

LEADERSHIP STYLES, EMPLOYEE PERFORMANCE, AND TURNOVER INTENTION: A TWO-MODEL EMPIRICAL ANALYSIS

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First Received/ Makale İlk Gönderim Tarihi: 01.10.2025

Accepted/ Makale Kabul Tarihi: 14.11.2025

Citation/©: Shokhrukh, N., & Aktaş, B. N. (2025). Leadership styles, employee performance, and turnover intention: a two-model empirical analysis. *Journal of International Management Research and Applications*, 4(2), 23-42.

Abstract

This study examines how distinct leadership styles, autocratic, transactional, democratic, and transformational, relate to employee performance, and how performance, in turn, associates with turnover intention in organizations operating across Uzbekistan's public and private sectors. Drawing on cross-sectional survey data from 200 employees in government, manufacturing, banking, and service industries, the analysis employed descriptive statistics, Pearson correlations, and multiple regressions to assess these associations. Transformational leadership emerged as the sole style positively linked with employee performance, whereas autocratic, transactional, and democratic forms showed no significant connection. Employee performance displayed a strong inverse relationship with turnover intention, indicating that higher-performing employees tend to express lower intent to leave. The results reveal the continued prevalence of autocratic and transactional practices within Uzbek organizations but underscore the value of transformational leadership in enhancing performance and fostering workforce stability. The study contributes empirical evidence from a transitional economy and offers implications for leadership development, performance management, and future research on leadership-retention dynamics.

Keywords: Leadership styles, employee performance, turnover intention.

Article Type: Research Article.

LİDERLİK TARZLARI, ÇALIŞAN PERFORMANSI VE İŞTEN AYRILMA NİYETİ: İKİ MODELLİ ANALİZ

Atif/©: Shokhrukh, N., & Aktaş, B. N. (2025). Liderlik tarzları, çalışan performansı ve işten ayrılma niyeti: İki modelli analiz. *Uluslararası Yönetim Araştırmaları ve Uygulamaları Dergisi*, 4(2), 23-42.

Özet

Bu çalışma, liderlik tarzlarının (otokratik, işlemsel, demokratik ve dönüşümcü) çalışan performansı üzerindeki etkilerini ve devamında çalışan performansının işten ayrılma niyeti üzerindeki etkisini, Özbekistan'da faaliyet gösteren örgütler özelinde incelemektedir. Nicel ve kesitsel bir araştırma deseni benimsenmiş; devlet, imalat, bankacılık ve hizmet sektörlerinde çalışan 200 kişiden yapılandırılmış anketler yoluyla veri toplanmıştır. Değişkenler arasındaki ilişkileri incelemek amacıyla tanımlayıcı istatistikler, Pearson korelasyonu ve çoklu regresyon analizleri uygulanmıştır. Bulgular, incelenen örgütlerde otokratik ve işlemsel liderlik tarzlarının en yaygın olduğunu göstermektedir. Tüm liderlik tarzları arasında yalnızca dönüşümcü liderliğin çalışan performansı üzerinde anlamlı ve pozitif bir etkisi olduğu belirlenmiştir. Otokratik, işlemsel ve demokratik liderlik tarzlarının ise istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bir etkisi bulunamamıştır. Ayrıca, çalışan performansının işten ayrılma niyeti üzerinde güçlü ve negatif bir yordayıcı olduğu saptanmıştır. Çalışma, Özbekistan'da otokratik ve işlemsel liderliğin baskılılığını vurgulamakta ve örgütlerin yüksek performanslı çalışanları elde tutmak ve performansı artırmak amacıyla dönüşümcü liderliği teşvik etmeleri gereğinin altını çizmektedir. Teorik, uygulamaya yönelik ve gelecekteki araştırmalara ilişkin çıkarımlar tartışılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Liderlik tarzları, çalışan performansı, işten ayrılma niyeti.

Makale Türü: Araştırma Makalesi.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Leadership remains one of the most decisive forces shaping organizational outcomes, influencing how individuals interpret goals, engage in work, and sustain commitment. While global research has produced extensive evidence on leadership's influence on performance and retention, its effectiveness is not uniform across contexts (Avolio et al., 2009; Asrar-ul-Haq & Kuchinke, 2016). Much of what is known about leadership has been derived from Western organizational settings, where participative norms, low power distance, and open communication are taken for granted. These assumptions, however, do not always align with the realities of transitional economies, where managerial control, institutional hierarchy, and collective social expectations remain deeply embedded. Uzbekistan represents one such context in which organizational leadership continues to operate within authority-centered traditions inherited from the Soviet administrative model (Velu et al., 2017).

This historical and institutional background makes Uzbekistan a compelling environment in which to examine how leadership functions and what forms are most effective. In many Uzbek organizations, leadership practices continue to reflect command-and-control structures, even as new market-oriented management philosophies emerge. Autocratic and transactional leadership often dominate, while democratic and transformational approaches appear less institutionalized. Whether such dominance enhances or constrains employee outcomes remains an unresolved empirical question with direct implications for organizational development in the region.

