

https://dspace.org/

Exploring the relationship between leadership styles and quiet quitting in a tier-1 automotive supplier

Charles, Nengwenani Fulufhelo Ravhutsi

2025

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/50172

Charles, Nengwenani Fulufhelo Ravhutsi. (2025). Exploring the relationship between leadership styles and quiet quitting in a tier-1 automotive supplier [Master`s dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg]. WIReDSpace. https://hdl.handle.net/10539/50172

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Exploring the relationship between leadership styles and quiet quitting in a tier-1 automotive supplier

by

Nengwenani Fulufhelo Ravhutsi Charles

Student Number: 392417

A research article submitted in partial fulfilment of

the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF BUSINESS ADMINISTRATION

in the

Faculty of Commerce, Law and Management

University of Witwatersrand

Supervisor: Dr Lehlohonolo Tabane

May 2025

DECLARATION

I, Nengwenani Fulufhelo Ravhutsi Charles, declare that this research project submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration (MBA) at the Wits Business School in the University of the Witwatersrand, is my own unaided work and all the sources that I have used or cited have been indicated and acknowledged employing complete references

Signature:  **Date: 31 May 2025**

NENGWENANI FULUFHELO

Student Number: 392417

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to my parents for their unwavering support and encouragement throughout my research journey. Their belief in my abilities and their constant motivation have been instrumental in helping me overcome challenges and stay focused on my goals. Thank you for instilling in me the values of hard work and perseverance, which have guided me every step of the way

My sincere thanks go to my supervisor, Dr Lehlohonolo Tabane, for the invaluable guidance, encouragement, and feedback, which greatly enhanced the quality of this study.

ABSTRACT

This research study explored the “quiet quitting” phenomenon, focusing on how different leadership styles, namely, autocratic, laissez-faire, and democratic, impact employee engagement and retention in a Tier-1 automotive supplier organisation. The study aimed to clarify the relationship between these leadership approaches and the likelihood of quiet quitting. Through a quantitative analysis, the findings revealed key insights into how leadership practices affect employee behaviour, providing actionable recommendations for enhancing retention strategies and understanding workforce motivations.

Keywords: employee engagement, leadership styles, quantitative analysis, quiet quitting, retention strategies

TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION ..... **II**

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... **III**

ABSTRACT ..... **IV**

LIST OF FIGURES ..... **IX**

LIST OF TABLES ..... **IX**

LIST OF APPENDICES ..... **IX**

LIST OF ACRONYMS ..... **X**

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND **1**

1.1 Background of the study 1

1.2 Problem statement 1

1.3 Research objectives 2

1.4 Research questions 2

1.5 Rationale for the study 3

1.6 Delimitations of the study 3

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW **5**

2.1 Introduction 5

2.2 The concept of leadership 5

2.3 Different leadership styles 5

2.3.1 Democratic/participative leadership 5

2.3.2 Laissez-faire/delegative leadership 6

2.3.3 Autocratic/authoritarian leadership 7

2.4 Quiet quitting 8

2.4.1 Causes of quiet quitting 8

2.4.1.1 Job dissatisfaction *8*

2.4.1.2 Lack of recognition *8*

2.4.1.3 Inadequate communication *9*

2.4.1.4 Limited growth opportunities *9*

2.4.1.5 Toxic work culture *9*

2.4.2 Signs of quiet quitting 9
2.4.2.1 Decreased productivity and enthusiasm 10
2.4.2.2 Withdrawal from collaboration and increased absenteeism 10
2.5 Conceptual framework 10
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY 12
3.1 Introduction 12
3.2 Research design 12
3.3 Research paradigm 12
3.4 Data collection method 13
3.4.1 Population 13
3.4.2 Sample and sampling method 13
3.5 Research instrument 13
3.6 Data analysis strategy and interpretation 14
3.7 Reliability and validity 14
3.7.1 Research reliability 14
3.7.2 Research validity 15
3.8 Ethical considerations 15
CHAPTER 4: RESULTS 16
4.1 Introduction 16
4.2 Demographic characteristics of the respondents 16
4.3 Descriptive analysis 19
4.3.1 Dominant leadership style in the target organisation for the study 19
4.3.1.1 Autocratic leadership style 20
4.3.1.2 Democratic leadership style 21
4.3.1.3 Laissez-faire leadership style 22
4.3.2 Quiet quitting 23
4.4 Inferential statistics 24
4.4.1 The relationship between leadership styles and employees' quiet quitting 24
4.5 Regression analysis 25

4.6 Reliability and validity 27
4.7 Hypothesis testing 27
CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS 29
5.1 Demographic overview 29
5.1.1 Gender imbalance 29
5.1.2 Age distribution 29
5.1.3 Educational background 30
5.1.4 Work experience 30
5.2 Leadership styles analysed 31
5.2.1 Autocratic leadership style 31
5.2.2 Democratic leadership style 31
5.2.3 Laissez-faire leadership style 32
5.3 Quiet quitting: A growing concern 32
5.3.1 Implications of quiet quitting 32
5.3.2 Correlation with leadership styles 33
CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS 34
6.1 Summary of literature 34
6.2 Recommendations 35
6.2.1 Enhance recognition and feedback mechanisms 35
6.2.2 Invest in employee development and training 35
6.2.3 Utilise technology for engagement 35
6.2.4 Evaluate leadership effectiveness 35
6.3 Suggestions for future research 36
6.3.1 Diverse industry contexts 36
6.3.2 Cultural influences 36
6.3.3 Impact of hybrid work environments 36
6.3.4 Employee well-being and mental health 36
6.3.5 Exploration of alternative leadership styles 36
6.4 Limitations of the study 37

6.5 Conclusion 37
REFERENCE LIST 39
APPENDICES 49

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Conceptual framework 11

Figure 2. Distribution of respondents by gender 16

Figure 3. Distribution of respondents by age group 17

Figure 4. Distribution of respondents by education level 18

Figure 5. Distribution of respondents by work experience 18

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Summary of leadership styles ranked by mean score 19

Table 2. Mean scores for perceptions of autocratic leadership style 20

Table 3. Mean scores for perceptions of democratic leadership style 21

Table 4. Mean scores for perceptions of laissez-faire leadership style 22

Table 5. Mean scores for perceptions of quiet quitting 23

Table 6. Correlation matrix: Relationships between leadership styles and employee quiet quitting 24

Table 7. Regression model summary 25

Table 8. Coefficients of regression analysis: Leadership styles impact on quiet quitting 26

Table 9. Reliability analysis results: Cronbach's alpha 27

LIST OF APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE 49

APPENDIX B: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE 50

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER 51

APPENDIX D: CRONBACH'S ALPHA INTERNAL CONSISTENCY TABLE 52

APPENDIX E: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE 53

APPENDIX F: GRAMMARIAN LETTER 57

LIST OF ACRONYMS

ALS	Autocratic leadership style
DLS	Democratic leadership style
DV	Dependent variable
Gen X	Generation X
Gen Y	Generation Y
Gen Z	Generation Z
IVs	Independent variables
LSL	Laissez-faire leadership style
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences

CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

1.1 Background of the study

In an ever-changing and competitive business environment, attracting and retaining talent is a constant challenge for organisations (Mazlan & Jambulingam, 2023; Abraham, 2023). The modern workplace comprises a mix of generations that engage with one another to support business operations. The generations are Generation X (Gen X) which refers to individuals born between 1965 and 1980, Generation Y (Gen Y) which refers to individuals born between 1981 and 1994 and finally, Generation Z (Gen Z) which points to individuals born between 1995 and 2009 (Benítez-Márquez et al., 2022).

High employee turnover not only disrupts the stability of an organisation but also leads to significant costs in terms of new recruitment, training and ultimately, reduced productivity (Zhong et al., 2022). With these challenges in mind, it is essential for the organisation to understand what influences employees' intentions regarding quiet quitting and the leadership styles at the centre of such employee behaviour.

According to Serenko (2023), quiet quitting is a state of mind in which an employee deliberately limits their work responsibilities to those that are formally stated in the job specification. The employee is only willing to meet the minimum employment expectations and chooses to ignore any additional work that may come up.

1.2 Problem statement

Leadership styles could have a significant impact on the existence of quiet quitting. According to Lowisz (2022), leaders have a direct impact on the quiet quitting of their team members, however, different leaders possess different traits that form part of their persona. As a result, no relationship has been established between the three different leadership styles and quiet quitting. DePrisco (2022) emphasises that quiet quitting has become a leading trend in the modern workplace post- the COVID-19 pandemic that is associated with Gen Z. Quiet quitting is very silent compared to other factors that lead to high turnover and as a result, it can go unnoticed by leaders until the employee finally leaves the organisation (Arzuaga et al., 2023).

The purpose of this research was to investigate how different leadership styles influence the likelihood of employees engaging in quiet quitting. The transformational leadership theory and social exchange theory both suggest that leaders who inspire and motivate employees to exceed

their own self-interests can foster higher engagement, reducing the likelihood of quiet quitting (Bakker et al., 2023). The transactional leadership theory suggests that autocratic leaders often rely on strict rules to manage their employees, which then leads to disengagement as employees feel controlled rather than supported (Jaqua & Jaqua, 2021). Laissez-faire leadership theorises that the lack of direction and ambiguity causes frustration among employees, as a result when employees feel less supported and unclear about expectations, they may disengage leading to quiet quitting, on the other hand, if employees thrive in an independent environment, they might remain engaged (Thanh & Quang, 2022).

1.3 Research objectives

The research objectives below guided the study in investigating the relationship between leadership styles and quiet quitting within the target organisation, a Tier-1 automotive supplier. The study also provided the organisation with practical insights on how to enhance employee engagement and reduce employee turnover. The research objectives are outlined below.

- to determine the relationship between the autocratic leadership style and quiet quitting within the organisation;
- to determine the relationship between the democratic leadership style and quiet quitting within the organisation;
- to determine the relationship between the laissez-faire leadership style and quiet quitting within the organisation;
- to provide recommendations on how the target organisation for the study could develop and train leaders to adopt leadership styles that reduce the likelihood of quiet quitting.

1.4 Research questions

This study addressed the following research questions.

- What are the specific behaviours and actions that leaders exhibit that contribute to quiet quitting?
- How do employees' perceptions of their leaders' support, recognition and empowerment, influence their quiet quitting?
- Which generation within the target organisation of study is more prone to quiet quitting?

1.5 Rationale for the study

The modern workplace has changed post- the COVID-19 pandemic and as a result, work environments require that leadership styles change to better manage and lead teams (AlMazrouei, 2023). Some notable changes in the work environment are the hybrid mode of working, where employees may opt to work from home (Bangura & Lourens, 2023) and how leaders track key performance indicators of their teams in hybrid work settings (McPhail et al., 2024).

Quiet quitting often suggests a lack of engagement or effort but it can be quite subtle, especially in remote work environments. Employees might appear productive on the surface, completing their tasks while quietly stepping back from extra responsibilities or collaborative efforts. This can create a challenging situation for leaders, as it is not always easy to spot those who are quietly quitting just by looking at their output (Hong et al., 2023).

In many cases, these employees may still attend meetings and submit their work on time, giving the impression that everything is fine. However, beneath this façade, they might feel disconnected from the team and less motivated to contribute beyond the basics. This makes it crucial for leaders to foster open communication and build strong relationships, helping to create an environment where employees feel comfortable expressing their needs and concerns.

1.6 Delimitations of the study

This research outlined critical delimitations, assumptions, and limitations pertinent to the study's scope. The study specifically examined three leadership styles: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire, while intentionally excluding others to maintain a focused analysis within the context of a Tier-1 automotive supplier. The target population comprised solely mid-level management and operational staff, which may have restricted the generalisability of the findings. The study made several assumptions: it was assumed that participants would respond truthfully to surveys, that the selected leadership styles were relevant to the industry, and that the organisational environment would remain stable during the research period. However, the potential for response biases existed, and the reliance on a quantitative methodology limited the depth of insights, as it lacked qualitative data that could have provided a more detailed understanding of employee experiences.

Additionally, due to time constraints, the findings may not have captured long-term impacts, representing a significant limitation of the research. The exclusion of qualitative methods

restricted the exploration of the complexities inherent in employee engagement and leadership dynamics. These factors highlight the necessity for future research to consider diverse organisational contexts and methodologies, which could have enhanced the robustness and applicability of the results. Such exploration would contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the relationships between leadership styles and employee behaviours in various sectors.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

The literature review section focused on previous work relevant to the research topic. The literature helped support the research argument and presented findings from earlier studies. It primarily concentrated on the automotive sector.

