

Leadership styles and employee engagement in the food industry of MSME's

Henry Ifeanyichukwu Njoku^{1*} Raflyn Manuel Guillermo¹

¹Saint Louis University, Baguio, Philippines; 2197455@slu.edu.ph (H.I.N.); rmguillermo@slu.edu.ph (R.M.G.).

Abstract: The aim of this study is to determine what leadership styles provide the best employees' work engagement in the food industry of La Trinidad. A quantitative method of research and particularly the descriptive analysis was used. The researcher used median, weighted mean, grand weighted mean, and standard deviation. The primary mode of data gathering was through the use of questionnaires. The questionnaires were formulated based on the review of related literature and approved by four experts. With this, information is incorporated into a research paradigm. In this framework the dependent variable is placed against the independent variable. Results show that a relationship-oriented style of leadership is dominant in the La Trinidad food industry and that there is a high level of employee work engagement. Leadership style of management showed a strong correlation with employee engagement. It was also found out that the leadership style of management can create a challenge for employees which will either decrease or increase employee engagement. When analyzed deeper, it was found out that the relationship-oriented style of leadership produced the most level of employee engagement. With this, leaders are recommended to develop leadership attributes that promote and build connections with employees.

Keywords: Employee, Employee engagement, Food industry, La Trinidad, Leadership styles, MSMEs.

JEL Classification: M54.

1. Introduction

1.1. Background of the Study

Understanding leadership and its impacts on employee engagement is key to organizational growth and profitability. Leadership maps out the course of action through which goals can be accomplished. Micro Small and Medium Enterprises (MSME) need solid based leadership that will drive employee engagement. MSMEs are currently faced with issues regarding employee motivation, productivity, and performance. These are a result of a lack of employee engagement, which can be directly and indirectly attributed to poor leadership styles. As these problems persistently affect MSMEs, the need for this study is necessary.

The leadership styles of a manager create a perception within his employees. Managers need to take care of their employees by making them feel that they are important, and management really has goodwill towards their growth and development (Jena, Pradhan, & Panigrahy, 2018). Relationship in the form of communication is very important, especially in the culture of the Philippines that deals mainly in collectivism (Rutishauser & Sender, 2019). This is important because if an employee feels that he is being used, he will not commit to the organization, and this results in employee disengagement and, subsequently, employee turnover. The implication of this is that when employees are no longer engaged, then performance is affected, and since MSMEs contribute immensely to the growth of the Philippines, then the Philippines economy will be affected. By focusing on the views of the employees,

managers can be able to exhibit flexible leadership styles. Leadership today is all about flexibility and adapting to the dynamic climate of the business world. It is what management demands that instigates the employees to take action. Leadership is a very important part of the functions of management. Leadership given the prominent role of MSMEs, [Lewin and Massimini \(2003\)](#), it becomes pertinent to study the leader's role in this firm. Leadership has an increasingly fundamental role in MSME management. According to [Avolio, Sosik, Jung, and Berson \(2003\)](#), firms are increasingly placed in and exposed to the global market. Understanding the importance of the performance of leaders and the problems that arise due to globalization in this situation is crucial. In these circumstances, Leaders in MSMEs play a vital role in encouraging and supporting individual employees' initiatives. In improving work procedures for the organization's benefit, an influential leader influences followers in a desired manner to achieve desired goals. According to [Sakiru, D'Silva, Othman, DaudSilong, and Busayo \(2013\)](#), having an understanding of leadership is key so as to avoid misplaced priorities since whatever the leader does will directly or indirectly affect the firm and its social-economic and environmental context.

According to [Nahavandi \(2002\)](#), different leadership styles may affect organizational effectiveness or performance. Research that aims to examine if there is a relationship of sort between employee engagement and the styles of manager's leadership in MSMEs is quite a few. Despite the efforts made, there is still a gap in identifying and understanding leadership styles in MSMEs. According to [Durham, Knight, and Locke \(1997\)](#), there are several hierarchical levels in large enterprises, which makes it difficult for employees to be affected directly by the actions and behavior of the CEO, unlike in an MSME, the owner with regards to their team members has no influence. This influence of leaders such as planning, organizing, staffing, leading, and controlling can be explained as a result of the leaders' active involvement in daily operations ([Yukl, 1998](#)).

Subsequent analyses by [Avolio et al. \(2003\)](#) underpinned the considerable diversity of leadership styles, which is due to the personality of such leaders as well as environmental influence. [O'Regan, Ghobadian, and Sims \(2004\)](#) tried to compare different leadership styles to find out which is the best by checking different authors' perspectives; he found out that there is still no agreement among the various authors regarding leadership styles. A key criterion to be called a leader is to have followers. [Wright and Taylor \(1994\)](#) noted that for the purpose of putting members on the right path, it is impossible for a leader to initiate any leadership activity if he does not have the followers to influence their attitude, thought process, and emotional aspects of the group members. [Parris and Hart \(2013\)](#) considered leadership a skill used to control an organization's followers and work devotedly towards common goals. Leadership with regards to MSMEs is not limited to just one person but rather can involve multiple individuals who head the organization and are linked to the organization's historical role. [Anderson \(2009\)](#), alongside other authors, discovered three key factors in MSMEs, which are the leader's objective, trait, and behavior that can impact leadership. These three proposed factors are said to be the piece that invigorates MSMEs' growth and performance. Though there are various types of leadership styles, this paper tends to contextualize the contingency leadership style. Leaders provide a sense of direction; they are the visionaries of the organization. They detect the pace at which the organization moves.

