

**Exploring the relationship between constructive leader behaviour and work  
engagement For Employed midwives in Aotearoa New Zealand**

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## Abstract

This thesis adopts an organisational behaviour (OB) and human resource management (HRM) approach to investigate how emotionally interpreted leadership behaviours influence work engagement among employed midwives in New Zealand. While research on leadership often highlights transactional and transformational styles, these approaches largely overlook how leadership is emotionally experienced, particularly in emotionally demanding roles such as hospital-based midwifery (Glaveli et al., 2023; Walumbwa et al., 2010). This study examines the effects of Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB): Clarifying, Recognising, Ethical Conduct, and Networking on Work Engagement (WE) (Mharapara, Clemons, et al., 2022; Mharapara et al., 2019), using the emotional dimension of Leader–Member Exchange theory known as LMX-Affect (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005; Wagner & Koob, 2022). LMX-Affect captures the emotional quality of the leader–follower relationship, including trust, closeness, and mutual respect. Drawing on Social Exchange Theory (Cropanzano et al., 2017), Self-Determination Theory (Ryan & Deci, 2000), and LMX theory, the study explores both mediating and moderating roles of LMX-Affect using PROCESS macro analysis and JAMOV. Data (N = 327) was collected from employed midwives in clinical environments with high emotional labour demands. Findings reveal that Recognising and Ethical Conduct significantly influence engagement only when mediated by emotional trust. Clarifying and Networking behaviours, while structurally valuable, did not have a direct impact on engagement. LMX-Affect did not moderate the relationship, indicating that emotional connection is a prerequisite rather than an enhancer of leadership effectiveness (Ali et al., 2024; Decuyper & Schaufeli, 2020). This study contributes new understanding of emotionally resonant leadership in midwifery and offers practical recommendations for leadership development that supports sustainable engagement in healthcare practice.

**Keywords:** work engagement, constructive leadership behaviour, LMX-Affect, midwifery, emotional trust, organisational behaviour

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### **Attestation of Authorship**

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor used artificial intelligence tools or generative artificial intelligence tools (unless it is clearly stated, and referenced, along with the purpose of use), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning.

**Signature:**

**Date: 29 July 2025**

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## 1: INTRODUCTION

“Leadership is not about being in charge. It is about taking care of those in your charge.”  
(Winter & Pronovost, 2023).

Good leadership is not just about giving orders or making decisions in emotionally demanding professions; it also involves being emotionally present, showing care, and building trust with others (Sinek, 2009; Winter & Pronovost, 2023). Nowhere is this more relevant than in the midwifery sector, particularly among New Zealand’s employed midwives. These professionals work in structured clinical environments that demand clinical acumen and the emotional stamina to build trust-based relationships with whānau, handle unpredictable situations, and navigate organisational pressures (Middlemiss et al., 2024). Leadership effectiveness cannot be gauged merely by behavioural competence in such contexts. It must also account for how leadership is emotionally experienced by those being led.

Despite substantial research on leadership behaviours and their outcomes, a significant gap exists in understanding how leadership is interpreted through emotional and relational dynamics, particularly in health-focused, self-managed roles like midwifery. The prevailing academic focus has been on transactional and transformational leadership, emphasising performance enhancement through structure or inspiration (Glaveli et al., 2023; Walumbwa et al., 2010). However, these models often overlook how leaders’ actions are received by employees, especially in roles where emotional labour and autonomy are inherent. This thesis responds to the need for a more nuanced understanding of relational leadership, foregrounding emotional trust, perceived fairness, and recognition as critical dimensions of leader impact.

Constructive Leadership Behaviour (CLB) offers a structured yet flexible model for assessing task- and relationship-oriented leadership practices (Mharapara, Cooper-Thomas, et al., 2022; Mharapara et al., 2019). Initially conceptualised by Yukl (2012) and later validated by Mharapara et al. (2019), CLB includes four core dimensions: Clarifying (setting expectations and direction), Recognising (valuing and acknowledging contribution), Ethical Conduct (demonstrating fairness and integrity), and Networking (building social capital and strategic connections). These behaviours collectively aim to enhance workplace climate and performance. However, CLB's impact is frequently assumed rather than empirically tested, particularly in contexts where professional autonomy intersects with emotional accountability, such as midwifery. Existing research has tended to emphasise the direct effects of CLB on outcomes like job satisfaction and motivation without examining the emotional intermediaries that might explain how and why such effects occur (Decuyper & Schaufeli, 2020).

This thesis's central outcome of interest is Work Engagement (WE), a motivational state characterised by Vigour, Dedication, and Absorption (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Work engagement has consistently been associated with improved performance, reduced turnover, and greater psychological resilience (Blanch & Aluja, 2009; Crawford et al., 2010). However, engagement is not merely the outcome of supportive leadership behaviours; it is shaped by employees' subjective perceptions of their leader's sincerity, fairness, and emotional intelligence. Without emotional trust, even well-intentioned leadership efforts may fall short of fostering meaningful engagement.

This introduces the concept of Leader–Member Exchange Affect (LMX-Affect), the emotional dimension of the broader Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory. While LMX focuses on the overall quality of the relationship between a leader and a

subordinate, LMX-Affect specifically captures the emotional closeness, interpersonal trust, and mutual liking characterising that relationship (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005). Wagner and Koob (2022) suggest that this affective component may mediate the translation of leadership behaviours into employee outcomes such as work engagement. For instance, goal clarification may only enhance engagement when delivered by a leader perceived as emotionally supportive and trustworthy. Similarly, attempts to recognise employee contributions may be ineffective if the emotional bond between leader and employee is weak or absent. Yet, while the theoretical case for LMX-Affect is strong, its leadership role–engagement dynamics remain empirically underexplored, especially in healthcare (Bennouna et al., 2024).

Most of these studies measure LMX quality or leadership behaviours without unpacking the emotional mechanisms that underpin their effects (Ali et al., 2024). This thesis contends that overlooking LMX-Affect leads to an incomplete understanding of leadership effectiveness, particularly in emotionally demanding contexts such as midwifery. Furthermore, prevailing leadership models often assume linear, cause-and-effect relationships between leadership behaviours and outcomes, neglecting the relational dynamics that shape how these behaviours are perceived. As Decuyper and Schaufeli (2020) argue, relying solely on trait-based or behaviourist models can obscure the complexity of leadership and its contextual nuances.

To address this gap, the present study investigates whether LMX-Affect influences or moderates the relationship between Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB) and Work Engagement (WE) among employed or core midwives. Understanding how these emotional and relational factors operate is theoretically significant and practically urgent. Organisations must prioritise systems that foster emotionally intelligent leadership to support midwives in sustaining motivation, reducing burnout, and

remaining in the profession. Given the increasing recognition of emotion in leadership discourse, exploring these affective dimensions is necessary and timely.

## **1.1 Research Context**

Midwives play a central role in New Zealand's maternity care system, especially those employed in hospitals, birthing units, and integrated maternity services. These employed or "core" midwives typically work in shift-based systems, delivering care in a clinical setting as part of a multidisciplinary team (Grigg & Tracy, 2013). Their duties span antenatal assessments, intrapartum monitoring, emergency interventions, and postnatal support. These midwives are often the first responders to labour onset and must make rapid clinical decisions while ensuring emotional reassurance for both the birthing woman and her family (Davies, 2017; Grigg & Tracy, 2013).

Unlike midwives in independent models, employed midwives operate within formal structures and under organisational policies that guide service delivery. This model is structured and team-oriented but places midwives in environments where autonomy may be limited and emotional labour is consistently high (Grigg & Tracy, 2013). As noted in previous research, employed midwives often must adhere to institutional protocols that can reduce their ability to shape care decisions independently (Davies, 2017; Hunter et al., 2016). The demand for efficiency, clinical documentation, and risk aversion often dominates the pace and tone of their workday, leaving limited space for personalisation or continuity of care (Clemons et al., 2021).

This creates a unique work context where emotional fatigue, ethical strain, and professional burnout are real and ongoing risks (Davies, 2017). Employed midwives frequently report experiencing role tension, managing the expectations of obstetric teams, complying with hospital procedures, and maintaining woman-centred care under

time constraints (Clemons et al., 2021; Mharapara, Staniland, et al., 2022). When midwives feel unsupported or undervalued in this environment, it can lead to disengagement, decreased job satisfaction, and even early exit from the profession (Hunter et al., 2016; Sidhu et al., 2020).

However, these challenges do not overshadow the value midwives place on their work. Many employed midwives express strong professional pride, a deep commitment to perinatal health, and a desire to contribute meaningfully to the team (Hunter et al., 2016). They describe moments of joy and fulfilment when their expertise is respected, their care is acknowledged, and their leadership within labour rooms is recognised (Gilkison et al., 2015). Positive outcomes are more likely to occur where their contributions are supported by trust-based leadership, healthy team dynamics, and a shared respect for midwifery judgment (Hunter et al., 2016).

Yet, much research on leadership within healthcare tends to prioritise technical behaviours, such as goal setting, resource delegation, or performance reviews, without exploring how practitioners emotionally experience leadership (Glaveli et al., 2023). Decuypere and Schaufeli (2020) argue that leadership that ignores emotional trust, perceived fairness, or recognition risks becoming mechanistic and ineffective. Epitropaki and Martin (2005) similarly highlight that followers judge leaders not just by what they do but by how they make them feel, whether they create a sense of safety, value, and fairness in everyday interactions.

This emotional dimension of leadership becomes even more critical in midwifery, where the work is deeply relational and emotionally charged. In high-stakes environments such as birthing suites or postnatal wards, the tone of leadership can either buffer stress or intensify it (Mharapara, Cooper-Thomas, et al., 2022). When leadership is dismissive, inconsistent, or emotionally distant, midwives are less likely to feel secure, less able to

deliver compassionate care, and more likely to experience psychological exhaustion (Clemons et al., 2021).

This research applies an organisational behaviour and Human Resource Management perspective to investigate how Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB), specifically clarifying expectations, offering recognition, modelling ethical conduct, and fostering professional networks, are interpreted by employed midwives. It focuses on understanding how these leadership actions influence Work Engagement (WE), especially in emotionally demanding environments like hospitals and integrated maternity wards (Mharapara, Clemons, et al., 2022).

A key focus of this study is the Leader-Member Exchange affect (LMX-Affect), the emotional quality of the relationship between a leader and a team member. As Wagner and Koob (2022) emphasise, LMX-Affect plays a central role in determining whether leadership is perceived as authentic, fair, and emotionally supportive. These perceptions are essential in settings like maternity care, where the relational atmosphere directly influences team cohesion and care quality.

Leadership in this context is not enforced by position but emerges through everyday relational encounters. It is co-constructed through trust, emotional attentiveness, and a leader's ability to affirm professional identity. Therefore, this research explores how employed midwives interpret leadership behaviours within their daily practice and how those interpretations shape their emotional engagement with work.

This study addresses a gap in current leadership literature by centring this investigation on the experiences of employed midwives working in structured, fast-paced, and emotionally complex environments. It also offers practical insights into how

emotionally intelligent leadership can help sustain motivation, reduce burnout, and support the well-being of midwives in the public healthcare system.

## **1.2 The Influence of Constructive Leadership Behaviours**

This study identifies Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB) as the independent variable influencing Work Engagement (WE) among employed midwives. The focus on CLB is grounded in its relevance to emotionally intensive professions like midwifery, where emotional intelligence matches clinical competence. In hospital-based settings, midwives function within formal organisational hierarchies and experience leadership more directly through managers, supervisors, or charge midwives. In such contexts, leadership behaviours are not interpreted at face value. They are filtered through the staff's emotional experiences and perceptions (Wagner & Koob, 2022).

CLB comprises four core behavioural dimensions: Clarifying, Recognising, Ethical Conduct, and Networking (Mharapara et al., 2019). Each represents a form of leadership interaction that can influence how midwives engage with their roles. However, not all dimensions carry the same emotional weight or relevance within clinical environments characterised by unpredictability, emotional labour, and team-based care.

### **Clarifying focuses on communicating job expectations and performance standards.**

In hospital settings where midwives are accountable to supervisory structures, clear guidance is often essential to navigate shift patterns, clinical priorities, and interprofessional protocols (Mharapara et al., 2019). However, Glaveli et al. (2023) caution that too much directive behaviour in relational professions can be perceived as micromanagement, potentially undermining professional autonomy and reducing engagement.

**Recognising refers to a leader's ability to acknowledge effort, celebrate**

**accomplishments, and offer praise.** This is especially powerful in healthcare roles where emotional labour is rarely visible or formally rewarded (Mharapara et al., 2019). For core midwives working shifts in busy maternity wards, simple acts of recognition can serve as emotional validation, reinforcing a sense of belonging and personal value (Glaveli et al., 2023). This behaviour aligns closely with midwives' need to feel seen and appreciated in fast-paced, high-pressure settings (Hearn et al., 2021).

**Ethical Conduct includes fairness, reliability, and trustworthiness.** In healthcare organisations, ethical leadership supports psychological safety and fairness in conflict resolution, shift allocation, and team communication (Mharapara et al., 2019). For employed midwives who rely on supportive work cultures to navigate emotional and physical stressors, leaders who demonstrate ethical consistency provide critical reassurance and trust (Walumbwa et al., 2010). Such leadership fosters resilience and mitigates burnout in emotionally charged environments.

**Networking, the final CLB dimension, involves a leader's engagement with external systems, departments, or professional bodies** (Mharapara et al., 2019).

While this behaviour may be vital for systemic change, its emotional impact on core midwives is likely less direct. In day-to-day practice, networking may seem abstract or disconnected unless it translates into practical improvements in staffing, resourcing, or interdepartmental collaboration (Glaveli et al., 2023).

Despite the evidence supporting CLB's positive outcomes, prior studies often treat leadership behaviours as uniformly beneficial (Decuyper & Schaufeli, 2020). Few explore how emotional interpretation affects the reception and impact of these behaviours. Wagner and Koob (2022) argue that employees do not simply respond to what leaders do; they respond to how those actions feel. This insight is crucial in

midwifery, where emotional resonance, trust, fairness, and empathy often shape work engagement more than managerial technique. By exploring CLB through the lens of emotional perception among employed midwives, this study aims to reveal which leadership behaviours truly support engagement in roles defined by relational intensity, professional accountability, and emotional complexity.

### **1.3 The Role of LMX-Affect**

This study highlights Leader-Member Exchange Affect (LMX-Affect) as a key emotional factor that explains how leadership behaviours influence Work Engagement (WE). LMX-Affect refers to the emotional side of the leader-follower relationship, especially feelings of mutual trust, care, and respect (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005).

Unlike broader LMX theory, which measures the general quality of exchanges between leaders and staff, LMX-Affect focuses more closely on emotional bonds. This makes it especially important in healthcare roles like midwifery, where emotions play a big part in daily work.

Based on Social Exchange Theory, LMX-Affect helps explain how fairness, trust, and emotional reciprocity influence people's motivation and job performance (Cropanzano et al., 2017). In hospital settings, employed midwives often operate within structured teams but still face high emotional demands. They must regularly manage difficult clinical situations, show compassion, and support women during labour, often under time pressure (Buchanan et al., 2025). Leadership is not just about giving orders or setting expectations in these conditions. It is also about how trusted and emotionally supported midwives feel by their leaders.

In this study, LMX-Affect is tested in two ways: as a mediator and a moderator between Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB) and Work Engagement. As a mediator, the idea is to ethically recognise good work or behaviour and help to build emotional trust. That emotional trust then boosts engagement. For example, when a midwife feels genuinely appreciated by her manager, she may become more committed and motivated at work. Research supports this chain reaction, showing that leadership actions are often filtered through emotional lenses before affecting engagement (Wagner & Koob, 2022). A leader's effort to clarify tasks might only be helpful if the midwife sees that leader as fair, supportive, and trustworthy.

This study also tested whether LMX-Affect moderates the link between CLB and engagement, meaning whether strong emotional bonds make leadership actions more or less effective. However, the results showed that LMX-Affect had no significant moderating effect. This means that emotional trust did not directly increase or decrease the impact of leadership behaviours on engagement. This finding is consistent with recent studies suggesting that emotional connections work more as indirect influences than amplifiers of leadership outcomes (Ali et al., 2024; Decuypere & Schaufeli, 2020).

There is an apparent reason for focusing on the LMX effect in this research. Most leadership models focus on transactional elements, like goal setting and feedback, but often ignore the emotional side (Glaveli et al., 2023). In healthcare, this is a serious gap. Employed midwives work in environments filled with emotional highs and lows, making trust and emotional recognition vital to their long-term well-being (Walumbwa et al., 2010).

Therefore, this research positions LMX-Affect as a central lens for understanding why some leadership actions succeed and others fail, even when both appear favourable. By focusing on emotional trust and how leadership feels in real hospital settings, this

research aims to explain how meaningful leadership relationships support midwives' engagement in emotionally demanding roles.

#### **1.4 Outcomes and Contribution of the Present Study**

The outcomes of this study offer a clearer understanding of how emotionally interpreted leadership behaviours—such as recognition, ethical conduct, and role clarification—can shape work engagement in emotionally intensive and autonomous healthcare roles. It reveals that the impact of leadership is not determined solely by observable actions but by how employees emotionally experience those actions. By applying an organisational behaviour (OB) and Human Resource Management (HRM) lens, the study highlights the critical role of emotional trust in mediating leadership effectiveness. These insights contribute to ongoing discussions about sustaining engagement in decentralised care settings and suggest that leadership strategies must account for both structural conditions and emotional perceptions to be effective.

To the best of my knowledge, no prior research in organisational behaviour or healthcare leadership has systematically examined the emotional mechanisms through which Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB) influence Work Engagement (WE) in autonomous healthcare contexts such as midwifery. While previous studies have established that CLB, which includes Clarifying, Recognising, Ethical Conduct, and Networking, is generally associated with positive employee outcomes (Mharapara et al., 2019; Walumbwa et al., 2010), few have critically assessed the assumption that all dimensions contribute equally to engagement. This study addresses that gap by demonstrating that only Recognising and Ethical Conduct significantly influence WE, and only when the leader mediates their Leader Member Exchange Affect (LMX-Affect) (Glaveli et al., 2023; Wagner & Koob, 2022).

In contrast, while structurally beneficial, Clarifying and Networking behaviours did not produce significant engagement effects among midwives. This challenges the traditional leadership assumption that all positive behaviours yield positive outcomes (Decuyper & Schaufeli, 2020). The findings suggest that the emotional filter through which leadership is interpreted plays a critical role in determining behavioural effectiveness. LMX-Affect, which captures the emotional quality of the leader-member relationship (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005), was confirmed to function as a mediator, not a moderator, in this relationship. The non-significant moderation result implies that emotional connection is a prerequisite for leadership effectiveness rather than a factor that merely amplifies its outcomes (Ali et al., 2024).

The integration of three theoretical frameworks—Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), Social Exchange Theory (SET), and Self-Determination Theory (SDT)—forms the conceptual foundation of this research. Emotional trust, perceptions of fairness, and the fulfilment of psychological needs are key mechanisms through which leadership enhances motivation and engagement (Cropanzano et al., 2017; Ryan & Deci, 2000; Walumbwa et al., 2010). Rather than focusing solely on leadership behaviours, this study emphasises that employees' emotional perceptions of their leaders are more predictive of engagement outcomes.

The findings suggest that leadership in midwifery is most effective when it prioritises visible recognition and ethical conduct rather than solely focusing on task structuring or professional networking. Therefore, the educational curriculum should incorporate training that fosters emotional trust and interpersonal support between staff and clients. From a human resource management perspective, leadership evaluation should include metrics that reflect emotional connection, such as surveys assessing ethical conduct and recognition frequency (Glaveli et al., 2023; Mharapara et al., 2019).

This research contributes to the OB literature by addressing a significant gap in leadership studies within midwifery, a field often overlooked in broader healthcare leadership discussions. It offers a nuanced understanding of how emotionally resonant leadership can sustain engagement in autonomous, emotionally demanding roles.

### **1.5 Research Aim, Questions.**

#### **Aim:**

To examine how the four dimensions of Constructive Leadership Behaviour influence Work Engagement among employed midwives in New Zealand and assess the mediating and moderating role of the Leader-Member Exchange affect.

#### **Research Questions:**

How does the 'Affect' component of leader-member exchange (LMX) mediate (explain) or moderate (strengthen) the relationship between constructive leader behaviour and work engagement in midwifery?

#### **Literature Review Questions:**

1. How have researchers studied leader behaviour and work engagement in the health workforce?
2. What are the key findings of research on leader behaviour and work engagement in the health workforce?
3. What are the underlying assumptions of research on leader behaviour and work engagement in the health workforce?
4. What are the limitations of research on leader behaviour and work engagement in the health workforce?

## 1.6 Structure of the Thesis

Following the Introduction, the second chapter, Literature Review, provides a comprehensive overview of the conceptual and theoretical foundations underpinning the study. It begins by contextualising the role of midwives within the New Zealand healthcare system and highlights the importance of leadership in sustaining engagement in emotionally demanding and autonomous roles. The chapter then explores Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB), focusing on its four dimensions: Clarifying, Recognising, Ethical Conduct, and Networking. It also examines Leader–Member Exchange effect (LMX-Affect) as an effective mediator and Work Engagement (WE) as the central outcome variable.

The review draws on three key theoretical frameworks—Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), Social Exchange Theory (SET), and Self-Determination Theory (SDT)—to establish a foundation for the hypothesised relationships. The chapter concludes by identifying gaps in the existing literature and outlining the hypotheses tested in the study.

The third chapter, Methodology, outlines the philosophical underpinnings and overall research design. It details the sampling strategy, demographic characteristics of participants, and the instruments used to measure CLB, LMX-Affect, and WE. Procedures for data cleaning and preparation are described, followed by a rationale for employing mediation and moderation analyses using Hayes' PROCESS Macro. Ethical considerations and the statistical techniques applied are also discussed.

The fourth chapter, Results, presents the findings from descriptive statistics, correlation analyses, and the mediation and moderation models. Results are displayed in tables, accompanied by statistical significance and relevance interpretations.

The final chapter, Discussion, interprets the findings about existing literature, highlights both theoretical and practical implications, addresses the study's limitations, and offers recommendations for leadership development and future research in midwifery practice.

## **2. Literature Review**

This chapter begins by introducing three key leadership constructs: Work Engagement (WE), Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), and Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB). These constructs are instrumental in understanding how leadership practices can shape employee motivation and influence broader organisational outcomes. The chapter then examines previous research on WE, LMX, and CLB, both individually and in combination. It clarifies the conceptual meanings of each construct and synthesises key empirical findings. Notably, the literature lacks studies investigating all three constructs within a single, integrated research framework. This gap underscores the need for more comprehensive inquiry. Accordingly, the chapter offers direction for future research, grounded in relevant theoretical perspectives and supported by existing evidence.

### **2.1 Work Engagement**

#### **2.1.1 Nature of Work Engagement**

Work engagement is a central concept in organisational psychology, as it significantly influences employee motivation, performance, and well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008; Christian et al., 2011; Schaufeli et al., 2002). It has been defined in two primary ways, each leading to distinct theoretical perspectives.

Schaufeli et al. (2006) define work engagement as a positive, fulfilling psychological state characterised by three dimensions: vigour, dedication, and absorption. “Vigour” refers to high energy level, mental resilience, and persistence at work. “Dedication” involves a deep sense of purpose, enthusiasm, and substantial involvement in one’s job. “Absorption” describes full concentration and immersion in work tasks (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). From this perspective, work engagement is viewed as a motivational state that enhances employees’ productivity and organisational commitment. Supporting

this view, Decuypere and Schaufeli (2020) argue that work engagement is the positive opposite of burnout. While burnout is associated with exhaustion and disengagement, work engagement fosters positive emotions, high energy, and resilience—key factors in promoting organisational success.

Alternatively, Rich et al. (2010) conceptualise work engagement as the active investment of cognitive, emotional, and physical effort into one's job tasks. Cognitive engagement involves focused attention and mental involvement in work. Emotional engagement refers to employees' passion, enthusiasm, and emotional attachment towards their roles. Physical engagement is reflected in employees' energy and effort, often exceeding minimum job requirements. Unlike the model proposed by Schaufeli et al. (2002) which emphasises psychological states, Rich et al. (2010) highlight the behavioural aspect of engagement, focusing on how employees demonstrate engagement through their actions.

It is important to distinguish work engagement from related concepts such as workaholism and job satisfaction. According to Decuypere and Schaufeli (2020), workaholism involves an uncontrollable drive to work excessively, often leading to stress, burnout, and dissatisfaction. On the other hand, Job satisfaction reflects a general sense of contentment with work but lacks the high energy, deep involvement, and extra effort characteristic of engagement. These distinctions underscore that work engagement is not merely about feeling good at work—it is about being fully immersed, highly motivated, and energetically involved in one's job activities.

This study employs the UWES approach, developed by Schaufeli et al. (2006), to investigate work engagement. This model explains work engagement as a positive mental state comprising three components: vigour, dedication, and absorption. There are good reasons for choosing this method. First, the UWES model has been used and tested

in many jobs, including healthcare and midwifery, which matches the focus of this research. Second, it helps us understand how people feel about their work on the inside, such as their energy, purpose, and focus, which is important in stressful and emotional jobs (Cisneros et al., 2019).

The other model by Rich et al. (2010) focuses more on what people do rather than how they feel. While this is also useful, it may miss the deeper reasons behind why people stay motivated and connected to their work. Since this research is about how leadership and relationships affect workers' motivation, the UWES model is more suitable. It helps show how good leadership can improve energy, commitment, and focus in the workplace. That is why the UWES approach is a better fit for this study.

### **Vigour**

Vigour reflects high energy level, mental resilience, strong willingness to work hard, and determination to overcome challenges (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). Engaged employees tend to be passionate about their work and capable of handling difficulties effectively (Bakker et al., 2011). In other words, vigour helps employees stay engaged with their tasks and enhances their concentration and persistence (Otoo, 2024). It also contributes to organisational growth and is associated with reduced turnover intentions (Blanch & Aluja, 2009).

Research by Mauno et al. (2007) further demonstrates that employees who experience high levels of vigour tend to show greater motivation and performance. In healthcare settings, for example, nurses with high vigour are better equipped to remain calm under pressure and perform effectively during long shifts (Bakker & Heuven, 2006). In other professional contexts, energetic employees are more likely to be proactive, take

initiative, and contribute to improved performance and organisational outcomes (Kuo et al., 2019).

### **Dedication**

Dedication refers to employees' sense of significance and emotional attachment toward their work (Schaufeli et al., 2017). Dedicated employees are deeply committed to achieving meaningful outcomes and contributing to their organisation's success (Knight et al., 2017). This dimension of work engagement is characterised by passion, commitment, and a strong desire to make a positive impact within the workplace (Carasco-Saul et al., 2015).

Employees who experience a strong sense of dedication are more likely to report higher job satisfaction and sustained engagement over time (Macey & Schneider, 2008). For instance, in healthcare settings, midwives and other health professionals often demonstrate deep commitment to patient care (Deery, 2005; Hunter, 2004). They exhibit high levels of resilience and professional dedication, consistently delivering quality services (Szilvassy & Širok, 2022). Their emotional connection to their work not only supports personal and professional growth but also enhances organisational performance (Bakker & Demerouti, 2008).

### **Absorption**

Absorption is the third dimension of work engagement (Schaufeli et al., 2002). It refers to a state of deep immersion and joyful involvement in one's work (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). Absorption enhances concentration, allowing employees to perform tasks more efficiently and creatively (Knight et al., 2017). Employees who are fully immersed in their roles typically demonstrate high levels of productivity and can deliver superior outcomes in less time (Fredrickson, 2001).

This dimension is especially crucial in creative and knowledge-intensive industries, where complex problem-solving and innovation are essential (Schaufeli et al., 2002). In healthcare, for example, deeply engaged professionals often exhibit heightened focus and immersion, enabling them to manage complex medical challenges effectively (Marzban et al., 2022). Such deep involvement not only contributes to personal fulfilment but also promotes organisational success by fostering creativity, innovation, and sustained performance.

### **The Combined Effect of Vigour, Dedication, and Absorption**

The combined effect of vigour, dedication, and absorption provides a comprehensive understanding of WE (Shuck, 2011). Employees who demonstrate all three dimensions are more likely to be productive, satisfied, and consistently motivated to perform at a high level (Schaufeli et al., 2002). Shuck et al. (2017) describe WE as a dynamic and ongoing process, rather than a static state. To effectively foster work engagement, organisations must prioritise the development of a highly motivated and committed workforce (Xanthopoulou et al., 2009).

