, the opinions of ACC and RG were significant in proving that leaders are significant in enhancing employee productivity, as the leaders of ACC and RG were more democratic and transformative which has improved their performance of the task through welfare and skills development opportunities. This was a discovery already made in the literature review. ST and SM, leaders however are a bit autocratic with few transactional traits which therefore makes her keep up to task and goals, this is a rare insight.

## **b. Leadership styles and impacts on meeting up to deadlines**

On issues of leaderships and employees meeting up to deadlines, ACC mentioned that *“my leader enabled me to meet up to task deadlines, my leader always tells me what to do and puts in place adequate measures for doing them”*. He further noted that the leader gives a timeframe for a task and when he meets up with the task, he gets rewarded through appreciation, pay bonuses, or even *“free meals”*.

SM explained that her leader had not enhanced her to meet up to deadlines because her leader was practically slow in responding to issues especially in relation to work. However, she said that *“based on my personal conviction I always ensure that I meet up to deadline based on internal motivations and the quest to do better for my job and also to have the confidence of working for what I’m paid for”*.

RG explained that *“my has enabled me to meet up to deadlines as there were quarterly goals and task to achieve which the leader ensures that it is met through appraisals and feedback reports”*. He also explained that my leader also rewards or disciplines individuals who do not meet up to deadlines.

ST explained that within the *“frameworks of an organisation leadership always ensures that employees meet up to task regardless of their skills as every employer is employed to work however the extent to which the work is performed depends on leadership styles”*, a leader just as his who is rather strict and prefers to relate to staff based on how they relate to her was necessary for meeting up to deadlines as if you do not meet up you get on her bad side.

From the above, it is evident that leaders who were more task inclined and provided means for staff to achieve deadlines ensured that employees met up to deadlines. Thus, transformative leaders are more influential in making staff meet up to deadlines, this is confirmed by discovered made in the literature review. However a new insight on this research that was not

discovered by the literature review was that autocratic leadership ensured that employees also met up to task.

### **c. Leadership styles and Resolving Conflicts**

ACC noted that *“leadership was significant in resolving conflicts, as my leader being democratic always tried to look at the two sides of the story before concluding”*, furthermore he noted that leadership has put in laws and policies that carefully address employee grievances and conflicts

SM stated that her *“leader provided room for resolving conflicts but more importantly tried to look for ways to enhance employee cooperation as with adequate cooperation conflicts may not arise”*, so she tries to foster teamwork and enhance employee unity.

RG noted that the transformative and democratic leadership styles of his workplace, has made the leader proactive in solving conflicts, he stated that *“putting up long term conflict management patterns as well as ensuring that mediums are available for employees to adequately address conflicts without resulting to violence”*. RG also mentioned the role of communication in reducing conflicts, he stated that *“leadership as provided enough communication patterns through which employees can channel their grievances and have conflicts resolved timely”*.

ST, further explained that despite his leader being aloof sometimes and not connecting to employees, there were channels to address grievances and conflicts. This helped other staff to continually be friendly and cooperate towards the achievement of goals.

From the above responses, it is glaring that leadership style was necessary for resolving conflicts as democratic and transformative leaders were able to put in place standard mediums to avoid conflict from occurring and also establishing proper rapport between employees. This was not confirmed by the literature review. As many authors in the review did not mention the



role of democratic and transformative leaders in resolving conflicts, this is thus a new discovery and addition to knowledge.

#### **d. Leadership and Achieving organisational Goals**

In key insight discovered from this section was the role of leadership in achieving organisational goals, ACC stated that leadership *“enabled me to meet up with organisational goals through providing a workable environment and good job conditions, leadership also provided training and development programmes to enhance my skill base to achieve goals”*.

SM, notes that the leadership style which her leader had which could easily switch from kept her achieving organisational goals, further she explained that *“pay was also essential in keeping my active in attaining organisational goals, as without the necessary pay, I would not have the internal conviction to achieve goals”*

RG, further noted that *“my leader’s attitude to skills and development, putting systems and work conditions to enhance productivity made me want to achieve organisational goals”*.

Furthermore, noted that the ability of the leader to make him fill value through welfare and other packages has influenced him to achieve more for the organisation

ST also noted the leadership style displayed by the leader is one that ensures that goals are adequately and expressively met *“since no one would want to get on my leader’s bad side due to fear of being disciplined or queried”*.

From the above, the findings was in line with the literature review, as it has been established that leadership has a significant role in achieving organisational goals, as leaders who were more proactive and placed systems which encouraged hard work, teamwork where able to channel the strength of their staff to achieve organisational goals

### **4.3. Discussion of findings**

#### **a. Impact of Leadership Style on Employee productivity**

The style displayed by leadership was significant in impacting employee productivity. This was a significant finding discovered in the primary research as revealed in section (4.3.a) Employee productivity is an essential part of employee engagement and employees who were engaged were more productive. The style of leadership however influences employee productivity. As discovered in the analysis of data, leaders who were transformative and democratic could adequately influence staff towards further productivity. This is collaborated by Saks (2006), who pointed out that democratic leaders enabled the employee to have a positive perception of the workplace, through enhancing their value and making them have a positive sense of belonging. Employees who had their opinions taken into considerations in their workplace were more engaged and productive, this is because when leaders heed to the opinion of staff it makes them have a sense of value and belonging which instils the need for staff to achieve more task. Furthermore, Markos and Sridevi (2010), noted that transformative leaders were also excellent at making employees more engaged and productive, transformative leaders seek to instil a sense of value for the work in the employees and create a framework where staff can be more productive, hence transformative leaders provide avenues for career development, training opportunities, more work-life balance schemes and further long-term development plans for the organisation and the staff. This enhances staff productivity as staff will poses the required technical and cognitive skills to carry out task.