2.2 The concept of leadership

Leadership is described as a process of influence in which managers can get their subordinates to work willingly, effectively and efficiently (Lee,2022). Through leadership, a leader's qualities and knowledge may be influenced by other traits such as beliefs, ethics, and values. The skills and knowledge of the leader are directly linked to the leadership styles, whereas traits shape the leader's characteristics that make them different from the next person (Bwalya, 2023). Leadership is shaped around inspiring other individuals within the organisation to perform in a manner that leads to the organisation achieving its set goals (Musaigwa, 2023).

2.3 Different leadership styles

Leadership style is defined as a manner of providing direction, implementation of plans and maintaining a motivated workforce (Wang et al., 2022a). In the late 1930s, Kurt Lewin led a group of researchers who identified different leadership styles that leaders used to influence employees within their organisation to achieve set goals (Shukla & Sinha, 2022).

2.3.1 Democratic/participative leadership

The democratic leadership style emphasises teamwork, inclusivity, and a shared decision-making process between the leader and his/her subordinates (Bwalya, 2023). Vasileva and Datta (2021) emphasise that under the democratic leadership style, in the automotive sector, supervisors who lead teams on the production floor actively involve their team members in the decision-making process by seeking their input and considering their input when making critical decisions within the operations.

This leadership approach promotes a sense of empowerment among the team members, as they get to voice their inputs that ultimately shape their work outcomes (Hieu, 2020). According to Wahyuwardhana and Wisesa (2024), this leadership style encourages open communication within the organisation, creates an environment that fosters trust and promotes the development of individual and team skills.

Susita (2023) also found that this form of leadership style in the automotive industry is characterised by nine dimensions, namely, openness, orientation to problem-solving, freedom at work, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, individualised consideration, coaching, participatory decision making and showing concern. This form of leadership cultivates a strong sense of ownership and commitment among team members, leading to higher levels of engagement and motivation (Wang et al., 2022b).

Lastly, democratic leadership is primarily associated with participative management theory, which emphasises collaboration and active involvement of team members in the decision-making process (Wang et al., 2022a). Key features include leaders actively seeking input and feedback, making decisions collectively to foster a sense of ownership among employees, and encouraging team members to express their ideas (Wang et al., 2022a). This approach enhances employee engagement, making them feel valued, which increases motivation and productivity.

2.3.2 Laissez-faire/delegative leadership

The laissez-faire leadership style involves a more hands-off approach, where leaders provide minimal guidance or direction to their team members (Jin & Men, 2023). In a laissez-faire leadership style, leaders delegate authority and decision-making power to their subordinates, allowing them to work autonomously and make their own decisions (Iqbal et al., 2021). However, a study by Vasileva and Datta (2021) found that in the automotive industry, though employees preferred the democratic leadership style, the level of employee motivation increased when the laissez-faire leadership style was used, though it was not statistically significant.

According to Rassaa and Emeagwali (2020), this leadership style can promote creativity, independence, and individual initiative. However, Research by Zhang (2023) found that this leadership style may also lead to a lack of structure within the organisation, poor coordination, and a lack of accountability in team members if not managed effectively.

Laissez-faire leadership is found to be most efficient and effective when implemented in a workforce that is skilled, motivated and has a high level of expertise in their respective areas of work (Ali & Ullah, 2023; Zhang, 2023).

Lastly, laissez-faire leadership is primarily associated with the human relations theory, which emphasises the significance of social relationships and employee well-being (Zhang et al., 2023). Key features include granting employees autonomy, minimal supervision, and trusting

their capabilities. This approach empowers employees, enhancing motivation and fostering creativity (Modise, 2023). However, while effective for self-motivated teams, it can lead to confusion and a lack of direction if team members need more guidance, making its effectiveness context-dependent (Zheng & Li, 2024).

2.3.3 Autocratic/authoritarian leadership

Autocratic leadership focuses on centralised decision-making and strict control by the leader (Pizzolitto et al., 2022). The leaders have complete authority over their respective departments and make decisions without seeking any input from their team members (Du & Li, 2020). This leadership style is known to be efficient and effective in organisational situations that require a quick response and decisive action, such as emergencies within the organisation (Rosing et al., 2022).

Research by Wang et al. (2022b) shows that this leadership style leads to a lack of employee motivation, creativity, and engagement. As a result, this form of leadership style tends to create a sense of dependency on the leader where team members wait on the leader for decisions to be made, which then results in decreased job satisfaction and lowers the self-confidence of team members (Saeed et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2019).

Lastly, autocratic leadership is mainly linked to the classical management theory, which emphasises a top-down management approach characterised by centralised decision-making and strict control by leaders (Rosing et al., 2022). Key features include a clear hierarchy, limited employee autonomy, and a strong focus on efficiency. Although this style facilitates quick decision-making and provides clarity in roles, it often reduces creativity and could lead to decreased employee morale over time (Alkuwari, 2025).

In conclusion, the management theory that encompasses democratic, laissez-faire, and autocratic leadership styles is the situational leadership theory. This theory suggests that effective leadership varies based on the context and needs of the team (Bwalya, 2023). Leaders adapt their style to democratic, laissez-faire, or autocratic, depending on factors such as the team's maturity, the task at hand, and the specific challenges faced. This flexibility allows leaders to choose the most appropriate approach to maximise team performance and engagement (Biloa, 2023).

2.4 Quiet quitting

Post- the COVID-19 pandemic, the world of work has changed both employers' and employees' work patterns, whilst new working conditions like flexible work hours and hybrid work have been welcomed by some employees (Galanis et al., 2023). However, the adaptation has introduced problems like quiet quitting in the workplace. Quiet quitting refers to a mindset in which an employee expends minimum effort and takes fewer responsibilities within the workplace (Öztürk et al., 2023). It often goes unnoticed by the leaders as the employees who have psychologically checked out of their jobs continue to work but only put in the bare minimum (Hamouche et al., 2023).

2.4.1 Causes of quiet quitting

2.4.1.1 Job dissatisfaction

One of the primary causes of quiet quitting is job dissatisfaction. When employees feel unfulfilled or undervalued in their roles, they may gradually disengage from their work (Caldwell & Mahand, 2023). According to Na-Nan (2021), some employees have highlighted factors like the lack of challenging tasks in the workplace, expectations not being met by the employer and a mismatch between the skills they possess and the responsibilities assigned to them, as some factors that lead to dissatisfaction in the workplace.

Research by Affainie and Qutieshat (2023) reports that Taylor's 1909 theory of motivation (Awofeso, 2019) indicates that to increase the productivity of their workforce, leaders should devise more efficient ways for employees to perform tasks as well as ensuring that employees are matched to jobs based on their abilities. Leaders should provide appropriate training to help employees carry out their work (Saudi et al., 2021).

2.4.1.2 Lack of recognition

Employees thrive on recognition and appreciation for their contributions. Maslow's 1943 Hierarchy of Needs outlined esteem as one key tier of human needs (Nurjanah & Suherman, 2022). People value being recognised for the work they do (Trivedi & Mehta, 2019). Consequently, when employees' efforts are unnoticed or unacknowledged, they may gradually lose motivation and become disengaged, which ultimately affects the quality of their work (Zhong et al., 2023). An article by InspiriSYS (2024) outlined inadequate recognition as one of the most common reasons for employee disengagement.

2.4.1.3 Inadequate communication

Poor communication channels or a lack of transparency within the organisation can also contribute to quiet quitting (Davis, 2023). According to Herzberg's Two Factor theory of motivation of 1959 an employee's working conditions and company policies influence employee satisfaction (Zhenjing et al., 2022), whenever employees feel left out of important decisions within an organisation, uninformed about changes that are taking place, or cannot voice their concerns, they may gradually distance themselves from their roles (Joseph & Shetty, 2022; Yıldız, 2023).

2.4.1.4 Limited growth opportunities

The Gallup model outlines growth and development as one of the factors that impact an employee's level of engagement; employees would like to work in organisations that have opportunities for them to learn, grow and support (Alnuaimi, 2022). According to Galanis (2023), a lack of professional development prospects can reduce the employees' eagerness to put in more work effort and eventually push them towards quiet quitting. When employees feel that there is no room for growth or that their contributions are not leading to meaningful career progression, they may quiet quit as a result (Pevec, 2023).

2.4.1.5 Toxic work culture

A work environment dominated by micromanagement, lack of trust among team members and leaders or conflicts can significantly reduce employee engagement within the organisation (Okocha et al., 2022). The resulting stress levels that employees endure from toxic work environments eventually lead them to quit quietly. In most instances, employees exposed to such work environments fear retaliation from the leaders should they at any time voice their concerns (Öztürk et al., 2023).

2.4.2 Signs of quiet quitting

Caldwell and Mahand (2023) emphasise that it is important for organisations to recognise the signs of quiet quitting among the workforce. This will help the organisation take measures to rescue the situation. Literature has detailed some of the signs that leaders in organisations may see amongst their team members as signs that they have silently disengaged. Below are some of the signs.

2.4.2.1 Decreased productivity and enthusiasm

Employees who have quiet quit often show a decline in their productivity levels. Such employees may complete tasks with minimal effort by doing what is expected and nothing more, miss deadlines to submit or complete work, and show a lack of initiative or interest in taking on new projects that the organisation may take up (Yıldiz, 2023). The employees become less proactive when it comes to the contribution of ideas and participation in discussions within the organisation (Serenko, 2023)

2.4.2.2 Withdrawal from collaboration and increased absenteeism

From a professional perspective, employees who have quit quietly tend to withdraw from any form of collaborative effort. As a result, they choose not to participate in any team activities through fewer contributions in meetings and discussions (Carrion, 2023). According to an article by Atiom (2023), quiet quitting can also be seen through increased absenteeism by an employee. Employees may take more time off work than usual to distance themselves from the organisation.

The above signs may also be observed as signs of other issues the individual may be facing. However, for this study, the survey questionnaire probed the participants on their level of job satisfaction as a factor that has emerged often when discussing the topic of quiet quitting.

2.5 Conceptual framework

The phenomenon of "quiet quitting" refers to situations where employees disengage from their work and organisation without overtly expressing their dissatisfaction or intention to leave. It can result in reduced productivity, decreased organisational commitment, and increased turnover (Taboroši et al., 2013). Leadership styles, on the other hand, play a crucial role in shaping the work environment and influencing employee behaviour (Wang, 2023). This conceptual framework explores the relationship between leadership styles and quiet quitting, shedding light on how different leadership approaches can impact employee engagement and retention.

The study utilises the human relations theory. According to this theory, leaders within the organisation ensure that all the organisational goals and objectives are achieved by recognising employees' inputs, attitudes, relationships amongst themselves and the leadership styles within the organisation (Ayodeji, 2021).

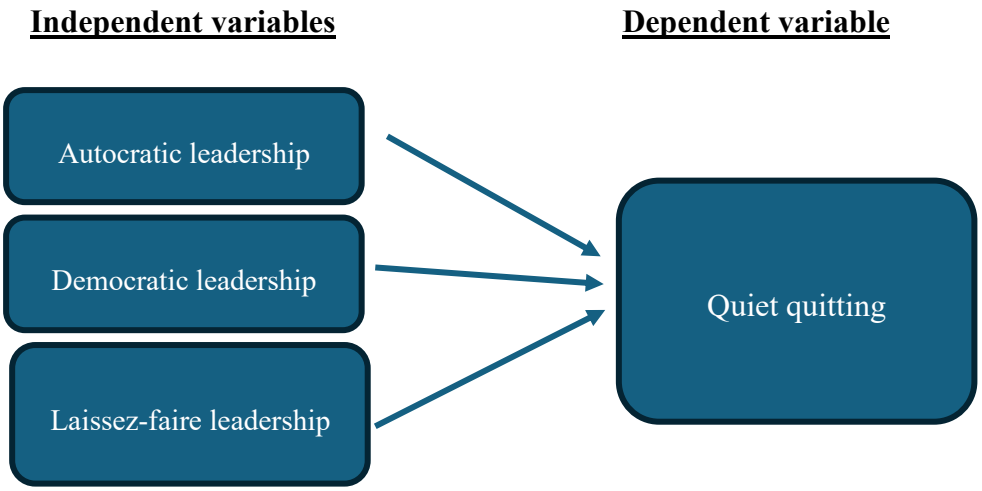


Figure 1. Conceptual framework

The following hypotheses were tested:

H_1: Autocratic leadership style predicted quiet quitting within the organisation.

