



INVESTIGATING THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN LEADERSHIP STYLES AND TURNOVER INTENTION IN BPO SECTORS IN DIGOS CITY, PHILIPPINES

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Abstract:

The Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) industry has consistently witnessed tremendous growth, but it has a chronic problem of high employee turnover, which is both expensive and recurring. This quantitative research investigates the relationship of leadership styles, such as transformational, transactional, autocratic, and laissez-faire leadership, on turnover intention of one hundred seventy-nine (179) rank-and-file employees from BPO sectors in Digos City, Philippines. The researchers used the 5-point Likert scale to measure the respondents' rate of agreement or disagreement with each statement of the two variables. Statistical techniques such as mean and Pearson's r were also used to measure the correlation between the variables. The examined data revealed a high descriptive level of overall leadership styles and a very low descriptive level of turnover intention among the participants. It also revealed a weak and statistically non-significant correlation between the two variables ($r = 0.061$, $p = 0.415$). The results suggested that while leadership styles are visibly practiced within these organizations, they do not appear to be the primary determinant of employees' decisions to stay or leave in the BPO sectors in Digos City.

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1. Introduction

Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) involves delegating specific business functions such as payroll and accounting, marketing, customer support, and IT services to external service providers. Companies typically adopt BPO to reduce operational costs while maintaining efficiency in non-core business activities (Jilbert *et al.*, 2023, pp. 213-226). Despite its continued growth and increasing revenue, the BPO industry faces persistent human resource challenges, the most pressing of which is employee turnover. The sector is known for its high labor turnover rates, which pose profound financial and operational implications for organizations. De Ocampo and Aguiling (2018, pp. 62-69) highlight that turnover has become a costly and enduring issue that negatively impacts performance, disrupts workflow, and increases recruitment and training expenses. Chiat and Panatik (2019, pp. 10-15) further emphasize that the financial burden of replacing employees, alongside the loss of experience and organizational knowledge, presents a significant challenge to sustained productivity and growth.

In addressing this persistent issue, leadership style has emerged as a critical factor influencing employees' intention to stay or leave an organization. When effectively applied, leadership can shape organizational climate, foster positive employee relationships, and directly influence behavioral outcomes (Gan & Ling, 2021, pp. 1-17). Research consistently points to the importance of leadership in enhancing employee commitment and mitigating turnover intention (Abasilim, Gberevbie, and Osibanjo, 2019, pp. 2158–2440). In particular, transformational leadership, characterized by inspiration, support, and individualized consideration, has been identified as a powerful tool in reducing turnover. Yücel (2021, p. 81) found that managers who practice effective leadership can significantly decrease employees' intention to leave by improving performance and workplace satisfaction. Similarly, Promchart & Potipiroon (2020, pp. 16-37) observed that employees who perceive their leaders as transformational are less likely to consider quitting. These findings underscore the pivotal role of leadership style in managing employee retention, especially in dynamic and high-turnover industries like BPO.

Building on the critical role of leadership in influencing employee outcomes, several studies have established a direct and substantial link between leadership style and turnover intention. Supriadi *et al.* (2020, p. 47) found that high levels of employee turnover intention are often associated with the type of leadership practiced within an organization, emphasizing that ineffective or inappropriate leadership styles can

contribute to dissatisfaction and eventual departure. Similarly, Stamolampros *et al.* (2019, pp. 130–147) highlighted the severe consequences of employee turnover for organizations, including not only the financial burden of severance pay, recruitment, and training costs but also the potential decline in performance due to the transition from experienced employees to new hires. Further reinforcing this connection, Choi (2025, pp. 281–303) demonstrated that ethical leadership significantly reduces turnover intention and actual turnover in U.S. federal agencies by fostering a culture of trust, fairness, and organizational commitment.

These findings underscore the notion that leadership is not merely a managerial approach but a strategic tool with the potential to influence workforce stability. The consistent evidence across studies points to the pivotal role of leadership in addressing employee retention challenges, particularly in high-turnover industries such as BPO. As such, this research aims to examine how different leadership styles impact employee turnover intention in selected BPO firms in Digos City, thereby contributing to the broader understanding of effective leadership practices in the context of employee retention.

This study is primarily anchored on the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory developed by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995). LMX is a relationship-based leadership theory that emphasizes the dyadic interactions between leaders and individual subordinates. Unlike traditional leadership theories that adopt a uniform approach to managing followers, LMX focuses on the quality of relationships leaders build with each employee. According to De Clercq (2022, pp. 90-102), high-quality leader-member relationships may enhance employees' job satisfaction and reduce complaints and turnover intention. Studies have demonstrated that leadership styles characterized by trust, support, and mutual respect cultivate high-quality LMX relationships associated with higher employee morale and reduced turnover intentions.