Previous studies show that leadership style is associated with both employee performance and turnover intention, often through mechanisms of motivation, satisfaction, and commitment (Puni et al., 2016; Praditya, 2022). Transformational leadership is frequently linked to higher engagement and stronger performance (Roz, 2019; Rony et al., 2023), whereas autocratic and transactional styles are often connected to lower morale and greater intention to leave (Mbah & Ikemefuna, 2011; Kalambayi et al., 2021). Yet, research from transitional and post-socialist economies indicates that even directive or hierarchical leadership can sometimes maintain efficiency in structured environments that rely on authority and compliance (Anyango, 2015; Gopal & Chowdhury, 2014; Wang & Guan, 2018). These mixed findings suggest that leadership effectiveness cannot be assumed to follow a single pattern; it must be understood in relation to local institutional and cultural conditions.

This study investigates how four leadership styles, autocratic, transactional, democratic, and transformational, relate to employee performance, and how performance, in turn, associates with turnover intention within organizations operating in Uzbekistan. Employing a quantitative, cross-sectional design, the study draws on data from employees in government, manufacturing, banking, and service sectors. The analysis proceeds in two stages: first, examining the relationships between leadership styles and performance; and second, testing how performance relates to turnover intention.

The contribution of this study is twofold. Theoretically, it refines the scope of Full Range Leadership Theory (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Bass & Riggio, 2006) by examining its propositions in a high power-distance and control-oriented environment. In doing so, it clarifies how contextual and institutional characteristics shape the relational meaning of leadership behaviors and their linkages to employee outcomes. Practically, it provides evidence on which leadership styles are most prevalent and effective in Uzbekistan's evolving organizational landscape, thereby offering guidance for leaders seeking to balance authority with empowerment. Together, these contributions respond to a central question for leadership research: how established theories of

influence perform when applied within the distinctive structural and cultural conditions of transitional economies.

2. CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The four leadership forms considered in this study, autocratic, democratic, transactional, and transformational, capture a spectrum that extends from command orientation to participative and visionary influence. Autocratic leadership, first identified by Lewin et al. (1939), reflects concentrated authority and unilateral decision-making. Later analyses confirm that autocratic leaders rely on formal power and rarely delegate discretion to subordinates (Gastil, 1994; Rosing et al., 2022). While this structure can preserve order in highly regulated or crisis settings, it often restricts communication and suppresses initiative. Democratic leadership, in contrast, disperses authority through consultation and collective problem-solving. Originating from the same early typology (Lewin et al., 1939), this style positions employees as active participants in organizational decisions. Contemporary interpretations emphasize its participatory nature, leaders solicit input, integrate feedback, and foster a cooperative climate that encourages ownership and trust (Northouse, 2021; Rosing et al., 2022).

Transactional leadership, conceptualized by Burns (1978) and refined through subsequent empirical work, is grounded in exchange logic. Leaders clarify expectations, monitor compliance, and reward performance based on predefined criteria (Aarons, 2006; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). This approach tends to stabilize operations and secure short-term results in structured environments, yet it rarely generates commitment beyond contractual obligation. Transformational leadership, introduced by Burns (1978) and expanded by Bass (1985), represents a qualitatively different form of influence. It relies on articulating vision, stimulating intellectual engagement, and addressing individual needs to elevate followers' motivation. A substantial body of research associates transformational behaviors with higher performance and satisfaction across diverse organizational settings (Aarons, 2006; Bass & Riggio, 2006).

Beyond leadership itself, two outcome constructs define the present inquiry. Turnover intention refers to an employee's conscious willingness to leave the organization, a variable consistently recognized as the most direct predictor of actual turnover behavior (Tang et al., 2022). Prior studies show that turnover intention is shaped by perceived fairness, stress, job satisfaction, and commitment (Chin & Hung, 2013; Lee et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2020; Norizan et al., 2023). Understanding its antecedents is therefore crucial for managing organizational stability. Employee performance captures how effectively individuals execute assigned tasks in both quality and quantity terms (Triansyah et al., 2023; Aryata & Marendra, 2023). Performance is influenced not only by skill and effort but also by interpersonal dynamics and organizational culture (Ma et al., 2013; Sartika et al., 2021).

These constructs delineate the conceptual map guiding this study. Leadership style provides the behavioral context within which employees interpret expectations and allocate effort; performance represents the observable outcome of that interaction; and turnover intention reflects its longer-term attitudinal consequence. This framework enables an examination of how differing leadership approaches correspond with performance and how, in turn, performance aligns with employees' intention to remain or depart, issues particularly salient in hierarchical and transitional organizational systems such as those found in Uzbekistan.

3. HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

3.1. Leadership Styles and Employee Performance

Leadership is a fundamental factor influencing employee motivation, satisfaction, and organizational growth (Azhar, 2004; Fry, 2003; Paarlberg & Lavigna, 2010). Among the major approaches, democratic, transformational, transactional, and autocratic leadership each embody distinct assumptions about authority, participation, and reward systems.

Democratic leadership emphasizes participation and shared decision-making. By involving employees in problem-solving and encouraging open dialogue, democratic leaders cultivate belonging and self-efficacy, which correspond with higher motivation and task ownership (Agarwal, 2020; Andoh & Ghansah, 2019; Kalambayi et al., 2021; Suryadinata, 2023). Open communication and delegation further reinforce responsibility and trust, conditions associated with stronger performance and collaboration (Ahmad et al., 2014; Cooper, 2015; Koohang et al., 2017).