#### **2.1.2 Antecedents (Sources) of Work Engagement**

Several antecedents influence WE, including individual attributes, job resources, and organisational factors (Björkman & Mäkelä, 2013). Bakker and Demerouti (2014) demonstrate that both higher-order individual traits—such as emotional stability, extraversion, conscientiousness, and a proactive personality—and lower-order characteristics—such as self-efficacy, optimism, and self-esteem—play a significant role in shaping WE. These traits affect how employees perceive their work, their capacity to engage with tasks, and their overall involvement in their roles (Bakker et al., 2012)

In the following section, I will examine the key antecedents of WE, focusing on individual attributes such as intrinsic motivation and emotional intelligence; job resources including autonomy and leadership support; and organisational factors such as workplace climate and recognition programs.

### **Individual Attributes**

Individual attributes—such as intrinsic motivation, emotional intelligence (EI), self-efficacy, and resilience—significantly influence employees' ability to connect with their work and maintain engagement over time (Barreiro & Treglown, 2020).

Intrinsic motivation refers to an individual's enjoyment of their work and their drive to perform tasks for the inherent satisfaction they provide (Pandya, 2024). Bakker and Demerouti (2014) argue that intrinsic motivation fosters higher levels of engagement, as employees perceive their work as meaningful and fulfilling. In the healthcare sector, for example, professionals often experience high engagement because they derive intrinsic satisfaction from helping others (Kitsios & Kamariotou, 2021).

Emotional intelligence is the ability to understand, manage, and respond effectively to own emotions and those of others (Mahon et al., 2014). Employees with high EI tend to be more active, committed, and dedicated to their organisations (Zahari & Kaliannan, 2023). EI plays a crucial role in promoting work engagement by equipping individuals with the emotional tools needed to navigate workplace challenges and interpersonal dynamics (Choudhary & Jain, 2024).

Self-efficacy is an individual's belief in their capability to accomplish specific tasks (Gruman & Saks, 2011). Employees with high self-efficacy are typically more confident, resilient, and persistent in pursuing work-related goals (Consiglio et al., 2016). According to Consiglio et al., such employees view challenges as opportunities

for growth and are more inclined to assume new responsibilities and seek innovative solutions.

Resilience refers to the ability to recover from setbacks and adapt to adversity (Barreiro & Treglown, 2020). Resilient employees are better equipped to maintain engagement, despite difficulties and stressors (Yasami et al., 2024). Their capacity to remain focused and optimistic helps sustain motivation and performance over time.

### **Job Resources**

Schaufeli and Bakker (2004) define job resources as aspects of the job that help employees achieve work goals, reduce job demands, and promote personal growth and development. According to the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, job resources not only buffer the negative impact of job demands but also serve as key motivators that enhance work engagement by satisfying fundamental psychological needs (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014).

Autonomy refers to the degree of freedom employees have in deciding how to perform their work (Huo, 2024). Employees who have control over their tasks are more likely to feel empowered and intrinsically motivated (Demerouti et al., 2001). Autonomy fosters a sense of ownership and responsibility, encouraging employees to take initiative and remain focused on achieving their goals (Xanthopoulou et al., 2007).

Leadership plays a critical role in shaping employee engagement (Kitsios & Kamariotou, 2021). Leaders who provide guidance, support, and constructive feedback help create a work environment where employees feel valued and motivated (Gagné, 2009). Transformational leaders, in particular, inspire and energize their teams by articulating a clear vision and offering opportunities for personal and professional development (Christian et al., 2011).

Task variety refers to the range and diversity of activities involved in a job (Mlekus et al., 2022). Engaging in varied tasks helps prevent monotony, maintains interest, and sustains focus. Employees who experience task variety are more likely to stay engaged and find their work meaningful (Christian et al., 2011).

Access to professional development—through training programs, mentorship, and career advancement opportunities—is a key driver of engagement (Tomlinson, 2010). Employees who perceive opportunities to grow and advance are more likely to feel committed and motivated (Baumruk, 2006). Development opportunities also help employees enhance their skills, prepare for future challenges, and contribute more effectively to organisational success (Rahmadani et al., 2019).

### **Organisational Attributes**

The work environment is shaped by elements such as organisational climate, psychological safety, and recognition programs (Liu et al., 2023). These factors collectively contribute to an organisational culture characterised by trust, collaboration, and motivation.

A positive work climate fosters an atmosphere of trust, mutual respect, and collaboration (Kumar & Raghavendran, 2015). Employees who operate in a supportive and inclusive environment are more likely to feel valued and engaged (Albrecht et al., 2015). Such climates promote open communication, teamwork, and knowledge sharing, which enhance both individual and collective performance (Gyensare et al., 2017).

Psychological safety refers to an employees' perception that they can express themselves, take risks, and make mistakes without fear of negative consequences (Antoinette Bargagliotti, 2012). When organisations encourage openness and

participation, employees become more engaged and more likely to collaborate effectively with others (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008).

Recognition programs that celebrate employee achievements and contributions can significantly boost engagement (Rusin & Szandała, 2024). Employees who feel recognised are more likely to be motivated, committed, and aligned with organisational goals (P & CR, 2023). Effective recognition programs reinforce employees' sense of purpose and belonging within the organisation (White, 2015).

### **2.1.3 Outcomes (Consequences) of Work Engagement**

The impacts of WE are far-reaching, influencing not only individual employees but also team dynamics and overall organisational performance (Koyuncu et al., 2006). Engaged employees tend to experience higher job satisfaction, improved mental and physical well-being, and enhanced work performance (Saks, 2006).

Work engagement leads to several positive employee outcomes, including greater job satisfaction, enhanced well-being, personal growth, and career development (Simpson, 2009).

1. **Improved Job Satisfaction:** Engaged employees are typically more satisfied with their jobs because they find meaning and purpose in their work (Simpson, 2009). Job satisfaction is closely linked to engagement, as emotionally connected employees to their roles tend to feel more fulfilled and motivated (Bakker & Heuven, 2006).
2. **Enhanced Well-being:** Work engagement is associated with better mental and physical health. Engaged employees report lower levels of stress, burnout, and emotional exhaustion. They also tend to experience improved overall health, as

engagement helps buffer the adverse effects of work-related pressure and stress (Saks, 2019).

3. **Personal Growth:** Rahmadani et al. (2019) found that engaged employees are more likely to seek out professional and personal development opportunities. Engagement encourages individuals to embrace challenges, acquire new skills, and invest in their career growth. This sense of continuous development and accomplishment contributes to long-term job satisfaction (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004).
4. **Reduced Burnout:** One of the key benefits of work engagement is its protective effect against burnout (Bakker & Demerouti, 2014). Engaged employees are less likely to experience emotional exhaustion because their work provides a sense of purpose and achievement. This engagement acts as a buffer, helping employees manage demands and sustain energy (Edú-Valsania et al., 2022).

### **For Teams**

Work engagement also yields significant outcomes at the team level, including increased productivity, innovation, and collaboration (Anderson et al., 2014).

1. **Higher Team Productivity:** Engaged employees bring greater energy, focus, and dedication to team tasks. Their active involvement drives better performance, more efficient workflows, and the successful achievement of team goals (Baumruk, 2006).
2. **Innovation and Creativity:** Engaged employees are more likely to contribute fresh ideas and creative solutions during team projects. Their enthusiasm and passion motivate them to challenge outdated processes and drive innovation (Mazzei et al., 2019).

- 3. Collaboration and Cohesion:** Work engagement enhances team collaboration and cohesion. Engaged employees are more inclined to communicate openly, share knowledge, and support one another, fostering a cooperative and high-functioning team environment (Gruman & Saks, 2011; Knight et al., 2017).

### **For Organisations**

At the organisational level, WE contributes significantly to enhanced performance, profitability, customer satisfaction, and overall success.

- 1. Increased Organisational Performance and Profitability:** Organisations with highly engaged employees consistently outperform their competitors across key performance indicators such as productivity, profitability, and customer satisfaction (Demerouti et al., 2001). Engaged employees contribute to these outcomes by delivering high-quality work and driving innovation (Budhwar et al., 2002).
- 2. Enhanced Customer Satisfaction:** Engaged employees are more likely to provide exceptional customer service, resulting in greater customer satisfaction and loyalty. Their enthusiasm and commitment translate into superior customer experiences and stronger client relationships (Truss et al., 2013).
- 3. Reduced Turnover and Absenteeism:** Engaged employees are less likely to leave their organisations or take excessive sick leave. Their commitment and motivation lead to lower turnover rates and reduced absenteeism, thereby minimising recruitment and training costs (Rich et al., 2010).
- 4. Stronger Employer Brand and Reputation:** Engaged employees often act as ambassadors for their organisations, promoting a positive workplace culture and

attracting top talent (Gagné, 2009). A strong employer brand—fueled by high employee engagement—enhances the organisation’s reputation and supports long-term success (Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2008).

## **2.2 Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB)**

Leadership is widely recognised as a fundamental driver of an organisation’s direction, success, and long-term viability. Traditional command-and-control leadership styles have evolved into more participative and people-centric approaches in today's fast-paced and dynamic work environment. Among these modern models, Constructive Leadership Behaviour (CLB) stands out as a highly effective framework for fostering positive organisational outcomes. CLB emphasises ethical conduct, emotional intelligence, and support for employee development. These elements are vital in cultivating a work environment that promotes engagement, collaboration, and productivity (Burns Jr, 2017).

### **2.2.1 Nature of Constructive Leadership Behaviour**

CLB encompasses leadership practices that positively influence follower outcomes through supportive, ethical, and task-oriented behaviours, ultimately enhancing job performance (Mharapara et al., 2019). CLB prioritises positive and supportive actions contributing to employee well-being and reducing role ambiguity. It further promotes fairness, integrity, and moral clarity within the workplace (Mharapara, Cooper-Thomas, et al., 2022). Leaders who engage in CLB—such as providing role clarity, offering recognition, and giving praise—help satisfy employees’ basic psychological needs, thereby increasing motivation and job satisfaction (Burns Jr, 2017; Chénard-Poirier et al., 2021; Mharapara et al., 2019).

CLB explicitly discourages authoritarian approaches or decision-making through threats. Instead, it emphasises the use of influence, persuasion, and encouragement (Mharapara, Cooper-Thomas, et al., 2022). Such behaviours foster trust, a critical foundation for sustaining long-term motivation and enhancing work performance (Einarsen et al., 2007). CLB is valued for its dual focus: achieving organisational objectives while simultaneously cultivating a favourable climate that supports high employee performance (Glaveli et al., 2023).

### **Facets of Constructive Leadership Behaviour (CLB)**

Ethical, transformational, and authentic leadership styles are closely aligned with Constructive Leadership Behaviour (CLB), each contributing distinct strengths that enhance its overall effectiveness (Keyes et al., 2000). Ethical leadership involves consistently demonstrating and promoting ethical conduct and fairness in leadership practices (Mayer et al., 2010). It emphasises respect and justice, fostering an environment where individuals feel valued and heard. Ethical leaders encourage open communication and transparency, thereby cultivating a workplace culture that supports ethical behaviour and enhances organisational effectiveness (Glaveli et al., 2023).

**Transformational leadership** is another key dimension of CLB, characterised by the encouragement of followers to realize their full potential and embrace change.

Transformational leaders inspire employees to contribute positively toward the achievement of organisational goals (Li et al., 2024). They foster individual enthusiasm and commitment while strengthening group cohesion and motivation (Neuber et al., 2022). By doing so, transformational leaders play a critical role in driving both personal and collective progress.

**Authentic leadership**, a third facet of CLB, focuses on building genuine relationships between leaders and followers through clarity of vision and values. It involves self-awareness, relational transparency, and consistency in actions (Walumbwa et al., 2010). Authentic leadership cultivates trust and collaboration, forming a foundation for sustainable growth at both the individual and organisational levels. Moreover, it complements transformational leadership by grounding inspirational leadership in honesty and integrity (Glaveli et al., 2023).

### **Impact of CLB on Workplace Culture**

CLB has a profound impact on shaping organisational culture (Burns Jr, 2017). By fostering a psychologically safe work environment, CLB promotes a culture where employees feel secure in taking interpersonal and professional risks without fear of negative consequences (Hansen, 2010). This sense of psychological safety nurtures innovation, as employees are more inclined to contribute creative solutions and engage in problem-solving (Grojean et al., 2004; Shelton et al., 2020).

Constructive leaders actively cultivate a workplace culture grounded in cooperation, openness, and mutual support among individuals and teams (Leroy et al., 2022). Their emphasis on strong interpersonal relationships enhances integration, collaboration, and the free exchange of ideas (Schmidt et al., 2014). Employees led by constructive leaders often report feeling valued, which in turn motivates greater effort and engagement (Spreitzer et al., 2005).

## **2.2.2 Antecedents of Constructive Leadership Behaviour**

### **Individual-Level Factors**

Several personal attributes contribute to the practice of Constructive Leadership Behaviour (CLB). Traits such as empathy, emotional intelligence, and ethical orientation are strongly associated with constructive leadership practices (Glasø et al., 2018).

Empathy refers to the capacity to understand and share the feelings and perspectives of others. It enables leaders to connect meaningfully with team members, fostering trust and mutual respect (Chinthamu, 2022; Kock et al., 2019). Leaders who demonstrate empathy are better positioned to create supportive environments that embody the core principles of constructive leadership (Glasø et al., 2018).

Emotional intelligence is the ability to recognise, understand, and manage one's own emotions as well as those of others (Ahsan, 2023). Leaders with high emotional intelligence are more adept at navigating workplace challenges, building strong interpersonal relationships, and maintaining team motivation (Babatunde et al., 2023; Chénard-Poirier et al., 2021).

## **Organisational Climate and Support as Antecedents of Constructive Leadership Behaviour**

Organisational factors also play a crucial role in enabling and sustaining Constructive Leadership Behaviour. Ethical climates, often called "caring climates", promote fairness, respect, and employee welfare, reducing the prevalence of coercive or unethical practices (Mharapara et al., 2019). In such environments, leaders are supported in enacting ethical and constructive practices that enhance accountability and employee trust (Schmidt et al., 2014).

Supportive organisational structures, such as the availability of resources and open channels of communication, further reinforce constructive leadership (Martin & Cullen, 2006). A culture that prioritises psychological safety, collaboration, and openness fosters a leadership approach characterised by empathy, inclusivity, and motivation (Einarsen et al., 2007). When employees feel valued and supported, leaders are more likely to respond with trust-based, empowering behaviours.

For example, transparent decision-making processes help leaders align their actions with organisational values and the specific needs of their teams (Grant & Rynsaardt, 2010). Such alignment encourages leaders to model constructive behaviours that enhance both employee well-being and organisational performance (Einarsen et al., 2007). Ultimately, when supported by an ethical and inclusive culture, constructive leadership thrives, driving positive outcomes across the organisation (George & Zhou, 2001).

### **2.2.3 Outcomes of Constructive Leadership Behaviour**

Constructive leadership has a direct and positive impact at the individual level, enhancing job satisfaction, motivation, and engagement in the workplace (Grojean et al., 2004). By clearly defining role expectations and consistently recognising achievements, such leaders foster a positive work environment that supports employee motivation and personal fulfilment (Schyns & Schilling, 2013). In addition, positive leadership enhances employees' perceptions of being valued, which strengthens leader–follower relationships, boosts organisational commitment, and reduces turnover (Schmidt et al., 2014). Constructive leadership also cultivates psychological safety, empowering employees to take creative risks and pursue innovation without fear of negative consequences (Glaveli et al., 2023).

At the team level, CLB fosters cohesion, commitment, and collaboration. It enhances organisational trust, mutual respect, and support among colleagues, thereby strengthening teamwork and resilience (Bedi et al., 2016). Teams led by constructive leaders—especially in self-organized work groups—tend to exhibit higher levels of organisational commitment (Callahan & De Dávila, 2004). Moreover, CLB helps mitigate negative workplace behaviours such as mobbing and absenteeism by reducing stress and encouraging positive behavioural patterns (Glaveli et al., 2023; Skakon et al., 2010). Additionally, constructive leadership contributes to workplace stability, as employees are more likely to remain loyal to organisations that demonstrate genuine care for their workforce.

Leaders who adopt constructive processes benefit not only their teams but also themselves. They tend to experience more positive follower behaviours, greater enjoyment in their roles, reduced stress, and improved mental health (Connelly & Ruark, 2010). Managers who embrace a constructive attitude often report satisfaction

from witnessing effective team interactions and observing their subordinates' positive development and achievements, which stem from their supportive leadership (Crawford et al., 2010). Furthermore, culturally compatible and relational-oriented leadership, emphasising social relationships, aligns with leaders' own needs for social connection and interpersonal engagement (Dickson et al., 2001). Thus, constructive leadership enhances not only the experiences of followers but also the psychological well-being and job satisfaction of leaders themselves. By providing clear role expectations, consistent recognition, and a supportive atmosphere, constructive leaders help employees find meaning and fulfilment in their work (Fredrickson & Joiner, 2002).

Positive leadership transforms organisational productivity, engagement, and creativity into constructive forces that drive overall performance (Grojean et al., 2004). Effective managers enhance team outcomes by offering encouragement, ensuring access to necessary resources, and supporting the management of demanding workloads (Kaluza et al., 2020). Moreover, constructive leadership fosters a reinforcing cycle in which employees are motivated to contribute positively, thereby strengthening support, collaboration, and collective success (Breevaart & Zacher, 2019; Neuber et al., 2022).

## **2.3 Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)**

### **2.3.1 Nature of LMX**

Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) theory emphasises the quality of relationships between leaders and individual team members (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005). High-quality LMX relationships are characterised by mutual respect, trust, obligation, and constructive development (Kacmar et al., 2003). These relationships are built on reciprocal exchanges, where trust and mutual obligations guide interactions between leaders and subordinates (Sherony & Green, 2002). Leaders in high-quality LMX

relationships offer greater support, developmental opportunities, and consistent guidance, which are reciprocated by increased effort, dedication, and enhanced performance from employees (Andersen et al., 2020). Such relationships foster a collaborative environment that positively influences team dynamics, individual satisfaction, and overall organisational outcomes.

In contrast, low-quality LMX relationships are limited to formal, role-based exchanges and lack personal connection or meaningful support. These interactions often result in minimal engagement from subordinates, who may be unwilling to exert effort beyond basic job requirements (Thompson et al., 2018). LMX theory underscores the critical role of relationship quality in shaping both individual and organisational performance (Wagner & Koob, 2022).

### **Examples of High-Quality and Low-Quality LMX Relationships**

Understanding the principles of LMX theory is enhanced by examining real-world examples of both high- and low-quality relationships in workplace contexts. High-quality LMX relationships are marked by mutual respect, trust, and constructive collaboration, while low-quality LMX relationships lack these essential elements.

Consider a project manager in a technology firm who maintains a close, collaborative relationship with an experienced team member. The manager communicates goals clearly, provides constructive feedback, and ensures the employee has the necessary resources to succeed (Terpstra-Tong et al., 2020). The employees are recognised for their unique talents and are actively involved in decision-making processes. In response, the employee exceeds expectations, contributes innovative ideas and demonstrates strong commitment. These interactions foster mutual respect, enhance job satisfaction, and improve both individual and team performance.

In contrast, another team member in the same organisation has a distant, transactional relationship with their manager. Interactions are limited to task assignments, with little guidance or feedback (Henderson & Jeong, 2024). The manager excludes the employee from strategic discussions and fails to acknowledge their contributions (Sheldon et al., 2003). As a result, employee becomes disengaged, performing only the minimum required and showing little initiative (Gagné & Deci, 2005).

These examples illustrate how the quality of LMX relationships directly influences employee engagement, motivation, and performance.

### **Importance of Studying and Understanding Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)**

Studying LMX theory offers valuable insights into leadership effectiveness, employee engagement, and organisational culture. Key benefits include:

LMX enables leaders to tailor their management style to individual team members' needs and strengths. High-quality LMX relationships improve communication, delegation, and team performance (Grant, 2008). Leaders who invest in strong relationships find it easier to motivate and align their teams with organisational goals (Bernerth et al., 2016) while promoting fairness and inclusivity (Gotsis & Grimani, 2017).

Employees in high-quality LMX relationships feel valued and supported, leading to greater engagement and productivity. They are more likely to take initiative, pursue growth opportunities, and contribute innovative solutions (Mumtaz & Rowley, 2020). Supportive leadership also strengthens job attachment, reducing absenteeism and turnover (Aleksić et al., 2017).

High-quality LMX relationships contribute to a respectful and cooperative workplace culture. Leaders who prioritise relational investments reduce conflict and promote teamwork, enhancing both performance and job satisfaction (Avolio et al., 2009; Wayne, 1997).

LMX positively influences organisational outcomes by improving performance levels and employee retention. Loyal, engaged employees foster a culture of excellence (Eisenberger et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2020).

LMX complements other leadership theories by emphasising relational dynamics. It highlights how individualized attention and trust transform team interactions. Integrating LMX with other leadership models helps organisations manage diverse teams more effectively (Andersen et al., 2020; Lagowska et al., 2024).

### **2.3.2 Antecedents (Sources) of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)**

#### **Individual Attributes**

The quality of LMX relationships is significantly influenced by both leader and follower characteristics, including individual attributes, interpersonal dynamics, and behavioural tendencies. These antecedents shape the development of trust, communication, and collaboration within leader–member relationships (Yu & Pitafi, 2024; Zahari & Kaliannan, 2023).

Leaders with strong interpersonal and communication skills are particularly effective at fostering open, transparent relationships, which are essential for high-quality LMX. Trust is the cornerstone of high-quality LMX relationships. Leaders who demonstrate integrity, reliability, and consistency foster trust among subordinates (Alo & Arslan,

2022). Leaders earn loyalty and commitment by acting in their team's best interests, fulfilling commitments, and maintaining transparency (Dulebohn et al., 2012).

Similarly, subordinates who are dependable and uphold ethical standards are more likely to build meaningful relationships with their leaders. Mutual trust reduces conflict, promotes respect, and enhances collaboration (Borchgrevink & Boster, 1997). For example, when employees consistently meet expectations and align with organisational values, leaders are more inclined to delegate responsibilities and offer mentorship. This reciprocal trust contributes to a cohesive and high-performing work environment.

Effective communication is a critical factor in developing strong LMX relationships. Leaders who clearly articulate expectations, provide timely and constructive feedback, and actively listen to their team members foster open dialogue and mutual understanding (Hassan & Hatmaker, 2015). Subordinates who communicate effectively—by sharing updates, seeking clarification, and expressing ideas—enhance team cohesion and reduce misunderstandings (Dulebohn et al., 2012; Zahari & Kaliannan, 2023). Strong communication skills on both sides improve the quality of interactions and support the development of trust and collaboration.

Emotional intelligence plays a vital role in establishing and maintaining high-quality LMX relationships. Leaders with high EI are better equipped to manage their own emotions, understand others' feelings, and respond with empathy and care (Barbuto & Bugenhagen, 2009; Poon & Rowley, 2007). This emotional awareness fosters a supportive team environment and strengthens trust and collaboration (Chen et al., 2012). Subordinates with high EI are also more receptive to feedback and more capable of building cooperative relationships. Overall, EI enhances communication, empathy, and organisational culture (Jordan & Troth, 2011).

Empathy enables leaders to understand their subordinates' perspectives, challenges, and needs (Chinthamu, 2022). Demonstrating genuine concern for employee well-being builds trust and strengthens work relationships (Newman et al., 2017). Subordinates with strong interpersonal skills, such as friendliness, adaptability, and cooperation, are more likely to develop positive relationships with their leaders (Bhal & Dadhich, 2011). These skills contribute to a harmonious and productive team environment.

Subordinate initiative and proactivity are essential for cultivating high-quality LMX relationships. Employees who take on additional responsibilities, proactively solve problems, and show dedication to team goals are highly valued by leaders (Kafetsios et al., 2014). Such behaviours signal commitment and reliability, encouraging leaders to invest more in the relationship through support, recognition, and developmental opportunities (Gkorezis et al., 2015).

### **Organisational Attributes**

While individual attributes play a significant role in shaping LMX relationships, organisational factors are equally critical. As Poon and Rowley (2007) note, the interactions between leaders and team members are strongly influenced by broader organisational policies, culture, and operational systems. These contextual elements create a framework that shapes the dynamics and quality of LMX relationships (Newman et al., 2017). Organisational culture plays a pivotal role in determining the quality of LMX relationships. A culture that promotes inclusiveness, cooperation, and mutual respect fosters high-quality exchanges between leaders and subordinates (Chiu et al., 2023). Supportive cultural norms and open communication channels encourage positive, trust-based interactions.

Robust organisational support systems, such as leadership development initiatives, mentoring programs, and access to resources, are essential for sustaining high-quality LMX relationships (Mulligan et al., 2021). These systems enhance leader–subordinate interactions by providing opportunities for growth, skill development, and recognition (Aleksić et al., 2017).

Clearly defined roles and responsibilities reduce ambiguity and conflict, laying the foundation for effective LMX relationships (Sahlmüller et al., 2022). Leaders who provide explicit job expectations and guidance enable subordinates to perform confidently and efficiently (Kuvaas & Buch, 2020). Role clarity contributes to a structured and supportive environment that strengthens LMX quality (Martin et al., 2018).

Transparent and equitable organisational policies, particularly those related to performance appraisals, rewards, and promotions, enhance employee confidence and trust in leadership (Schulze & Pinkow, 2020). Leaders perceived as fair and impartial are more likely to inspire loyalty and commitment. Conversely, inconsistent or unjust practices can erode trust and weaken LMX relationships (Terpstra-Tong et al., 2020).

The frequency and quality of interactions between leaders and subordinates significantly influence the development of LMX. Regular engagement through meetings, one-on-one sessions, and informal conversations fosters trust, goal alignment, and issue resolution (Jansson & Kangas, 2024). These interactions are essential for building and maintaining strong, collaborative relationships.

### **2.3.3 Outcomes (Consequences) of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)**

#### **For Employees**

Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) significantly shapes employee experiences and outcomes in the workplace (Kuvaas & Buch, 2020). High-quality LMX relationships—characterised by mutual trust, respect, and open communication—are strongly associated with enhanced job satisfaction, organisational commitment, work motivation, and professional development (Martin et al., 2018).

Employees engaged in high-quality LMX relationships report significantly higher levels of job satisfaction. Leaders foster these relationships by offering support, constructive feedback, and a positive work environment (Hill et al., 2014). Opportunities for skill development, career advancement, and involvement in decision-making processes further strengthen these bonds. In contrast, employees in low-quality LMX relationships often feel overlooked, leading to disengagement and dissatisfaction (Yu et al., 2018).

High-quality LMX relationships promote stronger employee loyalty and alignment with organisational goals. Trust between leaders and employees enhances commitment to the organisation’s mission (Torka et al., 2011). Conversely, low-quality exchanges can lead to feelings of alienation and reduced organisational commitment (Martin et al., 2018).

LMX also plays a critical role in shaping employee motivation. Personalised attention and support from leaders in high-quality exchanges encourage employees to contribute beyond formal job requirements (Wang et al., 2021). These attitudes from leaders often result in discretionary behaviours such as helping colleagues or taking on additional responsibilities (Prussia & Kinicki, 1996).

High-quality LMX relationships are instrumental in professional growth. Leaders often act as mentors, providing guidance, feedback, and access to challenging assignments and training opportunities (Dulebohn et al., 2012). This mentorship helps employees build the competencies needed for career advancement (Jawahar et al., 2019).

### **For Teams**

Beyond individual benefits, LMX also influences team dynamics, fostering collaboration, cohesion, innovation, and effective conflict resolution.

High-quality LMX relationships create a foundation for effective teamwork. Trust and open communication facilitated by leaders enhance idea sharing and coordination among team members (Lee et al., 2019), ultimately supporting team performance and task completion (Martin et al., 2018).

LMX contributes to team unity by promoting mutual respect and understanding. High-quality exchanges reduce interpersonal conflict and cultivate a supportive team environment (Riisla et al., 2021). Fairness and leader support further reinforce trust and cooperation (Ugwulor-Onyinyechi et al., 2022).

Teams led by leaders with strong LMX relationships are more likely to engage in creative problem-solving. These leaders provide autonomy and psychological safety, encouraging experimentation and innovation (Yasmin et al., 2024). Such environments enhance team performance and organisational competitiveness (Aggarwal et al., 2020).

Strong LMX relationships enable leaders to manage conflict constructively. Open communication and mutual respect allow for the timely and effective resolution of disputes, minimising disruptions and maintaining a favourable work climate (Bauer & Erdogan, 2015; Eisenberger et al., 2010).

