

Impact of Leadership Practices on Employees Engagement within Police Organisation, An Example from Qatar

Dr. Musaab Jasim Mohammed Al-Kubaisi

Leadership Development Specialist - Police Academy . State of Qatar

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ABSTRACT

The aim of this study is to explore the role and relative importance of leadership in employee engagement or disengagement in the Qatar Rescue Police and to elucidate the drivers of engagement in an Arabic cultural context. The research is based on a qualitative approach, employing interviews and observations in which leaders and subordinates' views are expressed, and their actions are observed. The perspectives of each leader and subordinate were examined and cross-referenced against observations and existing literature, indicating highly variable approaches to leadership and a significant degree of consensus regarding the effects of these varying leadership practices on engagement among employees. The study revealed that there is a direct effect of leaders practices on their followers engagement. It also revealed that there is a need for greater sensitivity to context in the approach to leadership as well as a dearth of interaction between administrative leadership and operational personnel. The Islamic view of business hierarchies as being akin to family relationships and the concepts of "brotherhood" and "fatherhood" were of particular interest as drivers of engagement. In addition, various organisational limitations were identified, particularly with regard to staffing and financial constraints, highlighting the limitations of operational leadership in fostering engagement through material rewards and employee benefits. At operational level, subordinates and leaders suggested specific non-monetary rewards and practices which could be used to promote engagement despite these organisational constraints. The study indicates evidence-based interventions that may be applied to improve leadership practice and employee engagement among subordinates working as first responders in the Qatar Rescue Police and examines attitudes towards accepted drivers of engagement including autonomy, training, supportiveness, even-handedness and personal recognition. Although its findings and recommendations are specific to the Qatar Rescue Police, its conclusions may have relevance to those seeking to understand the role of leadership practices in employee engagement in both private and governmental organisations in the Islamic world.

Key words: Leadership Practices, engagement, drivers of engagement, Rescue Police.

المُلخَص

تأثير ممارسات القيادة على مشاركة الموظفين داخل جهاز الشرطة، مثال من قطر

الدكتور/ مصعب جاسم محمد الكبيسي

أخصائي تطوير القيادة - أكاديمية الشرطة، دولة قطر

يهدف هذا البحث الى دراسة أثر الممارسات القيادية على اندماج الموظفين في إدارة شرطة النجدة (الفزعة) بدولة قطر، وذلك للتعرف على مسببات الاندماج في بيئة عمل في دولة عربية إسلامية، وبالتالي الخروج بتوصيات تساهم في تحسين هذه البيئة، ورفع مستوى الاندماج بين الموظفين. استخدم البحث الاسلوب الوصفي التحليلي باستخدام مقابلات مباشرة ودراسات حالة مع موظفين وقيادات من ذات الادارة لأخذ آرائهم ومراقبة افعالهم ومقارنتها مع الدراسات السابقة مما نتج عنه معلومات جديدة تمثل اضافة مميزة على الصعيد البحثي الأكاديمي وعلى صعيد التطبيق العملي المؤسسي والذي يؤكد تأثير هذه الممارسات القيادية في بيئة العمل على أداء الموظفين وشعورهم بالاندماج. وكشفت النتائج عن علاقة ممارسات القادة بشكل مباشر على مستوى اندماج الموظفين في العمل، إضافة إلى تأثير الأمور الادارية والتعاقدية على شعورهم بالاندماج. كما كشفت عن اهمية السياق المؤسسي واعطاءه الاهتمام المطلوب عند دراسة هذه المعطيات لاسيما ان عينة الدراسة تقع في العالم العربي الاسلامي ذات الطبيعة الثقافية والدينية التي تؤثر في كيفية فهم هذه المعطيات، على عكس بيئة العمل في العالم الغربي مما يدعو الباحثين في هذه المنطقة الى ضرورة توسيع قاعدة الفهم الثقافي والمؤسسي. من التوصيات التي خرجت بها هذه الدراسة اهمية التواصل الفعال بين القيادة والموظفين من خلال اجتماعات دورية تعزز اواصر العلاقة بين الطرفين لتحقيق اهداف المؤسسة ومعالجة أي احباطات او تحديات او احتياجات، لا سيما وأن هذه الادارة لها دور كبير بل تعتبر المستجيب الأول للحالات الطارئة في الدولة للمحافظة على سلامة وأمن واستقرار المجتمع وبالتالي وجود قوة عمل مندمجة ضرورة لا تستغني عنها الادارة. بالرغم من القيود والمحددات إلا أن هذه الدراسة قد تسهم في كونها دليل استرشادي لكل من يريد فهم الممارسات القيادية المفضلة وكيفية تحسين الاندماج في بيئة عمل حكومية أو عسكرية في العالم العربي والاسلامي.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الممارسات القيادية، الاندماج، بواعث الاندماج، شرطة النجدة (الفزعة).

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Employee engagement has recently come to the forefront of leadership discourse as an important foundation for achieving organisational goals while enhancing both innovation and competitive advantage (Bedarkar and Pandita, 2014). Although employee engagement is an important component towards enhancing organisational success, questions regarding how to realise this outcome in practice remain a challenge to practitioners. This is especially true when attempting to build employee engagement in non-Western organisations like public institutions in Qatar, where traditional approaches to building worker engagement may not be as effective due to the difference in cultural and social norms that operate in these environments. While a plethora of studies, including those authored by Kahn (1990), Anitha (2014), Breevart et al. (2014), Popli and Rizvi (2016), Saks (2017) and Sundarary (2011) explore employee engagement from a Westernised or Non-Islamic context, a significant number of them examined either leaders in an organisation or those that are being led, rather than considering the relationship between these two positions and the organisational structure in which they operate.

This premise serves as the foundation for engaging in the current research, which will examine the role of leadership in shaping employee engagement within the context of the Qatar Rescue Police. It includes background information about the topic, as well as the problem statement, research aim and objectives, and the scope and limitations of the study. A brief introductory account of the research methodology is also highlighted

1.2 The Problem

The nexus between leadership and employee engagement has been explored over the years in scholarly studies sparked by Kahn's (1990) first recorded use of the term "employee engagement." Since this conversation is still being debated among scholars, this suggests that the impact of the relationship between leaders and their subordinates on their engagement and hence organisational outcomes is of importance, hence the ongoing interest in the subject matter. However, the importance of this relationship seems to have been ignored in the last few decades (O'Neill et al., 2015), particularly among organisations in the Middle East.

A recent study (Al-Sada et al., 2017) revealed that effective leadership leads to the achievement of three major outcomes among firms in Qatar, particularly in the contexts of job satisfaction, motivation, and gaining employees' trust and commitment. Even though employee engagement has been defined in several ways,

these three outcomes give a sufficiently inclusive description of what is meant by employee engagement. However, effective leadership in militaristic organisations such as the Qatar Rescue Police may differ significantly from what is effective in private firms or even governmental organisations with a more “civilian” approach.

To date, leadership remains a highly contested area of study, and one of the most researched concepts (Walker, 2006) among management scholars. But while most leadership research focuses on Western organisations as well as organisations operating in Westernised countries, the Arab Gulf region in the Middle East, often referred to as GCC, is yet to witness a proliferation of leadership studies, particularly in the public sector. Of particular concern is the fact that recommendations and policy implications resulting from Western leadership studies may be irrelevant in context, or may require adaptation to achieve relevance to organisations operating in the Middle East (Ly, 2020), particularly countries within the GCC region. Drawing inferences from studies conducted outside of the Qatari context with the intention of applying them to the functioning of government organisations such as the Qatar Rescue Police may therefore produce inconsistent or misleading results.

In support of this, Biygautane, Gerber and Hodge (2017) stated that Western ideologies may not reflect the cultural and moral tenets of the Gulf region, thus making it difficult to implement reform practices of any sort despite the best intentions of the governments in the region. Furthermore, fiscal policies in GCC countries, whose economies depend heavily on oil, are impaired due to a decrease in oil prices. Hence, the application of findings might have implications on other sectors of the economy if their implantation requires increased government expenditure. In addition, findings from studies based on literature alone may not have explored leadership practices in the GCC region and may not be fully relevant to national and cultural contexts within the region or to the specific government departments to which they are applied.

Under the transactional model of leadership, tangible factors such as salaries and benefits are often utilised as a foundation for engaging workers in the workplace (Anitha, 2014). Although these may not be the sole source of employee engagement, salaries and job security represent significant issues that contribute to the development

of proactive staff behaviours. These behaviours ultimately translate to job retention (Anitha, 2014). In the Gulf region, however, budgetary limitations within government institutions may limit their applicability. This poses challenges for those occupying leadership positions, as well as those who are being led, hence the need to critically review the concept of leadership in the Qatar Rescue Police to determine the degree to which organisational limitations such as budgetary constraints impair engagement and in order to determine how leadership practices may be employed to mitigate disengagement and promote engagement.

A recent study (Al Haj, 2017) identified some commonly practised leadership principles in Qatar by examining the impact of transformational and transactional leadership styles on employees' motivation at the workplace. Findings from the study revealed that leaders struggle to identify factors that may motivate or enhance employee engagement in the public sector. Public institutions in the GCC region that have conducted leadership research, and which reached similar conclusions, include those in the education sector (Al-Sada et al., 2017) energy sector (Williams et al., 2017), and the health sector (Balkhy *et al*, 2018) but no studies have, as yet, addressed leadership and its impacts on employee engagement among first responders in Qatar's police departments.

Research addressing factors that promote staff engagement in the public sector appears to be extremely limited in the Gulf region, possibly because public sector employees in the region are considered to lack basic skills and competencies needed to perform their jobs effectively (Biygautane et al., 2017). The Qatar police department, as a unique public institution, may not be exempt from facing these challenges. In addition, the question of how leaders in the Qatar Rescue Police can engage effectively with employees to gain their trust and confidence, as well as boost their morale and improve their level of job performance is posed.

In accordance with this idea, the research findings of Biygautane, Gerber and Hodge (2017), outlined how the emergence of the petroleum industry among Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries in the 1950s resulted in the development of a large public sector workforce. And that, although public sector institutions were already present in Middle Eastern countries, the inflow of oil revenue from

the petroleum industry made it possible for the government to markedly expand public services. The authors' claim is that, over the course of a 50-year period, countries such as Qatar have been able to establish modern public sector institutions commensurate with those in developed Western nations. While public institutions in GCC countries serve as the foundation for providing important services to citizens, the authors found that these entities serve as a means for distributing oil revenues equitably among the people.

For those hired in government positions, the situation is unique. Public agencies in GCC countries have become a way to provide many workers from Qatar as well as its neighbouring countries with access to well-paid employment. Biygautane et al. (2017) further emphasised that public sector employment has become a mode of distributing wealth among GCC countries. Although not extensively detailed in the literature, they believe public sector institutions in the region are unmatched in their spending allocations for staff salaries despite having some of the most ineffective workforces in the world.

These authors go on to argue that public sector employees continue to retain their jobs and to acquire raises regardless of their performance and level of competency. The situation has become problematic to the extent that the World Bank has recognized the deterioration of overall quality and performance of government departments in GCC countries (Biygautane et al., 2017). Since improved performance is argued to be one of the primary outcomes of heightened employee engagement (Sridevi, 2010), determining how leaders can promote employee engagement may, in part, contribute to the resolution of this problem.

