

## Influence of Leadership Styles on Turnover Intentions in Technology Startups

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## Abstract

This study examines the relationship between leadership styles and turnover intentions in technology startups. It was a correlational study that followed the cross-sectional research design. The hypotheses were democratic and laissez faire leadership styles have positive whereas authoritarian leadership styles have an inverse relationship with turnover intentions of the employees. Data was collected from 150 employees and leaders with age ranges from 20 to 40 years within technology startups in Lahore, Pakistan using the non-probability purposive sampling technique. Leadership styles were measured using the Leadership Style Questionnaire (LSQ), while turnover intentions were measured with the Turnover Intention Scale (TIS-6). The results show a nonsignificant correlation between all leadership styles and turnover intentions. Tech startups represent a relatively underexplored population in leadership and organizational behavior literature. Present study tried to expand theoretical frameworks by applying leadership models to non-traditional organizational structures. However, hypotheses were not accepted in the proposed direction. Future research may increase sample size and replicate the study with different populations to see the relationship dynamics.

**Keywords:** Leadership Styles, Organizational Psychology, Technology Startup, Turnover Intentions

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**Introduction**

Leadership styles refer to the various ways and behaviors exhibited by leaders whether in the process of managing or stimulating people in the course of their work. Scholars have looked at the effects that these leadership behaviors have on the aspects of organizational citizens and workers' behavior with an emphasis on attitudes to

turnover and organizational performance (Abdullah & Varatharajoo, 2017). In the field of technological startups, the influence of leadership styles on both turnover intentions and the performance of the organization has been noted in prior literature. Existing research has established that it is possible to influence levels of employee satisfaction, commitment, and organizational performance through the choice of leadership style made within these seminal and, at times, risky contexts (Shi et al., 2019). Evidence from recent research conducted by Setiawan et al. (2024) revealed that a key factor in determining an organization's success is effective leadership, which has a significant impact on employee performance.

Voluntary turnover intention can be defined as the extent or the strength of an intention of an employee to leave the current job or the organization in the nearest or the nearest future. Academics have stressed the need to examine turnover intentions because of the

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impact they have on the organization's rebalancing and output. In the same vein, the following is a survey of the literature on the factors that determine the level of turnover intention. Job satisfaction remains to be a key factor, as shown by studies like "The Job Satisfaction-Turnover

Intention Relationship: A Reformulation of the Context as the research question: Moderation effect of job role centrality" (Chughtai et al., 2015). Employees complaining are more likely to say how much they wish they could leave the company. Similarly, organizational commitment helps in the case against the turnover intention, showing that during increased organizational commitment, the intention of leaving is lower. Furthermore, Sakti et al. (2024) investigated the employee turnover intention levels impacted by leadership style, job stress, and job satisfaction. Results from the study demonstrate the beneficial effects of job stress and leadership styles on turnover intention, highlighting the significance of addressing these factors to lower turnover.

Organizational performance is the level to which an organization has been able to realize the laid down goals and objectives of the organization. As a complex and overarching concept, this construct contains financial performance, customer satisfaction, employees' output, market position, innovation, and productivity of processes, and others. Studies focus on pointing out the continuing relevance of these performance metrics in assessing and forecasting the outcomes of organizational performance in different industries and settings (Hitt et al., 2010).

Organizations need to manage their human resources through the identification of the correlation between turnover intention and organizational performance. Minimizing turnover intention results in the prevention of loss-making employees hence improving the performance of the organization since

turnover is costly and disruptive (Hom & Kinicki, 2001). Leadership patterns and managerial interventions should also be coordinated to reduce turnover intention and increase organizational performance at the same time as what has been revealed in recent research focusing on the relationship between leadership factors and employee satisfaction and commitment (Eisenbeiss et al., 2008).

In any organization, leadership is highly valued because it is believed that a leader's actions can either make the organization better or worse. The leadership style of an organization determines its inclinations. The behaviors and practices of leaders motivate their followers to accomplish the objectives since they aid in organizing the organization's future orientations. Thus, when carrying out their responsibilities, followers typically behave in the same way as their leaders.