H_2: Democratic leadership style predicted quiet quitting within the organisation.

H_3: Low levels of laissez-faire leadership predicted quiet quitting within the organisation.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

The study took a quantitative research approach due to its ability to report on the relationship between variables (Creswell, 2022). The nature of the study required a quantitative approach, as it sought to test the significance and strength of the relationship between leadership styles and employee quiet quitting

3.2 Research design

The research study utilised both descriptive and inferential statistics to test the hypotheses. Data were collected through a survey questionnaire administered to staff members of the target organisation. The independent variables (IVs) were the three leadership styles: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire, while the dependent variable (DV) was the phenomenon of quiet quitting.

To measure the IVs, specific indicators were identified: for autocratic leadership, decision-making authority and feedback mechanisms; for democratic leadership, employee participation and team collaboration; and for laissez-faire leadership, support and guidance. The DV, quiet quitting, was assessed using employee engagement survey scores, which provided quantitative data on employee attitudes and behaviours related to engagement levels. This comprehensive approach enabled a thorough analysis of the relationship between leadership styles and the quiet quitting phenomenon, facilitating a deeper understanding of how different leadership approaches impact employee engagement.

3.3 Research paradigm

The research study was grounded in the positivist paradigm, which emphasises the use of quantitative methods to explore relationships between variables (Maksimovic & Evtimov, 2023). This approach aligned with the study's aim to test specific hypotheses regarding the impact of autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles on the phenomenon of quiet quitting. By employing descriptive and inferential statistics to analyse data collected from a survey questionnaire administered to staff members, the research sought to maintain objectivity and rigour. The use of measurable indicators for each leadership style and the assessment of quiet quitting through employee engagement survey scores further supported the positivist framework. This paradigm enabled the researcher to derive generalisable conclusions about the

influence of different leadership approaches on employee engagement, highlighting observable phenomena and their interrelationships.

3.4 Data collection method

3.4.1 Population

The population of the workforce within the target organisation for the study was 530. Mid-management employees accounted for 24% of the entire population. Therefore, the population size was 133. The population excluded employees who were fully involved in the manufacturing operation, in this case, the operators.

3.4.2 Sample and sampling method

For this study, a convenience sampling technique was used because participants were easily accessible and available to the researcher. To explain that the survey was purely for academic purposes and not work-related, the researcher scheduled brief meetings with potential participants, hoping to maximise the response rate. The sample size was determined using the Yaro Yamane formula, assuming a 95% confidence level and a 5% margin of error.

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + N(e)^2}$$

Where:

n = Sample size

N = Population size

e = error rate (0.05)

$$= \frac{133}{1 + 133(0.05)^2}$$

$$= 100$$

The study sample size is 100.

3.5 Research instrument

The survey questionnaire used Likert scale-type questions to gauge participants' feelings about specific topics through a point scale system. A 5-point scale format was chosen for its ease of understanding and common usage in research (Jamieson, 2024). Larger Likert scales can be

challenging for participants as they may struggle to differentiate between categories with subtle differences (Tanujaya et al., 2023).

The survey utilised three distinct Likert scale instruments to assess employee experiences. The Gallup Q12 of 1997 (Sapko, 2024) measured employee engagement with items like “I am enthusiastic about my work”, achieving a reliability coefficient of 0.90. Mobley’s Turnover Model of 1977 (Singh, 2023) evaluated turnover intentions, including the item “I often think about leaving my job”, with a reliability coefficient of 0.85. Spector’s Job Satisfaction Survey (JSS) (Tokekar, 2024) provided insights into job satisfaction, featuring reverse-scored items such as “I often feel disconnected from my work” and attained a reliability coefficient of 0.92. This structured approach enabled a clear analysis of each instrument and its sub-scales.

The surveys collected participants’ demographic information, including gender, age, and educational background. This information helped categorise the participants into generations according to the literature, providing insights into which generation was more prone to quiet quitting.

The survey was created in Microsoft Excel due to its ability to create and format Likert scale questions. The surveys were printed as hard copies and meetings were scheduled with the participants to complete the survey.

3.6 Data analysis strategy and interpretation

The researcher used the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) software to perform a regression analysis on the data, which allowed the relationship between the dependent variable and independent variables to be examined.

Correlations were established between the leadership styles and quiet quitting before predictions were made. Each hypothesis was either accepted or rejected, based on the findings from the analysis.

3.7 Reliability and validity

3.7.1 Research reliability

To assess the consistency of the survey questionnaire, the study focused on test-retest reliability, which examined whether the same questionnaire produced similar results when re-administered. This was evaluated using Cronbach’s alpha, a technique that tested the internal consistency of the survey questions.

3.7.2 Research validity

The study used Pearson's correlation technique, which is a measure of how two variables are related to each other and the degree to which they correlate. The degree of correlation ranged between -1 and 1, with -1 being a perfect negative correlation and 1 being a perfect positive correlation.

3.8 Ethical considerations

Ethical considerations ensured both participant and organisational anonymity in the study. A consent form allowed participants to accept or decline participation, safeguarding their privacy, while the target organisation's identity remained confidential in reporting. The study committed to accurately reporting findings without distortion, upholding research integrity and trust with participants and the organisation. In accordance with the POPIA Act, all collected data was securely stored by the researcher.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

The study evaluated the relationship between leadership styles and employee quiet quitting in a Tier-1 automotive supplier. A total of 108 surveys were distributed, all of which were completed and returned. This chapter presents the results from an analysis of the surveys, utilising both descriptive and inferential statistics to analyse the data.

4.2 Demographic characteristics of the respondents

This section presents the demographic characteristics of the respondents, which include gender, age, education level, and years of work experience of the employees working in the company. The gender distribution of respondents is depicted in Figure 2 below.

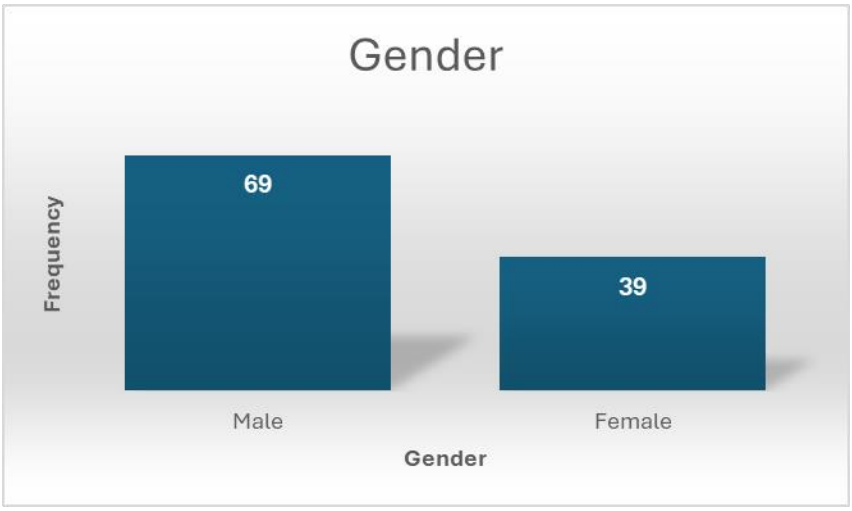


Figure 2. Distribution of respondents by gender

Figure 2 indicated that the majority of participants were male (69 = 64%) compared to female (39 = 36%). This gender distribution highlights a significant male representation in the study sample. This spread of participants is in keeping with a report from Statistics South Africa published in 2021 that showed that the metals, metal products, machinery and equipment sector had an employment ratio of males to females of 80.3% to 19.7% respectively (Stats SA, 2021).

Figure 3 below shows the distribution of respondents by age group.

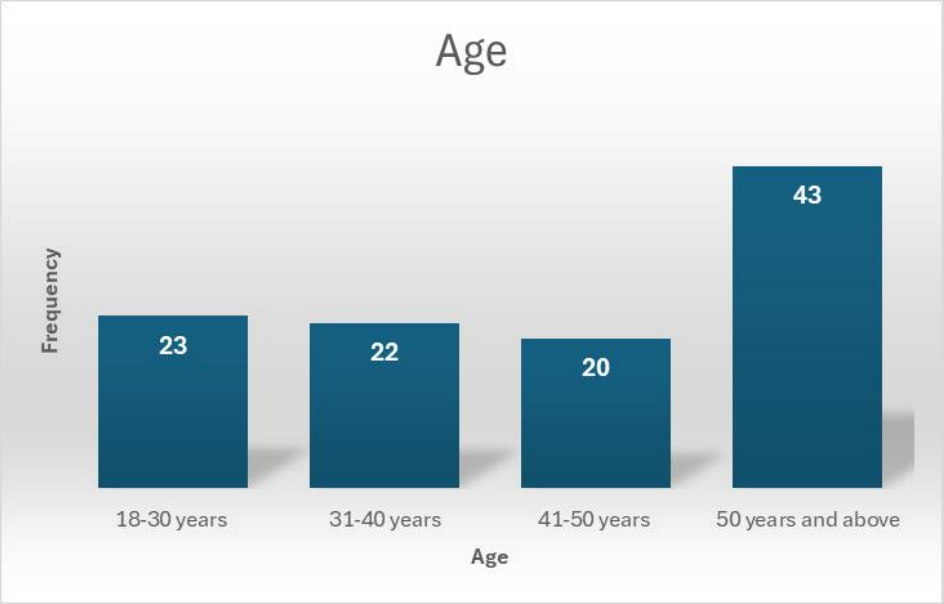


Figure 3. Distribution of respondents by age group

Figure 3 revealed that the largest group of respondents (43) was in the "50 years and above" category, indicating a significant portion of the workforce nearing retirement and the potential turnover of experienced employees. In contrast, of the younger age groups, 23 were in the 18–30 years group, 22 were in the 31–40 years group, and 20 were in the 41–50 years group, showing a more balanced distribution. This gap raised concerns about knowledge transfer and succession planning, as valuable institutional knowledge was at risk of loss due to the impending retirement of older workers.

Figure 4 below depicts the distribution of respondents by education level.

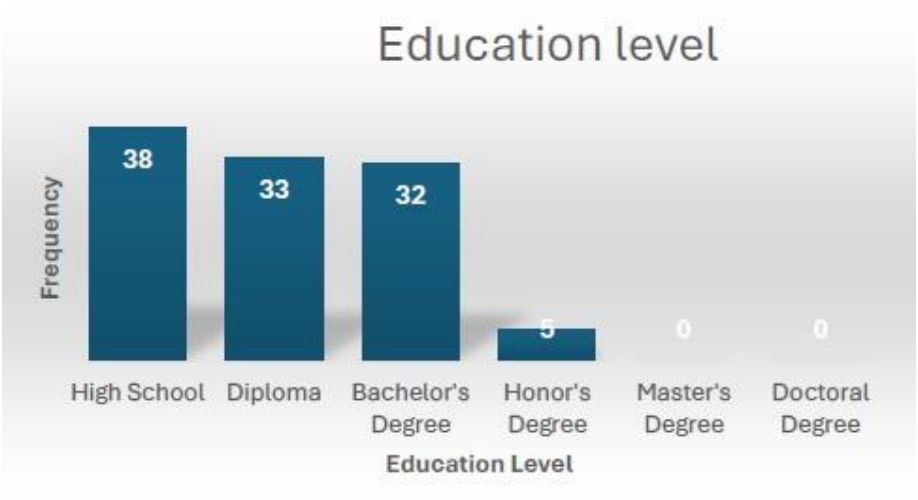


Figure 4. Distribution of respondents by education level

Figure 4 above shows that the largest group of respondents (38=34%) had a high school diploma, followed closely by 33 individuals (30%) with a diploma and 32 (29%) holding Bachelor's degrees. Only 5 participants (5%) possessed an Honours degree, and none had a Master's or Doctoral degree. This distribution indicates a predominance of individuals with lower educational qualifications within the sample.

Figure 5 below indicates the distribution of respondents by work experience.



Figure 5. Distribution of respondents by work experience

Figure 5 revealed that the majority of respondents (63) had over 10 years of work experience, highlighting a workforce predominantly composed of highly experienced individuals, which suggests stability and extensive knowledge. At the opposite end of the spectrum, only 1 respondent had less than 1 year of experience, reflecting a low presence of entry-level employees. This may signal challenges in attracting new talent or a preference for hiring more experienced candidates.