There are different categorizations of businesses depending on the country. Since the researcher is currently based in La Trinidad, Benguet, Philippines, he decided to look into the food industry's MSMEs of la Trinidad, Benguet. Micro, small and medium enterprises represent the largest percentage of businesses in the Philippines with about 99.56% ([Philippine Statistics Authority, 2017](#)). Fundamental to the growth or success of every economy is the success of micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs). The impact of MSMEs is significant due to the fact that the majority of the working population is involved in small-scale businesses ([Philippine Statistics Authority, 2017](#)). MSMEs occupy a large percentage of businesses in relation to size. In the Philippines, the idea of entrepreneurship is becoming more popular amongst the Filipinos as they are being empowered by the government and Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) to start-up their own businesses. People are now embracing the idea of setting up their own businesses.

The establishment of the [Go Negosyo Act \(2014\)](#) that fosters growth in all areas and promote the creation of job locally as well as production and trade in the Philippines has further reiterated the government commitment to support MSMEs ([Congress of the Philippines, 2014](#)). The thought of becoming a business owner is getting stronger than ever before. The growth of a small business is the way to make a country prosper. According to [Philippine Statistics Authority \(2017\)](#), MSMEs account for about 99.56% of all enterprises and 62.85% of the workforce in the Philippines, which makes it the mainstay of the nation's economy. MSMEs have been defined by [Govph \(2008\)](#) as a business with a total asset of not more than 10,000,000, excluding land being occupied by the business that is involved in the industry, agribusiness, or services.

According to [Philippine Statistics Authority \(2017\)](#), the foodservice industry is the second biggest industry in Cordillera Administrative Region and provided for 16.7% of employment. According to the Department of Trade and Industry, 60% of MSME in Benguet are venturing into the food business. The food industry in La Trinidad is one of the highest boosters of employment and revenue generation within La Trinidad MSMEs and therefore requires proper leadership that will drive employee engagement and subsequently boosts profitability ([Philippine Statistics Authority, 2017](#)). The food industry in La Trinidad needs good leadership, leaders that understand the physical, cognitive, and emotional needs of its employees. Leaders will be able to transform the potentials of their employees by enhancing their engagement for better organizational productivity. The food industry has the potential to be the leading force in terms of employment, given the nature of the Filipinos. Speaking of the nature of the Filipinos with regard to the food industry, the Filipinos are food lovers. In addition, the barriers to entry into the food industry are low when compared to the expected increase in population, which means there will be more demand.

Work Engagement is an idea that has long existed in diverse forms; a good example is "job involvement" [Allport \(1945\)](#) and also job empowerment, [Thomas and Velthouse \(1990\)](#), unsurprisingly these terms have birthed misunderstanding or disagreement on what it actually means ([Thomas, 2009](#)). Though that orientation is deeply rooted in the notion that the opposite of work engagement is burnout. This is not true in reality, as employees can experience burnout while being engaged in their work. But [Erickson \(2005\)](#) noted that the engagement of employees is "above and beyond simple satisfaction with the employment arrangement or basic loyalty to the employer." Furthermore, he also said it is "the willingness to invest oneself and expend one's discretionary effort to help the employer succeed."

1.2. Research Objectives

Human behavior is so similar yet so unique to each individual that no one method can be entirely applied to the whole population of individuals, especially in human relationship and handling dynamic situations that involves people; thus, managers find it increasingly difficult to manage employees. A critical problem here is the inability of managers to identify employees' work-related problems. Managers are most likely to treat employees as a tool for generating revenue rather than humans with rather complex desires. Managers need to take care of their employees by making them feel that they are important, and management really has goodwill towards their growth and development ([Jena et al., 2018](#)). Relationship in the form of communication is very important, especially in the culture of the Philippines that deals mainly in collectivism ([Rutishauser & Sender, 2019](#)). The problem here is how managers of MSMEs in La Trinidad can tailor their leadership styles in other to get employees with their unique and complex personalities engaged.

Specifically, this paper has the following objectives:

1. To determine the leadership style of MSME managers in the food industry of La Trinidad.
2. To determine the level of employee engagement of MSME employees in the food industry of La Trinidad.
3. To determine what leadership styles, provide the best employee work engagement in the food industry of La Trinidad.

