



GRADUATE SCHOOL OF BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP

**Evaluating the Impact of Leadership Styles on Employee Performance: A Case
Study of BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal**

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of
Master

of Commerce in Leadership Studies

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DECLARATION

I declare that:

- i. The research reported in this dissertation, except where otherwise indicated, is my original research.
- ii. This dissertation has not been submitted for any degree or examination at any other university.
- iii. This dissertation does not contain other persons' data, pictures, graphs or other information, unless specifically acknowledged as being sourced from other persons.
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Signature: _____

Date:

DEDICATION

This thesis is lovingly dedicated to my late mother, whose unwavering love, sacrifice, and wisdom continue to guide me. Though you are no longer here, your spirit lives in every step of my journey. Your strength and encouragement inspire me always. This achievement is for you, Mom.

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ABSTRACT

Leadership is a critical factor influencing organisational success, yet its effects on employee performance remain underexplored at BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal. This exploratory qualitative study investigates the leadership styles at BDP International, which is a logistics and supply company operating in KwaZulu-Natal, and their impact on employee performance. There were ten executive and middle-level managers selected from BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal using a purposive sampling technique who participated in this qualitative study. There is limited research on how leadership styles affect employee performance in KwaZulu-Natal's logistics sector. This study focuses on BDP International to address this gap and provide context-specific insights. Data were collected from top level executives and managers at BDP International using semi-structured interviews. Interview data were analysed using thematic analysis. First, the results of this exploratory study reveal that the five different themes identified as depicting the predominant leadership styles at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal are as follow: (1) mixing of transformational, transactional and directing styles; (2) minimal employee involvement in decision-making, (3) pursuit of alignment of the company's goals and objectives, (4) low fidelity two-way communication between managers and employees, and (5) limited engaging feedback for employee creativity, problem-solving and growth at BDP International. Second, the study has found five themes revealing how leadership styles affect employee performance. Transactional style for employee operational efficiency and performance culture, structured, constructive but irregular feedback not good for continuous employee improvement, driving employee job satisfaction through clarity of goals, structured expectations and rewards, leadership for employee retention and empowering and adaptive leadership to improve employee performance are the themes which depict the effect of leadership style on employee performance. Lastly, three key recommendations highlighted by participants in this study for enhancing and improving leadership practices are (1) Integrated and regular leadership development, (2) leadership development for new growth, and (3) holistic assessment of leadership effectiveness and progression. Future research may explore the long-term impact of leadership development, hybrid leadership styles, diversity, and digital transformation on leadership effectiveness in the logistics sector.

Keywords: *Leadership development, Leadership, Logistics sector, Employee performance and leadership styles*

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|-----|
| DECLARATION..... | ii |
| DEDICATION..... | iii |
| ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS | iv |
| CHAPTER 1..... | 1 |
| INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY..... | 1 |
| 1.1 Introduction | 1 |
| 1.2 Background | 3 |
| 1.3 Research Problem Statement..... | 5 |
| 1.4 Research Aim | 9 |
| 1.5 Research Objectives..... | 9 |
| 1.6 Research Questions | 9 |
| 1.7 Motivation of the Study | 10 |
| 1.8 Significance of the Study | 11 |
| 1.8.1 Leadership Development Practitioners..... | 12 |
| 1.8.2 Relevance to Students and Researchers in Logistics Leadership..... | 12 |
| 1.8.3 Logistic and Transportation Industry Implications | 12 |
| 1.8.4 Broader Societal Implications | 13 |
| 1.9 Delimitation of the Study..... | 13 |
| 1.10 Outline of Chapters..... | 14 |
| 1.11 Chapter conclusion | 15 |
| CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW | 16 |
| 2.1 Introduction | 16 |
| 2.2 Exploring the origin and meaning of leadership..... | 16 |
| 2.3 Challenges in Defining Leadership..... | 23 |
| 2.4 Understanding the meaning of leadership style | 25 |
| 2.5 Leadership style: definition | 28 |
| 2.6 Analysis of Definitions of Leadership Style | 29 |
| 2.7 Justification for the definition of leadership style in this study | 30 |
| 2.8 Types of Leadership Styles | 32 |
| 2.8.1 Seven types of leadership style | 32 |
| 2.8.2 Free-rein leadership style | 36 |
| 2.9 The path-goal leadership model | 36 |
| 2.9.1 Directive leadership style | 36 |

| | |
|--|----|
| 2.9.2 Supportive leadership style..... | 37 |
| 2.9.3 Achievement-oriented leadership style | 37 |
| 2.10 The McGregor Theory..... | 37 |
| 2.11 The managerial grid..... | 38 |
| 2.12 The impoverished leader (1.1)..... | 39 |
| 2.13 The authority compliance leader (9.1)..... | 39 |
| 2.14 The country-club leader (1.9)..... | 39 |
| 2.15 The middle of the road leader (5,5)..... | 39 |
| 2.16 The team leader (9,9)..... | 40 |
| 2.17 Charismatic Leadership Style | 40 |
| 2.18 Transactional Leadership Style..... | 41 |
| 2.19 An overview of employee performance | 43 |
| 2.20 Perspectives on employee performance..... | 44 |
| 2.20.1 Dimensions of employee performance..... | 44 |
| 2.21.1 Job Performance | 44 |
| 2.23 Factors that contribute to employee performance | 45 |
| 2.23.1 Organisational Level Factors..... | 46 |
| 2.23.7 Individual Level Factors | 47 |
| 2.24 Theories on employee performance..... | 49 |
| 2.24.1 Herzberg's two-factor theory | 49 |
| 2.24.2 Vroom's expectancy theory | 50 |
| 2.24.3 Mcgregor's Theory X and Theory Y | 51 |
| 2.26 The relationship between leadership styles and employee performance | 51 |
| 2.27 Transformational leadership style and employee performance..... | 52 |
| 2.28 Transactional leadership style and employee performance..... | 54 |
| 2.29 Laissez-faire leadership style and employee performance | 55 |
| 2.30 Leadership styles that result in improved employee performance | 55 |
| 2.31 Previous studies on leadership style and employee performance in South Africa | 56 |
| 2.31.1 Transformational and Transactional Leadership | 56 |
| 2.31.2 Laissez-Faire and Ethical Leadership..... | 56 |
| 2.31.3 Leadership and Employee Retention..... | 57 |
| 2.31.4 Leadership and Innovation | 57 |
| 2.31.5 Participative and Well-Being-Oriented Leadership..... | 57 |

| | | |
|--|--|-----------|
| 2.31.6 | Servant Leadership and Job Satisfaction | 58 |
| 2.31.7 | Autocratic Leadership and Employee Performance | 58 |
| 2.31.8 | Transformational Leadership in the Public Sector | 58 |
| 2.31.9 | Authentic Leadership and Employee Engagement..... | 58 |
| 2.31.10 | Situational Leadership and Employee Adaptability..... | 59 |
| 2.32 | Chapter conclusion | 59 |
| CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY | | 60 |
| 3.1 | Introduction | 60 |
| 3.2 | Research Methodology | 62 |
| 3.2.1 | Quantitative Method..... | 62 |
| 3.2.2 | Mixed Methods..... | 62 |
| 3.2.3 | Qualitative Method | 63 |
| 3.3 | Research Philosophy | 64 |
| 3.4 | Research Approach | 64 |
| 3.4.1 | Deductive Research Approach..... | 65 |
| 3.4.2 | Inductive Research Approach | 65 |
| 3.5 | Research Paradigm | 65 |
| 3.5.1 | Ontology..... | 66 |
| 3.5.2 | Epistemology | 66 |
| 3.5.3 | Axiology..... | 67 |
| 3.5.3.1 | Positivism..... | 67 |
| 3.5.3.2 | Critical Realism | 68 |
| 3.6 | Research Strategy..... | 70 |
| 3.6.1 | Ethnography | 71 |
| 3.6.2 | Grounded Theory | 72 |
| 3.6.3 | Action Research | 73 |
| 3.6.4 | Narrative Inquiry..... | 73 |
| 3.6.5 | Case Studies | 74 |
| 3.7 | Research Design..... | 74 |
| 3.7.1 | Descriptive Research..... | 75 |
| 3.7.2 | Explanatory Research | 75 |
| 3.7.3 | Exploratory Research | 76 |
| 3.8 | Population and Sampling..... | 76 |
| 3.8.1 | Population..... | 76 |

| | |
|--|-----------|
| 3.8.2 Sampling | 77 |
| 3.8.3 Sample Size | 78 |
| 3.9 Data Collection | 80 |
| 3.10 Pilot Study..... | 81 |
| 3.11 Data Analysing | 82 |
| 3.11.1 Thematic Analysis | 82 |
| 3.12 Trustworthiness | 84 |
| 3.12.1 Credibility..... | 84 |
| 3.12.2 Transferability | 85 |
| 3.12.3 Dependability..... | 85 |
| 3.12.4 Confirmability | 85 |
| 3.13 Ethical Considerations | 85 |
| 3.13.1 Informed Consent | 85 |
| 3.13.2 Confidentiality and anonymity | 85 |
| 3.13.3 Minimisation of harm..... | 86 |
| 3.13.4 Data handling and storage..... | 86 |
| 3.13.5 Ethical Approval..... | 86 |
| 3.13.6 Conflict of interest | 86 |
| 3.13 Limitations of the study | 86 |
| 3.13.1 Mitigating Limitations and Bias..... | 87 |
| 3.14.1 Geographical location | 89 |
| 3.15 Chapter conclusion | 89 |
| CHAPTER 4: RESULTS | 91 |
| 4.1 Introduction | 91 |
| 4.2 Presentation of Findings..... | 91 |
| Empowering and adaptive leadership to improve employee performance. | 93 |
| 4.3 Themes depicting predominant leadership styles identified at BDP International according to top-level executives and middle managers | 93 |
| 4.3.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Mixing of transformational, transactional, and directing styles | 94 |
| 4.3.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Minimal employee involvement in decision-making | 95 |
| 4.3.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Pursuit of alignment of the company’s goals with objectives. | 97 |
| 4.3.4 Sub-theme 1.4: Low-fidelity two-way Communication between Managers and employees at BDP International..... | 98 |

| | |
|--|------------|
| 4.3.5 Sub-theme 1.5: Limited engaging feedback for employee creativity, problem-solving, and growth at BDP International | 99 |
| 4.4 Themes depicting how leadership style affects employee performance at BDP International..... | 100 |
| 4.4.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Transactional style for employee operational efficiency and performance culture at BDP International | 101 |
| 4.4.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Structured, constructive but irregular feedback is not good for continuous employee improvement | 102 |
| 4.4.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Driving employee job satisfaction through clarity of <i>goals</i> , structured expectations, and rewards..... | 103 |
| 4.4.4 Sub-theme 2.4: Leadership for employee retention | 104 |
| 4.4.5 Sub-theme 2.5: Empowering and adaptive leadership to improve employee performance..... | 105 |
| 4.5 Theme 3: Themes depicting recommendations for <i>enhancing leadership practices</i> and <i>improving</i> employee performance at BDP International | 105 |
| 4.5.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Integrated and regular Leadership development for enhancing current performance at BDP International..... | 106 |
| 4.5.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Leadership development for new Growth | 107 |
| 4.5.3 Sub-theme 3.3: Holistic assessment of leadership effectiveness and progression..... | 108 |
| 4.6 Chapter conclusion | 109 |
| CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS | 111 |
| 5.1 Introduction | 111 |
| 5.3 Chapter conclusion | 117 |
| CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS..... | 118 |
| 6.1 Introduction | 118 |
| 6.2 Key Findings..... | 118 |
| 6.2.1 Synthesis of the Literature Review..... | 118 |
| 6.2.2 Primary Research Findings | 119 |
| 6.3 Implications and Contributions..... | 119 |
| 6.3.1 Theoretical Implications..... | 119 |
| 6.3.2 Practical Implications | 119 |
| 6.3.3 Contribution to Knowledge and Practice..... | 119 |
| 6.4 Areas for Future Research..... | 120 |
| 6.5 Recommendations | 120 |

Based on the study’s findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance leadership practices and improve employee performance at BDP International:..... 120

6.8 Chapter Summary 121

BIBLIOGRAPHY 121

Appendix A: Gatekeeper’s Letter 135

Appendix B: Ethics Approval 136

Appendix C: Data Collection Instrument..... 137

Appendix D: Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research..... 140

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

Leadership is a fundamental driver of organisational performance and success. Leadership is pivotal and increasingly complex in modern workplaces, particularly within sectors that operate in high-pressure and competitive environments, such as logistics. As organisations navigate the volatile, uncertain, complex, and ambiguous (VUCA) conditions of the 21st century, understanding how leadership styles influence employee performance becomes an essential area of inquiry. This dissertation, titled *Evaluating the Impact of Leadership Styles on Employee Performance: A Case Study of BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal*, explores how leadership approaches shape employee attitudes, motivation, engagement, and overall performance within an organisational setting.

The logistics industry in South Africa is both economically significant and operationally demanding. Companies like BDP International are continually challenged to optimise efficiency, maintain high service delivery standards, and manage human capital in a fast-paced environment. Within such contexts, leadership styles are not merely administrative tools but strategic instruments that can enhance employee productivity, job satisfaction, and commitment, or conversely, contribute to disengagement and underperformance. Leadership effectiveness is closely tied to how leaders communicate, motivate, delegate, and build employee relationships. Thus, assessing which leadership styles are most conducive to improving performance in specific organizational settings is important.

Leadership style refers to leaders' distinctive behaviours and strategies to influence, inspire, and guide their teams. Over the years, a wide range of leadership styles has been identified in scholarly literature, focusing on transformational, transactional, servant, ethical, authentic, and, more recently, toxic and destructive leadership. These styles differ significantly in their principles and practices. For instance, transformational leadership encourages innovation and intrinsic motivation, while transactional leadership emphasizes reward and punishment based on performance outcomes. Servant leadership focuses on meeting the needs of employees, while authentic and ethical leadership promotes transparency, moral conduct, and value-driven decision-making. Each style carries potential benefits and limitations, and

its effectiveness can vary depending on the organizational culture, goals, and employee expectations.

The evolving complexity of leadership research has introduced new dimensions to studying organisational behaviour. Contemporary scholars have begun to question the linear classification of leadership styles into “positive” or “negative,” noting that context plays a crucial role in determining the impact of leadership behaviours. For example, while servant leadership is typically seen as positive, recent studies have shown that it may lead to employee burnout if not applied appropriately (Peng, Gao, and Wang, 2023). Similarly, certain forms of strict or autocratic leadership, often viewed negatively, may enhance performance in high-stakes or tightly controlled environments (Yu and Duffy, 2021). Therefore, a more nuanced approach is needed to evaluate how leadership styles function in practice and how they influence individual and organisational outcomes.

A key motivation behind this study is the increasing recognition that leadership is not a one-size-fits-all concept. The VUCA environment demands leaders' flexibility, emotional intelligence, and strategic adaptability. This calls for empirical studies that evaluate leadership within specific organisational contexts. BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal presents a relevant and practical case study, given its position in the logistics industry and its operational footprint in South Africa. By focusing on this organisation, the study aims to generate contextualised insights that can inform leadership practices, human resource strategies, and performance improvement interventions.

This dissertation is structured to investigate the relationship between leadership styles and employee performance comprehensively. Chapter One introduces the research topic, outlines the research problem, and presents the objectives and key questions guiding the study. It also explains the significance and rationale for the research, as well as the delimitations and overall structure of the dissertation. Chapter Two reviews relevant literature on leadership theories, styles, and their documented impact on employee behaviour and performance. Chapter Three describes the research methodology, including the case study design, sampling procedures, data collection methods, and ethical considerations. Chapter Four presents and analyses the data, while Chapter Five discusses the findings about the existing literature. Chapter Six concludes the study, offering recommendations for leadership practice and suggestions for future research.

In essence, this dissertation aims to contribute to the growing knowledge on leadership by providing a focused analysis of how different leadership styles influence employee performance in a real-world organisational setting. It emphasises the need for context-specific leadership approaches, especially in sectors fundamental to economic growth and operational excellence. As organisations seek to improve performance and maintain competitiveness, leadership remains a key to achieving strategic and operational goals.

1.2 Background

BDP International, known locally as Turners Shipping, was established in 1966 and is headquartered in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA. The organisation has grown into a leading global provider of supply chain management, freight forwarding, customs brokerage, and logistical services, catering to many industries across more than 130 countries. With a workforce of approximately 5,000 employees, BDP International prides itself on delivering innovative, customer-focused solutions tailored to the evolving demands of global trade (BDP International, 2023).

The company operates under Turners Shipping in South Africa, with its regional headquarters strategically located in KwaZulu-Natal. This province is home to the Port of Durban, the largest and busiest port in sub-Saharan Africa, making BDP International's regional office a critical hub within national and international logistics networks. The company is a significant player in this space, managing large volumes of freight movement and trade facilitation. However, in recent years, BDP has faced numerous operational challenges, including disrupted global supply chains, rising transportation and regulatory costs, and increasing demand for agile and tech-driven logistics solutions.

In such a dynamic and high-pressure sector, the importance of effective leadership cannot be overstated. Leadership not only shapes the operational performance of logistics firms but also directly influences employee motivation, job satisfaction, and retention. In organisations like BDP International, where employees must deliver timely, accurate, and customer-centric services, leadership quality can be a make-or-break factor for long-term sustainability.

Extensive scholarly research, including that of Bass and Riggio (2019), Judge and Piccolo (2019), and Northouse (2018), has emphasised the impact of different leadership styles on employee behaviour and organisational performance. Transformational leadership, for instance, fosters commitment, creativity, and a shared vision among employees, making it

particularly effective in fast-paced environments. Although efficient in enforcing structure and discipline, transactional leadership often fails to inspire innovation or deep employee engagement. Meanwhile, laissez-faire leadership, characterised by a lack of guidance and decision-making, typically leads to decreased morale and performance, especially in sectors that demand precision and accountability (Northouse, 2018).

While these leadership theories are well-established, their practical application and effectiveness often vary depending on organisational context, cultural setting, and industry type. Bass and Riggio (2019) note that although transformational leadership is generally effective, its implementation may be influenced by regional values, operational models, and the nature of the workforce. This is especially true in the logistics sector, where leaders must constantly balance structure, flexibility, speed, accuracy, and individual motivation and team performance.

Despite the wealth of literature on leadership styles, there remains a significant gap in the context-specific application of these theories within the South African logistics sector, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal. Most existing studies focus on generalised corporate environments or public-sector institutions, overlooking international logistics firms' unique demands and organizational culture operating regionally. As such, there is a lack of empirical data on how leadership styles at companies like BDP International affect employee performance and organisational outcomes within this local setting.

This study focuses on evaluating the impact of leadership styles on employee performance at BDP International's KwaZulu-Natal branch. Specifically, the research seeks to identify which leadership styles are practiced, how they influence employee motivation, satisfaction, and productivity, and what implications they hold for the company's performance in a competitive logistics market. The study is grounded in the understanding that effective leadership is not one-size-fits-all; rather, it must be contextually responsive to the needs of both employees and the organisational environment.

By exploring these dynamics, the research aims to provide evidence-based recommendations that could inform leadership development, employee engagement strategies, and performance management frameworks at BDP International and potentially other logistics companies in similar regional contexts. This study will thus contribute to academic discourse and practical leadership practice, addressing a critical gap in the

literature while supporting organisational improvement in one of South Africa's key economic sectors.

1.3 Research Problem Statement

Effective leadership is widely recognised as a critical factor in influencing employee performance and organisational success in the contemporary business environment. However, at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal, there is limited empirical understanding of how different leadership styles impact employee motivation, productivity, and overall job performance. While the company operates in a dynamic and competitive logistics sector, inconsistent employee output and morale suggest a potential disconnect between leadership approaches and employee expectations. The absence of a clearly defined and consistently applied leadership style may contribute to these challenges. Therefore, evaluating the prevailing leadership styles within BDP International and determining their influence on employee performance is essential. This study seeks to fill the gap by providing insights that can guide leadership development and improve organisational outcomes.

In contemporary organisational contexts, various leadership styles significantly influence employees, organisational outcomes, and societal progress. Servant leadership focuses on the growth and well-being of employees, fostering trust, empathy, and collaboration, which in turn enhances job satisfaction and organisational commitment (Malinga and Mjoli, 2023). Transformational leadership inspires and motivates employees to exceed expectations by aligning personal goals with organisational vision, resulting in increased innovation and performance (Dlamini and Ngcamu, 2024). In contrast, transactional leadership relies on structured rewards and penalties to drive performance, often effective for short-term goals but limited in promoting intrinsic motivation (Pillay, 2023). Ethical leadership, rooted in fairness and integrity, cultivates a culture of trust and accountability, positively affecting employee morale and ethical behaviour within the organisation (Naidoo and Govender, 2023). Moreover, environmental or green leadership emphasizes ecological consciousness, encouraging employees to adopt sustainable practices that reduce environmental impact and improve corporate social responsibility (Moyo and Sibanda, 2024). Complementing this, sustainable leadership integrates social, economic, and environmental dimensions into long-term organisational strategies, promoting resilience, employee well-being, and broader societal benefit (Khuzwayo and Zulu, 2024). These leadership styles collectively highlight the

interdependence between leadership approaches, employee engagement, organisational success, and societal advancement.

From a modern global perspective, the success of an organisation emanates from effective leadership that influences operational and employee performance. Various studies have examined the impact of leadership style on employee productivity. These studies have noted that distinctive leadership styles, including transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire, affect organizational performance differently (Judge and Piccolo, 2018; Bass and Riggio, 2019). Transformational leadership is generally understood to be inspiring, visionary, and developmental regarding employee growth. It has frequently been linked with higher levels of employee engagement, satisfaction, and performance within several contexts. The understanding of transformational leadership as inspiring and linked to higher employee engagement, satisfaction, and performance is widely supported by Bass and Riggio (2019) in their seminal work, *Transformational Leadership*. Their research highlights its impact across diverse organizational contexts, emphasising its role in fostering employee growth and motivation.

Transactional leadership, in contrast, is all about clarity of roles, rewards, and penalties. It is seen as fairly effective in ensuring the work gets done and short-term productivity is secured, even if this approach may not lead to longer-term buy-in or innovation (Bass and Riggio, 2019). The general finding regarding laissez-faire leadership as a hands-off style is that it tends to ensure lower performance and satisfaction because of a lack of emphasis on directing and giving feedback. However, each style's effectiveness will vary based on the context in terms of industry, organisation culture, and region; this represents an interim point toward more nuance in some sectors and locations.