According to Eckhardt *et al.* (2021, pp. 269-295), various leadership styles can impact employees differently. Additionally, Barnová (*et al.* (2022, p.192) concluded that leadership styles, such as transformational, transactional, autocratic, and laissez-faire, can influence the quality of interpersonal relationships and outcomes. As such, Shretha (2019, pp. 30-41) highlighted that proper leadership style increases management efficiency in the sense that it inspires employees to work enthusiastically, enhances their performance, resulting in better organizational outcomes, and strengthens dedication and commitment to their workplace (Al-Awlaqi *et al.*, 2021, pp. 74-93). This dynamic is particularly relevant in the BPO industry, where demanding workloads and insufficient recognition often heighten the risk of employee dissatisfaction and departure. Thus, LMX theory provides a relevant and robust theoretical lens for examining the impact of leadership style on employee turnover intention. It asserts that the quality of interactions between leaders and subordinates significantly affects employee perceptions and behaviors, particularly in BPO firms where employee retention is a persistent challenge. As Erdogan and Bauer (2015, p.3) emphasize, the foundation of LMX lies in the ability of

leaders to cultivate meaningful, trust-based relationships that foster employee loyalty, enhance commitment, and ultimately reduce the intention to leave.

This study holds significant value as it investigates the relationship between leadership styles and employee turnover intentions within the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) sector, characterized by high attrition rates and demanding work environments. By examining the relationship between leadership styles and turnover intention, this study offers practical insights into management strategies that can improve employee satisfaction, foster stronger leader-member relationships, and enhance organizational stability. Moreover, this study contributes to bridging the gap in empirical literature on leadership dynamics within the local BPO context, particularly in Digos City. Human resource practitioners and organizational leaders may utilize these insights to design targeted training programs that promote effective leadership styles, improve employee engagement, and ultimately support long-term retention of employees in organizations.

2. Research Objectives

This study aimed to determine the relationship between leadership styles and turnover intention in the BPO sectors in Digos City. Particularly, it sought to address the following objectives:

1. To determine the level of leadership style in the BPO sectors in Digos City in terms of:
 - 1.1 transformational leadership;
 - 1.2 transactional leadership;
 - 1.3 autocratic leadership; and
 - 1.4 laissez-faire leadership.
2. To assess the level of turnover intention in the BPO sectors in Digos City.
 - 2.1 affective commitment;
 - 2.2 continuance commitment, and
 - 2.3 normative commitment.
3. To ascertain the significance of the relationship between leadership styles and turnover intention in the BPO sectors in Digos City.

3. Material and Methods

3.1 Respondents

A total of 179 respondents, comprising employees from two BPO companies in Digos City, were included in this study. This represented 100% of the target population, as complete enumeration was utilized to ensure comprehensive data collection. According to Memon *et al.* (2020), a sample size in the range of 160 to 300 valid observations is considered optimal for conducting multivariate statistical analysis procedures, being neither too small to compromise the power of the study nor too large to overcomplicate

the analysis. Therefore, including 179 respondents in this study provided a robust and valid sample size, supporting the reliability of the findings.

Specifically, this study included current employees from the two selected BPO companies who have been employed for at least six months. This timeframe was chosen to ensure that the respondents had sufficient exposure to their workplace environment and leadership styles, allowing them to provide informed insights into turnover intentions. Additionally, only full-time employees were included, as their experiences with leadership practices were expected to be more consistent and reflective of long-term employment relationships. On the other hand, the study excluded employees who had been with the company for less than six months, as their limited experience did not provide a comprehensive view of the leadership styles in place. Part-time and temporary employees were also excluded, as their turnover intentions might be influenced by factors unrelated to leadership, such as their employment status or contract terms. Additionally, respondents were allowed to withdraw their participation at any point to ensure their involvement was voluntary and compliant with ethical research procedures.

3.2 Instruments

The researchers utilized a structured survey questionnaire composed of two sections. The first section assessed leadership styles using four key dimensions: transformational, transactional, laissez-faire, and autocratic leadership. The measurement tool for leadership styles was adopted from the study “Effect of Leadership Styles on Employees' Performance: The Case of Commercial Bank of Ethiopia” by Regawi (2021, pp. 34-41). To facilitate data analysis and ensure consistency in responses, the questionnaire employed a 5-point Likert scale, adapted from Pimentel (2019, pp 183-191), which allowed respondents to rate their agreement or disagreement with each statement.