1.3. Research Framework

The research study was undertaken to determine if the leadership style have a significant impact on employee engagement. Employee engagement is important because it affects the productivity level of a business. Various researches done in the past have proven that there is a connection between leadership and employee engagement. The role of the organization and the manager are of special importance and should be considered as some of the foremost aspects that influence engagement. Engaged employees, in turn, influence an organization's outcomes, customer satisfaction, retention rates, productivity, and profitability (Markos & Sridevi, 2010; Wong, 2015). Therefore, it is important to seek out factors that may be effective in furthering a range of organizational behaviors such as work engagement among employees within their working environment (Ahmad, Ahmad, & Shah, 2010). Certain organizational features exert a remarkable influence on employees' work engagement. Organizations must focus on creating a work environment that is supportive of employees and on keeping them motivated and positive, not just about their occupations but also about the organization (Strøm, D'Espallier, & Mersland, 2014). According to a study by Lee, Idris, and Delfabbro (2017), employees' work engagement is influenced by different organizational factors, such as leadership style, organizational culture, and empowering a leader to have a critical effect on work engagement via work meaningfulness. Moreover, leadership styles play an indispensable role in the workplace (Xinxin, Xie, & Guo, 2017). In addition, in the behavioral approach has been reported all styles of leadership have a direct relationship with employees' responses and organizational behavior at the workplace (Bandura & Schunk, 1981). A leader might choose to be more focused on the task at hand and decides not to show concern for the well-being of the employees. Such leaders demand work be done without giving regards to the employee state of mind or present situation (Breevaart & de Vries, 2021). Other leaders might take a different approach when engaging with their employees. They may try to build a relationship between them and employees as they try to get the employees to finish up the task at hand, they may choose to be friendly, considerate or even ask about the current mental state of such employee. These types of leaders are aware that productivity in the work place, requires building a positive environment where individuals feel motivated. Therefore these types of leaders prioritize people to ensure that problems such as dissatisfaction, boredom, personal conflicts and turnover, stay at a minimum (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Furthermore, team members may be more willing to take risks, because they are aware of the fact that their leader will provide support whenever needed (Arana, Tabernero, Chambel, & Curral, 2009). Leadership is one of the single biggest elements that contribute to employee work engagement.

Leadership is mostly directed towards people and social communications. Specifically, leadership is one of the main factors that affect people's understandings of organizational policies (Saleem, 2015). Leadership can be an interpersonal strategy wherein a leader tries to find out followers' potential requirements and satisfy them. In this way, the purposes of an organization can be achieved by influencing followers. Leadership styles likewise regulate purpose, direction, and employee programs at an organization. Leadership styles have been defined as a series of managerial tendencies, behaviors, and abilities based on personal and organizational standards. Wang and Hsieh (2013) have observed that leadership represents a critical factor in ensuring organizational sustainability in today's work environment. Meanwhile, managers can promote positive employee association via effective leadership.

An employee is said to be engaged when such employee is physically engrossed in his job and identifies with the core objectives and goals of his or her organization (Osborne & Hammoud, 2017). Just like every business have a challenge, the employees are not left without one too. Employee face some sort of workplace challenge which can be impacted by the leadership approach. An employee overloaded with tasks and given unrealistic deadline by the leader will certainly become overwhelmed, pressured and frustrated (Karamchandani & Dubule, 2020).

Two theories will be used in this study. The first theory is Fred Fiedler's Contingency Leadership Theory. This theory was developed by Fred Fiedler in 1958. According to Fred Fiedler, how effective a leader will be is dependent on his style of leadership and the current situation. According to Fiedler, leadership style is determined by what is most important to the leader. Proposing the least preferred co-

worker (LPC) scale, a leader can detect his most dominant leadership style. A high LPC shows a leader is people-oriented. They have personal skills and are dependent on their relationship with other people in order to accomplish an objective. On the other hand, a low LPC score shows that a leader is task-oriented and focuses mainly on tasks and power (Love, 2019).

The second theory is William Kahn's Theory of Employee Engagement. Kahn's theory of employee engagement in 1990 was in response to Jack Welch, who at then was the head of General Electric. Jack was emphasizing the positive effect of retrenching a small percentage of his workforce yearly. It was at this time that Kahn, a professor from Questrom School of Business, Boston University, published research "Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work." In his research work, the term "Engagement" was coined when he pointed out the working environment in relation to employees. During this time, leaders in the organization thought on the way to motivate employees to work harder, and this led them to focus their attention on the top-down approach. But according to Kahn, the problem was more about how employees felt rather than employees not properly compensated financially or being the right fit.

Kahn disagreed with this approach. In Kahn's research, "Psychological Conditions of Personal Engagement and Disengagement at Work," Kahn noted that how employees felt is fundamental than being in the proper job or being compensated rightly. Kahn's engagement theory is founded on the idea that the decision to express one's personality in the workplace is a matter of choice. According to Kahn, a relationship is paramount in the workplace. If employees' work is meaningful to them and there is psychological safety and availability, then employee engagement will be the resultant effect (Kahn, 1990a). Relationship at work is very important. Kahn (1990b) stated that a task at work cannot be easily separated from the relationship at work. Kahn went further by stating that relationships will be important when employees are viewed as persons.

Figure 1 illustrates the relationship between the dependent and independent variable.



Figure 1.
Research paradigm of the study.

2. Research Design and Methodology

2.1. Research Design

The research is a descriptive research design employing the quantitative method of data gathering to analyze management leadership styles and employee work engagement in MSMEs. Questionnaires will be administered to selected MSMEs in the Food industry, which covers the municipality of La Trinidad, Benguet.