Despite a significant body of research on the problem of leadership and employee performance (Bass and Riggio, 2019; Judge and Piccolo, 2019), there remains a significant gap in understanding the impact of variations in leadership style on employee performance in the logistics and transportation industry. Research, including that of Long and Thean (2021) and Obiwuru et al. (2021), who investigated transactional and transformational actions across logistics, but there is scope to limit these to a contextually focused lens, especially in areas such as South Africa, where logistics is generating trade and economic growth.

BDP International operates in the highly active KwaZulu-Natal region in South Africa, in many ways an industrial and logistical heartland of the country, where employee performance is critically important in allowing the company to run smoothly and deliver high service expectations set forth by customers. While leadership under these conditions is one of the imperative elements, there is a shortage of research regarding the specific leadership styles that would influence employee motivation, satisfaction, and productivity in logistics organizations operating within South Africa. At the same time, referring to the specific demands placed on the industry, high demand for precision, adaptability, and rapid response to changing market needs, it is useful to identify which leadership styles are most helpful in this environment regarding high performance.

There are only a few studies on logistics leadership. However, these tend to be more concerned with operational efficiency and supply chain management than with the direct link between a leader's style and employee performance in the industry this. For instance, Long and Thean (2021) carried out their study in Malaysia. They examined the positive effects of transactional leadership on task efficiency in high-stress settings, such as logistics, yet left out the long-term impact of transactional leadership on employee engagement. Similarly, Obiwuru et al. (2021) researched Nigerian logistics firms, demonstrating the role of transformational leadership in improving employee motivation and commitment. However, it lacked a focus on contextual variables such as cultural and organizational factors.

Second, Yahaya and Ebrahim (2016) examined leadership style across different sectors, including the logistics industry, in a world context and noted the effectiveness of transformational leadership. Ekrot, Rank, and Gemünden (2016) further studied leadership types regarding the contributions of transactional leadership to accomplishing short-term goals while pointing to its lack of relevance regarding promoting innovation. In addition, Abiodun and Kian (2020) studied the issues of South African logistics sector leadership. They suggested further investigating the role of leadership style on employee satisfaction and performance in culturally heterogeneous environments. These investigations highlight the importance of more differentiated studies of leadership styles and their influence on worker performance, particularly in the changing and high-intensity logistics industry.

In South Africa, with its socio-economic environment so broad and diverse, there is a possibility that findings from the study might not directly apply, hence requiring localized research that shall investigate how leadership styles influence performance in this region's

logistics sector. Therefore, the study aims to close this gap by examining the leadership styles at BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal and their effect on employee performance.

Given logistic challenges in the area and the need for speed and efficiency, there is an urgent need for an investigation into how different practice leadership styles affect employee outcomes, with implications for organizational improvement. The study will determine what kind of leadership style is practised at BDP International, popularly known as Turners Shipping, thereby underpinning insights that may be used to influence leadership practice and policy within the company.

Although previous studies have described the impact of leadership styles on the performance of employees, the literature was lacking in the freight logistics industry of South Africa, particularly in the case of a global logistics corporation like BDP International. Bass and Riggio (2019) and Judge and Piccolo (2019) have repeatedly investigated transformational and transactional leadership styles, differing in their positive and negative impacts on job satisfaction and performance. Long and Thean (2021) and Obiwuru et al. (2021) revealed transactional leadership's role in ensuring task efficiency and transformational leadership's potential to boost employee motivation. However, these studies lacked a contextual focus on regional and cultural variables. Northouse (2018) also made further observations on the nature of laissez-faire leadership, which can lead to a lack of engagement without clear direction.

Other studies, for example, Liao and Zhang (2020), considered leaders' behaviours with responsibility, such as servant and transformational leadership, and Avolio and Yammarino (2018) considered the effect of vision and power on the motivation of employees, especially in high-level-risk industries, such as the logistics industry. Albeit Bennett, Lance, and Woehr (2019) talked about the restricted applicability of laissez-faire leadership in African firms. In contrast, Riaz and Haider (2020) explained that transactional leadership depends on contingent rewards and penalties. Hamstra, Yperen, Wisse, and Sassenberg (2021) then explored unique transactional approaches in more detail, focusing on management by exception and contingent rewards approaches and highlighting their relative appropriateness for task-oriented roles.

These are areas of research constituting a foundation, but they raised the necessity for empirically targeted, preferably South African-specific, research. Thus, this research filled the existing gap, investigating what impact different leadership styles have on employee performance within a high-pressure, high-stakes environment and developing theoretical contributions to leadership studies, as well as practical recommendations regarding leadership development in the logistics sector.

1.4 Research Aim

This qualitative study investigates the leadership styles at BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal and their effect on employee performance.

1.5 Research Objectives

The study aimed to achieve the following objectives:

- To identify the *predominant* leadership styles practiced by managers at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal according to top-level executives and middle managers.
- To examine how leadership styles *affect* employee performance at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal according to top-level executives and middle managers; and
- To develop actionable recommendations to strengthen leadership approaches and boost employee performance at BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal.

1.6 Research Questions

Based on the above research objectives, the following were the relevant research questions:

- What are the predominant leadership styles practiced by managers at BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal, according to top-level executives and middle managers?
- How do leadership styles affect employee performance at BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal, according to top-level executives and middle managers?
- How can leadership practices be enhanced to improve employee performance at BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal?

1.7 Motivation of the Study

This study is motivated by both theoretical and practical imperatives. From a theoretical perspective, the research contributes to the existing body of leadership literature by offering an exploratory assessment of how leadership styles manifest within the logistics and transportation sector in South Africa. This area remains under-researched despite its strategic significance to national economic development. While much of the existing literature has focused on leadership in education, healthcare, and corporate finance sectors, this study introduces unique insights into how hybrid leadership models, particularly the integration of transactional and transformational leadership styles, function in high-pressure, operations-driven environments. The study identifies new dimensions of leadership adaptability that are context-specific and responsive to the operational complexities of organisations like BDP International (Turners Shipping).

The practical contribution of this research lies in its relevance to leadership practice within the logistics industry. The study provides actionable insights for managers and executives seeking to improve organisational efficiency and workforce morale by unpacking the real-world implications of leadership behaviours on employee performance, motivation, and engagement. Identifying a blended leadership approach that strategically combines transactional control mechanisms and transformational vision-based engagement can serve as a model for leadership development programmes, particularly in logistics operations marked by routine tasks, high compliance requirements, and the need for continual innovation.

Ultimately, the study bridges the gap between theory and practice by grounding conceptual understandings of leadership in empirical evidence drawn from an operationally critical and economically strategic sector. In doing so, it provides a robust foundation for further research and leadership enhancement strategies within the logistics and transportation industries in South Africa.

i. Academic Contribution:

This exploratory qualitative research will contribute to the existing knowledge on leadership styles and their impact on employee performance. By examining the specific context of BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal, the study will provide context-specific insights into leadership

style within the logistics and transportation sector, thereby expanding the understanding of what constitutes an explicitly effective leadership style within this industry.

The findings will also complement the broader literature on leadership styles and their implications for employee outcomes, providing a more comprehensive understanding of the subject matter.

ii. Practical Implications:

The outcomes of this exploratory research will have practical implications for BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal and other similar organisations operating within the logistics and transportation sector as it will uncover not only the predominant leadership styles employed, but also the specific context and outcomes which reveal the nature of effectiveness of style of leadership from the viewpoint of those with lived experiences of leadership at the executive and middle management levels. The research outcomes benefit executives, middle managers, and supervisors at BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal by identifying effective leadership styles and their impact on employee performance. These findings guided leaders in fostering motivation, enhancing job satisfaction, and improving productivity, ultimately enabling a high-performance culture and aligning leadership strategies with organisational goals.

1.8 Significance of the Study

Focusing on the logistics and transportation sector in South Africa, this study provides significant value to leaders and managers at BDP International and to leadership development practitioners, students, and researchers within the logistics field more broadly. Beyond proposing theoretical relevance, the study draws on integrative, transactional, and transformational leadership theories to offer practical insights into enhancing organisational performance. By aligning these theories with the critical challenges observed in the sector, such as poor communication, weak decision-making, and low employee engagement, the study highlights how leadership behaviour can be strategically applied to meet organisational goals. This is particularly important in the high-pressure logistics environment, where efficiency, adaptability, and employee motivation are central to success. The findings offer pragmatic recommendations that enable leaders to cultivate a high-performance culture,

reduce employee turnover, and strengthen operational effectiveness. For BDP International, these insights are timely and actionable, especially for managers seeking to transform leadership practices to meet internal performance demands and external industry pressures.

1.8.1 Leadership Development Practitioners

This research is relevant to practitioners who design and deliver leadership training programs because it identifies specific leadership styles that best facilitate employee well-being and productivity within the logistics sector. The findings from this study will help formulate more focused training programs that concentrate on the necessary competencies and practices proven to succeed within settings where the same have been applied. To this end, the practitioners of the course can assist BDP and every other company that operates in the logistics industry to develop adaptable leaders who can manage different operations that are overly complex; this is important in ensuring an enabling work environment where individual and organizational development can take place. Leadership development practitioners at BDP may use the findings to design training to build or reinforce the positive leadership styles and associated capabilities in the contexts where they are more effective in influencing employee performance.

1.8.2 Relevance to Students and Researchers in Logistics Leadership

This work, therefore, addresses the lacuna in existing literature on leadership issues within the logistics and transportation sector in South Africa and thus provides foundational insight to broaden the knowledge base on such topics further. This study will also provide students and researchers interested in leadership and organisational behaviour, among other areas related to logistics management, with an understanding of the dynamics involved in leading high-stakes settings. At the same time, this study, set within the South African context, also serves as a critical point of reference for other studies to understand how cultural and regional parameters define the success or failure of various leadership styles. In this regard, such a study fosters more culture-contingent scholarship in leadership studies.

1.8.3 Logistic and Transportation Industry Implications

Logistics is one industry that has overly complex and often high-level operations where labour productivity and performance are among the most dominant variables. Effective leadership becomes an essential component of competitive advantage in such a situation. The study offers industry-wide lessons to help logistics organisations adopt leadership practices that drive employee performance for organisational resilience and competitiveness. It helps

enhance performance standards in the entire industry, so logistics businesses efficiently meet the rapid changes in the market environment by focusing on specific leadership strategies that activate employees and decrease the voluntary turnover rate.

1.8.4 Broader Societal Implications

Since this study deals with leadership and employee performance, those implications go well beyond the confines of BDP International. Positive work environments, created by positive leadership, benefit employees' quality of life since higher levels of job satisfaction often go hand in hand with better well-being and lower stress levels. In this respect, this research identifies what type of leadership styles go along with supportive and involving workplaces, and it concludes that employee well-being is good for society, positioning leaders as drivers of healthy and productive workplaces in a way that is beneficial to the growth of their employees both personally and professionally.

Ultimately, this study is important to leaders and managers of BDP International, leadership development practitioners, students, leadership studies researchers, and the logistics sector. In this vein, such findings are expected to support the development of effective strategies in leadership and training programs and contribute towards ensuring positive organizational outcomes that shall benefit the industry and society at large.

1.9 Delimitation of the Study

The study aims to examine the leadership styles at BDP International KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, and investigate how these styles influence employee performance in this regional context. Delimitations are put in place to indicate the scope within manageable scope limits clearly; therefore, the study shall be narrowed down to leadership within the KwaZulu-Natal branch of BDP International only and shall not extend to other branches or regions.

The research drew participants from various levels within BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal to arrive at a representative understanding of how leadership influences motivation, job satisfaction, and performance outcomes. However, this did not extend to other external factors influencing performance, such as economic or market conditions, since these will lie beyond the control and focus of the study. In placing the study within these confines, the research provided specific insights into the role of leadership within this context, without overextending into broader variables that may be less controllable. This, in turn, allowed the

study to remain quite deep and applicable in assessing the impact of leadership within the peculiar organisational structure and regional dynamics of BDP International.

1.10 Outline of Chapters

Chapter One: Introduction

The first chapter of this study will present an introduction. It will cover the background of the study, research problem, aim, and objectives, the study's significance, and the delimitation of the study.

Chapter Two: Literature Review

The Literature Review discusses the theoretical and empirical background of leadership styles and their effects on employee performance. Key subheadings include defining and differentiating leadership from management, exploring leadership styles such as transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire, analysing employee performance dimensions, and reviewing the relationship between leadership styles and performance. It integrates paradigms such as the two-factor theory of Herzberg and Vroom's expectancy theory to provide an empirical background for understanding employee motivation. Second, it identifies areas of missing research and points to the need for localised studies in the logistics industry in South Africa, especially at BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal.

Chapter Three: Research Methodology

The third chapter of this study will describe the methodologies adopted in data collection, analysis thereof, and sampling of the study population, addressing issues of credibility, dependability, confirmability, and transferability, as well as ethical considerations for the study.

Chapter 4: Presentation of Findings

This chapter presents and analyses a summary of the key findings gathered from the study participants.

Chapter 5: Discussion of Findings

The chapter discusses the findings in detail, including the interaction between the literature, the theory, and the participants' perspectives. Conclusions and implications are drawn based on the findings of the study.

Chapter 6: Conclusion and Recommendations

Chapter six concludes this study. The final chapter summarises the findings and chapters and offers recommendations that can be used to address challenges and guide future studies.

1.11 Chapter conclusion

This chapter has offered a consolidated understanding of the topic, as the importance of leadership styles at BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal and their effect on employees' work life has been elucidated. The background described the crucial importance of leadership in influencing employees' motivation, job satisfaction, and overall organisational efficiency, especially in the logistical field. The research points out a research gap in the available literature, that is, although leadership and performance have been professionally researched, very little research exists specifically related to the logistics sector, particularly in the South African context. The chapter also described the research problem, purpose, aims, and focus, as well as critical research questions informing the study, which aims to understand and explain the effects of leadership styles on employee performance of BDP International.

In particular, the chapter further describes the importance of the study, highlighting its importance to practitioners of leadership development, logisticians, and researchers in the field. The scope of the research, that is, the research's delimitation, was also described, indicating the research area, BDP International's activity in KwaZulu-Natal. The plan for the remaining chapters was presented, which provided a logical framework for tackling the research goals. Generally, this chapter establishes the base for a more exhaustive investigation of leadership approaches in logistics and the context in which the study follows thereafter. The following chapter provides a comprehensive literature review of leadership styles and their effect on employee performance.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter critically reviews the existing body of literature on leadership and its influence on employee performance to provide a comprehensive foundation for the study. Leadership is pivotal in shaping organisational dynamics, influencing employee attitudes, behaviours, and performance outcomes. This review explores various dimensions of leadership, beginning with a conceptual understanding of leadership and its evolution over time. It further examines the theoretical frameworks that underpin leadership practices, such as the trait theory, behavioural theory, contingency theory, and contemporary approaches. The chapter also delves into the typologies of leadership styles, particularly emphasizing transactional, transformational, and laissez-faire leadership. These styles are analysed in terms of their characteristics, application in organisational settings, and their implications for employee motivation, productivity, job satisfaction, and organisational commitment. By examining the interplay between leadership styles and employee performance, this review highlights the empirical findings and theoretical debates that inform current leadership practices in diverse organisational contexts.

2.2 Exploring the origin and meaning of leadership

The early written principles of leadership can be found in the Ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs for leadership, leader, follower, and collective goal. Initially, the study of leadership was primarily performed from a historical and military perspective (Yukl, 2013). Later, other perspectives on leadership, such as the sociological or psychological, were added. The word “leadership” is associated with going somewhere together with others. Leadership is quite complex; it involves the ability to inspire, guide, and influence others in ways that aid the achievement of common goals.

The origins of leadership can be traced to the Great Man theory, which posits that effective leaders are born with inherent traits and destined to lead (Northouse, 2022). This view highlights extraordinary individuals like political and military figures supposedly possessing natural authority and charisma. Over time, leadership theory evolved to include behavioural approaches, focusing on what leaders do rather than who they are (Yukl, 2019). Attribute theories emerged, identifying key traits such as integrity, confidence, and decisiveness (Antonakis and Day, 2018). Later, the skills approach emphasised that leadership can be

learned and developed through experience and education (Northouse, 2022; Bolden, 2023). Modern perspectives recognise leadership as a dynamic and context-driven process, incorporating transformational, servant, and ethical leadership styles that value adaptability, emotional intelligence, and inclusivity (Grint, 2021; Bolden, 2023).

2.2.1 The Great Man Theory

The Great Man theory is one of the earliest explanations of leadership, originating in the 19th century, and it posits that leadership is an innate quality possessed by a select few extraordinary individuals who are “born leaders” (Carlyle, 1841/2020). This theory focused on heroic historical figures, primarily male, who shaped events through inherent traits. Although discredited mainly for its determinism and lack of empirical rigor, the Great Man theory remains important as a historical starting point in leadership studies (Kumar & Gupta, 2020).

Recent scholarship critiques this view for ignoring social, cultural, and situational factors, emphasizing instead leadership's socially constructed and relational nature (Bolden, 2016). Nevertheless, understanding the Great Man perspective helps contextualize the field's early focus on individual leader characteristics.

2.2.2 Trait-Based Approaches: Attributes, Habits, and Skills

Following the Great Man theory, leadership research focused on identifying specific traits or qualities of effective leaders. Trait theory posits that specific personality attributes, such as self-confidence, intelligence, and integrity, predict leadership effectiveness (Zaccaro, 2018). Meta-analyses support the idea that traits play a significant role in leadership emergence and effectiveness, although they are insufficient (Nguyen et al., 2021).

Building on trait theory, recent research has examined leadership skills and habits as key determinants of effective leadership. Katz's (1955) classic categorization of technical, human, and conceptual skills remains influential, and recent studies highlight the role of emotional intelligence and social skills as critical components of leadership capability (Miao et al., 2018). Additionally, Kouzes and Posner's (2017) framework on leadership practices emphasizes habits such as “Model the Way” and “Encourage the Heart,” underscoring the behavioural side of leadership.

Recent work also suggests that these skills and habits are malleable and can be developed through targeted training and reflection, shifting the view of leadership from innate to learnable (Day et al., 2020). This evolution encourages a more inclusive understanding of who can become a leader.

2.2.3 Behavioural and Contingency Theories: Moving Toward Contextual Leadership

Trait-based approaches were eventually criticized for neglecting what leaders actually do and how their behaviour interacts with context. Behavioural theories emerged to fill this gap by focusing on leadership actions, categorising them into task-oriented and relationship-oriented behaviours (Northouse, 2021). Contemporary research affirms that effective leadership depends on balancing these behaviours depending on the situation. Fiedler's contingency theory (1967) and Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership model (1969) laid foundational ideas about adapting leadership style to follower readiness and environmental factors. Recent studies have expanded contingency perspectives by integrating complex variables such as organisational culture and follower characteristics, demonstrating that leadership effectiveness is highly context-dependent (Grint, 2017). Furthermore, the rise of adaptive leadership theory stresses leaders' ability to navigate complex, changing environments by encouraging experimentation, learning, and stakeholder engagement (Heifetz & Linsky, 2017).

2.2.4 Transformational and Transactional Leadership: Contemporary Core Models

Transformational and transactional leadership have gained significant empirical and practical traction among modern leadership theories, particularly in organisational settings. Transformational leadership, as conceptualized by Burns (1978) and further developed by Bass (1985), refers to leaders who inspire followers to transcend their self-interest for the sake of the organisation by articulating a compelling vision, fostering intellectual stimulation, and providing individualized consideration. Meta-analytic reviews affirm that transformational leadership positively influences follower motivation, job satisfaction, and organisational performance across diverse contexts (Wang et al., 2018; Nguni et al., 2019).

Transactional leadership complements transformational leadership by focusing on exchanges and contingent rewards for performance. It maintains structure and order by clarifying roles and correcting deviations, essential for day-to-day operations (Bass and

Riggio, 2006). Recent scholarship highlights that integrating transactional and transformational behaviours produces more effective leadership outcomes than either style alone (Antonakis and House, 2014).

In the logistics and transport industry context, these leadership models offer a valuable framework to understand how leaders balance innovation and operational control, a tension critical to organisational success (Avolio et al., 2019).

2.2.5 Integrative and Emerging Leadership Models

Contemporary leadership theories increasingly emphasize complexity, ethics, and relational dynamics. The Full Range Leadership Model (Bass & Avolio, 1997) integrates transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership into a comprehensive framework, allowing leaders to adapt their style flexibly. More recent models, such as authentic leadership, focus on leader self-awareness, transparency, and ethical conduct, addressing societal calls for responsible leadership (Walumbwa et al., 2018). Servant leadership also gains prominence by prioritizing follower development and well-being, aligning with contemporary organisational culture values (Eva et al., 2019). Moreover, research underscores the growing importance of emotional intelligence as a leadership competency, affecting leader-follower relationships and team outcomes (Mayer et al., 2020). These modern perspectives enrich the understanding of leadership beyond traits and behaviours, incorporating moral and relational dimensions.

In a study of leadership style, it is fundamental to have a clear and complex understanding of what leadership is first and, thereafter, what style means. At its core, leadership is the art of influencing others to work towards a shared objective. It involves guiding, inspiring, and motivating a group to achieve their goals. While leadership has numerous definitions, most converge on *influence*, direction, and pursuit of a *common goal*. Notably, there is emphasis on leadership's social and relational aspects, which recognizes others such as followers, teams, and peers.

- Influence and inspiration: Leadership is often described as the ability to influence and inspire others. This influence is not about exerting power or authority but encouraging people to follow willingly. A leader inspires trust and confidence, making others want to follow their lead.

- Vision and direction: A leader provides an unobstructed vision for the future and sets a direction for the team to follow. They articulate a compelling vision that resonates with their followers and aligns with their values and aspirations.
- Empowerment and support: Effective leadership involves empowering team members and providing the necessary support to succeed. A leader creates an environment where individuals feel valued, capable, and motivated to contribute their best efforts.

Drath, McCauley, Palus, Velsor, O'Connor, and McGuire (2008:637) assert that there are two types of leadership ontology – the tripod and DAC (Direction, Alignment, and Commitment) –which may guide a researcher. The tripod ontology of leadership asserts that:

“in its simplest form, [leadership] is a tripod - leader or leaders, followers, and a common goal they want to achieve” (Bennis 2007:3) ... this is not a definition of leadership, but something much more fundamental: it is an expression of commitment to the entities(leaders, followers, common goals) that are essential and indispensable to leadership and about which any theory of leadership must therefore speak”(Drath et al. 2008:635)

It is important to understand that the three key aspects of leadership are the leader, the follower, and the common goal. At its core, leadership is the art of influencing others to work towards a shared objective. Thus, leadership can be understood as a social process involving iterative exchange processes between several individuals who take on (and release) the leading roles over time in both formal and informal relationships (Yammarino et al., 2012: 382). According to this view, social interaction and transaction relations are the critical aspects of the dynamic leadership process.