In a rather rare discovery, from the analysis of data, it was discovered that transactional and autocratic leaders also influenced employee productivity, as leaders which based their relationship and exposure to staff based on the job, they offered were also capable of driving the essence of productiveness. As noted from the analysis leaders who were only based on the

job, enhance employee productivity, as employees would ensure they meet up to task to get the relevant pay, promotions and bonuses, furthermore autocratic leaders who were not reluctant in disciplining staff for failure to achieve task through a cut in salaries, or suspension also enhanced productivity as staff would not want to have their pay slashed. Thus as Keskes (2014), and Barry and Girona, (2017), notes that a central way to increase staff productivity was through proper motivation and basic pay, furthermore Barling and Cooper (2008), notes that a central benefit of transactional leaders was their ability to keep formal working ethics amongst staff thus driving them to work harder to achieve the relative bargain of the contract.

#### **b. Impact of Leadership styles on meeting up to deadline**

Another important finding from the study was the impact of leadership styles on meeting up to deadlines. Deadlines in jobs are important as they set the date for task completion and objectives attainment, when staff adequately meet up to task it enhances the overall performance of the organisation as such organisation will be progressive (Afshinpour, 2014). From the analysis of data (section 4.2.b) it has been discovered that leadership style influences the extent to which employees meet up to deadlines. Transformative leaders which are more concerned about transforming employees for better work significantly enhanced the extent to which employees meet up to deadlines, as noted in the literature review Bhatia (2011), explained that transformational leaders often put adequate work conditions and environment for employees to meet up with deadlines, furthermore, Bhatia (2011), explained that more training and skills development opportunities provided by transformational leaders to employees enhanced their ability to meet up with deadlines. Ulrich, Zenger & Smallwood (2013), also noted that the ability of transformational leaders to keep track of staff achievements and meeting of deadlines through performance appraisals and quarterly reports was essential in identifying productive staff as well as non-productive staff.

Autocratic and transactional leaders also enhanced the ability of staff to meet up to deadlines. Since a transactional leader was concerned with terms of employee contract, employees always strived to meet-up with deadlines so they can gain the benefits of the contractual agreement. According to Shastri, Sinha, and Keskes (2014)), employees work harder to meet-up with deadlines when there is a reward of doing so, furthermore Zajkowska (2012), noted that an increase in a paycheck after meeting deadline, quarterly or yearly goals served as a significant motivator for individuals.

### **c. Impact of leadership styles of Conflict resolution**

Conflict resolution is the ability to manage conflict in an organisation in a way in which grievances are adequately settled and compensation is made (Biro, 2014). Conflict resolution fosters harmony, cooperation, and unity amongst staff members further improving the performance of the organisation. According to James (2017), effective conflict resolution is essential for a better work relationship, patterns, and environment. One essential attribute of engaged employees is the management of conflict, as AbuKhalifeh and Som (2013), noted that engaged employees often looked for peaceful methods to resolve conflict before it escalates.

From this study, it has been discovered that leadership style enhances employee engagement which in turn makes employees seek better and peaceable means of resolving conflicts. Democratic leaders who allowed room for communication, better interpersonal relationships, and cooperation amongst employees enhanced peaceable resolution of conflict. This is collaborated by Garber (2007), who noted that communication provided healthy patterns for employees to express their grievances to leaders, through the down-up communication style employees were able to enlighten leadership on the policy which was favourable or not favourable, furthermore as noted in the literature review Zajkowska (2012), notes that communication and interpersonal relationship enhances employees to air their views

concerning managerial practices which were not convenient. Democratic leaders have been researched to have more effective communication patterns amongst employees, Garber (2007), notes that democratic leaders gave room for different opinions and views, hence increasing the chance for employees to resolve conflicts and express grievances.

Transformational leaders are also inclined towards healthy conflict resolution, through the setting of workplace policies and instilling a feeling of value amongst employees, transformational leaders can condition the minds of employees towards healthy conflict management. In explaining this further Malik, Saleem and Naeem (2016), notes that a transformational leader through the setting of good working conditions, healthy work environment, positive staff team-work, enabled staff to be more inclined towards a positive resolution of conflicts, as staff will not want to keep a grudge with other staff which could limit their ability to work together and achieve a task.

#### **d. Impact of Leadership styles on achieving organisational goals**

Achieving organisational goals is an essential part of a business, firm, or company as it was discovered from the analysis of data section. According to Malik, Saleem and Naeem (2016) goals define an organisations purpose, hence when goals are achieved it means the organisation is keeping up to its purpose. Achievement of goals also aids the organisation to measure its progress and discover means by which goals attainment can be improved.