Range of Means	Descriptive Level	Interpretation
4.20 - 5.00	Very High	This means that the respondents strongly agree with the statement.
3.40 - 4.19	High	This means that the respondents agree with the statement.
2.60 - 3.39	Moderate	This means that the respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statement.
1.81 - 2.59	Low	This means that the respondents disagree with the statement.
1.00 - 1.80	Very Low	This means that the respondents strongly disagree with the statement.

On the other hand, the employee turnover intention instrument utilized in this research was adopted from the study titled “Employees’ Organizational Commitment and Turnover Intentions” by Bonds (2017, pp.121-122). This instrument was used to gather essential data on the turnover intentions of employees working in business process outsourcing (BPO) sectors in Digos City. To facilitate data analysis and ensure consistency in responses, a 5-point Likert scale (Pimentel, 2019, pp. 183-191) was

employed in analyzing and interpreting the respondents' responses, which allowed the respondents to rate their agreement or disagreement with each statement on the questionnaire.

Range of Means	Descriptive Level	Interpretation
4.20 - 5.00	Very High	This means that the respondents strongly agree with the statement.
3.40 - 4.19	High	This means that the respondents agree with the statement.
2.60 - 3.39	Moderate	This means that the respondents neither agree nor disagree with the statement.
1.81 - 2.59	Low	This means that the respondents disagree with the statement.
1.00 - 1.80	Very Low	This means that the respondents strongly disagree with the statement.

3.3 Design and Procedure

This study employed a quantitative research design, specifically utilizing descriptive and correlational methods to examine the relationship between leadership styles and employees' turnover intention in the BPO sectors in Digos City. The descriptive approach aimed to provide a clear overview of the characteristics and trends within the data, while the correlational method focused on identifying the statistical association between the two main variables. Quaranta (2017, pp. 40-41) explains that correlational research is a form of non-experimental design that examines the degree of relationship between two or more variables without manipulating any of them. In this context, the study investigated the correlation between leadership styles and employee turnover intentions. Prior to data collection, a formal letter of request was submitted to the operations managers of selected call center firms to seek permission to conduct the survey. Upon receiving approval, the researchers personally distributed the questionnaires to ensure clear instructions, minimize misunderstanding of the items, and enhance the validity and accuracy of responses. The completed questionnaires were retrieved on the date agreed upon with the operations managers. After collection, the responses were organized, tabulated, and encoded with the assistance of a statistician. The data were then analyzed and interpreted based on the research problems. Mean scores were computed to assess the levels of leadership styles and turnover intention. Additionally, Pearson's *r* was employed to determine the significance and strength of the relationship between leadership styles and employees' turnover intention.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Level of Leadership Styles in BPO sectors in Digos City

Table 1 presents the perceived level of leadership styles among Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) companies in Digos City based on the responses of 179 respondents. The leadership styles examined include transformational, transactional, autocratic, and

laissez-faire. The overall mean of 4.13 (SD=0.52) falls under the “High” descriptive level, indicating that respondents agree with the statement about overall leadership styles. This suggests that managers in these organizations are actively engaging in various leadership behaviors to guide and influence their teams. Among the four leadership styles assessed, transactional leadership recorded the highest mean of 4.41 (SD=0.53), closely followed by transformational leadership at 4.40 (SD=0.55). These findings imply that BPO leaders in Digos City frequently utilize structured performance management systems (transactional) and motivational, vision-driven approaches (transformational). Laissez-faire leadership had a mean score of 4.11 (SD=0.82), also interpreted as “High,” which suggests that leaders often grant employees autonomy in performing tasks. However, the relatively higher standard deviation implies more varied experiences among respondents. On the other hand, autocratic leadership scores the lowest with a mean score of 3.60 (SD=0.89), still within the “High” range. This indicates that while directive and authoritative behaviors are present, they are less frequently demonstrated compared to other styles. The relatively high standard deviation also reflects greater variability in how these leadership styles are experienced across different BPO firms.