Transformational leadership extends beyond participation to address deeper psychological engagement. Through articulating vision, offering individualized consideration, and stimulating intellectual growth, transformational leaders inspire employees to transcend immediate self-interest, often translating into enhanced performance and satisfaction (Anwar et al., 2023; Hadi, 2018; Khan et al., 2020; Roz, 2019; Rony et al., 2023). Research across diverse contexts finds that transformational and transactional behaviors combined can balance inspiration with structure, improving organizational effectiveness (Alharbi & Aljounaidi, 2021; Asrar-ul-Haq & Kuchinke, 2016).

Transactional leadership, grounded in clear expectations and contingent rewards, is frequently associated with stable task performance (Alharbi & Aljounaidi, 2021; Judge & Piccolo, 2004). Its emphasis on structure and accountability can be beneficial in routine or compliance-driven environments. However, studies also indicate that its reliance on external reinforcement limits creativity and intrinsic motivation in dynamic settings requiring adaptation and innovation (Baig et al., 2019; Khan & Nawaz, 2016; Ohemeng et al., 2018; Omonona et al., 2019).

Autocratic leadership, defined by centralized control and unilateral decision-making, tends to suppress initiative and reduce satisfaction, thereby constraining performance (Anyango, 2015; Dolly & Nonyelum, 2018; Gopal & Chowdhury, 2014; Luque et al., 2008). While such authority can produce short-term efficiency in contexts demanding strict coordination or compliance, prolonged reliance on coercive control often diminishes morale and elevates turnover risk (Iqbal et al., 2015; Nwokocha & Iheriohanna, 2015; Wang & Guan, 2018).

Taken together, empirical findings indicate that leadership styles fostering participation, inspiration, and personal growth are more consistently associated with positive performance outcomes than those grounded in command or transactional control. These observations inform the present study's first set of hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Autocratic leadership style is negatively associated with employee performance.

Hypothesis 2: Transactional leadership style is positively associated with employee performance.

Hypothesis 3: Democratic leadership style is positively associated with employee performance.

Hypothesis 4: Transformational leadership style is positively associated with employee performance.

3.2. Employee Performance and Turnover Intention

Employee performance constitutes a central determinant of organizational effectiveness, reflecting how efficiently individuals contribute to collective goals and sustain long-term productivity (Dessler, 2013; Rachman, 2017; Robbins & Coulter, 2012). High-performing

employees typically demonstrate stronger job satisfaction and deeper organizational commitment, which correspond with lower turnover intention (Al-Ali et al., 2019; Dahlan et al., 2023; Han et al., 2024; Iqbal et al., 2020; Widjiani et al., 2019). This relationship is frequently reinforced through job satisfaction, which functions as a psychological link between performance outcomes and the decision to remain. Satisfaction, when supported by effective leadership and equitable workplace culture, strengthens attachment to the organization and reduces withdrawal tendencies (Alias et al., 2018; Suswati, 2020; Yusupova et al., 2024).

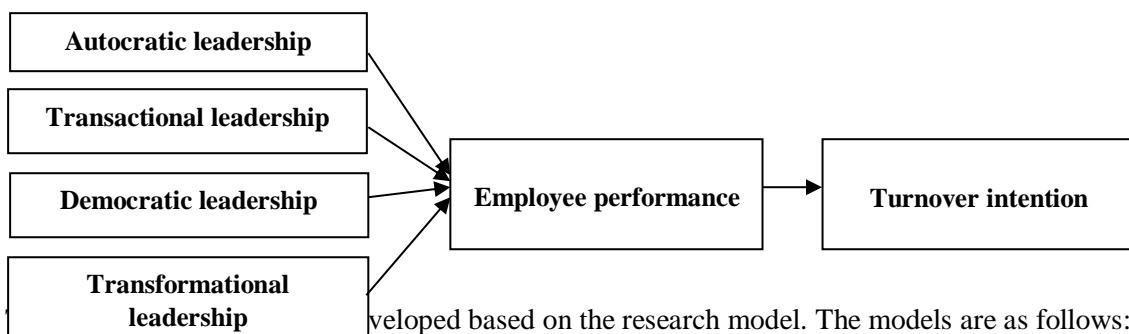
However, the association between performance and turnover intention is not uniform. Exceptional employees may still seek external opportunities when recognition, compensation, or advancement are perceived as inadequate (Ariyabuddhiphongs & Khan, 2017; Park & Min, 2020). Similarly, persistent stressors or perceptions of unfair treatment can erode satisfaction, weakening the stabilizing effect of high performance and increasing the likelihood of departure (Applebaum, 2010; Lo et al., 2017; Villanueva & Djurkovic, 2009). These contingencies highlight that performance alone does not guarantee retention; contextual and motivational factors determine whether strong performers remain committed or disengage.

Drawing on these evidences, higher levels of performance are expected to correspond with lower turnover intention. Therefore, we hypothesize:

Hypothesis 5: Employee performance is negatively associated with turnover intention.

A conceptual model has been developed to illustrate the relationships among leadership styles, employee performance, and turnover intention. As depicted in Figure 1, it provides the theoretical foundation for the subsequent empirical analysis.