4.3 Descriptive analysis

The study used Likert scale-type questions.

4.3.1 Dominant leadership style in the target organisation for the study

The table below shows the mean score and standard deviation of the leadership styles within the company under study.

Table 1. **Summary of leadership styles ranked by mean score**

Leadership style	Mean	Standard deviation	Rank
Autocratic	3.22	0.063	1
Laissez Faire	3.12	0.036	2
Democratic	3.06	0.040	3

Autocratic leadership ranked as the most favoured style, with a mean score of 3.22, indicating a strong preference for directive leadership. This high score, coupled with a low standard deviation of 0.063, suggests an agreement among respondents on its effectiveness in providing clear guidance and decisiveness. Democratic leadership closely followed, achieving a mean score of 3.06, reflecting an appreciation for collaborative processes where team input was valued, supported by a low standard deviation of 0.040. Laissez-faire leadership occupied a middle ground with a mean score of 3.12 and a very low standard deviation of 0.036. This "hands-off" approach, significant in the automotive sector, fostered innovation and creativity by empowering employees to solve problems independently. This autonomy enhanced job satisfaction and productivity, particularly among younger workers who thrived under its flexibility, while older workers appreciated the freedom to leverage their expertise, even though sometimes requiring additional guidance in adapting to new processes.

4.3.1.1 Autocratic leadership style

Table 2. Mean scores for perceptions of autocratic leadership style

Leadership Style	Mean	Std. Deviation
The leadership style of my immediate supervisor influences my intention to stay with the organization	2.90	1.04
My immediate supervisor is accessible and approachable for discussions and support	3.17	1.06
My immediate supervisor expects compliance with their directives	3.19	0.96
My immediate supervisor encourages open communication and feedback	3.23	1.04
My immediate supervisor provides clear expectations and goals for my work	3.09	1.02
My immediate supervisor recognizes and appreciates my contributions to the organization	3.16	1.01
	3.22	**0.063**

The findings revealed that immediate supervisors significantly influenced employee perceptions and organisational engagement. The impact of a supervisor's leadership style on retention received a mean score of 2.90, indicating moderate recognition of this influence. Supervisors' accessibility and approachability scored 3.17, highlighting the value employees placed on open communication. Compliance with directives got a mean of 3.19, while encouragement of open communication and feedback achieved the highest score at 3.23, emphasising the importance of collaborative leadership. Additionally, supervisors' ability to provide clear expectations and goals was rated at 3.09, and recognition of contributions scored 3.16, underscoring the significance of acknowledgement in enhancing employee morale. Overall, these findings underscored the crucial role of effective communication, support, and recognition in improving employee satisfaction and retention.

4.3.1.2 Democratic leadership style

Table 3. Mean scores for perceptions of democratic leadership style

Leadership Style	Mean	Std. Deviation
My immediate supervisor encourages open communication and collaboration	3.46	1.02
My immediate supervisor provides clear directions and expectations	3.35	1.06
My immediate supervisor supports employees' professional development	3.05	1.05
My immediate supervisor recognizes and rewards employees' achievements	2.93	1.08
My immediate supervisor shows empathy and understanding towards employees	3.41	0.95
My immediate supervisor encourages the team members to share their opinions	3.16	1.14
	3.06	**0.04**

The data regarding leadership styles emphasised the impact of immediate supervisors on employee engagement and satisfaction. The highest mean score of 3.46 was attributed to the encouragement of open communication and collaboration, indicating strong employee belief in a communicative work environment. The provision of clear directions and expectations scored 3.35, reflecting an appreciation for clarity in leadership. A mean score of 3.05 for supporting professional development suggested some acknowledgement of efforts, though improvements were needed. Recognition and rewards for achievements received a lower mean of 2.93, highlighting a gap in employee acknowledgement. Empathy from supervisors scored 3.41, indicating the value placed on emotional support. Finally, encouragement for team members to share opinions held a mean of 3.16, suggesting a positive feedback environment but also a need for more inclusive dialogue. Overall, these findings underscore the importance of communication, recognition, and empathy in enhancing employee satisfaction and engagement.

4.3.1.3 Laissez-faire leadership style

Table 4. Mean scores for perceptions of laissez-faire leadership style

Leadership Style	Mean	Std. Deviation
My immediate supervisor delegates authority and empowers employees	3.04	1.07
My immediate supervisor demonstrates fairness in decision-making processes	3.09	1.02
My immediate supervisor encourages and supports my professional development	2.90	1.12
My immediate supervisor effectively resolves conflicts within the team	3.10	1.01
My immediate supervisor demonstrates trust and respect towards team members	3.17	1.04
My immediate supervisor provides autonomy and independence in my job role	3.09	1.06
	3.20	**0.035**

The data on leadership styles indicated that employees perceived their immediate supervisors as moderately effective in empowering them, with a mean score of 3.04 for delegation of authority. Fairness in decision-making processes received a slightly higher score of 3.09, suggesting a generally positive view of leadership equity. However, the lower score of 2.90 for support of professional development highlighted an area that needed improvement. Conflict resolution skills were valued, as reflected in the score of 3.10. Trust and respect demonstrated by supervisors garnered the highest score of 3.17, indicating strong interpersonal relationships. The overall mean score for providing autonomy and independence in job roles was 3.20, suggesting that while employees appreciated their independence, there was still potential for further enhancement in this area.

4.3.2 Quiet quitting

Table 5. Mean scores for perceptions of quiet quitting

Quiet quitting	Mean	Standard deviation
I frequently think about leaving my current job without informing anyone	2.43	1.31
I often feel disengaged and uninterested in my work	2.36	1.24
I have reduced my effort and commitment to my current job	2.35	1.20
I find it challenging to voice my concerns and frustrations at work	2.40	1.31
I believe my current job does not align with my long-term career goals	2.33	1.39
I have mentally checked out from work, even though I physically remain present	2.28	1.27
I have become less motivated and productive at work	2.29	1.27
I have disengaged from social interactions with colleagues and supervisors	2.18	1.19
I have actively sought alternative employment opportunities	2.44	1.49

The data on quiet quitting provided significant insights into employee attitudes and behaviours, revealing a concerning trend of disengagement. The mean score for thoughts of leaving a job was 2.43, indicating moderate contemplation among employees. A score of 2.36 for feelings of disengagement suggested widespread apathy toward job responsibilities. Employees reported a mean score of 2.35 for reduced effort and commitment, reflecting declining engagement. Communication challenges were evident, with a score of 2.40 for difficulty voicing concerns. Additionally, a score of 2.33 highlighted a disconnect between current roles and long-term career goals. Employees felt physically present but mentally disengaged, as indicated by a mean score of 2.28. Reduced social interactions were evident, with a score of 2.18, while a score of 2.44 indicated moderate interest in seeking alternative employment. Collectively, these findings underscored significant dissatisfaction and disengagement, raising concerns for employee retention and overall morale.

4.4 Inferential statistics

4.4.1 The relationship between leadership styles and employees' quiet quitting

Table 6. Correlation matrix: Relationships between leadership styles and employee quiet quitting

		ALS	DLS	LLS	Quiet quitting
ALS	Pearson correlation	1	-.524	-.701	.801
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000	.000	.000
	N	108	108	108	108
DLS	Pearson correlation	-.524	1	.553	-.788
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		.402	.000
	N	108	108	108	108
LLS	Pearson correlation	-.0701	.553	1	.221
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.402		.018
	N	108	108	108	108
Quiet quitting	Pearson correlation	.801	-.788	.221	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	.018	
	N	108	108	108	108

The Pearson correlation analysis revealed key insights into the relationship between leadership styles and quiet quitting among employees. The autocratic leadership style (ALS) showed a strong positive correlation with quiet quitting ($r = 0.801$, $p < 0.001$), indicating that increased autocratic leadership was associated with higher instances of disengagement. On the other hand, the democratic leadership style (DLS) exhibited a strong negative correlation with quiet quitting ($r = -0.788$, $p < 0.001$), suggesting that a participative approach fostered greater employee engagement and reduced the likelihood of quiet quitting. The laissez-faire leadership style (LLS) demonstrated a weak positive correlation with quiet quitting ($r = 0.221$, $p = 0.018$), indicating that a lack of guidance could also lead to disengagement, even though to a lesser extent. Overall, the analysis underscored the critical role of leadership styles in shaping employee behaviour, urging organisations to be mindful of the negative impacts of autocratic leadership and consider more democratic or supportive approaches to enhance employee satisfaction and reduce quiet quitting behaviours.

4.5 Regression analysis

This section presents the regression analysis results. A multiple regression model was used to determine the relationships between the dependent variable, quiet quitting, and the independent variables: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire leadership styles.

The effect of autocratic, democratic and laissez-faire leadership styles on employees' intention to quiet quit was estimated using the following regression analysis:

$$Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3 + \varepsilon$$

Where:

Y = Quiet quitting

X_1= Autocratic leadership

X_2= Democratic leadership

X_1= Laissez-faire leadership

β_0= Constant

β_1, β_2 and β_3 are correlation coefficients

ε = error term

Table 7. Regression model summary

Model Summary of Regression Analysis				
Model	R	R square (R^2)	Adjusted R square	Std Error of the estimate
1	0.856[a]	0.733	0.727	0.332
a. Predictors: (Constant), Leadership styles				

The regression analysis results indicated a strong relationship between leadership styles and quiet quitting, with an R-value of 0.856. This suggested a high correlation between the predictors and the dependent variable. The R-squared value of 0.733 meant that approximately 73.3% of the variance in employee outcomes could be explained by the leadership styles

employed. The adjusted R-squared value of 0.727 accounted for the number of predictors in the model, reinforcing the model's validity.

Table 8. Coefficients of regression analysis: Leadership styles impact on quiet quitting

Coefficients of the regression analysis						
Model		Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardised Coefficients		
		B	Std. Error	Beta (β)	t	Sig.
1	Constant	1.564	0.164		2.18	.000
	Autocratic LS	0.689	0.062	0.694	8.87	.000
	Democratic LS	-0.324	0.058	-0.336	-4.34	.000
	Laissez Faire LS	0.031	0.034	0.029	1.14	.114
a. Dependent Variable: Quite Quitting						

The constant (B = 1.564) represented the baseline level of quiet quitting when all leadership styles were held constant. It indicated that, without any influence from leadership styles, the quiet quitting score was 1.564.

The autocratic leadership style (B = 0.689, β = 0.694) showed a positive coefficient, suggesting that an increase in autocratic leadership was associated with a significant rise in quiet quitting. The t-value of 8.87 and a significance level (Sig.) of 0.000 indicated strong statistical significance, meaning this relationship was unlikely to be due to chance. This suggests that autocratic leadership may have contributed to higher rates of disengagement among employees.

The democratic leadership style (B = -0.324, β = -0.346) showed a negative coefficient, implying that democratic leadership was associated with a decrease in quiet quitting. The t-value of -4.34 and a significance level of 0.000 further confirmed that this relationship was statistically significant. This indicated that fostering a democratic leadership style could help reduce disengagement and promote greater employee involvement.

The laissez-faire leadership style (B = 0.031, β = 0.034) had a positive but very small coefficient, suggesting a minimal impact on quiet quitting. The t-value of 1.14 indicated that

this relationship was not statistically significant (Sig. = 0.114), suggesting that laissez-faire leadership did not have a meaningful effect on quiet quitting behaviours.

In summary, the results indicate that leadership styles significantly influence quiet quitting, with autocratic leadership contributing to increased disengagement, while democratic leadership helps to reduce it. Laissez-faire leadership appears to have little impact on the phenomenon.

4.6 Reliability and validity

A Cronbach's alpha of 0.963 for 27 items indicated an excellent level of internal consistency, supporting the reliability of the scale. This high value suggested that the items worked well together to measure a specific construct, providing confidence in the resulting data and findings.

Table 9. Reliability analysis results: Cronbach's alpha

Cronbach's alpha	N of Items
.963	27

4.7 Hypothesis testing

H_1: Autocratic leadership style predicts quiet quitting within the organisation

The findings from the regression analysis for the autocratic leadership style indicated a positive coefficient (B = 0.689) and a standardised coefficient (β = 0.694), with a t-value of 8.87 and a significance level (Sig. of 0.000. This demonstrated a strong positive relationship between autocratic leadership and quiet quitting. Practically, the results suggested that as autocratic leadership increased, instances of quiet quitting among employees also rose significantly. The high coefficient underscored that this leadership style was a substantial predictor of disengagement, indicating that employees likely felt disenfranchised and unrecognised in such environments. The statistical significance ($p < 0.001$) confirmed that this relationship was unlikely due to chance. Consequently, organisations employing an autocratic leadership approach likely experienced higher levels of employee disengagement and reduced commitment, highlighting the need for more supportive leadership practices to foster engagement.