The primary research also discovered that leadership plays a significant role in the ability of employees to achieve organisational goals. Engaged employees possessed the right emotional, cognitive, and technical skills to ensure that organisational goals are met. From the research, it was discovered that the transformative leadership style (section 4.2.d) was more capable of influencing employees to achieve organisational goals. The transformative leadership style is more concerned with emotional, cognitive and technical skills, as such transformative

leadership provides good welfare and work conditions to ensure that an employee is emotionally attached to the workplace, a transformative leader also puts in place career development programmes and training measures to ensure that employees acquired the basic skills to work on their job, hence increasing their cognitive and technical capability of achieving task. This discovery from the research is collaborated, Ojokuku , Odetayo ,and Sajuyigbe (2012) who noted that the transformative leader provides room for growth and development in the employees which enabled them to meet up with organisational goals. Samad, Reaburn, Davis et al, (2015), further noted that transformative leaders enhanced the ability of employees to attain higher levels of skills necessary to carry out their jobs which are crucial for goal attainment.

From the research autocratic and transactional leaders also enhanced employee ability to meet up with organisational goals but not as the transformative leaders. As discovered in section (4.2.d). Transactional leadership only increased the sense of duty in employees, i.e perform the task based on pay and contractual agreement, autocratic leaders on the other hand also enhanced employees to meet up with organisational goals because of fear of the consequences of not meeting up to organisational goals. Transformational leadership however can influence employees to meet up with organisational goals because they feel valued in the organisation, furthermore, transformative leaders provide the necessary skills and environment for employees to meet up with organisational goals. The transformational leadership style is thus the most efficient in achieving employee engagement as Robinson, Perryman, and Hayday (2004), noted that the transformational leadership style builds a strong relationship between employees and employers, by providing good welfare conditions, healthy work environment, and training opportunities.

### **4.3. Answering the Research Questions**

For this research, four research questions were posed, the first two were critically answered in the literature review section i.e this questions were posed in other to get the relevant variables and frameworks by which the researcher could answer the last two questions which were answered based on the collection of primary data through interviews. The discussions below thus explain the answers to research questions.

#### **RQ 3. What is the influence of leadership style on employee satisfaction and commitment?**

This question was posed to discover which leadership style had the most influence on employee satisfaction, commitment, and motivation. These three are all factors that make employees engaged as discussed in the literature under section (2.2.2). Therefore, this question intended to get answers on how leadership style influenced the three thus resulting in better engagement.

Employee satisfaction involves the extent to which an employee is contended with his working conditions and pay. It describes the extent to which an employee is happy with his/her job and finds it fulfilling (Chowdhury, 2014). From the analysis of data and the discussion of findings, it has been discovered that transformational leadership had the most influence on job satisfaction. This is because the transformational leader puts in place factors that enhance job satisfaction amongst employees. Factors like welfare conditions, incentives, bonuses, and salaries that are sufficient to meet up with the basic needs of an employee are essential for job satisfaction. The transformational leader thus puts all this in place as he/she seeks a wholistic approach towards employee engagement. The transformational leader knows that taking care of employee needs, through providing means for them to meet up with basic needs is an essential way of keeping employees satisfied (Afshinpour, 2014).

Employee commitment involves the loyalty of employees to an organisation, i.e it measures the ability of employees to go the “extra mile” for their organisation. It also shows the level in

which employees can put more cognitive and technical skills towards the achievement of organisational goals. From the responses in the interview, the transformational leadership style had more possibilities in making employees committed to an organisation. While job satisfaction can be based on pay, employee commitment comes from other factors such as a feeling of value, a sense of belonging, and purpose (Bruno, 2013). The transformational leader thus can instill a feeling of value and sense of belonging amongst employees, as the transformational leader has exceptional interpersonal skills. Samad, Reaburn, Davis et al (2015), noted that the transformational leader has the quality of a democrat as he effectively listens to employees and seeks their opinions when making policies, this resonates well as employees feel more confident in an organisation that listens to their opinions. Furthermore, the transformational leader provides room for career growth and development, through training, workshops, and skill development. This can increase the feeling of value employees have concerning the workplace, as the more skills they acquire, the more work is assigned to them thus making them feel they are contributing positively to the workplace.