## **For Organisations**

At the organisational level, high-quality Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) relationships influence a range of critical outcomes, including employee retention, performance, organisational culture, engagement, and leadership development.

Organisations with leaders who foster high-quality LMX relationships typically experience significantly lower employee turnover rates. These supportive relationships are associated with greater job satisfaction and reduced intentions to leave, thereby lowering recruitment and training costs (Aggarwal et al., 2020). For example, organisations with strong LMX cultures may observe measurable reductions in turnover percentages. In contrast, low-quality LMX relationships often lead to dissatisfaction and disengagement, increasing the likelihood of voluntary turnover and disrupting organisational performance (Cropanzano et al., 2017).

High-quality LMX relationships positively impact organisational performance.

Employees in such relationships are more committed to organisational goals, resulting in higher productivity and improved work quality (Gillet et al., 2022). Furthermore, the collaborative and innovative climate fostered by strong LMX enables organisations to adapt to change and capitalize on emerging opportunities (Eisenberger et al., 2019).

LMX contributes to the development of a positive organisational culture grounded in trust, respect, and mutual support. Employees in high-quality exchanges are more likely to take ownership of their roles and prioritise organisational interests over personal gain (Gillet et al., 2022). A strong culture not only enhances internal cohesion but also attracts and retains top talent, creating a virtuous cycle of organisational success (Xie et al., 2019).

High-quality LMX relationships are a key driver of employee engagement. Engaged employees are more likely to go beyond their formal roles, collaborate effectively, and contribute to innovation and customer satisfaction (Li et al., 2010). Conversely, low-quality LMX relationships can lead to disengagement and diminished organisational performance (Van Dyne et al., 2008).

Organisations that prioritise LMX in leadership development gain long-term strategic advantages. Training leaders to build and maintain high-quality relationships embeds effective leadership practices into the organisational fabric. This not only enhances current performance but also prepares future leaders to sustain a competitive edge (Lonsdale, 2016; Venkataramani et al., 2010).

## **2.4 Theoretical Foundations For CLB and WE**

### **2.4.1 Self-Determination Theory (SDT) as the Primary Framework**

Baron and Morin (2009) explain that Self-Determination Theory (SDT) (Deci & Ryan, 1985) is a well-established psychological framework that describes how individuals develop motivation and engagement through the fulfilment of three fundamental psychological needs: autonomy, competence, and relatedness.

According to Rodgers et al. (2014), competence refers to an individual's belief in their ability to perform tasks and achieve desired outcomes effectively. Employees feel competent when provided with opportunities to develop their skills (Breevaart & Zacher, 2019). CLBs contribute to competence by offering clear expectations, coaching, and encouragement. It enables employees to build confidence in their abilities (Axelrod, 2017).

Autonomy refers to the ability to make decisions and have control over one's work (Patall, 2021). Leaders who practice ethical decision-making and empowerment allow employees to take ownership of their roles. It leads to greater engagement and job satisfaction (Junaidi, 2023).

Relatedness refers to an individual's fundamental need to feel connected, valued, and supported within their social environment (Westerskov Dalgas et al., 2024). Employees experience relatedness when they feel connected, valued, and supported by their leaders and colleagues (Ellemers et al., 2013). CLBs foster trust, recognition, and a collaborative organisational culture. It strengthens workplace relationships and emotional well-being (DeChurch et al., 2010).

Self-Determination Theory (SDT) posits that when the three core psychological needs, autonomy, competence, and relatedness, are fulfilled, individuals experience intrinsic motivation. These psychological needs, in turn, drive higher levels of engagement, commitment, and productivity (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Since CLBs actively support the satisfaction of these needs, SDT provides a robust theoretical foundation for understanding how leadership influences employee engagement (Rigby & Ryan, 2018).

#### **2.4.2 Supporting Theories: Social Exchange Theory (SET) and the JD-R Model**

##### **Social Exchange Theory (SET)**

Cook et al. (2013) explain that workplace relationships are grounded in reciprocal exchanges. When leaders demonstrate fairness, trust, and support, employees tend to respond with increased commitment, trust, and engagement (Cropanzano et al., 2017). Within the framework of CLBs, leaders who invest in their employees' well-being and professional development foster positive exchanges that cultivate loyalty and motivation (Coyle-Shapiro & Conway, 2005). According to a study by Ali et al. (2024), when

leaders recognise achievements, provide mentorship, and support career growth, employees respond with higher engagement, greater discretionary effort, and reduced turnover. SET explains this dynamic as a mutual exchange process, where positive leadership behaviours generate loyalty, motivation, and enhanced performance (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

### **2.4.3 Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) Model**

The Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker & Demerouti, 2017) explains that employee engagement is influenced by the balance between job demands and job resources. Job demands refer to aspects such as work pressure, role ambiguity, and emotional stress (Adam, 2023), while job resources include leadership support, autonomy, and role clarity (Crawford et al., 2010).

Schaufeli (2015) highlights that constructive leadership behaviours (CLBs) function as a vital job resource by both mitigating job demands and enhancing job resources. Leaders reduce job demands through clear communication, ethical guidance, and effective workload management. Simultaneously, they strengthen job resources by offering support, motivation, and clarity in roles, enabling employees to navigate their responsibilities more effectively. By addressing workplace challenges and providing essential resources, CLBs help prevent burnout and sustain high levels of engagement, aligning closely with the core principles of the JD-R model (Schaufeli et al., 2017).

In essence, constructive leadership represents a strategic approach to organisational management and motivation that prioritises both organisational goals and employee well-being, while promoting ethical behaviour. This review underscores the value of constructive leadership, particularly in its alignment with ethical, transformational, and authentic leadership styles, and its capacity to foster a positively engaged workforce. The development of CLBs is influenced by antecedent factors such as individual

differences, targeted training, and the broader organisational climate. In today's complex global environment, organisations can significantly benefit from constructive leadership through enhanced employee satisfaction and improved organisational performance.

Leadership development programs that emphasise constructive behaviours warrant strong support, as modern organisational environments demand resilient, motivated, and adaptable teams. Future research should further explore the long-term effects of constructive leadership, particularly under chronic stress conditions. Insights from such studies could inform the refinement of leadership training programs, enhancing their effectiveness in cultivating constructive behaviours among leaders. Constructive leadership not only drives organisational success but also fosters a positive organisational culture characterised by trust, collaboration, and high performance, ultimately benefiting both leaders and their teams.

## **2.5 Empirical Studies on the Interplay Between LMX, CLB and WE**

In recent years, research has increasingly focused on how various leadership styles influence employee outcomes such as engagement, performance, and discretionary effort. Among the most frequently studied constructs are Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB), including transformational, ethical, and servant leadership, and Work Engagement (WE). However, most empirical studies have examined these constructs in isolation or dyadic combinations, with few integrating all three within a single research model.

To address this gap, the present review examines 17 studies that explore different pairings of LMX, CLB, and WE. These studies span diverse sectors, including healthcare, education, tourism, and hospitality, and employ various methodological

approaches. These include theory-driven models (e.g., Suhaimi and Panatik (2016)), quantitative surveys (e.g., Diko and Saxena (2023); (Helalat et al., 2024)), mixed-methods designs (e.g., (Grah et al., 2024)), and bibliometric analyses of published literature (e.g., Vintila (2023)). Studies such as Chen and Cuervo (2022) and Makowski (2023) emphasise the impact of leadership behaviour on engagement, while others, like Soilihin (2024) investigate how leader–member relationships (LMX) relate to innovation and discretionary effort.

### **2.5.1 Conceptual Foundations**

#### **Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)**

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory helps explain the relationship between leaders and their team members. Social Exchange Theory highlights trust, support, and respect as key parts of strong leader-follower relationships (Suhaimi & Panatik, 2016). LMX has been linked to positive employee outcomes like engagement, job satisfaction, and innovation. For instance, Suhaimi and Panatik (2016) suggested that LMX could lead to innovation through work engagement, though they did not test this with real data.

Despite its importance, LMX is rarely studied as a primary factor in research. When mentioned, it is often part of larger models without being measured directly. Decuyper and Schaufeli (2020) described LMX as a link between leadership behaviours and engagement, but their ideas remained theoretical. In another study, Soilihin (2024) found that engagement improved helpful behaviours at work, but omitted LMX, even though it is relevant.

Very few studies measure both LMX and engagement together. Even in leadership studies like Helalat et al. (2024), which focuses on transformational leadership, LMX is left out. This weakens the full understanding of how leadership works. Although LMX

is widely seen as important, there is still a clear gap in research that properly measures and analyses it within leadership and engagement studies.

### **Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB)**

Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB), such as transformational, ethical, authentic, and servant leadership, are key topics in leadership research today. These styles are linked to better employee well-being, engagement, and performance because they focus on support, empowerment, and clear values. Many studies support these links using large and varied groups. For example, Diko and Saxena (2023) studied 442 academic staff in Ethiopia and found that transformational leadership increased engagement and reduced the likelihood of staff leaving. They used well-known tools like the MLQ and UWES to measure their results.

Similarly, Chen and Cuervo (2022) studied 443 full-time employees in China's Greater Bay Area and found that transformational leadership improved engagement through increased motivation. Their research carefully accounted for cultural differences and other possible influencing factors. Grah et al. (2024) also contributed to this area by using both surveys and interviews with 168 tourism employees in Croatia. Their approach showed that motivation plays a key role in how leadership affects engagement.

Even though these studies are strong in their methods, many of them do not include relationship-based ideas like Leader-Member Exchange (LMX). They focus mainly on leadership behaviours rather than on how leaders and employees relate to each other. Also, most studies use one-time surveys, which makes it hard to understand cause and effect.

## **Work Engagement (WE)**

Work Engagement (WE) is understood as a positive mental state made up of energy, dedication, and focus at work (Schaufeli et al., 2006). It is important because it often leads to better job performance, employee retention, and extra effort. Researchers commonly use the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) to measure it, and studies use various methods. For example, Grah et al. (2024) surveyed 168 hospitality employees in Croatia and found that motivation influenced how leadership affected engagement.

Helalat et al. (2024) used a statistical method called SEM to study the role of transformational leadership in the service sector. They found that engagement helped explain how leadership affects performance. Work engagement (WE) is often studied in leadership research, but there is limited research that looks at how it connects with both CLB and LMX at the same time. This limits our understanding of how engagement functions in leadership settings. WE have been limited mainly to the hospitality, education and public service organisations, which makes it more difficult to generalise to other work sectors. As a result, the findings on work engagement are not always easy to generalise across different sectors.

### **2.5.2 Paired Relationships in Literature**

While numerous studies have examined Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB), and Work Engagement (WE) as individual constructs, the empirical literature has primarily addressed them in dyadic combinations rather than within an integrated framework. These dyadic relationships, namely LMX–WE, CLB–WE, and LMX–CLB, have received varying degrees of scholarly attention. Some studies demonstrate intense methodological rigour, employing validated

instruments and advanced statistical techniques, while others remain primarily conceptual, lacking empirical validation or comprehensive theoretical integration.

### **Leader-Member Exchange and Work Engagement**

The relationship between Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) and Work Engagement (WE) is conceptually well-grounded in Social Exchange Theory (SET), yet empirical evidence remains limited. Suhaimi and Panatik (2016) proposed a conceptual framework in which LMX fosters innovative work behaviour through the mediating role of WE. Although their model aligns with established theoretical foundations, it lacks empirical testing and measurement validation, leaving a significant gap in the literature.

In contrast, Krén and Juhász (2024) used a dyadic design involving 60 MBA students and 123 peers who evaluated them in structured leadership exercises. Their study examined the congruence between leaders' self-perceptions and followers' engagement ratings. While LMX was not explicitly measured, the focus on relational perceptions and their influence on engagement outcomes suggests an indirect overlap with LMX constructs. The inclusion of both leader and follower perspectives enhanced methodological triangulation and provided a richer understanding of how relational alignment affects engagement.

Despite these contributions, few studies have directly tested the relationship between LMX and WE using structural models and validated measurement instruments. This limited empirical integration highlights a methodological shortfall and underscores the need for further research employing robust quantitative designs to explicitly examine how LMX predicts or moderates engagement outcomes across diverse organisational contexts.

## **Constructive Leadership Behaviours and Work Engagement**

The dyadic relationship between Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB)—particularly transformational leadership—and Work Engagement (WE) has received substantial empirical attention. Numerous studies have confirmed a positive, statistically significant association between CLB and WE across various sectors and cultural contexts.

For instance, Diko and Saxena (2023) conducted a quantitative survey of 442 academic staff in Ethiopian public universities and found that transformational leadership positively influenced engagement while significantly reducing turnover intention. Using Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) via AMOS, they demonstrated that engagement partially mediated the relationship between leadership and turnover. Similarly, Chen and Cuervo (2022), drawing on a sample of 443 employees in China's Greater Bay Area, confirmed that transformational leadership enhanced engagement both directly and indirectly through different forms of motivation.

Grah et al. (2024) extended this line of inquiry by incorporating intrinsic motivation as a moderator within a mixed-methods design. Their study, involving 168 hospitality employees in Croatia, revealed that transformational leadership significantly increased engagement, particularly among individuals with high intrinsic motivation. The integration of survey data and follow-up interviews added contextual richness to their findings. Helalat et al. (2024) also demonstrated, using data from five-star hotel employees in Jordan, that engagement partially mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and performance outcomes such as innovation and creativity.

Collectively, these studies underscore the effectiveness of CLB in fostering engagement, with most employing robust analytical techniques such as SEM, Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), and regression analysis. However, a standard limitation across this body of work is the absence of LMX as a relational dimension. While CLB is typically assessed through behavioural instruments (e.g., the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire), few studies integrate employees' perceptions of relational quality with their leaders—an omission that may obscure important nuances in how leadership behaviours translate into engagement outcomes.

### **Leader-Member Exchange and Constructive Leadership Behaviours**

Research examining the interaction between Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) and Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB) remains limited and is predominantly conceptual rather than empirical. Decuyper and Schaufeli (2020) proposed a unified framework in which LMX functions as a mediating mechanism through which leadership styles influence employee outcomes. Their theoretical model suggests that trust, communication, and autonomy, core elements of both LMX and CLB, form a shared pathway that enhances employee engagement. However, this model has not been empirically tested.

Similarly, in a comprehensive meta-analysis, Decuyper and Schaufeli (2021) synthesized findings from 86 leadership–engagement studies, arguing that various leadership styles (e.g., transformational, servant, ethical) exert their influence through standard mechanisms such as LMX, empowerment, and psychological need satisfaction. While their statistical synthesis offers valuable insights, LMX is again treated as a conceptual linkage rather than a directly measured variable within these frameworks.

This lack of empirical testing is problematic, particularly given that leadership behaviour and relational quality do not always align. For example, a leader may demonstrate transformational behaviours yet fail to establish trust-based relationships with subordinates, thereby limiting their impact on engagement. Without the explicit measurement of LMX, such relational dynamics remain speculative and underexplored.

### **Attempts at Triadic Integration**

Despite the growing body of research exploring Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB), and Work Engagement (WE) individually or in dyadic combinations, very few studies have empirically examined the interplay of all three constructs within a unified framework.

One of the most notable conceptual contributions comes from Decuyper and Schaufeli (2021), who proposed a unified mechanism model for leadership–engagement research. Drawing on Self-Determination Theory (SDT) and the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model, their framework conceptualises CLB styles, such as transformational, authentic, and ethical leadership, as operating through mediating mechanisms like LMX, trust, and psychological need satisfaction. While their synthesis highlights shared mechanisms across leadership styles, the model remains theoretical and lacks empirical validation. No primary data or statistical modelling was conducted to test the interaction between LMX, CLB, and WE.

In a subsequent meta-analysis, Decuyper and Schaufeli (2021) reviewed 86 studies to explore the collective impact of various leadership styles on work engagement. They found consistent evidence that CLB styles positively influence engagement, often through mediators such as empowerment, trust, and job resources—mechanisms conceptually aligned with LMX. However, their analysis did not include studies that

explicitly measured all three constructs together. LMX was referenced as a theoretical pathway but was not consistently operationalised or statistically examined alongside leadership style and engagement in a single model.

Another relevant contribution is the conceptual model proposed by Suhaimi and Panatik (2016), which links LMX, work engagement, and innovative work behaviour. While the model suggests that LMX fosters engagement, which in turn promotes innovation, it does not include CLB as a measured or theorised construct. Moreover, the framework remains non-empirical, lacking both data collection and statistical validation, and thus contributes more to theoretical discourse than practical application.

In terms of more integrated methodological designs, Vintila (2023) conducted a bibliometric analysis of the relationships among transformational leadership, work engagement, well-being, and burnout. Drawing on 37 articles indexed in the Web of Science, the study identified three thematic clusters, including a “leadership–engagement cluster” and a “burnout–well-being cluster.” Although LMX was not directly included in the analysis, the study acknowledged the need for integrative models that account for both leadership behaviours and relational quality. While insightful in mapping research trends, the study did not provide empirical evidence of the triadic relationship among LMX, CLB, and WE.

Similarly, Makowski (2023) examined the role of transformational leadership in virtual workplaces using a mixed-methods approach to predict employee engagement.

Although the study focused on leadership behaviour and engagement, LMX was not mentioned, and relational variables were treated as contextual rather than theoretical constructs. Krén and Juhász (2024) explored leader–follower congruence using dual surveys, referencing relational quality and leadership style. However, LMX was not

operationally defined, and the study did not attempt to integrate all three constructs into a single model.

## **2.6 Methodologies and Theoretical Frameworks**

The methodological approaches and theoretical foundations employed in studies on Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB), and Work Engagement (WE) vary considerably, reflecting both the interdisciplinary nature of the topic and the evolving interest in leadership and employee outcomes. While many studies demonstrate strong quantitative rigour, particularly through the use of Structural Equation Modelling (SEM) and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), others remain conceptual or lack empirical integration of all three constructs.

Most studies employed quantitative, cross-sectional survey designs, with sample sizes ranging from relatively small cohorts (e.g., 85 employees in Soilihin (2024)) to large datasets (e.g., 442 academic staff in Diko and Saxena (2023); 443 employees in Chen and Cuervo (2022)). These studies typically utilized validated instruments such as the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) for transformational leadership, the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES) for engagement, and adapted LMX scales for relational assessment—though LMX was frequently omitted.

For example, Diko and Saxena (2023) used SEM with AMOS to test the mediating role of engagement between transformational leadership and turnover intention, demonstrating strong model fit and scale reliability. Similarly, Chen and Cuervo (2022) applied SEM and regression modelling to examine motivation as a mediator between transformational leadership and engagement, ensuring methodological robustness through instrument validation in the Chinese context.

Grah et al. (2024) adopted a mixed-methods design, combining quantitative surveys with qualitative interviews among 168 hospitality employees in Croatia. This approach enabled triangulation and richer interpretation of findings, enhancing internal validity. Their moderated model, where intrinsic motivation influenced the strength of the transformational leadership–engagement relationship, offered insights into interaction effects often missed by linear models.

However, several methodological limitations are common across the literature. Cross-sectional designs dominate, limiting causal inference. Although SEM is widely used, few studies incorporate multilevel modelling or dyadic analysis methods, which are particularly suited to LMX, which is inherently relational and often asymmetric across leader–follower dyads. An exception is Krén and Juhász (2024), who employed a dyadic design involving both leaders and subordinates, though their study still lacked a complete triadic analysis incorporating CLB.

Regarding relational variables, most leadership studies neglected to include LMX as an independent or mediating construct. Even when LMX was conceptually acknowledged, as in Decuyper and Schaufeli (2020); (Decuyper & Schaufeli, 2021), empirical testing was absent. This omission represents a missed opportunity to examine the joint impact of relational quality and leadership behaviour on employee engagement.

The reviewed studies predominantly draw on a set of overlapping theoretical frameworks, including:

- **Social Exchange Theory (SET)** is commonly used to explain LMX dynamics (Suhaimi & Panatik, 2016).
- **Self-Determination Theory (SDT)** is used to explore contextualised motivation as a mediator or moderator (Adnan et al., 2020; Grah et al., 2024).

- **Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) Model** is frequently applied to explain how leadership functions as a job resource that enhances engagement (Decuyper & Schaufeli, 2021).
- **Social Learning Theory** is often linked to ethical or transformational leadership, where employees emulate observed leader behaviours (Adnan et al., 2020).

Among these, the JD-R model and SDT are the most frequently employed in engagement research. For instance, Chen and Cuervo (2022) used SDT to explain how internal and external motivation mediate the relationship between leadership and WE, while Decuyper and Schaufeli (2021) applied the JD-R model to conceptualise leadership as a resource that facilitates engagement.

Despite these theoretical integrations, few studies explicitly link relational and behavioural leadership theories. While Decuyper and Schaufeli (2021) acknowledged shared mechanisms, such as trust, psychological safety, and autonomy, underlying leadership styles and LMX, no study operationalised a framework that incorporates both LMX and CLB as parallel or interacting antecedents of WE.

Moreover, theories such as Path–Goal Theory, LMX Theory, and Transformational Leadership Theory were referenced inconsistently and often only at a conceptual level. Few studies attempted to integrate multiple theories into a multidimensional leadership model. This theoretical gap underscores the need for frameworks that combine relational leadership quality (LMX) and constructive leadership behaviours (CLB) as joint predictors of engagement.

## 2.7 Gaps and Limitations in the Literature

Research on leadership and work engagement has expanded significantly in recent years, yet several critical limitations persist. While numerous studies have explored Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB), and Work Engagement (WE) either individually or in dyadic combinations, very few have examined all three constructs within a single, integrated model. This fragmented approach has resulted in substantial gaps in understanding how leadership influences employee engagement through both behavioural and relational mechanisms.

A key gap lies in the absence of studies that simultaneously incorporate LMX, CLB, and WE into a cohesive research framework. Most existing research has examined only two of these variables at a time. For instance, Diko and Saxena (2023) and Chen and Cuervo (2022) focused on transformational leadership and engagement but excluded LMX. Conversely, Suhaimi and Panatik (2016) proposed a model linking LMX and engagement but omitted CLB and did not empirically test their framework. Even theoretically robust models, such as those proposed by Decuyper and Schaufeli (2020) and Decuyper and Schaufeli (2021) and , which reference all three constructs, remain untested. As a result, the field lacks a comprehensive understanding of how leadership behaviours and relational quality jointly influence employee engagement.

Another notable issue is the underutilization of LMX as a measurable construct.

Although many leadership studies reference concepts such as trust, respect, and support, they often fail to employ validated LMX scales. Instead, they focus predominantly on leadership behaviours, such as transformational or ethical leadership, while neglecting the relational dimension. For example, Helalat et al. (2024) and Chen and Cuervo (2022) measured transformational leadership and its impact on engagement, but omitted LMX. This omission is significant, as LMX provides critical insight into how

employees personally experience leadership. Without it, researchers risk overlooking a key explanatory mechanism for why certain leadership styles are more effective in fostering engagement.

Several studies have proposed promising theoretical models that integrate LMX, CLB, and WE, yet these models often remain conceptual. For example, Suhaimi and Panatik (2016) and Decuyper and Schaufeli (2021) presented thoughtful frameworks suggesting that leadership behaviours and relationship quality contribute to engagement. However, the lack of empirical testing limits their practical applicability and leaves a gap between theoretical propositions and evidence-based conclusions.

Methodologically, many leadership studies rely heavily on cross-sectional designs, which capture data at a single point in time. This approach limits the ability to infer causality, raising the question of whether leadership drives engagement or whether engaged employees simply perceive their leaders more positively. Additionally, the widespread use of self-reported data introduces potential biases. Although some researchers, such as Grah et al. (2024) and Krén and Juhász (2024), have employed mixed-methods or dyadic designs to enhance data quality, such approaches remain relatively rare.

A related limitation is the underuse of dyadic and multilevel research designs. Given that LMX inherently involves the leader–follower relationship, collecting data from both parties is essential. However, most studies rely solely on employee perspectives, omitting leaders' views. Similarly, few studies employ multilevel analyses to examine how leadership at the team or organisational level influences individual outcomes.

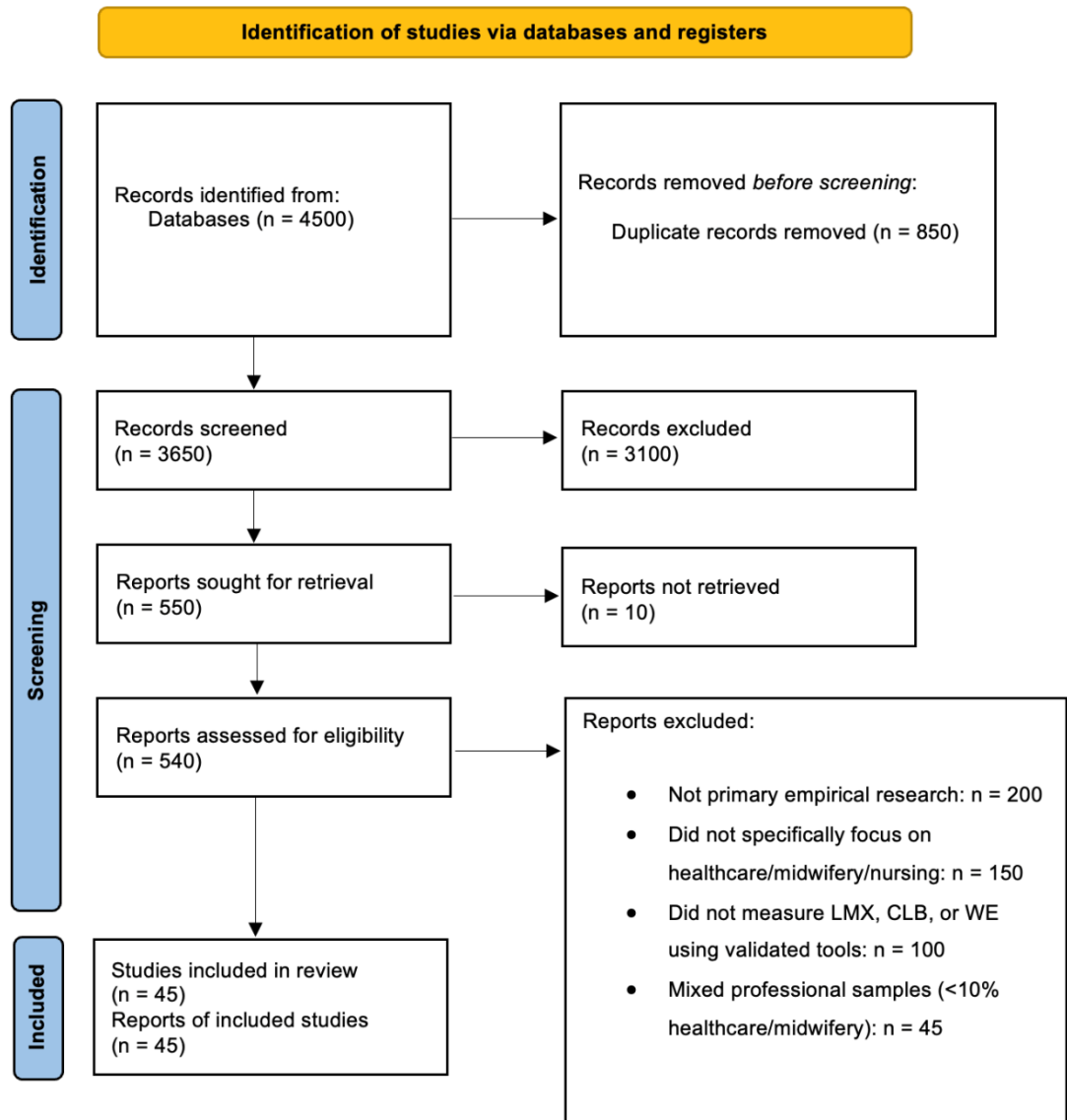
Finally, the generalizability of current findings is constrained by the limited range of sectors and geographic contexts represented in the literature. Many studies are

concentrated in specific industries such as hospitality, tourism, and education, and a significant proportion originates from non-Western countries, including Indonesia, Ethiopia, and Malaysia. While these contributions are valuable, leadership expectations and workplace cultures vary widely across contexts. For example, findings from a university setting in Ethiopia may not translate to a corporate environment in the UK. Moreover, few studies explicitly examine cultural dimensions, such as power distance or collectivism, that could significantly shape leadership dynamics and engagement outcomes.