H_2: Democratic leadership style predicts quiet quitting within the organisation

The findings from the regression analysis for the democratic leadership style revealed a negative coefficient (B = -0.324) and a standardised coefficient (β = -0.346), with a t-value of -4.34 and a significance level (Sig.) of 0.000. This indicated a strong negative relationship between democratic leadership and quiet quitting. Practically, the results suggested that as democratic leadership practices increased, instances of quiet quitting among employees decreased significantly. The negative coefficient highlighted that a collaborative and inclusive leadership approach fostered greater employee engagement and reduced feelings of disenfranchisement. The statistical significance ($p < 0.001$) confirmed the robustness of this relationship, indicating it was unlikely due to chance. Consequently, organisations that promoted democratic leadership effectively enhanced employee satisfaction and commitment, thereby mitigating quiet quitting behaviours.

H_3: Low levels of laissez-faire leadership predict quiet quitting within the organisation

The findings from the regression analysis for the laissez-faire leadership style revealed a positive coefficient (B = 0.031) and a standardised coefficient (β = 0.034), with a t-value of 1.14 and a significance level (Sig.) of 0.114. This indicated that the relationship between laissez-faire leadership and quiet quitting was not statistically significant. Practically, this meant that laissez-faire leadership had a minimal impact on quiet quitting behaviours among employees. The small positive coefficient suggested a slight tendency for quiet quitting to increase in laissez-faire environments; however, the effect was negligible and not statistically confirmed. Consequently, it was concluded that laissez-faire leadership did not meaningfully influence employee engagement or disengagement within organisations.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The study on the relationship between leadership styles and quiet quitting within a tier-1 automotive supplier revealed the unique significance of these leadership approaches in the automotive context. In an industry marked by high demands and tight deadlines, the impact of leadership styles on employee engagement and behaviour was particularly pronounced. Autocratic leadership, while yielding short-term efficiency, often led to disengagement among employees who felt undervalued. In contrast, democratic leadership fostered collaboration and innovation, essential for adaptability in this sector. Laissez-faire leadership promoted autonomy but risked leaving less experienced employees without the necessary guidance, leading to frustration. Understanding these dynamics was crucial for enhancing employee commitment and reducing quiet quitting, ultimately contributing to organisational success.

5.1 Demographic overview

5.1.1 Gender imbalance

The demographic analysis revealed a significant gender imbalance within the sample, with males comprising 64% of respondents compared to 36% of females. This inconsistency was evident in the autocratic leadership style, where 34 out of 48 respondents were male, and in the laissez-faire style, which featured 20 males against 10 females. In contrast, the democratic leadership style showed a more balanced distribution, with 15 males and 15 females. This gender imbalance reflects broader industry trends, especially in sectors like automotive and manufacturing, known for higher male representation (Zavala-Parrales et al., 2025). Addressing this imbalance is crucial for organisations seeking to create a more inclusive workplace, as effective strategies to attract and retain female employees can enhance diversity and introduce varied perspectives into leadership and decision-making processes (Leuhery et al., 2024).

5.1.2 Age distribution

The age distribution within the workforce indicated a concerning trend, with a significant portion of respondents aged 50 and above, suggesting an impending wave of retirements that could challenge knowledge transfer and succession planning. This situation raises issues regarding both explicit knowledge, such as documented procedures, and implicit knowledge, including insights gained through experience. The under-representation of younger employees, with only 23 respondents aged 18-30, reflects potential difficulties in knowledge acquisition, as these less-experienced workers lack access to the mentorship and guidance necessary for

effective learning (Soegiarto et al., 2024). Such gaps likely led to frustration and disengagement, contributing to quiet quitting, where employees fulfilled only the minimum requirements of their roles. Consequently, the organisation needs to address knowledge transfer and foster engagement among younger employees to mitigate quiet quitting and ensure a smooth transition as experienced workers retire (Toska et al., 2025).

5.1.3 Educational background

Respondents' educational attainment raised additional concerns as the majority had only completed high school, with few holding diplomas or Bachelor's degrees. This distribution suggests a potential skills gap in positions requiring advanced critical thinking and expertise, often cultivated through higher education. Such disparities likely impact employee engagement and satisfaction, particularly under different leadership styles. An autocratic approach may exacerbate disengagement among less educated employees, who feel undervalued and unsupported (Asim et al., 2021). In contrast, democratic leadership could foster inclusivity and skill enhancement, while laissez-faire leadership may fail to provide the necessary guidance (Maqbool et al., 2024). Consequently, the organisation may need to invest in training and development programmes to bridge these educational gaps and enhance workforce capabilities (Arulsamy et al., 2023).

5.1.4 Work experience

The findings indicate a stable workforce with many employees having over 10 years of experience, but a concern is the lack of entry-level employees and limited fresh perspectives. Autocratic leadership, effective in this stable environment, faces challenges as younger employees seek involvement and autonomy (Wang, et al., 2022c). This shift calls for inclusive practices to enhance democratic leadership, fostering collaboration and participation. Engaging younger employees, who value teamwork and communication, could improve morale and innovation, reducing quiet quitting (Imran et al., 2025). However, while laissez-faire leadership suits experienced employees, it risks leaving new hires feeling lost and without adequate guidance, highlighting the need for a balance between autonomy and support for effective onboarding and retention (Clément et al., 2023).

5.2 Leadership styles analysed

The study identified three primary leadership styles: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire. Each style has distinct implications for employee engagement, satisfaction, and the likelihood of quiet quitting.

5.2.1 Autocratic leadership style

Autocratic leadership is favoured in the automotive sector for its ability to facilitate quick decision-making and maintain focus under tight deadlines. While it improves short-term efficiency, it often leaves employees feeling undervalued and disengaged, particularly those desiring input and collaboration. Employee feedback indicated a recognition of the need for compliance, but the overall impact on morale and retention was negative (Radu, 2023). Regression analysis showed a strong correlation between autocratic leadership and quiet quitting, suggesting that such environments lead to employee withdrawal and minimal engagement, potentially harming long-term organisational productivity and morale (Ergen et al., 2025).

5.2.2 Democratic leadership style

Democratic leadership significantly enhances employee engagement, as employees express a strong appreciation for collaborative processes. High mean scores for open communication and collaboration indicate a clear preference for supervisors who cultivate a communicative and cooperative work environment, along with providing clear directions and expectations. Regression analysis results revealed a robust negative correlation between democratic leadership and quiet quitting, suggesting that an increase in democratic practices is associated with a decrease in disengagement behaviours. According to Vorecol (2024), this observation is supported by influential authors such as Daniel Goleman, who highlight the importance of emotional intelligence in fostering engagement through collaboration, and Kurt Lewin, who notes that democratic leadership enhances participation and morale (Coronado-Maldonado & Benítez-Márquez, 2023). Additionally, according to Jerab and Mabrouk (2023), Edgar Schein emphasises that inclusive cultures contribute to higher levels of commitment and lower instances of disengagement. Therefore, it is imperative for organisations to prioritise democratic leadership practices to encourage employee engagement, satisfaction, and to mitigate the risk of quiet quitting.

5.2.3 Laissez-faire leadership style

The laissez-faire leadership style shows promise in promoting autonomy and creativity among employees, however, it does not significantly alleviate quiet quitting behaviour. Employees expressed appreciation for the freedom that this approach provided, yet they emphasised the need for adequate support and guidance to stay engaged. This sentiment was reflected in moderate agreement scores related to empowerment and professional development support. Additionally, Pearson correlation analysis indicated a weak positive correlation between laissez-faire leadership and quiet quitting, suggesting that a lack of guidance may contribute to employee disengagement, though to a lesser extent than autocratic leadership (Pevec, 2023). These findings highlight the importance of finding a balance between granting autonomy and providing necessary support, as employees require both independence to foster creativity and guidance to prevent feelings of neglect and uncertainty (Ribas et al., 2025).

5.3 Quiet quitting: A growing concern

The study's findings on quiet quitting revealed a concerning yet moderate level of disengagement among employees. Mean scores indicated that some employees contemplated departure without formal notification, while the score for "mentally checking out" underscored a trend of reduced presence and engagement at work. This perspective aligns with several key authors, including Gallup, which documented the negative impact of employee disengagement on productivity and turnover (Tatel & Wright, 2024). Daniel Pink emphasised the importance of autonomy and purpose in maintaining engagement, suggesting that a lack of these elements could lead to withdrawal (Grzegorzek, 2024). Brene Brown discussed the significance of vulnerability and connection, noting that employees who did not feel valued were more likely to disengage (Cozzi, 2024). Additionally, William Kahn's concept of personal engagement highlighted that disengagement often stemmed from a lack of meaningful connection and support (Albrecht et al., 2023). Together, these authors reinforced the necessity for organisations to foster an engaged and connected workforce to combat the trends associated with quiet quitting.

5.3.1 Implications of quiet quitting

The implications of quiet quitting are significant, indicating a disengaged workforce that lacks emotional investment despite being physically present. This disengagement leads to decreased productivity, lower morale, and potential turnover, prompting organisations to recognise key indicators such as increased absenteeism, withdrawal from collaboration, diminished meeting

engagement, and negative peer feedback. To address these issues, a “Check-In and Connect” strategy is recommended, involving regular one-on-one meetings between managers and team members to foster open communication and rapport (CoffeePals Team, 2025). This approach includes bi-weekly or monthly feedback sessions, safe spaces for dialogue, recognition programmes, professional development opportunities, and team-building activities, aimed at creating a supportive environment that enhances employee engagement (Leibovitch, 2025).

Additionally, the consequences of quiet quitting extend to safety hazards, particularly in sectors like automotive manufacturing. Disengaged employees demonstrate decreased attention to detail, overlook critical safety protocols, and communicate less effectively, increasing the risk of accidents (Kim & Sohn, 2024).

5.3.2 Correlation with leadership styles

The correlation analysis revealed that autocratic leadership was positively associated with quiet quitting, indicating that such leadership styles may lead to employee disengagement and decreased morale. In contrast, democratic leadership showed a negative correlation, suggesting that fostering a participative culture enhances employee input and engagement (Hassnain, 2022). Organisations are urged to evaluate their leadership strategies to better align with employee needs and create an environment conducive to commitment and productivity, thereby reducing disengagement and turnover risks (Mazzetti & Schaufeli, 2022). To facilitate this transition, it is essential to adopt a collaborative approach involving top management, HR, and employees to address potential leader defensiveness and implement inclusive leadership practices effectively.

CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary of literature

The relationship between leadership styles and employee quiet quitting was complex. Autocratic leadership was generally associated with higher instances of disengagement, while democratic leadership promoted engagement and satisfaction. Authors such as Kurt Lewin identified autocratic leadership as leading to lower morale and creativity, reinforcing this correlation. In contrast, according to Vorecol (2024), Daniel Goleman emphasised the positive impact of democratic leadership on employee well-being, linking it to increased engagement. Laissez-faire leadership could yield varying results based on employee motivation and support systems, as reported by Edgar Schein in the Psych Safety (2023) article, which highlighted the importance of organisational culture in influencing behaviours. Understanding these dynamics was crucial for organisations aiming to mitigate quiet quitting and enhance overall employee engagement.

Leaders who exhibited a lack of communication, support, and recognition can significantly contribute to quiet quitting. Specific behaviours include failing to provide regular feedback, neglecting employee contributions, and not fostering an inclusive environment. Additionally, micromanagement and insufficient delegation can lead to feelings of disempowerment among employees, prompting them to disengage from their roles while still maintaining minimal job performance

Employees who perceived their leaders as supportive and recognising their efforts are less likely to engage in quiet quitting. Positive perceptions of leadership support can enhance employee morale and motivation, leading to higher engagement levels. On the other hand, when employees feel undervalued or unrecognised, they may withdraw their efforts mentally and emotionally, leading to quiet quitting. Empowerment through autonomy and involvement in decision-making also plays a critical role; employees who feel empowered are more likely to stay engaged and committed.