Figure 1. Hypothesized Model



Developed based on the research model. The models are as follows:

$$\text{Model 1: } EP_i = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 ALS_i + \alpha_2 TRLS_i + \alpha_3 DLS_i + \alpha_4 TLS_i + \varepsilon_i$$

Where, EP_i —employee performance in organization i , ALS_i —autocratic leadership in organization i , $TRLS_i$ —transactional leadership in organization i , DLS_i —democratic leadership in organization i , TLS_i —transformational leadership in organization i , α_0 —intercept (constant), α_1 — α_4 —are coefficients, ε_i —error term. Thus, the first model examines how various leadership styles, autocratic, transactional, democratic, and transformational, affect employee performance, with performance serving as the dependent variable.

$$\text{Model 2: } TI_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 EP_i + \varepsilon_i$$

Where, TI_i —turnover intention in organization i , EP_i —employee performance in organization i , β_0 —intercept (constant), β_1 —coefficients, ε_i —error term. The second model explores the link between employee performance on turnover intention.

The use of two separate regression models in this study is intentional and theoretically guided. The sequential structure reflects the underlying framework in which leadership styles are conceptually associated with employee performance, and employee performance is in turn related to turnover intention. Modeling these associations separately enables a focused examination of each relationship while avoiding assumptions of temporal order or untested mediation. This stepwise design aligns with the study's objectives and is supported by methodological recommendations that advocate separate estimation when indirect effects are not being formally tested (Baron & Kenny, 1986; Hayes, 2018).

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1. Research Design

The study employed a quantitative, cross-sectional design to examine the associations among leadership styles, employee performance, and turnover intention within organizations operating in Uzbekistan. This design was selected to capture employees' perceptions across multiple sectors and to identify relational patterns rather than causal effects. Data were gathered through a structured survey, enabling standardized measurement and statistical comparison across variables.

4.2. Sample and Data Collection

Participants were drawn from organizations in the government, manufacturing, banking, and service sectors. A total of 200 valid responses were obtained using a purposive sampling approach targeting full-time employees with at least one year of organizational tenure. Participation was voluntary and anonymous to reduce social desirability bias. Respondents represented a range of organizational levels and demographic backgrounds, providing a heterogeneous but contextually relevant sample for examining leadership–performance dynamics in transitional economies. The survey instrument was first developed in English, translated into Uzbek, and back-translated to ensure conceptual and linguistic equivalence following Brislin's (1970) procedure.

Ethical approval for this study was granted by the Beykoz University Research Ethics Committee on 13.05.2025 (Approval No. E-45152895-299-2500008937). Participation was entirely voluntary, and informed consent was obtained before respondents completed the survey. All participants were assured that their responses would remain confidential and be used exclusively for academic research.

The demographic profile of the sample ($N = 200$) demonstrates a balanced representation across key organizational and personal characteristics, presented in Table 1. Respondents were evenly distributed among government, manufacturing, banking, and service sectors, each comprising 25% of the total sample, thus minimizing sectoral bias and supporting generalizability across organizational types. In terms of marital status, 47% of participants were married, 32% unmarried, and 21% divorced, indicating substantial diversity in personal backgrounds. Educational attainment was notably high: the majority (83%) held a higher education degree, while only 15.5% had secondary education and 1.5% vocational education. This aligns with the study's context and increases the likelihood of informed survey responses. The average age of respondents was 33 years ($SD = 7.59$), with ages ranging from 20 to 51 years. This suggests a workforce primarily composed of early- to mid-career professionals. Correspondingly, the mean level of professional experience was 5.16 years ($SD = 2.85$), with a range from 1 to 15 years. Collectively, these demographic results provide a robust foundation for analyzing the impact of leadership styles on employee outcomes in a relatively young and well-educated workforce.

4.3. Measurements

All constructs were measured using established scales adapted to the local context while retaining the original conceptual structure. Respondents rated each statement on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Leadership styles scale: Four leadership styles, autocratic, democratic, transactional, and transformational, were assessed. Each has 5 items. The transformational and transactional dimensions were derived from the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Bass & Riggio, 2006). Given contextual constraints, shorter validated subsets of items were used to preserve internal consistency while minimizing respondent fatigue. Autocratic and democratic leadership were measured with items adapted from established instruments in prior research (Lewin et al., 1939; Northouse, 2021). These items captured decision-making centralization, participation, and communication patterns consistent with each style's theoretical core.

Employee performance scale: Employee performance was measured using a 5-items task-performance scale reflecting efficiency, reliability, and goal attainment (Dessler, 2013; Robbins & Coulter, 2012; Rachman, 2017). This self-report measure focuses on employee's perceived contribution to their organization's objectives.

Turnover intention scale: Turnover intention is a single construct without a sub-dimension and was measured through 5-items scale, assessing the respondent's stated likelihood or willingness to leave their organization (Tang et al., 2022). Items were selected from previously validated turnover intention scales and adapted linguistically for local comprehensibility.

4.4. Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics, Pearson's correlation, and multiple regression analyses were used to examine the hypothesized associations. Two models were estimated. Model 1 tested the relationships between leadership styles and employee performance. Model 2 examined the association between employee performance and turnover intention. To maintain interpretive clarity and avoid statistical suppression, leadership styles were not treated as control variables in the second model. All analyses were conducted using SPSS version 26.