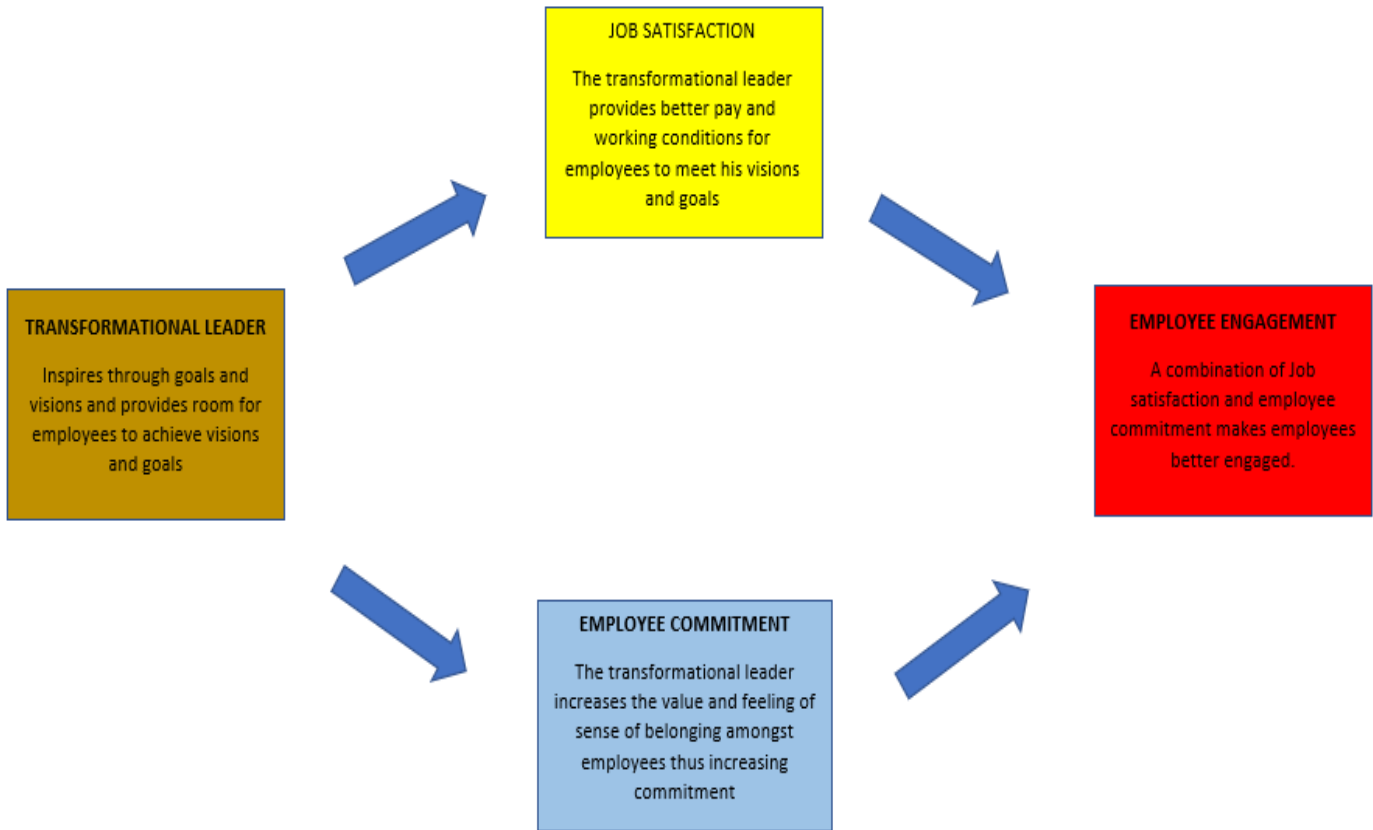
The transformational leader is one who inspires people through vision, goals, and sets the relevant environment for employees to achieve these goals and visions, this further leads to an employee being more engaged.

From the above, the researcher can thus conclude that the transformational leadership style provides the best job satisfaction and commitment further making employees more engaged.

The relationship between the three is described in the figure 5 below:



**Figure 6. Relationship between transformational leadership, job satisfaction and employee engagement**



**Source: Drawn by the author of this dissertation**

**RQ 2: What significant link exists between leadership style and employee turnover levels.**

Employee turnover refers to the extent to which employees exit an organisation Soebbing, Wicker, and Weimar, (2015), several reasons have been attributed to employees exiting an organisation as discussed in the literature review, one however is the leadership style. From this study, the link between leadership style and employee turnover is a positive one as how leaders managed their organisation significantly determined the way employees exited the organisation. From the study organisation with democratic and transformative leadership were most likely to reduced employee turnover rates than organisations with autocratic or transactional leaders. This is because democratic and transformative leaders increase the value,

sense of belonging, and commitment of employees to the organisation. One significant factor that influences employee turnover is better pay and working conditions, thus Tomal and Jones (2015), noted that employees are always seeking better payment and work conditions, transformational leaders excel at paying their staff well and also placing better work conditions which makes it difficult for staff to exit the organisation except if they get a job that offers them better payment and work conditions.

Democratic leadership, on the other hand, provides a sense of value of employees through inclusion and making them feel important to the organisation, thus listening to employees opinions is an important factor in retaining staff, however, it is not a significant factor in retaining staff, as a sense of value needs to be supported with good pay and working conditions (Overstreet , Hazen, Skipper, et al 2014). Therefore, the democratic leader though can limit the turnover levels at his/her organisation, may not achieve low turnover rates like the transformational leader. From this research for democratic leaders to limit the turnover rates they must merge the ability to make employees feel valued with sufficient salary and better work conditions.

Autocratic and transactional leaders are the highest in terms of employee turnover, Ishaiku (2016), notes that organisation with autocratic leaders experienced a high rate of 66% employee turnover, furthermore Malik, Saleem and Naeem (2016), noted that leaders or managers who “lord their opinions” over others were prone to lose quality staff as staff desire a place where their opinions can be heard and grievances adequately met. However, from this study, it was noted that both transactional and autocratic leaders could experience fair turnover rates if the organisation offered good pay and working conditions. This study discovered that employees may stay in such organisation just for the pay but may not be engaged as they will not see the need to put more effort into the organisation due to the absence of the feeling of a sense of value and belonging.

From the above good pay, good working conditions, sense of value and feeling of belonging are essential in employee engagement, the transformational leadership style is hence the best is boosting employee engagement due to the ability to merge (good pay, good working conditions, sense of value and feeling of belonging) to organisational practice.