Table 1: Level of leadership style of BPOs in Digos City, n=179

Indicators	Mean	SD
Transformational leadership	4.40	0.55
Transactional leadership	4.41	0.53
Autocratic leadership	3.60	0.89
Laissez-faire leadership	4.11	0.52
Overall	4.13	0.52

4.1.1 Transactional Leadership

Transactional leadership received the highest mean score of 4.41 (SD=0.53), assessed as “very high”. This indicates that respondents strongly agree with the statement about transactional leadership. Employees perceived their leaders as highly responsive to performance outcomes and committed to reinforcing productivity through clear expectations, structured feedback, and performance-based rewards. This finding suggests that leaders in these organizations commonly provide explicit instructions, monitor goal progress, and acknowledge individual and team accomplishments. Such behaviors are essential in fast-paced, performance-driven environments like the BPO industry, where measurable outcomes are a key priority.

This finding aligns with the perspective of Udayanga (2020, pp. 297-309), who described transactional leadership as an exchange-based relationship in which leaders clarify roles, set clear expectations, and focus on maintaining operational stability through structured and goal-oriented interactions. This supports the current results, where employees in BPO firms perceived their leaders as task-focused and consistent in reinforcing performance through rewards and feedback mechanisms. Additionally, Richards (2020, pp.46-50) reinforces this interpretation, emphasizing the value of extrinsic motivators, such as incentives and recognition events, in promoting employee

motivation and engagement. This resonates with the BPO environment, where performance metrics and client service standards often necessitate visible and tangible acknowledgment of accomplishments. Richards' and Udayanga's views corroborate the finding that transactional leadership is effectively applied in settings that demand clarity, productivity, and accountability.

However, Solis *et al.* (2023, pp.215-233) present a critical counterpoint, highlighting the limitations of transactional leadership, particularly in dynamic or transformative organizational contexts. Their findings argue that a reliance on contingent rewards may weaken a leader's influence over time, reducing their relational connection with employees and potentially harming the organization's social and cultural cohesion. This perspective suggests that while transactional leadership may be suitable for maintaining order and performance in routine operations, as reflected in the current study, it may be insufficient or even counterproductive when innovation, adaptability, or more profound employee commitment are required.

4.1.2 Transformational Leadership

With a mean score of 4.40 (SD=0.55), transformational leadership in the selected BPO companies in Digos City is rated as "very high", indicating that the respondents strongly agree with the statement about this type of leadership. This result suggests that employees perceive their leaders as individuals who inspire confidence, motivation, and positivity, while also making them feel valued and empowered. The results also indicate that leaders are perceived as effective in articulating clear goals, using vivid communication to convey the company's vision, and encouraging creativity in problem-solving. This finding is strongly supported by Lei *et al.* (2020, pp. 481–499), who identified transformational leadership as one of the most effective styles for managing change and fostering innovation. Their study highlights that transformational leaders build emotional well-being, confidence, and a sense of belonging among team members – traits that align closely with the perceptions shared by BPO employees in the current study.

Furthermore, Lei, Leaungkhamma, and Le (2020, pp. 481–499) emphasize the role of such leaders in communicating vision, offering support, encouraging critical thinking, and nurturing personal development - all of which reflect the leadership characteristics perceived by the respondents. Similarly, Farahnak *et al.* (2020, pp. 98-111) extend this view by underscoring the concept of person-organization value congruence, suggesting that transformational leaders help employees understand how their personal values align with organizational goals. By promoting trust, clarity of purpose, and commitment to excellence, these leaders further reinforce a culture of growth and motivation, thereby validating the observed high manifestation of transformational leadership in the BPO context.

However, the current findings are also complemented by Lin *et al.* (2020, p.16), who present a nuanced perspective on transformational leadership. While their research confirms the positive effects of this leadership style on innovation and performance, it also points out that transformational leadership may contribute to challenge stressors

such as increased workload and task complexity. Although such stressors can motivate employees to improve performance, they can also lead to heightened pressure and potential burnout if not properly managed. This insight highlights the need for balance in applying transformational leadership, ensuring that motivation and high expectations are matched with adequate support and resources.

4.1.3 Laissez-Faire Leadership

This indicator received a mean score of 4.11 (SD=0.82), indicating a “High” level of manifestation among the selected BPO companies in Digos City. This result suggests that the respondents agree with the statement about this kind of leadership, with leaders often adopting a hands-off approach, granting substantial autonomy to their employees. The relatively higher standard deviation also indicates variability in how this leadership style is experienced across different respondents. The data indicate that BPO employees often operate under conditions emphasizing freedom, minimal direct interference, and individual responsibility.