In summary, the existing literature on leadership and work engagement reveals several critical gaps that hinder a comprehensive understanding of how LMX, CLB, and WE interact. Most notably, few studies have integrated all three constructs into a unified model. Research has predominantly emphasised leadership behaviours while neglecting relational quality, and many theoretical frameworks remain untested. Methodological limitations, such as reliance on cross-sectional designs, self-report data, and single-source perspectives, further constrain the field. The lack of dyadic, multilevel, and cross-cultural research also limits the applicability of findings across diverse organisational settings.

Future research should adopt more robust, multidimensional designs to address these limitations. Integrating LMX and CLB into unified models, collecting data from both leaders and followers, and conducting studies across varied sectors and cultural contexts would significantly advance the field. Such efforts would yield a more nuanced and actionable understanding of how leadership behaviours and relational dynamics jointly shape employee engagement.

## 2.8 Method



*Figure 1: Systematic Search Process*

To search and collate relevant literature on Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory, Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB), and Work Engagement (WE) in healthcare and midwifery contexts, the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines were followed. Fig.1 shows the three main steps involved in the identification, Screening and Included Studies for this research.

## **Identification**

The identification process involved a comprehensive search across multiple databases to capture a diverse range of articles relevant to the research questions. This search was conducted using four academic databases: EBSCO Business Source, Scopus, the Auckland University of Technology (AUT) Library, and Google Scholar. Collectively, these databases provided broad coverage of literature related to leadership theories, employee engagement, and healthcare practices.

The search strategy was guided by three inclusion criteria: (1) articles had to be peer-reviewed, (2) published between 2015 and 2025, and (3) written in English.

Standardised search parameters were applied across all databases to ensure consistency, incorporating similar keywords within titles and abstracts. Identical combinations of search terms were used in each database, with only minor punctuation and syntax adjustments to align with each platform's specific requirements.

The search term strings were:

### **1. Constructive Leadership Behaviour Strings**

Constructive Leader behave\*, Constructive leadership Behavi\*, Constructive leader\*, Ethical Behavi\*, Positive Leader\*

### **2. Work Engagement strings**

Work Engagement, Job Engagement, Work engagement AND employee motivation, Work engagement AND job satisfaction.

### **3. Leader-Member Exchange strings**

Leader-Member Exchange, LMX AND Organisational Behaviour,

4. (constructive leadership OR transformational leadership OR supportive leadership OR authentic leadership) AND (work engagement OR employee engagement OR burnout prevention) AND (midwifery OR nursing OR healthcare)
5. (Leader-Member Exchange OR LMX theory OR LMX healthcare) AND (work engagement) AND (midwifery OR nursing)

All articles found in this phase (n = 4,500) were collected and imported into EndNote, the reference management tool utilised for handling the following stages of the review process.

### **Screening**

During the second phase, duplicate articles were removed using a dedicated function in EndNote. The remaining articles were then screened for relevance to the research question by reviewing their titles and abstracts. Studies were included if they investigated Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB), Work Engagement (WE), or closely related constructs such as employee empowerment, job satisfaction, burnout prevention, and leadership styles within healthcare settings.

Articles were excluded during this initial screening if they did not specifically focus on leadership behaviours or employee engagement within healthcare, midwifery, or nursing contexts. For example, studies examining leadership outcomes in corporate, educational, or industrial sectors were excluded. Additionally, articles that bypassed the initial search limiters—such as non-peer-reviewed publications or studies published in languages other than English—were also removed.

## **Assessment for Eligibility**

In the third phase, an eligibility evaluation was conducted on the 550 articles that passed the initial screening, based on abstract reviews and, when necessary, full-text assessments. During this stage, an additional 10 articles were excluded due to retrieval issues, resulting in 540 articles being assessed in detail. Of these, 495 articles were excluded for the following reasons:

1. They did not report primary empirical research within the domains of healthcare leadership or employee engagement (e.g., reviews, theoretical papers, or secondary analyses) (n = 200).
2. Their empirical focus was not specifically on healthcare, midwifery, or nursing professionals (n = 150).
3. They did not apply or measure Leader–Member Exchange (LMX), Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB), or Work Engagement (WE) using validated instruments (n = 100).
4. The study sample included a broad range of professionals, with midwifery participants comprising less than 10% of the total sample (n = 45).

Following the exclusion of these non-eligible articles, a total of 45 studies were selected for final analysis.

## **Data Analysis**

At the final phase of the review, a two-step process was employed to analyse the full-text articles. First, a data extraction table was used to systematically summarize and categorize key information from each study, including research objectives, theoretical frameworks, methodologies, findings, and implications (Afifi et al., 2023). This

structured approach enabled the review to address the first two descriptive research questions:

- (1) How have researchers studied LMX, CLB, and WE among healthcare professionals?
- (2) What are the main insights regarding leadership practices and employee engagement in healthcare settings?

In the second step, the full-text articles were synthesized and critically evaluated to address the final two evaluative research questions:

- (3) What theoretical assumptions underpin research on LMX, CLB, and WE within healthcare contexts?
- (4) What are the key limitations and methodological gaps in the existing literature?

Patterns and emerging themes relevant to these questions were identified through thematic analysis (Nowell et al., 2017). Drawing on a comprehensive understanding of the broader leadership and engagement literature, an iterative process of reading, coding, and refinement was undertaken to develop and finalize the thematic categories through repeated analysis.

## **2.9 Findings**

### **How have researchers studied LMX, CLB, and WE in healthcare settings?**

The articles were analysed to determine the main study designs, methodologies, metrics, concepts, and healthcare environments examined in empirical research related to Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB), and Work Engagement (WE) among healthcare workers.

### **Study designs, methods, measures, and constructs**

Table 1 summarizes the study designs and methodologies employed across the reviewed sample. The majority of studies were quantitative (n = 30), with most utilizing a cross-sectional survey design (n = 28). Only one study adopted a longitudinal approach, while another employed a pre- and post-intervention design to assess changes over time. Ten studies used qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews (n = 6), focus groups (n = 2), and open-ended written responses (n = 2). Additionally, five studies employed mixed-methods designs, combining surveys and interviews (n = 3) or integrating focus groups (n = 2). Across all studies, the unit of analysis was the individual healthcare professional.

Table 1 also outlines the primary constructs and measures examined. Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) was the most frequently studied construct in quantitative research (n = 16), with a focus on LMX quality (n = 12) and leader communication or support behaviours (n = 4). Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB) were explored in 11 studies, including transformational leadership (n = 6), authentic leadership (n = 3), and supportive leadership (n = 2). Work Engagement (WE) was assessed in six studies, primarily using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES). Burnout and emotional exhaustion were examined in three studies, while job-related outcomes such as job

satisfaction (n = 2) and organisational commitment (n = 1) were less frequently addressed.

In qualitative studies, leadership experience emerged as a central theme (n = 4), alongside engagement-related constructs such as emotional connection (n = 3), exhaustion and stress (n = 2), and meaning and motivation (n = 1). Mixed-methods studies integrated data sources to explore leadership and engagement themes, with three studies combining survey and interview data, and two using dual sources to examine burnout and well-being outcomes.

### **Theoretical perspectives**

This review revealed that empirical research on LMX, CLB, and WE in healthcare settings is mainly atheoretical. While many studies referenced general leadership or organisational behaviour theories, few explicitly applied robust theoretical frameworks to guide their hypotheses, research designs, or interpretations. Only a small subset of studies (n = 8) demonstrated strong theoretical integration. For instance, some researchers employed Social Exchange Theory to explain the reciprocal dynamics of high-quality leader–member relationships in fostering work engagement among healthcare professionals (Ali et al., 2024; Cropanzano et al., 2017; Suhaimi & Panatik, 2016). Others utilised the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model Adam (2023), Bakker and Demerouti (2014), Bakker and Demerouti (2017) and Huo (2024) to conceptualise how constructive leadership behaviours function as critical resources that buffer workplace stressors and enhance engagement. Additionally, a few studies grounded their analyses in Authentic Leadership Theory (Glaveli et al., 2023; Teo et al., 2023), exploring how authenticity and relational transparency influence healthcare workers' commitment and psychological safety. Despite these examples, most of the literature

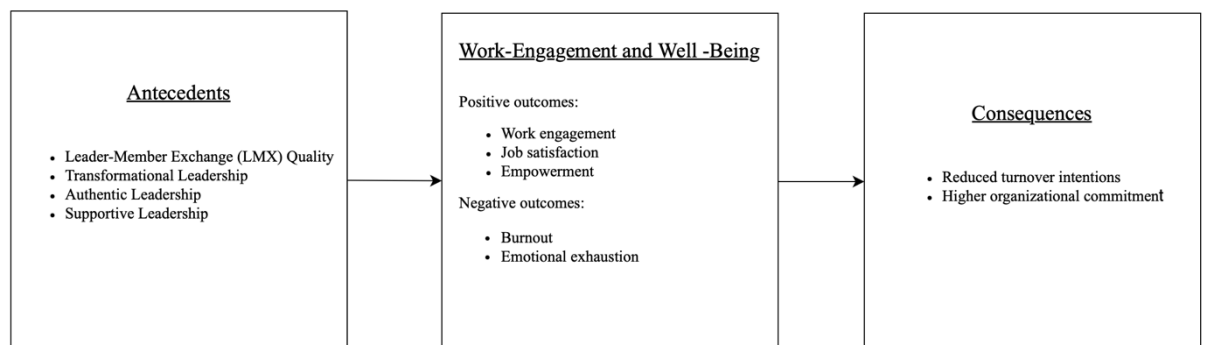
reviewed employed leadership and engagement constructs descriptively, without developing or empirically testing comprehensive theoretical models.

*Table 1: Research design, study methods, and primary measures across studies on LMX, CLB, and WE in healthcare.*

Research Design	Quantitative: N = 30	Qualitative: N = 10	Mixed Methods: N = 5
Unit of Analysis	Individual: N = 30	Individual: N = 10	Individual: N = 5
Design of Study / Data Collection Method	Cross-sectional survey: N = 28 Longitudinal survey: N = 1 Pre-post intervention: N = 1	Semi-structured interviews: N = 6 Focus groups: N = 2 Open-ended responses: N = 2	Surveys + interviews: N = 3 Focus groups: N = 2
Measures and Constructs	<p><b>Leader-Member Exchange (LMX):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LMX Quality: N = 12</li> <li>• Leader communication/support: N = 4</li> </ul> <p><b>Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB):</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Transformational: N = 6</li> <li>• Authentic: N = 3</li> <li>• Supportive: N = 2</li> </ul> <p><b>Work Engagement:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Measured by UWES: N = 6</li> </ul> <p><b>Burnout and Emotional Exhaustion:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Burnout: N = 3</li> </ul> <p><b>Job-Related Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Job satisfaction: N = 2</li> <li>• Org. commitment: N = 1</li> </ul>	<p><b>Leadership Experience:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Perceived leadership impact: N = 4</li> </ul> <p><b>Engagement Themes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Emotional investment / connection: N = 3</li> </ul> <p><b>Well-being Outcomes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Exhaustion and stress: N = 2</li> <li>• Meaning &amp; motivation: N = 1</li> </ul>	<p><b>Leadership Measures:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mixed survey + interview data: N = 3</li> </ul> <p><b>Engagement / Burnout Themes:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dual data integration: N = 2</li> </ul>

## What are the key findings of research on LMX, CLB, and WE in healthcare?

To summarise the key research findings on LMX, CLB, and WE, I developed a nomological network of antecedents, well-being outcomes, and consequences, as depicted in Figure 2. From this network, the predominant factors identified include leadership quality, constructive leadership behaviours, work engagement, job satisfaction, burnout, emotional exhaustion, turnover intentions, and organisational commitment. Creating a nomological network aligns with other comprehensive reviews (Zhang & Parker, 2019).



*Figure 2: Antecedents, work engagement outcomes, and consequences of leadership quality and constructive leadership behaviours among healthcare professionals.*

### **Antecedents of Healthcare Professionals' Well-Being**

#### **Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Quality**

The quality of leader–member exchange (LMX) has emerged as the primary factor influencing the well-being of healthcare professionals in existing research. LMX refers to the mutual trust, respect, and sense of obligation shared between leaders and their employees (Andersen et al., 2020; Newman et al., 2017; Zahari & Kaliannan, 2023). In healthcare settings, high-quality LMX relationships have been consistently linked to

enhanced employee engagement, increased job satisfaction, and reduced emotional exhaustion (Yu & Pitafi, 2024). Conversely, low-quality LMX relationships—characterised by distrust, limited communication, and minimal support—have been associated with higher levels of burnout and a greater intention to leave the organisation (Terpstra-Tong et al., 2020).

### **Transformational Leadership**

Transformational leadership behaviours have also emerged as a critical antecedent of healthcare professionals' well-being. Transformational leadership is characterised by a leader's ability to inspire, intellectually stimulate, and provide individualized consideration to their followers (Li et al., 2024). Research indicates that such leadership practices foster greater empowerment, strengthen professional identity, and reduce burnout among healthcare workers (Helalat et al., 2024; Li et al., 2024; Neuber et al., 2022). Leaders who articulate a compelling vision and offer Personalised support are particularly effective in promoting work engagement and sustaining motivation in demanding healthcare environments.

### **Authentic Leadership**

Authentic leadership, characterised by transparency, ethical guidance, and relational openness, also played a significant role in supporting the well-being of healthcare professionals. Authentic leaders cultivated environments of trust and psychological safety, which in turn promoted higher levels of work engagement and reduced emotional exhaustion (Glaveli et al., 2023). Research further demonstrated that authenticity in leadership enabled healthcare staff to align their personal values with organisational goals, thereby strengthening their sense of purpose and deepening their commitment to their roles (Mayer et al., 2010).

## **Supportive Leadership**

Supportive leadership, defined as leadership behaviours that offer emotional support, remove work-related obstacles, and facilitate access to necessary resources, has been shown to significantly enhance healthcare professionals' well-being (Kitsios & Kamariotou, 2021). In healthcare settings, supportive leadership buffered the adverse effects of high job demands, bolstered employee resilience, and fostered a collaborative work climate (Pansini et al., 2024; Sihvola et al., 2022). Such supportive environments proved especially vital during periods of heightened stress, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Outcomes of Leadership and Work Engagement**

### **Work Engagement**

Work engagement, defined as a positive, fulfilling state of mind characterised by vigour, dedication, and deep involvement in one's work (Rahmadani et al., 2019), emerged as a key positive outcome in the leadership literature. Studies consistently demonstrated that high-quality leader–member exchange (LMX) and constructive leadership behaviours were significantly associated with elevated work engagement scores (Breevaart & Zacher, 2019; Shuck et al., 2017). Engaged healthcare employees reported greater job involvement, enhanced mental well-being, and increased discretionary effort.

### **Job Satisfaction**

Job satisfaction, defined as the degree to which employees feel content and fulfilled in their roles, was strongly linked to leadership effectiveness (Szilvassy & Širok, 2022). Transformational and authentic leadership styles were particularly associated with

enhanced perceptions of job meaningfulness, recognition, and work–life balance (Burns Jr, 2017; Saks, 2019). Employees who experienced positive leadership relationships reported stronger intentions to remain in their roles and to contribute meaningfully to their organisations.

### **Burnout and Emotional Exhaustion**

Burnout and emotional exhaustion emerged as prevalent adverse outcomes associated with poor leadership quality. Low leader–member exchange (LMX), unsupportive supervision, and the absence of transformational leadership behaviours were consistently linked to heightened emotional fatigue and de-personalisation (Edu-Valsania et al., 2022; Schaufeli et al., 2017). These outcomes significantly compromised healthcare professionals’ mental health and diminished their professional effectiveness.

### **Consequences of Well-Being Outcomes**

#### **Turnover Intentions**

Turnover intentions, defined as employees’ conscious considerations or plans to leave their current organisation, were strongly influenced by leadership and engagement-related factors. Studies consistently found that individuals experiencing low-quality leader–member exchange (LMX), high levels of burnout, and low job satisfaction were significantly more likely to express intentions to quit (Aleksić et al., 2017; Cropanzano et al., 2017). In contrast, constructive leadership behaviours served as a protective factor, mitigating the risk of turnover by fostering a more supportive and engaging work environment.

## **Organisational Commitment**

Organisational commitment, defined as an employee's emotional attachment to and identification with their organisation (Martin et al., 2018), was positively associated with high-quality leader–member exchange (LMX) and transformational leadership. Employees exhibiting strong organisational commitment demonstrated greater resilience, lower absenteeism, and reduced intentions to leave their roles (Glaveli et al., 2023; Schmidt et al., 2014). Leadership behaviours characterised by trust, developmental support, and empowerment were particularly effective in fostering this commitment.

## **What are the underlying assumptions of research on leadership and work engagement in healthcare?**

### **Leadership quality is equivalent to employee well-being.**

A prevailing assumption within the healthcare leadership literature is that leadership quality is inherently synonymous with employee well-being. Across the studies reviewed, constructs such as leader–member exchange (LMX) quality, transformational leadership, and authentic leadership were frequently employed as direct proxies for healthcare professionals' well-being (n = 32). In quantitative research, well-being was primarily operationalized through indicators such as work engagement (n = 7), job satisfaction (n = 2), and the absence of burnout or emotional exhaustion (n = 3).

This pattern reflects a strong underlying belief that high-quality leadership relationships inherently lead to positive employee well-being. Healthcare professionals working under supportive, transparent, and empowering leadership were presumed to be well, while those lacking such leadership were viewed as vulnerable to disengagement or burnout. However, this assumption risks oversimplifying the multifaceted nature of

well-being. It overlooks critical dimensions such as physical health, family satisfaction, financial stability, and opportunities for professional growth, factors which were rarely examined independently of leadership outcomes.

Researchers may unintentionally reinforce a narrow lens through which healthcare workers' experiences are interpreted by equating leadership effectiveness with employee well-being. Crucially, well-being encompasses more than workplace relationships; it includes broader psychosocial, emotional, and societal dimensions that remain largely underexplored in the current literature.

**Work-related factors are the primary determinants of healthcare professionals' well-being.**

Another implicit assumption in the leadership and engagement literature is that work-related factors are the primary determinants of healthcare workers' well-being. Most of the antecedents examined—such as leader–member exchange (LMX) quality, transformational leadership behaviours, and supportive leadership—are organisational or supervisory in nature. These studies often conceptualise leadership style as either a buffer against burnout or a driver of engagement, leaving limited space to consider non-work influences (Schulze & Pinkow, 2020; Terpstra-Tong et al., 2020).

While it is understandable that research on occupational well-being would emphasise workplace determinants, this near-exclusive focus reveals a subtle yet significant oversight. It implicitly downplays the relevance of broader contextual factors, such as healthcare policy shifts, public health crises, gender inequities, systemic racism, and the pressures of balancing work and family life.

Given that healthcare professionals routinely navigate complex social, familial, and institutional environments beyond their immediate workplaces, this narrow framing

risks offering a decontextualised understanding of well-being. Just as midwives' well-being has been shown to be shaped by the gendered and colonised structure of their profession Szilvassy and Širok (2022), the well-being of healthcare workers more broadly must be interpreted within broader socio-economic and cultural contexts that transcend organisational leadership dynamics.

**Employee well-being must be justified in terms of organisational outcomes.**

A final underlying assumption evident across the reviewed literature is that healthcare employees' well-being is primarily valued for its impact on organisational outcomes. Commonly assessed consequences in leadership and well-being studies include work engagement, reduced turnover intentions, and increased organisational commitment (Breevaart & Bakker, 2018; Schaufeli, 2015; Van der Heijden et al., 2017).

This instrumental framing aligns with neoliberal ideologies that prioritise workforce productivity and institutional competitiveness over intrinsic human welfare (Burns Jr, 2017). It implies that employee well-being is important insofar as it reduces absenteeism, enhances patient care quality, or improves team cohesion (Shanafelt & Noseworthy, 2017; West & Coia, 2019), rather than being recognised as a fundamental right or ethical imperative.

While organisational outcomes are undeniably important, positioning well-being solely as a means to operational efficiency risks dehumanizing healthcare professionals (Thompson et al., 2018). The mental, emotional, and physical health of healthcare workers should be valued in and of itself, independent of its contribution to institutional performance metrics. A more balanced approach would acknowledge both the ethical significance of well-being and its practical implications for healthcare delivery (Montgomery et al., 2019; Skakon et al., 2010).

## **What are the limitations of research on leadership and work engagement in healthcare?**

### **Lack of theoretical development and integration**

While several studies reference foundational frameworks such as Social Exchange Theory Cropanzano et al. (2017), Suhaimi and Panatik (2016) and Ali et al. (2024) and the Job Demands–Resources (JD-R) model Adam (2023), Bakker and Demerouti (2017) and Huo (2024), their application is often superficial.

In many cases, theoretical models are cited merely to justify variable selection or outcome prediction, rather than being systematically embedded into the research design, hypothesis development, or analytical interpretation. As a result, findings tend to be fragmented and disconnected, limiting their contribution to a cohesive understanding of leadership dynamics and employee well-being.

This lack of theoretical rigour reflects broader trends observed in related fields, such as midwifery well-being research, where studies often focus on immediate, context-specific issues without situating them within comprehensive theoretical frameworks. Future research in healthcare leadership should prioritise deeper theoretical integration to advance the field. Doing so would enable the development of cumulative insights and more meaningful contributions to both theory and practice, rather than isolated empirical observations.

### **Disproportionate focus on individual responsibility for engagement and burnout**

Another critical limitation in the current literature is the disproportionate emphasis on individual healthcare workers' responsibility for maintaining engagement and preventing burnout. Many studies frame employee engagement (Kitsios & Kamariotou,

2021), job satisfaction (Rahmadani et al., 2019), and burnout prevention (Schaufeli et al., 2017) as outcomes primarily dependent on individual perceptions of leadership quality, coping mechanisms, and emotional resilience.

While leadership behaviours undoubtedly influence employee experiences, this individual-centric perspective tends to obscure the broader structural and systemic factors at play. Issues such as chronic understaffing, budget constraints, bureaucratic workload inflation, and public health emergencies are rarely acknowledged as root causes of disengagement and burnout. This mirrors critiques in midwifery well-being research, where workplace-level antecedents are often emphasised at the expense of recognising wider socio-economic and institutional forces (Mharapara, Clemons, et al., 2022).

Healthcare professionals do not operate in isolation; they are embedded within complex, high-pressure systems that either constrain or enable their capacity to thrive. Ignoring these collective and systemic determinants risks promoting an unrealistic and decontextualized understanding of healthcare worker well-being. As illustrated in Figure 3, the proposed framework integrates relational work dynamics alongside familial, socio-cultural, political, and financial dimensions, offering a more holistic view of the multi-layered factors influencing healthcare workforce well-being.

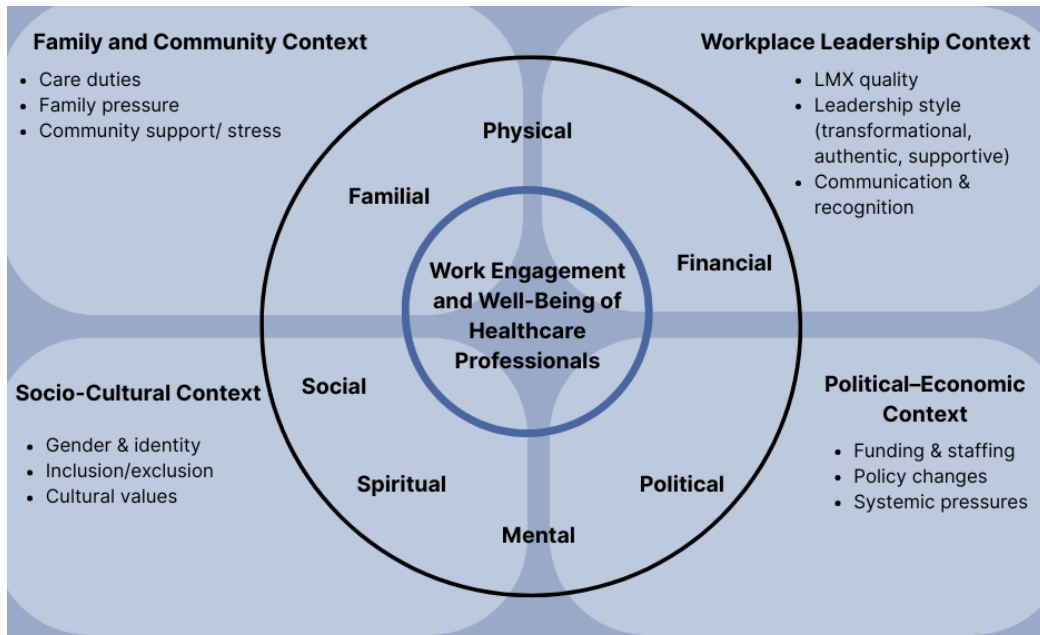
### **Lack of diversity within healthcare leadership and engagement research**

A significant limitation in current healthcare leadership research is the insufficient attention to diversity among healthcare professionals (Dauvrin & Lorant, 2015). While surface-level variables such as age, tenure, and occupational category (e.g., nurse vs. midwife) are occasionally considered, deeper dimensions of diversity, such as ethnicity,

migration background, parental status, disability, and socio-economic position, are largely overlooked (Stanford, 2020).

The reliance on homogeneous professional samples, predominantly from English-speaking Western contexts, continues to obscure important variations in how healthcare workers experience leadership, engagement, burnout, and turnover. While this study's own review was also limited to English-language research, it highlights the need for future work that includes more diverse, cross-cultural perspectives to build a fuller understanding of leadership outcomes in global healthcare settings. For instance, cultural norms may influence how leadership behaviours are perceived; disparities in resource access may moderate the benefits of supportive leadership; and systemic discrimination may intensify emotional exhaustion among marginalised groups (Korkmaz et al., 2022).

Without a more nuanced and inclusive approach, healthcare leadership research risks producing solutions that are only partially effective, or worse, inadvertently exclusionary (Korkmaz et al., 2022). Future studies must adopt diversity-sensitive research designs and analytical frameworks to ensure findings are relevant, equitable, and applicable across increasingly multicultural and intersectional healthcare workforces.



*Figure 3: Adapted from Contextual factors influencing work engagement and well-being of healthcare professionals by (Mharapara et. al, 2022)*

## 2.10 Contribution of the Present Study

Building upon the identified gaps in the existing literature, this study makes a timely and significant contribution by empirically examining the combined influence of Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) and Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB) on Work Engagement (WE). Unlike most prior research, which has tended to examine these constructs in isolation or in dyadic combinations, this study introduces a triadic model that integrates both relational quality (LMX) and leadership behaviours (CLB) as joint predictors of employee engagement. In doing so, it addresses a longstanding limitation in the leadership literature, namely the fragmentation between behavioural and relational perspectives.

The inclusion of LMX as a central, measurable construct distinguishes this study from much of the engagement-focused leadership research, where LMX is often conceptually acknowledged but rarely operationalised. By employing validated LMX scales, the

study offers a clearer understanding of how the quality of leader–follower relationships shape the impact of leadership behaviours on psychological work outcomes. Grounded in Social Exchange Theory (SET), this approach emphasises the importance of trust, respect, and reciprocity in leadership dynamics.

Moreover, this study extends beyond the dominant focus on transformational leadership by adopting a broader definition of CLB. Drawing on integrative frameworks that encompass transformational, ethical, authentic, and servant leadership styles (Adnan et al., 2020; Decuyper & Schaufeli, 2020). CLB is conceptualized as a multidimensional construct comprising a range of positive, developmental behaviours. This broader conceptualization enhances generalizability and accommodates variations in leadership enactment across organisational and cultural contexts.

The selection of Work Engagement (WE) as the primary outcome variable reflects a strategic shift in organisational research toward employee well-being and discretionary effort as key performance drivers. Compared to traditional measures such as job satisfaction or organisational commitment, WE capture a more active and dynamic state linked to innovation, productivity, and retention (Grah et al., 2024; Helalat et al., 2024). By testing the interaction between LMX and CLB in predicting WE, the study explores both structural (behavioural) and relational (social exchange) pathways to engagement, offering a more comprehensive understanding of leadership effectiveness.

From a methodological standpoint, the study addresses common limitations in the existing literature by employing robust quantitative modelling techniques, validated measurement instruments, and context-specific sampling. While many prior studies rely on cross-sectional data and single-source perspectives, this research incorporates multivariate analysis and a context-sensitive approach, thereby enhancing both internal and external validity.

Practically, the findings offer actionable insights for organisational leaders and HR practitioners. By emphasising the dual importance of leadership behaviours and relational quality, the study can inform the design of leadership development initiatives, engagement strategies, and relational competency frameworks.

