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Abstract

Purpose: The aim of the study was to assess the role of leadership style in employee retention in Senegal.

Materials and Methods: This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

Findings: The study indicated that leadership style plays a crucial role in employee retention. Effective leadership fosters a positive work environment, which significantly influences employees' decisions to stay with an organization. Transformational leadership, characterized by inspiring and motivating employees, tends to enhance job satisfaction and commitment, thereby reducing turnover rates. Leaders who prioritize open communication, provide constructive feedback, and recognize employees' contributions create a supportive atmosphere that encourages loyalty. Conversely, authoritarian leadership styles,

which rely on strict control and limited employee autonomy, often result in higher stress levels and job dissatisfaction, leading to increased turnover. Additionally, leaders who invest in employees' professional development and show genuine concern for their well-being contribute to a sense of belonging and long-term commitment. Therefore, cultivating a leadership style that emphasizes empathy, empowerment, and employee engagement is essential for retaining a talented and motivated workforce.

Implications to Theory, Practice and Policy: Social exchange theory, self-determination theory and path-goal theory may be used to anchor future studies on assessing the role of leadership style in employee retention in Senegal. Organizations should prioritize leadership development programs that cultivate transformational and authentic leadership qualities among managers and supervisors. Policymakers and HR practitioners can play a crucial role in shaping organizational policies and practices that support employee retention.

Keywords: *Leadership, Style, Employee, Retention*

INTRODUCTION

Employee retention refers to the strategies and practices employed by organizations to reduce turnover and retain valuable employees. It is crucial for maintaining productivity, morale, and the overall health of an organization. In the United States, for instance, the Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS) reported that the average employee tenure in 2020 was about 4.1 years, indicating a slight decline from previous years, suggesting a need for enhanced retention strategies (BLS, 2020). Similarly, in Japan, the Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare found that the average length of service was approximately 12 years in 2020, reflecting a culture of long-term employment but also highlighting challenges in retaining younger employees (Ministry of Health, Labour and Welfare, 2020). These statistics underscore the ongoing need for effective employee retention practices in developed economies (Smith, 2019).

In developing economies, the challenges of employee retention can be more pronounced due to economic instability and rapid market changes. For example, in India, a study revealed that the IT sector experiences high turnover rates, with an average tenure of about 3 years, emphasizing the need for better career development opportunities (Ramesh, 2020). Similarly, in Brazil, employee turnover in retail and manufacturing sectors remains high, with average tenures of less than 2 years, largely due to economic volatility and competitive job markets (Silva, 2021). These trends indicate that organizations in developing economies must invest in comprehensive retention strategies, including competitive compensation and career advancement opportunities, to maintain a stable workforce (Ramesh, 2020).

Another significant example is China, where rapid economic growth and industrialization have led to increased employee turnover, especially in manufacturing and technology sectors. The average tenure in these sectors is around 2.5 years, with younger employees frequently seeking better opportunities and higher salaries (Zhang, 2019). Similarly, in South Africa, the mining and healthcare sectors experience high turnover rates, with average tenures of about 2 years, driven by factors such as labor disputes, inadequate compensation, and challenging working conditions (Nkosi, 2021). To combat these issues, organizations in developing economies must invest in employee engagement, continuous training, and development programs to enhance job satisfaction and loyalty. These strategies are essential for retaining talent and ensuring sustainable economic progress in these regions (Zhang, 2019).

In Brazil, turnover is notably high in the retail and manufacturing sectors, with average tenures of less than two years. Economic volatility and insufficient employee benefits contribute to these trends, emphasizing the need for strategies like improved compensation packages and professional development opportunities to enhance retention (Silva, 2021). In Indonesia, the manufacturing sector experiences significant retention challenges. The average tenure in this sector is about 2.5 years, influenced by low wages, poor working conditions, and limited career growth opportunities (Suryani, 2019). Similarly, in the Philippines, the business process outsourcing (BPO) industry faces high turnover rates, with employees often leaving within two years due to high stress levels and better opportunities in other sectors (Reyes, 2020). These trends suggest that organizations in these economies must focus on enhancing employee engagement, offering competitive salaries, and providing clear career advancement paths to improve retention (Reyes, 2020).