Research has indicated that younger generations, particularly Millennials and Gen Z, were more prone to quiet quitting compared to older generations. This tendency could be attributed to their differing work values, such as a greater emphasis on work-life balance and a desire for meaningful work. If these needs were not met, younger employees chose to mentally disengage

while still fulfilling their job requirements, rather than actively seeking new opportunities or voicing their dissatisfaction

6.2 Recommendations

Based on the findings from this research, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance employee engagement and mitigate the risks associated with quiet quitting:

6.2.1 Enhance recognition and feedback mechanisms

Implementing structured recognition programs can significantly improve employee morale and engagement. Organisations should develop mechanisms for acknowledging employee contributions, whether through formal awards, verbal recognition in team meetings, or written commendations. Regular feedback sessions can provide opportunities for employees to express their concerns and aspirations, fostering a culture of open dialogue.

6.2.2 Invest in employee development and training

To address the educational gaps identified in the study, organisations should invest in employee development programs that enhance skills and competencies. This includes offering training sessions, workshops, and mentorship opportunities to prepare employees for more advanced roles. Encouraging continuous learning will not only enhance individual capabilities but also prepare the organisation for future challenges.

6.2.3 Utilise technology for engagement

Leveraging technology can enhance communication and engagement within the organisation. Implementing platforms for employee feedback, recognition, and collaboration can create a more connected environment. Digital tools can facilitate open communication channels, allowing employees to voice their opinions and feel more involved in organisational decisions.

6.2.4 Evaluate leadership effectiveness

Organisations should regularly evaluate the effectiveness of their leadership styles and practices. This can be achieved through 360-degree feedback mechanisms, where employees can provide input on their leaders' performance. Understanding how leadership styles impact employee engagement will enable organisations to make necessary adjustments and improvements.

6.3 Suggestions for future research

The findings from the current study on leadership styles and quiet quitting provide a foundation for further exploration in this critical area of organisational behaviour. Future research can expand on these insights by addressing several key themes and questions:

6.3.1 Diverse industry contexts

Future research should explore the relationship between leadership styles and quiet quitting across different industries and organisational contexts. Investigating sectors with varying dynamics such as healthcare, technology, and education can reveal whether specific leadership styles have universally negative or positive impacts, or if they vary significantly by industry.

6.3.2 Cultural influences

The impact of cultural factors on leadership styles and employee engagement warrants further investigation. Research that examines how cultural dimensions (e.g., individualism vs. collectivism, power distance) influence the effectiveness of different leadership styles could provide valuable insights into tailoring leadership practices to diverse workforces.

6.3.3 Impact of hybrid work environments

As remote and hybrid work arrangements become increasingly prevalent, future research should examine how these settings affect leadership dynamics and employee engagement. Understanding how leadership styles operate in virtual environments and their correlation with quiet quitting can help organisations adapt their practices to meet the needs of remote workers.

6.3.4 Employee well-being and mental health

Future studies should investigate the connections between leadership styles, employee well-being, and mental health. Understanding how leadership approaches affect employees' mental health can provide insights into preventing burnout and promoting a healthy work-life balance, ultimately influencing engagement levels.

6.3.5 Exploration of alternative leadership styles

In addition to the three primary styles examined, future research could explore the impact of other leadership styles, such as transformational, transactional, and servant leadership, on employee engagement and quiet quitting. Understanding the nuances of these styles can broaden the scope of leadership studies and their practical implications.

6.4 Limitations of the study

The main limitation of the study is the sampling technique, which restricted data collection to a narrower population within the sector. This limitation is significant because it prevents a broader understanding of quiet quitting across different contexts. Furthermore, the research grouped employees who have quietly quit with those who have not, missing the opportunity to distinguish between varying levels of engagement. Research by Zenger and Folkman (2022) highlights the importance of this differentiation, as they categorise employees into those who are neutral towards quiet quitting and those who actively go the extra mile in their duties. Recognising these distinctions could provide deeper insights into employee behaviour and engagement.

6.5 Conclusion

Leaders contribute to quiet quitting through several detrimental behaviours. A lack of recognition for employees' contributions, such as innovative ideas in design or efficiency improvements in manufacturing, leads to disengagement. Poor communication regarding production expectations and deadlines creates confusion among team members. Micromanagement stifles workers' autonomy and initiative. Additionally, policies that do not accommodate employee needs, along with limited opportunities for skills development and career advancement, further disengage staff.

Employees' perceptions of their leaders' support, recognition, and empowerment significantly influence their likelihood of quiet quitting. When employees feel supported, they become more engaged, as this fosters a sense of belonging and value within the organisation. Recognition of their contributions boosts morale and motivation, while a lack of acknowledgement leads to feelings of undervaluation and disengagement. Empowerment is also crucial; when leaders grant autonomy and involve employees in decision-making, it enhances their commitment.

The research showed that the younger generations, particularly Millennials and Generation Z, are becoming increasingly prone to quiet quitting. This tendency was largely driven by their emphasis on work-life balance; they disengaged if job demands, such as long hours or high pressure, interfered with their personal lives. Additionally, a lack of recognition for their contributions, such as innovative ideas in design or efficiency improvements on the production line, led to feelings of undervaluation. These employees also sought meaningful work; if they perceived their roles as lacking purpose, they were more likely to withdraw their efforts.

Furthermore, the flexibility in the job market empowered them to be less invested in positions that did not align with their values and expectations.

REFERENCE LIST

Abraham, M., Kaliannan., M., Thomas, S., & Avvari, M. V. (2023). Reframing talent acquisition, retention practices for organisational commitment in Malaysian SMEs: A managerial perspective. *Journal of General Management,* 1-13. https://doi.org/10.1177/03063070231184336

Affainie, E. A. B., & Qutieshat, A. (2023). Maximising productivity through employee motivation. *International Journal of Innovative Research & Development, 12*(10), 1-9. http://dx.doi.org/10.24940/ijird/2023/v12/i10/OCT23002

Aibieyi, S. (2014). Approaches, skills and styles of leadership in organizations. *Review of Public Administration and Management, 3*(5), 58. https://www.arabianjbmr.com/pdfs/RPAM_VOL_3_5/6.pdf

Albrecht, S. L., Furlong, S., & Leiter, M. P. (2023). The psychological conditions for employee engagement in organizational change: Test of a change engagement model. *Frontiers in Psychology, 14,* 1-11. http://dx.doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1071924

Ali, M., & Ullah, M. S. (2023). Role of laissez-faire leadership in talent management: Evidence from the pharmaceutical industry of Bangladesh. *Heliyon, 9*(6), 1-13. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e17234

Alkuwari, A. K. M. Z. (2025). Impact of leadership practices on organizational work environments. *Journal of Ecohumanism, 4*(1), 3410-3428. https://doi.org/10.62754/joe.v4i1.6182

AlMazrouei, H. (2023). The effect of COVID-19 on managerial leadership style within Australian public sector organizations. *Journal of General Management,* 1-14. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/03063070231152976

Alnuaimi, Y. M. E. (2022). Impacts of workplace factors on employee engagement in the public sector. *European Journal of Marketing and Economics, 5*(1), 59. http://dx.doi.org/10.26417/969ouv25

Arulsamy, A., Singh, I., Kumar, S. Panchal, J., & Bajaj, K. (2023). Employee training and development enhancing employee performance – a study. *Samdarshi, 16*(3), 406-416.

Arzuaga, S., Gandolfi, F., & Johnston, T. (2023). Quiet quitting: Work affect in the post-pandemic workplace. *European Economic Letters, 13*(5), 951-961.

Asim, M., Zhiying, L., Nadeem, M., Ghani, U., & Arshad, M. (2021). How authoritarian leadership affects employees' helping behavior? The mediating role of rumination and moderating role of psychological ownership. *Frontiers in Psychology, 12*, 1-13. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2021.667348

Aslam, U., Muqadas, F., Imran, M. K., & Rahman, U. U. (2018). Investigating the antecedents of work disengagement in the workplace. *Journal of Management Development,* 37(2), 149-164. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JMD-06-2017-0210

Atiom. (2023). *Understanding Quiet Quitting in the Modern Workforce.* https://www.atiom.app/post/understanding-quiet-quitting-in-the-modern-workforce

Awofeso, O. (2019). Managing formal organizations in the 21st century: A critique of Fredrick Taylor's scientific management theory. *Journal of Public Management Research, 5*(2), 1-11. http://dx.doi.org/10.5296/jpmr.v5i2.15970

Ayodeji, S. (2021). Human relations theory: Implications for effective human resource management. *Journal of Human Resource Management, 5*(1), 1-8.

Bakker, A., Hetland, J., Olsen, O. K., & Espevik, R. (2023). Daily transformational leadership: A source of inspiration for follower performance? *European Management Journal, 41*(5), 700-708. https://psycnet.apa.org/doi/10.1016/j.emj.2022.04.004

Bangura, S., & Lourens , M. (2023). Analysis of the effect of post-Covid office hybrid work arrangement on employee health and safety: A case study of Uni4 online Westville Durban South Africa. *Global Public Health Conference, i*(1), 80-88. http://dx.doi.org/10.17501/26138417.2023.6106

Bedarkar, M., & Pandita, D. (2014). A study on the drivers of employee engagement impacting employee performance. *Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences*, *133*, 106-117. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.sbspro.2014.04.174

Benítez-Márquez, M. D., Sánchez-Teba, E. M., Bermúdez-González, G., & Núñez-Rydman, E. S. (2022). Generation Z within the workforce and in the workplace: A bibliometric analysis. *Frontiers of Psychology, 12*, 1-16.

Biloa, X. (2023). *The impact of leadership style on employee job performance.* PhD thesis, West Chester University.

Bondersky, A. (2023). *The 3 Types of Leadership Styles in Business – Which One Is Right for You?* https://www.salesforce.com/blog/3-common-leadership-styles/

Bwalya, A. (2023). Leadership styles. *Global Scientific Journals, 11*(8), 181-194. http://dx.doi.org/10.6084/m9.figshare.23932113

Caldwell, C., & Mahand, T. (2023). Quiet Quitting – Causes and Opportunities. *Business and Management Research, 12*(1), 9-19.

Carrion, C. (2023). *The Silent Withdrawal: Understanding Quiet Quitting in the Workplace.* https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/quiet-quitting-understanding-employee-disengagement-workplace

Chukwusa, J. (2018). Autocratic leadership style: Obstacle to success in academic libraries. *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal),* 1-11.

Clément, D., Hasnaoui, J., Umar, M., & Gonzalez-Feliu, J. (2023). Decoding laissez-faire leadership: an in-depth study on its influence over employee autonomy and well-being at work. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal, 20*(2), 1-19. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11365-023-00927-5

CoffeePals Team. (2025). *The importance of one-on-one check-ins between managers and employees*. CoffeePals. https://www.coffeepals.com/blog/the-importance-of-one-on-one-check-ins-between-managers-and-employees

Coronado-Maldonado, I., & Benítez-Márquez, M.-D. (2023). Emotional intelligence, leadership, and work teams: A hybrid literature review. *Heliyon, 9*(10), 1-19. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2023.e20356

Cozzi, J. (2024). *Brené Brown – Cultivating Meaning & Connection* https://www.nbforum.com/newsroom/blog/brene-brown-cultivating-meaning-connection/

Creswell, J. W. (2022). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative and Mixed Methods Approaches.* 6th ed. SAGE.

Crosby, G. (2021). Lewin's democratic style of situational leadership: a fresh look at a powerful OD model. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science, 57*(3), 398-401. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/0021886320979810

Davis, G. (2023). Fight back against "quiet quitting" and "rage applying". *Sabinet African Journals.* https://journals.co.za/doi/abs/10.10520/ejc-om_hrf_v2023_n11_a5

DePrisco, M. (2022). *Leaders can stop quiet quitting—here's how.* https://qz.com/leaders-can-stop-quiet-quitting-heres-how-1849756621

Derecskei, A. (2016). How do leadership styles influence the creativity of employees? *Society and Economy, 38*(1), 103-118. http://dx.doi.org/10.1556/204.2016.38.1.7

Du, J., & Li, N. N. (2020. Authoritarian leadership in organizational change and employees' active reactions: Have-to and willing-to perspectives. *Frontiers in Psychology, 20*, 1-8. http://dx.doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.03076

Ergen, H., Giliç, F., Yücedağlar, A., & İnandi, Y. (2025). Leadership styles and quiet quitting in school context: unveiling mobbing as a mediator. *Frontiers in Psychology, 16,* 1-14. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2025.1538444

Galanis, P., Katsiroumpa, A., Vraka, I., & (2023). The quiet quitting scale: Development and initial validation. *AIMS Public Health, 10*(4), 828-848. http://dx.doi.org/10.31219/osf.io/5tgpm

Giao, H. N. K., & Hung, P. C. (2018). The impact of leadership style on job satisfaction of District 3 Party Committee employees, Ho Chi Minh City. *Journal of Finance and Marketing, 45*, 23-34.

