

After completing an undergraduate degree, I opted to continue into 'further and higher education' (NCHE, 2009, p.6), to further help me in my career in areas which are relevant to Malta's economic and social development. The completion of my **Masters Degree in Business Administration (MBA)** awarded by the University of Derby (UK), could not have been possible without the collaboration and participation of different individuals as well as the **Tertiary Education Scholarship Scheme (TESS)**, who funded my studies.

Employee engagement refers to the 'positive, affective psychological work-related state of mind that leads employees to actively invest themselves emotionally, cognitively, and physically in their work' (Lee & Ok, 2014, p.1). The aforementioned term, is a relatively new psychological concept, regularly addressed at the organisation level and thus often fails to accurately identify what truly engages employees as individuals at work (Karatepe, 2013). According to Lee & Ok (2014) and Simpson (2009), despite the term's ever more recent popularity, employee engagement is less researched in the hospitality industry when compared to other industries. Moreover, the authors have also stated that such a low rate is slowly decreasing by time (Gallup Inc., 2013). Such results show that despite the organisation's awareness and attempts in adequately addressing employee work engagement in practice, further research in this field is still needed, especially within the hospitality industry.

In the hospitality industry, the organisation's success has been stated by Garlick (2010), to be greatly determined by the workforce. Such reasoning lies in the nature of the work in the industry. It is ultimately the workforce who delivers the service as well as sells the product. This would in turn influence the rate of organisational performance and its success rates (Terglav et al. 2016). After all, employees who occupy a front-role within the hospitality industry must provide high quality levels of service, especially in luxury hotels such as those carrying a 5-star hotel rating (Lee et al. 2015; Valdivia et al. 2018). The term 'front-line employees' refers to the employees who are assigned tasks which ultimately bring them into regular or semi-regular contact with guests and thus play a major role in the hotels' guests' experience (Valdivia et al. 2018). Having employees within an organisation who are fully engaged is considered to be an effective human resource strategy, as an engaged workforce can be an efficient strategy for an organisation's productivity (Soika, 2014). In addition, it can provide a product or service of high quality, despite variant or low levels of resources and fluctuating volumes of the size of the workforce itself (Valdivia et al. 2018). Thus, the European Commission (2017) recommends that organisations should strive 'to enhance staff engagement' (EU, 2018, p.1).

A research study titled '**The impact of managers' leadership style on front line employees' work engagement: a single case-study of a 5-Star Hotel in Malta**' was conducted. The aim of this research was to critically determine the managers' impact on front line employees' work engagement in order to ensure the provision of high quality service. The determined key objectives were aimed to critically identify employees' understanding of employee engagement and on which such a phenomenon is based, to identify and criticise the most important front line employee work engagement factors and to critically determine which leadership style may be adopted in order to increase such factors, and thus front line employee work engagement.

This cross-sectional qualitative study was conducted through a case-study approach at one local 5-star Hotel in Malta. Due to ethical considerations, the hotel was referred to by the pseudonym: Park-towers. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with five front line employees selected through random sampling, from the Front Office, Food & Beverage and Housekeeping departments within Park-towers. One manager from each department was also selected to participate in a semi-structured interview. Eight participants were interviewed in total, which interviews were all audio-recorded, transcribed and analysed thematically.

Findings gathered proved that departmental management have a strong and definite impact and are the main determinants of front line employees' work engagement in Park-towers. It can be concluded that in order for employees' work engagement to positively increase, managers should strive to promote supportive relationships, recognition systems, feedback, and decision-making opportunities. Such as in the situational theory, Park-towers' front line managers should switch from a democratic to an autocratic style of leadership, according to the front line employees' needs and characteristics in order to increase front line employees' work engagement. The main conclusions gathered from the research's main findings were also applied and integrated within the 'Job Demands and Resources Model' by Bakker and Demerouti (2008, p.209) which was used as the conceptual framework of this study.