In conclusion, this study provides an original and empirically grounded contribution to the leadership and engagement literature by integrating LMX and CLB as joint predictors of WE. It addresses significant theoretical and methodological gaps, offers practical recommendations for leadership practice, and lays the groundwork for future research into interactive leadership mechanisms across diverse organisational contexts.

## **2.11 Hypothesis**

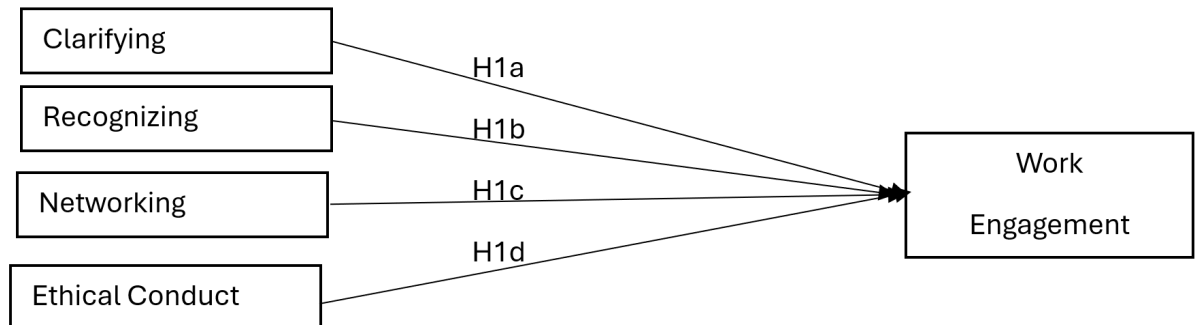
H1: - Constructive Leader Behaviour (CLB), a) Clarifying, b) Recognising, c) Networking, and d) Ethical Conduct, is positively related to work engagement in facility-based or employed midwives in New Zealand.

H1a: - Clarifying component of constructive leader behaviour is positively related to work engagement in facility-based or employed midwives in New Zealand.

H1b: - Recognising component of constructive leader behaviour is positively related to work engagement in facility-based or employed midwives in New Zealand.

H1c: - Networking component of constructive leader behaviour is positively related to work engagement in facility-based or employed midwives in New Zealand.

H1d: - Ethical conduct component of constructive leader behaviour is positively related to work engagement in facility-based or employed midwives in New Zealand.



*Figure 4: Relationship between Constructive Leadership Behavior and Work Engagement*

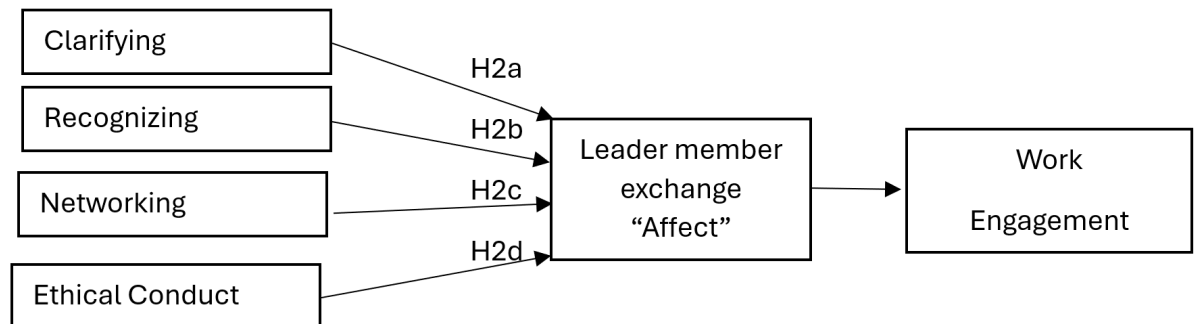
H2: - The Affect Component of leader-member exchange (LMX) has a mediating role in the relationship between constructive leader behaviour and work engagement.

H2a: - The Affect Component of leader-member exchange (LMX) has a mediating role in the relationship between the clarifying component of constructive leader behaviour and work engagement.

H2b: - The Affect Component of leader-member exchange (LMX) has a mediating role in the relationship between the recognising component of constructive leader behaviour and work engagement.

H2c: - The Affect Component of leader-member exchange (LMX) has a mediating role in the relationship between networking component of constructive leader behaviour and work engagement.

H2d: - The Affect Component of leader-member exchange (LMX) has a mediating role in the relationship between ethical conduct component of constructive leader behaviour and work engagement.



*Figure 5: Mediating role of LMX-Affect in the relationship between Constructive Leadership Behaviours and Work Engagement.*

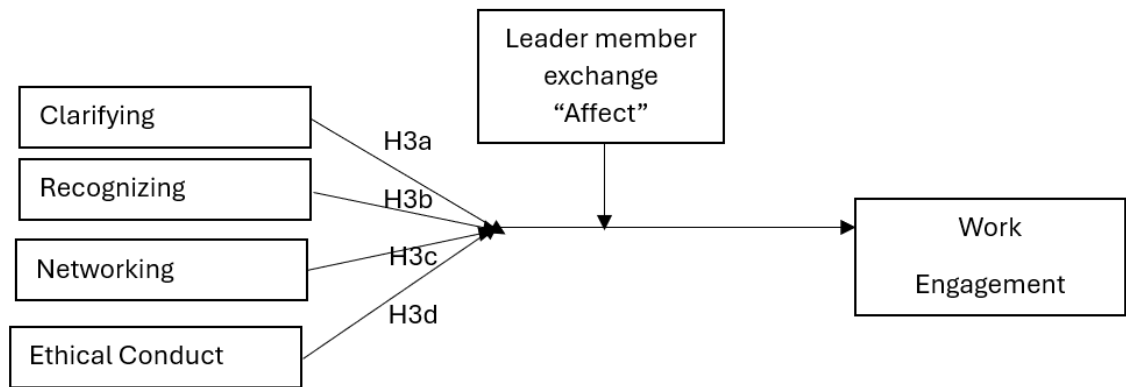
H3: - The impact of constructive leadership behaviours (Clarifying, Recognising, Networking and Ethical Conduct) on work engagement will be stronger for leaders who are high on the affect dimension of LMX.

H3a: - The impact of clarifying component of constructive leadership behaviour on work engagement will be stronger for leaders who are high on the affect dimension of LMX.

H3b: - The impact of recognising component of constructive leadership behaviour on work engagement will be stronger for leaders who are high on the affect dimension of LMX.

H3c: - The impact of networking component of constructive leadership behaviour on work engagement will be stronger for leaders who are high on the affect dimension of LMX.

H3d: - The impact of ethical conduct component of constructive leadership behaviour on work engagement will be stronger for leaders who are high on the affect dimension of LMX.



*Figure 6: Moderating role of LMX-Affect in the relationship between Constructive Leadership Behaviours and Work Engagement.*

### **3. Methodology**

This chapter presents the theoretical framework guiding the study, followed by an overview of the method used for data collection, preparation, and analysis to support hypothesis testing (Coker, 2022).

#### **3.1 Theoretical Paradigm**

A research paradigm encompasses ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods, providing a coherent framework that describes what is investigated, how it is investigated, and how the results are interpreted (Kivunja & Kuyini, 2017; Scotland, 2012). Research paradigms reflect the underlying assumptions, beliefs, and thinking that shape knowledge acquisition (Lather, 1986). Each paradigm is grounded in distinct ontological and epistemological assumptions, which are inherently provisional and cannot be definitively proven or disproven (Scotland, 2012).

This study adopts a positivist paradigm, as it employs structured, quantitative methods to investigate the relationship between constructive leadership behaviour (CLB) and work engagement (WE), along with the mediating and moderating roles of Leader–Member Exchange (LMX). The research relies on validated psychometric scales, hypothesis testing, and statistical analysis to examine the proposed relationships. This paradigm assumes an objective reality that can be measured and modelled, enabling the identification of patterns and causal relationships in leadership and engagement dynamics. While the study explores complex human behaviours, it reduces this complexity to quantifiable constructs to minimise bias and enhance replicability, consistent with the core principles of positivist inquiry. (Clark, 1998; Sharma, 2010).

This model also aligns with this study's quantitative research approach, which is structured and scientific in nature. Data were collected via a self-administered online

survey using interval scale items, allowing for the quantification of constructs and facilitating statistical analysis. The data were analysed using both descriptive and inferential statistical techniques, ensuring that the findings are structured, measurable, and generalizable, particularly within the context of the midwifery profession.

## **3.2 Method**

### **3.2.1 Participants and Procedure**

The NZ MidWoW study was a three-year project (2019-2021) conducted in collaboration with the New Zealand College of Midwives (NZCOM). In September 2019, participants were recruited from the NZCOM membership database and invited to complete an online survey via the Qualtrics platform. Participation was entirely voluntary and confidential, with respondents able to withdraw at any time without consequence. Ethical approval for the study was granted by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEK 19/33).

A total of 556 facility-based or employed midwives initially engaged with the survey. Out of them, a total of 408 midwives provided usable responses. Following data cleaning and curation, the final sample comprised 327 participants. The median age of respondents was 48 years, with 68.8% (n = 225) aged 40 or older. All participants identified as female, and the demographic distribution closely mirrored existing national workforce data (Midwifery Council of New Zealand, 2019).

Participants' ethnic backgrounds were reported as follows: New Zealand European (62.39%, n = 204), Non-New Zealand European (22.01%, n = 72), New Zealand Māori (6.72%, n = 22), and Other ethnicities—including Pasifika, African, Asian, and Middle Eastern (8.87%, n = 29).

Regarding educational qualifications, 50.45% (n = 165) held a direct-entry degree in midwifery from New Zealand, while 10.39% (n = 34) had obtained a midwifery degree overseas. Other qualifications included a New Zealand post-nursing registration midwifery degree (3.97%, n = 13), an overseas hospital-based midwifery programme (18.35%, n = 60), and a 12-month Diploma in Midwifery from New Zealand (7.03%, n = 23). Some participants also reported other overseas degrees, New Zealand hospital-based qualifications, or an Advanced Diploma in Midwifery.

In terms of workload and employment structure, 28.13% (n = 92) reported working 40 or more paid hours per week, while 42.50% (n = 139) worked 30 to 39 hours per week, and 29.36% (n = 96) reported working fewer than 30 hours per week. Additionally, 27.83% (n = 91) of participants reported working unpaid hours, averaging 1.22 unpaid hours per week across the sample.

Participants had a median of 15 years of professional experience, including work both within and outside New Zealand. Annual income levels varied, with the most commonly reported income range being NZD 50,000 to 74,999. Only 3.67% (n = 12) reported earnings above NZD 100,000, while 0.92% (n = 3) chose not to disclose their income. As LMC midwives are self-employed, annual income is subject to fluctuation based on caseload variability (Midwifery Council of New Zealand, 2019).

Finally, participants were asked to evaluate the perceived importance of the NZ MidWoW study. A substantial majority (92.05%, n = 301) considered the survey important, with 40.36% (n = 132) rating it as significantly important. Overall, the sample was representative of the broader New Zealand LMC midwifery population, as confirmed by alignment with prior workforce survey data (Midwifery Council of New Zealand, 2019).

### 3.2.2 Measures

Well-established and validated measurement scales were utilised to assess the key variables in this study.

**Constructive Leader Behaviour (CLB):** To measure CLB, I used Mharapara et al. (2019) Constructive Supervisor Behaviour Scale (CSBS). The scale assesses the extent to which leaders practice constructive, developmental, and feedback behaviours that enable employees to grow and become motivated. The scale has a total of four items: clarifying, recognising, ethical conduct and networking. Each of those four items has four other sub-items. So CLS has sixteen items in total. Items such as " Clearly explains the job responsibilities and task assignments to members" Sets specific performance goals and deadlines for important aspects of the work." Responses were related to clarification, and items "Attends social and professional events to meet people with useful information" and "Joins social networks that include outsiders with useful information" were related to Networking. Responses were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from " Not at all" (1) to " To a very great extent" (5)

**Work Engagement:** Work Engagement was assessed using the Utrecht Work Engagement Scale (UWES-9), a widely recognised tool developed by (Schaufeli & Bakker, 2004). This scale captures the extent to which employees feel energised, dedicated, and absorbed in their work. It consists of three dimensions, vigour, dedication, and absorption, with sample items including: "At my work, I feel bursting with energy," "I am enthusiastic about my job," and "I am immersed in my work." Responses were measured on a six-point Likert scale ranging from "Never" (1) to "Always" (6), with higher scores reflecting more work engagement.

**Leader-Member Exchange (LMX):** LMX was measured using the LMX-7 scale developed by (Schriesheim et al., 1999). This scale assesses the quality of the leader-member relationship, focusing on aspects such as trust, respect, and professional support. Sample items include: "I like my supervisor very much as a person," "My supervisor is the kind of person one would like to have as a friend," and "My supervisor is a lot of fun to work with." Participants responded on a seven-point Likert scale ranging from "Strongly Disagree" (1) to "Strongly Agree" (7), with higher scores reflecting stronger leader-member relationships.

### **3.2.3 Data Preparation**

The data were initially collected via the Qualtrics online platform and then downloaded into Microsoft Excel for cleaning before being transferred to IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 26) and JAMOVI for analysis. Several procedures were conducted to validate the data, ensure accuracy, and maintain adherence to statistical assumptions (DeSimone et al., 2015; Zimmerman, 1994; Zimmerman, 2023). First, data screening and quality control involved identifying low-quality responses, ensuring genuine participation, and testing for response inconsistency (DeSimone et al., 2015). To assess response quality, participants were asked directly how much effort they had exerted in completing the questionnaire. Responses from participants who indicated that they had not exerted sufficient effort were excluded from analysis (DeSimone et al., 2015). Second, detecting outliers was performed using graphical methods to identify extreme values that could distort statistical inferences. Outliers can inflate error variance, reduce the power of statistical tests, and, if non-randomly distributed, substantially affect the probability of Type I and Type II errors (Zhang et al., 2003). They can also bias or significantly influence parameter estimates (Zimmerman, 1994).

Third, Handling Missing Data was a critical component of data preparation. Missing responses can occur when participants skip items or do not complete the questionnaire. The extent of missing data is a key indicator of data quality (Groves, 1989) and, if unaddressed, can distort results (Rubin, 1976). Item nonresponse occurs when a participant answers most items but omits specific questions (Groves et al., 2002). In this study, missing data were not ignored in order to prevent information loss and reduce statistical power (De Leeuw et al., 2003). Although various strategies, such as imputation methods and direct estimation techniques (Acock, 2005) These techniques are available to handle missing data; however, they were deemed unnecessary because the missing data did not significantly impact the analysis. In this dataset, 57 participants discontinued the survey at a particular point, likely due to time constraints. This pattern suggested that the data were Not Missing at Random (NMAR) (Allison, 2000). Since NMAR data can introduce bias, it was treated as non-ignorable missing data (Rubin, 1976). Given the length of the questionnaire, respondent fatigue was likely a contributing factor. Consequently, these 57 incomplete cases were removed, resulting in a final dataset of 301 participants for analysis.

Finally, testing for normality and data distribution was performed using univariate descriptive statistics, specifically by assessing skewness and kurtosis to detect deviations from normality. Following established guidelines, acceptable skewness and kurtosis values fall within  $\pm 2$  (Trochim & Donnelly, 2001). All variables met the normality criteria, thereby supporting the use of parametric statistical analyses.

### **3.2.4 Control Variables**

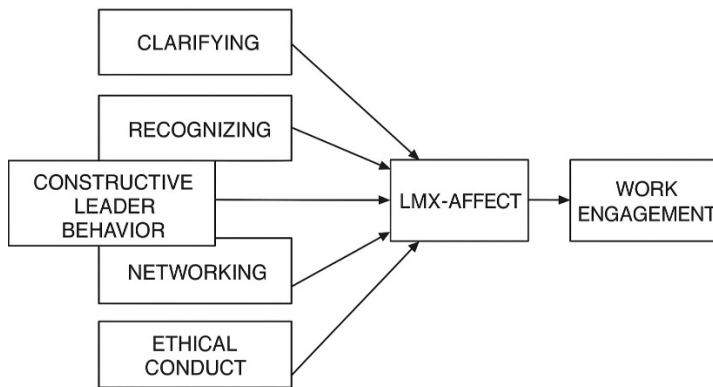
To account for factors that could influence work engagement beyond the impact of constructive leader behaviour, several control variables were incorporated into the analysis. These included age (measured in years), level of education (1 = Doctoral

degree (e.g., PhD), 2 = Master's degree (e.g., MSc, MA), 3 = Post-bachelor's degree qualification (e.g., PG. Dip, PG Cert), 4 = Bachelor's degree (e.g., BSc, BA), 5= Other: Please specify), and job tenure (measured in years). As all participants in the study were female, gender was not included as a control variable. The decision to control for age, education, and job tenure is supported by previous research, which identifies these factors as relevant when examining leadership and employee engagement (Chen et al., 2014; Henriksen & Lukasse, 2016; Lu et al., 2016).

### **3.2.5 Direct, Mediation, and Moderation Analysis**

Prior to hypothesis testing, intercorrelations between all study variables were examined through pairwise plots to check for nonlinearity and heteroscedasticity, following the guidelines proposed by Breusch and Pagan (1979). Hypotheses related to the direct effect of constructive leader behaviour on work engagement were tested using correlation analysis.

For the mediation analysis, a simple mediation model was employed, with Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) serving as the mediator between constructive leader behaviour (X) and work engagement (Y). In this model, the influence of constructive leader behaviour on work engagement is transmitted through the causal pathway where X affects M (path a), which in turn influences Y (path b). The indirect effect is represented by the product of these two paths (ab). Mediation is confirmed if the indirect effect is statistically significant (i.e., significantly different from zero) (Zhao et al., 2010).



*Figure 7: Mediating role of Leader Member Exchange between Constructive Leader Behaviour and Work Engagement*

Additionally, moderation analysis was conducted to determine whether LMX moderates the relationship between constructive leader behaviour and work engagement. This analysis assessed whether the strength of the relationship between X and Y varied depending on different levels of LMX.

The PROCESS macro for SPSS (Version 3.0) (Hayes, 2018) and JAMOVI were used to test Hypotheses a1, b1, and c'. The PROCESS macro facilitates bootstrapping, mediation, and moderation analyses, allowing for the examination of regression significance, total effects, direct effects, and indirect effects (Hayes, 2018). Mediation analysis addresses the second stage of experimental causal relationships, identifying the extent to which a mediating variable explains the relationship between the independent variable (X) and the dependent variable (Y) (Iacobucci, 2012).

The analysis begins by defining the roles of the key variables: independent, dependent, and mediating. This is followed by the estimation of path coefficients and additional statistics—including standard errors, t-values, p-values, and confidence intervals—using JAMOVI. To conduct the mediation analysis, two regression equations were specified, and model estimation was carried out using the GLM Mediation Model (medmod)

module within JAMOVI. Each equation was processed separately following the required syntax input.

Bootstrapping methods were employed to generate the results, offering a straightforward approach to inference testing without the need for advanced programming skills (Hayes, 2018).

While JAMOVI provides an accessible platform for mediation analysis, it does have certain limitations. Primarily, it is restricted to modelling observed variables and relies exclusively on the medmod framework. Additionally, it requires a complete dataset; thus, any missing data must be addressed through imputation prior to analysis. The following section presents the statistical analysis results based on this methodology.

## 4. Findings

### 4.1 Descriptive Analysis

The analytical procedures and the results obtained from the analysis are described in the following section, categorised into 3 parts: reliability analysis, mediation analysis, and moderation analysis. Analyses were conducted in jamovi (v2.x) and IBM SPSS (v29); mediation and moderation were estimated with Hayes' PROCESS macro (v4.x).

Reliability of multi-item measures was assessed using Cronbach's alpha and McDonald's omega, with .70 taken as the minimum acceptable threshold and  $\geq .80$  indicating good internal consistency. Construct validity was evaluated via a confirmatory factor model: Composite Reliability ( $CR \geq .70$ ) and Average Variance Extracted ( $AVE \geq .50$ ) evidenced convergent validity; discriminant validity was judged using the Fornell–Larcker criterion (the square root of AVE for each construct exceeds its correlations with other constructs) and the HTMT ratio ( $< .85$  strict;  $< .90$  lenient).

For regression-based models, assumptions were examined at the model-residual level. Normality was inspected using Q–Q plots and summary indices of skewness and kurtosis for composite scores (rules of thumb:  $|\text{skew}| < 2$ ,  $|\text{kurtosis}| < 7$  acceptable). Because indirect effects are often non-normal, all mediation inferences rely on bias-corrected bootstrapped 95% confidence intervals with 5,000 resamples. Linearity and homoscedasticity were checked with residual–fitted plots; when heteroscedasticity was indicated, HC3 robust standard errors were used as a sensitivity check. Influence diagnostics (Cook's D, leverage) were inspected to ensure no single observation unduly affected estimates.

Given the conceptual overlap among Constructive Leadership Behaviour (CLB) subscales, multicollinearity was monitored using Tolerance ( $> .20$ ) and Variance Inflation Factors (VIF;  $< 3.3$  desirable,  $< 5$  acceptable). Predictors were mean-

centred before forming interaction terms to reduce non-essential collinearity. To address common method variance (CMV), the study combined procedural remedies (anonymity, neutral item wording, separated blocks and anchors) with statistical checks: Harman’s single-factor test (first factor < 50% of variance), full collinearity VIFs (< 3.3), and a common latent factor sensitivity analysis (changes in standardised loadings < .20 and no meaningful improvement in model fit).

Mediation models report the a, b, and c’ paths, the indirect effect (a×b) with bootstrapped CIs, and the direct effect after the mediator to distinguish indirect-only from partial mediation. Moderation models include centred product terms; evidence for moderation requires a significant interaction, with simple slopes interpreted at –1 SD, mean, and +1 SD (Johnson–Neyman intervals consulted where informative). All tests are two-tailed with  $\alpha = .05$ ; unstandardised coefficients (b), standard errors, 95% CIs, and standardised effects ( $\beta$ ) are presented alongside model R<sup>2</sup>.

#### 4.1.1 Reliability Analysis

##### 1) Reliability Analysis – Work Engagement

*Table 2: Reliability Analysis – Work Engagement*

<b>Scale Reliability Statistics</b>				
	Mean	SD	Cronbach’s $\alpha$	McDonald’s $\omega$
scale	3.71	0.807	0.715	0.753
<b>Item Reliability Statistics</b>				
Item	Mean	SD	Cronbach’s $\alpha$ (if item dropped)	McDonald’s $\omega$ (if item dropped)
Dedication	3.91	1.038	0.414	0.415
Vigour	3.07	0.949	0.685	0.685
Absorption	4.14	1.045	0.735	0.736

#### **Scale reliability Statistics**

- Cronbach's Alpha: 0.715

Acceptable internal consistency or reliability: generally, we accept Cronbach's alpha of more than 0.7 for our research.

- McDonald's  $\omega$  (Omega): 0.753

Acceptable reliability and suggest that the items on our scale consistently measure the same underlying construct.

### **Item Reliability Statistics**

- Dedication: - If dropped, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.414$ ,  $\omega = 0.415$

Dedication shows a lower reliability if removed from the scale, suggesting that this item is crucial for overall reliability. The lower values of  $\alpha$  and  $\omega$  indicate that Dedication is essential to measuring work engagement.

- Vigour: If dropped, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.685$ ,  $\omega = 0.685$

Vigour has moderate internal consistency. If we remove this item, the overall reliability will not drop drastically, which means it's still a significant part but not as critical as Dedication.

- Absorption:

If dropped, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.735$ ,  $\omega = 0.736$

Absorption has the highest internal consistency among the three items. If we remove this item, the reliability will improve slightly, suggesting that while Absorption is a strong indicator, the scale might still maintain good reliability without it.

## 2) Reliability Analysis – Clarifying

Table 3: Reliability Analysis – Clarifying

<b>Scale Reliability Statistics</b>				
	Mean	SD	Cronbach's $\alpha$	McDonald's $\omega$
scale	2.95	0.976	0.920	0.922
<b>Item Reliability Statistics</b>				
Item	Mean	SD	Cronbach's $\alpha$ (if item dropped)	McDonald's $\omega$ (if item dropped)
Clarifying 1	3.01	1.05	0.890	0.893
Clarifying 2	2.94	1.06	0.880	0.883
Clarifying 3	3.07	1.06	0.904	0.908
Clarifying 4	2.78	1.17	0.911	0.912

### **Scale reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha: 0.920

This indicates excellent internal consistency or reliability. Generally, we accept Cronbach's alpha values above 0.7 for our research, and 0.920 is well above this threshold.

McDonald's  $\omega$  (Omega): 0.922

This value also suggests excellent reliability, indicating that the items on our scale consistently measure the same underlying construct.

### **Item Reliability Statistics**

- Clarifying 1: - If dropped, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.890$ ,  $\omega = 0.893$

This suggests that Clarifying 1 has high internal consistency. If we remove this item, the overall reliability will decrease slightly, indicating it is an integral part of the scale.

- Clarifying 2: - If dropped, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.880$ ,  $\omega = 0.883$

Clarifying 2 also shows high internal consistency. If we remove this item, the reliability will decrease, suggesting it is a significant part of the scale.

- Clarifying 3: - If dropped, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.880$ ,  $\omega = 0.883$

Clarifying 3 shows strong internal consistency. If we remove this item, the overall reliability will decrease, indicating it is an essential part of the scale.

- Clarifying 4: - If dropped, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.911$ ,  $\omega = 0.912$

Clarifying 4 also demonstrates high internal consistency. If we remove this item, the overall reliability will decrease slightly, suggesting it is crucial for the scale.

### 3) Reliability Analysis – Ethical Conduct

*Table 4: Reliability Analysis – Ethical Conduct*

<b>Scale Reliability Statistics</b>				
	Mean	SD	Cronbach's $\alpha$	McDonald's $\omega$
scale	3.23	1.02	0.896	0.900
<b>Item Reliability Statistics</b>				
Item	Mean	SD	Cronbach's $\alpha$ (if item dropped)	McDonald's $\omega$ (if item dropped)
Ethical Conduct 1	3.02	1.14	0.878	0.886
Ethical Conduct 2	3.18	1.18	0.837	0.842
Ethical Conduct 3	3.18	1.17	0.837	0.843
Ethical Conduct 4	3.54	1.18	0.906	0.909

#### **Scale reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha: 0.896

This indicates excellent internal consistency or reliability. Generally, we accept Cronbach's alpha values above 0.7 for our research, and 0.896 is well above this threshold.

McDonald's  $\omega$  (Omega): 0.900

This value also suggests excellent reliability, indicating that the items on our scale consistently measure the same underlying construct.

### **Item Reliability Statistics**

- Ethical Conduct 1: - If dropped, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.878$ ,  $\omega = 0.886$

Ethical Conduct 1 shows high internal consistency. If we remove this item, the overall reliability will decrease slightly, indicating it is an integral part of the scale.

- Ethical Conduct 2: - If dropped, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.837$ ,  $\omega = 0.842$

Ethical Conduct 2 has moderate internal consistency. If we remove this item, the overall reliability will not drop too drastically, which means it's still a significant part but not as critical as other items.

- Ethical Conduct 3: - If dropped, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.837$ ,  $\omega = 0.843$

Ethical Conduct 3 has moderate internal consistency. If we remove this item, it will not significantly impact the overall reliability, indicating it's significant but not as crucial as other items.

- Ethical Conduct 4: - If dropped, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.906$ ,  $\omega = 0.909$

Ethical Conduct 4 has strong internal consistency, but removing it slightly improves Cronbach's  $\alpha$  and McDonald's  $\omega$ . This suggests it's a valuable but somewhat less critical item for the scale, as the overall reliability remains excellent without it.

#### 4) Reliability Analysis – Networking

Table 5: Reliability Analysis – Networking

<b>Scale Reliability Statistics</b>				
	Mean	SD	Cronbach's $\alpha$	McDonald's $\omega$
scale	2.97	1.07	0.936	0.936
<b>Item Reliability Statistics</b>				
Item	Mean	SD	Cronbach's $\alpha$ (if item dropped)	McDonald's $\omega$ (if item dropped)
Networking 1	3.08	1.19	0.920	0.920
Networking 2	3.09	1.18	0.907	0.907
Networking 3	2.69	1.15	0.919	0.920
Networking 4	3.03	1.13	0.920	0.920

##### **Scale reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha: 0.936

This indicates excellent internal consistency or reliability. Generally, we accept Cronbach's alpha values above 0.7 for our research, and 0.936 is well above this threshold.