Commonly, the key concerns of leadership lie in the areas of vision, motivation, transformation, and the common goal (Marn, 2022). There are views of leadership as a process of facilitating the goal achievement of an individual or of a group in a particular situation” (Keating, 1982:16). Leadership can be viewed from more than one perspective. For example, leadership is primarily a concept that denotes an individual or a group of individuals whose authority has been accepted by others. It is also a process in which the set goals, plans, and tasks are realised through exerting influence on one’s followers and their behaviour. Northouse (2010:3) asserts that leadership is a process whereby an individual influences a group of individuals to achieve a common goal. Leadership may be viewed as a

relation between two persons or as a multilateral relation in hierarchies and networks that connect people. Finally, leadership is the connection between collective intentionality, collective action, and the desired outcomes: it exists as a guiding, integrative, and coordinating mechanism of common action in the collective. In this way, leadership can be defined as a process by which one actor influences others in a group, organisation or several organisations and social settings, to make them understand and accept the tasks that need to be performed and the way they need to be performed, as well as a process by which individual and collective efforts are directed towards the accomplishment of common goals (Yukl, 2006). Notably, influencing others is a key element of the leadership process (Bass, 1981), in which an individual involves a group to accomplish common objectives (Northouse, 2015).

The classic notion of leadership identifies the following elements and relations that can be used to explain leadership: (1) specific nature of the situation in which the need for leadership appears (collective and environment), (2) authority and other characteristics of the leader, (3) acceptance of authority by the members of the collective (feeling of connectedness or obedience), (4) the leader's influence on the follower (direct and indirect influence mechanisms), (5) connection and alignment of goals to perform a task and achieve the best possible outcomes in a given situation. In this way, leadership is impossible to understand without analysing the complexity of the interactions between the leaders, the followers and the context, and the nature of their interrelations. Followership is the ability to take direction well, be part of a team, and deliver on what is expected of you. Followership also enhances the interaction and synergy between the follower and the leader. More importantly, followership is not just a passive role, but an active and important one for the organization's success. In short, the other side of leadership is followership. It makes sense that if leadership is important to performance, followership must also have something to do with it.

Followership is about collaborating with and supporting the leader, understanding and buying into the vision, and contributing effectively towards the objectives. Followership is about individual contribution and cooperation within a group, leading to collective achievement. Followers can exhibit distinctive styles, from being fully engaged to disengaged, depending on their perception of the leadership and their commitment levels. Northouse (2013) identified the following four common themes: (1) leadership constitutes a process, (2) it involves influence, (3) it appears in a group context, and (4) it implies goal attainment.

The following table presents different definitions of leadership, which depict many varied definitions.

| Author | Definition of Leadership | Focus |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
| Malik & Azmat (2019) | Leadership is a dynamic process of influencing people towards achieving collective goals. | Influence, Goal Achievement |
| Toma, Catană & Grădinaru (2020) | Leadership is guiding and inspiring others toward a common objective through effective communication and vision. | Guidance, Inspiration |
| Bass (1990) | Leadership is influencing followers to understand and agree on what needs to be done and how to do it. | Influence, Agreement, Process |
| Yukl (2002) | Leadership involves influencing others to achieve group or organisational objectives. | Influence, Organizational Goals |
| Kotter (1990) | Leadership is about coping with change by setting direction, aligning people, and motivating them. | Change Management, Direction, Motivation |
| Northouse (2010) | Leadership involves an individual influencing a group to achieve a common goal. | Process, Influence, Goal Attainment |
| Stogdill (1974) | Leadership is the process of influencing the activities of an organised group toward goal setting and achievement. | Influence, Group Activities |
| Burns (1978) | Leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that raises human conduct and aspirations. | Mutual Influence, Development |
| Goleman (2000) | Leadership is managing emotions effectively and creating a favorable organisational climate. | Emotional Intelligence, Climate |
| House (1976) | Leadership is the ability of an individual to inspire and guide followers toward goal accomplishment by clarifying roles and expectations. | Inspiration, Role Clarity |

Source: Own

Table 2.1: Integrated Table



| | <u>Management</u> | <u>Leadership</u> |
|---------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| Direction: | Planning, Budgeting | Vision, Strategy |
| Alignment: | Organizing, Staffing | Creating shared culture |
| Relationship: | Focusing on objects | Focusing on people |
| Personal: | Emotional distance | Emotional connections |
| Outcomes: | Maintains stability | Creates change |

Source: Own

2.3 Challenges in Defining Leadership

The definition of leadership remains complex and contested, as the diversity of contexts, individual traits, and organisational needs render it highly variable and difficult to standardise. Leadership is not a one-size-fits-all concept, and efforts to define it often fall short of encompassing its full range of expressions. Scholars and practitioners have attempted to define leadership from several theoretical perspectives, including traits, behaviours, interpersonal relationships, situational roles, and influence processes. For example, trait theories of leadership emphasise personal qualities such as decisiveness, confidence, emotional intelligence, and resilience. Meanwhile, behavioural theories focus on what leaders do such as whether they are more task-oriented or relationship-oriented in their interactions (Northouse, 2022).

As Nusair et al. (2022) assert, the variability in leaders and leadership situations makes it difficult to arrive at a universal definition. Each interpretation captures only a fragment of what constitutes leadership in practice. The diversity of approaches is both a strength and a limitation allowing flexibility in understanding leadership, but complicating efforts to establish a comprehensive theory that applies universally across industries, cultures, and organisational types.

One of the key reasons leadership is difficult to define is its dynamic nature. Effective leadership practices vary widely across cultural, institutional, and industrial contexts. For instance, in highly regulated environments like manufacturing or logistics, leadership may focus on precision, standardisation, and compliance. In contrast, in creative or academic settings, leadership might emphasise autonomy, innovation, and collaborative visioning. In the case of BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal, leadership may involve both technical precision and innovation. A transformational leader in this context might establish a clear vision for the logistics team, inspire change, and promote team cohesion, all while navigating the technical demands of customs clearance and delivery scheduling (Chikoko & Ndlovu, 2023).

The frequent overlap between leadership and management also complicates the definition of leadership. While management traditionally involves planning, organising, and controlling, leadership often involves influencing, inspiring, and motivating. In practice, especially in contemporary organisations with flattened hierarchies and team-based structures, the boundaries between leadership and management are blurred. Shared and distributed leadership models have gained relevance in such settings. For instance, at BDP International, effective leadership may not only come from senior managers but also from experienced customs officers or warehouse supervisors who guide their peers during peak operational periods, exhibiting leadership informally through initiative, experience, and team support.

Moreover, contemporary leadership increasingly entails fostering innovation and adaptability. Leaders today are expected to create environments where employees feel empowered to experiment and take calculated risks. For example, transformational leaders at BDP International might support operational staff in piloting new technologies such as AI-powered inventory management systems or blockchain-based tracking for cargo. Such leadership fosters a culture of experimentation, boosting organisational agility and promoting a sense of ownership among employees (Maringe and Moletsane, 2021).

Ethical and moral leadership has also emerged as a critical dimension in defining leadership in modern organisations. According to Banks et al. (2016), leaders who uphold ethical values significantly influence employee creativity, trust, and overall organisational integrity. A leader at BDP International who practices transparency and accountability can foster a workplace

culture where employees are motivated to report discrepancies or errors without fear, ultimately contributing to better performance outcomes.

Another important challenge is the cultural relativity of leadership. Research shows that leadership preferences and expectations differ across national and cultural boundaries. As House et al. (2004) demonstrate in the GLOBE study, leadership traits considered effective in one culture may be ineffective or even counterproductive in another. In South Africa, where diverse cultural paradigms coexist, leaders must navigate expectations that value Ubuntu principles such as collective decision-making, mutual respect, and relational harmony. Therefore, leadership at BDP International must be contextually grounded, inclusive, and attuned to local socio-cultural dynamics.

In conclusion, leadership is difficult to define because it is situational, multidimensional, and constantly evolving. It encompasses personal traits, behavioural patterns, relational dynamics, ethical conduct, and contextual responsiveness. Leadership and management are increasingly blurred, particularly in modern team-based and decentralised organisations. Evaluating the impact of leadership styles such as those observed at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal demonstrates the importance of adopting adaptive, ethical, and transformational approaches to guide teams effectively through complex operational environments. As organisations' demands evolve, so must our understanding and definitions of leadership.

2.4 Understanding the meaning of leadership style

Leadership styles are single constructs that encompass a set of behaviours reflecting a common theme. In essence, a leadership style is a leader's distinctive method of providing direction, implementing plans, and motivating individuals (Bwalya, 2024). Slightly differently, it can be viewed as a leader's unique approach to managing, guiding, and inspiring followers, shaping how they interact with their teams, make decisions, and build relationships (Bwalya, 2024). For example, an autocratic leader may make top-down decisions with little team input, while a democratic leader encourages participatory discussions and shared responsibility. These distinctions are essential in helping organisations and institutions determine what styles work best in specific operational contexts.

Understanding leadership style is crucial for fostering trust, securing loyalty, and maximising a leader's impact on an organisation or group. According to Nickerson (2024), leadership

styles refer to a leader's characteristic behaviours in directing or managing people. For instance, at a company like BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal, a transactional leadership style might emphasise structured roles, performance-based rewards, and compliance with established procedures to ensure operational efficiency in shipping logistics. Transactional leaders rely on established rules and reward systems to maintain discipline and drive task completion.

Every leader has a "default" leadership style, the approach they feel most natural when guiding others toward achieving a vision. This could be transformational, laissez-faire, authoritarian, or coaching-oriented, depending on personality traits, organisational context, or team composition. For instance, a transformational leader at BDP International might focus on motivating the customs team through vision-sharing, personal engagement, and moral leadership, particularly during organisational reform or digital innovation. Transformational leaders are considered change agents, driving new ideas, empowering staff, and cultivating a sense of purpose among employees (Mwangi and Ouma, 2022).

The leadership style offers a unique behavioural pattern through which a leader influences, motivates, and directs followers. Scholars define leadership style in various ways. Some emphasise behavioural tendencies and personality, while others focus on relational dynamics between leaders and followers that contribute to effective performance in diverse contexts (Chikoko and Ndlovu, 2023). For example, a servant leadership style, where the leader places the needs of employees above organisational goals, is increasingly relevant in industries that rely on teamwork and employee well-being, like the freight and logistics sector. A servant leader at BDP International could support stress management, encourage work-life balance, and ensure psychological safety, thereby improving long-term employee retention and service delivery.

Leadership is also deeply tied to organisational culture and employee satisfaction. According to Maringe and Moletsane (2021), leadership style determines the tone of interpersonal relationships within the workplace. A participative or inclusive leadership style, which fosters dialogue, shared accountability, and democratic engagement, tends to cultivate an environment where staff feel valued and committed to common goals. At BDP International, such a style could result in better cooperation among customs officers, document handlers, and drivers who all depend on seamless coordination and mutual respect.

Additionally, there is growing emphasis on adaptive leadership a concept that underscores the need for flexibility, responsiveness, and innovation in dynamic and unpredictable environments. Adaptive leaders acknowledge that complex challenges require learning, experimentation, and collaboration rather than rigid adherence to protocol. Mkhize and Naicker (2022) argue that in South Africa's volatile socio-economic context, adaptive leadership is essential for navigating uncertainty and aligning organisational strategies with evolving public and employee needs. At BDP International, adaptive leadership would be particularly useful when responding to sudden customs policy changes or international trade disruptions.

Another important style gaining traction is inclusive leadership, which involves actively seeking and valuing the diverse contributions of all team members. Nkomo and Dlamini (2023) highlight that inclusive leaders enhance innovation and performance by creating a psychologically safe space for open dialogue, especially in multicultural settings. In KwaZulu-Natal, where ethnic and linguistic diversity is high, an inclusive leadership style can bridge gaps and improve cohesion across racially and culturally heterogeneous teams. Furthermore, distributed leadership is now recognised in South African business and educational settings. Rather than being centralised in one individual, leadership tasks are distributed across multiple actors within the organisation (Maringe and Moletsane, 2021). This model suits agile companies like BDP International, where junior managers, clerks, and logistics coordinators may all be required to exercise leadership at different stages of a delivery chain. Empowering more voices can lead to faster decision-making, accountability, and innovation.

Contemporary research also shows that emotional intelligence significantly impacts leadership effectiveness. Leaders who exhibit self-awareness, empathy, social skills, and emotional regulation tend to inspire stronger team cohesion and higher job satisfaction (Chikoko and Ndlovu, 2023). In high-pressure environments such as shipping and logistics, emotionally intelligent leaders can remain calm during crises, de-escalate tensions among team members, and build trusting relationships that translate into performance.

Leadership styles are multifaceted and dynamic, shaped by individual characteristics, organisational needs, and broader socio-economic factors. Whether transactional, transformational, adaptive, inclusive, or servant in nature, each style offers advantages depending on the context. In a competitive and operationally intensive environment such as BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal, choosing and adapting the right leadership style is key

to sustaining productivity, innovation, and staff morale. Leaders who are attuned to cultural diversity, open to feedback, and emotionally intelligent are more likely to guide their teams through change and uncertainty while fostering long-term success.

2.5 Leadership style: definition

Leadership styles refer to the behavioural approach employed by leaders to influence, motivate, and direct their followers (Hoshino, Asad, and Hassan, 2019). Effective leadership has more to do with leadership style. Hence, a leader's ability to take charge and know whether a situation requires an executive decision or a more consultative one is vital (Bwalya, 2024). A leader needs to have the ability to know the most effective leadership style that is suitable for an organisation or situation to succeed (Bello, 2019). The concept of leadership style emerged from the so-called early studies regarding the influence of a leader's personality on organisational behaviour. Over time, this concept expanded to embrace an even greater understanding of how leaders may modify their behaviours to inspire followers or attain goals. Anderson and Sun (2018) define leadership style as a consistent set of behaviours leaders use to influence their teams. This definition focuses more on the action and not the traits that leaders exhibit during the interaction with other members of the organisation (Anderson & Sun, 2018).

The relational approach has also been emphasised by other scholars in describing the style of leadership, where the quality of interaction between the leader and the followers defines it. For example, Cheung and Wong (2021) affirm that the transformational leadership style instils an environment of mutual trust and respect where one gets inspired to raise the antenna of performance. On the other hand, Holten and Brenner (2018) describe transactional leadership as a style where leaders sustain follower compliance through structured rewards and consequences, focusing on task completion and standards of performance.

Leadership style refers to the behavioural tendencies leaders exhibit and the way they adjust their approach according to situational demands. It also points out that effective leadership might require multiple styles-transformational, transactional, or empowering, depending on the team's organisational goals and requirements (Avolio and Bass, 2021). It is very insightful to explore leadership styles, understand how to identify the most suitable style for different situations, and analyse the advantages and challenges associated with each approach. However, it is fundamental to initially understand what leadership style (Nixon, Harrington,

and Parker, 2022) is. A summary of the various scholarly definitions of leadership style is provided in the table below, each definition emphasising one or more elements of this concept.

2.6 Analysis of Definitions of Leadership Style

The various definitions of leadership style reveal its multidimensional and evolving nature. Leadership style is no longer simply about directing tasks; it encompasses a wide range of behaviours, values, and relational dynamics that define how leaders engage with their followers and the broader organisational environment. Scholars such as Bwalya (2024) emphasise the relational and motivational elements, arguing that leadership style reflects how leaders connect with and influence their teams. Similarly, Nickerson (2024) highlights leadership style as a set of consistent behavioural patterns shaped by a leader's personality, values, and experiences. These perspectives indicate that leadership style is inherent and situational, formed through personal tendencies and contextual demands.

One key insight is that contemporary leadership demands more than authority it requires influence, adaptability, and the ability to build cultures that support learning, innovation, and trust. Transformational leadership, for example, centres on shared vision, ethical conduct, and mutual trust, making it highly suitable for organisations that value creativity and employee engagement. At BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal, this leadership style could be reflected in leaders who inspire freight teams to adopt new digital tools or develop sustainable solutions to shipping challenges, thereby enhancing both performance and innovation. In contrast, transactional leadership built on performance standards, structured rewards, and rule compliance can be particularly effective in task-driven environments where routine execution and efficiency are critical. In the logistics context of BDP International, transactional leadership might be used to ensure that shipping protocols are followed precisely and that delivery deadlines are consistently met.

However, the organisational environment today is not static, and neither can leadership styles be. The concept of adaptive or situational leadership has emerged in response to the increasing complexity, diversity, and volatility of modern workplaces. Leaders are often required to shift between styles depending on the task at hand, the team's composition, and emerging challenges. This flexibility is particularly essential in diverse teams where employees differ in needs, backgrounds, and expectations. Avolio and Bass (2021) argue that effective leadership often requires blending transformational qualities with transactional

techniques to achieve sustainable outcomes. For instance, a leader may need to use transformational strategies to launch a new innovation project but rely on transactional methods to monitor progress and meet deadlines.

Moreover, leadership styles play a vital role in shaping organisational climate. The style a leader adopts can either foster psychological safety, trust, and engagement or lead to fear, disengagement, and resistance to change. Leadership aligning with organisational culture and values promotes cohesion, employee satisfaction, and higher productivity. At BDP International, a leader who practices servant leadership by prioritising the well-being and development of staff may cultivate a more loyal and high-performing team than one who relies solely on control and performance metrics. As organisations increasingly value agility, ethics, and innovation, leadership styles must evolve accordingly. Ethical leadership, which integrates integrity, transparency, and respect, has become a non-negotiable foundation for long-term success, especially in global industries that are under constant scrutiny.

2.7 Justification for the definition of leadership style in this study

For this study, leadership style is defined as the specific set of behaviours, attitudes, and methods a leader employs to influence and motivate their team members toward achieving organisational objectives. This definition is centred on the practical application of leadership traits in a work environment, especially relevant to high-stakes industries like logistics, where leaders must balance operational efficiency with employee motivation and satisfaction (Avolio and Yammarino, 2018). This study adopts a definition that aligns with the demands of the logistics sector, which requires adaptability, consistency, and relational dynamics that influence productivity and employee well-being by focusing on leadership as an interactional and behavioural process (Northouse, 2018).

Scholars have offered numerous definitions of leadership style, with varying emphases. Anderson and Sun (2017) describe leadership style as a pattern of behaviour that leaders display to motivate and guide their teams. This view emphasises consistent behavioural approaches leaders adopt to influence their followers, underscoring that a leader's actions and decisions significantly affect organisational outcomes. In the context of this study, such a definition is useful because it helps analyse the direct impact of consistent leadership behaviours on employee performance within BDP International's operations in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa.

It is important to acknowledge that Avolio and Bass's (2021) definition of leadership style, which includes both transformational and transactional components, provides a foundation for evaluating how flexible or structured leadership styles affect employee outcomes in different scenarios. Transformational leadership, focused on vision and employee empowerment, is often contrasted with transactional leadership, which emphasises structured exchanges and clear task requirements. These dimensions are particularly relevant for this study, as transformational leadership has been shown to enhance employee motivation and satisfaction, while transactional leadership supports efficiency in routine or structured tasks (Judge and Piccolo, 2018). At its core, transformational leadership is about empowering and inspiring individuals to transcend their limits by promoting a collective sense of purpose and growth (Bwalya, 2024).

Other scholars consider the laissez-faire leadership style. Laissez-faire leadership allows employees significant freedom in decision-making, which could be relevant in autonomous roles within BDP International. Northouse (2018) cautions that laissez-faire leadership can sometimes lead to disengagement, as employees may lack direction and feedback. This study, therefore, takes cognisance that there is a variety of leadership styles that influence employee performance and satisfaction, particularly when employees have extensive autonomy yet operate under strict logistical timelines. A definition of leadership style that recognises the fact that there is a variety of styles that can affect employee performance differently is key for this study at BDP. For instance, transformational leaders who foster creativity and innovation may be ideal for long-term motivation, while transactional leaders who clarify roles and reward performance can optimise immediate task completion. These nuances support a comprehensive analysis of leadership's influence on employee performance in a high-pressure setting.

In summary, this study employs a definition of leadership style that combines the behavioural, relational, and adaptive aspects of leadership style. This open approach allows for a nuanced understanding and evaluation of the types of leadership styles practised within BDP International's unique logistical context, helping to explore how different leadership behaviours, methods, and patterns of strategies impact employee motivation, satisfaction, and performance.

2.8 Types of Leadership Styles

No single leadership style fits every situation. Leaders must adapt their approach to each scenario's unique demands (Bwalya, 2024). Everyone has a natural leadership style, but knowing your style is essential for effective leadership. A positive approach can motivate a team, while a poor style may discourage or demotivate them. Goleman, Richard, Boyatzis, and Annie McKee (2002) define the visionary leadership style as the ability to move people toward a shared dream or vision. Below is a discussion of distinct types of leadership styles.

2.8.1 Seven types of leadership style

Identifying the leadership style appropriate to an organisation can help a leader forge a path toward success (Bwalya, 2024). The style defines the ways that a leader guides, inspires, and oversees their employees. Goleman (2002) discusses the core features of six distinctive leadership styles in their influential book *Primal Leadership: Unleashing the Power of Emotional Intelligence*. Figure 2.1 below depicts the different popular leadership styles, which are later discussed in detail.

Figure 2.1: The Popular Leadership Styles



Source: Goleman (2002:18)

First, autocratic leadership is a command-and-control approach where the leader holds complete authority over the team (Bwalya, 2024). An autocratic leader gives orders without seeking input or suggestions from others (Olaladele and Akeke (2019). In this style, the focus is on strict roles and responsibilities, with minimal collaboration. Those with autocratic

leadership styles are tyrants who want their followers to do exactly what they say (Ojokuku, Odetayo, and Sajuyigbe, 2019). These leaders are not familiar with the leadership they have in place, given their new job, which involves people management. Uchenwamgbe (2018) asserts that a manager who exhibits this leadership style retains the bulk of authority and makes choices in a way that employees are inclined to imitate. When command authority and decision-making are concentrated in the hands of one dominant leader, autocratic leadership is present (Adeyemi, 2020).

Because of this kind of leader, followers do not seem to care what they think about a decision. Autocratic leadership is thought to be very task-oriented, meaning that they constantly push for output (Tannenbaum, and Schmidt, 2018). One's job as a manager is to direct what must be done and when, while also giving guidance and serving as an example to subordinates. An authoritarian leader is recognised for giving directives and setting deadlines (Lussier and Achua, 2019). This leadership style is effective when a team needs clear direction and inspiration to stay focused on goals (Bwalya, 2024). It also works well when guiding a team through transitions or new strategies, when the team needs motivation and a sense of purpose, and when setting a vision. However, it creates a lack of innovation as team members may feel discouraged from sharing innovative ideas. Low morale among employees occurs as they can feel undervalued and unmotivated. The overdependence on the Leader makes the team rely entirely on the leader, limiting growth and independence. Concisely, its rigid approach can stifle creativity, teamwork, and morale. Autocratic leadership has its place in specific situations, such as emergencies or high-stakes decisions.