This is of particular importance in an organisation responsible for assisting in public emergencies and maintaining public order, namely Qatar Rescue Police, since poor workplace performance would have negative implications for society at large. The means to address this issue within the unique context of Qatar are not fully clarified by studies conducted in other contexts, and addressing this knowledge gap could result in substantial benefits for the organisation, its employees, and the general public.

By referring to literature with reference to real-world experiences and the Islamic cultural context and values system, it is possible to evaluate the current leadership environment that contributes to fostering employee engagement. In this regard, researchers have identified several elements of Islamic values that may contribute to employee engagement. Islamic leadership traits suggested by Meiani and Putra (2019) and Nasrah et al. (2021) include truthfulness (Siddiq), trustworthiness (Amanah), advocacy (Mashourah) and wisdom (Hikmah). This study may shed some light on the extent and manner in which leaders in the Qatar Rescue Police implement these values in practice, the practices that demonstrate them, and the degree to which they influence employee engagement.

However, these approaches study the practices of leaders as individuals and do not consider ways in which they might become part of the accepted practice or question whether they can, in fact, contribute to disengagement in a culture where those occupying positions of leadership may see themselves as a source of inarguable wisdom. Hence, this study strives to determine whether operational leadership matters in employee engagement and if so, whether constructive leadership practices can be identified as well as how they could be embedded in operational policies and procedures for “mid-management” officers.

Insight gained from this research will facilitate understanding of how leadership practices may contribute to enhancement of employee engagement. Knowledge gained will be useful for understanding leadership practice in Islamic contexts as well as for formulating recommendations for improving leadership practice in order that leaders can achieve improved engagement among their employees in the Qatar Rescue Police.

1.3 Aims and Objectives

By adding to the currently limited existing body of research on public sector leadership and employee engagement in Qatar, this research will identify and suggest leadership practices considered suitable for managing public institutions among countries in the Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC). With these aims in mind, the following objectives were set:

- To examine how leadership is being viewed and enacted by leaders and subordinates in the Qatar Rescue Police

- To explore factors affecting subordinates' disengagement towards work
- To explore ways leaders can promote employee engagement in the Qatar police department
- To construct a conceptual framework informing recommendations for leadership practices fostering employee engagement in the Qatar police department.

1.4 Importance of the study

Recognizing the ways in which leadership is understood is imperative to this research partly due to the controversial nature of leadership as argued by Walker (2006). Knowing how leadership is being understood and demonstrated will highlight how leaders view themselves in an organisation, how followers perceive leaders, and whether there are differing or conflicting views of the concept of leadership within the organisation (Juntrasook, 2014). It will address the knowledge gap surrounding the concept of leadership in the context of the Qatar Rescue Police and may have relevance to similar organisations within the GCC countries.

More than one interpretation of leadership is expected. With regards to differing perceptions on how leaders see themselves, a doctoral research study (Timiyo, 2016) conducted among leaders in UK higher education institutions revealed that leaders exhibited differing orientations when viewing the concept of leadership. The study provides compelling evidence to show that leaders' perception of the concept of leadership differs from one leader to another. Hence, it might be interesting to know whether leaders and subordinates also share differing views of leadership within the police department and whether these views have an impact on employee engagement.

Another gap identified from the problem statement is the potentially impractical nature of adopting unmodified Western practices to lead institutions in GCC countries. As pointed out in a recent study (Biygautane et al., 2017), Western managerial practices and ideologies may be ineffective in leading firms in the Gulf region. According to this study, traditional methods, such as pay increases and other fringe benefits, have failed to achieve the intended objective of motivating workers in the Qatar public sector. In comparison with private sector employees, those working in Qatar public institutions earn higher salaries (Al Haj, 2017); consequently salary alone may not foster employee engagement.

On the other hand, in a study dealing with first responders in the US, Petersen (2019) noted that a lack of basic workplace satisfaction factors, including tangible rewards, led to disengagement in the form of poor employee retention and a lack of interest in accepting further responsibilities. Thus, while tangible rewards may not necessarily promote engagement, their absence may lead to disengagement. It is therefore important to this study's conclusions to determine the extent to which tangible rewards influence engagement or act as factors contributing to disengagement.

In addition, other factors leading to disengagement should be considered. Govindarajo (2014) identified several factors as contributing to disengagement including: wage, welfare, work environment, lack of safety and security, poor organisational support, rigid rules and regulations, and lack of individual motivation. Beyond this, leadership practices may lead to disengagement, as confirmed by Nikolova et. al (2021) in their work on defining and measuring disengaging leadership. Thus, in seeking leadership practices that promote engagement, disengaging leadership as well as the role of the organisation must also be considered within the cultural and organisational contexts of the Qatar Rescue Police.

Thus, after identifying what leadership means in context, leadership practices that result in disengagement as well as those with a role in promoting engagement should be examined and accounted for. To ensure relevance, the values system and culture prevailing in Qatar should be taken into account at all times. The format of the study allows participants to propose practical solutions to address workers' disengagement by letting them tell their own stories, which is a crucial aspect of a phenomenological research study. Among other things, research has established that "one way by which humans construct their reality is through storytelling" (Walker, 2006: 42).

Research (Al Haj, 2017) has shown that leaders in Qatar public institutions struggle to motivate subordinates to achieve needed results. This implies that they are unable to foster employee engagement in their institutions. This research supports mainstream research (Mumford, 1972; Kahn, 1990, 1992; Juntrasook, 2014; Al-Sada et al., 2017), which describes employee engagement as the tendency for leaders to motivate subordinates to give their best towards achieving organisational goals and objectives. The research proposes that one way of achieving this goal is to find out, from the subordinates themselves, what leaders need to do to foster their engagement with the organisation. In this way, organisation-specific and culturally relevant findings can be made with potential benefits for the improvement of leadership practices and employee engagement. Hence, the need to address the current knowledge gap

relating to the leadership of policing personnel in Qatar.

Following the outcomes of the third objective, this research will propose appropriate leadership practices deemed suitable for managing (public) institutions like the Rescue Police Department. Thus, the fourth objective provides the basis for examining the opinions of leaders and subordinates regarding what leadership practices are suitable for managing their institution. As leaders' perception towards the concept of leadership varies (Juntrasook, 2014; Timiyo, 2016), their suggestions of appropriate leadership practises suitable for managing the police department will also differ. Even though leadership is treated as a universal construct (Den Hartog *et al.*, 1999; Timiyo and Yeadon-Lee, 2016), applied in almost all organisations around the world, its interpretation and applications by individuals from different cultural and social settings are different. The fourth objective of this research is intended to examine these differences in order to develop a conceptual framework inspired by the Leadership-as-Practice (LAP) approach as well as any other approaches to leadership that appear to be relevant based on the study's findings to advance or guide future research relating to this subject area. According to Raelin *et al.* (2018) the concept of leadership-as-practice suggests that leadership is not the result of behaviours undertaken by individuals within the organisation. Rather, it emanates "from an emerging collection of practices" (Raelin *et al.*, 2018: 372).

1.5 Defining Key Terms

Certain basic words are defined below to allow for contextual meanings and interpretations.

Leadership: is a contested term, and attempts to define it date back for centuries. It has been discussed as a set of traits, or as an activity (Northouse, 2010). For the purpose of this thesis, the focus is on the practice or activity of being a leader. Raelin (2016) observed that "*leadership should be viewed as a practice that works towards an organisational goal as opposed to leadership being associated to the behaviours of an individual that is identified as a leader.*" However, apart from referring to leadership as a practice, it will also be used as a noun indicating individuals or groups that have been formally tasked with leadership. Casagrande and Rivera-Aguilera (2020) clarify this with the assertion that "*Leadership is a concept that starts from an assumption of authority, that there must be some people in organisations who give orders, make decisions and expect obedience.*" In this thesis, leadership is therefore considered as a set of practices that are initiated by people who have been granted authority by the organisation.

Employee engagement: This term describes a situation in which employees are fully involved and committed to the achievement of organisational goals and objectives (Mumford, 1972). This definition concurs with that of Kahn (1990) who noted that engaged employees “*express themselves physically, cognitively, emotionally, and mentally*” in their work. Hence, they dedicate their full energy on every level to the tasks which they have been assigned.

Leadership-As-Practice: Also abbreviated as LAP, this is an evidenced-based leadership approach that recognises and promotes group achievements over individual accomplishments and sees leadership as a set of ever-evolving practices that contributes to the realisation of organisational goals instead of consisting of individual behaviours on the part of people who have been designated leadership roles. (Raelin, 2016a, 2016b).

2. Literature review

2.1 Leadership and leadership as practice

In this literature review, the concept of leadership and the lack of a single definition of leadership is examined, the importance of context is explored, and the relationship between leadership and employee engagement is examined along with the nature of engagement, and its benefits to organisations are extrapolated with reference to published literature. Tangible transactions as a factor in engagement will be briefly examined, but, since leaders at the level of study respondents have limited influence in determining fiscal policy, non-monetary drivers of engagement will also receive attention. Finally, constructivism as an approach to gaining new knowledge in the field of leadership practice and the importance of cultural context are considered with Leadership as Practice (LAP) providing inspiration as a means of gaining a greater understanding on the concepts of leadership and engagement in the Qatar Rescue Police.

Over the course of the last two decades, the understanding of leadership has expanded, with scholars examining a wide range of variables and their implications for both theory and practice. A review of the literature on leadership indicates that scholars have extensively examined critical issues such as gender, power, and race to further comprehend how leadership is structured and practised (Stead, 2014; Choi, Hong and Lee, 2018; Lewis, 2018). This shift in research has challenged previously accepted views on leadership and prompted the application of constructivist and

relational paradigms for extending knowledge on the subject (Endres and Weibler, 2017; Ospina 2017; Crevani, 2018). Despite these efforts, however, leadership is frequently viewed through a monocultural lens; one in which Western thought and values dominate discourse on the topic (Srivastava, 2016: 69).

The absence of national context or local values in the framework of leadership practice prompts concern, especially in the light of what Srivastava (2016) noted regarding the implications of local context for outcomes within the organisation. This is particularly important when addressing the culture of a group of people in a given society because “*business culture differs from country to country due to influence of its national culture*” (Srivastava, 2016: 61). The author goes on to argue that while underlying business culture is shaped by the context in which a business is developed, leaders also play a role in shaping the values and behaviour of employees. Leaders that are educated and trained to utilise Western views and conceptualisations of leadership practice may fail to integrate essential components of local context into practice resulting in significant challenges for successfully connecting with employees and motivating them to perform. The author noted that without the appropriate leadership support in place to motivate and engage employees, the end result is typically the loss of employee productivity which can hamper the overall success of the organisation.