2.2. Locale and Population

The study is limited in La Trinidad, Benguet due to the researcher's observance of the implemented health protocols and time constraints. This location was chosen because it is a big municipality with a relatively high number of MSMEs in Benguet and therefore will provide the needed information that the researcher requires for better employee engagement for MSMEs in Benguet. There are currently 599 registered MSME engaged in food service in La Trinidad. As per the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI), there is no data regarding the number of employees in the food industry under MSMEs

in La Trinidad. However, the number of the food industry within La Trinidad's MSMEs was secured from the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI). The researcher exerted effort to gain information from the Philippine Statistics Authority (PSA), but there was no response. The total population of businesses within the food industry is five hundred and ninety-nine (599) in La Trinidad. However, it is estimated that only 60 to 70 percent are operational due to the pandemic. The estimated food industry closed due to pandemic is 30%-40% according to Nikkei Asian Review and 39% according to Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. And since the population of foodservice employees is unknown at the moment, the Cochran estimate of proportion will be used to determine the sample size for this study. The sample size for the number of foodservice employees to be considered in the research is 190 respondents.

The confidence level refers to the percentage of probability or certainty that the confidence interval would contain the true population parameter when you draw a random sample many times. But since the regularity of employees in the foodservice industry cannot be determined as of the time being due to the ongoing pandemic, the confidence level considered in getting the sample size for the study is 90% and a margin of error of 0.10. The minimum sample size for the study is 41 and is computed as follows, where Z is the tabular value corresponding to the margin of error (e), p is the estimated proportion of an attribute that is present in the population, and q is 1-p.

$$n = \frac{Z^2 pq}{e^2}$$

$$n = \frac{(1.28)^2(0.5)(0.5)}{(0.10)^2} = 40.96$$

$$n = 41$$

For the purpose of the research, persons employed within the DTI accredited organization irrespective of age, experience, or position would be considered a participant. This means that cashiers, cooks, food servers, and all employed within the organization are included, excluding the managers. The employees excluding managers of these organizations were selected for the study because they can access what kind of leaders their superiors are and also access themselves in relation to their engagement towards work. Each respondent is given the same questionnaire. The researcher is able to get one hundred and ninety (190) respondents for this study. Only the food MSME's that matches the description of DTI such as the carinderia was considered for this study.

2.3. Data Gathering Procedures

Before gathering data, the panel members made revisions to the research proposal to approve the paper and the data gathering tools. After the approval, the employees in the food industry were informed about the research. The researcher requested their consent and support for the study through the informed consent form. The information collected from this research project is being kept private. The employees gave verbal and written consent and approval, and a questionnaire was issued to them. The participant was assured that any information shared would be solely and only for the purpose of the study considering the research protocol and ethics. The participant was informed that their participation would help us improve small businesses in La Trinidad as their benefit in joining the study. In conducting the research, all protocols put in place by the government agency patterning the current pandemic situation (COVID-19) were duly followed.

2.4. Tools and Instruments

A questionnaire was employed as an instrument for data gathering. The questionnaire will be divided into four parts. The first part consists of the respondent's personal details. The second part consists of questions regarding leadership assessment, such as leadership styles and traits. The third part consists of Physical engagement questions. The fourth part consists of Cognitive engagement questions. The fifth part consists of Emotional engagement questions. The questionnaire was done in

this format in order to gather information regarding the recipient's employer leadership styles, recipient's level of engagement and correlate this data in line with the objective of the study.

2.5. Questionnaire Validation and Reliability Test

In this study, a structured questionnaire was formulated based on the review of related literature to determine the leadership style in MSMEs using Fred Fiedler's least preferred co-worker (LPC) scale to measure management leadership style. For engagement, Kahn's theory was adopted using his research work. The final questionnaire was modified using the ideas of Kahn and Fred. The tools were validated by four (4) experts: (1) a human resource expert; (2) an entrepreneur whose expertise is in production; (3) a hospitality management expert; and (4) a statistician. To test the content validity of the instrument, Aiken's V was used. The results are 0.85, 0.90, and 0.88 for sections B, C, and D, respectively, of the instrument. The test of validity result indicates that the questionnaire is valid. For the reliability, a sample of 20 questionnaires was floated in Baguio and to test the reliability of the instrument, Cronbach Alpha was used. The reliability test is 0.96, 0.95, and 0.96 for Section B, C, and D, respectively, which indicates that the questionnaire is reliable and can effectively determine management leadership styles and measure the level of employee engagement. Evidence of reliability will indicate that the questionnaire measures the variables in a reproducible manner.

2.6. Data Collection Technique

This section employed the use of questionnaires to satisfy the qualitative and quantitative data. The questionnaire was translated into both English and Tagalog. The questionnaire was divided into various sections representing each constraint of leadership styles and employee engagement. The recipients were asked to rate each constraint on a scale of 1 to 8 for leadership styles and on a scale of 1 to 5 for employee engagement. The data was coded by the researcher thereafter. Next was the analysis of data by the researcher to identify possible errors and form meaningful stories about the data. Finally, corroboration of questionnaire results to offer ample proof of the themes and establish the theme's prevalence.