Second, authoritative leadership is a *follow-me* style in which leaders lead by example (Bwalya, 2024). They do not just give orders but also take action to guide their team toward a shared goal. These leaders are often called visionaries because they clearly explain the purpose and vision behind their goals. Authoritative leaders believe in communicating their intentions. They ensure the team understands the bigger picture and feels motivated to work towards it. Authoritative leadership works well in situations requiring inspiration and clear direction. These leaders create formidable team alignment and motivation by communicating the vision and leading through action. However, over-reliance on the leader can limit the team's independence, so this style should be balanced with other approaches for long-term success.

Third, Pace-setting leadership occurs when the leader sets a fast pace and expects the team to keep up (Bwalya, 2024). Pacesetting leaders strive for excellence and inspire their team members through role modelling. The leader is energetic, highly driven, and often leads with a “follow me and keep up!” attitude. This leadership style is focused on achieving quick results by pushing the team to perform at their best, often under tight timelines. His leadership style is best suited when tasks must be completed quickly and efficiently and when working with skilled and motivated individuals who can handle the pressure. Elon Musk, the CEO of Tesla and SpaceX, is associated with pacesetting leadership. He is known for setting aggressive goals and expects his teams to achieve extraordinary results in electric vehicles and space exploration. Pace-setting leadership is effective for achieving quick results and meeting tight deadlines. However, it is unsuitable for long-term use, as it can cause burnout and reduce team morale. Leaders should use this style selectively and combine it with supportive approaches to ensure balance and team well-being.

Fourth, democratic leadership, called participative leadership, involves team members in decision-making (Bwalya, 2024). Instead of making decisions alone, the leader seeks input from the team and bases their final decisions on collective feedback.

A democratic leader often asks, *What do you think?* This approach makes team members feel valued and encourages their commitment to achieving shared goals. Goleman et al. (2002) suggest that democratic leaders seek to empower their teams. They foster a collaborative culture where everyone’s opinions are respected. This inclusive approach tends not only to result in high levels of job satisfaction but also promotes creativity and innovation within an organisation. Democratic leadership is ideal for fostering collaboration, innovation, and team morale. However, it requires time and best suits teams with skilled and motivated members. It is a time-consuming decision-making approach as it involves multiple stakeholders in the decision-making process. It is slow decision-making compared to autocratic styles (Northouse, 2013).

Leaders should balance this style with other approaches when time is limited or decisions require fast action. Avolio and Bass (2004), observed five distinct features and characteristics of democratic leadership as: (a) inclusive decision-making which encourage open discussions, actively listen to ideas, and consider multiple viewpoints before making final decisions; (b) shared vision and goals arising from engaging team members in defining the organisation's direction and creating a sense of ownership and commitment among team

members; (c) supportive communication characterised by open lines of communication with team members; (d) empowerment and autonomy as team members under democratic leadership are empowered to take initiative, make decisions, and contribute to problem-solving and (e) trust and respect typified by the valuing of contributions of each team member.

Fifth, the coaching leadership style is characterised by the leader's focus on helping employees reach their full potential (Bwalya, 2024). Above all, coaching leaders seek to support personal development and growth. Leaders provide guidance, support, and constructive feedback while encouraging personal and professional growth. They aim to bring out the best in the team by improving skills and boosting performance. A coaching leader often asks, "What could you try?" They believe the team can achieve remarkable things with the right motivation and direction. Coaching leadership is excellent for developing growth, building skills, and motivating the team. However, it is most effective for long-term development and may not suit urgent or high-pressure situations. Leaders should combine this style with others to address immediate needs while encouraging lasting success.

Sixth, affiliative leadership focuses on creating harmony and building strong relationships within the team. It is a "people come first" style, where the leader prioritizes team members' well-being and values their contributions. Affiliative leaders reward task completion and how team members achieve their goals. Goleman et al. (2002) argue that affiliative leaders aim to resolve conflicts and enhance team cohesion by focusing on open communication, empathy, and trust.

This leadership style promotes cooperation, trust, and diversity within the team or organization. Affiliative leadership builds trust, cooperation, and morale within a team. While it works well for creating a positive work environment, it may not be suitable for situations requiring strict performance focus or urgent decision-making. Leaders should balance this style with others to ensure harmony and productivity. Lastly, laissez-faire leadership is a hands-off style in which leaders give full responsibility to team members (Bwalya, 2023). They allow the team to make decisions independently and interfere minimally in their processes. This approach builds trust between leaders and team members, giving them freedom and ownership of their work. Laissez-faire leadership is effective for skilled and motivated teams that thrive with independence. However, it is not suitable for unskilled or unmotivated workers.

Leaders must balance this approach with appropriate monitoring to ensure success without compromising team freedom.

2.8.2 Free-rein leadership style

Ejere and Abasilim (2018) define free-rein leadership as granting subordinates additional authority. Additionally, Osabiya (2019) asserts that managers with free-rein approaches indirectly lead their firms and do not make judgments. The leader does not establish the goals and objectives. Employees with motivation and experience respond well to this kind of leadership (Lussier and Achua, 2019). On the other hand, when subordinates are erratic, dishonest, and evasive, this method might also fail (Oyetunji, 2018).

2.9 The path-goal leadership model

The Path-goal leadership model is informed by theories of motivation, such as Goal-setting theory and Expectancy theory, as noted by Chikozho, Mapira, and Vengesai (2019). Setting challenging goals and rewarding people for accomplishing them are active ways to inspire people, according to Karamat (2013). The Expectancy theory, in contrast, asserts that people strive hard to accomplish their objectives (Uchenwamgbe, 2018). A path-goal model makes clear how a leader's actions affect the productivity and happiness of their workforce (Bello, 2022). Although the Path-goal model does not consider qualities and behavioral factors, it allows leaders to adapt to shifting conditions (Daft, 2019). According to the approach, situational elements might be either tasks or workers. Diverse circumstances call for diverse behaviours from leaders (Moorhead and Griffin, 2020). According to Ivancevich, Konopaske, and Matteson (2018), there are four distinct types of leadership styles that can boost output and employee happiness.

2.9.1 Directive leadership style

When a leader delivers directions to subordinates about preparing, organising, and carrying out tasks, this is known as a directive leadership style (Oyetunji, 2018). Employees are typically expected to abide by laws and regulations. This technique can be utilised, according to Uzzona (2019), when the task is unstructured, challenging, or if the employee is lacking in the requisite skills. Their employees' performance and job happiness increase when leaders give more instructions (Chikozho, Mapira, and Vengesai, 2019).

2.9.2 Supportive leadership style

According to El-Zayaty (2019), relational leadership is relationship-focused and calls for the leader to be more affable and approachable. The leader fosters an emotionally safe climate. When the task is monotonous and unpleasant, a supportive leadership style performs better than a demanding and dangerous job (Moorhead and Griffin, 2020).

2.9.3 Achievement-oriented leadership style

With an achievement-oriented leadership style, followers are given challenging but doable goals to work toward while being encouraged to improve their performance (Chikozho, Mapira, and Vengesai, 2019). The same leader can employ an achievement-oriented leadership style in both easy and challenging circumstances, i.e., the manager can use this type of leadership in all circumstances. According to Ivancevich, Konopaske, and Matteson (2018), this technique works better with goal-oriented subordinates.

It is suggested that the Path-goal model is challenging to apply since it can be challenging for the leader to choose the right approach for each situation (Goodnight, 2021). Therefore, according to Moorhead and Griffin (2020), managers who employ this model ought to be thoroughly familiar with all its components. According to Osabiya's (2019) study, performance and satisfaction suffer when a leader makes up for an employee's or the workplace's shortcomings. According to Osabiya (2019), the Path-goal theory is helpful because it helps leaders remember that achieving their goals effectively and efficiently is their primary goal. The path-goal theory strongly emphasizes the followers' satisfaction and motivation. Chikozho, Mapira, and Vengesai (2019) observe in their analysis of the path-goal theory that the theory places the most emphasis on inspiring followers to be more motivated, leading to better performance.

2.10 The McGregor Theory

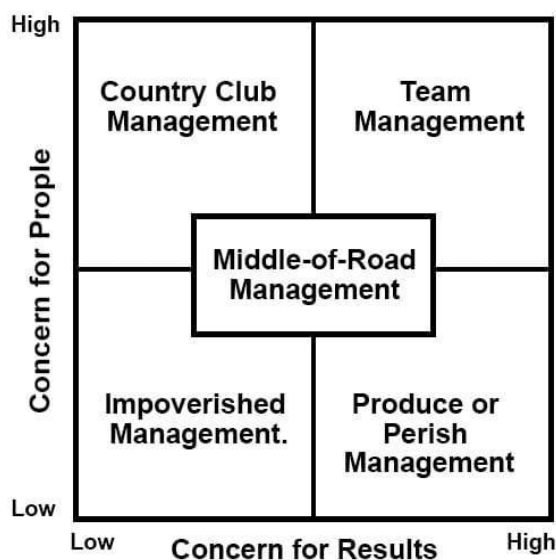
McGregor (2019) claims that good leadership requires cultivating the person inside a unified and successful group. McGregor (Muchran, 2019) lists thirty-two distinct kinds of organizational leadership. According to hypothesis X, leaders must direct and inspire followers to effect change because people are passive and resistant. People are already motivated, but they want responsibility, according to Theory Y. According to Bello (2018), the leader's job is to create organisational conditions that enable employees to achieve their individual needs while also focusing their efforts on attaining the organization's objectives. According to McGregor, the best leaders do not see their employees as lazy people who

need to be coerced, managed, or guided, according to Jing and Probst (2019). According to the study, managers can take advantage of their staff members' diverse talents by allowing them to participate and shoulder responsibilities (Colbert, Judge, Choi, and Wang, 2022).

2.11 The managerial grid

The continuum of employee management, from task emphasis to staff management, is represented by a two-dimensional model developed by Blake and Mouton (Daft, 2019). It is the Managerial Grid, as seen in Figure 2.1 below. The model's initial axis concerns people, followed by concern for production (Oyetunji, 2018). The grid uses a nine-point rating scale from low to high concern (Chemers, 2019). Mission and performance are two of the horizontal axes. The vertical axis is related to member support, member trust, member respect, and staff job security concerns from a personal perspective (Zopiatis and Constanti, 2020). The grid, which is scored on a scale of one (1) to nine (9) summarises the various leadership attitudes a leader might use in a range of situations (Osabiya, 2019).

Figure 2.2: The Managerial Grid



Source: Blake and Mouton (2019)

2.12 The impoverished leader (1.1)

According to Karunathilake (2022), the poor leader (1.1) is unconcerned with productivity and people, as seen in Figure 2.1 above. The organisation's aims are of little interest to these leaders, who make few efforts to further them. As a result, followers lose interest in the process, making productive work practically impossible (Ejere and Abasilim, 2019). The leader, therefore, exerts little effort to complete tasks and has little regard for followers. Oyetunji (2018) asserts that a manager's ineffective guiding causes disagreement within the company. As a result, the work is not done efficiently.

2.13 The authority compliance leader (9.1)

Figure 2.1 shows Authority Compliance (9.1) in action. This leader places a greater emphasis on productivity than on people (Karunathilake, 2022). By ordering and dictating to followers, leaders prioritize completing duties (Osabiya, 2019). This management approach is centred on achieving organisational tasks at any cost. Because he believes that the needs of the organization and the needs of the employees are incompatible, a leader does not care about the welfare and rights of his or her subordinates (Oyetunyi, 2018). Production and its maximisation are the main priorities of this style. As a result, subordinates are tightly monitored, and all communications are purely business-related (Daft, 2019).

2.14 The country-club leader (1.9)

Blake and McCauley (1991), referenced by Oyetunji (2018), suggest that country club leaders focus more on people than output. According to Moorhead and Griffins (2020), pleased employees will work hard and perform well. As a result, the leader is more concerned with upholding followers' connections than with achieving outcomes. Lusier and Achua (2019) assert that the Country club leadership style has a favourable influence on the surroundings while only having a marginally direct effect on performance. For instance, the management is disrespectful when it comes to absenteeism and late arrivals, and does not analyse employee performance.

2.15 The middle of the road leader (5,5)

As illustrated in Figure 2.1, a middle-of-the-road manager believes that balancing a moderate concern for both productivity and employee welfare, each at approximately 35% can lead to acceptable organisational performance (Daft, 2019). Mwenje (2018) emphasises the

importance of achieving outcomes in a considerate manner to maintain employee morale. Similarly, Zopiatis and Constanti (2020) note that such leaders tend to avoid conflict by adopting a moderate, balanced leadership approach.

2.16 The team leader (9,9)

A team leader is responsible for output and people, as depicted in Figure 2.1 above (Karunathilake, 2022). Your worries as a leader affect your choices, emotions, and behaviour (Moorhead and Griffins, 2010). The needs of the organization and the personnel must always align for effectiveness. This goal-oriented leadership strategy emphasizes teamwork to get the best results through commitment, participation, and involvement (Osabiya, 2019). Oyetunji (2018) argues that the team leader style is the best since it has the highest likelihood of enhancing both climate and results.

2.17 Charismatic Leadership Style

According to House and Shamir (1993) and Conger and Kanungo (1998), the four main features and characteristics of charismatic leadership style include (a) charismatic presence, (b) visionary leadership, (c) persuasive communication, and (d) self-confidence. First, charismatic presence is about charismatic leaders' magnetic personalities that attract and captivate their followers, with charm and self-confidence. Second, charismatic leaders are visionary leaders (Bwalya, 2024). Charismatic leaders are visionary and have a clear sense of direction and communicate their vision effectively to their followers. Third, charismatic leaders are persuasive and skilled communicators, using powerful rhetoric, storytelling, and emotional appeal to influence and mobilize their followers (Bwalya, 2024).

Lastly, charismatic leaders are self-confident and often exhibit strong self-confidence and optimism. According to Lussier and Achua (2021) and Chemers (2019), Max Weber first described charismatic leadership in 1947. Jobs and Mandela are charismatic business and political figures, respectively (Oladele and Akeke, 2016). According to the charismatic leadership theory, leaders engage in astounding behaviours and exhibit a wealth of knowledge (Bello, 2013). It is common to observe charisma in others, yet it isn't easy to describe it without mentioning specific actions or personal traits (Chemers, 2019).

Robbins and Judge (2018) define charismatic leaders as those with exceptional vision and the capacity to persuade others to help them realize it. A leader's followers will determine

whether he is charismatic. El-Zayaty (2019) asserts that a charismatic leader articulates ethical objectives and makes sacrifices to achieve those objectives.

A charismatic leader stands out and has an unclouded vision. The beneficial effects of charismatic leadership have been seen in numerous nations worldwide (Uzzona, 2019). Charismatic leaders appear to predominate in the African environment and frequently provide good employee performance (Ali, Elmi, and Mohamed, 2018). The charismatic leadership style alters subordinates' goals, values, wants, beliefs, and aspirations. Charismatic leadership heavily depends on the leader's personality and presence, which can create challenges if the leader is absent or unable to sustain their charisma (Northouse, 2018). The persuasive abilities of charismatic leaders can sometimes lead to unquestioning follower loyalty, potentially bypassing critical thinking and healthy scepticism. This leaves room for potential manipulation of followers (Northouse, 2018). Charismatic leaders' strong influence can be used for both positive and negative purposes, and there is a risk of leaders exploiting their followers or pursuing self-interest over the common good (Bass and Riggio, 2006).

2.18 Transactional Leadership Style

Transactional leadership is defined by the connections between leaders and followers (Riaz and Haider, 2020). According to Chikozho, Mapira, and Vengesai (2019), transactional leadership is essential for achieving routine norms mutually agreed upon by leaders and employees. Identifying followers' needs and demonstrating how to address them are further characteristics of transactional leadership. Transactional leaders tell followers of the benefits they will obtain, as claimed by Hamstra, Yperen, Wisse, and Sassenberg (2021). Transactional leadership strongly emphasises a contingent reinforcement strategy (2021). Leaders motivate followers using monetary or non-financial incentives (Zopiatis and Constanti, 2020). Transactional leaders prioritise tasks over relationships and use their position of authority to negotiate favourable deals with their team members (Andreassen, Hetland, Pallensen, and Notelaers, 2021).

According to Northouse (2013:195), transactional leadership relies on hesitant support and followers motivated by rewards. Transactional leaders encourage their subordinates to perform by rewarding them, according to Hamstra, Yperen, Wisse, and Sassenberg (2021). Rewards are a crucial element of transactional leadership to promote employee loyalty, according to Naderi and Jadidi (2019). Transactional leadership, according to Uzzona (2018),

is preferable to transformational and laissez-faire leadership (Rashid, Shireen, Rab, Anam, Hafiza, and Somia, 2019).

Figure 2.3: Transactional Leadership Attributes



Source: Hamstra, Yperen, Wisse, and Sassenberg (2021)

Transactional leadership, according to Hamstra, Yperen, Wisse, and Sassenberg (2021), encompasses management by exception, management by exception-passive, and contingent rewards and penalties. Management by exception as part of transactional leadership involves the leader stepping in and intervening at an early stage, prompted by signs of problems or failure (Bwalya, 2024). More importantly, transactional leaders manage by exception, meaning they only get involved when their subordinates' work deviates from what has been agreed upon. Management by exception is used to identify when rewards or punishment should be used positively to reinforce behaviours or negatively to dissuade people (Bwalya, 2024). Kouzes and Posner (2017) and Bass and Riggio (2006) discussed the five features and characteristics of transactional leadership as:

- *Clearly defined expectations:* Transactional leaders establish clear expectations and ensure that everyone understands these expectations.

- *Defined contingent rewards*: In line with the expectations, transactional leaders also provide well-defined rewards and punishments to their followers based on meeting the set performance targets.
- *Exchange relationship*: This leadership style is based on an exchange relationship - a reward for satisfactory performance and punishment for poor performance.
- *Monitoring performance*: Transactional leaders closely monitor the performance of their teams and intervene when deviations occur to ensure compliance with established standards.
- *Goal-oriented*: This type of leadership is focused on achieving goals.

The disadvantage of transactional leadership includes limited creativity and innovation (Bwalya, 2024). It discourages creativity and innovation as the focus is primarily on meeting predetermined goals and targets (Yukl, 2018). Another disadvantage of transactional leadership is the lack of long-term motivation. The rewards and punishments provided by transactional leaders may primarily focus on short-term goals, potentially leading to a lack of sustained motivation among followers in the long term (Bwalya, 2024). Inflexibility and limited adaptability to change are other weaknesses of transactional leadership highlighted by Bwalya (2024). Transactional leaders may struggle to adapt to rapidly changing environments and circumstances or unexpected challenges due to their reliance on established rules and procedures.

2.19 An overview of employee performance

Barchiesi et al. (2007) measured the effect of leadership effectiveness on the performance and attitudes of teams. Information about leadership style can be powerful for managers because it gives them an awareness of how others perceive them. This awareness can enable leaders to communicate better, assess others' needs, and forge positive relationships (Bwalya, 2024). According to Obicci (2019), performance is a multifaceted notion characterising an organisation's successes or failures. Additionally, Prasetya and Kato (2021) assert that actions and abilities used by employees in particular situations determine performance. A firm's workforce is its most valuable asset (Taiwo, 2013). In a sense, any organisation has always aimed to raise its level of performance and productivity (Oladele and Akeke, 2019). Employees must be able to define and comprehend employee performance in detail to be productive and efficient (Altrasi, 2019).

Employee performance is defined by Khan (2018) as completing the task that gives rise to the employee's position. Scholars have discussed employee performance under various forms of leadership (Obiwuru, Okwu, Akpa, and Nwankwere, 2019). The job requirements, organizational goals, and values all affect employee performance. Staff performance is essential to accomplishing organizational objectives (Abdussamad, Akim, Jasruddin, and Paramata, 2019). According to Obicci (2019), an employee's observable behaviours and neutral acts that produce organisational results determine employee performance. Employee performance, which reflects individual contributions to organisational goals, is vital for attaining defined goals (Shafie, Baghersahini, and Barghi, 2018).

2.20 Perspectives on employee performance

According to Koech and Namusonge (2019), employee performance is the volume and calibre of a person's work. Employee performance is described by Ali, Elmi, and Mohamed (2019) as the conduct that employees exhibit and how it manifests in their actions. Karamat (2020) contends that an employee's output is determined by the things for which they are compensated.

For instance, BDP International pays its receptionists to help walk-ins with various issues. Employee performance is crucial to accomplish organizational objectives and, ultimately, organizational strategy (Govender, 2019). Employee performance is highly valued by business psychology and human resource management (Prasetya and Kato, 2021). Employee motivation and direction must come from leadership styles to improve employee performance (Shafie, Baghersahini, and Barghi, 2018). Predicting employee performance has long been challenging for managers (Obiwuru, Okwu, Akpa, and Nwankwere, 2019).

2.20.1 Dimensions of employee performance

Employee performance is defined as knowledge, skills, aptitudes, and inspiration based on role-prescribed behaviour, such as acknowledged work tasks (Jyoti and Bhau, 2020). According to Altrasi (2019), employee performance may be categorised into contextual and work performance.

2.21.1 Job Performance

Job performance is how employees accomplish their primary responsibilities (Peng, 2019). Job performance is achievement-centred behaviour that the individual controls and contributes to corporate goals, according to McShane and Von Glinow (2020). According to

a study by Jalalkamali, Ali, Hyun, and Nikbin (2019), one of the most crucial aspects of workplace behaviours is task performance.

2.22.2 Contextual Performance

It is context that gives a workplace setting its best possible quality (Peng, 2019). Contextual performance, despite not directly connecting to primary activities, boosts organisational efficiency, according to Lu and Lin (2019). Promotions and other organizational and supervisory benefits are influenced by contextual performance, claim Rasid, Shireen, Rab, Anam, Hafiza, and Somia (2020). According to Bothma (2019), the alignment between employee conduct and performance is a critical determinant of organizational success, as behavior often reflects an individual's work ethic and commitment. Bothma (2020) further explains that performance entails deliberate actions directed toward achieving specific objectives, highlighting the purposeful nature of workplace tasks. Similarly, Peng (2019) describes performance as the execution of tasks aimed at fulfilling predetermined goals. Campbell (2020), as cited in Jalalkamali, Ali, Hyun, and Nikbin (2018), emphasizes that organisations recruit individuals primarily for the value they add through measurable outputs, not just for participation. This distinction underscores the importance of goal-oriented behavior in evaluating employee effectiveness. High performance is not simply about being busy but about producing results that align with organizational priorities. Therefore, performance must be assessed not only by the quantity of effort but also by its relevance, consistency, and contribution to achieving the institution's broader objectives.