McDonald's  $\omega$  (Omega): 0.936

This value also suggests excellent reliability, indicating that the items on our scale consistently measure the same underlying construct.

##### **Item Reliability Statistics**

- Networking 1: - If dropped, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.920$ ,  $\omega = 0.920$

Networking 1 shows high internal consistency. If we remove this item, the overall reliability will decrease slightly, indicating it is an integral part of the scale.

- Networking 2: - If dropped, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.907$ ,  $\omega = 0.907$

Networking 2 also shows high internal consistency. If we remove this item, the reliability will decrease, suggesting it is a significant part of the scale.

- Networking 3: - If dropped, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.919$ ,  $\omega = 0.920$

Networking 3 shows strong internal consistency. If we remove this item, the overall reliability will decrease, indicating it is an essential part of the scale.

- Networking 4: - If dropped, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.920$ ,  $\omega = 0.920$

Networking 4 also indicates high internal consistency. Removing this item slightly decreases the reliability, suggesting it is crucial for the scale.

### 5) Reliability Analysis – Recognising

*Table 6: Reliability Analysis – Recognising*

<b>Scale Reliability Statistics</b>				
	Mean	SD	Cronbach's $\alpha$	McDonald's $\omega$
scale	2.69	1.06	0.922	0.928
<b>Item Reliability Statistics</b>				
Item	Mean	SD	Cronbach's $\alpha$ (if item dropped)	McDonald's $\omega$ (if item dropped)
Recognising 1	2.91	1.16	0.889	0.900
Recognising 2	2.81	1.18	0.870	0.880
Recognising 3	2.86	1.21	0.871	0.883
Recognising 4	2.20	1.16	0.955	0.955

#### **Scale reliability Statistics**

Cronbach's Alpha: 0.922

This indicates excellent internal consistency or reliability. Generally, we accept Cronbach's alpha values above 0.7 for our research, and 0.922 is well above this threshold.

McDonald's  $\omega$  (Omega): 0.928

This value also suggests excellent reliability, indicating that the items on our scale consistently measure the same underlying construct.

### **Item Reliability Statistics**

- Recognising 1: - If dropped, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.889$ ,  $\omega = 0.900$

Recognising 1 shows high internal consistency. If we remove this item, the overall reliability will decrease slightly, indicating it is an integral part of the scale.

- Recognising 2: - If dropped, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.870$ ,  $\omega = 0.880$

Recognising 2 shows high internal consistency. If we remove this item, the overall reliability will decrease slightly, indicating it is an integral part of the scale.

- Recognising 3: - If dropped, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.871$ ,  $\omega = 0.883$

Recognising 3 shows high internal consistency. If we remove this item, the overall reliability will decrease slightly, indicating it is an integral part of the scale.

- Recognising 4: - If dropped, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.955$ ,  $\omega = 0.955$

Recognising 4 shows high internal consistency. If we remove this item, the overall reliability will improve slightly, suggesting it is a strong indicator, but the scale might still maintain good reliability without it.

## 6) Reliability Analysis – LMX Affect

Table 7: Reliability Analysis – LMX Affect

<b>Scale Reliability Statistics</b>				
	Mean	SD	Cronbach's $\alpha$	McDonald's $\omega$
scale	4.74	1.44	0.910	0.912
<b>Item Reliability Statistics</b>				
Item	Mean	SD	Cronbach's $\alpha$ (if item dropped)	McDonald's $\omega$ (if item dropped)
LMX-Affect 1	5.37	1.47	0.885	0.885
LMX-Affect 2	4.65	1.61	0.835	0.838
LMX-Affect 3	4.20	1.61	0.889	0.891

### Scale reliability Statistics

Cronbach's Alpha: 0.910

This indicates excellent internal consistency or reliability. Generally, we accept Cronbach's alpha values above 0.7 for our research, and 0.910 is well above this threshold.

McDonald's  $\omega$  (Omega): 0.912

This value also suggests excellent reliability, indicating that the items on our scale consistently measure the same underlying construct.

### Item Reliability Statistics

- LMX-Affect 1: - If dropped, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.885$ ,  $\omega = 0.885$

LMX-Affect 1 shows high internal consistency. If we remove this item, the overall reliability will decrease slightly, indicating it is an integral part of the scale.

- LMX-Affect 2: - If dropped, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.835$ ,  $\omega = 0.838$

LMX-Affect 2 has moderate internal consistency. If we remove this item, the overall reliability will not drop too drastically, which means it's still a significant part but not as critical as T1LmxAff1.

- LMX-Affect 3: - If dropped, Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.889$ ,  $\omega = 0.891$

LMX-Affect 3 shows high internal consistency. If we remove this item, the overall reliability will decrease slightly, indicating it is an integral part of the scale.

*Table 8: Correlation Matrix*

Correlation Matrix											
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1	<b>Cmp W Eng</b>	—									
2	<b>Cmp CLB Clar</b>	0.197* **	—								
3	<b>CMP CLB Rec</b>	0.202* **	0.634 ***	—							
4	<b>Cmp CLB Eth</b>	0.168* *	0.648 ***	0.703 ***	—						
5	<b>Cmp CLB Net</b>	0.148* *	0.485 ***	0.631 ***	0.694 ***	—					
6	<b>Com LMX Aff</b>	0.214* **	0.413 ***	0.608 ***	0.627 ***	0.572 ***	—				
7	<b>Age</b>	0.075	-0.023	0.043	0.024	0.015	0.04	0.05 3	—		
Note. N = 327, * p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001											

**Note.** Cmp W Eng = composite Work Engagement; Cmp CLB Clar = Constructive Leadership Behaviour (Clarifying); Cmp CLB Rec = Constructive Leadership Behaviour (Recognising); Cmp CLB Eth = Constructive Leadership Behaviour (Ethical Conduct); Cmp CLB Net = Constructive Leadership Behaviour (Networking); Com LMX Aff = Leader–Member Exchange (Affect dimension).

Work engagement is positively and significantly correlated with all CLB subscales, including clarifying ( $r = .197, p < .001$ ), recognising ( $r = .202, p < .001$ ), ethical conduct ( $r = .168, p < .01$ ), and networking ( $r = .148, p < .01$ ), indicating that constructive leadership behaviours are associated with higher employee engagement. Additionally, work engagement is positively correlated with LMX affect ( $r = .214, p < .001$ ), suggesting that stronger leader-member relationships contribute to higher engagement.

The CLB subscales are strongly interrelated. For instance, clarifying is significantly associated with recognising ( $r = .634, p < .001$ ), ethical conduct ( $r = .648, p < .001$ ), networking ( $r = .485, p < .001$ ), and LMX affect ( $r = .413, p < .001$ ). Similarly, recognising demonstrates high correlations with ethical conduct ( $r = .703, p < .001$ ), networking ( $r = .631, p < .001$ ), and LMX affect ( $r = .608, p < .001$ ). Ethical conduct also has strong relationships with networking ( $r = .694, p < .001$ ) and LMX affect ( $r = .627, p < .001$ ). Networking, in turn, is positively related to LMX affect ( $r = .572, p < .001$ ). These findings indicate that leaders who exhibit constructive behaviours in one domain are likely to demonstrate them in others, reinforcing the interconnected nature of leadership practices. Regarding demographic variables, Age does not show significant correlations with engagement or leadership behaviours.

## 4.2 Mediation Model Overview

Mediation Model of Constructive Leader Behaviour through Leader-Member Exchange to Work Engagement

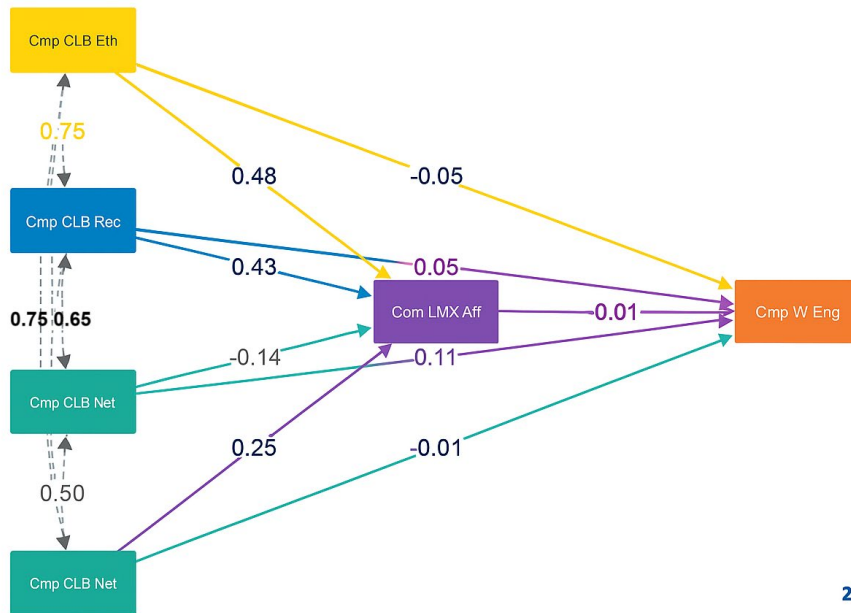


Figure 8: Mediation Model of Constructive Leader Behaviour through Leader-Member Exchange to Work Engagement

The mediation model examines the relationship between several independent variables (IVs), a mediator, and a dependent variable (DV). The key components are:

- **Independent Variables (IVs):**
  - Cmp CLB Net
  - Cmp CLB Clar
  - CMP CLB Rec
  - Cmp CLB Eth

- **Mediator:**
  - Com LMX Aff
- **Dependent Variable (DV):**
  - Cmp W Eng

**Indirect Effects**

The indirect effects represent the pathways through which the independent variables influence the dependent variable via the mediator. The specific indirect effects are:

- **IE Cmp CLB Net  $\Rightarrow$  Com LMX Aff  $\Rightarrow$  Cmp W Eng**
- **IE Cmp CLB Clar  $\Rightarrow$  Com LMX Aff  $\Rightarrow$  Cmp W Eng**
- **IE CMP CLB Rec  $\Rightarrow$  Com LMX Aff  $\Rightarrow$  Cmp W Eng**
- **IE Cmp CLB Eth  $\Rightarrow$  Com LMX Aff  $\Rightarrow$  Cmp W Eng**

**4. Sample Size**

The analysis is based on a sample size of **N = 327**.

**GLM Mediation Model**

*Table 9: GLM Mediation Model*

**Models Info**

Mediators Models (M1)	Com LMX Aff ~ Cmp CLB Net + Cmp CLB Clar + CMP CLB Rec + Cmp CLB Eth
Full Model (M2)	Cmp W Eng ~ Com LMX Aff + Cmp CLB Net + Cmp CLB Clar + CMP CLB Rec + Cmp CLB Eth
Indirect Effects IE1 IE2	Cmp CLB Net $\Rightarrow$ Com LMX Aff $\Rightarrow$ Cmp W Eng Cmp CLB Clar $\Rightarrow$ Com LMX Aff $\Rightarrow$ Cmp W Eng CMP CLB Rec $\Rightarrow$ Com LMX Aff $\Rightarrow$ Cmp W Eng

IE3 IE4	Cmp CLB Eth ⇒ Com LMX Aff ⇒ Cmp W Eng
Sample size N	327

## Mediation Analysis

### Indirect and Total Effects

Table 10: Mediation Analysis Indirect and Total Effect

Type	Effect	Estimate	SE	95% C. I. (a)		$\beta$	z	p
				Lower	Upper			
Indirect	Cmp CLB Net ⇒ Com LMX Aff ⇒ Cmp W Eng	0.0224 2	0.0125 0	-0.00208	0.0469 2	0.0295 8	1.793 9	0.072 8
	Cmp CLB Clar ⇒ Com LMX Aff ⇒ Cmp W Eng	- 0.0127 8	0.0094 6	-0.03132	0.0057 6	- 0.0154 5	- 1.351 2	0.176 6
	CMP CLB Rec ⇒ Com LMX Aff ⇒ Cmp W Eng	0.0381 8	0.0191 4	0.00065 7	0.0757 0	0.0499 9	1.994 3	0.046 1
	Cmp CLB Eth ⇒ Com LMX Aff ⇒ Cmp W Eng	0.0432 6	0.0216 7	0.00078 2	0.0857 3	0.0545 3	1.996 1	0.045 9
Component	Cmp CLB Net ⇒ Com LMX Aff	0.2502 2	0.0787 3	0.09590	0.4045 3	0.1850 8	3.178 0	0.001 5
	Com LMX Aff ⇒ Cmp W Eng	0.0896 0	0.0412 3	0.00879	0.1704 2	0.1598 2	2.173 2	0.029 8
	Cmp CLB Clar ⇒ Com LMX Aff	- 0.1426 5	0.0826 9	-0.30473	0.0194 2	- 0.0966 7	- 1.725 1	0.084 5
	CMP CLB Rec ⇒ Com LMX Aff	0.4260 6	0.0848 9	0.25967	0.5924 5	0.3127 9	5.018 8	<.000 1
	Cmp CLB Eth ⇒ Com LMX Aff	0.4827 5	0.0956 5	0.29527	0.6702 3	0.3412 0	5.046 8	<.000 1
Direct	Cmp CLB Net ⇒ Cmp W Eng	- 0.0080 2	0.0596 0	-0.12484	0.1088 0	- 0.0105 8	- 0.134 5	0.893 0
	Cmp CLB Clar ⇒ Cmp W Eng	0.1073 3	0.0619 4	-0.01305	0.2287 2	0.1297 3	1.733 0	0.083 1
	CMP CLB Rec ⇒ Cmp W Eng	- 0.0537 6	0.0656 9	-0.17948	0.1825 1	- 0.0704 0	- 0.818 5	0.413 1

	Cmp CLB Eth ⇒ Cmp W Eng	- 0.0463 4	0.0740 4	-0.19146	0.0987 8	- 0.0584 1	- 0.625 8	0.531 5
Total	Cmp CLB Net ⇒ Cmp W Eng	0.0144 0	0.0592 2	-0.10166	0.1304 6	0.0190 0	0.243 5	0.807 4
	Cmp CLB Clar ⇒ Cmp W Eng	0.0945 5	0.0622 6	-0.02734	0.2164 5	0.1142 8	1.525 2	0.128 4
	CMP CLB Rec ⇒ Cmp W Eng	0.0919 4	0.0638 5	-0.03320	0.2170 8	0.1203 9	1.440 9	0.149 6
	Cmp CLB Eth ⇒ Cmp W Eng	- 0.0030 8	0.0719 4	-0.14408	0.1379 2	- 0.0038 8	- 0.042 8	0.965 9

Note. Confidence intervals computed with method: Standard (Delta method)

Note. Betas are completely standardized effect sizes.

### Regression Results: Total Effects

Table 11: Regression Results: Total Effects

ANOVA Table									
R-squared	F	df1	df2	p					
0.0490	4.15	4	322	0.0027					
Total Effects Predicting: Cmp W Eng									
Names	Effect	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	$\beta$	df	t	p
Cmp CLB Net	Cmp CLB Net	0.01440	0.0596	-0.1028	0.132	0.01900	322	0.2417	0.8092
Cmp CLB Clar	Cmp CLB Clar	0.09455	0.0626	-0.0286	0.218	0.11428	322	1.5109	0.1318
CMP CLB Rec	CMP CLB Rec	0.09194	0.0642	-0.0344	0.218	0.12039	322	1.4311	0.1534
Cmp CLB Eth	Cmp CLB Eth	-0.00308	0.0724	-0.1455	0.139	-0.00388	322	-0.0425	0.9661

**Mediator Model Dependent variable: Com LMX Aff**

*Table 12: Mediator Model Dependent variable: Com LMX Aff*

<b>ANOVA Table</b>									
R-squared	F	df1	df2	p					
0.470	71.4	4.00	322	<.0001					
<b>Regression</b>									
Names	Effect	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	$\beta$	df	t	p
Cmp CLB Net	Cmp CLB Net	0.250	0.0793	0.0941	0.4063	0.1851	322	3.15	0.0018
Cmp CLB Clar	Cmp CLB Clar	-0.143	0.0833	- 0.3066	0.0213	- 0.0967	322	- 1.71	0.0879
CMP CLB Rec	CMP CLB Rec	0.426	0.0855	0.2578	0.5944	0.3128	322	4.98	<.0001
Cmp CLB Eth	Cmp CLB Eth	0.483	0.0964	0.2931	0.6724	0.3412	322	5.01	<.0001

**Full Model Effects**

*Table 13: Full model predicting Cmp W Eng*

<b>ANOVA Table</b>									
R-squared	F	df1	df2	p					
0.0626	4.29	5.00	321	0.0009					
<b>Full model predicting Cmp W Eng</b>									
Names	Effect	Estimate	SE	Lower	Upper	$\beta$	df	t	p
Com LMX Aff	Com LMX Aff	0.08960	0.0416	0.00773	0.171	0.1598	321	2.153	0.0320
Cmp CLB Net	Cmp CLB Net	- 0.00802	0.062	- 0.12637	0.110	- 0.0106	321	-0.13	0.8940

Cmp CLB Clar	Cmp CLB Clar	0.10733	0.0625	- 0.01565	0.230	0.1297	321	1.717	0.0869
CMP CLB Rec	CMP CLB Rec	0.05376	0.0663	- 0.07667	0.184	0.0704	321	0.811	0.4180
Cmp CLB Eth	Cmp CLB Eth	- 0.04634	0.0747	- 0.19336	0.101	- 0.0584	321	- 0.620	0.5357

The mediation analysis examines how **Constructive Leadership Behaviour (CLB)** components influence **Work Engagement (Cmp W Eng)** through the mediating role of **Leader-Member Exchange - Affect Dimension (Com LMX Aff)**. The results are interpreted using **Estimate, Standard Error (SE), 95% Confidence Interval (CI), Standardized Effect Size ( $\beta$ ), z-value, and p-value** for each effect.

#### **Indirect Effects (Mediation Pathways):**

The indirect effects represent the influence of the IVs on the DV through the mediator (Com LMX Aff). Here's a breakdown:

##### **1. Cmp CLB Net $\Rightarrow$ Com LMX Aff $\Rightarrow$ Cmp W Eng:**

- **Estimate = 0.02242:** The indirect effect of networking behaviour on work engagement through the emotional bond is positive but small.
- **SE = 0.01250:** The standard error indicates the precision of the estimate.
- **95% CI = [-0.00208, 0.04692]:** The confidence interval includes zero, which suggest the effect is **not statistically significant** at the 0.05 level.
- **$\beta$  = 0.02958:** The standardized effect size is small, which indicates a weak relationship.
- **z = 1.7939:** The z-value suggests the effect is marginally significant.

- **p = 0.0728**: The p-value is marginally significant ( $p < 0.10$ ), which indicates a trend toward significance.

**Interpretation:** The indirect effect of networking behaviour on work engagement through the emotional bond (Com LMX Aff) is positive but small, with an estimate of 0.02242. The standard error (SE = 0.01250) indicates moderate precision, and the 95% confidence interval (CI = [-0.00208, 0.04692]) includes zero, suggesting the effect is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. However, the p-value ( $p = 0.0728$ ) is marginally significant, indicating a trend toward significance. The standardized effect size ( $\beta = 0.02958$ ) is small, and the z-value ( $z = 1.7939$ ) further supports the marginal significance. This suggests that networking behaviour may have a weak, indirect influence on work engagement through emotional bonds, but the effect is not robust.

## 2. Cmp CLB Clar $\Rightarrow$ Com LMX Aff $\Rightarrow$ Cmp W Eng:

- **Estimate = -0.01278**: The indirect effect of clarifying behaviour on work engagement through the emotional bond is negative but small.
- **SE = 0.00946**: The standard error is relatively small, indicating moderate precision.
- **95% CI = [-0.03132, 0.00576]**: The confidence interval includes zero, which indicates the effect is **not statistically significant**.
- **$\beta = -0.01545$** : The standardized effect size is very small and negative.
- **z = -1.3512**: The z-value suggests the effect is not significant.
- **p = 0.1766**: The p-value is non-significant ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Interpretation:** The indirect effect of clarifying behaviour on work engagement through the emotional bond is negative but small, with an estimate of -0.01278. The standard error (SE = 0.00946) indicates moderate precision, and the 95% confidence interval (CI = [-0.03132, 0.00576]) includes zero, suggesting the effect is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The p-value (p = 0.1766) is non-significant, and the standardized effect size ( $\beta$  = -0.01545) is very small and negative. The z-value (z = -1.3512) further confirms the lack of significance. This indicates that clarifying behaviour does not significantly influence work engagement through emotional bonds, and its impact, if any, is minimal.

### 3. Cmp CLB Rec $\Rightarrow$ Com LMX Aff $\Rightarrow$ Cmp W Eng:

- **Estimate = 0.03818:** The indirect effect of recognising behaviour on work engagement through the emotional bond is positive and moderate.
- **SE = 0.01914:** The standard error is moderate, which indicates reasonable precision.
- **95% CI = [0.000657, 0.07570]:** The confidence interval does **not** include zero, which suggest the effect is **statistically significant** at the 0.05 level.
- **$\beta$  = 0.04999:** The standardized effect size is moderate.
- **z = 1.9943:** The z-value suggests the effect is significant.
- **p = 0.0461:** The p-value is significant (p < 0.05).

**Interpretation:** The indirect effect of recognising behaviour on work engagement through the emotional bond is positive and moderate, with an estimate of 0.03818. The standard error (SE = 0.01914) indicates reasonable precision, and the 95% confidence

interval (CI = [0.000657, 0.07570]) does not include zero, suggesting the effect is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The p-value ( $p = 0.0461$ ) is significant, and the standardized effect size ( $\beta = 0.04999$ ) is moderate. The z-value ( $z = 1.9943$ ) further supports the significance. This indicates that recognising behaviour significantly enhances work engagement by fostering stronger emotional bonds between leaders and employees.

#### 4. **Cmp CLB Eth $\Rightarrow$ Com LMX Aff $\Rightarrow$ Cmp W Eng:**

- **Estimate = 0.04326:** The indirect effect of ethical conduct on work engagement through the emotional bond is positive and moderate.
- **SE = 0.02167:** The standard error is moderate, indicating reasonable precision.
- **95% CI = [0.000782, 0.08573]:** The confidence interval does **not** include zero, which suggest the effect is **statistically significant** at the 0.05 level.
- **$\beta = 0.05453$ :** The standardized effect size is moderate.
- **$z = 1.9961$ :** The z-value suggests the effect is significant.
- **$p = 0.0459$ :** The p-value is significant ( $p < 0.05$ ).

**Interpretation:** The indirect effect of ethical conduct on work engagement through the emotional bond is positive and moderate, with an estimate of 0.04326. The standard error (SE = 0.02167) indicates reasonable precision, and the 95% confidence interval (CI = [0.000782, 0.08573]) does not include zero, suggesting the effect is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The p-value ( $p = 0.0459$ ) is significant, and the standardized effect size ( $\beta = 0.05453$ ) is moderate. The z-value ( $z = 1.9961$ ) further supports the

significance. This indicates that ethical conduct significantly enhances work engagement by fostering stronger emotional bonds between leaders and employees.

### **Direct Effects:**

The direct effects show the effect of the IVs on the DV without taking into consideration the mediator.

#### **1. Cmp CLB Net $\Rightarrow$ Cmp W Eng:**

- **Estimate = -0.00802:** The direct effect of networking behaviour on work engagement is negative but negligible.
- **SE = 0.05960:** The standard error is large, which indicates low precision.
- **95% CI = [-0.12484, 0.10880]:** The confidence interval includes zero, which indicates the effect is **not statistically significant**.
- **$\beta$  = -0.01058:** The standardized effect size is small and negative.
- **z = -0.1345:** The z-value suggests the effect is not significant.
- **p = 0.8930:** The p-value is non-significant ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Interpretation:** The direct effect of networking behaviour on work engagement is negative but negligible, with an estimate of -0.00802. The standard error (SE = 0.05960) is large, indicating low precision, and the 95% confidence interval (CI = [-0.12484, 0.10880]) includes zero, suggesting the effect is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The p-value ( $p = 0.8930$ ) is non-significant, and the standardized effect size ( $\beta = -0.01058$ ) is very small and negative. The z-value ( $z = -0.1345$ ) further confirms the lack of significance. This indicates that networking behaviour does not directly influence work engagement, and its impact, if any, is minimal.

## 2. Cmp CLB Clar $\Rightarrow$ Cmp W Eng:

- **Estimate = 0.10733**: The direct effect of clarifying behaviour on work engagement is positive and moderate.
- **SE = 0.06193**: The standard error is moderate, which indicates reasonable precision.
- **95% CI = [-0.01405, 0.22872]**: The confidence interval includes zero, which indicates the effect is **not statistically significant**.
- **$\beta = 0.12973$** : The standardized effect size is moderate.
- **$z = 1.7330$** : The z-value suggests the effect is marginally significant.
- **$p = 0.0831$** : The p-value is marginally significant ( $p < 0.10$ ).

**Interpretation:** The direct effect of clarifying behaviour on work engagement is positive and moderate, with an estimate of 0.10733. The standard error (SE = 0.06193) indicates moderate precision, and the 95% confidence interval (CI = [-0.01405, 0.22872]) includes zero, suggesting the effect is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. However, the p-value ( $p = 0.0831$ ) is marginally significant, indicating a trend toward significance. The standardized effect size ( $\beta = 0.12973$ ) is moderate, and the z-value ( $z = 1.7330$ ) further supports the marginal significance. This suggests that clarifying behaviour may have a weak, direct influence on work engagement, but the effect is not robust.

## 3. Cmp CLB Rec $\Rightarrow$ Cmp W Eng:

- **Estimate = 0.05376**: The direct effect of recognising behaviour on work engagement is positive but small.

- **SE = 0.06569**: The standard error is moderate, which indicates reasonable precision.
- **95% CI = [-0.07498, 0.18251]**: The confidence interval includes zero, which indicates the effect is **not statistically significant**.
- **$\beta = 0.07040$** : The standardized effect size is small.
- **z = 0.8185**: The z-value suggests the effect is not significant.
- **p = 0.4131**: The p-value is non-significant ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Interpretation:** The direct effect of recognising behaviour on work engagement is positive but small, with an estimate of 0.05376. The standard error (SE = 0.06569) indicates moderate precision, and the 95% confidence interval (CI = [-0.07498, 0.18251]) includes zero, suggesting the effect is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The p-value ( $p = 0.4131$ ) is non-significant, and the standardized effect size ( $\beta = 0.07040$ ) is small. The z-value ( $z = 0.8185$ ) further confirms the lack of significance. This indicates that recognising behaviour does not directly influence work engagement, and its impact, if any, is minimal.

#### 4. Cmp CLB Eth $\Rightarrow$ Cmp W Eng:

- **Estimate = -0.04634**: The direct effect of ethical conduct on work engagement is negative but small.
- **SE = 0.07404**: The standard error is moderate, which indicates reasonable precision.
- **95% CI = [-0.19146, 0.09879]**: The confidence interval includes zero, which indicates the effect is **not statistically significant**.

- **$\beta = -0.05841$** : The standardized effect size is small and negative.
- **$z = -0.6258$** : The z-value suggests the effect is not significant.
- **$p = 0.5315$** : The p-value is non-significant ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Interpretation:** The direct effect of ethical conduct on work engagement is negative but small, with an estimate of -0.04634. The standard error ( $SE = 0.07404$ ) indicates moderate precision, and the 95% confidence interval ( $CI = [-0.19146, 0.09879]$ ) includes zero, suggesting the effect is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The p-value ( $p = 0.5315$ ) is non-significant, and the standardized effect size ( $\beta = -0.05841$ ) is small and negative. The z-value ( $z = -0.6258$ ) further confirms the lack of significance. This indicates that ethical conduct does not directly influence work engagement, and its impact, if any, is minimal.

### **Total Effects:**

The total effects combine the direct and indirect effects of the IVs on the DV. Here's a breakdown:

#### **1. Cmp CLB Net $\Rightarrow$ Cmp W Eng:**

- **Estimate = 0.01440**: The total effect of networking behaviour on work engagement is positive but negligible.
- **SE = 0.05922**: The standard error is moderate, which indicates reasonable precision.
- **95% CI = [-0.10166, 0.13046]**: The confidence interval includes zero, which indicates the effect is **not statistically significant**.
- **$\beta = 0.01900$** : The standardized effect size is very small.