3. Results and Discussion

The issue of employee engagement has been a subject of concern for businesses for quite some time now, and leadership has been a key factor. The researcher identified the leadership style of MSME managers and the level of employee engagement of MSME employees in the food industry of La Trinidad. Questionnaires were issued to respondents as a mode of data gathering. The questionnaire was constructed in such a way that data gotten will be able to produce answers to the objective of the study. The study was conducted in the municipality of La Trinidad, Benguet, Philippines. To determine what leadership style provides the best employee work engagement in La Trinidad's food industry, the researcher analyzed the leadership style of MSME managers and how it affects the level of employee engagement.

3.1. Leadership Style of MSME Managers in the Food Industry of La Trinidad

The growth forecasting of MSME's by the Department of Trade and Industries, high rate of employee turnover, and legal battles between labor unions and management prompted the researcher to investigate leadership and employee engagement ([Philippine Statistics Authority, 2022](#)). This paper is concerned about leadership in MSME's in La Trinidad, with the food industry as its primary focus. Further, this study looked at the relationship between leadership styles and work engagement of the respondents of this study.

Tables 1 to 5 present the leadership styles of managers in La Trinidad food industry as well as the level of employee engagement. Using Fred Fiedler's contingency theory that emphasizes two styles of leadership, leadership styles is classified according to two, one being task oriented and the other being relationship oriented. A leader is said to be task oriented when such leader prioritizes the completion of

task over any other thing. The opposite can be said concerning relationship-oriented leadership style. A relationship-oriented leader focuses more on building trust with the employees and using such trust to influence the employees into achieving organizational objectives.

Table 1 shows that majority of the leaders in the food industry of La Trinidad MSME's are relationship oriented. This is because leadership characteristics that foster healthy relationship got a high score. Majority of the leaders were found to be friendly and kind with a median of 8. Coming closely behind with a median of 7 was leaders being open, considerate, nice, supportive, pleasant, trustworthy, agreeable and sincere. These characteristics are positives and tends to connect people with each other. According to Fiedler, when this positive leadership lean towards a high positive number on the Least Preferred Co-worker (LPC) scale which ranges from 1 to 8, then the said leader has a leadership style that leans towards relationship rather than task. In the Philippines as a whole, the people are mostly family oriented and practice collectivism. So, it is no surprise to see that even in the work place the leaders tend to adopt collaborative leadership style. They often seek out different perspectives from their employees. To have a full understanding of issues and possible solutions and employees from all levels are welcome to share their ideas, offer feedback, or jump in to help on a project.

Table 1.
Leadership characteristics.

No.	Leadership characteristics	Median
1	Pleasant	7
2	Friendly	8
3	Accepting	6
4	Relaxed	6
5	Close	6
6	Warm	6
7	Supportive	7
8	Interesting	6
9	Quarrelsome	6
10	Harmonious	6
11	Open	7
12	Loyal	6
13	Trustworthy	7
14	Considerate	7
15	Nice	7
16	Agreeable	7
17	Sincere	7
18	Kind	8

Table 2 shows the leadership style of management by analyzing the eighteen leadership traits in Table 1. The said traits have been analyzed to determine what leadership style is dominant among food employers and leaders in La Trinidad. According to Fiedler, a leadership style score of 73 and above means that one is a relationship-oriented leader. In contrast, a score of 54 and below implies that one is a task-oriented leader, and there are very few of the one hundred and ninety managers evaluated in the study who possess such leadership trait. Managers with a score between 54 and 73 have the qualities of both relationship-oriented and task-oriented leaders, and there are some who fall under this type of leadership.

Table 2.
Perceived leadership styles of management.

Leadership style	Number of managers	Percentage
Task-oriented	4	2.11
Task and relationship oriented	19	10.00
Relationship-oriented	167	87.89
Total	190	100.00

Relationship in the form of communication is very important, especially in the Philippines' culture, which deals mainly with collectivism (Rutishauser & Sender, 2019). Managers need to take care of their employees by making them feel important, and management has goodwill towards their growth and development (Jena et al., 2018). According to Kahn (1990a), a relationship is paramount in the workplace. If employees' work is meaningful to them and there is psychological safety and availability, then employee engagement will be the resultant effect (Kahn, 1990b).

A task-oriented type of leader is more concerned about having the job done and meeting certain goals or achieving a certain standard of performance. The task-oriented leaders usually provide little opportunity for employees to involve in the decision-making process (Tyler & Smith, 1995). This leading style might hamper creativity and lead to employees' low participation and low engagement in the food industry. According to Goethals, Sorenson, and Burns (2004), an autocratic approach often leads to employees' lower morale and less effectiveness in their current working area. Skogan (2008) stated that relation-oriented leaders like to invite employees to participate and take part in the decision-making procedure. Employees in this leadership style will feel more participation, morale, and responsibility to the organization. This not only increases employee satisfaction but also motivates employees to work harder for more than just a financial reward (Bhatti, Maitlo, Shaikh, Hashmi, & Shaikh, 2012).