2.23 Factors that contribute to employee performance

Rashid, Shireen, Rab, Anam, Hafiza, and Somia (2019) claim that several variables interact to affect employee performance. A worker's behaviours at work cannot be traced to a single element (Thahier, Ridjal, and Risani, 2019). According to Uysal (2019), performance is behaviour that has an impact on an organisation's objectives. According to Salehzadeh, Shahin, Kazemi, and Barzoki (2020), numerous variables affected subordinates' performance in an organisation. There are numerous elements, broken down into organisational factors and individual factors, that affect employee performance at work Zameer, Ali, Nisar, and Amir, (2019). Therefore, such elements, in the opinion of Rashid, Shireen, Rab, Anam, Hafiza, and Somia (2019), inspire subordinates to work effectively and productively for a company. These elements fall within the categories of individual and organisational factors, according to a research review.

2.23.1 Organisational Level Factors

Employee performance is regularly impacted by organisational characteristics, according to Ofoegbu and Joseph (2018). According to Boehm, Dwertmann, Bruch, and Shamir (2019), organizational characteristics may impact subordinate performance. They may come from various places within an organisation (Arham, 2018).

These include organisational practices, the working environment, technology use, job rotation, and managerial techniques (Oladele and Akeke, 2019). Creative compensation plans and a pleasant work environment also influence employee performance. Additionally, people seek to be connected to prestigious employers (Rashid, Shireen, Rab, Anam, Hafiza, and Somia, 2019).

2.23.3 Organisational Structure

According to Salehzadeh, Shahin, Kazemi, and Barzoki (2019), organisational frameworks are frequently disregarded. An organisational structure is a design created by individuals playing various roles in collaboration. Organisational structures serve as the fundamental building elements for the overall design of an organisation (Muda, Rafiki, and Harahap, 2019).

Functional, divisional, hybrid, and matrix are the four fundamental organisational designs that Qazi, Shafique, and Ahmad (2019) examine as impacting employee performance. Employees are grouped in functional designs based on similar jobs, abilities, and activities. (Boehm, Dwertmann, Bruch, and Shamir, 2019) Divisional design groups are autonomous production centres for goods and services. A matrix design allows employees dual power and concurrent functional and divisional designs. Leaders and their teams must understand organisational structures to work effectively and meet the human dimension (Armstrong, 2019).

2.23.5 Work Environment

According to Muda, Rafiki, and Harahap (2018), a work environment is made up of anything that impacts an organization, either directly or indirectly. According to Altrasi (2019), the workplace involves interactions between leaders and followers, incentives, and support. Workplaces have an impact on how employees perform their duties. According to Chaudhry and Javed (2019), various work environment dimensions can be used to assess various work needs. Organisations with practical knowledge of their work environment have increased

employee engagement, brand equity, and turnover (Boehm, Dwertmann, Bruch, and Shamir, 2019).

2.23.6 Organisational Culture

According to Rashid, Shireen, Rab, Anam, Hafiza, and Somia (2018), the organisational culture significantly impacts how well employees perform. Performance is improved by a company's reputation for moral leadership in its industry. According to Muda, Rafiki, and Harahap (2018), employees are more likely to be productive and efficient in a comfortable working environment. Building an organisational philosophy requires employees to be motivated to reach their maximum potential (Nasrah, 2019).

2.23.6 Incentives to employees

According to Ofoegbu and Joseph (2018), rewards may enhance worker performance by enhancing their capacity to identify accomplishments. Incentives are a significant factor in encouraging workers to succeed. According to Armstrong (2019), experience affects how significant other motivators have been for individuals and organisations.

2.23.7 Individual Level Factors

According to Altrasi (2019), individual factors can affect an employee's performance. These elements include pay disparities, flexible work schedules, financial, material, political, and interpersonal pressures. According to Abdussamad, Akib, and Paramata (2019), self-efficacy is the belief that one can successfully finish a challenging endeavour. Additionally, they contend that motivation and conduct are more heavily influenced by self-efficacy (Zameer, Ali, Nisar, and Amir, 2019). People continually assess if their actions are preventing them from achieving other tough goals by keeping track of their actions and accomplishments.

2.23.8 Performance evaluation or appraisals

According to Koech and Namasonge (2020), performance reviews can reveal flaws and help to implement corrective measures. A constructive assessment system and clear expectations are required to inspire personnel to attain organisational outcomes (Prabhu and Pradeep, 2021).

2.23.9 Skills of employees

Employees who possess abilities but do not use them may be able to take advantage of them if new chances occur that call for them, according to Sokoro (2020). By hiring adaptable individuals based on their talents, organisations can easily reach the necessary skill profile (Mello, 2021). Numerous analyses and justifications have been used in prior studies to explain the benefits of employee abilities and behaviour (Boehm, Dwertmann, Bruch, and Shamir, 2019; Altrasi, 2018; Sokoro, 2022).

2.23.10 Attitude of employees

Muda, Rafiki, and Harahap (2019) state that attitudes comprise beliefs and actions. Employee attitudes are viewpoints on their professions, careers, and companies, according to Abdussamad, Akib, and Paramata (2019). Researchers have investigated job satisfaction as a work attitude. Work-related attitudes are influenced by job satisfaction (Bennett, Lance, and Woehr, 2018).

2.23.11 Remuneration of employees

It alludes to benefits given by employers that are not intrinsic (Rashid, Shireen, Rab, Anam, Hafiza, and Somia, 2018). Reward management is described as "creating and implementing strategies and policies that are consistent with the organization's values" by Armstrong (2019). Employees are compensated for their time, abilities, and effort in achieving predetermined organizational goals (Nixon, Harrington, and Parker, 2022). Money pushes workers to perform, claim Mehrabi, Roozbehani, Naseri, and Samangoei (2019). Along with financial rewards, additional things can inspire workers (Rabia, Afsheen, Arshud, and Iram, 2020). According to Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Theory, extrinsic rewards are comparable to incentives (Uchenwamgbe, 2018).

According to Lu and Lin (2019), various incentives, including financial rewards, have been found to promote employee performance in diverse ways, according to Bushra, Usman, and Naveed (2021), inequality in the distribution of compensation impacts most workers' performance. According to Tinofirei (2021), financial incentives are linked to worker performance. Contrarily, intrinsic rewards depend on the task performed; when employees are paid highly, they work harder and more productively (Marnewick, 2021).

2.23.12 problems of employees

Personal issues significantly impact employee productivity (Bennett, Lance, and Woehr, 2019). Personal issues typically have an impact on a person's IQ. Concentration is hampered, for instance, by dull thinking (Uchenwamgbe, 2018). However, an optimistic outlook and a freer attitude will produce better outcomes.

2.23.13 Job content of employees

Every task must be completed with originality, enthusiasm, and lofty objectives (Ofoegbu and Joseph, 2019). According to Abdussamad, Akib, and Paramata (2019), innovation and originality improve employee performance. Innovative and challenging job content is required.

2.24 Theories on employee performance

According to Tinofirei (2021), there has been much research on employee performance. According to Obiwuru, Okwu, Akpa, and Nwankwere (2019), there are a few theories. To make leadership styles effective, several motivating theories concentrate on employee performance (Kinicki and Kreitner, 2018). An employee's performance in a company is influenced by three factors: motivation, aptitude, and work environment (Riedle, 2019). Motivational theories that address employee performance include Herzberg's Two Factor theory, Vroom's Expectancy theory, and McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y (Oyetunji, 2018).

2.24.1 Herzberg's two-factor theory

According to Kiruja and Elegwa (2019), the Herzberg Two Factor theory is like Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, but is separated into two elements. According to Herzberg, issues related to motivation and hygiene affect how well employees perform at work. According to Uzonna (2019), motivating variables are inherent since they increase workers' job happiness. Intrinsic elements boost employee pleasure and reduce employee dissatisfaction, claim Muda, Rafiki, and Harahap (2018).

Intrinsic elements raise employees' overall performance (Omollo, 2019). Intrinsic elements successfully maintain a favourable effect on employee performance, claim Yuoff, Kian, and Idris (2019). As an alternative, extrinsic variables support workers' demands for motivation (Asim, 2019). For employees to experience extrinsic influences, employers must offer

favourable working conditions. According to Muda, Rafiki, and Harahap (2020), employee performance is influenced by inner and external elements.

Cash does not motivate employees, according to Herzberg's Two-factor theory of motivation (Kiruja and Elegwa, 2019). Ejere and Abasilim (2013) assert that job advancement, success, and growth may impact performance. According to Pradeep and Prabhu (2021), the staff members are more knowledgeable and skilled than they were in the past. Herzberg's Two-factor theory (El-Zayaty, 2019) states that the nature of the job itself affects how well workers perform. The worker builds self-esteem while carrying out a task (Wiza and Hlanganipai, 2014).

She believes that since leaders emphasize addressing employees' hygiene needs too much, their reliance on external rewards increases. Leaders should emphasise demanding work, intrinsically recognise employees' contributions, and empower them where necessary, according to Kiruja and Elegwa (2018). Employees' performance will likely improve when their needs are met (Bello, 2019).

2.24.2 Vroom's expectancy theory

Vroom's Expectancy Theory has various implications for how motivated employees are. Vroom lists a few factors that can be used to inspire workers (Uzzona, 2019). Expectancy is the conviction that a particular degree of effort will produce a particular level of achievement, according to Lussier and Achua (2020). This idea assumes that staff performance will increase when a shared objective is concentrated. Success, relationships with coworkers, and self-esteem are examples of expectation perceptions (Osabiya, 2019).

Instrumentality is connected to expectancy since performance depends on the advantages and perspective of a particular degree of performance, leading to a specific outcome (Goodnight, 2021). Value is described by Uysal (2020) as the perception of a result that is favourable and satisfies a person's requirements. According to Chaudhry and Javed (2021), Vroom's hypothesis can also forecast employee motivation across cultural boundaries. These opponents contend that emotions significantly influence motivation among employees.

Opportunities for personal development, increased job responsibility, and other factors are examples of intrinsic motivators (Nasrah, 2018). According to Lu and Lin (2019), assuming a reward for workers to behave in a particular way is necessary. Because of this, organisations

can encourage employees to perform well if they believe their efforts will be rewarded with satisfactory performance (Boehm, Dwertmann, Bruch, and Shamir, 2020).

2.24.3 McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y

Banks, McCauley, Gardner, and Guler (2020) assert that the two parts of McGregor's dual theory are Theory X and Theory Y. McGregor's Theory X and Theory Y ideas strongly emphasise leadership and employee engagement. McGregor contends that presumptions influence managers' perceptions of human nature (Ofoegbu and Joseph, 2019).

2.24.4 McGregor's Theory X

According to McGregor's Theory X, Lu and Lin (2019), it is necessary to coerce, direct, and intimidate employees into working. According to McGregor's Theory X, managers believe that employees would avoid doing their jobs and need constant direction. Due to their natural dislike of labour, employees need to be told what to do and threatened with discipline to achieve. Numerous workers put safety first, more than anything else.

2.24.5 McGregor's Theory Y

Lu and Lin (2019) argue that work is inherently fulfilling and natural for individuals, drawing on McGregor's Theory Y to support this perspective. According to Rashid et al. (2018), Theory Y underpins participative leadership approaches that emphasise employee involvement as a key performance driver. Similarly, Koech and Namasonge (2019) assert that employees aligned with Theory Y actively seek responsibility and are motivated by opportunities for accountability.

According to Uysal (2019), managers subscribe to McGregor's Theory Y because workers view work as a natural activity like sleeping or playing. When a person is devoted to the organization's objectives, they assume responsibility on their own and risk discipline. According to McGregor (Koech and Namasonge, 2020), supervisors who strive to influence their staff members' behavior may change how happy and fulfilled they feel.

2.26 The relationship between leadership styles and employee performance

According to Hoshino, Asad, and Hassan (2019), a company's performance depends on how well its people resources are used. Employees must be inspired to accomplish the company's objectives (Jyoti and Bhau, 2019). Leadership significantly impacts employee performance in many firms, according to Sundi (2018).

According to Kirkpatrick and Locke (2020), numerous studies have discovered a beneficial connection between leadership and output. Researchers consider various factors to gauge the connection between leadership and performance. According to Muda, Rafiki, and Harahap (2018), the relationship has drawn much scholarly interest. Transactional and transformational leadership styles enhance employee performance in educational contexts (Paracha, Qamar, Mirza, Hassan, and Waqas, 2021). According to these studies, transactional leadership is more important than transformative leadership. Using correlation and regression analysis, Pradeep and Prabhu (2021) propose that transformational leadership has a notable influence on employee performance in India. Their research demonstrates a meaningful association between transformational leadership behaviours such as inspiring a shared vision, encouraging innovation, offering personal support, and increasing employee effectiveness. The regression results confirm that transformational leadership significantly predicts performance, highlighting its role in motivating employees and driving organisational achievement.

Researchers from Iran, Shafie, Baghersahini, and Barghi (2019), also found that leadership enhanced worker performance. Shafie, Baghersahini, and Barghi (2019) employed pragmatic and development-oriented leadership styles as factors. According to Lu and Lin (2018), the performance of local employees in Taiwan was enhanced by the transformational leadership style of international managing directors. Chikozho, Mapira, and Vengesai (2018) claim that autocratic leadership demotivates workers and harms output. Additionally, they contend that autocratic leadership results in competent staff performance even when the labor is monotonous. Abdussamad, Akib, Jasruddin, and Paramata (2019) contend that higher levels of transformative leadership may have a negative effect on workers. Qazi, Shafique, and Ahmad (2019) claim that a manager's leadership style influences subordinates' performance significantly.

2.27 Transformational leadership style and employee performance

Human resources are essential in this era of globalisation for producing creative ideas (Jyoti and Bhau, 2019). Leaders must inspire people to work hard (Chou, Lin, Chang, and Chuang, 2013). Transformational leadership styles are among the most frequently utilised to manage change in businesses (Shanker, 2019; Kwan, 2019).

Transformational leaders exercise less authority and guide, mentor, and coach their subordinates to sharpen their focus. According to Cavazotte, Moreno, and Bernado (2019),

transformational leadership practices boost employee performance, work satisfaction, self-efficacy, and career advancement in firms. According to Jyoti and Bhau (2018), transformative leadership directly impacts employee performance. Change and transformation are synonymous, and transformational leaders inspire their teams to think beyond their self-interest.

Kinicki and Kreitner (2018) state that a transformative leader creates a high-quality relationship with the workforce. Giving each employee personalised attention motivates them to put in their best effort, which ultimately results in the accomplishment of corporate goals. According to Zopaitis and Constanti (2020), the foundation of transformational leadership theories is mutual guidance between leaders and subordinates to attain organisational goals. According to Munir, Nielsen, and Cameiro (2020), transformational leadership places a comparable emphasis on emotions and values as it does on leadership relationships. Wiza and Hlanganipai (2019) assert that transformational leaders consistently promote work motivation with a focus on interpersonal connections. According to Bennett, Lance, and Woehr (2019), transformative leadership can enhance employee performance. Butler (2019), according to Sundi (2018), states that transformative leadership inspires followers to concentrate on maintaining peak performance.

Elshout, Scherp, and Feltz-Cornelis (2018) contend that consistent transformational leadership psychologically empowers followers. Transformational leadership raises knowledge and performance expectations regarding financial performance (Osabiya, 2019). The four key components of transformational leadership are intellectual stimulation, individualised consideration, inspirational motivation, and idealised influence (Bwalya, 2024). First, intellectual stimulation is manifest when transformational leaders involve their teams in decision-making processes to encourage creativity (Bwalya, 2024). Stimulating employees' creativity is a crucial step in achieving innovation. It is also important that a leader share the vision with their team to help them understand goals and steps for realizing the vision.

Second, individualized consideration is about leaders forming relationships with their team members so that they can learn about their needs and provide individualised support (Bwalya, 2024). Recognising team members' accomplishments is helpful in encouraging them and providing motivation. Giving specific praise may impart ownership of their responsibilities and help employees realise their value to their team. Third, inspirational motivation as a component of transformational leadership focuses on learning how to motivate employees

(Bwalya, 2024). Motivating employees with goals, recognition, and rewards helps bring positive organisational change. An important aspect of offering motivation is to encourage confidence in the abilities of each team member so that they can succeed. Transformational leaders maintain a positive attitude to set an example and inspire other employees. Lastly, idealised influence as a component of transformational leadership is important to put highly influential individuals in charge of making change (Bwalya, 2024). Transformational leaders are role models who influence other leaders' and employees' behaviors and attitudes.

2.28 Transactional leadership style and employee performance

According to Sundi (2019), transactional leadership entails a transaction between an employer and a subordinate that affects employee performance. It utilises rewards and punishments to motivate and direct followers. This approach to leadership emphasises the importance of structure, organization, supervision, performance, and outcomes. The goals and tasks for the group are highly structured, and members are rewarded when they achieve these goals and reprimanded if they miss deadlines (Bwalya, 2024). Ishola (2020) argues that an employee's performance affects the type of transaction. According to Hoshino, Asad, and Hassan (2018), the transactional leadership paradigm fosters employee commitment to achieving a common goal, eventually improving employee performance.

According to Obiwuru, Okwu, Akpa, and Nwankwere (2021), transactional leadership enables firms to achieve goals by linking employee success to well-regarded rewards and providing the appropriate resources. By setting expectations, transactional leaders can increase employee work satisfaction and motivation (Ladzani, Smith, and Pretorious, 2020). Instead of inspiration and cooperation, team members are motivated by rewards and expectations. According to Sundi (2019), a transactional leader rewards satisfactory performance, increasing workers' motivation to work hard. According to Nasrah (2019), transactional leadership has both positive and negative effects on employee performance. In transactional leadership, rewards and punishments are contingent upon the performance of the followers. The leader views the relationship between managers and subordinates as an exchange: you give me something for something in return. Transactional leadership is often used in organisations; when employees are successful, they are rewarded; when they fail, they are reprimanded or punished.

2.29 Laissez-faire leadership style and employee performance

Laissez-faire leadership focuses on how the leader's style interacts with the needs of various situations and personnel (Bennett, Lance, and Woehr, 2019). Laissez-faire leadership entails letting subordinates use their preferred methods of leadership (Prasetya and Kato, 2011). For a variety of reasons, African firms have not fully adopted a laissez-faire leadership style (Oladele and Akeke, 2018). In addition, laissez-faire is never given a game plan. When given the freedom to complete duties whenever they like, employees feel like they are a part of the family (Boehm, Dwertmann, Bruch, and Shamir 2019). Employees may conceptualize wisdom in judgment, decision-making, and action because of this kind of leadership (Lu and Lin, 2019). A laissez-faire leadership style can potentially empower creative employees or leave them feeling directionless (Bwalya, 2024). Leadership may lay out basic expectations, but they are not involved in many decisions that produce their expected results. Employees are generally given guidance and free rein to make decisions and produce innovative ideas if they do not do anything to affect the company negatively.

However, a hands-off leader can easily be seen as neglectful. Some decisions require a decisive executive decision-maker, like when there is an emergency or a new opportunity. Laissez-faire leadership can suggest that no one is steering the ship, and that can sink team morale (Bwalya, 2024). Laissez-faire-managed employees can also feel defeated when they are delegated responsibilities for which they are ill-equipped.

2.30 Leadership styles that result in improved employee performance

Appropriate leadership approaches assist in accomplishing tasks promptly, enhancing team dynamics, and reaching goals, in addition to deterring staff performance (Jing and Probst, 2019). Riaz (2020) asserts that transformative leadership and organizational effectiveness are related. Compared to transformational leaders, transactional leaders have a minimal effect on the performance of their subordinates, according to Osabiya (2020).

Wiza and Hlanganipai (2019) claim that transformational leadership has a stronger connection to employee performance and happiness than transactional leadership. Laissez-faire leadership may be effective if employees are incredibly talented and committed to the organization. Laissez-faire leadership has been found to have a negative impact on employees' performance at work (Boehm, Dwertmann, Bruch, and Shamir, 2018). Employee performance and conduct both improve in participative cultures (Nyarangi, 2022). In Ali, Elmi,

and Mohamed's article (2018), the authors discuss how outstanding leadership influences the connection between organizational culture and employee outcomes.

2.31 Previous studies on leadership style and employee performance in South Africa

Leadership is a key factor in influencing employee performance in all industry types, such as logistics (Babbie, 2020). Many studies in South Africa have focused on the relationship between leadership style and work performance, and have addressed the impact of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership. This section reviews key studies conducted in different regions of South Africa, analysing their aims, methodologies, findings, and recommendations.

2.31.1 Transformational and Transactional Leadership

Basson and Mofokeng (2021) undertook a study in Gauteng exploring the effects of transformational leadership on employee motivation activities in the logistics industry. The study used a quantitative survey design using two hundred employees of large logistics companies in Johannesburg. Results showed that transformational leadership has a positive effect on motivating employees and increasing job satisfaction. The research suggested implementing leadership development programmes to nurture transformational behaviour. Illustrating, Mahlangu and Dlamini (2020) also completed a study in KwaZulu-Natal investigating the impact of transactional leadership on employees' work performance in the freight logistics industry. This study shows that transactional leadership boosts short-term performance but fails to carry long-term engagement effectiveness using an interview-based case study approach, involving managers and employees. The authors proposed a hybrid leadership model with both transactional and transformational aspects.

2.31.2 Laissez-Faire and Ethical Leadership

Ngcobo and Zulu (2019) measured a correlation between laissez-faire leadership and employee engagement using a mixed-approach study involving survey data and focus group interviews in the Western Cape. Results also demonstrated that laissez-faire leadership leads to disengagement and reduced performance. According to the study, the leader needs to give more direction and organisation to make the employees commit to the work. Also, Pillay and Govender (2018) in the Eastern Cape studied the impact of ethical leadership on organizational performance in logistics. A qualitative analysis of leadership strategies in five

major logistics firms revealed that ethical leadership fosters trust and enhances employee commitment. The study suggested integrating ethical training programs into leadership development initiatives.

2.31.3 Leadership and Employee Retention

A study by Ramaphosa and Sithole (2022) in Mpumalanga examined how leadership style influences retention rates in transportation companies. Using a longitudinal study with employee retention data collected over five years, the researchers found that transformational leadership correlates with higher retention and job satisfaction. The study recommended prioritizing leadership training programs to enhance employee retention. In the same sense, Mokoena and Khumalo (2021) experimented the Free State, looking at the effect of servant leadership on teamwork and collaboration. Based on interviews and questionnaires with employees in three logistics enterprises, the research concluded that servant leadership is conducive to teamwork. However, the implementation faces some challenges. The authors suggested mentorship programs to enhance servant leadership behaviours.