The table below thus shows the relationship between each leadership style and employee turnover levels based on the relationship to pay, working conditions, sense of value, and feeling of belonging.

**Table 4. Relationship between Leadership style and Employee Engagement**

Leadership Style	Pay	Work Conditions	Sense of Value	Feeling of belonging	Employee turnover	Employee Engagement
Transformational Leadership	↑	↑	↑	↑	↓	↑
Democratic Leaders	◇	◇	↑	↑	◇	◇
Transactional and Autocratic leaders	↑	↑	↓	↓	◇	↓

Source: Author

**LEGENDS**



**4.4. Summary of Research findings**

The central aim of this study was to discover the impacts of leadership styles on employee engagement. The research discovered that there is a positive relationship between leadership styles and employee engagement. Leadership styles involve the manner and approach which a

leader takes towards influencing, mobilising, inspiring, and directing their teams this has varying effects on employee engagement.

The transformational leadership style was discovered to be most effective in enhancing employee engagement. This is because this style puts adequate measures to ensure that staff meets up with the goals and objectives of an organisation. The transformational leader sets goals, objectives, and plans and motivate employees towards achieving them by providing good welfare conditions, a good working environment, and opportunities for training and development. From the research, it was discovered that transformational leaders provide adequate pay and financial incentives for employees, this thus enhances their job satisfaction which boosts productivity and ability to meet up with task. Transformational leadership also creates a sense of value and belonging amongst employees this enables them to be more committed to the organisation, strive to achieve more goals, stay in unity, and cooperate with other team members thus limiting the occurrence of conflict. The transformational leader is also able to limit employee turnover by creating platforms by which employees have an emotional attachment to the organisation, organisations with transformational leadership recorded low employee turnover rates because employees have a greater sense of achievement and meaning to the organisation due to value and sense of belonging rather than based on salary and remunerations

Next to the transformational leadership style in ensuring employee engagement was the democratic leader. This research discovered that the democratic leader can instil a sense of value and feeling of belonging amongst employees due to his/her ability to hear opinions and foster positive communication patterns, however, a democratic leader has to balance the sense of value and belonging with adequate pay and salary to keep employees engaged as a sense of value and belonging (though important) is not significant in ensuring employees are engaged.

Employees are better engaged when they are satisfied (with pay and working conditions) and are committed (having value and a sense of belonging) in an organisation.

The lowest leadership styles in terms of employee engagement as discovered by this research are transactional and autocratic. This is because while transactional leadership deals with employees strictly on employment contracts and terms, autocratic leadership gives less room for employee opinions, interpersonal relationships, and employee participation in decision making. This diminishes their sense of value and feeling of belonging to the organisation, further affecting their commitment level. Transactional leadership also is concerned with rewarding employees based on their performance and does not provide room for other incentives and interpersonal relations, from the study it was discovered that this leadership style can lead to productive staff but not committed and engaged staff, staff will only concern themselves with meeting up to organisational goals just for the monetary rewards that come with it but will not be willing to go the extra mile for the organisation. The leadership style which effectively engages employees is the transformational leadership style.

#### **4.5. Limitations of the Findings**

Using the interviews as a major source of data collection, limited the findings of this study as the findings cannot be generalised on the entire population of SMEs of Nigeria, this is because the interview seeks to go in-depth rather than provide general discoveries, hence conducting a general studies may yield answers that are quite different from the above

#### **4.6. Conclusion**

This study mainly consists of the data analysis and presentation of findings. This section was significant as it adequately linked the literature review, research methodology to the findings of the study. Using the qualitative research method, the research was able to prove that some

findings of the study were in line with the literature review while some were not. The next chapter thus contains the summary and conclusions of the study.

## **CHAPTER FIVE**

### **CONCLUSION, RECOMMENDATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH POSSIBILITIES**

#### **5.1. Conclusion**

The importance of leadership in the 21<sup>st</sup> century cannot be overemphasised as leadership is central to every sphere of life most importantly in the organisational setting where diverse individuals come together to perform several tasks for the overall success of the organisation. In that case the capacity of leadership to impeccably harmonise both human and material resources for the achievement of organisational goals is paramount. Leaders must ensure that human resource possess the adequate and accurate drive to pursue organisation goals and achieve them within the stipulated deadline. The need for productivity workers who can properly achieve goals had brought the concept of employee engagement which succinctly means the level of commitment of employees to the organisation. Employee engagement becomes an important factor in organisational studies as employees who are engaged are better committed more productive and more emotionally attached to the organisation in a manner which influences them to use their cognitive and behavioural prowess to achieve organisational goals (Petermode, 2012). Each company thus strive to make its employees better engaged as with a high level of engagement organisational goals are speedily and properly achieved (Soebbing, Wicker, and Weimar, 2015).

The relationship between leadership and employee engagement has been a subject of academic enquiry especially in the 21<sup>st</sup> century when the two concepts are important to the overall success of an organisation. The nature of leadership style has the capacity to influence employees thus making them or engaged or less engaged. Leaders who support a more cordial, interpersonal relationship alongside with rigorous work ethics and providing employees with the relevant motivation, skills and opportunities to perform task were proven to have better engaged

workers who will strive more and put in their innovative and creative skills to achieve task. As such, leaders have been advised to create a balance between salary or basic pay and creating a sense of value amongst employees as the both are significant in ensuring that employees are properly engaged.