This finding is supported by Zhang *et al.* (2022, pp. 232-257), who emphasized the positive role of autonomy-promoting leadership in enhancing employee well-being and performance. Their research supports the notion that allowing employees more control over their work can lead to greater satisfaction and productivity benefits likely relevant to the BPO setting, where repetitive tasks can be balanced by self-direction. Similarly, Thanh and Quang (2022, pp. 1-18) asserted that laissez-faire leadership enables employees to develop resilience and grow personally by learning to overcome challenges independently. This further supports the current study's finding that such leadership encourages initiative and self-management among BPO workers.

In addition, Ali and Ullah (2023, p. 17234) offered insight into the social exchange dimension of laissez-faire leadership. They argued that when employees perceive that they are trusted and empowered by their leaders, they tend to reciprocate with greater commitment, loyalty, and positive behavior toward the organization. This aligns with the interpretation that autonomy under this leadership style can foster intrinsic motivation and engagement, especially for employees who value flexibility. However, the literature also highlights potential downsides of laissez-faire leadership. Diebig and Bormann (2020, pp. 324-344) warned that during organizational change or restructuring, such a leadership style may lead to increased stress levels and burnout, as employees are left to navigate complexity with little guidance. Additionally, Donkor and Zhou (2020, pp. 30-36) and Lundmark, Richter, and Tafvelin (2021, pp.40-58) emphasized that a lack of support and supervision under laissez-faire leadership can contribute to confusion, inefficiency, and reduced accountability.

4.1.4 Autocratic Leadership

Autocratic leadership received a mean score of 3.60 (SD=0.89), which falls under the “High” descriptive level, indicating that respondents agree with the statement about this type of leadership. The result suggests that many leaders in this sector adopt a directive

and supervisory approach, assuming that close monitoring and strict control are necessary to ensure employee compliance and productivity. The data reflect leadership behaviors where supervisors provide explicit instructions, enforce rules, and act as the final authority in evaluating performance. There is also evidence of reliance on external motivators such as rewards and penalties to influence behavior, consistent with the characteristics of an autocratic environment. This interpretation is supported by Lashley (2021, pp. 83–86), who argued that employees in autocratic settings are typically motivated through extrinsic mechanisms, emphasizing a reward-punishment orientation rather than intrinsic motivation. Lashley's view reinforces that BPO leaders may adopt this style to maintain performance levels, especially in task-driven environments requiring precision and accountability.

Likewise, Syed, Ali, and Hussain (2020, p.58) highlighted that autocratic leadership is associated with strict organizational structures, where control is exerted through rigid enforcement of policies and rules. This mirrors the perception among BPO employees that their leaders implement strong oversight mechanisms and maintain a clear chain of command to regulate behavior and drive compliance. However, while autocratic leadership is often viewed negatively, Sanusi *et al.* (2020, pp. 576–586) offered a conditional perspective, suggesting that this style may be effective under certain conditions, specifically when the leader is competent, fair, and well-aligned with the team, and the workforce is cohesive. This implies that in structured environments like BPOs, autocratic leadership could deliver results when exercised with balance and fairness. On the other hand, Zheng, Song, and Xi (2025, pp. 292) argued that autocratic leadership can lead to employee passivity, where team members become overly dependent on the leader and show reluctance to take initiative without direct instruction. This can hinder creativity, reduce adaptability, and create a culture of compliance rather than empowerment, which may lead to challenges that may emerge if this style is overused.

4.2 Level of Turnover Intention in BPO sectors in Digos City

As shown in Table 2, the results of the study revealed a mean score of 1.54 (SD=0.36) for turnover intention, indicating that this variable is very low and employees in BPO sectors in Digos City strongly disagree with the statement in intent to leave the organization. This finding suggests that most respondents are not actively considering leaving their current jobs, reflecting a generally high level of job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and emotional attachment to their roles. Given the nature of the turnover intention scale, which measured employee attitudes toward thoughts of resignation, dissatisfaction, frustration over unmet goals, and openness to job offers, this low score signifies a favorable organizational climate that fosters employee retention. This result aligns with the findings of Abudaqa, Hilmi, and Dahalan (2022, pp. 361– 377), who emphasized that when employees' personal and organizational needs are met, their intentions to leave decrease significantly. Their study showed that job satisfaction, emotional intelligence, and reduced burnout directly lower the desire to resign. This

reinforces the interpretation that employees in Digos City's BPO industry are likely retained through fulfilling work environments that meet both personal needs and professional goals.