In other developing economies such as Mexico, employee retention is influenced by various factors including job satisfaction, compensation, and career development opportunities. The

average tenure in Mexico's manufacturing sector, for example, is approximately 3 years, with turnover rates influenced by factors such as wage competitiveness and job stability (Garcia, 2021). In Thailand, the hospitality industry faces retention challenges, with average employee tenures of around 2 years due to issues like low salaries and limited career advancement prospects (Chaiyapat, 2018). These examples highlight the need for organizations in these countries to focus on improving working conditions, offering competitive salaries, and providing avenues for professional growth to enhance employee retention.

In Egypt, the construction sector experiences turnover issues with an average tenure of about 2.5 years, driven by factors like project-based employment and lack of long-term career paths (El-Gohary, 2019). Similarly, in Vietnam, turnover rates in the technology sector are high, with employees often leaving within 2 years due to opportunities in multinational companies and better compensation packages (Truong, 2022). These instances underscore the importance of implementing effective retention strategies such as skill development programs, flexible work arrangements, and recognition initiatives to retain talent in these developing economies.

Similarly, in South Africa, high turnover rates in sectors such as healthcare and education pose significant challenges. A study found that healthcare workers, in particular, have an average tenure of around 2.5 years, driven by factors such as burnout, better opportunities abroad, and dissatisfaction with working conditions (Ngwenya, 2021). In the education sector, teachers frequently leave within three years, often due to low pay, heavy workloads, and inadequate support (Mokoena, 2019). These trends indicate that to improve retention, organizations in developing economies must address both financial and non-financial aspects of employment, including enhancing workplace conditions, offering career progression pathways, and ensuring competitive salaries (Ngwenya, 2021).

In Ghana, the banking sector experiences significant turnover challenges. A study found that the average tenure of bank employees is approximately 2 years, driven by high job demands, stress, and more lucrative opportunities elsewhere (Adjei, 2020). Similarly, in Uganda, the education sector faces retention issues, with teachers often leaving within the first three years of employment due to low salaries and inadequate professional support (Nakisozi, 2018). These trends highlight the necessity for comprehensive retention strategies, such as improving working conditions, offering competitive compensation, and providing robust career development opportunities to retain employees in Sub-Saharan Africa (Adjei, 2020).

In Sub-Saharan Africa, employee retention is also a critical issue, influenced by socio-economic factors and political instability. In Nigeria, for instance, the average tenure in various sectors is approximately 1.5 years, reflecting high turnover due to factors such as poor working conditions and lack of career growth opportunities (Okafor, 2021). Similarly, in Kenya, the average tenure is about 2 years, with high turnover rates in the service and agriculture sectors, driven by low wages and insufficient employee benefits (Mwangi, 2019). These patterns highlight the importance of improving workplace conditions and offering career development programs to enhance employee retention in Sub-Saharan Africa (Okafor, 2021).

Leadership styles significantly impact employee retention within organizations. Transformational leadership, characterized by leaders who inspire and motivate their teams through a shared vision, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration, plays a crucial role in reducing turnover rates. Studies have shown that transformational leaders can foster a positive work environment,

promote employee engagement, and provide developmental opportunities, leading to higher levels of job satisfaction and commitment among employees (Abdullah, Khan & Awan, 2021). This, in turn, contributes to decreased turnover and increased organizational loyalty.

Transactional leadership, which focuses on exchanging rewards and punishments for performance, may have a limited impact on long-term employee retention. While this leadership style emphasizes clear goals, rules, and performance expectations, it may struggle to inspire intrinsic motivation and engagement. Research suggests that employees seeking a meaningful and empowering work experience may be more likely to turnover under transactional leadership, as they may perceive a lack of support and motivation (Wang & Hsieh, 2020). Similarly, laissez-faire leadership, characterized by minimal guidance and decision-making, often leads to reduced employee satisfaction, lack of direction, and increased turnover as employees may feel unsupported and disengaged (Awan, Khan, & Ahmad, 2019).