The challenges that exist regarding Western influence over leadership practice are further highlighted in the context of globalisation and these are also of interest in non-global, non-Western organisations that base their practices on Westernised models. As managers and leaders from the United States and other Western countries transfer skills and knowledge to new local contexts there is concern that attempts to translate Western theories to other cultural settings without any modification may not be fruitful. Perkins (2009) brought attention to this by analysing certain commonly accepted premises in the field of leadership and noting their limitations in other cultural contexts. An example of particular interest in this author’s work was that “leadership traits” valued in the West may be counterproductive in certain cultures, especially those in which an understanding of the leader’s role in the organisation is of greater importance than “qualities” such as assertiveness. However, the author observed that by analysing the cultures of specific countries, leaders could seek ways to identify specific reasons why certain theories may not be effective, and adapt them accordingly.

Another group of scholars illustrated this point by noting that in many non-Western cultures, the proliferation of globalised organisations implementing received knowledge with Western roots serves as a basis for creating a level of “cultural ambiguity” (Liu and MacDonald, 2016:311) in which established values, beliefs, and cultural norms become more uncertain. In the context of leadership practice, these issues are quite profound. Likewise, Castelli (2016) demonstrated this point by arguing that modern organisations have consistently found that in the context of globalisation, traditional leadership practices, or “business as usual,” are often ineffective for addressing the needs of a culturally diverse workforce not all of whom share the values systems on which they are based. Liu and MacDonald go on to assert that when responding to globalisation in business, organisations have recognized that a new approach to conceptualising leadership is needed; one that focuses on a broader approach to understanding how leadership occurs in practice. In non-Western, local organisations, the task is considerably less complex since only the local or regional context requires integration into leadership practice. However, works on globalisation are of interest, since they highlight the influence of culture on effective leadership.

In relation to conventional approaches to leadership practice, Mainstream approaches to leadership practice, on one hand, are often linked to the “characteristic ability of extraordinary individuals” (McCleskey, 2014: 117) who have the ability to influence decisions of other individuals in a group setting. According to Day et al. (2014) the “Great Man” theory which was proposed more than a century ago and is often identified as the starting point for the development of modern leadership theory and practice. Embedded in this theory is the belief that effective leadership practice is integrally linked to the personality of the individual serving in a leadership role (McCleskey, 2014). Although this approach to leadership does have some salience for understanding the success of leaders in practice, Day et al. (2014) believe the evolution of research and discourse on leadership demonstrated that there were other variables that could contribute to leadership success including the applied behaviours and skills of the leader. Based on this approach to leadership, scholars have consistently argued that education and training can contribute to the ability of the individual to effectively lead. Aldulaimi (2018), for example, found that leadership training within the Saudi Petroleum Company (ARAMCO) was effective in developing leadership within the organisation, and Channing (2020) concluded that effective leadership can be taught. By inference, applying constructive leadership practices is a skill that can be learned, and need not necessarily be a construct of individual personality.

Adding to the debate, Rast (2015) posits that while trait and behavioural theories have served as the foundation for building modern understanding of leadership practice, further exploration of leadership prompted a proliferation of paradigms to understand leadership that has widely been described as psychological in nature. According to him, scholars examining this approach argue that the focus of understanding leadership practice has shifted, with efforts made to evaluate the psychological implications of this process. This includes issues such as influence, meeting follower needs, and the ways in which the actions of the leader shape follower behaviour.

An assessment of the evolution of leadership demonstrates that, most recently, the psychological or interpersonal nature of leadership has been emphasised with efforts made to quantify how the leader's actions influence follower and organisational outcomes. There is a glut of research demonstrating that specific leadership styles lead to specific outcomes for followers such as higher productivity or greater job satisfaction (Breevaart *et al.*, 2014; Humborstad *et al.*, 2014). A focus on these outcomes is imperative as it serves to quantify what is important about leadership and what can be gained from the process. By commodifying leadership in this manner, it is possible to teach practice and to fortify leaders with the knowledge and skills that they need to be successful in their roles. Further, organisations that buy in to this view on leadership may spend considerable time and money training leaders to ensure that these individuals can implement what is needed to achieve desired goals.

2.2 Employee engagement

This assessment of employee engagement prompts the need to consider how this outcome can be pragmatically achieved in practice. Current research (Breevaart *et al.*, 2014) on employee engagement in organisations seems to suggest that leaders shape follower engagement through transactional influence. Transactional influence, according to Breevaart *et al.* (2014) focused mainly on the ability of leaders to provide tangible rewards or benefits that will meet the expectations of employees. They claimed that this will lead to a positive state of influence in which employees will be motivated to achieve goals established by the employer. Popli and Rizvi (2016) are of the opinion that when leaders are capable of positively influencing followers, engagement will result, leading to goal achievement. They believe when leaders are unable to successfully influence followers, chaos may ensue, making it difficult, if not impossible, for the leader to achieve desired goals.

While considerable attention has been given to the role and importance of tangible resources in fostering employee engagement, it is pertinent to consider what happens when the promotion of engagement is the direct task of leaders who have limited influence on organisational factors such as salaries and job security. In these scenarios, the ability of leaders to promulgate engagement through transactions is notably weakened. In this environment, the linear relationships that develop between the leader and the follower may be less important to achieving desired outcomes. This observation prompts the need to consider how employee engagement can be achieved when transactional leadership practice is limited by organisational constraints. This observation also prompts the need to consider how leadership occurs in practice rather than attempting to examine leadership from the viewpoint of a particular model that dictates how leadership occurs.

The introductory concepts cited here provide a starting point for reviewing the literature on the topic of leadership. More specifically, this literature review addresses critical issues currently shaping leadership discourse and will fully explore: traditional conceptualisations and applications of leadership; the development of employee engagement; the lacunae in research regarding non-Western approaches to leadership practice; and the potential role of leadership as practice (LAP) for examining the operationalization of employee engagement in a non-Western organisation in which negotiations regarding compensation and benefits are limited by organisational constraints. Through an exploration of these specific areas it will be possible to fully elucidate the challenges of applying traditional leadership paradigms to non-Western cultures, with a focus on the topic of employee engagement. This will, in turn, justify the need for the current study to further develop understanding of leadership practice in a regional context such that professionals and organisations are able to foster employee engagement in settings such as those prevailing within the GCC countries or recognise the need to apply a modified approach to Western concepts in non-Western cultural settings.

2.3 Leadership and employee engagement

As noted in the introduction to this literature review, the specific outcome of employee engagement is integral to the success of leadership practice. Scholars examining the importance of this concept have argued that over the course of the last decade, employee engagement has emerged as a foundation for bolstering competitive advantage and providing a strategic platform for organisational success (Bedarkar

and Pandita, 2014). Also, engagement within the organisation is viewed as a source of innovation to foster the ability of the organisation to achieve its desired goals (Saks and Gruman, 2014; Saks, 2017). On the other hand, Carasco-Saul et al. (2015) maintained that many of the most pressing challenges facing modern organisations stem from human resource management issues. In addition to retaining high quality talent, the authors pointed out that organisations must work to keep employees motivated and productive while on the job to ensure that strategic outcomes are achieved. Given these challenges, it is not surprising to find that employee engagement has become an important topic for organisations and leaders seeking to evaluate the efficacy of leadership practices in the context of their operations.

In efforts to identify the factors that promote employee engagement, Mani's (2011) findings cited employee welfare, empowerment, personal growth, and positive interpersonal relationships as key contributors while Anitha (2014) cited leadership, training and development, compensation, organisational policies, communication, work-life balance, wellbeing in the workplace, and teamwork. Adding to the list of possible drivers of engagement, Sundaray (2011) identifies recruitment practices, empowerment, fair treatment, and performance management interventions as factors to be considered.

According to MacLeod and Clarke (2009) in their synthesis of research into employee engagement, knowing that senior management leaders care about the wellbeing of their subordinates is the foremost enabler of engagement. The authors noted that according to surveys, most employees did not feel that this was the case. The second most important driver of engagement identified was perceived improvement in skills and capabilities during the previous 12 months of employment. In the context of the research referenced in the work, 62 percent of employees felt that they had gained skills during this period.

Of particular interest, the role of tangible rewards was seen primarily as a means of attracting talent. However, when perceptions of inequity in the allocation of tangible rewards were present, this factor could contribute to disengagement.

The authors observed that organisational leadership provides strategic direction and should be both nurturing in terms of transparency, support and trustworthiness and “tough” in their application of discipline while managers have a strong role in facilitating work and empowering employees. These operational leaders form the lens through which employees view the organisation and vice versa.

At lower organisational levels, it was observed that having a “strong voice” which enables subordinates to voice their opinions with the expectation of responsiveness on the part of the organisation was recognized as having importance. Finally, integrity in the form of consistent application of the organisation’s stated values was identified as a driver of engagement.

Hence, MacLeod and Clarke (2009) identify Leadership, engaging management, employee voice, and the maintenance of integrity as the primary categories under which engagement should be considered.

Although research on the topic of employee engagement in organisations operating in the Middle East is scant, it is helpful to review the limited research on this topic to better understand how the concept of engagement has been explored in practice. An overview of the topic in the existing literature does indicate that engagement has been framed using traditional views on leadership practice: i.e., as a transaction between leader and followers. Albdour and Altarawneh (2014) illustrated this point by reviewing the topic of engagement among employees working in the banking sector of Jordan. According to these authors, engagement represents the degree to which employees are attentive to and absorbed in their roles. Engagement, according to the authors, results in specific outcomes such as productivity and better customer satisfaction. Juxtaposing this against Kahn’s (1990) definition of engagement, it becomes evident that the most prominent element of engagement as described by Albdour and Altarawneh is the quantifiable, physical aspect of work performance. Consequently, efforts to study engagement in Middle Eastern culture have resulted in the deconstruction of the concept to a one-dimensional concept that can be quantified.

Further exploration of the concept of engagement in the context of the public sector of the UAE is provided by Al Mehrzi and Singh (2016). While examining the concept of engagement, the authors considered the actions that must be taken by managers and leaders to foster an environment in which engagement occurs. As noted by these authors, leaders must work to resolve any difficulties that employees may have in performing their jobs. This includes actions such as providing clear guidance and direction and ensuring that employees feel confident that their contributions to the organisation are recognized. What this description of engagement demonstrates is that there is a focus on the physical elements of the term without a consideration of the full scope of engagement as defined by Kahn (1990). In this definition, the emotional and cognitive aspects of engagement are not fully developed and outcomes for engagement are again measured in terms of the behaviour of the employee: retention, productivity, and satisfaction.

Despite the lack of research on engagement among workers in GCC countries, the scant research that is available does provide remarkable insight into how this concept is developed and put into practice. When reviewing the literature, it is possible to see that there are notable parallels between how Western scholars interpret and research the concept of engagement and how it is developed and evaluated in Middle Eastern culture. What becomes clear is that a Western perspective on both leadership and engagement prevails when seeking to understand engagement in GCC countries. This creates notable limitations. Correcting these deficits, thus, becomes a recurrent theme; one that requires a broader framework for understanding how leadership occurs in GCC organisations and further how engagement can be constructed.