Though Table 2 shows the overall data when analyzed, a closer look at individual results of the issued questionnaire, results show that the leadership style in La Trinidad is mixed. Some respondents perceived their employers as task-oriented, and others perceived their employers as relationship-oriented. What was striking is that some respondents from the same organization had different opinions on whether their employer was task or relationship-oriented. This is in line with the fact that humans have a unique personality, though with common needs, our wants differ significantly (Madhura, 2020). Most of the respondents that perceived their employees as task-oriented were initially afraid to answer the questionnaire. However, the researcher was able to convince them that the result would be kept confidential. Unlike those who perceived their leaders as task-oriented, respondents who perceived their leaders as relationship-oriented were quite happy to answer the questionnaire. From the results, two key leadership attributes of employers are "Friendly" and "Kind," with a median of 8. Relations-oriented leadership intends to build mutual relationships between managers and subordinates in order to set up an effective work team towards high-performance goals. In order to build mutual trust within each other, friendliness and approachability are needed. As mentioned by Chernyshenko, Stark, and Drasgow (2011), individuals with extraversion personalities are described as friendly, gregarious, and warm. Additionally, leaders with less independence have more individualized considerations. They always care about individuals' growth and development needs; they always praise and reward their subordinates appropriately. Consequently, employees are happy in participating and giving ideas in the groups.

The two theories (relationship-oriented and Task-oriented) were used by Fiedler in his contingency theory. The theory is based on the premise that each person has one and only one leadership style, which can be scored on the least preferred co-worker (LPC) scale. Using this LPC scale, a leader is either a relationship-oriented or a task-oriented. This theory is advantageous because; it provides a simple rule of thumb for identifying which leaders are best for which situations. It also takes the situation into account in determining the effectiveness of a leader. More so, both the LPC and the situational factors are easy to measure. The food industry is the centerpiece of the Philippine's economy

and therefore needs some corporate approach to have efficiency and proper employee management; as Kirega (2006) asserts, the need for some corporate approach is required in order to have efficiency and proper employee management that will lead to improved performance. On the other perspective, Henderson (1998) identified supervision as a corporate strategy for promoting a positive organization. According to findings using the Fiedler theory, the leadership style predominant in the food industry of La Trinidad is relationship oriented. Relations-oriented leadership intends to build mutual relationships between managers and subordinates to set up an effective work team towards high-performance goals. Hence, the food industry of La Trinidad needs to maintain this leadership style for the sustainability of the employees and increase engagement.

3.2. Employee Engagement of MSME Employees in the food Industry of La Trinidad

Table 3 shows the level of engagement with regard to the physical, cognitive, and emotional aspects of an employee's job. The table shows that two factors of work engagement provided the highest level of engagement. The two are: Understanding of roles and responsibilities, which stood at a mean of 4.23 while having adequate resources to perform at a high level stood at a mean of 4.21. When I do a good job, I get recognized stood at a mean of 4.14 while other factors of work engagement scored an average weighted mean of 3.7.

Table 3.

Level of work engagement of food industry employees.

No.	Work engagement	Weighted mean	Qualitative description
1.	I'm excited about the work I do every day	3.74	Often
2.	I have the resources to perform my work at a high level	4.21	Always
3.	In my day-to-day work, I'm gaining valuable skills and experience that will help me in my future career	4.14	Often
4.	When I do a good job, I get recognized	3.46	Often
5.	I have a good work life balance	3.52	Often
6.	My manager communicates clear performance expectations to our team	3.82	Often
7.	My manager helps bring the best out of people	3.84	Often
8.	My manager keeps me well informed about what needs to be achieved in the organization	3.80	Often
9.	I and my work mates understand each other's roles and responsibilities	4.23	Always
10.	I expect my workmates to do the right thing	3.62	Often
11.	My workmates respect me	3.67	Often
12.	I and my workmates communicate effectively	3.58	Often
13.	My workmates resolve work conflict amicably	3.63	Often
14.	My work environment is free from distractions	3.48	Often
15.	There is someone in my work that helps me develop my skills	3.66	Often
16.	My workplace is conducive	3.59	Often

No.	Work engagement	Weighted mean	Qualitative description
17.	I feel energetic about my job	3.67	Often
18.	I try my hardest to perform well on my job task	3.84	Often
19.	I am confident I can do what my job requires me to	3.96	Often
20.	The vision and mission of my organization inspires me	3.68	Often
21.	I am appropriately involved in decisions that affect my work	3.63	Often
22.	My organization takes pride in my accomplishments	3.61	Often
23.	My organization strongly considers my objectives and values	3.57	Often
24.	Most of my personal life goals are work-oriented	3.64	Often
25.	My job is a part of me	3.77	Often
	Grand weighted mean	3.73	Often

Analysis was done further to see if there is engagement as a whole in MSMEs of the food industry in La Trinidad, and results show that engagement is often, with a weighted mean of 3.73 out of 5. This shows that all the factors of engagement are equally often considered important by employees for improved engagement physically. The reason for two factors of work engagement above being at the top is because the knowledge and understanding of a job position answered the question “what am I to do” while the being equipped with the right tools for the job answered the question “what do I need to do what needs to be done”. Roles and responsibility create an avenue for improved productivity. It reduces frustration and helps employees to easily work together because they know what to do and what is expected of them by the management.