2.31.4 Leadership and Innovation

In the province of the Northern Cape, Van der Merwe and Botha (2020) looked at the importance of charismatic leadership in generating innovation. There is also evidence on the effects of charismatic leadership on innovation and problem-solving in a top logistics company case study, which suggests that charismatic leadership can lead to innovation and problem-solving capabilities (Bajpai, 2021). The study suggested that leaders be trained in communication and motivation techniques to strengthen their effectiveness. Albeit in the Northwest, Sebeko and Mthembu (2019) have also investigated the use of transformational leadership in supply chain management. A statistical analysis of performance metrics before and after leadership changes revealed that transformational leadership leads to higher efficiency and customer satisfaction. The study recommended integrating transformational leadership into corporate culture.

2.31.5 Participative and Well-Being-Oriented Leadership

Khoza and Madiba (2018) in Limpopo investigated the effect of participative leadership on employee output. Using an experimental study with two logistics firms implementing different leadership styles, the study found that participative leadership improves decision-making and team morale. The study recommended that leaders actively involve employees in strategic decision-making. At the same time, Xulu and Mthethwa (2021) in KwaZulu-Natal examined

the influence of leadership style on the well-being of the workforce in the logistics industry. From interviews with HR managers and employees, it could be concluded that successful transformational leadership positively impacts mental well-being and decreases stress. The research proposed that leadership training has emotional intelligence and employer support mechanisms as the core of training.

2.31.6 Servant Leadership and Job Satisfaction

Using a sample in the Eastern Cape, Jansen and Pretorius (2020) studied the impact of servant leadership on employee job satisfaction. Based on survey data from 150 employees, the study obtained a significant positive relationship between servant leadership and job satisfaction. The study recommended that organisations adopt servant leadership training programs to improve employee morale and productivity.

2.31.7 Autocratic Leadership and Employee Performance

In KwaZulu-Natal, Naidoo and Singh (2021) investigated the association between autocratic leadership and employee performance in manufacturing-based workplaces. Based on interviews with twenty senior managers, the study found that autocratic leadership negatively impacts employee morale and creativity. The authors suggested a more agile leadership model to improve employee engagement and performance.

2.31.8 Transformational Leadership in the Public Sector

Dube and Phiri (2019) studied the effectiveness of leadership in public sector organisations in the context of Gauteng. The mixed-method study found that transformational leadership improves goods and services production and delivery in government services. The authors suggested a higher investment in training leadership development programs that would foster transformational leadership competencies in public sector leaders.

2.31.9 Authentic Leadership and Employee Engagement

Mahlatsi and Molefe (2022) of the Northwest explored the effect of authentic leadership on employee engagement. The study, conducted using focus group discussions with mid-level managers, found that authentic leadership fosters employee trust and commitment. The authors suggested embedding authentic leadership concepts into corporate leadership frameworks to foster employee and workplace commitment.

2.31.10 Situational Leadership and Employee Adaptability

Moosa and Petersen (2020) investigated the influence of situational leadership on employee adaptability in the Western Cape's financial industry. According to their research, which is built on performance metrics of employees, situational leadership has a positive impact on the ability of employees to be more adaptive and to have higher resilience. They suggested integrating situational leadership in leadership training programmes to provide managers with the skills to cope with changing workplace contexts.

These studies jointly highlight the role of leadership style in employee performance in the South African logistics environment. Although transformational leadership is well cited as associated with superior employee outcomes, transactional and laissez-faire leadership models pose liabilities for which a balanced leadership model is needed. Results indicate that leadership training and development programs designed for logistics and related industries can facilitate increased employee motivation, retention, and overall performance.

2.32 Chapter conclusion

The chapter has reviewed literature on the origin and nature of leadership and differentiated leadership from management. Subsequently, the chapter delves into the meaning of leadership style. For this study, leadership style is about the characteristics or typical ways, patterns, and methods that a leader uses to guide, inspire, and oversee their employees. The chapter has discussed distinct leadership styles, including the old styles, such as transformational and transactional, and new leadership styles, such as agile, toxic, and sustainable leadership, to mention a few.

The chapter also links leadership style with employee performance. Different dimensions of employee performance are also discussed in this chapter. A relationship between leadership styles and employee performance is key in this study to understand how leadership style affects employee performance at BDP International. Results from previous researchers' studies on leadership style and worker performance were discovered through a survey of the literature. The study's methodology and design are covered in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

Chapter 3 of this research focuses on the methodology employed to examine the leadership styles at BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal and their effect on employee performance. This chapter outlines the research design, approach, and methods used to collect and analyse data to address the research objectives. The research adopts a qualitative approach, deemed most appropriate for exploring the participants' perceptions, experiences, and insights regarding leadership styles and their impacts on employee performance.

The first section of the chapter describes the research design, detailing the study's exploratory nature. Given the aim to understand the leadership dynamics within the organisation, the chapter explains why qualitative methods, including semi-structured interviews, were selected as the primary data collection tool. These interviews were conducted with top-level executives and middle managers at BDP International, who are key to providing insights into the leadership styles practiced within the organisation.

The following section outlines the sampling strategy, explaining how participants were selected for the study. The sample included a mix of top-level executives and middle managers, ensuring that both strategic and operational perspectives are represented in the data. The chapter also explains the criteria for participant selection, such as their role within the organisation and their experience with leadership practices. Data collection methods were discussed in detail, focusing on how semi-structured interviews were conducted. The chapter outlines the structure of the interview guide, which covers key themes such as leadership styles, employee performance, and leadership challenges. This section also explains how the interviews were recorded, transcribed, and analysed.

The final section of Chapter 3 addresses data analysis techniques, which includes thematic analysis. This process involves identifying, analysing, and reporting patterns (themes) within the data, which allows for a deeper understanding of how leadership styles impact employee performance at BDP International. The chapter concludes by discussing the ethical considerations of the study, including informed consent, confidentiality, and the protection of participants' rights.

Overall, Chapter 3 provides a comprehensive overview of the research methodology, ensuring transparency and clarity in how the study was conducted to meet the research objectives.

Comparison of the Research Philosophies in the Field of Business

| Research Philosophy | Focus | Methodology | Goal |
|---------------------|---|---|---|
| Positivism | Observable, objective reality | Quantitative data collection and analysis | Test hypotheses and theories through empirical evidence |
| Constructivism | Subjective meanings and experiences of individuals | Qualitative research methods (e.g., interviews, focus groups) | Understand subjective experiences and meanings |
| Interpretivism | Subjective meanings and experiences of individuals | Qualitative research methods (e.g., interviews, observations) | Understand social phenomena and gain insights into human behavior |
| Critical Realism | Objective reality is influenced by social and cultural contexts | Mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) | Balance objectivity with subjective understanding |
| Pragmatism | Practical and flexible approach based on the research question | Mixed methods (quantitative and qualitative) | Address complex problems with a flexible approach |

Source: (Saunders et al., 2012; Creswell & Creswell, 2018:page)

Table 3.1 Focuses on Research Philosophy, Methodology, and Goal

3.2 Research Methodology

Methodology involves researchers' strategies and approaches to gather information about the world (Creswell, 2007; Edwards & Skinner, 2009; Punch, 1998). As Saunders et al. (2019) outlined, three distinct methods guide the thought processes and actions needed to create a research design that yields high-quality results and maintains objectivity while conducting research. As defined below, these methods include quantitative, mixed methods, and qualitative approaches.

3.2.1 Quantitative Method

According to Goertzen (2018), quantitative research aims to strengthen data dependability using a methodical and numerical approach to data collection and analysis. Apuke (2018) concurs that quantitative research proves valuable in quantifying information. Additionally, Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe quantitative research as testing theories by examining the relationships between variables. Statistical methods are used in quantitative research to analyse data.

In quantitative research, data are collected, analysed, interpreted, and conclusions are drawn (Fowler, 2019). According to the nature of the survey or experiment, it is necessary to identify a sample population, formulate a research strategy, collect data, analyse it, interpret it, and write a report. Because of the nature of the research questions and objectives, the qualitative method was chosen over the quantitative method.

3.2.2 Mixed Methods

The use of mixed methods involves blending quantitative and qualitative approaches to enhance understanding of the phenomena being studied, a concept commonly referred to as 'methodological eclecticism' or 'methodological pluralism' (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2022). A mixed methods approach integrates qualitative and quantitative data, utilizing diverse designs that may incorporate distinct philosophical assumptions and theoretical frameworks (Creswell and Creswell, 2018).

According to Creswell et al. (2018), a mixed methods approach offers a more comprehensive understanding of a research problem than an individual approach. As a result of the complexity of data collection and analysis (Dawadi et al., 2019), the mixed methods methodology was unsuitable. Due to the duration of the study, the extensive nature of this methodology posed a challenge.

3.2.3 Qualitative Method

Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe qualitative research as centering on participants' subjective experiences and viewpoints. Its goal is to capture the richness of human behaviour, beliefs, and emotions. Data collection in qualitative research often employs unstructured or semi-structured methods, such as interviews, focus groups, and participant observation, which yield descriptive and narrative data. In contrast, quantitative research relies on predetermined variables and numerical data. The aim of qualitative inquiry is to comprehend, explicate, delineate, and formulate a theory about a particular phenomenon or context using inductive, comprehensive process-oriented approaches (Adil et al., 2022). In qualitative research, inquiries and methodologies emerge, and data analysis moves from specific to general themes inductively, while the researcher interprets the data's significance (Creswell, 2018).

Open-ended questions are used instead of closed-ended inquiries in qualitative methodologies (Fowler, 2019). According to Creswell (2018), qualitative research is inductive, as meaning is constructed by analysing field data. It is advantageous to employ a qualitative strategy when there are uncertainties regarding the variables to be regulated. Using qualitative inquiry, participants are asked to explore, interpret, and depict a scenario to gain general (as opposed to specific) insights. In qualitative research, the researcher needs to possess attributes such as attentive listening, nonjudgment, honesty, and adaptability (Dudovskiy, 2018). This study followed a qualitative methodology that aligned with its research questions. A qualitative approach is highly suitable for delving into intricate phenomena, such as how leadership influences operational effectiveness.

A thorough exploration of various leadership philosophies used at BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal and how they affect worker productivity involves complex organizational intricacies, which can be achieved using qualitative methods (Stangor, 2020). Participants have the opportunity to express themselves candidly during in-depth interviews. By using this method, the exploratory qualitative study was able to gain a deep understanding of various leadership philosophies used at BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal and how they affect worker productivity, capturing subtleties that may be difficult to quantify.

3.3 Research Philosophy

This study adopted an interpretivist research philosophy, which aligns with qualitative research methodologies. Interpretivism is grounded in the belief that reality is socially constructed and that individuals attach meanings to phenomena based on their unique perspectives and experiences (Denzin and Lincoln, 2020). This philosophy emphasizes the subjective nature of knowledge and recognizes that researchers are an integral part of the research process, influencing both the data collection and analysis (Creswell, 2020).

The interpretivist philosophy was selected for this study as it allowed for an in-depth exploration of the leadership styles at BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal and their effects on employee performance. By adopting this approach, the research aimed to gain a deeper understanding of how managers at distinct levels, top-level executives and middle managers, perceive and practice leadership. Moreover, it acknowledged the complex and context-specific nature of leadership within the organisational environment of BDP International, where leadership styles are shaped by both individual characteristics and organisational culture.

This philosophy was deemed particularly suitable as it enabled the study to explore the meanings and interpretations attached to various leadership styles by the participants. Given that the focus of the research was on understanding the dynamics of leadership behaviours and their impact on employee performance, an interpretivist approach provided a framework for capturing the nuanced views of participants. The interpretivist stance also allowed for the acknowledgment of the diversity in leadership practices, ensuring that the findings reflect the variety of experiences and insights within the organisation. Thus, this research philosophy facilitated a comprehensive examination of the subjective experiences and perceptions of the participants, providing valuable insights into the effects of leadership styles on employee performance at BDP International.

3.4 Research Approach

A research approach, according to Kothari (2019), directs thoughts and actions to conduct research systematically, produce high-quality results, and remain unbiased. To fully understand the theories relevant to the research subject, Saunders et al. (2019) emphasise the importance of selecting an appropriate research approach. According to Saunders et al. (2019), research approaches can be classified as deductive or inductive.

3.4.1 Deductive Research Approach

The deductive research approach, as described by Sanders et al. (2019), involves formulating a theory that is then examined comprehensively through a sequence of propositions. A deductive research approach, according to Dudovskiy (2024), involves examining a theory or phenomenon to determine if it is valid under certain circumstances. In this study, deductive research methodologies were not utilised, which are generally embraced within the context of positivist research paradigms that align well with quantitative approaches.

3.4.2 Inductive Research Approach

According to Dudovskiy (2024), inductive research involves finding patterns in observations and proposing hypotheses to explain those patterns. In inductive research, the researcher starts by making observations or gathering data. Thereafter, the researcher takes a broad view of the data and searches for patterns (Creswell, 2020). Finally, you make general conclusions that you might incorporate into theories.

Inductive research “involves the search for patterns from observation and the development of explanations – theories – for those patterns through a series of hypotheses. Inductive research aims to generate meanings from the data set collected to identify patterns and relationships to build a theory. However, the inductive approach does not prevent the researcher from using existing theory to formulate the research question to be explored. In the current study, there was no theoretical framework that was developed, as the findings were derived from data. An inductive research methodology was used in this study to examine the influence of leadership style on the employee performance of BDP International through interviews.

3.5 Research Paradigm

Researchers use research paradigms to gain a better understanding and rationale of social phenomena (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2019). According to Creswell (2018), a paradigm is a collection of presumptions that guide researchers' investigations and correspond with a paradigm's perspective on the world. According to Soto (2023), paradigms provide a theoretical and methodological framework for examining research and philosophical issues. The following is a list of the five components of research paradigms identified by Saunders et al. (2019) in the context of three distinct worldviews: ontology, epistemology, and axiology.

3.5.1 Ontology

Ontology is a branch of philosophy that deals with the study of existence, the nature of being, and the structure of reality. Ontology is concerned with the natural world and answers the question of what the nature of reality is (Creswell, 1994: 5). Ontology deals with the nature of being. (Saunders et al., 2019). In ontology, the key question is: What is the nature of reality? For example, reality is objective and singular, apart from the researcher in quantitative research, while reality is subjective and multiple, as seen by participants in qualitative research.

3.5.2 Epistemology

Epistemology is the study and explanation of what knowledge is and the logic behind the knowledge (Creswell, 1994). It can also be the philosophy behind knowledge as it focuses on explaining knowledge, how we can obtain knowledge, and how we should reason about the nature and elements of knowledge. Epistemology asks: "How do we come to know?". According to Burrell and Morgan (2018), epistemology refers to beliefs underlying knowledge, the criteria for determining knowledge that is valid and legitimate, and the methods by which knowledge is disseminated. Furthermore, epistemology shapes a researcher's view on the existence of objective, verifiable knowledge versus subjective, interpretative perspectives (Saunders et al., 2019).

Epistemology is the way of looking at the world and making sense of it (Saunders et al., 2009). Major types of epistemologies are objectivism, constructionism, and subjectivism. The key question in epistemology is: What is the relationship of the researcher to that researched? In quantitative research, the researcher is independent of what is being researched. Conversely, in qualitative research, the researcher interacts with that being researched (Saunders et al., 2009).

Methodology is another element of the paradigm. It is the strategy, plan of action, process, or design lying behind the choice and use of methods and linking the choice and use of methods to the desired outcomes (Saunders et al., 2009). Methods narrowly refer to the techniques or procedures used to gather and analyse data related to some research question or hypothesis (Creswell, 1994: 5). Ontology defines the nature of reality and research framework, while epistemology determines the research questions that need to be answered (Saunders et al., 2009).

3.5.3 Axiology

As part of axiology, values and ethics are considered, such as ethical considerations in research and the influence of values on research (Saunders et al., 2019). This perspective provides guidance to researchers in making ethical decisions and recognizing the potential implications of personal values on research results. Positivism advocates for value neutrality in research, arguing that researchers should separate their personal values and beliefs from the research process.

It aims to provide objective knowledge that is free from bias and subjective opinions. The focus is on describing and explaining social phenomena, rather than advocating for social change. In contrast, interpretivism recognises the influence of values and beliefs on the research process.

Researchers acknowledge their own subjectivity and the potential for bias. Interpretivists often engage in research with the aim of promoting social change, challenging dominant narratives, and giving voice to marginalized groups. In the current study, there is recognition of the influence of values on research. An examination of the five research paradigms and a rationale for adopting the interpretivism paradigm is provided in the following section. Creswell (1995: 5) has compared the existing paradigm based on ontology, epistemology, methodology, and axiology to gain an in-depth understanding of research assumptions in qualitative and quantitative research.

3.5.3.1 Positivism

Johnson (2019) argues that positivist research uses scientific methods and quantification to accurately describe parameters and their relationships. According to Saunders et al. (2019), positivism refers to the philosophical viewpoint of the natural scientist and involves working with observable social reality to formulate law-like generalisations.

According to Henning, Van Rensburg, and Smit (2019), they argue that the positive perspective of truth is discovered empirically and requires an arms-length relationship between the researcher and the researched in pursuit of objective reality. Consequently, most 'traditional' teaching strategies are based on an objectivist, realist perspective on knowledge where the truth is seen as independent of the research, as reality pre-exists and is not constructed through social interactions.

According to this philosophy, the scientific method is based on measurable social realities (Aliyu, et al., 2021). As positivism is often used within a quantitative research framework, it was not appropriate for this exploratory qualitative study since it employs a qualitative method. In positivism, the researcher is expected to maintain a neutral and detached stance, aiming to minimize their influence on the research process. The researcher's role is to collect and analyse data objectively, without imposing their own interpretations or biases. The emphasis is on objectivity and replicability.

In contrast, interpretivism recognizes the active role of the researcher in shaping the research process. Researchers acknowledge their subjectivity and the potential influence they have on the data collection and analysis. They engage in reflexivity, acknowledging their own biases and interpretations, and often collaborate with participants to co-create knowledge.

3.5.3.2 Critical Realism

By delving into the fundamental structures of reality that influence observable occurrences, critical realism seeks to clarify our perceptions and encounters (Saunders et al., 2019). A critical realism philosophy provides a thorough understanding of reality, knowledge, and how theory and application are linked, according to Frank and Mohamed (2028). Saunders et al. (2019) assert that grasping the world involves two stages: sensory stimuli and events, followed by cognitive processing afterward.

As a result, critical realism is also viewed as a conciliatory approach that acknowledges the natural order that exists in social phenomena and discussions by discerning patterns in events (Walliman, 2018), like positivism. Despite being compatible with qualitative research methods, critical realism was deemed inappropriate for this study because it seeks to uncover the underlying structures and mechanisms that produce the observed phenomena. Considering leadership styles at BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal and their effect on employee performance may not align with this objective.

3.5.3.3 Postmodernism

A key component of postmodernism is the emphasis on language and power dynamics, with an emphasis on challenging existing thought patterns and amplifying perspectives that have been silenced (Saunders et al., 2019). The notion that language serves as a precise tool for depicting reality is challenged by Walliman (2018), who posits that within postmodernism lies an exploration of linguistic structures and their utilisation. Since postmodernism does not offer

insight into how leadership impacts the employee performance of BDP International, it was deemed unsuitable for the current exploratory qualitative study. As a means of representing reality, postmodernism primarily focuses on the use of language.

3.5.3.4 Pragmatism

The pragmatism of research holds that it involves identifying a problem and developing practical solutions that can be used in the future (Saunders et al., 2019). In addition to the insights provided by Creswell and Creswell (2018), pragmatism advocates the integration of multiple research methods, wherein quantitative and qualitative elements are integrated into the research process. Due to its time-consuming nature and the reliance on findings derived from the amalgamation of different research methods, pragmatism was not suitable for the present study; therefore, it opted for a qualitative method.

3.5.3.5 Interpretivism

Interpretivism emphasizes the importance of analysing subjective meanings associated with social phenomena (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2020). In contrast to positivism, which emphasizes objective and quantifiable data, interpretivism stresses the importance of individuals' perspectives, experiences, and interpretations in shaping social realities (Kivunja, 2019).

While Positivism aims for objectivity and generalisability, Interpretivism seeks to understand the complexity of human experiences. Interpretivism focuses on an in-depth understanding of specific cases, while positivism seeks generalizable findings applicable to a larger population. Alvesson and Sköldbberg (2020) assert that interpretivism recognises that meaning is created and interpreted by humans, and that knowledge is socially constructed and contextually dependent. Providing comprehensive and nuanced insights into complex social phenomena is a significant advantage of the interpretive paradigm (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2020).

Interpretivist inquiry allows researchers to explore the intricacies and nuances of human behaviour and social interactions by emphasising individuals' viewpoints and experiences (Henning, et al., 2019). As a result of this approach, social research can gain a deeper understanding of social phenomena through unravelling the meaning behind actions and

behaviours (Johnson, 2019:79). Interpretivism has the advantage of providing detailed and elaborate insights into complex social phenomena (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2020).

Researchers can explore human behaviour and social exchanges in greater depth with interpretivist research, since it emphasizes the perspectives and experiences of individuals (Henning et al., 2019). In social research, it is especially useful to grasp the significance of actions and behaviours to gain a deeper understanding of social phenomena (Johnson, 2019). In addition, interpretivism promotes reflexivity and emphasizes the researcher's influence on the research process (Alvesson and Sköldbberg, 2020). Interpretivist researchers should consider their own biases, assumptions, and interpretations to improve the validity and credibility of their research outcomes (Henning, et al., 2019:69).

In this exploratory qualitative study, the researcher utilised an interpretivist paradigm to gain an in-depth understanding of leadership styles and influence on employees from different executive-level and middle-level managers to capture the diversity of their views. In this study, the researcher used an interpretivist philosophy to gain a deeper understanding of the complex social phenomenon of leadership styles practised at BDP and how this affects employee performance positively or negatively in KwaZulu-Natal. This philosophy is well-suited for exploring subjective experiences and meanings of individuals involved in leadership, but also those affected by leadership styles in an organisation.

The use of interpretivism allowed for the selection of participants based on their relevance to the research question and enabled the gathering of rich, detailed data through qualitative methods, such as interviews. The researcher was able to capture the nuances and complexities of leadership styles practised at BDP and provide a more comprehensive understanding of its impact on employee performance by adopting an interpretive approach. According to Saunders et al. (2012), Creswell and Creswell (2018), the main research philosophies within the field of business are compared in the following, as shown in detail in Table 3.1 below:

3.6 Research Strategy

According to Sanders et al. (2016:177), a research strategy encompasses a collection of methods researchers utilise to address their research questions. Research strategies are defined by researchers as blueprints that summarise the approach to addressing research inquiries (Saunders et al, 2019). Research strategies include surveys, action research,

grounded theory, case studies, and narrative inquiries. The most used qualitative data collection methods are focus groups, observations, document analyses, interviews, and open-ended survey questionnaires (Tümen-Akyıldız and Ahmed, 2021).