5. RESULTS

5.1. Descriptive Statistics

Table 2 presents the descriptive statistics for the main study variables. Across all leadership styles, mean scores were moderate, with autocratic and transactional leadership demonstrating the highest average levels ($M = 3.49$ and $M = 3.44$, respectively), followed by transformational ($M = 3.12$) and democratic leadership ($M = 3.06$). This distribution suggests a prevailing influence of more directive leadership approaches within the sampled organizations, while participative and transformational behaviors, though present, were less dominant. Employee performance ($M = 3.41$, $SD = 1.09$) and turnover intention ($M = 3.34$, $SD = 1.13$) also reflected moderate central tendencies, with both variables exhibiting substantial variability (range: 1.8–5.0 for EP; 1.8–5.0 for ETI). All variables displayed a wide spread, covering most of the Likert scale, which indicates heterogeneity in both perceived leadership practices and individual work outcomes among respondents. These results establish a context of considerable diversity in leadership experiences

and outcomes, laying a sound empirical foundation for subsequent reliability, correlation, and regression analyses.

The results indicate that all scale variables are approximately symmetric, with skewness values ranging from -0.54 to 0.14. Skewness values below ± 2 and kurtosis values below ± 7 are generally considered indicative of normality in social science research (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013; West et al., 1995). In this study, all variables fall well within these limits, suggesting no serious floor or ceiling effects. Kurtosis values (between -1.63 and -1.23) indicate slightly platykurtic distributions, which are not problematic for parametric analyses such as correlation and regression.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics

Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	25th %ile	Median	75th %ile	Max	Skewness	Kurtosis
Autocratic Leadership	3.49	0.98	1.6	2.40	3.80	4.20	5.0	-0.538	-1.232
Transactional Leadership	3.44	1.04	1.2	2.40	3.80	4.40	5.0	-0.467	-1.228
Democratic Leadership	3.06	1.05	1.8	2.00	3.30	4.00	5.0	0.135	-1.522
Transformational Leadership	3.12	1.15	1.8	1.80	3.40	4.40	4.8	0.102	-1.632
Employee Performance	3.41	1.09	1.8	2.20	3.80	4.20	5.0	-0.219	-1.383
Turnover Intention	3.34	1.13	1.8	2.20	3.40	4.20	5.0	-0.129	-1.447

5.2. Leadership Styles in Selected Organizations

The descriptive analysis of leadership style items indicates that autocratic leadership (Mean = 3.49) and transactional leadership (Mean = 3.44) are the most prevalent leadership styles perceived by employees in the sampled organizations in Uzbekistan. Transformational (Mean = 3.12) and democratic (Mean = 3.06) leadership styles are less commonly reported. The relatively higher means for autocratic and transactional styles suggest that Uzbek organizations may continue to rely on more traditional, hierarchical leadership approaches, possibly reflecting the influence of historical, cultural, or institutional factors specific to the region. These findings are consistent across all items within each style, confirming a pattern in which authority, rules, and structured rewards remain central to workplace leadership. The lower mean scores for transformational and democratic leadership styles highlight opportunities for organizations in Uzbekistan to develop more participative and inspirational leadership practices, which have been linked to higher employee performance in international studies. Item-level descriptive statistics are presented in Table 3.

Table 3. Item-Level Descriptive Statistics for Leadership Styles

Style	Item	Mean	SD
Autocratic leadership	ALS1	3.50	1.55
	ALS2	3.63	1.26
	ALS3	3.40	1.25
	ALS4	3.38	1.14

Style	Item	Mean	SD
Transactional leadership	ALS5	3.52	1.05
	TRLS1	3.58	1.35
	TRLS2	3.55	1.22
	TRLS3	3.44	1.18
	TRLS4	3.56	1.34
Democratic leadership	TRLS5	3.06	1.34
	DLS1	3.01	1.58
	DLS2	3.21	1.25
	DLS3	3.07	1.01
	DLS4	3.06	1.20
Transformational leadership	DLS5	2.94	1.25
	TLS1	2.98	1.58
	TLS2	2.94	1.00
	TLS3	3.31	1.05
	TLS4	3.13	1.19
	TLS5	3.25	1.35

5.3. Reliability and Validity Tests

First, to assess potential common-method variance, Harman's single-factor test was conducted using all measurement items. The unrotated factor solution yielded six factors with eigenvalues greater than 1, explaining 79.12 % of the total variance. The first factor accounted for 28.30 % of the variance, well below the 50 % threshold, indicating that common-method bias was unlikely to distort the observed associations (Podsakoff et al., 2003).

The appropriateness of the dataset for factor analysis was assessed through the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity, as outlined in Table 4. The KMO score reached 0.796, reflecting a satisfactory level of sampling adequacy and indicating that the correlation patterns are suitably compact to produce distinct and dependable factors (Kaiser, 1974; Hair et al., 2019). Additionally, Bartlett's Test yielded a highly significant result ($\chi^2 = 8076.372$, $df = 435$, $p < 0.001$), reinforcing that the correlation matrix deviates significantly from an identity matrix and that the variables exhibit sufficient intercorrelation to justify factor analysis. Collectively, these statistical outcomes provide robust support for moving forward with exploratory factor analysis, as the data meet widely accepted criteria for methodological soundness (Field, 2018; Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013).