Problem Statement

The role of leadership style in employee retention remains a critical concern for organizations seeking to enhance workforce stability and performance. Leadership styles such as transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire have varying impacts on employee satisfaction, engagement, and commitment, which in turn influence retention rates (Abdullah, Khan, & Awan, 2021). However, the specific mechanisms through which different leadership styles affect employee retention outcomes are not fully understood, posing challenges for organizations in developing effective retention strategies (Wang & Hsieh, 2020). Additionally, the dynamic nature of modern workplaces and evolving employee expectations necessitate a deeper investigation into how leadership styles can be adapted or modified to better align with employee retention goals (Awan, Khan & Ahmad, 2019). Therefore, this study aims to explore and analyze the nuanced relationship between leadership style and employee retention within contemporary organizational contexts.

Theoretical Framework

Social Exchange Theory

Originated by George Homans in 1958 and further developed by Peter Blau, Social Exchange Theory posits that individuals engage in social relationships based on the principle of reciprocity and mutual benefit. In the context of leadership style and employee retention, this theory suggests that employees may choose to stay with an organization if they perceive that their contributions (such as effort, skills, and dedication) are valued and reciprocated by the leadership through rewards, recognition, and opportunities for growth (Allen, 2018). The relevance of Social Exchange Theory lies in understanding how leadership behaviors, such as transformational leadership, can create positive exchanges between leaders and employees, leading to increased job satisfaction, commitment, and ultimately, higher retention rates.

Self-Determination Theory (SDT)

Developed by Edward Deci and Richard Ryan in the 1980s, Self-Determination Theory focuses on individuals' intrinsic motivation and psychological needs for autonomy, competence, and relatedness. This theory suggests that when leaders support employees' autonomy, provide opportunities for skill development and foster positive relationships, employees are more likely to be intrinsically motivated and committed to their work and organization (Gagné & Deci, 2021). In

the context of leadership style and employee retention, SDT emphasizes the importance of transformational leadership behaviors, such as empowering employees, providing meaningful feedback, and creating a supportive work environment, in promoting intrinsic motivation and retention.

Path-Goal Theory

Introduced by Robert House in 1971, Path-Goal Theory emphasizes the role of leaders in clarifying paths to achieve goals and removing obstacles to employee success. This theory suggests that leaders should adapt their leadership styles (such as directive, supportive, participative, or achievement-oriented) based on the needs and characteristics of their employees and the situational context (Northouse, 2021). In the context of employee retention, Path-Goal Theory highlights the importance of leaders aligning their leadership styles with employee preferences and organizational goals to enhance job satisfaction, motivation, and ultimately, retention outcomes.

Empirical Review

Smith (2018) investigated the impact of transformational leadership on employee retention within the healthcare sector. Through a quantitative survey among healthcare professionals, the study found a positive correlation between transformational leadership behaviors and employee retention, highlighting higher levels of job satisfaction and commitment among employees under transformational leaders. The study recommended that healthcare organizations invest in leadership development programs focusing on transformational leadership behaviors to improve employee retention rates. By inspiring employees with a shared vision, providing intellectual stimulation, and showing individualized consideration, transformational leaders create a positive work environment that fosters employee engagement and loyalty. The study's findings underscored the importance of leaders' abilities to motivate and inspire their teams, as well as the need for organizations to recognize and cultivate transformational leadership qualities among their managerial staff.

Patel (2019) focusing on the retail industry, the influence of transactional leadership on employee turnover was examined using a mixed-methods approach. The findings revealed that transactional leadership, characterized by rewards and punishments for performance, was associated with higher turnover rates and lower job satisfaction among retail employees. The study recommended that retail organizations consider implementing more transformational leadership practices to reduce turnover and enhance employee retention. Transactional leadership, while effective in providing structure and clarity in tasks, may lead to a lack of intrinsic motivation and commitment among employees. The study emphasized the importance of leadership styles that foster trust, empowerment, and professional growth to create a supportive and engaging work environment conducive to employee retention.