Additionally, Saunders et al. (2019) argue that researchers select their research strategies based on the research questions and objectives, their alignment with research philosophy, approach, and purpose, as well as practical factors such as the existing knowledge base, time availability, resource constraints, and access to potential participants and data sources. A qualitative research framework has four key research strategies, according to Denzin and Lincoln (2018). Due to their qualitative nature, the study discusses strategies such as ethnography, grounded theory, action research, narrative inquiry, and case studies.

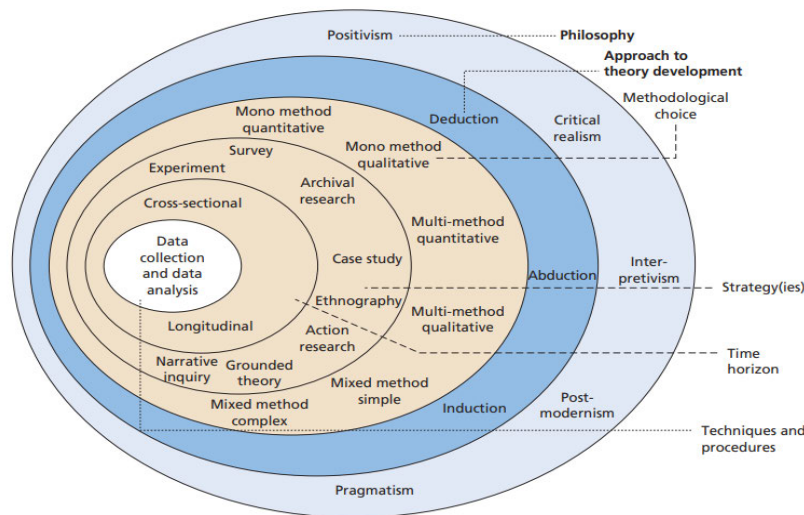
3.6.1 Ethnography

As Saunders et al. (2019) defined, ethnography examines people within social groups who interact and coexist in a shared physical environment. According to Sharma and Sarkar (2019), ethnographic research focuses on culture. Creswell and Creswell (2018) define ethnography as a qualitative method involving immersion in a specific cultural group within a natural setting for an extended duration while collecting observational and interview data.

Saunders et al. (2019) outline three key ethnographic approaches: realistic ethnography, impressionist ethnography, and critical ethnography. Sharma and Sarkar (2019) emphasise that integrating the researcher into the target population is necessary for successful ethnographic studies, which involves spending multiple months in the community. As the focus of this investigation is not to study the cultural aspects of the employees at BDP International, but rather to examine various leadership philosophies and how they affect worker productivity of the facility, ethnography was deemed inappropriate. This methodology is also unsuitable due to the large amount of time required for data collection; a constraint given that the current study will last six months.

The research onion by Saunders (2009) has been used to aid the presentation of the various aspects and layers of the research process in this exploratory qualitative study. Below is Figure 3 depicting the research onion by Saunders (2009), which asserts that the research needs to specify the research philosophy first, before clarifying the type of research approach, methodological choice, strategy, time, and finally, techniques and procedures relevant in a particular study.

Figure 3.1: Research Onion



Source: [research onion - Google Search](#)

3.6.2 Grounded Theory

Creswell and Creswell (2018) define grounded theory as a qualitative method in which the researcher formulates a comprehensive abstract theory of a process, action, or interaction based on the perspectives of participants in the study. According to Saunders et al. (2019), grounded theory encompasses methodology and method loosely, but more specifically, it refers to a theory derived from a collection of data, aiming to produce a theory that elucidates the phenomenon under investigation while considering variations and inconsistencies. As pointed out by Dudovskiy (2018), grounded theory has the following advantages:

- Methodically and rigorously collects and analyses data.
- Provides an in-depth exploration of the research question.
- The development of theories and paradigms that are not entirely explicable by current theories and paradigms is made possible by this methodology.

Despite its time-intensive nature, potential for researcher-induced bias, and inability to offer insights into how leaders at BDP International affect worker productivity, grounded theory was not deemed suitable for this study.

3.6.3 Action Research

In action research, researchers and participants work together to identify problems and formulate solutions (Dudovskiy, 2018). The Action Research process requires collaborative participation across all its iterative phases to enhance organisational practices, according to Saunders et al. (2019). Dudovskiy (2018) suggests that action research is often used with quantitative and qualitative data to understand the issue comprehensively.

According to Saunders et al. (2019), action research can also be a valuable and profound experience for those participating in it. In accordance with Saunders et al. (2019), the pragmatic considerations regarding the implementation of Action Research, which also influenced the decision not to use this approach for the study, are as follows:

- The identification of a conducive context, the emergent nature of action research, the need to foster collaboration and participation, as well as the various stages or interactions involved, make action research an extremely demanding approach.

3.6.4 Narrative Inquiry

As Creswell and Creswell (2018) describe, narrative research is an investigative approach in which the researcher delves into the lives of individuals and prompts them to share their stories. According to Gavidia and Adu (2022), these stories play a crucial role in guiding the researcher toward a deeper understanding of various phenomena. Gavidia and Adu (2022) emphasise how the researcher must engage personally in narrative inquiry, including how to grasp the participants' narratives within a time and context framework.

A systematic data collection, analysis, and interpretation process culminating in textual representations is crucial to establishing coherence and connecting narratives to a broader understanding of existence. Due to Narrative Inquiry's tendency to focus on comforting narratives, it was deemed unsuitable for this study as it seeks to examine how leadership impacts operational efficiency.

3.6.5 Case Studies

Researchers use case studies to study a particular program, event, activity, process, or individual in depth (Creswell and Creswell, 2018). The concept of a case study is elaborated by Yin (2018) as a thorough examination of a topic or phenomenon within a real-world context. According to Priya (2021), the case study methodology entails thoroughly analysing the focal unit of investigation within its natural context.

The comprehensive nature of the case study allows the researcher to use any data collection method that aligns with their objectives. Yin (2018) categorises case studies into descriptive, exploratory, and explanatory. The researcher decided to opt for a case study approach as it aligned with the objectives of this investigation, which aims to investigate the phenomenon of various leadership philosophies used at BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal and how they affect worker productivity. As a result, BDP International's existing knowledge base was enhanced, and other branches can be able to perform better.

3.7 Research Design

A research design serves as a roadmap that guides the conduct of a research project, outlining the specific methods and procedures for collecting relevant information and structuring the approach used to address the research questions and objectives (Saunders et al., 2016). According to Creswell (2009), a research design is a detailed plan that enables researchers to systematically gather data in an accurate, economical, and trustworthy manner. As Creswell (2009) described, this plan funnels the various data collection, analysis, and interpretation activities into a cohesive and organised process. Saunders et al. (2019) delineate the research design as a comprehensive strategy that describes how the researcher intends to address the research inquiries. To select the appropriate design for the research, the researcher must consider the nature of the research objectives (Stangor, 2020). According to Zikmund (2018), research designs serve as a coherent framework for data collection and analysis. Research designs include causal-comparative, correlational, explanatory, descriptive, and exploratory (Stangor, 2020). An explanatory, descriptive, or exploratory research design can be considered a research methodology.

3.7.1 Descriptive Research

To delineate phenomena authentically, descriptive inquiry involves elucidating relationships, patterns, and connections among variables (Stangor, 2020). A specific pattern or correlation can be examined using this method (Stangor, 2020). According to recent studies by Saunders et al. (2019), descriptive research aims to develop a detailed profile of a situation, individual, or event. There is a limitation regarding information in descriptive studies since they do not manipulate or alter any variables (Johnson and Onwuegbuzie, 2021). It is also possible to formulate future predictions using the data derived from descriptive studies (Stangor, 2020), which is another advantage.

In descriptive research, information is gathered efficiently so it can be used to formulate hypotheses and suggest relationships since it focuses on the question of *what* rather than *why* (Dudovskiy, 2024). This qualitative study considered the descriptive research design inadequate because it is frequently used in quantitative research, but it is a qualitative study. Additionally, it was considered inappropriate since it neglects the *how* and *why* dimensions of the inquiry, focusing solely on the *what* dimension.

3.7.2 Explanatory Research

Explanatory research seeks to examine a domain or issue with limited prior research, rather than verifying or supporting a hypothesis (Kotowicz, 2018). Using explanatory research, Saunders et al. (2019) propose that variables are examined to elucidate their connections. Kotowicz (2018) argued that explanatory designs are well-suited to qualitative research because they enable researchers to investigate their theories based on their insights and opinions.

Explanatory research aims to determine the extent and characteristics of cause-and-effect relationships (Dudovskiy, 2021). Research of this type explores unexplored territories and addresses existing gaps in knowledge (Lee, 2021). The explanatory research design was deemed unsuitable for this study because it relies heavily on experiments as its primary data collection method. The current qualitative study does not seek to explain but to explore reality. Explanatory research design seeks to uncover the underlying reasons behind a phenomenon, answering *why* and identifying cause-and-effect relationships between variables (Saunders et al., 2016: 22).

3.7.3 Exploratory Research

A primary objective of exploratory research, according to Polit and Beck (2019), is to shed light on the manifestations of phenomena and uncover poorly understood phenomena. Reid-Searl and Happell (2020) suggest that qualitative exploratory studies allow researchers to explore topics rarely covered in existing literature, thereby advancing knowledge. According to Creswell and Creswell (2009), exploratory research aims to gain insights and understanding of a phenomenon and is flexible and adaptable as new insights emerge. Additionally, exploring research design is valuable for posing open-ended questions to reveal the occurrences and insights related to a particular subject (Saunders et al., 2019). New insights and data from exploratory research must be used to adjust researchers' course (Saunders et al., 2019; Dudovskiy, 2021).

An exploratory research design is beneficial for enhancing understanding of issues, problems, and phenomena (Saunders et al., 2019). There were multiple reasons why exploratory research was selected for this qualitative study. Exploratory research offers significant advantages in qualitative investigations by providing data collection and analysis flexibility, enabling researchers to explore emerging ideas and concepts throughout the study (Polit and Beck, 2019). The current study seeks to understand leadership styles and their impact on employee performance from the viewpoint of executive-level and middle-level managers at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal.

Further, exploratory research can provide insight into the factors influencing leadership styles and worker productivity at BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal, thereby guiding future research efforts in the field (Reid-Searl and Happell, 2020). This study offered a comprehensive understanding of various leadership styles used at BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal and how they affect worker productivity by adopting an exploratory research framework, guiding future research efforts.

3.8 Population and Sampling

3.8.1 Population

Several methods exist for delineating populations, which include people or entities of all kinds, including commodities, establishments, geographical areas, commodity prices, or individual incomes (Polit, 2018). Saunders et al. (2019) define population as the number of instances from which a sample is drawn. The total population of this study is ten individuals, who include top-level executives (4) and middle managers (6).

Accordingly, the target population was selected in the following manner: top-level executives (4), middle managers (6) who had considerable influence on strategic decision-making, and the enterprise, which is a total of 10. Taking strategic decisions and translating them into implementable schemes at the operational level is the responsibility of mid-level managers (Yukl, 2020).

In their direct participation in day-to-day tasks, operational staff provide valuable feedback on how leadership styles affect operational effectiveness (Avolio, Walumbwa, and Weber, 2019). The comprehensive approach guarantees a complete understanding of leadership dynamics at all levels, which aligns with the arguments of scholars who advocate for a diverse representation of organisational studies (Denis, Langley, and Rouleau, 2019). As a result of focusing on BDP International, the discoveries were relevant and applicable to the distinctive challenges and opportunities the organisation faces in the ever-evolving energy sector.

3.8.2 Sampling

As Creswell (2019) explained, sampling occurs when a subset of individuals, items, or observations is chosen from a larger population to infer characteristics, trends, or patterns. Research uses this method to make predictions and generalizations without having to collect data from every member of a population, which can be time-consuming and expensive. It is possible to obtain reliable and valid results from samples that accurately represent the broader population (Creswell, 2019). Probability and non-probability sampling methods are commonly used in research (Saunders et al., 2019).

According to Dudovskiy (2018), non-probability sampling involves selecting individuals in a group non-randomly. It is also important to note that non-probability sampling is primarily used in exploratory research, which is the focus of this study. In addition, non-probability sampling is aligned with qualitative research, and this research is qualitative.

In purposive sampling, researchers choose cases that best serve the research objectives and answer the research questions. The sampling technique is effective when only a small number of individuals can be used as primary data sources in accordance with the research design, objectives, and aims (Dudovskiy, 2018). Using purposive sampling, the researcher can select participants with diverse characteristics so that the data collection could be as varied as possible (Saunders et al., 2019). Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling technique where researchers deliberately select participants based on specific

characteristics, knowledge, or expertise relevant to the research objectives. This method ensures the sample is information-rich and suited for in-depth analysis (Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim, 2016).

3.8.3 Sample Size

To focus the research efforts, a sample size is selected from the target population (Saunders et al., 2019). Dudovskiy (2018) defines a sample size as the individuals selected for a study from the population. The sample size in this study was ten participants. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants. The participants' selection criteria included individuals with significant managerial experience, particularly those in decision-making positions such as top-level executives and middle managers.

These participants were expected to be directly involved with leadership practices and understand how their leadership styles impacted employee performance. Additionally, participants were selected to ensure a variety of perspectives, capturing differences in leadership approaches and experiences at various levels of the organisation. Purposive sampling was deemed appropriate for this study as it allowed the researcher to focus on individuals who could provide in-depth, relevant, and context-rich data. By selecting participants with leadership expertise, the study gathered detailed insights into how leadership styles were perceived, enacted, and influenced employee performance. This approach also ensured the sample was manageable, enabling the researcher to conduct meaningful and focused interviews with each participant.

3.8.4 Recruitment Strategy

The participants were recruited using a purposive sampling approach, targeting individuals who held key leadership roles within BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal. Purposive sampling is a non-probability sampling method in which participants are selected based on specific characteristics or knowledge they possess, making them particularly suited to inform the study (Etikan, Musa, and Alkassim, 2016). This method is commonly used in qualitative research to identify and select information-rich cases for in-depth analysis (Palinkas et al., 2015). According to Creswell and Poth (2018), purposive sampling enables researchers to intentionally select individuals who can provide meaningful insights into the central phenomenon being explored. A formal request for permission to conduct the research was submitted to the company's human resources department and executive management. Once

approval was granted, potential participants were identified through internal organisational charts and consultation with HR. Each eligible participant was contacted via email and/or phone and provided with an invitation letter outlining the purpose of the study, confidentiality measures, and the voluntary nature of participation. The letter also included a consent form and a summary of the interview process.

Follow-up communication was made to confirm participation and schedule convenient interview times. The researcher ensured that all ethical considerations were adhered to, and participants were allowed to ask questions before consenting to participate in the study. This strategy ensured that the recruitment process was transparent and ethical and targeted individuals best positioned to provide valuable insights into the research topic. DATA COLLECTED From 01 November 2024 to 29 November 2024.

3.8.4 Inclusive and Exclusive Sampling

3.8.4.1 Inclusive Sampling Criteria:

- Participants must be employed at BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal.
- Only individuals holding top-level executive or middle management positions were considered.
- Participants must have at least two years of experience in their current role to ensure informed perspectives on leadership and performance dynamics.
- Must be directly involved in the company's strategic planning, implementation, or performance evaluation processes.

3.8.4.2 Exclusive Sampling Criteria:

- Operational-level employees and support staff were excluded, as the study focused on strategic leadership influences rather than task-level execution.
- New employees (less than two years in position) were excluded due to their limited exposure to leadership dynamics.
- Individuals from departments unrelated to strategic or performance-based decision-making (e.g., outsourced services or technical contractors) were not considered.

Participant Demographic Table

| Code | Years of Work Experience | Age | Department in BDP International |
|----------------|--------------------------|-------|---------------------------------|
| Participant 1 | 11+ years | 51-60 | Executive Leadership |
| Participant 2 | 6-10 years | 41-50 | Operations Management |
| Participant 3 | 3-5 years | 31-40 | Human Resources |
| Participant 4 | 0-2 years | 18-30 | Logistics & Supply Chain |
| Participant 5 | 6-10 years | 41-50 | Finance & Administration |
| Participant 6 | 3-5 years | 31-40 | Business Development |
| Participant 7 | 0-2 years | 18-30 | Customer Relations |
| Participant 8 | 11+ years | 51-60 | Strategic Planning |
| Participant 9 | 3-5 years | 31-40 | Procurement & Compliance |
| Participant 10 | 6-10 years | 41-50 | IT & Digital Transformation |

Source: Own

Table 3.2 Participant data

3.9 Data Collection

Interviews are a robust qualitative research method where data is collected through direct dialogue between an interviewer and a participant. This method allows in-depth exploration of participants' thoughts, feelings, and experiences on specific topics. The informal nature of interviews can create a conversational atmosphere, which may help interviewees feel more comfortable and open, often leading to richer data collection (Busetto & Gumbinger, 2020). Interviews can be structured with a predefined set of questions, semi-structured, which is a blend of structured and open formats; these interviews use a guide with open-ended questions, allowing for a degree of flexibility. Interviewers can probe deeper based on responses, encouraging a more conversational flow and the potential for rich insights. Unstructured interviews allow interviewees to steer the conversation.

An interview guide was the data collection tool used to collect data for this research study. An interview guide is a document or tool that helps interviewers conduct successful interviews. It typically includes a list of the topics and questions an interviewer plans to cover during an interview. Interview guides are practical tools for maintaining consistency and direction during an interview, and they can range from highly structured interviews to relatively informal conversations. Using an interview guide is important for structuring interview

questions, planning out how each question will be posed to the interviewee, and setting an outline for conducting a follow-up.

An interview guide and in-depth and semi-structured interviews with BDP International top-level executives (4), middle managers (6) in KwaZulu-Natal were conducted November in 2024. The interview guide contained questions about leadership styles used and the impact of leadership style on aspects of employees at BDP in KwaZulu-Natal (see Appendix C for the Interview Guide). Depending on the interests of the participants and practical concerns, the interviews took place in person at their workplace. The research objectives guided the development of the interview questions, which examined managers' perspectives and experiences of various leadership styles and their effects on worker performance. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' permission to guarantee reliable data collection. The interviews continued until data saturation was reached, meaning no fresh data or topics surfaced from more interviews (Creswell, 2019). A gatekeeper's letter was obtained for permission to conduct the study at BDP (see Appendix A for Gatekeeper Letter).

3.10 Pilot Study

A pilot study is a small-scale preliminary investigation conducted to test the research methodology, including the data collection instruments, before the main study. The primary purpose of a pilot study is to identify any potential issues or challenges in the research design, methods, and data collection process, and to ensure that the research instruments are adequate and appropriate for the study. Conducting a pilot study allows researchers to refine their approach, adjust, and improve the reliability and validity of the main study (Creswell and Creswell, 2020).

For this research study, a pilot study was conducted on the 21st of October 2024 to assess the suitability and clarity of the interview questions designed to explore leadership styles and their effect on employee performance at BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal. The pilot study aimed to ensure that the questions were clear, relevant, and capable of eliciting detailed participant responses. Additionally, it provided an opportunity to test the interview process itself, including the interviewer's ability to guide the conversation and the time required for each interview.

Two participants were targeted for the pilot study, both of whom were managers at BDP International. These participants were selected because they met the criteria for the main

study, being either top-level executives or middle managers with considerable experience in leadership roles. They provided valuable feedback on the clarity of the interview questions, the flow of the interview, and any issues related to the interview format. Their responses were not included in the primary data analysis, as the purpose of the pilot was solely to test and refine the research instruments.

The benefits of conducting this pilot study were significant. Firstly, it allowed the researcher to refine the interview questions to ensure they were clear, concise, and aligned with the study's objectives. For example, the researcher could adjust the wording and grammar of a few questions that were found to be ambiguous or open to multiple interpretations. Secondly, the pilot study provided insights into the interview process, helping the researcher assess the interview timing and the rapport-building techniques needed for effective data collection. It took the slowest participant 25 minutes to attempt the pilot study, while only taking 10 minutes for the fastest. Lastly, the pilot study allowed for an evaluation of the data recording and transcription process, ensuring that the researcher could capture and analyse the data effectively.

3.11 Data Analysing

According to Thompson, Schwartz, Davis, and Panacek (2018), data analysis involves gathering, modelling, and analysing data to provide insights that can guide decision-making. During qualitative research, data analysis is a continuous process that begins during data collection and continues throughout the investigation. According to Paul et al. (2018), qualitative data analysis entails transcribing data into English, assigning descriptive codes to recurring thoughts, developing themes from categories, and translating content analysis into thematic analysis to address research questions effectively.

3.11.1 Thematic Analysis

Thematic analysis identifies themes and patterns within qualitative data. Braun and Clarke (2018) emphasize that it is an essential qualitative method for acquiring the necessary analytical skills. They argue, in terms of education and training, that it is more methodological than methodological. Saunders et al. (2019) emphasize that thematic analysis has a wide range of applications, including:

Thematic analysis (TA) helps researchers comprehend extensive and disparate qualitative data sets by integrating interconnected data from transcripts and notes. Thematic Analysis

facilitates the identification of crucial themes or patterns within a dataset for further analysis, and it empowers researchers to construct explanations and theories based on evident thematic patterns and relationships. Researchers can formulate and confirm conclusions (Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2019).

This research employed thematic analysis to scrutinise data, aiming to identify and elucidate patterns concerning how leadership impacts the operational efficiency of Medupi Power Station, for interpretation within its intrinsic context (Liebenberg et al., 2020; Xu and Zammit, 2020). Braun and Clarke (2019) state that thematic analysis has a profound philosophical foundation, demonstrating that different philosophical and theoretical perspectives can lead to different thematic analysis procedures. For data analysis, the following six steps were followed:

Step 1: Transcription, familiarization with data, and quotation selection

The researcher first became familiar with the themes of the questionnaire and collected data. In addition, the researcher selected quotes that vividly illustrated the data and effectively represented a variety of viewpoints and patterns pertinent to the research objectives (Naeem et al., 2023).

Step 2: Selecting keywords

After analysing the interview data, the researcher identified recurring patterns, terms, or visual elements categorised as keywords (Naeem et al., 2022).

Step 3: Coding

In the third step, complex textual data were synthesised into a theoretical framework and identified as relevant to the research question (Naeem et al., 2022).

Step 4: Theme Development

The researcher organized the codes into coherent groups to reveal patterns and connections, providing insights into the research queries (Naeem et al., 2032).