- **z = 0.2432**: The z-value suggests the effect is not significant.
- **p = 0.8078**: The p-value is non-significant ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Interpretation:** The total effect of networking behaviour on work engagement is positive but negligible, with an estimate of 0.01440. The standard error ( $SE = 0.05922$ ) indicates moderate precision, and the 95% confidence interval ( $CI = [-0.10166, 0.13046]$ ) includes zero, suggesting the effect is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The p-value ( $p = 0.8078$ ) is non-significant, and the standardized effect size ( $\beta = 0.01900$ ) is very small. The z-value ( $z = 0.2432$ ) further confirms the lack of significance. This indicates that networking behaviour does not significantly influence work engagement, either directly or indirectly, and its overall impact is minimal.

## 2. Cmp CLB Clar $\Rightarrow$ Cmp W Eng:

- **Estimate = 0.09455**: The total effect of clarifying behaviour on work engagement is positive and moderate.
- **SE = 0.06219**: The standard error is moderate, which indicates reasonable precision.
- **95% CI = [-0.02734, 0.21645]**: The confidence interval includes zero, which indicates the effect is **not statistically significant**.
- **$\beta = 0.11428$** : The standardized effect size is moderate.
- **z = 1.5203**: The z-value suggests the effect is not significant.
- **p = 0.1284**: The p-value is non-significant ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Interpretation:** The total effect of clarifying behaviour on work engagement is positive and moderate, with an estimate of 0.09455. The standard error (SE = 0.06219) indicates moderate precision, and the 95% confidence interval (CI = [-0.02734, 0.21645]) includes zero, suggesting the effect is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The p-value ( $p = 0.1284$ ) is non-significant, and the standardized effect size ( $\beta = 0.11428$ ) is moderate. The z-value ( $z = 1.5203$ ) further supports the lack of significance. This result indicates that clarifying behaviour does not have a significant effect on work engagement, either directly or indirectly, and its overall effect is minimal.

### 3. Cmp CLB Rec $\Rightarrow$ Cmp W Eng:

- **Estimate = 0.09194:** The total effect of recognising behaviour on work engagement is positive and moderate.
- **SE = 0.06385:** The standard error is moderate, which indicates reasonable precision.
- **95% CI = [-0.03320, 0.21708]:** The confidence interval includes zero, which indicates the effect is **not statistically significant**.
- **$\beta = 0.12039$ :** The standardized effect size is moderate.
- **$z = 1.4400$ :** The z-value suggests the effect is not significant.
- **$p = 0.1499$ :** The p-value is non-significant ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Interpretation:** The total effect of recognising behaviour on work engagement is positive and moderate, with an estimate of 0.09194. The standard error (SE = 0.06385) indicates moderate precision, and the 95% confidence interval (CI = [-0.03320, 0.21708]) includes zero, suggesting the effect is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The p-value ( $p = 0.1499$ ) is non-significant, and the standardized effect size ( $\beta =$

0.12039) is moderate. The z-value ( $z = 1.4400$ ) further supports the lack of significance. This indicates that recognising behaviour does not significantly influence work engagement, either directly or indirectly, and its overall impact is minimal.

#### 4. **Cmp CLB Eth $\Rightarrow$ Cmp W Eng:**

- **Estimate = -0.00308:** The total effect of ethical conduct on work engagement is negative but negligible.
- **SE = 0.07194:** The standard error is moderate, which indicates reasonable precision.
- **95% CI = [-0.14408, 0.13792]:** The confidence interval includes zero, which indicates the effect is **not statistically significant**.
- **$\beta = -0.00388$ :** The standardized effect size is very small and negative.
- **$z = -0.0428$ :** The z-value suggests the effect is not significant.
- **$p = 0.9659$ :** The p-value is non-significant ( $p > 0.05$ ).

**Interpretation:** The total effect of ethical conduct on work engagement is negative but negligible, with an estimate of -0.00308. The standard error ( $SE = 0.07194$ ) indicates moderate precision, and the 95% confidence interval ( $CI = [-0.14408, 0.13792]$ ) includes zero, suggesting the effect is not statistically significant at the 0.05 level. The p-value ( $p = 0.9659$ ) is non-significant, and the standardized effect size ( $\beta = -0.00388$ ) is small and negative. The z-value ( $z = -0.0428$ ) also shows the the lack of significance, so that this result indicates that ethical conduct does not significantly influence work engagement, either directly or indirectly, and its overall impact is minimal.

## Comprehensive Interpretation

The mediation analysis reveals that **Leader-Member Exchange - Affect Dimension (Com LMX Aff)** plays a crucial role in explaining the relationship between **Constructive Leadership Behaviours (CLB)** and **Work Engagement (Cmp W Eng)**. Specifically:

- **Recognising behaviour (Cmp CLB Rec)** and **ethical conduct (Cmp CLB Eth)** have significant **indirect effects** on work engagement through the emotional bond (Com LMX Aff). The 95% confidence intervals for these effects do not include zero, and their p-values are significant ( $p < 0.05$ ). This indicates that leaders who recognise employees' contributions and demonstrate ethical behaviour foster stronger emotional bonds with employees, which in turn enhances their engagement at work.
- **Networking behaviour (Cmp CLB Net)** has a marginally significant indirect effect ( $p = 0.0728$ ), suggesting a trend toward significance, but the 95% CI includes zero, indicating that the effect is not robust. **Clarifying behaviour (Cmp CLB Clar)** does not significantly influence work engagement through the mediator, as its 95% CI includes zero and the p-value is non-significant ( $p = 0.1766$ ).
- The **direct effects** of all IVs on work engagement are non-significant, as their 95% CI values include zero. This suggests that the mediator (Com LMX Aff) is the primary pathway through which constructive leadership behaviours influence work engagement.
- The **total effects** of all IVs on work engagement are also non-significant.

### 4.3 Moderation Model Overview

The moderation model examines how the relationship between several independent variables (IVs) and the dependent variable (DV) is influenced by a moderator. The key components are:

- **Independent Variables (IVs):**
  - Constructive leader behaviour, Clarifying (Cmp CLB Clar)
  - Constructive leader behaviour, Recognising (CMP CLB Rec)
  - Constructive leader behaviour, Ethical Conduct (Cmp CLB Eth)
  - Constructive leader behaviour, Networking (Cmp CLB Net)
  
- **Moderator:**
  - Leader Member Exchange, Affect (Com LMX Aff)
  
- **Dependent Variable (DV):**
  - Work Engagement (Cmp W Eng)

#### **Moderation Effects**

Moderation effects indicate whether the strength or direction of the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent variable changes based on the level of the moderator (Com LMX Aff).

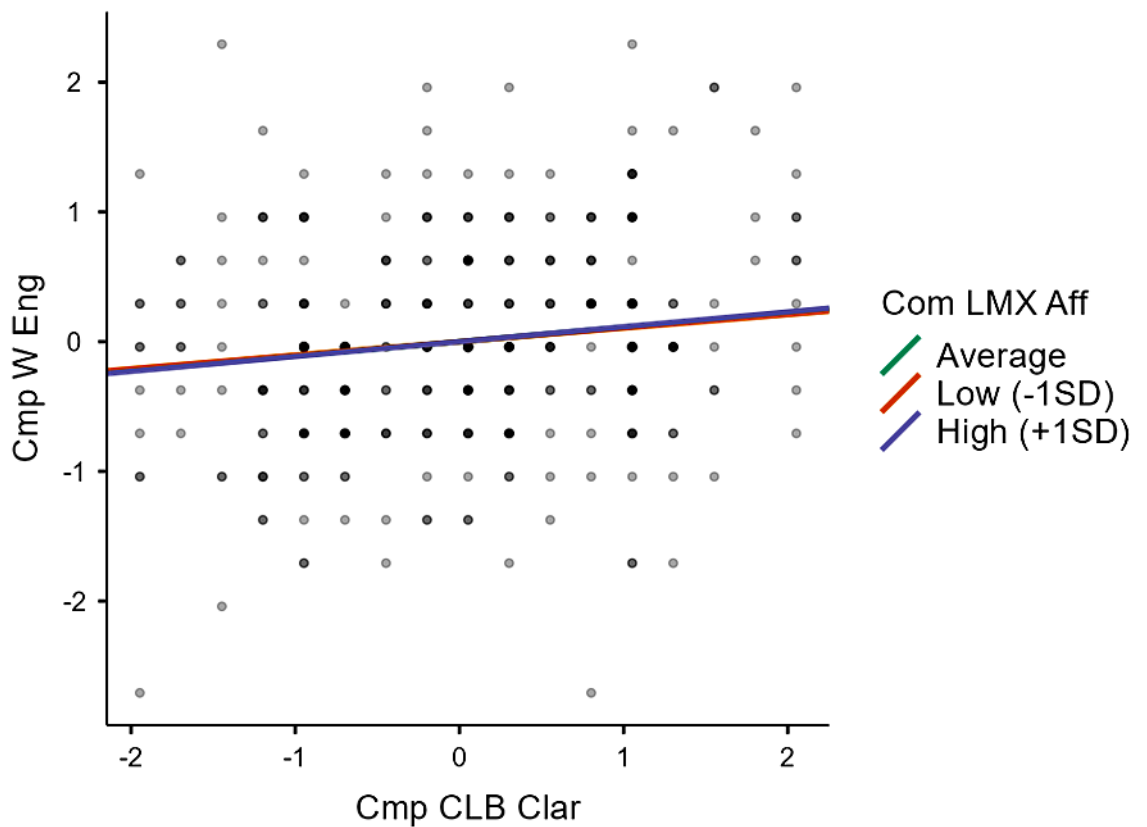
**Moderation Analysis:** Cmp CLB Clar × Com LMX Aff → Cmp W Eng

*Table 14: Moderation Analysis: Cmp CLB Clar × Com LMX Aff → Cmp W Eng*

<b>Moderation Estimates</b>				
	Estimate	SE	Z	p
Cmp CLB Clar	0.10941	0.0446	2.453	0.0142
Com LMX Aff	0.08933	0.0301	2.972	0.0030
Cmp CLB Clar * Com LMX Aff	0.00345	0.0302	0.114	0.9090
<b>Simple Slope Analysis</b>				
	Estimate	SE	Z	p
Average	0.109	0.0446	2.45	0.0142
Low (-1SD)	0.104	0.0588	1.78	0.0759
High (+1SD)	0.114	0.0654	1.75	0.0804

Note. Shows the effect of the predictor (Cmp CLB Clar) on the dependent variable (Cmp W Eng) at different levels of the moderator (Com LMX Aff).

## Simple Slope Plot



- **Estimate = 0.00345:** The moderation effect is small and negligible.
- **SE = 0.0302:** The standard error is moderate, suggesting reasonable precision.
- **Z = 0.114:** The z-value is very low, indicating no significant effect.
- **p = 0.9090:** The p-value is non-significant ( $p > 0.05$ ), meaning no interaction effect.

### Simple Slope Analysis:

□ **At average levels of Com LMX Aff: Estimate = 0.109, p = 0.0142 (significant).**

- Since the p-value is below 0.05, this provides strong statistical evidence that clarifying behaviour positively influences work engagement.

□ **At low levels (-1SD) of Com LMX Aff: Estimate = 0.104, p = 0.0759 (marginally significant).**

- The p-value falls between 0.05 and 0.10, which suggests a trend toward significance, but it is not strong enough to be conclusive at the conventional 0.05 level.

□ **At high levels (+1SD) of Com LMX Aff: Estimate = 0.114, p = 0.0804 (marginally significant).**

- Similarly, since the p-value is between 0.05 and 0.10, it indicates a possible effect but lacks sufficient statistical strength to be considered fully significant.

**Interpretation:** The direct effect of clarifying behaviour on work engagement is significant at the average level of the leader-member exchange (affect). However, the interaction effect is negligible, as shown by the high p-value (0.9090). This suggests that LMX (Affect) does not significantly moderate the relationship between clarifying leadership behaviour and work engagement.

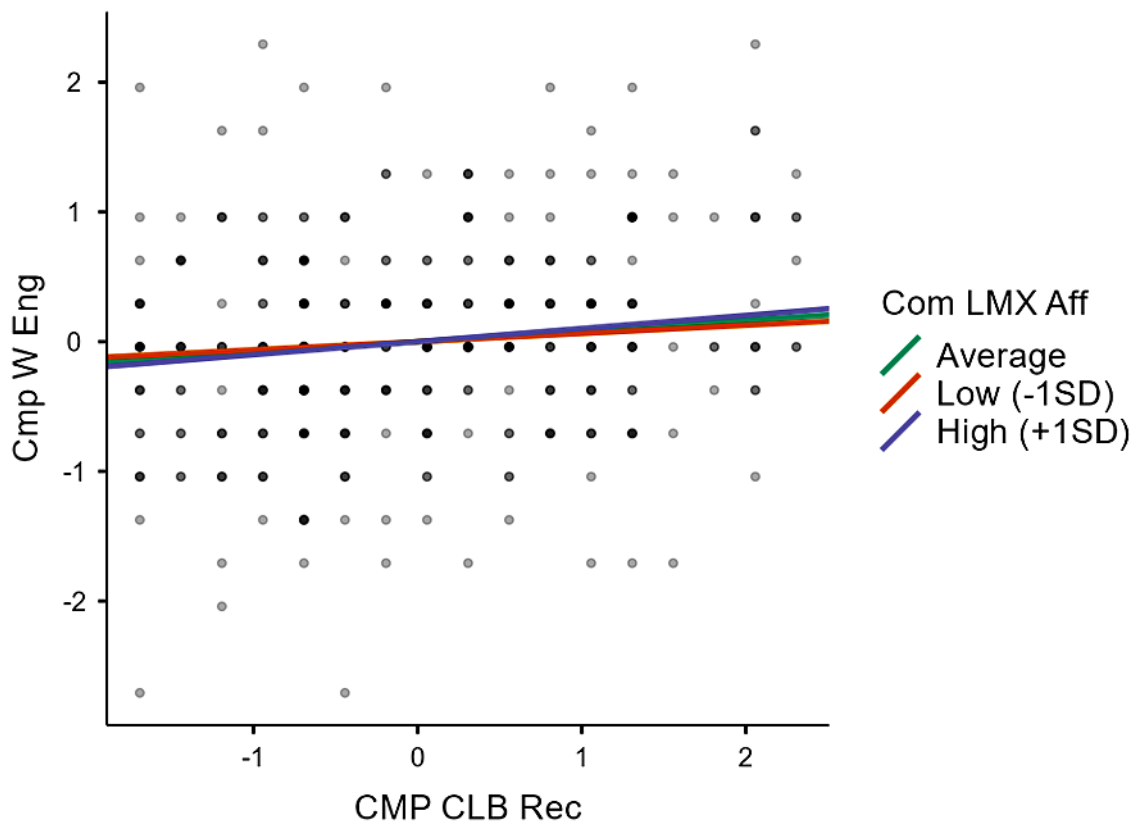
**Moderation Analysis:** CMP CLB Rec  $\times$  Com LMX Aff  $\rightarrow$  Cmp W Eng

*Table 15: Moderation Analysis: CMP CLB Rec  $\times$  Com LMX Aff  $\rightarrow$  Cmp W Eng*

<b>Moderation Estimates</b>				
	Estimate	SE	Z	p
CMP CLB Rec	0.0822	0.0412	1.996	0.0459
Com LMX Aff	0.0856	0.0301	2.840	0.0045
CMP CLB Rec * Com LMX Aff	0.0133	0.0285	0.467	0.6403
<b>Simple Slope Analysis</b>				
	Estimate	SE	Z	p
Average	0.0822	0.0412	2.00	0.0460
Low (-1SD)	0.0631	0.0600	1.05	0.2932
High (+1SD)	0.1013	0.0561	1.81	0.0708

Note. Shows the effect of the predictor (CMP CLB Rec) on the dependent variable (Cmp W Eng) at different levels of the moderator (Com LMX Aff).

## Simple Slope Plot



- **Estimate = 0.0133:** The moderation effect is small and non-significant.
- **SE = 0.0285:** The standard error is moderate.
- **Z = 0.467:** The z-value is low, indicating no significant effect.
- **p = 0.6403:** The p-value is non-significant ( $p > 0.05$ ), suggesting no interaction effect.

## Simple Slope Analysis:

- **At average levels of Com LMX Aff: Estimate = 0.0822, p = 0.0460 (significant).**
  - Since the p-value is below 0.05, this provides strong statistical evidence that recognising behaviour positively influences work engagement.

□ **At low levels (-1SD) of Com LMX Aff: Estimate = 0.0631, p = 0.2932 (non-significant).**

- The p-value is above 0.10, which means there is no statistical evidence that recognising behaviour influences work engagement at low levels of LMX (Affect).

□ **At high levels (+1SD) of Com LMX Aff: Estimate = 0.1013, p = 0.0708 (marginally significant).**

- Since the p-value is between 0.05 and 0.10, this suggests a possible effect, but it lacks sufficient statistical strength to be considered fully significant.

**Interpretation:** The direct effect of recognising behaviour on work engagement is significant at the average level of LMX (Affect). However, the moderation effect itself is non-significant, indicating that LMX (Affect) does not significantly change the impact of recognising behaviour on work engagement.

**Moderation Analysis:** Cmp CLB Eth × Com LMX Aff → Cmp W Eng

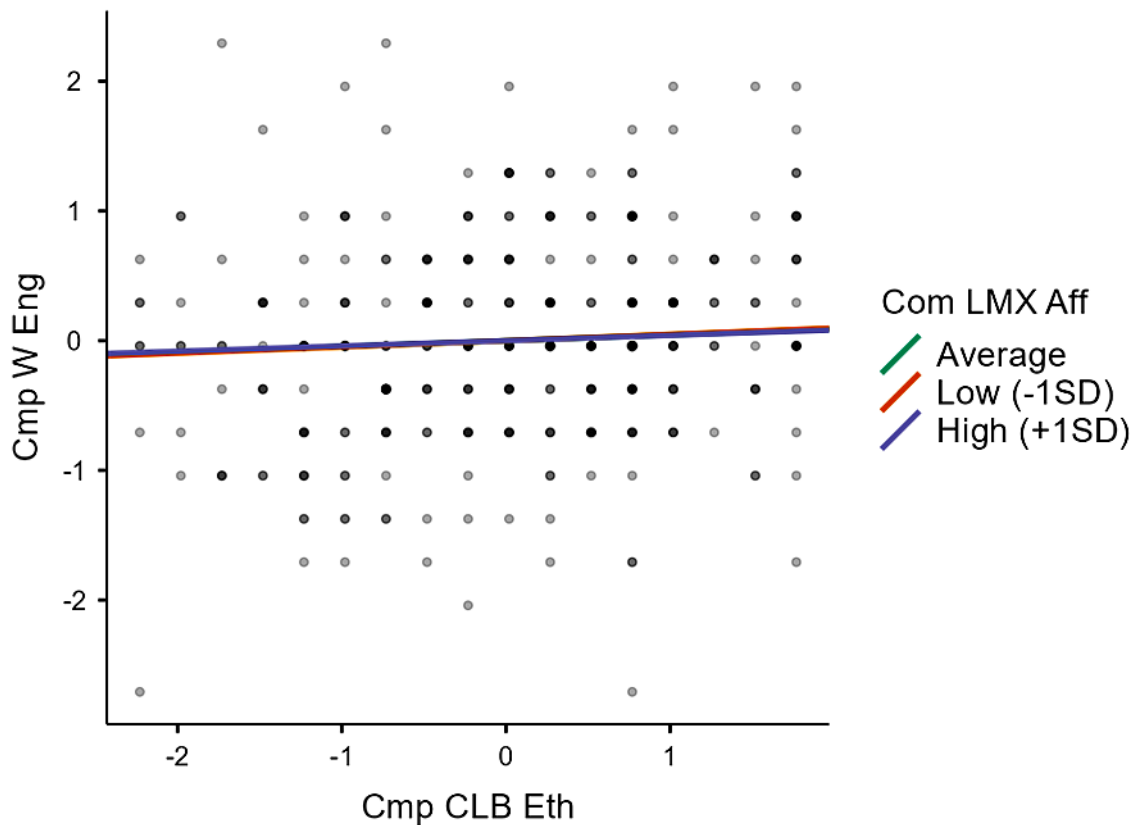
*Table 16: Moderation Analysis: Cmp CLB Eth × Com LMX Aff → Cmp W Eng*

<b>Moderation Estimates</b>				
	Estimate	SE	Z	p
Cmp CLB Eth	0.04463	0.0431	1.0346	0.3009
Com LMX Aff	0.09938	0.0303	3.2843	0.0010
Cmp CLB Eth * Com LMX Aff	-0.00259	0.0285	-0.0908	0.9277
<b>Simple Slope Analysis</b>				
	Estimate	SE	Z	p
Average	0.0446	0.0431	1.035	0.3009

Low (-1SD)	0.0484	0.0557	0.867	0.3857
High (+1SD)	0.0409	0.0631	0.649	0.5165

Note. Shows the effect of the predictor (Cmp CLB Eth) on the dependent variable (Cmp W Eng) at different levels of the moderator (Com LMX Aff).

### Simple Slope Plot



- **Estimate = -0.00259:** The moderation effect is negligible and negative.
- **SE = 0.0285:** The standard error is moderate.
- **Z = -0.0908:** The z-value is extremely low, suggesting no effect.
- **p = 0.9277:** The p-value is highly non-significant ( $p > 0.05$ ).

### **Simple Slope Analysis:**

□ **At average levels of Com LMX Aff: Estimate = 0.0446, p = 0.3009 (non-significant).**

- The p-value is above 0.10, which means there is no statistical evidence that ethical conduct influences work engagement at this level.

□ **At low levels (-1SD) of Com LMX Aff: Estimate = 0.0484, p = 0.3857 (non-significant).**

- The p-value is above 0.10, indicating no meaningful effect of ethical conduct on work engagement at lower levels of LMX (Affect).

□ **At high levels (+1SD) of Com LMX Aff: Estimate = 0.0409, p = 0.5165 (non-significant).**

- Since the p-value is well above 0.10, this confirms that ethical conduct does not significantly affect work engagement at high levels of LMX (Affect).

**Interpretation:** The direct effect of ethical conduct on work engagement is non-significant across all levels of LMX (Affect). Additionally, the interaction effect is completely negligible, meaning that the moderating effect of LMX (Affect) on the relationship between ethical conduct and work engagement is non-existent.

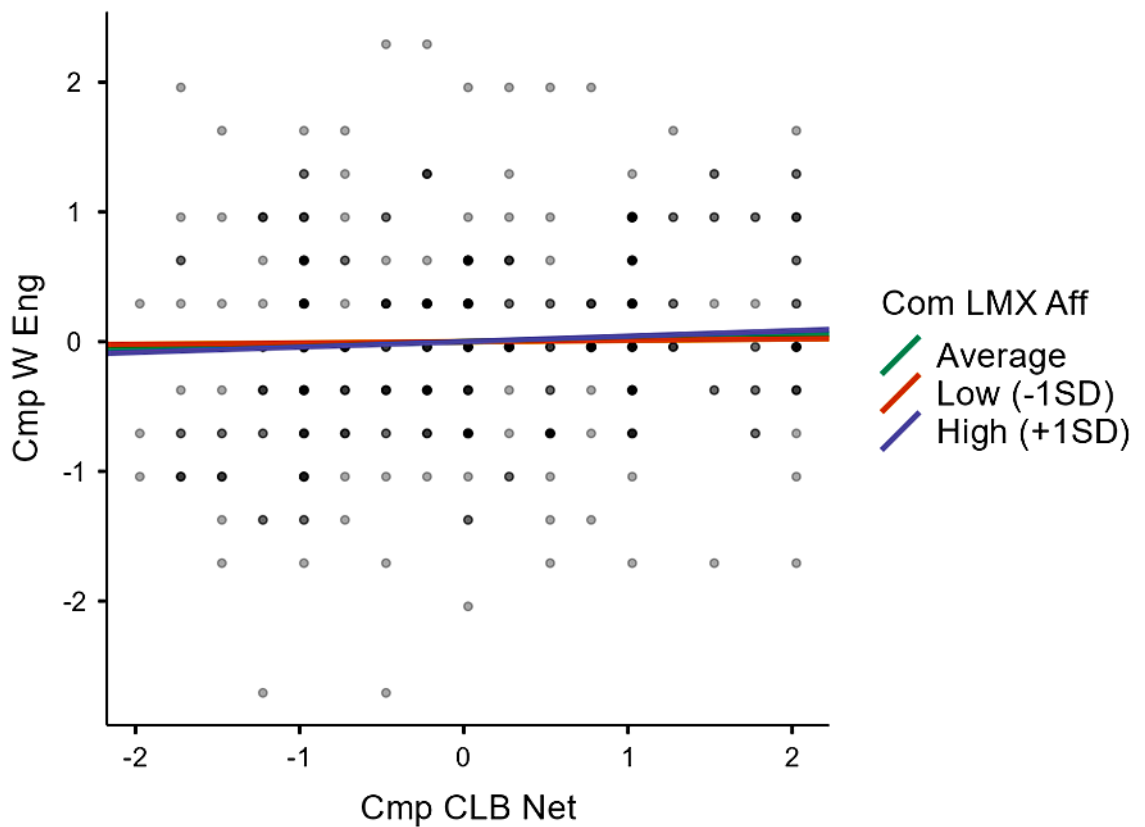
**Moderation Analysis:** Cmp CLB Net  $\times$  Com LMX Aff  $\rightarrow$  Cmp W Eng

*Table 17: Moderation Analysis: Cmp CLB Net  $\times$  Com LMX Aff  $\rightarrow$  Cmp W Eng*

<b>Moderation Estimates</b>				
	Estimate	SE	Z	p
Cmp CLB Net	0.0260	0.0410	0.634	0.5261
Com LMX Aff	0.1104	0.0303	3.646	0.0003
Cmp CLB Net * Com LMX Aff	0.0108	0.0314	0.345	0.7303
<b>Simple Slope Analysis</b>				
	Estimate	SE	Z	p
Average	0.0260	0.0410	0.634	0.5262
Low (-1SD)	0.0104	0.0623	0.167	0.8671
High (+1SD)	0.0415	0.0596	0.697	0.4857

Note. Shows the effect of the predictor (Cmp CLB Net) on the dependent variable (Cmp W Eng) at different levels of the moderator (Com LMX Aff).

## Simple Slope Plot



- **Estimate = 0.0108:** The moderation effect is small and non-significant.
- **SE = 0.0314:** The standard error is moderate.
- **Z = 0.345:** The z-value is very low, indicating no effect.
- **p = 0.7303:** The p-value is non-significant ( $p > 0.05$ ).

## Simple Slope Analysis:

□ **At average levels of Com LMX Aff: Estimate = 0.0260, p = 0.5262 (non-significant).**

- The p-value is above 0.10, meaning there is no statistical evidence that networking behaviour influences work engagement at this level.

□ **At low levels (-1SD) of Com LMX Aff: Estimate = 0.0104, p = 0.8671 (non-significant).**

- The p-value is well above 0.10, indicating no meaningful effect of networking behaviour on work engagement at lower levels of LMX (Affect).

□ **At high levels (+1SD) of Com LMX Aff: Estimate = 0.0415, p = 0.4857 (non-significant).**

- Since the p-value is above 0.10, this confirms that networking behaviour does not significantly affect work engagement at high levels of LMX (Affect).

**Interpretation:** Neither the direct effect of networking behaviour on work engagement nor the interaction effect is significant. This suggests that networking behaviour has little to no influence on work engagement, and LMX (Affect) does not act as a significant moderator in this relationship.

## Comprehensive Interpretation

The moderation analysis examines whether Leader-Member Exchange (Affect) influences the strength of the relationship between constructive leadership behaviours and work engagement. The key findings are:

- **Clarifying and Recognising behaviours have significant direct effects on work engagement**, but their interaction terms with LMX (Affect) are non-significant. This indicates that while these leadership behaviours positively influence work engagement, LMX (Affect) does not moderate these relationships in a meaningful way.
- **Ethical Conduct and Networking behaviours show no significant direct or moderation effects.** Their estimates and p-values indicate that neither their direct impact on work engagement nor their interaction with LMX (Affect) has meaningful effects.
- **Overall, Leader-Member Exchange (Affect) is not a strong moderator for the relationships between constructive leadership behaviours and work engagement.** While LMX (Affect) itself is significantly associated with work engagement, its interaction terms with leadership behaviours fail to reach statistical significance. This suggests that emotional bonds in leader-member relationships may not necessarily alter the effects of leadership behaviours on engagement in a meaningful way.