Based on this assessment, it becomes evident that by attempting to fit the concept of engagement into the empirical framework of mainstream leadership practice, important elements of the concept may be inadvertently excluded from consideration. Consequently, when organisational leaders consult the literature to acquire evidence-based support for practice, they are faced with multiple, confusing paradigms for building employee engagement. On the most simplistic level of interpretation, leaders consulting the literature are encouraged to offer incentives and rewards as these resources have been shown to enhance outcomes such as productivity or job satisfaction (Breevaart *et al.*, 2014; Humborstad, Nerstad and Dysvik, 2014; Singh, 2015). Also, leaders can work to build relationships with employees such that they are able to assert influence over worker behaviour and, subsequently, the

outcomes that result from such behavioural patterns. This accounts for elements of the cognitive and emotional components of engagement as proposed by Kahn (1990) as instrumental in achieving engagement, but may not represent a comprehensive approach. In this context, the concern that arises is whether leaders using purely academic approaches to leadership are ever fully engaging their followers should they fail to examine the realities existing within the organisation.

The issues noted here regarding the concept of engagement provide important insight into the weaknesses that exist in attempts to apply broadly accepted leadership practices as a panacea without considering the context in which they occur. Leadership, according to Tourish (2014) is viewed as a panacea for all of the problems that face the modern organisation, yet definitions of leadership do not address many of the critical issues that shape its existence. Analysis of the concept of engagement clearly exemplifies this point as it becomes evident that context-specific efforts are needed to build a more holistic understanding of leadership practice; one in which the concept of engagement can be applied and understood in specific organisations and cultures in such a way that leaders are able to engage their followers. With these issues in mind, it is pertinent to consider the criticisms of traditional leadership theory that have been provided in the literature so that a solution to ameliorate current gaps in practice can be identified.

Traditional leadership theories have also been challenged in light of globalisation and the need to understand leadership from diverse cultural perspectives (King and Wei, 2014). Baltaci and Balci (2017) reinforced this point by asserting that leadership models based on traditional theories are static and do little to provide a flexible framework for fostering the ability of employees to navigate the complex and chaotic nature of the modern business environment. For this reason, the authors argued that there is a need to revolutionise the current paradigm of leadership so that leaders can be more responsive to changes in the external environment including the advancement of technology and the expansion of globalisation.

A consideration of the criticisms that have been levied against traditional Western leadership theory demonstrates that there is a definitive realisation that, in practice, traditional theories of leadership are either ineffective, or must be adjusted to the local context for meeting the needs of non-Western employees. (Chuang, 2013)

considers this issue in the context of globalisation, noting that the expansion of business internationally has created challenges for many leaders and managers to provide effective support for followers in environments with differing cultures. While this issue has, to some extent, been addressed through efforts to understand cultural dimensions of the workplace—i.e., the seminal work of Geert Hofstede (Hofstede, 1984) which will be discussed in the next pages - in reality, there has been a dearth of effort on the part of modern scholars and practitioners to expand the pragmatic foundations of leadership in a global, culturally diverse environment (Chuang, 2013). Consequently, many leaders and managers struggle to exercise leadership efficiently in specific cultural contexts as warned by Chuang (2013).

The current status quo as it relates to organisational behaviour and leadership is reviewed by Wang *et al.* (2014) who confirmed that Western thought on business and management has long dominated discourse on these topics. As a result, when developing leadership practice, many companies, both in the U.S. and abroad, have approached leadership development through the lens of Western theory and practice. The authors believe that this approach to building leadership practice continues despite the fact that culture and context have consistently been highlighted as essential to successful leadership. Hence, they came to the conclusion that “*Western assumptions become part of leadership rhetoric and reinforce ‘this is how leadership is’*” (Wang *et al.*, 2014: 473). What is demonstrated through this assessment is that there is a foundational way of conceptualising and understanding leadership that influences how most organisations and professionals view the practice. This has a direct impact on the ability of leaders to change perspective in practice and to build new theoretical approaches to practise that recognize elements of context and culture as foundations for leadership action.

Not surprisingly, the problems noted by Gagnon and Collinson (2014) have been addressed by other scholars examining the same phenomenon in the context of leadership research, theory, and practice. Retrospectively, this implies a “disciplinary disconnect” (Rast, 2015:133) in which the history of leadership theory and practice continues to obstruct the ability of scholars and practitioners in looking beyond current leadership approaches to integrating context and culture as pathways for building practice. According to Rast (2015), this continues to have a profound impact on the ability of scholars to advance the discipline of leadership and to fully comprehend how leadership practice is developed and maintained outside of

traditional Western paradigms. This problem is one that is quite pervasive and one that can be frequently encountered when examining current literature on the topic of leadership in non-Western cultures and contexts.

This information would initially seem to create a novel foundation for exploring the paradox created as a result of culture's influence on leadership practice. However, attempts to address it have been made. As mentioned earlier, among the notable researchers who critically examined the role of culture in shaping leadership practices was Geert Hofstede. He conducted several studies in an attempt to elucidate cultural differences among individuals across the globe. His cross-cultural studies focused on building better organisational discourse by highlighting similarities and dissimilarities in the leadership styles of people from different cultural backgrounds. A key aspect of Hofstede's study was the construction of (initially) four cultural dimensions, which he described as: power distance, uncertainty avoidance, individualism, and masculinity (Hofstede, 1984). The fifth was long-term orientation which was later added to further expand Hofstede's framework in 2001 (Venaik *et al.*, 2013). Venaik and colleagues opined that under Hofstede's framework, practitioners could identify critical aspects of culture and be able to either adapt or adjust business practices accordingly to effectively meet the needs of others from diverse cultures.

As noted, a potential framework for addressing current gaps in knowledge regarding employee engagement in culturally diverse settings may be found in the concept of Leadership-As-Practice (LAP). To understand the leadership-as-practice movement and hence its implications for the current work, it is necessary to provide a thorough review of the paradigm and to explore the potential for its application to understanding leadership and engagement in GCC countries. Although the paradigm presents a relatively new movement in the discipline of leadership theory, the approach is rooted in practice-based theory. Consequently, it is helpful to review practice theory first to acquire a foundational understanding of leadership as practice.

A review of what has been noted regarding practice theory indicates that this body of knowledge does not refer to a succinct research tradition (Schatzki, 2001a; Nicolini, 2012). Rather, practice theory is often referred to as an arbitrary construct which has been informed by the work of various scholars including Pierre Bourdieu, Anthony Giddens, Michel Foucault, Jean-François Lyotard, Charles Taylor, Ludwig Wittgenstein, and Martin Heidegger (Schatzki, 2001a; Reckwitz, 2002). Nicolini (2012: 8) codifies this assertion by noting that the approach of practice theory “does

not stem from a single unified theory of practice” but rather emerges as a result of the synthesis of several different and distinct scholarly traditions. Despite the diversity of scholars that have contributed to the field of practice theory, researchers argue that it is possible to distil a similar architecture to the arguments made by those identified as contributing to the field (Schatzki, 2001a; Nicolini, 2012). Practice theory fundamentally embraces the desire to move social sciences “beyond currently problematic dualisms and ways of thinking” (Schatzki, 2001a: 10).

Practice theory was demonstrated by Raelin (2016a) as being foundational to the development of leadership-as practice. In particular, he argued that LAP challenges the traditional views of leadership that have relied on a linear perspective where leaders are supposed to have influence over subordinates. According to him, historically, any conversation regarding leadership practice focused on the proposition that some combination of leader traits and behaviours contribute to the success or failure of those being led (followers) and the organisation. More specifically, leadership as practice addresses many of the current criticisms of traditional leadership theory including those that focus solely on the “leader-follower ontological assumption” (Raelin *et al.*, 2018: 373) that appears to underlie most conceptualisations of leadership practice. A critical review of the literature on leadership as practice suggests that leadership is a collective action emerging from evolving and recurrent patterns that can only be evaluated through an understanding of practice. This idea reflects what Ortner (1984) proposed regarding the importance of observing how people in given situations practice ideas.

According to this school of thought regarding the leader-follower relationship, followers do not acquire the recognition bestowed upon leaders, but they typically enjoy lower risk and are often the benefactors of the decisions made by the leader. When reviewing this definition of leadership, two important issues become clear. First, leadership is embedded in the context of the individual. Decision-making and outcomes are the direct result of the actions taken by the leader. In this environment, the leader is often viewed as acting alone but also as being a visionary capable of achieving desired goals (Dansereau *et al.*, 2013; MacGillivray, 2018). Second, leadership is highlighted as a truly Western concept; one that was developed based on Western vernacular. Leadership has been studied and reviewed in this context since its inception without consideration of how other cultures may view the term or its practice (King and Wei, 2014; MacGillivray, 2018).

A more succinct definition of leadership as practice defines this paradigm as the “conception of leadership as occurring as practice rather than residing in the traits or behaviours of particular individuals” (Raelin, 2016a: 2). And that the concept of practice is developed during the leadership process. Practice generally involves coordinated actions among participants to achieve specific outcomes. Consequently, leadership as practice focuses on the collective actions that occur in a group to produce desired results rather than just the influence of the leader as being the causative agent leading to success or failure (Raelin, 2016a). According to Raelin, what is unique about this perspective is that it does not assign a descriptor to the leader either as an authoritarian, transformational or transactional leader. Instead, an effort is made to evaluate leadership in terms of the day-to-day experiences that contribute to the achievement of goals.

In summary, what is demonstrated from this literature review is a significant gap in understanding both leadership practice and engagement in multinational or non-Western contexts; one that is perpetuated by the overarching presence of Western thought in the development of both concepts. In an effort to address this gap, elements of the leadership as practice approach have been used with particular reference to the importance of the embeddedness to the specific context. Although research on leadership as practice is still in its infancy, it is possible to see the important features of this paradigm which may make it applicable to the need for filling current gaps in understanding both leadership practice and engagement. Leadership as practice takes a contextual or constructivist approach to understanding leadership practice; one in which leadership is not a product of an individual’s actions but rather the outcome of the collective work of all employees in a given work setting (Raelin, 2016b, 2016a; Youngs, 2017; MacGillivray, 2018). Through the use of this theoretical framework it is possible to integrate physical, cognitive, and emotional domains for understanding both what occurs in practice and how engagement is constructed in the context of leadership practice. The following diagram serves as a conceptual framework that addresses the gap by highlighting the need to link the elements emphasised by leadership as practice paradigm. Placing high value on the local contexts of organisation, staff and society means the leadership practices can be better informed and deemed effective as they are focussed on the organisation’s objectives, takes into consideration the local values and local expectations from followers and leaders. Furthermore, it targets the leadership practices on initiatives that foster employee engagement (see Figure 1).



The use of leadership as practice also has implications for truly understanding leadership in a global context and, specifically, in GCC countries. Even though literature on this topic is scant, Davis (2015) believes globalisation has increased the complexity of leadership and what occurs in organisational discourse indicating a need for broader frameworks for evaluating leadership in practice. Leadership as practice is uniquely positioned as a useful inspiration for eliminating cultural boundaries that shape and direct thinking on the subject. Rather than approaching the study of leadership in GCC countries with predetermined classifications and notions of practice, it is possible to evaluate leadership as it unfolds to truly appreciate and understand what is occurring in practice.