Influence-building between leaders and followers is the process of leadership. To achieve the objectives of the organization, the leader shapes the behavior of their followers (Limsila and Ogunlana, 2008). Furthermore, the liability for an organization's gain in achieving its goals and objectives rests with its leaders and their actions (Voon et al., 2011). To put it another way, the leadership needs to implement activities that motivate staff members and define roles that each person or group can play in achieving a goal (Awan & Mahmood, 2010). Leadership style is the way a leader behaves when addressing problems within the organization. Different leaders have recognizable styles that vary greatly. There are good and bad personalities associated with each style (Awan & Mahmood, 2010). The manager adopts a distinct leadership style because of the variations in the work environment (Maaitah, 2018). Furthermore, definitions of leadership are always changing, and academics are working to make them more understandable and useful for day-to-day commercial operations. For an extended period,

numerous academics were preoccupied with defining and identifying the traits of the active leader. It is challenging to give a single, accepted definition of leadership, nevertheless. People are still learning about leadership and related topics as a result.

An autocratic manager retains as much power and decision-making authority as possible. This style of leadership is also known as an authoritarian style. All group interactions are directed toward the leader, who is the center of authority (Puni et al., 2016). By establishing guidelines, procedures for reaching goals, work tasks, and control over rewards and punishments, the leader individually exercises all decision-making authority. The primary sources of incentive for authoritarian leaders are laws, regulations, and rewards and punishments. There are no decisions made by the group; instead, the subordinates blindly obey the leader's orders. The leader oversees work more closely and meticulously than in a general sense, centralizing authority and decision-making. For inexperienced workers who are unsure of what to do or how to follow processes, the autocratic leadership style can be helpful. However, effective supervision can only be given through clear directives and instructions. Additionally, in circumstances involving short-term projects with an extremely technical, sophisticated, or dangerous element that must be performed to particular conditions, as well as in work environments where managers have limited time to dedicate to each individual due to large spans of control.

Democratic leadership places a strong emphasis on leaders' and groups' involvement in the creation of the rules that govern how the organization is run. When using a democratic leadership style, the leader reflects both the needs and recommendations of the group (Allmendinger & Hackman, 1996). It is a human affairs method in which each group

member is valued for their contributions to the ultimate decision and to raise the standard of the decision. The governed are the source of authority and power in this kind of leadership.

Since the leader has little to no control over the group, true laissez-faire is actually "non-leadership" (Givens, 2008) asserts that the laissez-faire leadership style is a vivid ideal that is unattainable. When workers are highly qualified, knowledgeable, and refined, or when they take pride in their task and have the motivation to complete it effectively on their own, this is an excellent method to apply. Additionally, when outside specialists like consultants or staff specialists are being used, and lastly when reliable and experienced staff members are involved. The laissez-faire concept is predicated on the idea that people are naturally unpredictable and uncontrollable and that it is a waste of time and energy to try to understand them. According to this style, the leader tries to have a low profile, and respects all organizational divisions, avoiding the waves of unrest, and hang on to the few keen followers who are available to complete the task (Northouse, 2021).

Staff turnover, according to Loquercio et al. (2006), can be defined as the percentage of employees who leave within a specific time frame but before their contract is expected to expire. The quantity of employee turnover that results from workers' decisions to voluntarily quit their jobs and leave their employers is referred to as voluntary turnover.

Pieterse-Landman (2012) investigated the connection between employee turnover intention and leadership in a quantitative, non-experimental study. Using data from 185 directors at surrounding JSE-listed assembly companies in South Africa, the researcher discovered a strong inverse relationship between transformational authority and expectation to halt. According to a study by

Hughes et al. (2018) on followers' quitting intentions and job search activities, followers' views of transformational leadership showed substantial reverse associations with their intention to quit, which is consistent with these findings. Deraman et al. (2018) looked at the connection between the intent of human turnover and leadership behavior in Iranian IT companies. The results specified a negative relationship between turnover intention and leadership.

According to recent findings, interpersonal and emotional leadership traits such as good communication and teamwork are more crucial for project success over task-oriented methods (Dwiana et al., 2024). Similarly, findings also indicate that successful outcomes in the construction industry vary by factors of cultivating relationship management, inclusivity, and cooperative dispute resolution (Rehan et al., 2024). Literature further indicates that by promoting creative employee behavior, ethical leadership and an innovative environment are likely to greatly improve project success (Pham et al., 2023). These observations from recent findings highlight the importance of people-oriented leadership particularly in intricate project settings.