## **Final Summaries-**

### **Reliability Test:**

The reliability analysis assessed the internal consistency of the scales used to measure Work Engagement, Constructive Leadership Behaviour (CLB) dimensions, and Leader-Member Exchange – Affect (LMX-Affect). Work Engagement showed acceptable reliability with Cronbach’s Alpha ( $\alpha = 0.715$ ) and McDonald’s Omega ( $\omega = 0.753$ ), where Dedication was the most critical subcomponent. All CLB subscales demonstrated excellent reliability: Clarifying ( $\alpha = 0.920$ ,  $\omega = 0.922$ ), Recognising ( $\alpha = 0.922$ ,  $\omega = 0.928$ ), Ethical Conduct ( $\alpha = 0.896$ ,  $\omega = 0.900$ ), and Networking ( $\alpha = 0.936$ ,  $\omega = 0.936$ ), indicating strong internal consistency across items. LMX-Affect also exhibited high reliability ( $\alpha = 0.910$ ,  $\omega = 0.912$ ), suggesting that all measurement tools were statistically robust for further analysis.

### **Mediation Test:**

The mediation analysis examined whether LMX-Affect mediated the relationship between the four CLB dimensions and Work Engagement. The results showed significant indirect effects for Recognising (Estimate = 0.03818,  $\beta = 0.04999$ ,  $p = 0.0461$ ) and Ethical Conduct (Estimate = 0.04326,  $\beta = 0.05453$ ,  $p = 0.0459$ ), indicating that these leadership behaviours enhance work engagement by strengthening emotional bonds. Networking demonstrated a marginally significant indirect effect (Estimate = 0.02242,  $p = 0.0728$ ), while Clarifying showed no significant mediation effect (Estimate = -0.01278,  $p = 0.1766$ ). All direct and total effects were non-significant, confirming that LMX-Affect is the key pathway through which certain leadership behaviours impact engagement.

### **Moderation Test:**

The moderation analysis explored whether LMX-Affect moderated the relationship between each CLB dimension and Work Engagement. None of the interaction effects were significant. For instance, the moderation effect of LMX-Affect on Clarifying was negligible (Estimate = 0.00345,  $p = 0.9090$ ), and similar non-significant results were found for Recognising (Estimate = 0.0133,  $p = 0.6403$ ), Ethical Conduct (Estimate = -0.00259,  $p = 0.9277$ ), and Networking (Estimate = 0.0108,  $p = 0.7303$ ). Although some direct effects of CLB dimensions (e.g., Clarifying and Recognising) on Work Engagement were significant or marginally significant at average levels of LMX-Affect, the interaction terms consistently failed to reach significance, indicating that LMX-Affect does not moderate the strength of these relationships.

### **Overall Summary:**

In summary, the chapter presents a comprehensive statistical analysis demonstrating that the measurement tools for Work Engagement, CLB dimensions, and LMX-Affect are reliable. The mediation model highlights the central role of LMX-Affect in translating leadership behaviours—particularly Recognising and Ethical Conduct—into enhanced work engagement. However, the moderation analysis shows that LMX-Affect does not alter the strength of the relationship between leadership behaviours and engagement. Thus, while emotional bonds are crucial in explaining how constructive leadership leads to greater engagement, they do not amplify or weaken the effect of such leadership behaviours.

## 5: Discussion

In this chapter, I interpret the study's findings in relation to established literature and theoretical frameworks. I explored the impact of four dimensions of CLB—Clarifying, Recognising, Ethical Conduct, and Networking—on WE. I also examined the mediating and moderating roles of LMX-Affect. Mediation analysis revealed significant indirect effects for both Recognising ( $\beta = 0.04999$ ,  $p = .0461$ ) and Ethical Conduct ( $\beta = 0.05453$ ,  $p = .0459$ ), operating through LMX-Affect. However, no significant direct effects were observed between CLB dimensions and WE. Furthermore, all tested interaction effects for moderation were found to be non-significant.

### 5.1 Theoretical Implications

I investigated how various leadership behaviours influence WE, with a particular focus on the emotional dynamics between leaders and followers. Specifically, it examined four dimensions of CLB: Clarifying, Recognising, Ethical Conduct, and Networking. Additionally, it explored the role of LMX-Affect, which reflects the emotional quality of the leader–follower relationship.

The findings revealed that only two leadership behaviours, Recognising and Ethical Conduct, had a significant impact on WE, and this effect was entirely indirect and mediated through LMX-Affect. In other words, when employees feel emotionally connected to their leaders, recognition and ethical behaviour are more likely to foster higher engagement. This supports the LMX theory, which emphasises that leadership is not merely about task delegation but also about cultivating trust, mutual respect, and shared responsibility (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005).

In this context, LMX-Affect functioned as a mediator, clarifying the mechanism through which leadership behaviours influenced engagement. For instance, Recognising led to

engagement via LMX-Affect ( $\beta = 0.04999$ ,  $p = .0461$ ), as did Ethical Conduct ( $\beta = 0.05453$ ,  $p = .0459$ ). These results align with those of Epitropaki and Martin (2005), who emphasised the importance of emotional quality in leader–employee relationships for achieving positive outcomes.

The findings also reinforce the perspective of Gotsis and Grimani (2017), who highlighted the critical role of emotional trust in leadership. The results suggest that leadership is not solely a set of behaviours but a shared emotional experience. Employees are more likely to be engaged when they feel emotionally valued. When leaders demonstrate appreciation and act with integrity, employees reciprocate with motivation and effort.

Conversely, leadership behaviours such as Clarifying and Networking did not significantly influence engagement. This suggests that task-oriented behaviours may be less effective when not grounded in emotional connection. Although prior research has emphasised the importance of these behaviours (Mharapara et al., 2019), their lack of impact in this study may stem from their focus on processes and goals rather than emotional bonding. This aligns with (Glaveli et al., 2023), who argued that directive leadership, when perceived as impersonal, may fail to inspire. Suhaimi and Panatik (2016) similarly noted that effective leadership today requires a balance between clear guidance and personal warmth—an idea supported by the present findings.

The study also lends support to SET, which posits that workplace relationships are built on reciprocal exchanges. Employees who feel valued and fairly treated by their leaders are more likely to respond with loyalty and effort (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano et al., 2017). In this light, LMX-Affect can be viewed as a form of emotional exchange: when leaders recognise contributions and act ethically, employees reciprocate with engagement. This

is consistent with Gotsis and Grimani (2017), who found that emotional support from leaders enhances employee commitment.

Another relevant framework is SDT, which suggests that individuals are more motivated when their needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness are fulfilled (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Leadership behaviours such as Recognising and Ethical Conduct help meet these needs—recognition fosters a sense of competence and value, while ethical behaviour builds trust and connection. Baron and Morin (2009) also found that recognition from leaders enhances motivation, which may explain the strong indirect effect of Recognising on engagement observed in this study. When recognition is perceived as sincere, its emotional impact can surpass the act itself.

A key contribution of this study is its use of mediation analysis, which goes beyond examining direct relationships to uncover the underlying mechanisms. While many previous studies have focused solely on direct effects (Suhaimi & Panatik, 2016; Walumbwa et al., 2010), this research demonstrates that the emotional quality of the leader–follower relationship is the pathway through which leadership behaviours influence engagement. This provides a more nuanced understanding of how leadership functions in organisational settings.

Importantly, the study found that LMX-Affect did not moderate any of the relationships. This indicates that LMX-Affect does not amplify or diminish the effects of leadership behaviours; rather, it serves as the mechanism through which these effects occur. This finding supports the view of Decuyper and Schaufeli (2021), who argued that high-quality interpersonal interactions are essential for engagement. Leaders cannot rely solely on systems or procedures; they must cultivate emotional trust to truly engage their teams.

In conclusion, this study underscores that leadership is as much an emotional process as it is a functional one. Only two leadership behaviours, Recognising and Ethical Conduct, were found to enhance engagement significantly, and only when employees felt emotionally connected to their leaders. While Clarifying and Networking may support organisational structure and outreach, they lack the emotional resonance needed to drive engagement. This challenges the assumption that all constructive leadership behaviours are equally impactful and highlights the importance of ethical and emotionally intelligent leadership.

By grounding my analysis in LMX theory, SET, and SDT, I offer a theoretical contribution to leadership research. I demonstrate that how employees feel about their leaders may be just as important—if not more so—than what leaders do. Ultimately, the emotional experience of leadership plays a central role in shaping employee engagement.

## **5.2 Practical Implications**

This study offers several important insights for leadership development, workplace culture, and employee engagement, particularly in organisations where knowledge, people, and relationships are central. The findings highlight that two leadership behaviours, Recognising and Ethical Conduct, play a pivotal role in enhancing WE, and this effect is mediated by the emotional quality of the leader–employee relationship, known as Leader-Member Exchange Affect (LMX-Affect).

The results suggest that leaders who act ethically and acknowledge employee contributions foster trust and mutual respect. These emotional bonds make employees feel valued, which in turn enhances their engagement (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005; Gotsis & Grimani, 2017). In essence, emotionally intelligent leadership—not just task

delegation or strategic planning—is crucial for building motivated and committed teams.

A key implication is that rules, instructions, or task execution do not primarily drive engagement. Instead, it often stems from how leaders make their team members feel. While behaviours such as Clarifying and Networking are commonly emphasised in leadership training (Mharapara et al., 2019; Walumbwa et al., 2010), they did not significantly influence engagement in this study. This suggests that organisations should move beyond task-oriented strategies and place greater emphasis on emotional sensitivity and ethical awareness (Decuyper & Schaufeli, 2021).

Organisations should integrate emotional intelligence training into their development programs to enhance leadership effectiveness. Leaders must learn to build trust, offer sincere recognition, and demonstrate consistency in their values. These behaviours strengthen emotional connections, which in turn boost employee engagement (Cropanzano et al., 2017). This aligns with Baron and Morin (2009), who found that recognition enhances motivation by signalling to employees that they are valued both emotionally and professionally.

In practice, managers should consider using tools that assess emotional dynamics, not just performance metrics. For example, evaluating the quality of trust and emotional connection between leaders and team members can provide valuable insights into the health of workplace relationships. This approach echoes the recommendations of Suhaimi and Panatik (2016), who advocate for incorporating LMX-based indicators into leadership assessments and coaching frameworks.

Moreover, traditional directive leadership may be counterproductive in environments that require autonomy and innovation. Overemphasis on control and instruction can

make employees feel micromanaged, potentially explaining why Clarifying had no significant effect in this study. Glaveli et al. (2023) similarly observed that overly directive leadership can appear distant or rigid, thereby diminishing motivation.

Even small changes in daily leadership routines can yield meaningful results. For instance, leaders might begin meetings by acknowledging individual contributions or by explaining the ethical rationale behind key decisions. These practices help employees feel more competent and connected Ryan and Deci (2000), while also enhancing perceptions of fairness and trust. Such reciprocal dynamics reflect the principles of Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964), where positive leader behaviours elicit positive employee responses.

Another critical insight is that compliance-based leadership is insufficient for fostering authentic engagement. Organisations cannot expect employees to perform at their best if they are merely following rules. Instead, employees must feel psychologically safe, trusted, and respected. These conditions form the foundation of a secure and high-performing work environment (Gotsis & Grimani, 2017).

Leadership development programs should reflect this reality. Beyond communication and time management, training should include modules on emotional awareness, trust-building, and ethical decision-making. Effective leadership development may involve coaching, peer learning groups, and feedback tools that emphasise emotional intelligence and relational leadership.

Ultimately, this study underscores that employee engagement is deeply rooted in emotional connection and trust. Efficiency and directive behaviour alone are not sufficient. In workplaces that prioritise innovation, collaboration, and creativity, emotionally intelligent leadership is essential. Leaders who recognise contributions and

act with integrity are better equipped to cultivate engaged, high-performing teams. These are not optional traits—they are core competencies for leadership in modern, people-centred organisations.

### **5.3 Limitations**

This study presents several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the findings and applying them to broader contexts. First, data collection was conducted through an online, self-administered survey. This method was chosen for its convenience and ability to reach participants efficiently while preserving anonymity. However, online surveys carry inherent risks. The uncontrolled environment may lead to inattentive or insincere responses. Some participants may respond hastily or attempt to present themselves in a socially desirable manner, potentially compromising data accuracy (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005).

Second, the study relied exclusively on a single method of data collection: self-report surveys. This introduces the risk of common method variance, where both independent and dependent variables are measured from the same source. For instance, participants assessed both leadership behaviors and their own engagement levels, which may introduce bias (Decuyper & Schaufeli, 2021). Although steps such as ensuring anonymity were taken to mitigate this risk, the potential for response bias remains.

Third, the study focused on inherently subjective constructs, leadership style, emotional relationships, and engagement. These perceptions can vary widely among individuals. For example, one employee may interpret a leader's recognition as sincere and motivating, while another may perceive it as routine or disingenuous. Such variability may be influenced by personal values, organizational culture, or even the respondent's mood at the time of the survey (Decuyper & Schaufeli, 2021). While subjectivity is

central to these constructs, it also introduces interpretive variability that is difficult to control.

Fourth, although the survey instruments demonstrated high internal consistency (e.g., Cronbach's alpha ranging from  $\alpha = .920$  to  $\alpha = .936$  for CLB dimensions and  $\alpha = .910$  for LMX-Affect), these high reliability scores may raise concerns. Extremely high alpha values can indicate item redundancy—where questions are overly similar and may not capture the full complexity of the construct. In such cases, high reliability may reflect narrow measurement rather than conceptual richness.

Fifth, the study employed a cross-sectional design, collecting all data at a single point in time. This limits the ability to draw causal inferences. While the findings suggest that LMX-Affect mediates the relationship between Recognizing and Ethical Conduct and WE, the directionality of these relationships cannot be confirmed. It is equally plausible that highly engaged employees perceive their leaders more positively. A longitudinal design, involving data collection over time, would provide stronger evidence for causal relationships and developmental patterns.

The indirect effects reported in Chapter 4 reflect contemporaneous associations among CLB, LMX-Affect, and work engagement based on a single-wave survey. They do not show that changes in CLB occurred first, followed by changes in LMX-Affect, and then in engagement. Three cautions apply. Temporal ambiguity: reverse or reciprocal pathways are plausible (for example, more engaged staff may rate leaders and LMX more positively). Same-source, same-time bias: simultaneously measuring the a and b paths with the same instrument can inflate covariation, even with procedural remedies. Omitted variables: unmeasured factors (e.g., workload, psychological safety, staffing ratios) may influence LMX-Affect and engagement, creating spurious indirect effects. Simulation studies show that cross-sectional mediation can misestimate

the true longitudinal indirect effect when the process unfolds over time (Cole & Maxwell, 2003; Maxwell & Cole, 2007; Selig & Preacher, 2009).

To avoid over-claiming, indirect effects are interpreted as consistent with an LMX-Affect pathway rather than as causal proof. Bias-corrected bootstrap confidence intervals were used for the product term ( $a \times b$ ). Direct paths were reported alongside indirects. Overlap among CLB dimensions was modelled to limit suppression. Common-method and multicollinearity diagnostics were documented. These steps aid interpretation but do not replace temporal separation.

For stronger inference, future research should: use a three-wave panel (e.g., CLB at T1, LMX-Affect at T2, engagement at T3) with intervals aligned to leadership cycles; estimate cross-lagged or random-intercept cross-lagged models to distinguish within-person change from between-person stability; apply multilevel modelling or cluster-robust standard errors to account for ward or team clustering; and, where feasible, combine multi-source measurement (leader-rated CLB, staff-rated LMX/WE, objective indicators) with field interventions that target specific CLB behaviours. The observed indirect effects suggest a credible pathway—recognising and ethical conduct relate to engagement via affective relationship quality—but, given the single-time-point design, these findings should be treated as associational until confirmed with time-ordered or experimental evidence.

For instance, leadership in midwifery (healthcare) may emphasize ethical behavior and emotional support, whereas leadership in manufacturing may prioritize performance metrics and safety compliance. To assess the broader applicability of these findings, future research should replicate the study across diverse sectors, cultures, and organizational levels. However, an essential contextual limitation should also be acknowledged: in publicly funded hospitals operating on 24/7 rosters, leadership

structures are often diffuse and inconsistently experienced by staff. The survey used the term “supervisor” to refer to leadership figures in this study. Still, in practice, participants may have interpreted this variously — as a clinical coordinator, ward manager, or shift leader, each playing different roles with inconsistent presence across time. Moreover, midwives rotate through changing teams and often work under leaders operating only during standard hours (9–5), making establishing emotional continuity and relational leadership difficult. This organisational reality may have complicated how participants understood and rated items on the CLB, LMX, and WE scales, which generally assume a more stable team structure. Future research should consider these structural dynamics when designing leadership studies in shift-based, clinical environments. (Suhaimi & Panatik, 2016; Zahari & Kaliannan, 2023).

In summary, the limitations of this study include potential biases from online self-reporting, the use of a single data source, possible item redundancy due to high reliability scores, the constraints of a cross-sectional design, and limited generalizability due to the specific sample context. While the study offers valuable insights into the emotional mechanisms linking leadership and engagement, these limitations should be carefully considered when applying the findings to other settings or informing strategic decisions.

#### **5.4 Recommendations for Organisational Leadership Practice and Development**

The findings of this study indicate that only specific leadership behaviours, namely, Recognising and Ethical Conduct, significantly enhance WE. These effects are mediated by the emotional quality of the leader–employee relationship, referred to as Leader–Member Exchange Affect (LMX-Affect). This suggests that organisations should reconsider traditional leadership approaches. Rather than focusing solely on structure, directives, or task completion, leadership should prioritise emotional connection and

relational quality (Epitropaki & Martin, 2005; Gotsis & Grimani, 2017). Based on these insights, the following recommendations are proposed:

### **1. Integrate Emotional Intelligence into Leadership Development**

Leadership training programs should incorporate modules that help leaders build emotional connections with their teams (Atobatele & Okonkwo, 2024). This includes developing the ability to recognise employee efforts sincerely and to communicate ethically and respectfully. Emotional competencies should be cultivated alongside technical leadership skills. The findings underscore that task management alone is insufficient to drive engagement. Employees respond more positively when leaders act with integrity and demonstrate genuine appreciation. As noted by Baron and Morin (2009) and Decuyper and Schaufeli (2021), leadership frameworks should include relational tools such as trust assessments and LMX-Affect surveys.

### **2. Revise Leadership Evaluation Criteria**

Organisations should broaden their leadership evaluation frameworks to include emotional and ethical dimensions. Traditional performance reviews often emphasise outcomes, processes, and technical competencies (Ruben, 2019). These should be complemented by assessments of relational behaviours. For instance, recognition should be evaluated not only by frequency but also by perceived authenticity. Ethical conduct should be assessed based on daily interactions and employee perceptions, not merely compliance with policies. Research by Zahari and Kaliannan (2023) and Suhaimi and Panatik (2016) supports the integration of emotional and ethical behaviour into formal appraisal and reward systems.

### **3. Establish Internal Support Systems for Emotional Leadership**

Human Resource departments can foster emotional leadership by creating peer coaching or mentorship programs focused on trust-building and emotional intelligence (Soegiarto et al., 2024). These “engagement mentorship circles” would allow experienced leaders to share real-world examples of emotionally grounded leadership. Such initiatives align with Glaveli et al. (2023), who emphasised the importance of emotional exchange in sustaining long-term engagement.

### **4. Redefine Leadership Roles in Modern Work Environments**

In increasingly virtual and hybrid workplaces, leadership roles and expectations should be revisited. When leaders are confined to enforcing rules and achieving goals, opportunities for meaningful human connection may be limited (Abakpa & Dvouletý, 2024). Despite its high reliability, this study found that clarifying did not enhance engagement, suggesting that task-based leadership without emotional context may be insufficient (Glaveli et al., 2023). Leaders must be given the time and flexibility to build trust and demonstrate empathy, even in remote settings.

### **5. Promote Trust-Building Through Organisational Policies**

Organisations should implement policies that foster trust at all levels. This includes encouraging transparent communication, clearly explaining decisions, and holding leaders accountable for their behaviour (Hadziahmetovic & Salihovic, 2022). Trust is not built solely through formal rules but through perceptions of fairness and respect. This aligns with Social Exchange Theory (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano et al., 2017), which posits that employees are motivated by how they emotionally interpret their treatment, not just by contractual obligations.

## **6. Encourage Reflective Leadership Practices**

Leaders should be encouraged to engage in regular self-reflection and seek feedback from their teams. Ethical behaviour and recognition are only effective if they are perceived as genuine by employees (Crans et al., 2022). This study highlights LMX-Affect as the key mechanism linking leadership behaviour to engagement. Therefore, the emotional impact of leadership actions is as important as the actions themselves. As Decuyper and Schaufeli (2020) argue, leaders who practice emotional reflection are more likely to build high-quality relationships and sustain engagement.

In conclusion, leaders should be assessed not only by what they do but by how they make others feel. Training programs, evaluation systems, and organisational policies must reflect this reality. Emotional trust, authentic recognition, and ethical conduct are no longer optional—they are essential for fostering engagement, commitment, and high performance in today's people-centred workplaces.

## **5.5 Conclusion**

This study set out to explore how leadership behaviours influence employee engagement. The findings clearly demonstrate that leadership behaviour alone is not sufficient. For leadership to have a meaningful impact, it must be emotionally experienced and relationally significant. In other words, how employees feel about their leaders is central to whether they are engaged at work.

Although all four dimensions of Constructive Leadership Behaviour CLB, Clarifying, Recognising, Ethical Conduct, and Networking, were measured, only Recognising and Ethical Conduct had a significant impact on WE. Importantly, these effects were not direct. They occurred only when the emotional relationship between leader and

employee, known as Leader-Member Exchange Affect (LMX-Affect), was strong. This underscores the critical role of emotional bonds in real-world leadership dynamics.

The study employed both mean-based and mediation analyses. While mean scores provided a general overview of participants' perceptions of leadership behaviours and engagement, mediation analysis offered more profound insights into the mechanisms at play. It revealed not just what behaviours were present, but how and why they influenced engagement. The emotional quality of the leader–employee relationship emerged as the key factor. When LMX-Affect was high, Recognising and Ethical Conduct significantly enhanced engagement. This finding supports LMX theory of Epitropaki and Martin (2005), which emphasises trust, respect, and mutual care as the foundation of effective leadership. It also aligns with Bernerth et al. (2016), who found that emotional exchanges have a greater impact on engagement than transactional or purely logical interactions.

For example, Recognising only boosted engagement when it was emotionally perceived as sincere. A simple “good job” is not enough, employees must believe the recognition is genuine. Similarly, Ethical Conduct was effective only when employees perceived their leaders as fair, honest, and morally consistent. This perception fosters psychological safety, which in turn supports trust and commitment. These findings are consistent with Baron and Morin (2009), who argued that ethical leadership and recognition fulfil core psychological needs such as competence and relatedness.

In contrast, Clarifying and Networking did not significantly influence engagement. While these behaviours are often considered essential leadership traits, setting clear goals and building strategic relationships, they appear insufficient to foster emotional commitment on their own. This supports (Glaveli et al., 2023), who noted that

leadership focused solely on control or structure may hinder engagement, particularly in roles requiring autonomy or emotional investment.

The study also draws on Self-Determination Theory (SDT), which posits that motivation is driven by the fulfilment of autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Recognising supports competence and value, while Ethical Conduct fosters safety and respect. In contrast, Clarifying may help with goal setting, but without emotional support, it fails to meet deeper psychological needs. Similarly, Networking may aid in career development or information flow, but lacks the emotional trust needed to drive engagement.

Social Exchange Theory (SET) further supports these findings. According to SET, workplace relationships are built on reciprocal emotional exchanges. Employees who feel valued and fairly treated by their leaders are more likely to reciprocate with loyalty, effort, and commitment (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano et al., 2017). In this study, LMX-Affect functioned as emotional currency, amplifying the impact of leadership behaviours through the lens of trust.

A key contribution of this study lies in its methodological approach. While many previous studies have examined surface-level correlations between leadership and engagement, this research employed mediation analysis to uncover the underlying emotional mechanisms. It shows that CLB does not automatically lead to engagement—it does so through emotional trust. This provides a more nuanced understanding of leadership in complex, people-centred environments.

Limitations must also be acknowledged. The study relied on a self-report survey from a specific participant group, which introduces potential bias and limits generalizability. Although anonymity was maintained, responses may still reflect social desirability or

misinterpretation. Additionally, the cross-sectional design restricts causal inference. Longitudinal or experimental studies would be needed to confirm the directionality of these relationships.

Despite these limitations, the findings have strong practical relevance. In today's dynamic workplaces, characterised by hybrid teams, rapid change, and rising burnout, leaders must go beyond task management. They must connect with their teams on an emotional level. Leaders who demonstrate empathy, fairness, and gratitude are more likely to sustain motivation and commitment.

Organisations should reflect these insights in their leadership development strategies. Training should include emotional intelligence, ethical leadership, and performance recognition. Leadership assessments should evolve to measure not just productivity, but also trust-building, ethical conduct, and emotional resonance. Tools such as 360-degree feedback, LMX-Affect evaluations, and emotional intelligence assessments can help identify truly effective leaders.

Workplace culture also plays a critical role. Organisations that prioritise transparency, fairness, and emotional connection are more likely to foster engagement than those focused solely on control or output. Broadly, this study contributes to our understanding of how emotionally intelligent leadership can reduce burnout, prevent disengagement, and build resilient, high-performing teams.

In conclusion, this research highlights emotional resonance as the missing link between leadership behaviour and employee engagement. Recognition and Ethical Conduct only have power when they are emotionally received and trusted. Leadership is not just about setting direction, it is about building human connection. When that connection is strong,

engagement follows. Organisations that embrace this understanding will be better equipped to meet future challenges with a motivated and committed workforce.

## 6. References

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## 7. Appendix

### 7.1 Ethics Approval Letter



#### Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

Auckland University of Technology  
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T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316  
E: [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz)  
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TE WĀNANGA ARONUI  
O TĀMAKI MAKĀU RAU

13 March 2019

Tagonei Mharapara  
Faculty of Business Economics and Law

Dear Tagonei

Re: Ethics Application: **19/33 Midwifery Work & Wellbeing (MidWoW) Study**

Thank you for your request for approval of amendments to your ethics application.

The minor edits to the questionnaire are approved.

I remind you of the **Standard Conditions of Approval**.

1. A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using form EA2, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>.
2. A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using form EA3, which is available online through <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>.
3. Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form: <http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics>.
4. Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
5. Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. If you require management approval for access for your research from another institution or organisation then you are responsible for obtaining it. If the research is undertaken outside New Zealand, you need to meet all locality legal and ethical obligations and requirements.

For any enquiries please contact [ethics@aut.ac.nz](mailto:ethics@aut.ac.nz)

Yours sincerely,

Kate O'Connor  
Executive Manager  
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: Janine Clemons

## **7.2 Questions for the survey**

### **Work Engagement (UWES-3)**

#### **Response scale:**

1 = Never

2 = Rarely

3 = Sometimes

4 = Often

5 = Very often

6 = Always

#### **Items:**

1. At my work, I feel bursting with energy.
2. I am enthusiastic about my job.
3. I am immersed in my work.

### **Constructive Leadership Behaviour**

#### **Response scale:**

1 = Not at all

2 = To a limited extent

3 = To a moderate extent

4 = To a considerable extent

5 = To a very great extent

#### **Clarifying**

1. Clearly explains the job responsibilities and task assignments to members.
2. Explains what results are expected for a task or assignment.
3. Explains the rules, policies, and standard procedures that must be followed.
4. Sets specific performance goals and deadlines for important aspects of the work.

## **Recognising**

1. Praises effective performance by members of the work unit.
2. Provides recognition for member achievements or important contributions.
3. Provides recognition for good performance by the team or work unit.
4. Recommends high-performing members for appropriate rewards.

## **Ethical Conduct**

1. Communicates clear ethical standards and guidelines for members.
2. Sets an example of ethical behaviour in their decisions and actions.
3. Insists on doing what is fair and ethical even when it is not easy.
4. Opposes the use of unethical practices to improve performance.

## **Networking**

1. Attends social and professional events to meet people with useful information.
2. Builds and maintains a wide network of contacts among peers and outsiders.
3. Joins social networks that include outsiders with useful information.
4. Develops cooperative relations with people who can provide resources and assistance.

## **Leader–Member Exchange (LMX-Affect)**

### **Response scale:**

- 1 = Strongly disagree  
2 = Disagree  
3 = Somewhat disagree  
4 = Neither agree nor disagree  
5 = Somewhat agree  
6 = Agree  
7 = Strongly agree

### **Items:**

1. I like my supervisor very much as a person.
2. My supervisor is the kind of person one would like to have as a friend.
3. My supervisor is a lot of fun to work with.