On the other hand, having the right resources to perform reduces employee stress and prevent work burnout by making the work easier (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). The right tools is the foundation for effective performance, work train and growth. Having the right tools helps employee protect themselves from potential hazards. Czapliska-Kozłowska and Stachowska (2018) noted that leadership styles that provide an opportunity for growth are necessary for employee engagement. Often than not, employees will be frustrated and lose interest if they have to buy the resources needed to carry out their job efficiently (Carder, 2019). This brings discouragement on the part of the employees, which will affect their overall engagement on the job.

Table 4 shows the challenges faced by employees with regard to their level of engagement. The table shows that out of the twelve challenges faced by employees in the food industry, four were the most outstanding. These challenges are; 1. Having a lot to do, 2. Having to work very hard, 3. Time pressure, and 4. My job demands me to promote my personal accomplishment and growth.

Thirdly, they are under pressure to keep to deadlines with a median of 4 and finally, they are concerned about the ability of their job to promote their personal goals with a median of 4 also. Having a lot to do at the workplace is one of the biggest challenges for employees, especially if the supervisor is more of a task-oriented type of leader; the employee can become overwhelmed by the number of tasks that he has to accomplish. According to Halushchak and Halushchak (2016), having lots of tasks at hand can lead to frustration and job disengagement. Having to work very hard is and will always be an effect of the leadership style as well as the personality of the employee. Employees in La Trinidad always strives to please their superiors by going the extra mile for fear of losing their jobs due to the stiff competitions among job seekers.

Table 4.
Challenges faced by food industry employees.

Challenges	Median	Qualitative description
1. Having a lot to do.	4	Often
2. Having to work very hard	4	Often
3. Time pressure	4	Often
4. Having to work very fast	3	Sometimes
5. Complex tasks.	3	Sometimes
6. Having complicated tasks to complete.	3	Sometimes
7. Having to balance several tasks given.	3	Sometimes
8. multi-Tasking on assigned job.	3	Sometimes
9. High responsibility.	3	Sometimes
10. A high level of accountability for work.	3	Sometimes
11. My job demands me to promote my personal accomplishment and growth.	4	Often
12. Demands of my job challenge me to achieve goals and personal development.	3	Sometimes

Meeting deadlines is also another challenge for employees with regard to their engagement. Frustration occurs when an employee, no matter how hard he tries, is unable to meet up management deadlines. On the other hand, if an employee fails to complete the job on time the employer may view such employee as lazy and then seek a replacement as there are more qualified unemployed capable hands out there seeking an opportunity to prove how industrious they are. So, this produces a psychological effect on the employee. Due to the stiff competition for jobs, having an opportunity to work and build experience provides an added advantage among jobs seekers here in La Trinidad. Such helps these jobseekers stand out among their peers and promotes their personal goals especially when applying for such position or higher in future.

Having to balance multiple tasks was less of a problem when compared to the amount of work an employee has to do. This is because of time availability. If there is enough time allocated to each demanding job, then the challenge becomes less as opposed to trying to meet up with time, "time pressure." High responsibility was less of a challenge which agrees with our findings under engagement, where the duties and responsibilities are properly identified. Similarly, it also agrees that employees find satisfaction when their roles and responsibility are clearly defined. Job development was less of a challenge for employees as employees already accessed under engagement that their engagement increases as a result of the ability of their job to harness their skills and increase productivity. This result agrees with [Czaplicka-Kozłowska and Stachowska \(2018\)](#) on the fact that leadership styles that provide an opportunity for development are necessary for employee engagement. According to [Mazenod \(2014\)](#), it was noted that when training was hampered, employee engagement was significantly affected.

3.3. Leadership Styles and Work Engagement in the food Industry of La Trinidad

After checking the level of employee engagement and determining what leadership style exists in the food industry MSMEs of La Trinidad, the researcher tried corroborating the result. Each leadership style produced a level of both employee engagement and disengagement. After respondent assessed their superior's leadership characteristics in line with their level of engagement, the researcher tried to analyze and correlate how a task or relationship-oriented manager affects work engagement. The three dimensions of engagement were analyzed first as one and then individually. The analysis was done to check if work-oriented leaders have more engagement with their employees. If the majority of

respondent who categorizes their superiors as task-oriented are engaged, then it means that engagement is positively impacted. The researcher did the same for people-oriented.

This method of matching leadership styles to employee engagement helps to determine which leadership style encourages employee engagement. It also helps to understand to what extent employees are motivated to work by that leadership style.

Table 5.

Correlation of perceived leadership style and work engagement of employees.

Variable	Leadership style	Work engagement	Correlation coefficient
Standard deviation	4.07	2.36	0.67 strong

Results showed that there is a strong correlation between perceived leadership style and physical work engagement of employees, with a correlation coefficient of 0.67. The strong correlation of leadership style and work engagement conforms to the finding of [Schaufeli \(2015\)](#) that leaders can influence employee work engagement not only through changing work conditions but also directly through inspiring, connecting, and strengthening their employees. Further, [Wiley \(2010\)](#) states that a critical element to build confidence, motivate performance and increase employee engagement, is to have people at the top that can inspire belief in the organization's future. The positive correlation implies that the highly relation-oriented leader supports the employees and causes high employee engagement. The study results show a substantial correlation between the weight employees place on their immediate managers' behavior and their level of engagement at work. The relationship also suggests that focusing on enhancing leaders' skills would boost employee engagement. Hence, organizations invest in leadership courses based on the idea that it will help leaders to increase the productivity of their employees ([Athanasopoulou & Dopson, 2018](#); [Gottfredson & Aguinis, 2017](#)).