Garcia (2020) explored the impact of laissez-faire leadership on employee turnover intentions. The study's findings indicated a negative correlation between laissez-faire leadership and employee retention, with higher turnover intentions reported among employees under laissez-faire leaders. The study suggested that technology companies focus on developing leadership skills that promote active engagement and support to improve employee retention rates. Laissez-faire leadership, characterized by minimal guidance and decision-making, often leads to reduced employee satisfaction and increased turnover as employees may feel unsupported and disengaged. The study

highlighted the necessity for organizations to prioritize effective leadership practices that involve clear communication, mentorship, and active involvement in employee development.

Wang (2021) compared the effects of different leadership styles (transformational, transactional, laissez-faire) on employee turnover across various industries. The meta-analysis revealed that transformational leadership was associated with lower turnover rates and higher job satisfaction compared to transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles. The study recommended that organizations prioritize transformational leadership training and development to enhance employee retention across industries. Transformational leaders, by fostering a sense of purpose, providing support and recognition, and encouraging employee development, create a positive work culture that promotes long-term commitment and loyalty among employees. The study's findings emphasized the significant impact of leadership styles on organizational outcomes, highlighting the value of transformational leadership in mitigating turnover and enhancing employee satisfaction.

Kim (2022) investigated the mediating role of job satisfaction in the relationship between leadership style and employee turnover intentions within the manufacturing sector. Using structural equation modeling (SEM), the study found that job satisfaction partially mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and reduced turnover intentions. The study emphasized the importance of fostering job satisfaction through effective leadership practices to improve retention rates in manufacturing organizations. Transformational leaders, through their supportive and empowering behaviors, can positively influence job satisfaction by providing meaningful work experiences, opportunities for growth, and a supportive work environment. The study highlighted the need for organizations to focus on leadership development programs that promote transformational leadership qualities to create a work culture that prioritizes employee well-being and retention.

Chen (2018) explored the role of authentic leadership in mitigating turnover intentions among employees in the service industry through qualitative interviews. The study revealed that authentic leadership contributed positively to lower turnover intentions and increased employee commitment. The study recommended that service organizations prioritize the development of authentic leadership qualities among their leaders to foster trust and reduce turnover. Authentic leaders, by demonstrating transparency, ethical decision-making, and genuine concern for their employees, build strong relationships based on trust and mutual respect. The study's findings highlighted the significance of authentic leadership in creating a positive organizational culture that values integrity, openness, and employee well-being.

Nguyen (2019) analyzed the relationship between leadership style congruence and employee turnover in a multinational corporation. The study found that higher levels of congruence between leadership styles and employee preferences were associated with lower turnover rates and higher levels of engagement and satisfaction. The study recommended that organizations focus on enhancing leadership style alignment through training and development programs to improve employee retention and organizational performance. Leaders who align their leadership styles with employee preferences and organizational goals create a harmonious work environment that promotes trust, collaboration, and job satisfaction. The study emphasized the importance of leaders adapting their leadership styles to meet the diverse needs and expectations of their teams, ultimately contributing to higher levels of employee retention and organizational success.

METHODOLOGY

This study adopted a desk methodology. A desk study research design is commonly known as secondary data collection. This is basically collecting data from existing resources preferably because of its low cost advantage as compared to a field research. Our current study looked into already published studies and reports as the data was easily accessed through online journals and libraries.

RESULTS

Conceptual Gap: While the studies by Smith (2018) and Patel (2019) emphasize the impact of transformational and transactional leadership styles on employee retention, there is a gap in understanding the nuanced interactions between different leadership styles and their combined effects on retention outcomes. Future research could delve into the synergistic or conflicting effects of multiple leadership styles within the same organizational context and how they collectively influence employee turnover rates and job satisfaction.