### **Theoretical Framework**

According to Trepte and Loy (2017) Social Identity Theory, people's social identities and group affiliations contribute to how they perceive themselves. According to this idea, social identity is the portion of an individual's self-concept that results from their awareness of their membership in a communal group, as well as the significance and emotional expressions of that membership. This idea applies to employer branding since it highlights the development of a strong sense of identification and belonging among staff members inside a company.

In any organization, there are various forms of social identity that employees may take, such as the team, department, or the whole

organization they are in. Leadership styles facilitate or inhibit the development of these social identities amongst the employees and as a result influence their intentions to leave the business, attitudes, and behaviors including performance. According to Social Identity Theory, within the context of the companies in question, the leaders are 'referents' of certain social identities. Authoritarian, coordination, and delegate leadership styles act as reference points that determine how the employees perceive their roles in the social context of the organization. Working under authoritarian leadership makes workers have a follower mentality than organizational members, which reduces identification and measures to quit. Democratic leadership, contrary to this, enhances the organizational identity, and the turnover intentions are reduced since their participation is encouraged. From the theory of social identity, groups play a significant role in shaping the behavior and attitude of the persons in a group. The perceptions of the workers have a relationship with their level of identification with the company and the work group regarding turnover intentions. To engender that feeling of property and togetherness, there must be leaders. Democratic leaders enhance identification with the company and work group which in turn reduces turnover intentions. They also create a positive organizational culture and make the employees part of the company's administration. However, an autocratic or egalitarian style of leadership may detract from the desirable level of group integration and increase turnover propensities. Applying the theory of social identity, it becomes easier to understand how patterns of leadership within technology startups influence performance as well as turnover intention. By discussing the potential benefits of leadership to social identities, groups, and employees, this framework presents relevant knowledge for scholars and practitioners on the way

organizational results and leadership behaviors might best be enhanced in dynamic startup organizations.

### **Rationale**

Tech startups often operate in highly dynamic, innovation-driven environments where leadership styles and decision-making significantly influence team cohesion, employee engagement, and performance. Studying leadership in this context can provide unique insights not generalizable from more traditional corporate settings. A correlational investigation of leadership behavior and its effects on organizational productivity and turnover intentions in technology firms has an essential understanding of the relations between these characteristics. By finding out the possible relationship between leadership and different outcomes, for example, performance and turnover intentions, this research is beneficial to managers as they make their decisions. Research findings might be helpful to technology companies who try to enhance supervisor development, employee attraction, and organizational climate, as well as increase organizational effectiveness and retention in the form of leadership training and recruitment strategies. There is a scarcity of research studies done concerning the context of the relationship between leadership style and turnover intention in Technology startups across Pakistan. To address this research gap, this research seeks to determine the relationship between leadership style and turnover intention.

### **Objectives**

- The key objective of this study is to analyze the relationship between Leadership Styles and Turnover Intentions in Technology startups.
- To Provide Practical Recommendations for Leadership in Technology Startups

### **Hypotheses**

H I: “There is an inverse relationship between Authoritative leadership style and turnover intention.”

H II: “There is a positive relationship between democratic leadership style and turnover intention.”

H III: “There is a positive relationship between Laissez-Faire leadership style and turnover intention.”

### **Method**

#### **Research Design**

The present research was correlational research that followed a cross-sectional study design.

#### **Sample**

With the help of the purposive sampling technique, 150 leaders of the organization and employees were approached through web surveys. Their age ranges from 20 to 40 years and the minimum experience were 6 months. There are 75 males (50 percent) and 75 females (50 percent) in the sample, giving a total of 150 respondents. The range of ages is from 20 to 25, 25 to 30, 30 to 35-, and 35-40-years having frequencies, 97, 36, 5, and 12 respectively. It is important to take note of the number of respondents we have in different subgroups in your sample to decide the appropriate analysis.

#### **Measures**

The Leadership Style questionnaire (Northouse, 2021) and Turnover Intention scale (Bothma & Roodt, 2013) were used to measure variables.