This study thus aimed at investigating the impact of leadership styles on employee engagement. Primary data was collected via interviews of four employees in SMEs in Nigeria and although the sample was smaller than expected, the researcher found that the quality of data from the multiple perspectives in these different organisations was very high, and that it allowed him to satisfactorily address the research question. The research critically looked at the several leadership styles (transformative, democratic, transactional and autocratic). Transformative leadership is that which inspires individuals through visions and strategic goals but also put accurate steps and conditions for individuals to achieve such goals. As such Markos and Sridevi (2010), notes that transformative leaders try to influence employees to the extent that they see job or task as their personal responsibility. The transformational leader puts all in place from good pay, incentives, working conditions, career development, training and technical skills acquisition to ensure that employees have all the necessary emotional and cognitive resources to get the job done.

Democratic leaders are more inclined towards improving sense of value and feelings of belongings amongst the employees, hence a democratic leader listens to employees and tries to include employees in decision making and carry them along on matters regarding the organisation. A democratic leader may or may not be a transformative leader, it depends on how able he/she is able to instil the passion for the job or transform the employee from seeing the job as the organisations to “my job”.



Transactional leaders are those who are based on the contract and terms of employment hence they offer no extra incentive or means of drawing employees closer to the organisation. Autocratic leaders are bossy and often lord their opinions over others without giving others the opportunity to contribute creatively or innovatively to the organisation.

Amongst the above forms of leadership, this study has proven that transformational leadership style was more effective in ensuring employee engagement as a transformative leader puts all necessary conditions which keeps employees satisfied and happy and also committed and motivated to “go the extra-mile” in achieving organisational objectives. This finding was in line with existing literature, however, a new insight discovered in this study that has not been captured by existing literature was the role of autocratic leaders in employee engagement, the research discovered that while autocratic leaders could not engage employees, they could have better productive staff, if they provided good salaries and work conditions. Another ranking

## **5.2. Summary**

This research central aim was to discover the relationship between leadership styles and employee engagement, with leadership styles being the independent variable and employee engagement being the dependent variable. The study thus tried to draw the link between the two and discover how the I.V impacts on the D.V. Four questions were posed. The first two questions significantly dwelt on the use of secondary data to achieve them, this is because they provided frameworks and units of measurement to answer the last two questions. The below discusses the questions and how they were answered.

### **RQ 1: What does existing literature say about leadership styles and employee engagement?**

This question was achieved in section 2.2 of this study, With reference to existing literature such as Cronje and Willem (2010), Bruno (2013) , Barling and Cooper, (2008) and Ulrich,

Zenger & Smallwood (2013) leadership styles was referred to as the approach which a leader adopts in inspiring employees towards achieving organisational goals it was discovered that leadership style were 5 (transformational, democratic, transactional, autocratic and situational leadership). Existing literature also points out that leadership styles were important to an organisation as the manner which a leader adopts can resonate positively or negatively within the organisation thereby resulting in success or failure of the entire organisation

Existing literature, drawing from studies such as Macey and Schneider (2008), Mortimer (2009) and Bhatia (2011), noted that employee engagement refers the extent to which employees were committed to the organisation and where willing to put their best efforts to achieve organisational goals. Employee engagement also referred to the positive attitude employees have towards an organisation, this is manifested in commitment, satisfaction, and willingness to carry out more tasks for the success of that organisation. Within the literature several factors influenced the nature of employee engagement this includes job satisfaction and job commitment. Engaged workers were more productive, met up with deadlines, resolved conflicts properly and achieved organisational goals effectively.

**RQ 2: What are theoretical constructs that explain leadership styles and employee engagement?**

From the section 2,3, of this research it was discovered from the works of Khan, Khan and Khan (2016), Malik, Saleem and Naeem, (2016) that several theories have been discovered that discusses the importance of leadership styles. This theory includes but not limited to Great-man theory, trait theory, managerial grid, path-goal theory etc. All these theories explained the relevance of leadership in organisational setting. Leadership theories also try to relate the complexities of human behaviours within the organisation and intricacies of leadership. These

theories enabled the researcher to develop frameworks by which the effectiveness of leadership style was investigated

From the studies of Robinson, Perryman, and Hayday (2004), Macgregor (2003), and Malik, Saleem and Naeem, (2016), theories of employee engagement include the Robinsons model, PENNA hierarchy and Schmidt Model were used to discover how leaders can enhance and maintain employee engagement. These theories provided frameworks and units which informed the questions asked in relation to employee engagement and how it is being impacted by leadership

**RQ 3: What is the influence of leadership style on employee satisfaction and commitment?**

This question was answered in Section 4.2 and 4.3. It was discovered that leadership style played an important role in employee satisfaction and commitment as the transformative leader was able to keep employees satisfied and committed to the organisation, through the provision of welfare, conducive work environment and opportunities for skills development and career growth. The transformational leader can thus enhance the engagement of employees through increasing their satisfaction and happiness levels and also enhancing their feeling of value and sense of belonging to the research.