Grzegorzek, J. (2024). *Motivation Theories (11/12): Pink's Autonomy, Mastery and Purpose.* https://www.superbusinessmanager.com/motivation-theories-11-12-pinks-autonomy-mastery-and-purpose/

Hamouche, S., Koritos, C., & Papastathopoulos, A. (2023). Quiet quitting: relationship with other concepts and implications for tourism and hospitality. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management, 35*(12), 4297-4312. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/IJCHM-11-2022-1362

Hassnain, A. (2022). Impact of autocratic and democratic leadership styles on employees' performance and motivation. *Journal of Administrative and Business Studies, 8*(3), 19-26. http://dx.doi.org/10.20474/jabs-8.3.2

Hieu, V. M. (2020). Employee empowerment and empowering leadership: A literature review. *Technium Romanian Journal of Applied Sciences and Technology, 2*(7), 20-28. http://dx.doi.org/10.47577/technium.v2i7.1653

Holsinger, J. W., & Carlton, E. L. (2018). *Leadership for Public Health: Theory and Practice.* Health Administration Press.

Hong, A., Cortez, M. C., Garcia, T., & Lorenzo, D. (2023). Silent disengagement: A case study on 'quiet quitting' among professors in Metro Manila's private higher education institutions amidst remote/hybrid work. *Journal of Business, Ethics and Society, 3*(2), 15-44. http://dx.doi.org/10.61781/3-2II2023/2bmlm

Hussain, S. T., Shen, L. Akram, T., & Naqvi, M. J. H. (2018)). Kurt Lewin's change model: A critical review of the role of leadership and employee involvement in organizational change. *Journal of Innovation and Knowledge, 3*(3), 123-127. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jik.2016.07.002

Imran, M., Li, J., Bano, S., & Rashid, W. (2025). Impact of democratic leadership on employee innovative behavior with mediating role of psychological safety and creative potential. *Sustainability, 17*(5), 1879. http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/su17051879

InspiriSYS. (2024). *Understanding employee disengagement and its effects on workplace productivity.* https://www.inspirisys.com/beyond-the-norm/Employee-Engagement-Deficiency-Understanding-Employee-Disengagement

Iqbal, Z. A., Abid, G., Arshad, M., & Ashfaq, M. (2021). Impact of authoritative and laissez-faire leadership on thriving at work: The moderating role of conscientiousness. *MDPI Journals, 11*(3), 667-685. http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/ejihpe11030048

Jamieson, S. (2024). *Likert scale: Britannica Encyclopedia.* https://www.britannica.com/topic/Likert-Scale

Jaqua, E., & Jaqua, T. (2021). Transactional Leadership. *American Journal of Biomedical Science & Research, 14*(5), 399-400. http://dx.doi.org/10.34297/AJBSR.2021.14.002021

Jerab, D., & Mabrouk, T. (2023). The role of leadership in changing organizational culture. *SSRN Electronic Journal,* 1-14. http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4574324

Jin, J., & Men, L. R. (2023). How avoidant leadership style turns employees into adversaries: The impact of laissez-faire leadership on employee-organization relationship and employee communicative behavior. *International Journal of Business Communication.* https://doi.org/10.1177/23294884231190397

Joseph, S., & Shetty , N. (2022). An empirical study on the impact of employee voice and silence on destructive leadership and organizational culture. *Asian Journal of Business Ethics, 11*(2), 85-109. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s13520-022-00155-0

Kanchana, L., & Jayathilaka, R. (2023). Factors impacting employee turnover intentions among professionals in Sri Lankan startups. *PLoS ONE, 18*(2), 1-20. http://dx.doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0281729

Kim, K., & Sohn, Y. (2024). The impact of quiet quitting on turnover intentions in the era of digital transformation: The mediating roles of job satisfaction and affective commitment, and the moderating role of psychological safety. *Systems, 12*(11), 1-17. http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/systems12110460

Lee, C.-c., Li, . Y.-s., Yeh, . W.-c., & Yu, Z. (2022). The effects of leader emotional intelligence, leadership styles, organizational commitment, and trust on job performance in the real estate brokerage industry. *Frontiers of Psychology, 13*, 1-21. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.881725

Leibovitch, A. (2025, January 16). *Effective employee engagement ideas for the modern workforce.* Applauz. https://www.applauz.me/resources/employee-engagement-ideas

Leuhery, F., Padang, N., Puspitasari, D., & Judijanto, L. (2024). Workplace diversity and inclusion: strategies for effective implementation and benefits to organizational culture. *Dinasti International Journal of Economics, Finance and Accounting, 5*(4), 4647-4653. http://dx.doi.org/10.38035/dijefa.v5i4.3373

Lowisz, S. (2022). *Are leaders to blame for quiet quitting?* https://www.forbes.com/councils/forbeshumanresourcescouncil/2022/12/14/are-leaders-to-blame-for-quiet-quitting/

Lundmark, R., Richter, A., & Tafvelin, S. (2021). Consequences of managers' laissez-faire leadership during organizational restructuring. *Journal of Change Management, 22*(1), 40-58. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14697017.2021.1951811

Maksimovic, J., & Evtimov, J. (2023). Positivism and post-positivism as the basis of quantitative research in pedagogy. *Research in Pedagogy, 13*(1), 208-218. http://dx.doi.org/10.5937/IstrPed2301208M

Maqbool, S., Zafeer, H., Maqbool, S., Zeng, P., & Javed, S. (2024). Stance of numerous leadership styles and their effect on teaching to sustain academic performance at the high school level. *Heliyon, 10*(16), 1-12. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2024.e36438

Mazlan, M. R. M., & Jambulingam, M. (2023). Challenges of talent retention: A review of literature. *Journal of Business and Management Review, 4*(2), 78-91. http://dx.doi.org/10.47153/jbmr42.6302023

Mazzetti, G., & Schaufeli, W. (2022). The impact of engaging leadership on employee engagement and team effectiveness: A longitudinal, multi-level study on the mediating role of personal- and team resources. *PLOS One*, 1-25. https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0269433

McPhail, R., Chan, X. W., May, R., & Wilkinson, A. (2024). Post-COVID remote working and its impact on people, productivity, and the planet: An exploratory scoping review. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management, 35*(1), 154-182. http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2023.2221385

Mehraein, V., Visintin, F., & Pittino, D. (2023). The dark side of leadership: A systematic review of creativity and innovation. *International Journal of Management Reviews, 25*(4), 740-767. http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/ijmr.12334

Modise, J. (2023). The impacts of employee workplace empowerment, effective commitment and performance: an organizational systematic review. *International Journal of Innovative Science and Research Technology, 8*(7), 3435-3457. https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.10060841

Musaigwa, M. (2023). The role of leadership in managing change. *International Review of Management and Marketing, 13*(6), 1-9. http://dx.doi.org/10.32479/irmm.13526

Na-Nan, K., Kanthong, S., & Joungtrakul, J. (2021). An empirical study on the model of self-efficacy and organizational citizenship behavior transmitted through employee engagement organizational commitment and job satisfaction in the Thai automobile parts manufacturing industry. *Journal of Open Innovation: Technology, Market, and Complexity, 7*(3), 170. http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/joitmc7030170

Nurjanah, U., & Suherman, E. (2022). Maslow's theory study: Employee work motivation approach. *Journal of Management, 12*(2), 1775-1784. https://doi.org/10.35335/enrichment.v12i2.478

Okocha, B. F., Amah, E., & Amadi , M. N. (2022). Micromanaging behaviour and employee productivity in SMEs in Rivers State. *International Journal of Research and Innovation in Social Science, 6*(4), 745-755. http://dx.doi.org/10.47772/IJRISS.2022.6434

Osborne, S., & Hammoud, M. S. (2017). Effective Employee Engagement in the Workplace. *International Journal of Applied Management and Technology,* 16(1), 50-67. http://dx.doi.org/10.5590/IJAMT.2017.16.1.04

Öztürk, E., Arikan, Ö. U., & Ocak, M. (2023). Understanding quiet quitting: Triggers, antecedents and consequences. *International Journal of Behavior, Sustainability and Management, 10*(18), 57-79. http://dx.doi.org/10.54709/jobesam.1299018

Pevec, N. (2023). The concept of identifying factors of quiet quitting in organizations: An integrative literature review. *Challenges of the Future, 8*(2), 128-147. http://dx.doi.org/10.37886/ip.2023.006

Pizzolitto, E., Verna, I., & Venditti, M. (2022). Authoritarian leadership styles and performance: A systematic literature review and research agenda. *Management Review Quarterly,* 73, 841-871. http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s11301-022-00263-y

Preston, V. (2009). Questionnaire Survey. *International Encyclopedia of Human Geography,* 46-52. http://dx.doi.org/0.1016/b978-008044910-4.00504-6

Psych Safety. (2023) *Edgar Schein's Three Layers of Organisational Culture.* https://psychsafety.com/psychological-safety-edgar-scheins-three-layers-of-organisational-culture/

Radu, C. (2023). Fostering a positive workplace culture: impacts on performance and agility. In: Vilas Boas, A.A. (Ed.), *Human Resource Management—an update* (pp. 33-50). IntechOpen. https://doi.org/10.5772/intechopen.1003259

Rassaa, H. A., & Emeagwali, L. (2020). Laissez fair leadership role in organizational innovation: The mediating effect of organization structure. *Management Science Letters, 10*(7), 1457-1462. http://dx.doi.org/10.5267/j.msl.2019.12.022

Ribas, C., Rabie, G., Mostert, K., & De Beer, L. (2025). Job insecurity, work passion, and work-life balance in diverse work arrangements. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, *51,* 1-48. http://dx.doi.org/10.4102/sajip.v51i0.2266

Robinson, A. (2024). *Quiet Quitting: How to Prevent & Combat it at Work.* https://teambuilding.com/blog/quiet-quitting

Rosing, F., Boer, D., & Buengeler, C. (2022). When timing is key: How autocratic and democratic leadership relate to follower trust in emergency contexts. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, 1-18. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.904605

Saeed, S. A., Ali, S. O., & Rashid, K. M. (2023). The effect of different leadership styles on job satisfaction. *Organization and Human Capital Development, 2*(2), 16-30. http://dx.doi.org/10.31098/orcadev.v2i2.1747

Sapko, W. (2024). *Gallup Q12 Questions | The most famous engagement survey.* https://www.surveylab.com/blog/gallup-q12/

Saudi, M. H. M., Baker, R., Saudi, N. S., & Mohamed, R. (2021). The relationship between motivation, training, and job suitability with employee performance: A study of employees in the private sector. *Turkish Journal of Computer and Mathematics Education, 12*(11), 1156-1163. http://dx.doi.org/10.17762/turcomat.v12i11.6011

Serenko, A. (2023). The human capital management perspective on quiet quitting: Recommendations for employees, managers, and national policymakers. *Journal of Knowledge Management, 28*(2), 27-43. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JKM-10-2022-0792

Shukla, R., & Sinha, A. K. (2022). Leadership style's influence on employee performance in the workplace. *International Journal of Research in Business Studies, 7*(1), 53-64.

Singh, J. (2023). Development and initial validation of turnover intention scale. *Humanities and Social Science Studies, 10*(2), 1-10.

Soegiarto, I., Arifah, N., & Rahmadhani, M. (2024). Effects of leadership development programs, mentorship, and employee empowerment on organizational performance. *International Journal of Business, Law and Education, 5*(2), 1923-1937. http://dx.doi.org/10.56442/ijble.v5i2.755

Statistics South Africa (Stats SA). (2021). *Manufacturing industry: Financial.* https://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/Report-30-02-03/Report-30-02-032021.pdf

Susita, D. (2023). The influence of new leadership styles on employee performance in an automotive industry of Indonesia. *Problems and perspectives in management, 21*(2), 592-602. http://dx.doi.org/10.21511/ppm.21(2).2023.54

Taboroši, S., Maljugić, B., Lajić, Z., & Rajković, J. (2013). Employee turnover during the Great Resignation. In *Proceedings of XIII International Symposium Engineering Management and Competitiveness 2023 (EMC 2023)* (pp. 124-128). Zrenjanin, Serbia.