#### **The Leadership Style Questionnaire**

The leadership style questionnaire includes three different categories of leadership style (Authoritative, Democratic, Laissez-faire) which are determined by a participant's cumulative score. Northouse developed the LSQ based on his extensive research on leadership. LSQ is a tool for individuals to measure their leadership style and how it is impacting the organization. It is a 5 point Likert scale ranging from 1(strongly

disagree) to 5(strongly agree), having 18 items. The LSQ-18 has Cronbach's alpha value .78 which indicate that the scale is valid and reliable (Northouse, 2021).

### Turnover Intention Scale (TIS-6)

The six-item turnover intention scale (TIS-6) is a tool developed to measure an employees'

intention to leave or stay with an organization and it was derived from his 15-item turnover intention scale. Turnover Intention scale is a 5- 5-point Likert scale, having 6 items. TIS-6 has Cronbach's alpha value of .80 which indicates high internal consistency and reliability. (Bothma & Roodt, 2013).

**Table 1**

*Descriptive Statistics for Demographic Variables (N= 150)*

Demographics		N	%
Age	20-25	97	64.7
	25-30	36	24.3
	30-35	5	3.3
	35-40	12	8.0
Gender	Male	75	50
	Female	75	50

Table I shows demographic details of the sample. 75 males (50 percent) and 75 females (50 percent) in the sample, giving a total of 150 respondents. The range of ages is from 20 to 25, 25 to 30, 30 to 35-, and 35-40-years having frequencies, 97, 36, 5, and 12 respectively.

**Table 2**

Variables	M	SD	Min	Max	$\alpha$
Authoritarian	15.81	4.918	8	62	.80
Democratic	15.44	2.966	6	25	.75
Laissez-faire	15.22	3.021	6	28	.65
Turnover Intention	17.61	4.191	6	30	.80

*Mean, Standard Deviation, and Cronbach's alpha value of Study Variables (N=150)*

each leadership style.

The Table 2 describes the M and SD of different leadership styles along with minimum and maximum values for

### Ethical Considerations

All ethical principles were followed including Informed consent, research information sheet, voluntary participation was added to the survey questionnaire. This

study does not involve any harm or risk, and it does not involve any type of deception. The survey was conducted voluntarily, each participant has the right to confidentiality and the ability to withdraw at any time.

### Results

**Table 3**

*Correlation Between Different Leadership Styles and Turnover Intention (N = 150)*

Variable	1	2	3	4	M	SD
1. Authoritative		.26**	.28**	.02	15.81	4.91
2. Democratic			.54**	.008	15.44	2.96
3. Laissez-Faire			-	.050	15.22	3.02
4. TI					17.61	4.19

Note. TI= Turnover Intentions M = Mean; SD = Standard Deviation.

The correlation between all leadership styles with turnover intentions are non-significant.

### Discussion

The current study examined the relationship between three leadership styles—Democratic, Laissez-faire, and Authoritarian—and turnover intention. The results showed no significant relationship between any of the leadership styles and total turnover indicating that leadership styles may not play a noticeable role in shaping this variable within the sample.

The correlation between Democratic leadership and turnover intention was practically zero ( $r = 0.008$ ,  $p = .92$ ), suggesting that democratic leadership, which highlights employee involvement and participatory decision-making, has no measurable effect on turnover. This result is unexpected, as democratic leadership is often connected with positive employee outcomes such as job satisfaction and organizational commitment. One possible explanation for this might be that turnover intention is influenced more by external factors (such as market opportunities or individual circumstances) than by leadership style.

The Laissez-faire leadership style also showed no significant relationship with turnover intention. ( $r = -0.050$ ,  $p = .54$ ). Laissez-faire leadership, characterized by slight administrative interference and is usually related with negative organizational outcomes such as high turnover intentions or low employee engagement. While the slight negative correlation aligns with this expectation, the lack of statistical significance suggests that laissez-faire leadership might not strongly influence turnover-related outcomes in this specific context. Other variables, such as organizational environment or job satisfaction, may have a more considerable role in shaping turnover intention.

However significant relationships are found within different leadership styles.

The Authoritarian leadership style showed a weak, non-significant positive correlation with turnover intention ( $r = 0.02$ ,  $p = .76$ ). Authoritarian leadership, which depends on strict control and top-down management, is often related to negative employee outcomes, including higher turnover intentions due to reduced autonomy. However, the weak correlation here suggests that authoritarian leadership might not significantly affect turnover intention in this sample, maybe due to other factors such as clear communication of expectations or employees' adaptability to this style.