3. METHODOLOGY

3.1 Preferred Research Approach

Among other elements, the suitable approach to adopt depends mainly on the researcher's philosophical positioning, methods for collecting and analysing research data, and the particular research questions to be addressed, and/or objectives to be achieved (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The research methodology used in this study is a qualitative approach. As previously stated, the focus of this research was to examine leadership practices within the Qatar Rescue Police to better understand the leadership practices that contribute to employee engagement. Based on this assessment of the purpose of the research, it can be argued that while leadership is practised within the selected group, it is not possible to quantify what occurs in this setting to acquire numerical data. The problem being investigated is one that cannot be easily quantified such that variables and their surrounding nuances can be comprehensively identified and measured. Consequently, a quantitative approach to

research will fail to meet the objectives of the study. If data for this study cannot be quantified, a mixed methods approach would also be unsuitable for conducting this research. They are both not compatible for a number of reasons. They don't align with the researcher's ontological and epistemological considerations.

The qualitative approach not only provided a suitable foundation for exploring the practice of leadership as it occurs in the Rescue Police Department but also an opportunity to maintain the integrity of the phenomenon as it occurs in practice. This is aligned with the concept of leadership-as-practice which provided inspiration for this research. LAP requires an understanding of the collective processes that occur in the context of leadership as it occurs in practice (Raelin et al., 2018). Consequently, it is not possible to identify all of the variables that will be involved in leadership activities that foster employee engagement. Through the use of a qualitative methodology there is a greater possibility of acquiring an understanding of what occurs in the department to facilitate employee engagement.

Exploration of each of the qualitative research designs reviewed above prompted consideration of the use of either an ethnographic or phenomenological approach to the current study. Ethnography was considered due to the depth of understanding that can be garnered from this approach. Myers (2019) argued that ethnographic research requires the immersion of the researcher in the culture under investigation to extract in-depth understanding of a culture or phenomenon. In addition to this, ethnographic research creates a foundation for the investigator to question what many take for granted. The author is of the opinion that ethnographic research often challenges assumptions that underlie many of the theories that are used in everyday practice, which can have a revolutionary impact on a discipline or a theory, resulting in a paradigm shift or revolutionary improvements in systems or processes.

This approach can be difficult to undertake, however, because it requires the researcher to completely engross him or herself in the culture being investigated. For the purposes of this research, it was believed that this was not possible given that the researcher could not consistently observe the Rescue Police Department to collect the data needed for this type of study. Phenomenological study was subsequently selected as the research design to guide the current study. A closer review of the literature on phenomenological approach suggests that:

Broadly defined, phenomenology is defined as the study of phenomena: appearances of things, as they appear in our experience, or the way we experience things and thus the meanings things have in our experiences. In essence, phenomenology studies various types of experiences derived from our perceptions, thoughts, memories, imagination, emotions, volition, embodied action and social activity (Klenke, 2014: 222).

This approach is pragmatic, focusing on data provided by those experiencing a specific phenomenon. The current study provided an opportunity to examine the lived experiences of leaders and followers employed in the Qatar Rescue Police. Phenomenology also appears to be aligned with the leadership-as-practice framework as an effort will be made to understand the lived experiences of leaders and followers in the context of how leadership practice shapes employee engagement.

With regards to sampling of the research, the department employs 100 commissioned officers ranked at the level of lieutenant or above. Additionally, there are 1,000 non-commissioned field officers that work in the department. The former were identified as “leaders” for the purposes of this research, while the latter were identified as “followers” in the data collection process. The sample was drawn from current leaders and followers within the organisation and included: two-unit heads, two middle rank officers, two junior rank officers, and six operational non-commissioned frontline staff members. The sample was selected by the internal admin section based on those present in the shifts rota.

Dworkin (2012) defines a credible sample size for a qualitative study as one that is not more than fifty, yet not less than five participants. Thus, the sample size selected to generate the information on which the conclusions of this research are based is premised on this proposition because, generally, the intent of qualitative studies is to provide a robust amount of information, wherewith a subject of inquiry can deeply be understood from different perspectives. Thus, the researcher relied on data saturation to determine when to stop collecting additional information from additional participants where additional information obtained from them no longer captures new perspectives to those already obtained and coded by the researcher (Guest, Bunce and Johnson, 2006). It thus defines the sample size for this study. Doing this successfully, required the researcher to collect and analyse the research data concurrently. This is achieved by making sure that data items (interview and observations transcripts) are thoroughly coded, categorised and relevant themes identified before moving from one participant to the next. Thus the total number of interviews was 12 candidates (6 leaders and 6 followers) coupled with 12 observations of activities between leaders and followers in different settings.

1.2 Data Collection Method

Methods utilised for this study included observations of interactions between members of the Rescue Police Department as well as interviews with leaders and followers within the organisation. Data collection involved the use of observations and semi structured interviews to acquire data from interviewees from the department. A detailed review of these methods is outlined in the sections below.

Interviews typically adhere to an interview protocol or guide, which is often developed and used by researchers who conduct qualitative studies (Klenke, 2014). Under this approach, general themes relevant to the topic were addressed by asking open-ended questions that foster an open, two-way conversation. Using an interview protocol, in the current research, ensured that themes identified through the literature review regarding employee engagement were directly addressed through questions asked of interviewees. The interviews were recorded using a digital audio tape recorder. In addition to the interviews conducted, the researcher recorded personal observations of interactions between designated leaders and followers within the selected organisation. Field notes of observations included a description of the setting in which interactions between leaders and followers occurred. The context of the interaction was described along with observations regarding how leaders and followers responded during the interaction. Observations were made for average of three hours each day, two to three days per month for a total of five months, accounting to a total of 42 hours of observed data, interactions and practices, which resulted in 160 pages of field notes collected. Observations were made during group activities such as meetings (formal and informal), briefings, and debriefings, as well as one to one meetings. These interactions provided an opportunity to observe the actions of leaders interacting with followers and the perceived effects of these interactions and practices.

3.3 Data Analysis

Analysis is the process of systematically scrutinising data to deduce meanings that are capable of addressing pertinent issues, objectives or questions of a research study (Noble and Smith, 2014). Data analysis begins at different stages for qualitative and quantitative research activities but, for qualitative studies, this begins at the point of transcribing the audio recorded interviews and field notes of observations. Interviews

were transcribed as outlined in this document and coding was performed alongside observational data recorded from field notes to assess similarities and differences in results. This process is designed to analyse qualitative data items. Each interview transcript was coded using open and axial coding mechanisms.

Open codes were integrated and consolidated through axial coding. Axial coding, according to Jaccard and Jacoby (2010: 275) is analogous to “putting an axis through the data”, suggesting that it involves “imposing a coding scheme onto the categories from open coding that identifies connections between the categories”. In this process, the researcher essentially works to connect the dots and to find some congruence between the open codes identified in the initial round of coding. The authors further argued that there are several different methods for drawing connections between the data. These include conceptualising open codes as causally related, identifying open codes as different aspects of a common phenomenon, and/or identifying open codes as part of a process. While there are different approaches to use for creating axial codes, they contended that these are the most common. Based on this assessment, the development of axial codes for the current study included efforts to link open codes based on common phenomena associated with employee engagement.

Data provided from the literature review indicates that while employee engagement has been simplified to include incentives and rewards or physical components of engagement the concept has multiple dimensions that stem from cognitive and emotional aspects, which are currently overlooked in practice (Kahn, 1990). Consequently, it is imperative to incorporate these elements of employee engagement in data analysis, linking open and axial codes based broadly on these themes. Once axial codes were identified for each field note data point and interview, evaluations were made to determine similarities and differences in leader and follower responses. Axial code evaluation provided additional insight into the depth of issues involved in the research as well as the similarities and differences between the responses and notes collected from participants. Prior to building themes and relevant categories from the coding process, member checking was done to ensure that data collected was accurate and that the themes identified are consistent with what the participants provided during the process. Themes were identified and grouped in accordance with thematic analysis. Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) argue that thematic analysis

involves the search for themes that emerge as being important to the description of the phenomenon under study. Braun & Clarke (2006) call it “a method, or process, for identifying and encoding patterns of meaning in primary qualitative research” (Braun & Clarke, 2006: 80).

1.4 Limitation

Although the data obtained from this study will provide novel insight into how leadership occurs in practice to foster employee engagement in an Islamic cultural context, there are some limitations to the work. In particular, the research focuses on the Qatar Rescue Police, suggesting that it may not be possible to extrapolate results to leadership practice beyond this setting. Further, to make the scope of the research manageable, data will only be collected from a small number of participants. In addition, all respondents are male since no women are directly employed by the Qatar Rescue Police. This may also limit the use of the findings beyond the scope of the current study.

4. Data analysis and Discussions

Data from the interviews and observations revealed interesting outcomes. In general, there were few direct criticisms targeting immediate superiors and their leadership practices, although some noted that not all leaders were equally effective at achieving engagement. Speaking of the latter, one respondent commented: *“there are some of them we hoped we wouldn’t work with them again.”* (F6) And F3: *“If I hear a bad word from my boss, surely when I take the patrol and drive I won’t feel happy about it and that can be reflected in the field on my performance level.”*

The same respondent (L1) concluded by saying: *“Some of the challenges the leadership of the department face are related to the different styles of some leaders and supervisors. Not all have the same approach or practices. Some are very strict and not so flexible. Others are open and caring for their staff and work. Leading field security work requires high attention to details and feelings of staff, knowing them and knowing what motivates them, what disappoints them, what makes them connected to their colleagues and supervisors and to the workplace in general. The leader must be close and supportive to his staff, encouraging creativity and high performance.”*

In observation activity, L1's statements could be seen in practice:

10:00 am - *"The meeting starts with the coffee man pouring for the senior rank first who puts forward the junior rank officer to receive the first serving of coffee as a matter of respect and kindness. The meeting continues with a relaxed and informal atmosphere between officers and the deputy director. Social interactions showed relative informality and openness to discuss ideas about work and society. There appears to be an engaging and welcoming environment. Officers of different ranks were treated equally in giving the opportunity for the younger and junior officers to express their opinions and have their thoughts taken into consideration and used in decision making. The meeting begins with humour and informality before attending to the business at hand and making decisions based on input. Positive social interaction between officers despite their rank difference (from lieutenant to the rank of lieutenant colonel) are observed. Deputy director asks the lieutenant about his uncle's famous farm in suburbs of Doha "Al-Dossary farm", he answers with a laughing voice "now he has more tigers than he has birds" The meeting then becomes more serious with the junior officer presenting an issue for the attention of the deputy director. He responds positively to the input and decides to approve the suggested action. Overall, the Deputy Director was informal and very welcoming of lower rank staff, listening to their ideas and opinions on decisions to be taken, saying: "You are in the field and you know more about your requirements". Some officers left and new ones joined, yet the atmosphere did not change. There was a clear expectation from officers that they are allowed to come in and voice their issues in the expectation of positive outcomes."*

FIELDNOTE - OBS1

In synthesising perceptions of responses regarding leadership practices can be summarised as follows:

1. Command, responsibility, control, providing direction and having the ability to influence and provide support for subordinates are elements that recurred in all leader interviews.
2. Decision making and problem solving roles could be implied from most responses but were not always directly stated.
3. In-depth, practical knowledge of policing as a requirement for leadership was directly stated as an important characteristic of leaders by three of the respondents.