**RQ4: What significant link exists between leadership style and employee turnover levels?.**

This research question was answered in section 4.2 and 4.3. It was discovered that there exist a positive link between leadership style and employee turnover rates. The nature of leadership style adopted by a leader could significantly influence the exit of employees in an organisation. It was discovered that transformational leaders had the lowest level of employee turnover rates, as job satisfaction factors (pay and working conditions) and employee commitment factors

(sense of value and belonging) were balanced equally. Democratic leaders on the other hand were able to keep employee turnover rates low if they could balance job satisfaction factors with employee commitment factors, as there is a tendency for democratic leaders to exalt employee commitment factors over job satisfaction factors. Transactional and Autocratic leaders had the highest rate of employee turnover rates however they are able to keep turn over rates fair if they provide adequate job satisfaction factors i.e good pay and working conditions, however employees will not be engaged as they will be in the organisation just for the monetary rewards and are not likely to improve productivity unless they are adequately rewarded for it.

### **5.3. Recommendations**

Based on the above, it is evident and it has been proven empirically that leadership styles impact employee engagement in SMEs in Nigeria. Leadership provides the necessary motivations, welfare, incentives and working environment to keep employee engaged. Without leaders being transformative by putting means which ensure that that employees do not see job or task as “the organisation” but as his/her personal responsibility, organisations will not achieve employee engagement and hence better productivity. Leaders are required therefore to enhance the working conditions of employees, provide them with career growth and skill development opportunities and also increase their sense of value in the organisation. By doing this, leaders can keep employees engaged, further making them productive for the overall benefit of the organisation.

### **5.4. Contribution to Knowledge**

This study has contributed to knowledge by discovering the relationship between leadership styles and employee engagement. The empirical investigation of the linkage between leadership style and employee engagement had not been previously established in other research as documented in the literature review section of this study. This research has thus

shown that there is a link between the kind of leadership and the form of employee engagement generated in an organisation. The research has further been able to discover based on order of importance which leadership style can engage employees the most. In ascending order, this is transformative, democratic, transactional and autocratic leadership style.

Furthermore, the research has established a framework for understanding employee turnover in relation to leadership style. From the research it has been discovered that all leadership styles could significantly reduce employee turnover rates if the basic pay and work conditions provided by leaders were sufficient to meet employee needs, however not all leadership style can produce engaged employees, this can only be achieved by leadership styles that balance both pay, working conditions and employee sense of value and belonging.

## **5.6. Recommendations for Future Research**

Based on the findings of the research an area that emerged from this research that would warrant further study is exploring leadership and employee engagement in a more general and representational terms. The below is thus a list of recommendations and prospects for future research:

- i. Researchers can explore the link between leadership styles and employee engagement using quantitative strategies.
- ii. Researchers can explore the balance between employee engagement and pay, working conditions, feeling of value and sense of belonging.
- iii. Researchers can also test the findings of this research on a wider scale of employees.
- iv. Researchers can further explore the relationship between employee engagement and employee turnover rates, as the relationship between the two is yet to be established.

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## **Appendix A: Word Count Declaration**

CHAPTER ONE	-	2110
CHAPTER TWO	-	4737
CHAPTER THREE	-	2906
CHAPTER FOUR	-	4813
CHAPTER FIVE	-	1984
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>-</b>	<b>16553</b>

## Appendix B: Interview Schedule

Dear participant,

I am a student of (insert name of University) currently carrying a study on “An assessment of leadership styles on employee engagement in selected companies in Ireland”. The below interview questions is designed to get your opinions on the subject matter. I will require your cooperation and sincerest response. This is entirely for research purposes and in no way shall your identity be publicised which could jeopardise your security.

I have sent a sample of the interview questions before hand so you can get conversant with the questions and conduct your own research if necessary. Thank you for your anticipated cooperation

### Interview Questions

I. Do you feel valued and important to your workplace?

Probe:

- i. Does this feeling have anything to do with leadership? If yes how, if no why?
- ii. Are there policies like health and safety, welfare, promotions in your work place?
- iii. Is the feeling of value and importance based on the policies and job conditions in your work place?

2. Are your skills appreciated in your workplace?

Probe:

- i. Will you say you were recruited based on your skills?
- ii. Does leadership provide opportunities for skill growth and development?

3. Do you have a feeling of sense of belonging and meaning in your workplace?

Probe:

- i. Has there been a time when you had to work well in teams? If yes? How did you take the experience? If No? how do you work shared in your workplace
- ii. Is the pay and conditions at your workplace satisfactory?

4. Can you describe the manager at workplace?

- i. Will you say your manager is democratic, autocratic, transformative or transactional
- ii. Do you feel the need to work more to achieve workplace goals? Is this feeling based on how your manager treats you?
- iii. What forms of motivations are in your workplace? Are these motivations sufficient to keep you on the job?

5. What policies at your workplace you don't appreciate? If yes explain? If no will you say you are satisfied with your workplace?

Probe

- i. Is your manager aware of these policies that you don't appreciate?
  - ii. What is your managers reaction to these policies?
  - iii. Are these policies sufficient to make you quit your job?
- 6, Are there times you felt like quitting your job?

Probe:

- i. Did your managers' attitude have anything to do with it?
  - ii. Have you ever spoken to your manager about any attitude he/she has that you do not approve of? If yes? How did he/she take it? If no? why haven't you.
- 7, Are there systems that allow you talk to your manager about policies or attitudes that do not go well with employees?
8. How can management improve on their skills in relationship with employees in your workplace?