Table 2: Level of turnover intention of BPOs in Digos City

Indicators	Mean	SD
Turnover intention	1.54	0.36

Further supporting this, Medina, Biedma, and Ramos (2023) found that access to work-family balance policies enhances overall well-being and motivation, which in turn strengthens job performance and reduces the likelihood of turnover. This suggests that when BPO firms implement supportive and employee-centered practices, employees are more committed to staying, as they feel valued both as workers and individuals. However, it is important to recognize factors that could still potentially challenge employee retention. Atrian and Ghobbeh (2023, p. 2311) highlighted technostress as a significant factor influencing turnover intention, even in organizations that offer work-life balance. In technologically driven sectors like BPO, the pressure to adapt to constant digital demands may still contribute to job dissatisfaction if not properly managed. This implies that while turnover intention may currently be low, organizations must remain vigilant in monitoring stress factors that can arise from the technological nature of the work.

In the local context, the study conducted by Cole & Castro (2023, pp. 10-51) in BPO firms in Digos similarly found a low level of turnover intention, which validates the findings of the current research. They reported that while most BPO employees were content in their roles, the item "I dream about getting another job that will better suit my personal needs" received relatively high ratings, indicating that career aspiration and opportunity seeking still play a role for some employees. However, the item "I no longer look forward to another day at work" received the lowest rating, signifying that most employees retain a positive outlook toward their jobs. This pattern supports the interpretation that although some employees occasionally reflect on alternative job possibilities, the overall sentiment is one of satisfaction and stability. Cole & Castro (2023, pp. 10-51) also emphasized that employees who continue to look forward to their daily work experience a lower propensity to leave, reinforcing that a healthy workplace environment can effectively reduce turnover intention.

4.3 Relationship Between Leadership Styles and Turnover Intention in the BPO sectors in Digos City

Table 3 presents the correlation between leadership styles and turnover intention in selected BPO companies in Digos City. The analysis revealed a very weak and statistically non-significant correlation between overall leadership style and turnover intention ($r = 0.061$, $p = 0.415$). This indicates that leadership style, regardless of type, does not significantly influence employees' intention to leave their current positions within these BPO firms. This finding aligns with the study of Smama'h (2023, pp. 19–29), which

investigated leadership styles in the healthcare sector in Jordan and similarly found no significant relationship between perceived leadership and turnover intention. Their results suggest that while supportive leadership was present, it did not directly affect the likelihood of resignation. This supports the current study's conclusion that even when various leadership styles are actively manifested, they may not substantially influence an employee's decision to stay or leave.

Table 3: Correlational Matrix between Leadership Styles and Turnover Intention

Leadership Styles	Employee Commitment
Transformational leadership	0.112 (0.135)
Transactional leadership	0.024 (0.744)
Autocratic leadership	-0.019 (0.795)
Laissez-faire leadership	0.094 (0.21)
Overall	0.061 (0.415)

* $p < .05$

Similarly, Rachman and Iqbal (2025, pp. 238–259) argued that leadership style does not directly affect turnover intention through job satisfaction. Instead, their findings emphasized that the level of job satisfaction, rather than the leader's behavior, plays a more pivotal role in retention. This suggests that other organizational factors, such as workplace culture, compensation, work-life balance, or recognition, may influence turnover decisions more than leadership alone. However, contrasting perspectives in the literature underscore the potential indirect influence of leadership on employee retention. Grint (2020, pp. 313–319) and Woods *et al.* (2020, pp. 173–190) emphasized that leadership remains crucial in boosting employee morale, sustaining resilience, and supporting staff through organizational uncertainty and change. They argue that effective leadership, particularly during challenging periods, can reduce emotional fatigue and uncertainty—factors that are often precursors to turnover. In the same vein, Pattali *et al.* (2024, p. 199) highlighted that employees often leave organizations due to ineffective managerial approaches. Their study stressed that effective leadership enhances motivation, facilitates accountability, and fosters meaningful engagement, all of which are essential in retaining talent. Further supporting this, Retnowati *et al.* (2023, pp. 38–43) concluded that effective leaders build strong relational bonds with their team members, contributing to greater organizational commitment and lower turnover intention.

The correlation between each indicator of leadership style and turnover intention differs upon analysis. The results revealed a weak and statistically non-significant correlation between transformational leadership and turnover intention ($r = 0.112$, $p = 0.135$). This suggests that while transformational leadership is very highly practiced

among BPO sectors in Digos City, it does not exert a meaningful or reliable influence on employees' intention to leave. The implication is that other organizational or personal factors may better explain why they stay or resign, beyond the leadership style exhibited by their supervisors. This finding is consistent with the study conducted by Manoppo (2020, pp. 1395–1412), which reported that transformational leadership was not statistically significant in predicting turnover intention. The author emphasized that while transformational leadership may shape positive work attitudes, it does not always translate into retention, particularly when external or contextual factors are more pressing.