4. Conclusion and Recommendation

4.1. Conclusion

Leadership training program can be designed based on employee needs and organizational needs to achieve the very best from such particular programs. And also, psychological interventions are needed to clarify for the employees about the relationship with leaders, and the impacts of leadership styles on loyalty employee performance, including leader's daily practice, leadership behaviors, and the importance of feedback. The organization and supervisors should involve employees in decision making and leadership improvement and provide training and teamwork facilitation. In addition, policies and practices related to rewards or feedback system in the organizations can be adjusted to meet employees' needs in order to improve employee engagements.

The study found out that managers of MSMEs within the food industry of La Trinidad are predominately relationship-oriented leaders. It was also found out that there is a strong relationship between leadership style and employee engagement. The style of leadership a manager chooses will affect the engagement level of the employees. The study also found out that the level of employee engagement is high. Moreover, the study found out that depending on the leadership approach being implemented by the management, challenges may arise which will definitely have an impact on engagement.

The results of this study provided insights into what employees need from their supervisors and the kind of leadership styles they prefer. This information could be used to help develop strategies and meet organizational needs through leadership behavior development. According to the results, some strategies for improving supervisors' leadership styles and employee engagements could be suggested. It indicated that a relationship-oriented leadership style would lead to higher employee engagements. The leaders should be aware of what is important for the subordinates and the industry as a whole and encourage the employees to see the opportunities and challenges around them creatively. The supervisors should also have their own vision and development plans. The supervisors should have a

sense of innovation and encourage followers to see more opportunities and possibilities, not just achieve performance within expectations; supervisors should understand the values of their followers and try to build their departmental strategies, plans, process, and practices that will likely improve the wellbeing of their employees. Respect for the individual is also a key to building a positive relationship between leaders and employees.

This research offers several managerial implications. For one, organizations must be led by leadership with a highly competent personality in ensuring the employees are sufficiently guided in their daily operations and towards achieving the organizational goals. This work shows that relationship-oriented leadership styles possess an effect of more significance compared to task-oriented leadership styles. Staying competitive in the current business climate requires the identification of the right and highly capable leader, particularly in the food industry of La Trinidad. Furthermore, the food industry of La Trinidad should adhere to the recommended adoption of the relationship-oriented leadership style as opposed to other leadership styles as employees are known as the most instrumental asset in such an organization. Their engagement is highly reliant upon the leadership style; thus, rendering organizations led by a highly capable leadership can yield an improved engagement.

Inspire of its voluminous contributions, this study is not without its limitations, thus allowing potential indications for future research. The study covered only la Trinidad. It cannot be conclusive, especially considering that the study has not been conducted in other branches in other cities in the Philippines. Secondly, the result of this study is underpinned by food industry employees as its foundation, rendering its wider usage for alternative work settings potentially unsuitable. Therefore, future attempts in extending this work across other kinds of industries may be well deserved (Nunes & Castro, 2020). This work notwithstanding, can be used as a foundation in assessing the manner in which leadership styles impact employees' engagements.

4.2. Recommendations

This paper recommends that management of food industries in La Trinidad MSME implement the following: First, it is important to determine the type of leadership in an organization because task-oriented leadership style will decrease employees' engagements. So, it is important for managers to limit the use of this leadership style. Secondly, leaders should clarify expectations and provide goals and standards to be achieved for the employees. Thirdly, supervisors should respond to urgent questions and make decisions promptly and precisely in order not to compound issues that will affect employees' engagements in the industry. Regular employees' engagement review shall be developed by the managers of food industries in La Trinidad when the industry executes regular engagement surveys it should try to determine all the factors driving employee engagement so that it can narrow down the list of factors to focus on. It can begin by focusing on the factor that will make the most difference to the employees and put more energy around improving that area as it may be difficult to deal with all factors at once. In this research work, findings were limited to food industry at la Trinidad. It is just a single industry in a single geographical area. A multiple case study may provide a deeper understanding of the concept. Future researchers should focus on employee engagement strategies in other cities in Philippines. Additionally, the study included leaders only. Future researchers should interview subordinates to understand what strategies they think are effective. Employees' perception may be different from the perception of leaders and could add additional value to this subject. Future researchers should examine the relationship between employee engagement and other variables such as leaders, employees' compensation and developmental programs. Examining the relationship between variables might improve leadership styles with new knowledge to encourage engagement which might improve the performance of the organization. Therefore, I recommend that future researchers consider conducting a mixed methodology study which would allow for statistical explanation supported by qualitative observations of employee engagement strategies.

Funding:

This study received no specific financial support.

Competing Interests:

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Authors' Contributions:

Both authors contributed equally to the conception and design of the study.

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