4. Certain personal traits (patience, consultation, being a positive role model, knowledge, etc) were regarded as having relevance to the discussion on the nature of leadership. Perceptions of these traits were shaped by cultural context and the way in which leadership was practised.

Follower responses on what constitutes leadership include:

1. Responsibility for operations and outcomes, management, and authority were recurring themes.
2. Experience was considered important.
3. Relationships were highlighted and one respondent noted that in their relationships with and support for subordinates, different practices were applied by different leaders.

In observing meetings and interactions between leaders and followers, various notes have been recorded; 10:00 am - *Two expat policemen of constable rank who just finished their 8 hour duty, approached their shift manager - a captain rank leader - to discuss an issue that occurred towards the end of their shift where they encountered a problem - a senior officer from another department came to the accident scene and breached the cordon, when one of the constables challenged him, he refused to stop and went inside. They were seeking the Captain's guidance and decision on what to do in this situation. The Captain thanked them for sharing such significant issues, so solutions can be sought. The Captain reassured the constables that they have his support and trust to enforce the department procedures. He guided them that they need to submit a report about the incident in exact details, and next time they do the exact same action and prevent anyone who is not authorised to go in the police cordon, even if they were police officers. Constables said "thank you sir for your trust and support, we hope to be up to your expectations always". Both left with a smile and can be heard saying "great, Alhamdulillah or thanks to God for the outcome".*

FIELDNOTE - OBS11

The officer in charge was positive in his language with his two constables, his tone was calm and reassuring, and he listened well to their issue and offered them his support, even though within the police context it would be very hard to stop a senior officer and that can be risky for the constables career, but having a supportive leader

can give them the confidence to do their job right without having to be affected by the hierarchy of ranks.

Another example observed revealed a different reaction from followers towards the interaction they had with their leader. It was the monthly meeting to distribute the rota:

9:00 am - Some 45 constables were sitting in the main briefing room, waiting for their shift manager. When the leader -captain rank- entered the room all constables, including the warrant officer, stood up and saluted him. This appeared to be a standard practice that some leaders insist for it to be followed. The captain started talking in a loud voice and formal tone, telling the officers what needs to be done and providing details on how they must do it. No one in the room said anything and the captain did not invite questions or comments. He said: "Now you all know the details about next month's planning. I will not accept comments or debate. If you have any questions or change requests, go to the director of the department. I accept no discussion on this matter." Upon leaving the room, a few constables started buzzing with comments of disappointment, saying "What's his role as a leader? Why did he accept to be the leader of the shift? He should have some responsibility" some of the constables stood up pushing their chairs away in protest of the captain's attitude.

FIELDNOTE - OBS3

Observations of the leader-follower interaction revealed the impact of varying leadership practices on engagement and morale, as was the case with statements voiced by both leaders and followers during interviews. For example:

In the example of OBS3: Hostile leader practice led to the reaction of followers: *"Why do we go to the big boss? What's his role as a leader?"* This appears to indicate active disengagement.

In the example of OBS2: Neutral leader practice led to the reaction of follower: *"I'm not going to his office to ask about my leave. I will put it in writing and submit it to the administration office."* Hence, the follower seems to feel that the leader's neutrality means that outcome will be the same no matter what channel is followed.

OBS5: Open, supportive leader. Reaction: *“When the senior officer left the office, other officers praised him for his kindness and openness to share ideas, sense of humour and advice.”* In this meeting it was also noted that staff seemed eager to meet and even exceed the leader’s expectations. A high level of engagement is therefore probable. Similar examples resulted in positive reactions from followers in OBS7 and OBS10.

Summing up the responses presented by followers discussing employee engagement and disengagement, as well as observations recorded, several key themes can be identified. Firstly, reduced remuneration, perceived inequities in remuneration, and the lack of opportunities to earn financial incentives were considered questionable. Secondly, a lack of flexibility for workers in obtaining leave and time off - an issue in which some leaders feel disempowered to act due to the available manpower resources in relation to operational needs was noted. Added to that, practical matters such as food when on patrol and the design and allocation of uniforms were raised.

With contractual benefits such as leave and remuneration representing a “promise” on the part of the organisation, a possible “trust deficit” such as that described by Von DerOhe *et al.* (2004) seems likely to be impacting engagement in the Qatar Rescue Police. The unusual circumstances (Covid 19, the 2022 Football World Cup) to which its origins can be attributed have run their course, and rebuilding employee trust in the organisation will be of importance. With lessons learned regarding its ability to fulfil contractual obligations during difficult times, it appears that the organisation’s resilience should receive attention, with contingency plans and budgets offering a means to ensure continuity.

In a uniquely local point, equity in the allocation of shifts and the way in which shifts were allocated in the light of cultural barriers to engagement were questioned and the potential for disengagement when deployments may cause conflicts of interest owing to tribal affiliations was raised. Next, the nature of police work itself may result in disengagement based on the personal orientations and preferences of employees.

In addition, the manner in which leadership and discipline are practised, what appears to be a disconnect between operations and organisational management can contribute to disengagement. There are indications that what certain leaders and followers are seeking is a supportive, collaborative environment in which the

organisation, leaders and followers cooperate towards improved performance and in which the organisation plays an active role in support of their efforts. According to Shore and Shore (1995), perceived organisational support is used by employees to form beliefs regarding the degree to which they are valued for their contributions and the degree to which the organisation cares about their wellbeing.

An additional practice of disengagement, namely the private life of the employee, was also identified, with at least one leader asserting that intervention and dispute mediation on the part of the leader were desirable. This was somewhat unexpected, and differs from common leadership practices found in the West where leaders' intervention in personal lives is generally not considered to be desirable and may even be seen as inappropriate. In Qatar's context, such interventions may be welcomed by most of followers. It has been noted that in Islamic cultures, leaders are seen as role models (Abdullah and Ishak, 2012) and it is considered normal for leaders to intervene as advisors, counsellors or intermediaries in disputes, taking the role of a "spiritual father" as noted by one of the leaders participating in this study. Indeed, in the Prophet's speeches the quote, "*All of you have some people under your responsibility, and you are responsible for their matters too*" (Albukhari: 1/5200) reflects the leader's role in this context and hence, the leader's role may extend beyond the workplace in certain situations.

During observation of leader-follower interactions, it was noted that while some leaders openly discussed factors leading to disengagement with the followers under their command, communicating feedback from the organisation and inviting comment and public or private discussion, there was an instance of a "take it or leave it" attitude in some of the meetings observed which was seen to "disappoint" followers and which could contribute to further disengagement in the workplace. Maslach et al (2001) identified a supportive workplace community as having a strong influence on engagement, and supportiveness requires two-way communication.

Breevaart *et al.* (2014) and their assertion that engagement is largely transactional and is operationalised through "tangible transactions" was reflected when disengagement was examined. However, it is notable that these tangible transactions, when beneficial to followers, seemed primarily linked to a lack of disengagement rather than engagement itself. It could be argued that interpersonal transactions or practices, rather than tangible transactions, in leadership practice could have a substantial impact on either exacerbating disengagement or fostering engagement, even in the

absence of access to increased tangible rewards. Despite the lack of a single, clear definition of engagement, it may be argued that a “lack of disengagement” does not have engagement as a logical consequence. In support of this, Afrahi *et al.* (2022) confirm that distinguishing between workers who are disengaged, those who are neutral, and those who are engaged is helpful. This underlines that, before a high level of engagement can be achieved, factors causing disengagement must be seen to be addressed, at least to the extent possible given reigning limitations to their practicability.

In the context of this research, it can be seen that in a government-led organisation such as the Qatar Rescue Police, addressing disengagement caused by organisational factors such as the provision of tangible rewards is not within the direct capacity of operational leadership. On the other hand, practices such as open discussion between leaders and followers, providing guidance for administrative leaders towards the equitable allocation of rewards, application of constructive performance management procedures, and the practice of advocacy as a link between followers and the organisation effected by leaders contribute towards alleviating disengagement as observed multiple times during leader-follower interactions. This is confirmed by Frank *et al.* (2004) in their work on communication satisfaction and its influence on employee engagement. These authors noted that first-line supervisors were of particular importance in promoting engagement through constructive communication and by acting as a communication channel between organisational leadership and their subordinates. In observed interactions (such as OBS 5, 6 and 7), it was apparent that in the absence of direct problem-solving authority on the part of leaders, commitment to advocacy and feedback was highly regarded by followers.

In summary, the local context seems to indicate that the basic rewards-based factors linked to disengagement are broadly similar to those observed in the West and, as in the Western context, can be resolved or mitigated through the organisation’s intervention. The primary differences noted included the role of tribal affiliations and the role of the leader as a “spiritual father” who can even mediate in the private lives of subordinates. Finally, the organisation’s reluctance to grant decision-making powers to experienced, primarily expat constables in routine matters, may reflect on the local context in which a mostly expat workforce is managed by a small

number of Qatari citizens with a possible dearth of trust being present in the way this relationship is conducted.

Among leaders, there was far less consensus in this area than in the preceding areas of interest. Opinions on the leader's role in fostering engagement ranged from a "family-oriented" approach to the unexpected assertion that follower engagement could be excessive and counterproductive. While most sources focus on the potential positive outcomes of engagement, a handful of studies, including that of Nerstad et al (2019) have indicated that there is potential for negative outcomes when employees become highly engaged in their work. This concept indicates an area for further study, and indicates a need to monitor the wellbeing of highly engaged employees for indicators of burnout and the development of cynicism towards their work as recommended by Nerstad and colleagues.

Most, but not all, leader participants were of the opinion that fair treatment and leadership practices that fostered two-way communication, as well as advocacy for follower concerns at higher organisational levels were of importance. Finally, the opinion that the leader is part of the team in the roles of provider of guidance, affirmation, and as a communication channel between followers and organisational leadership was expressed. This accords with Islamic leadership theory as elucidated by Abdallah (2019) as well as Western findings on the subject of employee engagement such as those described by Sundaray (2011). However, it is notable that not all participants shared the same views highlighting a need for greater consistency.

It is interesting to note that followers' and leaders' opinions on the role of leadership in promoting engagement differed in some respects and that followers from both Qatari and expat backgrounds were more unanimous in their views regarding the importance of engagement and their direct leaders' role in its promotion. Recurring themes included respect and recognition, positive working relationships, access to advice, and equitable treatment. This is supported by Bedarkar and Pandita (2014), with their assertion that a positive connection between subordinates and leaders is key to fostering engagement. It is also reflected by Popli and Rizvi (2016) in their reference to "positive influence" as a means of promoting engagement. Views indicative of a family-like relationship between followers and between followers and

leaders were apparent in the use of vocabulary relevant to family relationships when both followers and leaders referred to workplace relationships.