Contextual Gap: Garcia's (2020) study specifically focuses on the impact of laissez-faire leadership in the technology sector, highlighting its negative correlation with employee retention. However, there is a gap in exploring how leadership styles interact with industry-specific challenges and organizational cultures to affect retention differently across various sectors. Further research could investigate how leadership practices need to be tailored or adapted based on industry dynamics to effectively address retention challenges.

Geographical Gap: While the studies by Smith (2018), Patel (2019), and Garcia (2020) provide insights into leadership styles and retention in specific sectors, there is a geographical research gap in understanding how cultural and regional differences influence the effectiveness of leadership styles in mitigating turnover intentions. Future studies could explore how cultural dimensions, such as individualism vs. collectivism or power distance, interact with leadership styles to impact employee retention in diverse global contexts.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

In conclusion, the role of leadership style in employee retention is a multifaceted and dynamic aspect of organizational management. Studies have consistently shown that leadership behaviors and practices significantly impact employees' job satisfaction, commitment, and ultimately, their decision to stay or leave an organization. Transformational leadership stands out as a key driver of employee retention, characterized by its ability to inspire, motivate, and empower employees through a shared vision, intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. On the other hand, transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles have been associated with higher turnover rates and lower job satisfaction due to their focus on rewards/punishments and minimal guidance, respectively.

The research also highlights the importance of aligning leadership styles with organizational goals, industry dynamics, and cultural contexts to optimize retention outcomes. Contextual factors such as industry-specific challenges, regional differences, and cultural nuances play a crucial role in shaping the effectiveness of leadership styles in fostering employee loyalty and engagement. Moreover, integrating multiple leadership theories and adopting longitudinal research designs can

provide a deeper understanding of the causal pathways and long-term effects of leadership behaviors on retention.

Practical implications stemming from these studies include the need for organizations to invest in leadership development programs that nurture transformational and authentic leadership qualities among managers and supervisors. Creating a positive work environment, fostering trust and collaboration, providing opportunities for growth and recognition, and actively involving employees in decision-making processes are essential strategies for enhancing employee retention. By addressing these aspects and continually adapting leadership practices to meet evolving employee needs, organizations can cultivate a motivated, committed, and loyal workforce, leading to improved retention rates and organizational success.

Recommendations

The following are the recommendations based on theory, practice and policy:

Theory

To further advance theoretical understanding, researchers should focus on integrating various leadership theories (e.g., transformational, transactional, authentic) to develop a more holistic framework that captures the complexities of leadership style and its impact on employee retention. Future studies can explore the synergistic or conflicting effects of different leadership dimensions and their interactions with contextual factors such as industry dynamics, organizational culture, and cultural nuances. By integrating multiple theories and adopting a cross-disciplinary approach, scholars can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the underlying mechanisms that drive retention outcomes.

Practice

Organizations should prioritize leadership development programs that cultivate transformational and authentic leadership qualities among managers and supervisors. This includes providing training and mentoring opportunities to enhance leaders' abilities to inspire, empower, and engage employees effectively. Practical strategies such as creating a positive work environment, fostering open communication, promoting a culture of trust and collaboration, and recognizing employee contributions can significantly impact retention rates. Implementing feedback mechanisms and conducting regular employee engagement surveys can also help organizations gauge the effectiveness of leadership practices and make data-driven improvements.

Policy

Policymakers and HR practitioners can play a crucial role in shaping organizational policies and practices that support employee retention. Policies should be designed to incentivize and reward leadership behaviors that promote employee engagement, job satisfaction, and commitment. This can include establishing performance metrics related to retention rates, incorporating leadership development goals into performance evaluations, and providing resources for ongoing leadership training and education. Additionally, policies should promote diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives to create an inclusive work environment that values and respects diverse perspectives and backgrounds. By aligning policies with retention-focused leadership practices, organizations can create a sustainable framework for attracting, developing, and retaining top talent.

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