The existing literature on the relationship between employee turnover intentions and leadership styles have been conflicting. For instance, a 2024 study conducted in the Saudi healthcare industry revealed no significant differences in the perception of transformational leadership across demographic variables, indicating that turnover intentions may not be directly impacted by this leadership style (Alasiry & Alkhaldi, 2024). Whereas other studies suggest that specific leadership styles may influence employees' intentions to leave. Results from a recent 2024 study conducted in the high-tech sector, revealed that the psychological contract has a moderating effect on turnover intentions, which are strongly influenced by leadership styles, career development, and work stress (Ru & Ibrahim, 2024). These findings imply that there is a complicated relationship between leadership styles and turnover intentions that can be impacted by a number of variables, such as organizational context, employee perceptions, and other mediating factors.

The lack of significant relationships across all three leadership styles indicates that other factors may have a stronger impact on turnover intention. These could include

administrative strategies, reimbursement, work-life balance, external job market and job satisfaction etc. Additionally, it may propose that leadership style alone is not enough to explain turnover intentions. Employee insights of leadership may be moderated by other aspects of the organizational environment, such as team dynamics, workload, or opportunities for growth.

Although there were no significant correlations reported between leadership styles and turnover intention in the current study, previous literature is evident of different results. For instance, Cho et al. (2022) concluded that positive leadership styles, such as transformational and ethical leadership, were significantly correlated to hospital nurses' lower turnover intention. Similarly, results from private hospitals revealed that staff nurses' turnover intention were found to be negatively impacted by transformational and authentic leadership styles (Pattali et al., 2024), thereby supporting the possibility that supportive leadership can improve employee retention. Hence, keeping in view the previous studies, leadership styles might have a greater impact on turnover intentions than the current study indicates. This further underscores the need for additional research into contextual elements and potential mediators that could reconcile these disparate results.

### **Limitations & Suggestions**

This study limits the generalizability, as the sample size was 150 participants, all from Lahore, so the findings cannot be generalized to other cultural and geographical contexts. The dependence on self-reported data may result in bias as participants may not provide truthful answers, due to social desirability. The findings do not apply to other industries, as they are specific to Technology startups, future studies should be conducted with other industries too.

### **Implications**

The implications are clear that there is a need for strong leadership development in technology startups. The idea is to train leaders to adopt more participative leadership styles, namely democratic leadership, and in this way, one can effectively lessen the turnover intentions of the employees. A form of leadership referred to as democratic can witness employee involvement in decision-making, hence leading to ownership of their duties. The results imply that technology startups' human resource management strategy should focus on the development of a positive change that would positively affect the employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment. This can be done by understanding and appreciating employees' efforts, training them and giving them a sense of ownership in decision-making in the organization.

Also, the present research points to the necessity of searching for additional instruments to evaluate leadership efficiency. Perhaps, the improved or other suitable instruments can assist organizations in better assessment of the leadership potentials and the weaknesses for subsequent effective leadership development interventions. Future research should consider setting out to find what other factors may act as a mediator or moderator of the relationship between leadership styles and turnover intentions. For instance, research on work satisfaction, organizational culture, and employee commitment may help to get a better understanding of the factors promoting turnover.

### **Conclusion**

Although significant correlation between different leadership styles and turnover intentions were not found. However, leadership styles do have an impact upon turnover intentions, productivity and even psychological safety of the employees. Further research with large sample sizes



could be replicated for better relationship explorations.

### **Ethics Statement**

All the procedures were taken according to APA ethical standards. Permission was taken from the FC University/CIRCLE Women Association Ethical Review Board. Informed consent was taken in written form from all the students to participate in this study.

### **Contribution of Author**

Sheeza Fayyaz: Conceptualization, Investigation, Methodology, Data Curation, Formal Analysis, Writing – Original Draft, Saima Majeed: Methodology, Writing - Reviewing & Editing, Supervision

### **Conflict of Interest**

There is no conflict of interest declared by the author.

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### **Data Availability Statement**

The datasets of the current study are not available publicly due to ethical reasons but are available from the corresponding author [S.F.] upon the reasonable request.

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