**N.B Interviews will not be limited to the above questions, as other questions will be generated as the interviewee responds to questions**

## **Appendix C: Transcript of Interviews**

Question one: Do you feel valued and important to your workplace?

ACC: I feel valued because my opinion counts, leadership takes my opinions into consideration, leadership style is not the type that doesn't listen to people. Leadership style has increased engagement as it is beautiful when your leader listens to you and implement your ideas.

SM- Yes, on a scale of 1-10% I am valued, because opportunities are provided and management cares about your productivity, management makes palliatives available and leadership goes the extra mile to keep you on the Job

RG: Yes, I feel valued to my organisation, because my skills are appreciated, as I render my services to people, they appreciate me. Likewise, my leader also encourages and tells me I've done a good job

ST: Yes, I feel very valued because of my contribution to the workplace, my leader always acknowledges that I do a good job and he always encourages me to do better.

Question Two: Are Your Skills Appreciated in your Workplace

ACC: Yes, my skills are very much appreciated because my leader constantly reminds me of the importance of my work and how I could do better. Leadership helps me improve my skills as there are opportunities for career development, courses, workshops etc which leadership provides

SM: Yes, my skills are appreciated, we have quarterly appraisals which leadership reviews our performance and let's us know whether we are doing and good job and how we can improve on it

RG: My skills are appreciated, as people are also looking for the best, when I was recruited, I was chosen because of my expertise and my salary is occasionally increased due to my skills

ST: My skills are much appreciated and valued within the school because I always impact knowledge which I feel is the basis of life

Question Three: Do you have a feeling of sense of belonging and meaning in your workplace?

ACC: Yes, I feel amongst with other staff, sometimes we gather together for group pictures and there is this general friendliness amongst us

SM: Yes, I feel amongst because we have to work together on a job, however this does not mean that we don't quarrel or have bad moments we do but we still must resolve our differences to ensure that work is done excellently

RG: Yes, I have an excellent feeling of sense of belonging as personal relationship with other staff is very cordial, we celebrate with each other mourn with each other. Leadership has been able to instill this sense of belonging in us as apart from the pay, there he makes us feel amongst the organisation through celebrating with us.

ST: Yes, I feel belonged in my organisation, with other staff who constantly work together and cooperate together on diverse occasions and responsibilities.

Question Four: Can you describe the manager at workplace?

ACC: My leader is caring, responsible, vision oriented, always striving to do more things and have further breakthroughs even in area where he is not professionally trained for.

SM: My leader is good, hardworking and a bit friendly, but she is dual sided, you may not know what will get her angry or when she could turn a bad face at you

RG: My leader is democratic, he does not lord or boss things over you, he is also transformative as he tries as much as possible to change you to suit what he does, he also is friendly and kind, everybody loves him.

ST: Well, my leader is a mixture of many things bossy, friendly, arrogant, calm etc. It depends on her mood and what you do to her, she reacts based on your actions

Question Five: What policies at your workplace you don't appreciate? If yes explain? If no will you say you are satisfied with your workplace?

ACC: Well, I won't say all the working conditions are good, because leadership can always improve, that is not to say I'm not satisfied with my job or working conditions but there can always be improvement.

SM: Policies I don't appreciate will be absence of fast response to things and issues, sometimes files will be kept on her desk without attending to them. Furthermore, her relationship to customers is not very tangible, as the profits we get from them is a bit exorbitant.

RG: Well, the only policy I would say I'm not comfortable with is the absence of pension schemes which always gives you the feeling that you cannot stay in this place forever, you have to constantly look for better jobs and occasions.

ST: The policy I don't really appreciate is the low pay, well it may be the general condition in my profession and particularly in this part of the country but I feel the pay is really not sufficient to meet other needs besides the basic needs.

Question Six: Are there times you have felt like quitting your job?

ACC: well everybody has that "I want to quit moment" but really it has nothing to do with my leader, mainly its just because of excess work, or times when I can't attend to other pressing issues

SM: Yes a lot especially because I get bored of jobs very often so I will move to another industry, but it is not really because of her but actually because of me

RG: Yes, obviously I've thought about quitting my job whenever I know that there are other promising places with better working conditions, but this feeling is not in relationship to my leader

ST: A lot especially when my leader begins to be unnecessarily difficult, also the job conditions has made me countlessly want to leave my job and look for better things to do

Question 7: Are there systems that allow you talk to your manager about policies or attitudes that do not go well with employees

ACC: Yes there are channels, but given my role in the organization I can actually speak to him directly but other lower staff have to follow the due process, but it is only when things are not done then you can meet him personally.

SM: Yes, I can talk to my leader but I prefer to do everything I can to meet up with a task before I actually go to her, grievances can be addressed between us staff, it must not necessarily go to her but if it concerns our working conditions yes we can talk to her

RG: Yes, I have been privileged to be able to talk to my leader, I have his phone number, he has mine and other, I have also been able to convey the grievances I may have as an employee which he listens.

ST: Well yes there are channels were we can tell our leader about grievances we have but most times nothing is really done. Well this limits my engagement but further makes me know that there are better jobs which I can always get.