The absence of direct contact with more senior leadership was noted in the analysis of followers' interviews, with many of them reiterating sources of dissatisfaction related to remuneration, leave, and other benefits. Interestingly, although some respondents suggested addressing these issues as promoters of greater engagement, the emphasis on direct, collaborative working relationships and leadership practice methodologies was far greater in discussions relating to engagement, being less apparent in the context of disengagement. This seems to confirm that mitigating disengagement requires transactional influence while promoting engagement has a stronger correlation with leadership practice and supports findings such as Finnegan and Taylor's (2004) opinion that first line supervisors have a strong influence over employee engagement as well as MacLeod and Clarke's (2009) identification of "engaging management" as an important role for line managers.

The importance of engaging management was noted in observations. Meetings in which senior ranks strove to demonstrate their respect for the opinions of their juniors, encouraging open communication, and in which concern for their welfare was demonstrated, appeared to result in heightened engagement, even when the resolution of practical matters was not within the power of the senior officers present.

The concepts of self-determination, autonomy, and empowerment led to extensive discussion among followers interviewed. While being aware that police work is, by nature, procedural, some followers appeared to be frustrated that despite their knowledge and experience of correct procedures, some leaders delegated supervision to junior officers with insufficient knowledge and experience resulting in extended communication channels and delays that could impact the efficacy of a police constable's work and along with that, the maintenance of public order and safety. Most constables seemed to accept limited autonomy as being a reality of police work but expressed satisfaction when reporting that leaders trusted their judgement in certain contexts. However, the general impression garnered from leaders was that some felt that autonomy could be ruled out; while most felt that there was some scope for interpretation, creativity, and autonomy in handling routine police actions. Besides the possibility that delayed responses in emergency situations may lead to

negative outcomes for the public, frustration can lead to disengagement and even workplace deviance as noted by Bennett *et al.* (2018).

The concept that micromanagement is not always necessary was confirmed by certain followers who noted with pride that their leaders had confidence in their recommendations when seeking approval for certain types of actions, and empowered them to exercise autonomy in conducting certain routine matters and procedures. On the other hand, there were respondents who reported having “no power at all,” a potential further indication that conflicting leadership interventions are in operation or that there is a need for further training for patrolling constables.

An interesting finding of the research interviews relates to the pairing of constables on patrol. A follower observed that seemingly-random pairings hindered communication and mutual understanding and collaboration between constables, making their work more difficult. He called for more permanent pairings, feeling that constables could be more productive in this context. In a similar vein, one leader remarked that he would not pair constables from tribes with significant political differences. However, without deeper investigation into deployments, it may be difficult to form any conclusion other than that these points should be considered in the deployment of staff with possible policies outlining best practices for deployments being formulated to guide leadership practice.

The ways in which engagement can be fostered can, to a certain extent, be addressed through leadership practices, and suggestions regarding leadership practices targeting improved employee engagement will be discussed in the following section.

5. CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Contribution to Practice and Theory

As noted in the literature review, utilising current theories on employee engagement without modification relative to the cultural context that prevails in non-western cultures may not meet with success. However, the results of this study show that these modifications often represent nuances in the application of theory rather than completely differing principles.

The findings may have applicability among other Islamic cultures that share similar values and may therefore contribute to the body of academic knowledge relating to leadership and employee engagement.

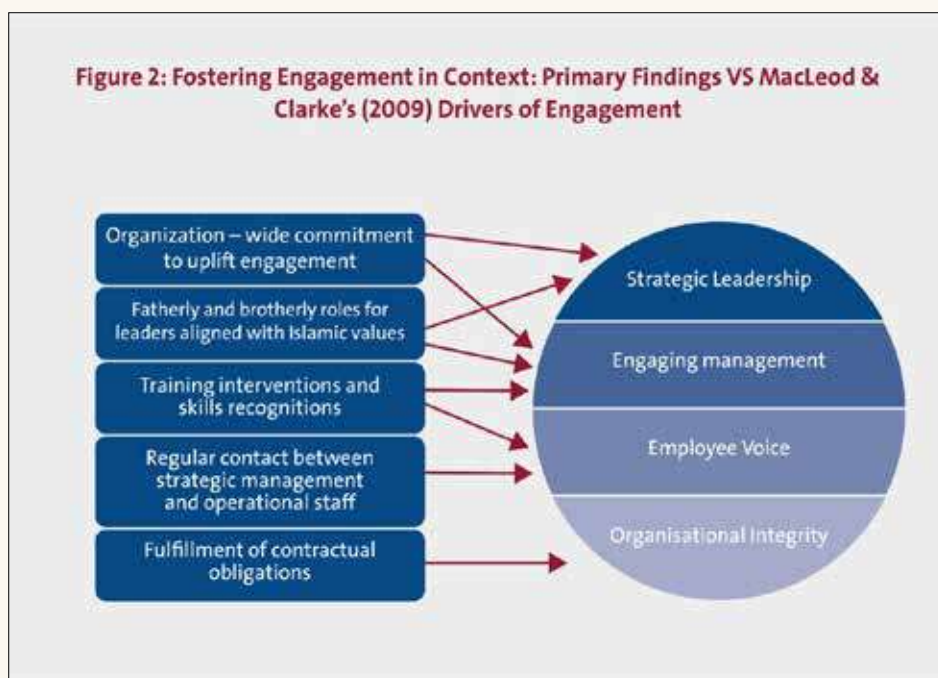
For example, although it is likely that there is a greater reverence for leadership, whether “good” or “bad” in Islamic cultures than in the West, employees value presence above distance and appear to demonstrate elevated engagement when leaders listen to their opinions and respond appropriately. Obedience to leadership is a cultural requirement based on religious values, but higher levels of initiative and performance were evident among the followers of engaging leaders. In the cultural context, fostering “brotherhood” or “fatherhood” roles (Farhet et al, 2000) and reinforcing the organisational mission as a vehicle for the greater good will be important in fostering engagement as noted by Chadley (1998).

Although “role model” leaders attract admiration around the world, the concept of the leader as a father figure and counsellor may be less accepted in the West while being regarded as a highly desirable role in certain cultures shaping their values based on Islam (Khan and Zia-ur- Rehman, 2021). It also reflects on organisational leadership and the strategic narrative in context of the employer-employee relationship as well as the overall mission of the organisation, which must be seen to reflect Islamic ideals if engagement is to be fostered. Islamic values shape social expectations in Qatar and Islamic leadership must therefore be seen to practise management in accordance with these values and expectations. Meiani and Putra (2019) and Nasrah et al. (2021) observed the importance of Islamic codes of ethics in leadership with similar results, attributing them to personal traits. However, since the evidence of “traits” lies in practices, it could be argued that practices can be easily learned and implemented regardless of personal predispositions (Raelin, 2018).

As can be seen from following the links suggested in the figure, broad concepts related to engagement apply but are modified by cultural context. This accords with MacLeod and Clarke’s (2009) view that “enablers of engagement have proved to be useful lenses which can help organisations assess the effectiveness of their approaches,” but underlines the importance of assessing these drivers with reference to cultural context. This study may therefore contribute an Islamic perspective to the broader body of academic knowledge related to employee engagement.

With closer reference to the organisation-specific practical recommendations based on the study's findings, but also with potential for transferability to other organisations seeking to enhance engagement in Qatari organisations, the below figure illustrates the ways in which recommended practices relate to MacLeod and Clarke's (2009) synthesis of the drivers of engagement. Strategic leadership can become part of an engaging narrative and this requires interactive practices on the part of managers as part of an overall commitment to the upliftment of employee engagement. The nurturing roles of leaders seen in the role of fathers and elder brothers plays a role, and the provision of training and skill recognition strengthens and adds authority to the employee voice as a contributing factor in both day-to-day and strategic decision-making. Underpinning this is the bread-and-butter necessity, or hygiene factor, of ensuring that transactional contractual obligations are fulfilled by the organisation as evidence of its integrity.

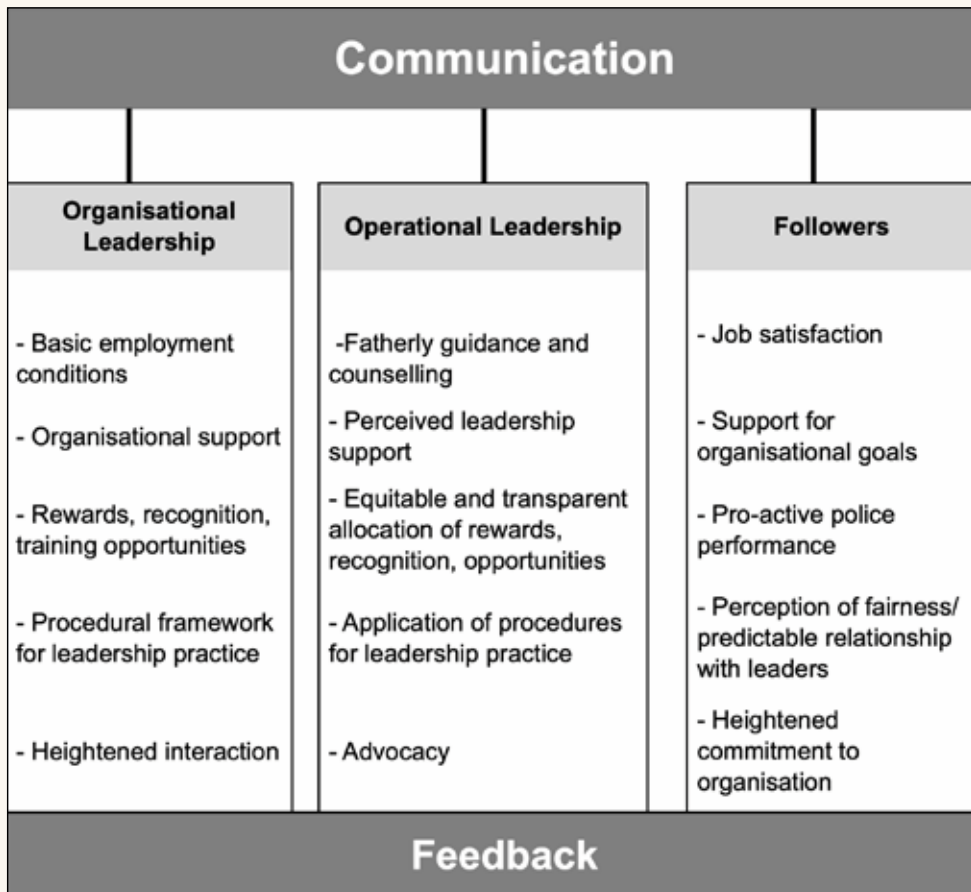
Figure 2: Fostering Engagement in Context: Primary Findings VS MacLeod & Clarke's (2009) Drivers of Engagement



The following framework strives to depict the suggested way in which the organisation, operational leaders, and subordinates interact with the aim of achieving heightened employee engagement through effective leadership. The key to unlocking heightened employee engagement relies on communication channels and feedback

as well as a strong, organisation-wide commitment to strategies targeting employee engagement. Evaluating what matters to subordinates can be partially achieved through quantitative measurement, but the qualitative value of direct verbal feedback from operational leaders and their subordinates will be of value since it also allows an opportunity for further suggestions and opinions from the leaders and followers which engagement strategies will target rather than relying on measurement criteria which impose limitations in the factors to be considered.