Conversely, Gerlach *et al.* (2020, pp. 298–383) offered a more favorable view, suggesting that the behaviors and values of transformational leaders—such as articulating vision, showing individualized consideration, and serving as moral exemplars that can foster employee alignment and purpose, which may negatively predict their intention to leave. This contrast highlights the possibility that while transformational leadership may not directly reduce turnover, its indirect effects on motivation, trust, and organizational identification could still be influential under certain conditions. Supporting this idea, Clack (2021, pp. 1001–1028) noted that employees who trust, admire, and respect transformational leaders often display higher levels of loyalty and commitment. This would suggest that transformational leadership's emotional and relational impact may help strengthen employee attachment, though again, this may not always prevent turnover if more potent external motivators exist. On the other hand, Gan and Voon (2021, pp. 10–11) emphasized that even satisfied and well-regarded employees may still choose to leave the organization due to external life circumstances, such as better job offers, family considerations, or long-term career goals. They pointed out that employees with seniority-related benefits like job security or pensions may still develop an intention to quit, especially when opportunities outside the organization align better with their evolving personal or professional needs.

The correlation analysis also showed no meaningful relationship between transactional leadership and turnover intention ($r = 0.024$, $p = 0.744$) in the BPO companies in Digos City. This very weak and statistically non-significant correlation indicates that reward-based, rule-governed leadership practices—such as contingent rewards and performance-based monitoring—do not significantly influence employees' decision to stay with or leave the organization. This finding aligns with the results of Alasiry and Alkhalidi (2024, p. 10), who reported that transactional leadership does not significantly affect turnover intention across various work settings. Their research emphasized that while useful in maintaining structure and performance, transactional approaches may lack the emotional or motivational depth needed to influence long-term employee commitment. Similarly, Pattali, Sankar, and Al Qahtani (2024, p. 199) found that external factors, such as lack of societal recognition or better opportunities elsewhere, may override the influence of leadership style on employees' intent to stay. This reinforces the idea that transactional leadership alone may not be sufficient to retain

employees, especially when personal or environmental factors weigh more heavily on their decisions.

On the other hand, contrasting perspectives argue for a more active role of transactional leadership in managing turnover. Yahaya, Abu-Abdissamad, and Malachy (2023, pp. 46–62) contended that transactional leadership is necessary to reduce employee turnover. They asserted that when leaders provide clear expectations, structured rewards, and consistent feedback, it creates a predictable and motivating work environment that discourages resignation. Similarly, Masenya and Ngoepe (2025, pp. 78–93) highlighted that transactional leadership can retain employees through well-defined goals and organized incentives, particularly in operational roles where structure and clarity are valued.

Additionally, Sobaih *et al.* (2020, pp. 257–270) emphasized that employees are more likely to remain with an organization when they perceive that the company fulfills its reciprocal obligations, such as offering rewards, opportunities for training, and developmental support. This aligns with the transactional model of leadership, where employees are expected to perform in exchange for tangible benefits. However, the current study's findings suggest that these mechanisms may not be strongly influential in the context of the BPO industry in Digos City, possibly because employees may be more motivated by other factors such as career advancement, work-life balance, or intrinsic job satisfaction.

The analysis also revealed a very weak and statistically non-significant negative correlation between autocratic leadership and turnover intention ($r = -0.019$, $p = 0.795$) in the selected BPO companies in Digos City. This implies that autocratic leadership, characterized by centralized decision-making, strict control, and minimal employee input, has an almost negligible inverse relationship with employees' intention to leave the organization. In essence, this leadership style does not significantly influence whether employees decide to stay or resign. This result aligns with the findings of Pahi *et al.* (2022), who observed that autocratic leadership, due to its restrictive and top-down nature, tends to have limited influence on employee retention. Their study highlighted that excluding employees from decision-making processes does not necessarily prompt them to leave, but also fails to build strong organizational commitment.

Further supporting this, Geay (2023, pp. 53–55) emphasized that autocratic leadership can, in some contexts, improve retention by offering clear structure and direction. This suggests that employees who prefer routine, order, or reduced ambiguity may respond positively to directive leadership, especially in performance-focused environments like BPOs. Therefore, the perceived impact of autocratic leadership may vary, depending on organizational norms and employee preferences. On the other hand, Sanam (2023, pp. 27–33) argued that employees working under autocratic leaders are often less satisfied with their jobs, making them more likely to consider quitting—even without clear future plans. Echoing this, Muguna *et al.* (2022, pp. 92–106) reported that autocratic leadership tends to positively influence turnover intention, suggesting that

excessive control and lack of autonomy may lead to disengagement and eventual resignation.