Tanujaya, B., Prahmana, R. C. I., & Mumu, J. (2023). Likert scale in social sciences research: Problems and difficulties. *FWU Journal of Social Sciences, 16*(4), 89-101. http://dx.doi.org/10.51709/19951272/Winter2022/7

Tatel, C., & Wright, B. (2024). *42% of employee turnover is preventable but often ignored.* Gallup. https://www.gallup.com/workplace/646538/employee-turnover-preventable-often-ignored.aspx

Thanh, N. H., & Quang, N. V. (2022). Transformational, transactional, laissez-faire leadership styles and employee engagement: Evidence from Vietnam's public sector. *Sage Journals, 12*(2), 1-18. http://dx.doi.org/10.1177/21582440221094606

Tokekar, I. A. (2024). Job satisfaction and work-life balance of employees working in work from home setting vs in the organization: A comparative study. *International Journal of Science, Engineering and Management, 11*(4), 86-92. https://ijsem.org/article/13%20April%202024%20IJSEM.pdf

Toska, A., Dimitriadou, I., Togas, C., & Nikolopoulou, E. (2025). Quiet quitting in the hospital context: Investigating conflicts, organizational support, and professional engagement in Greece. *Nursing Reports, 15*(2), 1-13. http://dx.doi.org/10.3390/nursrep15020038

Trivedi, A., & Mehta, A. (2019). Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs - theory of human motivation. *International Journal of Research in all Subjects in Multi Languages, 7*(6), 38-41. https://www.jetir.org/papers/JETIR2408635.pdf

Vasileva, N. A., & Datta, (2021). The impact of leadership style on employee motivation in the automotive industry: A British perspective. *Journal of Business and Retail Management Research, 16*(1), 58-70. http://dx.doi.org/10.24052/JBRMR/V16IS01/ART-05

Vorecol. (2024). *How can emotional intelligence influence leadership effectiveness in today's workplace?* https://vorecol.com/blogs/blog-how-can-emotional-intelligence-influence-leadership-effectiveness-in-todays-workplace-88475

Wahyuwardhana, M. H., & Wisesa, A. (2024). The role of democratic transformational leadership style in supporting clan organizational culture. *International Journal of Current Science Research and Review, 7*(2), 1312-1324. http://dx.doi.org/10.47191/ijcsrr/V7-i2-49

Wang, Q., Hou, H., & Li, Z. (2022a). Participative leadership: A literature review and prospects for future research. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13,* 1-12. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.924357

Wang, S., Wu, J., He, C., & Gu, J. (2022b). The impact of authoritarian leadership on employee creativity: the joint moderating roles of benevolent leadership and power distance. *Journal of Managerial Psychology,* 37(6), 527-544. http://dx.doi.org/10.1108/JMP-01-2021-0046

Wang, D., Wang, L., Wei , S., Yu, P., Sun, H., & Jiang, X. (2022c). Effects of authoritarian leadership on employees' safety behavior: a moderated mediation model. *Frontiers in Public Health, 10,* 1-15. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.846842

Wang, X. (2023). The role of leadership style in influencing employees' perceptions of their individual performance. In *Proceedings of the 2023 7th International Seminar on Education, Management and Social Sciences (ISEMSS 2023)* (pp. 946-952). http://dx.doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-126-5_104

Wang, Z., Liu, Y., & Liu, S. (2019). Authoritarian leadership and task performance: the effects of leader-member exchange and dependence on leader. *Frontiers of Business Research in China, 13*(19), 1-15. http://dx.doi.org/10.1186/s11782-019-0066-x

Xuecheng, W., Iqbal, Q., & Saina, B. (2022). Factors affecting employees' retention: integration of situational leadership with Social Exchange Theory. *Frontiers in Psychology, 13*, 1-13. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2022.872105

Yıldız, S. (2023). Quiet quitting: Causes, consequences and suggestions. *Social Mentality and Researcher Thinkers Journal, 9*(70), 3180-3190. http://dx.doi.org/10.29228/smryj.69426

Zavala-Parrales, A., Perez-Suarez, S., Meléndez-Anzures, F., & Dominguez, A. (2025). Driving gender equality in the automotive industry: A review of educational strategies. *Frontiers in Education, 10,* 1-17. http://dx.doi.org/10.3389/feduc.2025.1474864

Zenger, J., & Folkman, J. (2022). *Quiet Quitting is About Bad Bosses, Not Bad Employees.* https://zengerfolkman.com/articles/quiet-quitting-is-about-bad-bosses-not-bad-employees/

Zhang, J., Wang, Y., & Gao, F. (2023). The dark and bright side of laissez-faire leadership: Does subordinates' goal orientation make a difference? *Frontiers in Psychology, 14*, 1-12. http://dx.doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2023.1077357

Zheng, S., & Li, L. (2024). Navigating the double-edged sword: How and when laissez-faire leadership affects employees' challenging behavior. *Acta Psychologica, 250,* 1-16. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.actpsy.2024.104549

Zhenjing, G., Chupradit, S., Kuo, Y., & Nasssani, A. A. (2022). Impact of employees' workplace environment on employees' performance: a multi-mediation model. *Frontiers in Public Health, 10.* http://dx.doi.org/10.3389/fpubh.2022.890400

Zhong, X., Mamun, A., Masukujjaman, M., & Rahman, M. K. (2023). Modelling the significance of organizational conditions on quiet quitting intention among Gen Z workforce in an emerging economy. *National Library of Medicine, 13*(1), 1-18. http://dx.doi.org/10.1038/s41598-023-42591-3

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: ETHICAL CLEARANCE

Graduate School of Business Administration
University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Wits Business School

Wits Business School Ethics Committee
Constituted under the University Human Research Ethics Committee (Non-Medical)

Ethics Clearance Certificate

Ethics protocol number: WBS/BA392417/421
This certificate is only valid with a legitimate ethics protocol number and signed by the Researcher (below).

This certificate is only valid if accompanied by formal permission from the relevant stakeholder(s).

Project title	Exploring the relationship between Leadership Styles and Employee Turnover Intentions in a Tier 1 Automotive Supplier
Investigator / Researcher	Mr Fulufhelo Nengwenani
Nature of Project	MBA (Research Article)
Decision of the Committee	Approved, provided stakeholders and participants are guaranteed confidentialty.
Issue Date of Certificate	10/07/2024
Expiry date	Date of submission of the project / research report
Chairperson	Dr Ayanda Magida ☎ +27 11 717 3953 ✉ ayanda.magida@wits.ac.za

Declaration by Researcher

One copy must be signed by the Researcher and returned to the Chairperson of the Wits Business School Ethics Committee.

I fully understand the conditions under which I am authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee.

Signature

11/07/2024
Date:

APPENDIX B: INVITATION TO PARTICIPATE

Dear Participant,

Thank you for accepting to participate in this study. Please complete this consent form as you see appropriate. By signing this consent form, you are indicating that you have read and understood the description of this study and that you agree to the terms as described below:

	Mark with X	
	YES	NO
I confirm that I have read and understood the information about this study as provided in the participant's information sheet.		
I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time without any penalties or negative consequences against me.		
I agree that the information I provide may be treated as strictly confidential and anonymous and only the research team will have access to the interview data.		
I understand that the information acquired from the interview will not be recorded in excess of what is required for this study.		
I agree that the results of this study may be recorded in academic journals and at conferences.		
I may request a report summary, which will come as a result of this study subject to the university rules and regulations		

With full knowledge of all above-mentioned terms, I agree to participate in this study.

Participant		Consent taken by (Researcher)	
Name		Name	Fulufhelo Nengwenani
Signature		Signature	CharlesNengwenani
Date		Date	22/04/2024

APPENDIX C: INFORMED CONSENT LETTER

23 April 2024

Dear Participant

Re: Exploring the relationship between Leadership Styles and Employee Turnover Intentions in a Tier-1 Automotive Supplier

I am a part-time Master of Business Administration (MBA) student at the Wits Business School (WBS), under the supervision of Dr Lehlohonolo Tabane. My MBA research title is "Exploring the relationship between Leadership Styles and Employee Turnover Intentions in a Tier-1 Automotive Supplier". The research paper is aimed at investigating the influence of leadership styles within the organisation on the phenomenon of quiet quitting.

Participation in the study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time, without any consequences. Anonymity (regarding company name and any owner/manager/employee names) and confidentiality of information provided will be maintained and respected. Your consent at the time of the survey will be requested.

The results of the study will form part of my MBA dissertation report and may also be reported in academic papers and at conferences. A summary of the results of the research will be made available to you on request.

Please contact me if you have any questions regarding this study and participation in it. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours faithfully

Fulufhelo Nengwenani

Wits Business School

Johannesburg, South Africa

Supervisor: Dr Lehlohonolo Tabane

Contact details: lehlohonolo.tabane@wits.ac.za

APPENDIX D: CRONBACH'S ALPHA INTERNAL CONSISTENCY TABLE

Cronbach's Alpha	**Internal Consistency**
$A \geq 0.9$	Excellent
$0.89 > \alpha \geq 0.8$	Good
$0.79 > \alpha \geq 0.7$	Acceptable
$0.69 > \alpha \geq 0.6$	Questionable
$0.59 > \alpha \geq 0.5$	Poor
$0.5 > \alpha$	Unacceptable

APPENDIX E: SURVEY QUESTIONNAIRE

Gender	
Male	
Female	

Age	
18 -30 years old	
31 - 40 years old	
41 - 50 years old	
50 years old and above	

Educational Background	
High School (Matric)	
Diploma	
Bachelor's degree	
Honor's degree	
Master's degree	
Doctoral degree	

Years of work experience	
Less than 1 year	
1-3 years	
4-6 years	
7-10 years	
More than 10 years	

	Leadership Questions	1	2	3	4	5
		Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Not Sure	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	My immediate supervisor encourages open communication and collaboration					
2	My immediate supervisor provides clear directions and expectations					
3	My immediate supervisor supports employees' professional development					
4	My immediate supervisor recognises and rewards employees' achievements					
5	My immediate supervisor shows empathy and understanding towards employees					
6	My immediate supervisor delegates authority and empowers employees					
7	My immediate supervisor demonstrates fairness in decision-making processes					
8	My immediate supervisor encourages and supports my professional development					
9	My immediate supervisor effectively resolves conflicts within the team					

10	My immediate supervisor demonstrates trust and respect towards team members					
11	My immediate supervisor provides autonomy and independence in my job role					
12	The leadership style of my immediate supervisor influences my intention to stay with the organisation					
13	My immediate supervisor is accessible and approachable for discussions and support					
14	My immediate supervisor demonstrates fairness in decision-making processes					
15	my immediate supervisor encourages open communication and feedback.					
16	My immediate supervisor provides clear expectations and goals for my work					
17	My immediate supervisor recognises and appreciates my contributions to the organisation					
18	My immediate supervisor encourages open communication and feedback					
		1	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
	Quiet Quitting	**Strongly Disagree**	**Disagree**	**Not Sure**	**Agree**	**Strongly Agree**

1	I frequently think about leaving my current job without informing anyone					
2	I often feel disengaged and uninterested in my work					
3	I have considered reducing my effort and commitment to my current job					
4	I find it challenging to voice my concerns and frustrations at work					
5	I believe my current job does not align with my long-term career goals					
6	I have mentally checked out from work, even though I physically remain present					
7	I have become less motivated and productive at work					
8	I have disengaged from social interactions with colleagues and supervisors					
9	I have actively sought alternative employment opportunities					

APPENDIX F: GRAMMARIAN LETTER

22 Krag Street
Napier
7270
Western Cape

07 February 2025

WITS Business School
University of the Witwatersrand
JOHANNESBURG

LANGUAGE & TECHNICAL EDITING
Cheryl M. Thomson

Exploring the relationship between leadership styles and quiet quitting in a tier-1 automotive supplier

This is to confirm that I, Cheryl Thomson, executed the language and technical editing of the above-titled project of **NENGWENANI FULUFHELO**, **student number 392417**, at the **WITS BUSINESS SCHOOL**, in preparation for submission of this project for assessment.

Yours faithfully



CHERYL M. THOMSON

Email: cherylthomson2@gmail.com

Cell: 0826859545