Figure 3: Source - author's own



The following figure attempts to encapsulate the findings of the study relevant to practices contributing to disengagement in the Qatar Rescue Police and MacLeod and Clarke's (2009) synthesis of current knowledge related to employee engagement.

It will be followed by a detailed set of recommendations that, while specific to the Qatar Rescue Police, may have relevance to other Qatari governmental organisations, and to a certain extent, private organisations operating in Qatar. The needs of expats are of particular importance in Qatari contexts, since the majority of the workforce is drawn from neighbouring countries, and leaders seeking to engage employees must therefore pay particular attention to this area in creating an environment that is conducive to employee engagement.



5.2 Recommendations

5.2.1 Organisational leadership is recommended to develop and follow an organisation-wide strategy for improved employee engagement

Although line managers can attempt to promote employee engagement, making it a matter of personal choice and “management approach” leaves room for variation as was seen in leader and follower interviews. Besides this, operational leaders implementing leadership practices to promote employee engagement will be constrained by organisational factors beyond their control. Hence, to optimise employee engagement, an organisation-wide strategy targeting engagement, removing barriers to engagement, stipulating practices that promote it, measuring outcomes, and continually striving for improvement should be implemented.

5.2.2 Organisational leadership should periodically engage with operational leaders as well as their followers.

Despite the limitations of this study, which only dealt with leadership at operational level, some practices that could be implemented by higher management leaders were identified and should not be overlooked. First among these, contact and communication between organisational management and line management, and organisational management and employees would appear to be in need of enhancement. The proposed meetings, as suggested by respondents, should be held at regular intervals and should target clear, constructive communication regarding tangible, practical issues confronting operational leaders and their followers, what is being done about them, and if nothing is being done, why this is not possible. Feedback should be invited.

5.2.3 Organisation-wide training initiatives for leaders

Since it is recommended that efforts to advance engagement should be organisation-wide, it is imperative for strategic management and operational management to be aware of the importance of employee engagement, its benefits, and how it can be promoted, acting to develop an organisational culture that enables line managers to work towards this end. Although local context may call for modification of accepted knowledge in this field, these seem to relate primarily to interpersonal relationships and the way in which principles are applied and many of the accepted principles regarding how engagement can be heightened appear to match local culture. For

example, mutual respect is accepted as a prerequisite for engagement in Western approaches to engagement (MacLeod and Clarke, 2013) and is seen as a guiding principle in Qatari society and under Islam (Rizvi, 1995). Hence, the principles underlying the concept of employee engagement should not be entirely alien, and it is recommended that management at all levels should be equipped with the knowledge necessary to understand the importance of employee engagement, its basic, underlying principles, and the methods used to measure it.

5.2.4 Instituting clear guidelines for the provision of monetary and non-monetary rewards

Also at organisational level, the provision of monetary and non-monetary rewards should be reviewed and standardised. Presbitero (2016) observed that the management of rewards as a practice can have positive results on engagement and organisational outcomes. Whether or not perceptions of favouritism or lack of equity in the provision of rewards are subjective, confirming a transparent framework that indicates the requirements for their allocation could either end inequities, or clarify what is required in order for incentives to be awarded. The achievement of rewards and recognition could thus form a clearly-defined enabling factor in the promotion of engagement, since employees at all levels would be aware of the actions to be taken in order to gain them. From a faith-based perspective, “*God blessed a person who perfected his work*” (Almusnad: 4386). With opportunities for recognition strategically aligned with the organisation’s objectives, they can be used in their furtherance as well as in promoting employee engagement.

5.2.5 Attempting to formulate a uniform policy for the deployment of staff taking cultural context and the nature of the work required into account. Consideration of the concept of more permanent employee partnerships.

In discussions related to engagement and disengagement among followers in the Rescue Police, it appeared that there was some lack of clarity in understanding why constables are deployed in certain ways when proceeding with patrols. One respondent suggested some rotation of patrols, allowing all constables an opportunity to work on generally preferred routes at some time or another.

Further complicating the issue is the valid observation that in geographical areas dominated by certain tribes, it would be undesirable to deploy constables with tribal affiliations that are too nearly related to that which is prevalent in the area. It was felt that initiating punitive action against tribal “brothers” may lead to disengagement,

either because the action is carried out but not preferred owing to social stigma, or not carried out at all. And, when political or social tensions occur between tribes or nationalities residing in Qatar, it may be counter-productive to deploy members of these tribes in working partnerships. Tribal affiliations and loyalties are a powerful social force in Qatar and the extent to which this may affect the work environment forms a potential area for future study.

5.2.6 Access to confidential counselling for constables experiencing family or work-related problems

Police work can often be stressful, traumatic or disturbing and the resulting burnout can lead to disengagement. In Western cultures, access to counselling, usually from a psychologist, for police constables is an accepted norm. In the Arab world, however, there is a greater stigma associated with consultation with mental health professionals than there is in the West (Al-Krenawi, 2005).

For this reason, juniors will often approach senior officers to act as counsellors, even though they may not have formal training in this area. An example of this was seen in the leader who, in his interview, related an anecdote in which he provided counselling and mediated a family dispute confided in him by a constable in order to address disengagement in his work owing to this “distraction.”

It is therefore proposed that as accepted “father figures,” leaders should be trained in some of the basic tenets of acting as counsellors and be required to avail themselves in this role when followers require it. However, if for some reason, constables should feel the need for an alternative, a more senior member of the organisation, possibly with a higher level of training, should be designated as the person to consult, and constables should feel that they can do so without in any way prejudicing their positions in the workplace and on the understanding that any form of direct intervention (for example, in acting in the role of mediator) would occur with consent.

By encouraging followers to seek counselling, the Qatar Rescue Police could, to some degree, address or help to mitigate disengagement caused by family issues, workplace conflicts, or trauma incurred in the course of work, providing additional support and helping to build on the desired “family-like” nature of the employment

relationship. For expats, in particular, a dearth of opportunities for support from their direct family in other countries within the region would no doubt be felt, and by reinforcing the supportive, “father figure” role of leaders, this could to some extent be mitigated while simultaneously promoting engagement.

5.2.7 The encouragement of formal and informal opportunities for social interaction between leaders and their followers: “fun” with the workplace family

The perceived “power distance” in countries like Qatar may exist to a certain degree and in specific contexts, but societal values limit the degree to which there is approval for “distance.” When leader and follower respondents use the terms “brother” and “father,” it is not simply a matter of vocabulary, but a deep-seated recognition of the nature of the society, and individuals’ perceptions of responsibility towards one another, albeit in a context in which seniority is deeply respected.

Strengthening the bonds implied by this relationship can be difficult when workplace pressures intervene, however, efforts should be made to support its furtherance, both in formal and informal contexts. It was noted that when one of the followers related an anecdote about constables being invited to play football with their leader, it was evident that this consideration both delighted the respondent and contributed to his respect for, and relationship with, the leader in question. Although time pressure and shortages of manpower when confronted with intensive demands on policing (such as that experienced during the recent Football World Cup in Qatar) are all too apparent, leaders in the Qatar Rescue Police can do much to build morale, engagement, and their relationship with followers when able to indulge in formal and informal, social interactions.

It is recommended that such practices be encouraged and that when possible, organisational support in the form of facilities or events occurring during working hours be provided.

5.3 Final thoughts

It became apparent that leadership does matter in effecting employee engagement in the Qatar Rescue Police even when direct leaders are limited by organisational-based constraints. However, certain organisational and leadership practices may

contribute to disengagement. Beyond the relationship between constables and their direct supervisors and leaders, a strategic approach to the development of leadership practice is suggested, allowing for a top-down, organisation-wide approach to engagement strategies.

Specific interventions that may contribute to this initiative at operational level were identified, and these broadly accord with many of the leadership and engagement theories outlined in mainstream literature, with differences relating to the cultural and organisational context taking the form of nuances that modify, but do not necessarily contradict, these theories. However, nuanced though they may be, they highlight the importance of local and organisational context in implementing interventions and caution in implementing interventions based on theory alone even when this is complemented by practical experience in Western contexts.

It could thus be argued that when implementing mainstream approaches to engagement in non-Western contexts, leaders should be sensitive to cultural and societal differences and their potential for rendering well-intentioned interventions ineffective. For example, access to counselling is widely accepted as a means of promoting mental health, averting burnout, and contributing to engagement in police operatives, but while access to a psychologist would be the correct means of implementing this in the West, stigma, and the feeling that by showing “weakness” they are demonstrating a lack of the “courage” required from followers in the cultural context would limited its applicability in Qatar.

In the context of leadership, the “father figure role” often negatively regarded in the West, was seen as highly constructive in fostering engagement. However, such a role is considered to be positive in context and has the potential to be both benign and consultative. Farhet *al.* (2000) define paternalistic leadership as a combination of discipline and authority coupled with “fatherly benevolence.” The father figure is present, cooperative, collaborative and involved, and the interviews conducted as part of this study appear to reinforce the importance of practices that serve as practical demonstrations of these qualities. Within the cultural context, as well as the militaristic one, it could be argued that practices furthering the familial nature of relationships between employees and their leaders could be extremely beneficial in fostering employee engagement and statements made during interviews seem to support this. This conclusion is supported by a study conducted in Pakistan by Khan and Zia-ur- Rehman (2021) in which the authors found that paternalistic leadership can be correlated with job-related affective wellbeing in their Islamic cultural context.

However individual interpretations of leadership and what constitutes constructive leadership practices lead to inconsistency, hence the conclusion that Raelin’s 2016

concept of Leadership as a practice that is developed collaboratively could serve as culturally appropriate inspiration for creating a more consistent and constructive approach to leadership within the Qatar Rescue Police, furthering organisational goals and employee engagement among both operational leaders and their subordinates.

As an organisation with militaristic structures, the Qatar Rescue Police may appear to present a different milieu to that found in other government departments. However, attitudes towards command and leadership discussed in this study are rooted in the cultural context prevailing in Qatar and the broader principles applicable to effective leadership and its role in employee engagement may have applicability beyond the context of the organisation. However, confirming or refuting the potential of these findings for applicability in contexts other than that of the Qatar Rescue Police would require further study.

Hence, it may be said that the current study has shown the importance of leadership in employee engagement in the Qatar Rescue Police, but presents broad conclusions and recommendations that give rise to additional questions regarding their operationalisation while posing questions regarding employee engagement among leaders, particularly those occupying decision-making roles. Indeed, if employee engagement is to form a strategic focus for the organisation, engaged high-level leadership that is committed to the concept of employee engagement as a means of achieving greater organisational efficacy will be a requirement for its future success.

At operational level, this study identifies obstacles to engagement and leadership practices that promote engagement among the primarily expat workforce. However, obstacles to engagement and factors that may promote engagement are likely to differ when examining the primarily native Qatari demographic seen among higher echelon leadership. With engaged leadership being a primary requirement in driving an organisation-wide commitment towards heightened employee engagement, determining the factors that promote engagement among higher-echelon leaders in Qatari government organisations represents a potentially fruitful field for future study.

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