Table 4. KMO and Bartlett's Test

Statistic	Value
Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy	0.796
Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Approx. Chi-Square)	8076.372
df	435
Sig. (p-value)	.000

Table 5 shows the exploratory factor analysis factor (EFA), yielded a six-factor solution, with each set of items, autocratic leadership (ALS), transactional leadership (TRLS), democratic leadership (DLS), transformational leadership (TLS), employee performance (EP), and turnover

intention (TI), loading primarily on their respective factors. This result provides strong empirical support for the construct validity of the scales used in the study. Most items exhibited very high loadings (generally above 0.80) on their respective factors, indicating that each scale measured a distinct and coherent underlying construct. The six-factor solution accounted for approximately 78.8% of the total variance, a robust result for social science research and further confirmation of the appropriateness of the measurement structure.

Although EFA indicated clear separation among the six constructs, with each item set loading strongly onto its intended factor, the observed composite correlation between employee performance and turnover intention was extremely high and negative (see Table 7). This discrepancy is likely attributable to response patterns or sample-specific factors, rather than conceptual or measurement overlap. Thus, the measurement model is empirically sound, but the sample data exhibited unusually strong inverse association between these two outcomes.

Table 5. Factor Analysis

Items	Factors						Eigenvalues	Variance Explained
	1	2	3	4	5	6		
TI1	.920							
TI 2	.916							
TI 3	.827						7.04	24.3%
TI 4	.916							
TI 5	.895							
EP1		.825						
EP2		.922						
EP3		.841					4.39	15.1%
EP4		.899						
EP5		.834						
TLS1			.945					
TLS2			.921					
TLS3			.911				3.50	12.1%
TLS4			.944					
TLS5			.903					
DLS1				.939				
DLS2				.902				
DLS3				.765			3.42	11.8%
DLS4				.838				
DLS5				.685				
TRLS1					.874			
TRLS2					.867			
TRLS3					.849		3.19	11.0%
TRLS4					.874			
TRLS5					.545			
ALS1						.909		
ALS2						.911		
ALS3						.602	1.31	4.5%
ALS4						.894		
ALS5						.686		
							Total	78.8%

The internal consistency of each scale was evaluated using Cronbach's alpha (see Table 6). All multi-item scales demonstrated strong reliability, with Cronbach's alpha values well above the conventional threshold of 0.70. Specifically, the transformational leadership, employee performance, and turnover intention scales exhibited excellent reliability ($\alpha = 0.96, 0.92$, and 0.94 ,

respectively), while the remaining leadership scales demonstrated good reliability ($\alpha = 0.84$ – 0.89). These results confirm that the survey instruments used in this study are both consistent and reliable for measuring the targeted constructs, thereby supporting the robustness of subsequent analyses.

Table 6. Reliability Test

Scale	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha
Autocratic Leadership	5	0.84
Transactional Leadership	5	0.87
Democratic Leadership	5	0.89
Transformational Leadership	5	0.96
Employee Performance	5	0.92
Turnover Intention	5	0.94

5.4. Correlation Test

Table 7 presents the Pearson correlations among study variables. As shown, most associations are weak to moderate in magnitude. Transformational leadership shows a small positive correlation with employee performance ($r = .19$, $p < .05$), while employee performance and turnover intention are strongly and negatively related ($r = -.98$, $p < .01$). Other correlations are relatively low and non-significant, indicating limited multicollinearity among constructs.

Table 7. Correlation Matrix

	1	2	3	4	5	6
1. Autocratic Leadership	—					
2. Transactional Leadership	.23**	—				
3. Democratic Leadership	-.04	.00	—			
4. Transformational Leadership	-.13	-.10	.08	—		
5. Employee Performance	-.01	-.06	.11	.19*	—	
6. Turnover Intention	.00	.05	-.09	-.18	-.98**	—

$p < .05^*$, $*p < .01$.

5.5. Hypotheses Tests

Regression analyses were conducted to test the study hypotheses regarding the impact of leadership styles on employee performance (see Table 8) and, subsequently, the effect of employee performance on turnover intention (see Table 9). Model 1 tested hypotheses from H1 to H4, and Model 2 is used to test the H5.

Table 8. Model 1 - Predicting Employee Performance from Leadership Styles

Predictor	β	SE	t	p	95% CI
(Constant)	2.63	0.48	5.53	<0.001	[1.69, 3.57]
Autocratic Leadership	0.03	0.08	0.42	0.677	[-0.12, 0.19]
Transactional Leadership	-0.05	0.08	-0.64	0.525	[-0.20, 0.10]
Democratic Leadership	0.10	0.07	1.36	0.176	[-0.04, 0.24]
Transformational Leadership	0.17*	0.07	2.50	0.013	[0.04, 0.30]

$R^2 = 0.046$; Adjusted $R^2 = 0.026$; $N = 200$

Predictor	β	SE	t	p	95% CI
Notes: F(4,195) = 2.34; *p < .05 (model is marginally significant overall)					

In Model 1, only transformational leadership demonstrated a statistically significant positive effect on employee performance ($\beta = 0.17$, $p = 0.013$). Autocratic, transactional, and democratic leadership styles did not exhibit significant relationships with employee performance. The overall model explained 4.6% of the variance in employee performance ($R^2 = 0.046$). These findings underscore the importance of transformational leadership behaviors in enhancing performance outcomes, consistent with established theoretical expectations.