Lastly, the correlation analysis revealed a very weak and statistically non-significant positive correlation between laissez-faire leadership and turnover intention ($r = 0.094$, $p = 0.210$) among employees in selected BPO companies in Digos City. This result suggests a slight tendency for employees under laissez-faire leadership to be more likely to consider leaving their organization. While the relationship is weak and not statistically meaningful, it hints at a possible pattern where hands-off, non-engaged leadership may contribute to mild employee dissatisfaction or disengagement. This interpretation is partly supported by Alasiry and Alkhaldi (2024, pp. 6–7), who reported a weak negative correlation between laissez-faire leadership and turnover intention in their study. Their findings suggest that laissez-faire leadership had a negligible overall impact on employee decisions to leave, aligning with the present study's conclusion that the influence of this style is minimal at best.

Similarly, Suslik *et al.* (2022, p. 15) found a negative and statistically significant relationship between laissez-faire leadership and turnover intention, indicating that in some contexts, this leadership style may not meaningfully influence whether employees stay or resign. These perspectives reinforce the idea that laissez-faire leadership's impact may be too weak or inconsistent to be a primary driver of turnover. However, other studies highlight the potential risks of passive leadership approaches. Alshamari (2020, pp. 967–978) emphasized that the lack of active leadership, particularly the absence of support and engagement, can increase turnover intention, especially when employees feel neglected or lack clear direction. This aligns with Triono, Kusmaningtyas, and Halik (2024, pp. 8156–8167), who noted that employees under non-involved leaders may feel alienated, prompting them to seek more supportive work environments. Moreover, Inayah (2024, pp. 1431–1446) stressed the potential threat posed by passive leadership on work motivation, suggesting that reduced motivation could eventually translate into higher turnover intention. This means that even if laissez-faire leadership does not cause immediate turnover decisions, it may contribute to long-term disengagement, especially in environments where guidance, feedback, and developmental support are valued.

These findings partially negate the assumptions of the Leader–Member Exchange (LMX) Theory, which posits that the quality of leader–subordinate relationships significantly influences employees' organizational commitment and turnover intention. While LMX emphasizes the value of trust-based, supportive leadership in reducing employee attrition, the absence of a significant relationship in this study suggests that even well-established leader-member interactions may not be sufficient to curb turnover in the BPO context. This underscores the complexity of turnover behavior and the need to consider a broader set of organizational and individual factors beyond leadership alone.

5. Conclusion

The study investigated the relationship between various leadership styles and employees' turnover intention in the BPO sectors in Digos City. The findings revealed a generally high level of leadership style application and a very low level of turnover intention among employees. However, the statistical analysis showed that none of the leadership styles examined had a significant relationship with turnover intention. This suggests that while leadership styles are visibly practiced within these organizations, they do not appear to be the primary determinant of employees' decisions to stay or leave.

6. Recommendations

In light of the findings, it is recommended that BPO executives and operations managers go beyond traditional leadership frameworks and address other workplace factors that more directly influence retention. Specifically, attention should be given to the lack of individualized consideration in transformational leadership and limited feedback or recognition in transactional leadership. Managers are encouraged to implement personalized coaching, regular performance recognition, and meaningful one-on-one engagement sessions to foster stronger interpersonal connections with employees. Human resource managers may also integrate retention programs that complement leadership development with other essential factors such as competitive compensation, workload management, and career development pathways.

HR departments should also incorporate employee feedback mechanisms to better understand the underlying causes of disengagement and turnover that may not be addressed through leadership interventions alone. Furthermore, policy-makers and local stakeholders in the labor and business sectors are encouraged to promote workplace policies that support employee well-being in high-turnover industries like BPO. These may include advocacy for fair labor practices, incentives for employee-centered programs, and public-private collaborations to offer continuing education or wellness programs targeted at BPO workers. Lastly, future researchers may explore variables mediating or moderating the relationship between leadership styles and turnover intention, such as job satisfaction, organizational culture, or mental health, to better understand employee retention in the BPO setting.

Conflict of Interest Statement

The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper. The research was conducted independently and without any financial or personal relationships that could have influenced the results or interpretation of the data.

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