Table 9. Model 2 - Predicting Turnover Intention from Employee Performance and Controls

Predictor	B	SE	β	t	p	VIF
(Constant)	6.103	0.058		105.13	< .001	
Employee Performance	-1.008	0.016	-.975	-62.08	< .001	1.000
$R^2 = .951$, Adj $R^2 = .951$, Std. Error = .249, Durbin-Watson = 2.139						

Model 2 tested the association between employee performance and turnover intention without including leadership controls. The results showed a very strong and statistically significant negative relationship between the two constructs ($\beta = -.98$, $p < .001$). The model accounted for 95.1 % of the variance in turnover intention ($R^2 = .951$), indicating that employees who reported higher performance also reported markedly lower intentions to leave their organizations. Regression diagnostics confirmed that multicollinearity was absent (VIF = 1.00, Tolerance = 1.00), residuals were independent (Durbin-Watson = 2.14), and no influential cases were detected (Cook's D < 1). These results provide strong support for H5. The standardized coefficient ($\beta = -.975$) mirrors the bivariate correlation ($r = -.98$), as expected in a single-predictor model, confirming that the strong inverse relationship is substantive rather than a statistical artifact.

DISCUSSION

A substantial body of research has explored how leadership shapes employee performance and, in turn, influences turnover intention. The dominant view holds that leadership style affects performance by shaping motivation, commitment, and perceived fairness, which subsequently influence employees' intentions to stay or leave (Lipadzi et al., 2015). The present study confirms this general theoretical logic but also refines it by showing that, among four examined styles, only transformational leadership emerged as a significant positive correlate of employee performance.

This finding reinforces extensive evidence that transformational leaders enhance intrinsic motivation, strengthen identification with organizational goals, and cultivate commitment that translates into higher performance outcomes (Judge & Piccolo, 2004; Khan et al., 2020; Asrarul-Haq & Kuchinke, 2016; Roz, 2019; Rony et al., 2023; Widjaja et al., 2020). The absence of significant effects for autocratic and transactional leadership parallels earlier research showing that these styles are effective mainly in highly routinized or hierarchical environments but can suppress creativity and engagement elsewhere (Anyango, 2015; Gopal & Chowdhury, 2014; Omonona et al., 2019; Baig et al., 2019). The non-significance of democratic leadership, although unexpected, may reflect contextual contingencies in Uzbekistan's organizational landscape, where decision authority and cultural expectations of hierarchy may dilute participative mechanisms even when formally present (Andoh & Ghansah, 2019; Kalambayi et al., 2021).

Beyond leadership effects, the study found an extremely strong inverse relationship between employee performance and turnover intention. High-performing employees were markedly less inclined to leave their organizations. While such magnitude is uncommon in behavioral data, validity checks confirmed that it reflects a substantive association rather than a measurement artifact. The pattern aligns with evidence that high performers typically experience greater job satisfaction and stronger affective commitment, reducing their propensity to quit (Al-Ali et al., 2019; Han et al., 2024; Widjiani et al., 2019). Within Uzbekistan's emerging economy context, this may also indicate limited alternative employment opportunities for high achievers or strong relational bonds between supervisors and competent subordinates, both of which reinforce retention.

The results underscore that transformational leadership remains the most adaptive style for enhancing employee performance in diverse and evolving organizational environments, while employee performance itself functions as a stabilizing mechanism against turnover.

Theoretical Contribution

This study interprets its findings through the complementary perspectives of Full Range Leadership Theory (FRLT) and Social Exchange Theory (SET), using both as explanatory lenses. The pattern that only transformational leadership shows a significant positive association with employee performance aligns conceptually with FRLT's view that inspirational and visionary behaviors foster stronger motivational engagement (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Bass & Avolio, 1994). Within the Uzbek context, this correspondence illustrates how leadership behaviors emphasizing vision, intellectual stimulation, and individualized support are associated with higher performance, while transactional, democratic, and autocratic approaches show no such pattern. These results do not confirm the full FRLT hierarchy but instead delineate its boundaries, suggesting that transformational elements of the framework appear salient even where authority structures remain hierarchical.

Moreover, SET provides a complementary interpretive frame for understanding the strong inverse association between employee performance and turnover intention. Classical SET reasoning posits that perceived reciprocity and fair exchange strengthen employees' attachment to their organizations (Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Although perceptions of exchange quality were not directly measured here, the observed pattern is coherent with SET logic. Employees who perform well are also those who, in many contexts, perceive or expect reciprocal recognition, thereby expressing lower intentions to leave. This correspondence demonstrates theoretical resonance rather than empirical proof of exchange dynamics.

Viewed together, FRLT and SET help to locate the study's empirical regularities within broader theoretical conversations. Transformational behaviors appear congruent with performance enhancement in a transitional economy, and the performance–turnover linkage follows the exchange logic of retention. By interpreting rather than testing these frameworks, the study clarifies the scope conditions under which their core ideas remain meaningful and highlights avenues for future research that model the mediating and contextual mechanisms more directly (Avolio & Bass, 2004; Bass & Avolio, 1994; Blau, 1964; Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005).

Practical Implications

In the workplaces reflected by this study, leadership is not simply a matter of authority but of atmosphere, the tone a leader sets in how people see purpose, voice, and recognition. The data shows that transformational leadership stands out as the form most closely associated with stronger employee performance. In practice, this means that when leaders share an aspirational

vision, attend to individual growth, and communicate genuine belief in their teams, performance tends to rise in ways that numbers alone cannot capture (Anyango, 2015; Widjaja et al., 2020). Yet democratic leadership, widely praised in management literature for boosting motivation, appeared neutral here, perhaps since participation can feel hollow when cultural or institutional hierarchies quietly constrain it. Transactional leadership, with its focus on clear expectations and contingent rewards, remains useful as a framework for accountability, but its full potential seems to unfold only when woven together with transformational habits that speak to meaning and belonging (Alharbi & Aljounaidi, 2021; Ohemeng et al., 2018).

The findings also remind us that autocratic leadership has a narrow and situational role. In moments of crisis, decisiveness may be necessary, but sustained command can drain creativity and morale, eroding the very performance it seeks to enforce (Iqbal et al., 2015; Nwokocha & Iheriohanna, 2015). What endures longer than compliance is commitment, and commitment grows where people feel heard. A climate of dialogue, openness, and shared responsibility builds the psychological safety that allows employees to contribute more fully (Iqbal et al., 2015).

The unusually strong inverse association between performance and turnover intention points toward a simple, human truth, that is people rarely leave when their effort is seen and valued. Organizations that recognize high performance, provide developmental feedback, and offer visible paths for growth convert performance into attachment rather than exhaustion (Kadiresan et al., 2015; Haque, 2020). Recognition, in this sense, is a gesture and a mechanism of exchange, precisely what Social Exchange Theory describes.

Finally, work stress, cultural expectations, and labor-market competition all shape how leadership and performance translate into loyalty (Hidayat, 2023; Skelton et al., 2019). Investing in employees' psychological capital and emotional intelligence deepens resilience and helps sustain engagement even when external conditions are volatile (Maamari & Saheb, 2018; Ohemeng et al., 2018).

Future Research

The current body of literature underscores the need for further studies that explore the dynamic interplay of leadership style, cultural context, and psychological capital in influencing employee performance. Although substantial evidence affirms that transformational and democratic leadership styles are associated with positive performance outcomes, future research should aim to delineate the specific conditions under which each leadership style is most effective. There is also a call for more longitudinal studies that track changes in employee performance over time as influenced by leadership behaviors, especially in the face of rapid technological and organizational changes (Asrar-ul-Haq & Kuchinke, 2016; Ohemeng et al., 2018). Additionally, scholars and practitioners alike would benefit from studies that compare leadership effectiveness across different industries, examining how factors such as industry structure, employee demographics, and cultural norms interact with leadership styles to shape performance (Baig et al., 2019; Khan & Nawaz, 2016). While the evidence largely supports a negative relationship between employee performance and turnover intention, the variability in effect sizes and the occasional observation of curvilinear relationships indicate that additional moderating and mediating variables need further exploration. Future research should address the mechanisms by which performance influences turnover intentions in specific contexts and investigate the potential bidirectional effects between organizational performance and turnover (Wang & Sun, 2020). For instance, studies employing cross-lagged panel designs could elucidate whether improved organizational performance further reinforces employees' commitment and retention, or whether high turnover intention among key performers might in turn detract from overall organizational performance. There is also a need to examine the role of individual differences, in

terms of employee personality, career aspirations, and market conditions, in moderating the performance–turnover link (Alam & Asim, 2019; Kim et al., 2017).

Limitations

This study has several limitations that should be considered when interpreting the results. First, the cross-sectional design restricts the ability to make causal inferences and may not capture the dynamic nature of leadership and employee outcomes over time. Second, the study sample was limited to organizations in Uzbekistan, and results may not generalize to other contexts without further validation. Third, while the adapted scales showed good construct validity, further research is needed to ensure full cultural adaptation and psychometric robustness in the local context. Finally, the study did not account for other organizational or individual factors that may influence employee performance and turnover, such as compensation, organizational support, or external job opportunities.

CONCLUSION

This study contributes to the expanding literature on leadership and organizational behavior by empirically assessing the relationship between leadership styles, employee performance, and turnover intention in the context of Uzbek organizations. The results underscore the distinct effectiveness of transformational leadership in driving employee performance, while the other leadership styles examined showed no statistically significant influence in this setting. Additionally, the observed strong negative link between performance and turnover intention supports the notion that high-performing employees are substantially less likely to consider leaving their organizations. These findings emphasize the importance for organizations in transitional economies to cultivate transformational leadership capabilities and to implement targeted retention strategies that align with the expectations of high-performing employees. In sum, the study contributes to both theoretical understanding and practical applications of leadership in shaping employee outcomes, offering a valuable starting point for future research across varied cultural and organizational landscapes.

STATEMENTS/DECLARATIONS

Ethics Statement: Permission for this study was obtained from the Ethics Committee of Beykoz University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee with the decision number 1 at the meeting dated 13/05/2025 and numbered 12 of the relevant board. In case of detection of a contrary situation, Journal of International Management Research and Applications has no responsibility and all responsibility belongs to the author(s) of the study.

Author Contributions Statement: 1st author's contribution rate 75%, 2nd author's contribution rate 25%.

Conflict of Interest: There is no conflict of interest among the authors.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Data Availability Statement: The data presented in this study are available on request from the corresponding author.

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