Step 5: Interpretation of keywords, codes, and themes to conceptualise

This stage involved the researcher defining the concepts emerging from the data, using diagrams to grasp the interrelationships between the concepts in the study (Naeem et al., 2023).

Step 6: Conceptual model development

The researcher then crafted a distinctive representation of the data using existing theories to address the research questions and emphasise the study's contribution to current knowledge (Naeem et al., 2023). Thematic Analysis was selected for this study because it provides a comprehensive description and organisation of the dataset and a theoretically informed interpretation of its significance (Braun and Clarke, 2019).

3.12 Trustworthiness

In qualitative research, quality is assessed using credibility, which ensures the findings accurately reflect the data; transferability, which focuses on the extent to which findings can be applied to other contexts; dependability in terms of consistency within the employed analytical procedures; and confirmability, which is about transparency and neutrality in the qualitative research process.

Lincoln and Guba (2019) define a research outcome's trustworthiness as a combination of credibility, reliability, transferability, and dependability (Henning, et al., 2019). It is fundamentally critical to ensure that the findings of a study accurately reflect the phenomenon under examination and that stakeholders and the audience can rely upon them. For qualitative researchers to validate their credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability, trustworthiness must be guaranteed (Henning et al., 2019). Several principles underpin trustworthiness in the subsequent discourse:

3.12.1 Credibility

To establish credibility, a peer debriefing is used as an external validation of the research process, along with scrutinizing the referential adequacy of the initial findings and interpretations against the raw data (Nowell et al, 2019). An extensive engagement process, member verification, and peer review were used to validate the data to achieve precise elucidation.

3.12.2 Transferability

A study's transferability refers to extending it to various situations, temporal contexts, and demographics by demonstrating generalisability (Frank, 2022). Furthermore, the researcher lacks control over which branches transferred and implemented the findings; however, it is the researcher's responsibility to provide explicit descriptions so that parties intending to transfer the findings to their milieu can establish transferability (Nowell et al., 2019).

3.12.3 Dependability

As defined by Shenton (2020), dependability refers to the consistency and reproducibility of research findings. Dependability in qualitative research is about the extent to which a research study could be repeated by a separate researcher and reveal the same findings. Replicating a study in a similar context is key to understanding credibility conditions. There is sufficient information provided so that another researcher could follow the same procedural steps, possibly reaching different conclusions. This study has provided an audit trail of the process used to conduct this study, which is key for dependability.

3.12.4 Confirmability

To demonstrate the validity of the researcher's deductions and findings, the researcher must explain the process by which conclusions and interpretations were derived (Shenton, 2020, p. 87). The researcher maintained field notes that are open to scrutiny to ensure that the results of the study can be checked and that they reflect the views of the top and middle-level managers who were participants and are not influenced by the researcher's perceptions, biases, or intentions. This study has shown how the findings were derived from interview data, which are reported through detailed descriptions and quotes to ensure confirmability.

3.13 Ethical Considerations

3.13.1 Informed Consent

Participants were fully informed about the study's purpose, procedures, risks, and benefits before their involvement. They were provided written consent forms, and their voluntary participation was emphasised. Participants had the right to withdraw from the study at any time without consequence (see Appendix D).

3.13.2 Confidentiality and anonymity

All participant information, including their identities and responses, was kept confidential. Confidentiality is a set of rules that limits access or restricts the use of certain types of

information. It is the state of keeping secret or not disclosing information. Confidentiality is usually maintained through a confidentiality agreement or promises between the researcher and the participants. Any data collected was securely stored and accessible only to authorised researchers. To ensure anonymity, all possible identifiers were removed or coded to maintain anonymity and protect participants' privacy in the research process and report.

3.13.3 Minimisation of harm

The study ensures that participants experience as little pain or discomfort as possible. This entails refraining from probing or intrusive subjects and ensuring that no physical, emotional, or psychological harm is done throughout the research process. The study prioritized the health of its participants.

3.13.4 Data handling and storage

Data collected during the research was handled and stored in compliance with relevant data protection regulations. Appropriate security measures were implemented to safeguard the data from unauthorized access, loss, or misuse. Data was retained for a specified period and then securely destroyed.

3.13.5 Ethical Approval

An institutional review board or ethics committee was consulted for the research's ethical approval (see Appendix B). Doing this ensures that the study complies with the ethical norms and regulations established by UKZN.

3.13.6 Conflict of interest

Any potential conflicts of interest, financial or otherwise, were disclosed and managed appropriately. Transparency and integrity were maintained throughout the research process to avoid bias or undue influence. These moral considerations uphold the research study's integrity and credibility while safeguarding the rights and welfare of the participants. There were no conflicts of interest in this study.

3.13 Limitations of the study

Despite implementing rigorous strategies to mitigate bias, such as data triangulation, member checking, reflexivity, and explicit inclusion and exclusion criteria, the study's scope was limited primarily to top-level and middle management interviews. This narrowed focus may have inadvertently excluded valuable insights from lower-level employees, operational staff, or external stakeholders such as clients, partners, or community members who interact with

or are affected by organisational leadership. As a result, the research may not fully capture the diversity of experiences, perceptions, or challenges across all organisational tiers. This limitation affects the transferability and generalisability of the findings, particularly in contexts where leadership decisions have far-reaching implications across all levels of the organisation. Furthermore, relying on organisational documents and performance reports may have introduced institutional bias, as such records are often curated to reflect official narratives and might omit dissenting views or unreported challenges.

3.13.1 Mitigating Limitations and Bias

The candidate implemented several strategies to ensure that limitations and potential biases did not compromise the credibility, reliability, or validity of the research findings:

- **Triangulation of Data Sources**

Triangulation in this study was achieved by combining data from interviews with top-level and middle management, organisational documents, and performance reports to validate and enrich the findings. While the interviews provided first-hand insights into leadership practices and organisational dynamics, these accounts were cross-checked against internal documents such as strategic plans, leadership policies, and memos, as well as performance reports that captured measurable outcomes. For instance, if a manager claimed that leadership prioritised staff development through regular performance reviews, this was verified through the organisation's "Staff Development Policy," which outlined quarterly reviews, and confirmed by annual reports showing high participation rates and improved productivity metrics. This method of cross-verifying qualitative responses with documented evidence allowed the researcher to confirm consistencies, identify discrepancies, and ultimately enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the data collected.

- **Clear Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria**

The study applied well-defined inclusion and exclusion criteria to select participants with relevant experience and decision-making responsibilities. This helped ensure the relevance and reliability of the data collected, avoiding skewed insights from uninformed sources. The study employed carefully defined inclusion and exclusion criteria to select participants who possessed relevant experience and decision-making responsibilities,

which was crucial for ensuring the quality and relevance of the data collected. Specifically, the inclusion criteria likely required participants to hold positions within the organization that involved leadership or managerial roles, with sufficient tenure or experience directly related to the research focus, such as policy implementation, strategic planning, or operational oversight. This ensured that the participants had a comprehensive understanding of the issues being studied and could provide informed, insightful perspectives based on their practical involvement. Conversely, the exclusion criteria were designed to filter out individuals who lacked decision-making authority or sufficient experience in the relevant areas, such as junior staff, temporary employees, or those whose roles did not involve direct engagement with the study's core topics. By excluding these individuals, the study minimised the risk of gathering uninformed or irrelevant information that could skew the analysis or dilute the findings. This selective approach was essential not only to maintain the integrity and credibility of the data but also to ensure that the insights generated were meaningful and directly applicable to the research objectives. Ultimately, applying these criteria helped the study to focus on participants who could contribute valuable, reliable knowledge, thereby enhancing the overall validity, trustworthiness, and practical significance of the research outcomes.

- **Confidentiality and Anonymity Assurances**

Participants were assured of confidentiality and anonymity, encouraging them to speak openly without fear of repercussions. This helped reduce social desirability bias and promoted honest responses. To ensure confidentiality and anonymity, participants were informed that their identities would not be recorded or linked to their responses in any reports or publications. Pseudonyms or participant codes were assigned to protect their real names. All data collected was stored securely in password-protected files accessible only to the research team. During interviews or discussions, participants were reminded that their responses would be treated confidentially and used solely for research purposes. This explicit assurance created a safe environment where participants felt comfortable sharing honest and candid information without fear of being identified or facing negative consequences, thereby reducing social desirability bias.

- **Member Checking**

After transcribing the interviews, the candidate followed up with **member checking**, where participants were allowed to verify the accuracy of their responses. This enhanced the credibility of the data.

- **Reflexivity and Researcher Awareness**

The candidate maintained a reflective journal during the research process to remain aware of personal biases, assumptions, and interpretations. This reflexive practice helped minimise subjective interference during data collection and analysis.

3.14.1 Geographical location

Second, the study was limited to KwaZulu-Natal; as such, it excludes the views of other managers from the provinces that did not participate in this exploratory study. This limits how broadly the results can be applied to other markets or geographic areas. When extending the findings to various situations or organizations, caution should be used (Creswell, 2019). It is essential to underline that qualitative research is tolerant of subjective and multiple interpretations of reality, and it does not seek to achieve generability but rather transferability of its findings (Creswell, 2019).

Additionally, qualitative research, by its nature, does not seek to establish any form of causality and directionality but instead provides rich and deep meaning of a phenomenon such as leadership style and its diverse impact on employee performances. As such, the findings of this qualitative study are transferable to a similar context. As the study focused only on executive and middle-level managers, it is crucial that future research also include low-level employees to blend views of those at the top and those at the bottom, mindful that leadership also includes followership.

3.15 Chapter conclusion

The chapter has presented the research methodology used in this study to explore leadership styles and their respective impact on employee performance at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal. The chapter has discussed the research paradigm, study design, research method, data collection, and data analysis used in this qualitative study. The chapter clearly states that the inductive exploratory study adopted interpretivism and a purposive sampling technique to select top and mid-level managers as participants in this qualitative study.

Data were collected from top-level and middle-level managers using an interview guide and semi-structured interviews. This chapter also discussed thematic data analysis used to identify relevant themes and how research quality was pursued in this study. Ethical considerations were explained in detail, reflecting the various activities taken to ensure research ethics were adhered to in this study. The following chapter presents the findings of this exploratory study on leadership styles and their impact on employee performance at BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the findings of the exploratory study on leadership styles at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal and the effect on employee performance. The findings are organized around the three research objectives. First, the chapter presents themes identifying the predominant leadership styles practiced within BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal. Next, the chapter presents themes that reveal how leadership styles affect employee performance, focusing on motivation, productivity, engagement, and job satisfaction. It considers positive and negative outcomes and how leadership impacts trust, innovation, and autonomy. Finally, the chapter presents themes that reveal recommendations from top-level executives and middle managers to enhance leadership practices and improve employee performance, highlighting areas for leadership development such as emotional intelligence, adaptability, and communication. These insights aim to foster a more productive work environment at BDP International.

4.2 Presentation of Findings

There are three sections of themes identified to depict (1) leadership styles, (2) effects of leadership styles on employee performance, and (3) recommendations specifically for enhancing leadership practices and improving employee performance at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal.

First, the findings of this exploratory study reveal that the five themes identified as depicting the predominant leadership styles at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal are as follow: (1) mixing of transformational, transactional and directing styles; (2) minimal employee involvement in decision-making, (3) pursuit of alignment of the company's goals and objectives, (4) low fidelity two-way communication between managers and employees at BDP International, and (5) limited engaging feedback for employee creativity, problem-solving and growth at BDP International.

Second, the study has found five themes revealing how leadership styles affect employee performance. Transactional style for employee operational efficiency and performance culture, structured, constructive but irregular feedback is not suitable for continuous employee improvement, driving employee job satisfaction through clarity of goals, structured expectations and rewards, leadership for employee retention and empowering and adaptive

leadership to improve employee performance are the themes which depict the effect of leadership style on employee performance.

The results also reveal themes depicting how leadership styles affect employee performance at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal, including employee motivation and engagement, the role of leadership communication in productivity, and influence on workplace culture and morale. Leadership styles impact employee retention through structured career progression, mentorship programs, and inclusive decision-making. Lastly, the study has identified that the impact on employee performance includes fostering an innovation-driven leadership culture, improving leadership transparency for trust-building, and increasing employee participation in strategic planning. These findings will be presented according to the three research objectives outlined in the study. Table 4.1 summarises the results below.

Themes for the study

| | |
|---|--|
| Five themes depicting leadership styles | Mixing of transformational, transactional, and directing styles |
| | Minimal employee involvement in decision-making |
| | Pursuit of alignment of the company's goals and objectives |
| | Low-fidelity two-way Communication between managers and employees at BDP International |
| | Limited engaging feedback for employee creativity, problem-solving, and growth at BDP International |
| | |
| Five themes depicting how leadership styles affect employee performance | Transactional style for employee operational efficiency and performance culture at BDP International |

| | |
|--|--|
| | Structured, constructive, but irregular feedback is unsuitable for continuous employee improvement. |
| | Driving employee job satisfaction through clarity of <i>goals</i> , structured expectations, and rewards |
| | Leadership for Employee Retention |
| | Empowering and adaptive leadership to improve employee performance. |
| | |
| Three themes depicting recommendations | Integrated leadership development for enhancing current performance |
| | Leadership development for new Growth |
| | |

Table 4.1: Themes and objectives

4.3 Themes depicting predominant leadership styles identified at BDP International according to top-level executives and middle managers

In this exploratory study, the first research objective was to identify the *predominant* leadership styles practiced by managers at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal according to top-level executives and middle managers. The research questions this exploratory study seeks to answer in this chapter are: What are the predominant leadership styles practised by managers at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal according to top-level executives and middle managers? As such, this section of the results presents themes identified by top and middle-level managers, revealing the set, pattern, or typical characteristics and methods of how leaders influenced others towards common goals at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal. It is important to reiterate that for this study, leadership style is about the characteristics or typical ways, patterns, and methods a leader uses to guide, inspire, and oversee their employees. Table 4.1 depicts the identified themes revealing leadership styles, which are subsequently presented in detail.

4.3.1 Sub-theme 1.1: Mixing of transformational, transactional, and directing styles

Leader behaviours at the BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal are predominantly a mix of transformational, transactional, and directive leadership. This hybrid strategy is of special relevance, especially for the logistics industry, which focuses on effective operation, employee motivation, and compliance with procedures.

Transformational leadership is characterized by how leaders motivate employees and encourage creativity. Transactional leadership is characterized by how leaders foster and manage structured work processes and adherence to defined parameters. Directive leadership is also found in high-stress tasks that need accuracy and effectiveness. In contrast, transactional leadership is characterised by a structured and goal-oriented approach, where leaders maintain organizational stability through clear roles, rules, and reward systems. This style emphasizes task completion and compliance, relying on formal authority and standardised procedures to achieve performance targets (Burns, 1978; Maphumulo and Mjoli, 2023).

In addition, directive leadership, where leaders give specific instructions and closely monitor task execution, is commonly adopted in high-pressure or time-sensitive environments that demand precision, accuracy, and control. This style is especially effective when tasks are routine, high-risk, or require quick decision-making, such as emergency response teams or technical fields (House, 1996; Tannenbaum et al., 2022). Moreover, while each leadership style has strengths, its effectiveness often depends on contextual factors such as organizational goals, employee readiness, and task complexity.

The following is a statement from a participant:

Participant 1: Leadership at BDP International is largely transformational. Managers motivate employees to act on their initiative and find innovative ways to solve logistical problems. Career development and professional development are stressed very heavily.

This is consistent with Bass and Riggio (2018), who contend that transformational leadership increases motivation, satisfaction with work, and work performance. In a logistics environment, where flexibility is most important, transformational leadership empowers employees to be innovative through high engagement levels. Another respondent mentioned the following:

Participant 9: *Although innovation is encouraged, the leadership is primarily transactional. Performance metrics are well-delineated, and employees are incentivised for this. If you do not meet expectations, there are consequences.*

This matches Judge and Piccolo (2019), who state that transactional leadership is beneficial in highly structured industries where achieving performance goals is paramount. A leadership style that, through it, makes the staff responsible and maintains the order of the logistical function.

Participant 3: *The leadership style is quite directive in my department. Concrete instructions characterize management, and there are few, if any, deviations possible from predefined procedures. Considering logistics characteristics, this is understandable in preventing delays and mistakes.*

Participant 4: *It depends on the department. Confident transformational leaders inspire their people and encourage their involvement in decision-making. Other employees adopt a more transactional viewpoint and closely adhere to policies and procedures.*

This is consistent with Avolio and Bass (2020), who propose that disparate leadership styles may be able to thrive within a firm, especially in markets with clusters of different jobs. Although transformational leadership could be effective for employee engagement and innovation, transactional and directive leadership will likely be more helpful in sustaining operational stability.

4.3.2 Sub-theme 1.2: Minimal employee involvement in decision-making

Employee participation in decision-making is one of the key elements of leadership, directly impacting job satisfaction, engagement, and ultimately performance. At BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal, the degree to which staff are involved in decision-making is also inconsistent within departments and with leadership styles.

Although there are managers who use participatory leadership, that is, the involvement of employee participation and teamwork, there are also managers who have transactional or directive leadership, that is, decision-making is predominantly from the top down. In the logistics industry, which is highly process-oriented and deadline-driven, it may not be possible to involve a large number of staff in strategic decision-making, but active participation within the operational area is still of immense value. Participatory leadership fosters employee engagement, innovation, and job satisfaction by encouraging collaboration and shared

responsibility (Somech, 2006; Al Khajeh, 2018). In contrast, transactional leadership focuses on structured tasks, clear authority, and performance-based rewards, while directive leadership involves closely guiding employees and making authoritative decisions, often useful in high-pressure or routine environments (Bass and Riggio, 2006; Pearce et al., 2003).

In the logistics industry, which is highly structured, process-oriented, and deadline-driven, it may not be feasible to engage a large number of staff in high-level strategic decision-making due to the need for efficiency and speed. However, enabling employee participation at the operational level remains critically valuable. It enhances communication, improves task execution, and fosters a sense of ownership among employees, contributing to performance outcomes and reduced errors (Brewster et al., 2020; Karia and Asaari, 2006). Thus, while a hierarchical leadership approach may be necessary in strategic matters, integrating participatory practices in day-to-day operations aligns well with the practical needs of logistics operations.

Participant 7: *At this point, managers engaged in working here often get input from the employees in terms of process improvements, and the areas of operations are no exception. Yet, the major strategic decisions are taken by the higher management, and the employees hardly have any influence in this respect.*

Participant 2: *In my experience, employee involvement is minimal. Decisions are taken at the management level, and we are obliged to obey. Although feedback is welcome, it does not always shape the conclusion.*

Participant 10: *It depends on the type of decision. To enhance workflow, managers tend to get input from the staff, who are living the challenge. However, big decisions regarding strategy, budgeting, and policy shifts are all management focused.*

That view is in line with Vroom and Jago's (2007) Contingency Model, which proposes that the leader adopts a varied set of decision-making styles depending on the complexity and significance of the decision. Involving jobs in routine decisions, however, improves efficiency, while definitive strategic decisions widely need central control.

Participant 5: *The managers in my team are supportive of team discussions and help employees propose process improvements. Although not all ideas are immediately adopted, we take for granted that we are listened to and respected, which in turn motivates us.*

However, while participative leadership is demonstrable in operational and process-related decisions, transactional and/or directive leadership rules the strategic processes. At BDP International, increasing employee involvement could improve motivation and innovation without compromising operational efficiency.

4.3.3 Sub-theme 1.3: Pursuit of alignment of the company's goals with objectives

Strong leadership is a key factor, as it will help guarantee that the organisation's goals and targets are achieved. Leadership approach at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal must be consistent with the company's vision for business, which revolves around operational effectiveness, customer satisfaction, and environmentally responsible logistics initiatives.

Based on the company's hierarchical organisation, the management approach combines transformational and transactional leadership, balancing inspiration and implementation of processes. The responses from top and middle management suggest varying perspectives on how leadership aligns with organisational goals, highlighting strengths and areas for improvement.

Participant 6: *Yes, our leadership approach is compatible with the company's goals. We focus on efficiency, customer satisfaction, and employee engagement. Transformational leadership is promoted to encourage innovation; however, we also adopt a formal methodology to ensure that high operational standards are kept.*

Transformational leadership at BDP International guarantees employee motivation while seeking operational excellence.

Participant 8: *To a certain extent, yes. Organizational leadership is such that it is efficient, but at times it is transactional leadership that provides opportunities for stopping employee creativity expression. However, more participative leadership could have been promoted; indeed, we did obtain even better results.*

Participants expressed that leadership should be adaptive, enabling an equal balance between strategic effectiveness and the development of employees. In contrast, transactional leadership guarantees compliance, whereas participative leadership can be used to promote problem-solving and creativity.

Participant 1: *Leadership in BDP is very formalised, and whereas this promotes efficiency, it can lead to inflexibility. Increased decision-making flexibility could lead to better matching of leadership in response to market changes and employee behaviour.*

Participant 2: *There is alignment, but it can be improved. There are some departments where transformational leaders are in place, thereby making employees feel appreciated for their experience. Others rely too much on directive leadership, which can be demotivating.*

Overall, the findings suggest that leadership at BDP International is generally aligned with the company's goals but has room for improvement. When transformational leadership increases motivation and commitment over the long term, the transactional and directive dimensions maintain efficiency and control.

4.3.4 Sub-theme 1.4: Low-fidelity two-way Communication between Managers and employees at BDP International

Good interpersonal communication between managers and workers is indispensable in leaders' success, work success, and organisational success. Communication activities are one of the key factors at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal in ensuring operational effectiveness and employee involvement and in concert with corporate goals. The responses from both top and middle management indicate that while communication is generally structured and functional, there are areas that require improvement, particularly in terms of feedback loops and participative engagement.

Participant 10: *Communication is well-structured and ensures operational clarity. Employees are guided through a clear specification, and there are ongoing reviews of the targets. However, the extent is low-fidelity two-way communication, as workers may be uncomfortable in giving feedback.*

Although structured communication is necessary for ensuring operational efficiency, creating an atmosphere where employees are free to express their views can be a valuable measure of performance.

Participant 4: *In my department, communication is mainly top-down. Although managers articulate explicit guidelines, employees typically cannot share their frustrations. This can occasionally be frustrating when operational problems occur.*

With a logistics-oriented work structure, as with BDP International, a two-way communication flow can remedy operational bottlenecks and increase employee satisfaction.

Participant 3: *We have multiple communication channels, including emails, meetings, and performance reviews. The problem is that employees should understand the content and feel listened to. Sometimes, critical feedback is lost in formal communication structures.*

Participant 5: *Communication is reasonably good, but there is a lag in responsiveness. Employees often raise concerns about workload and process inefficiencies, but it takes time for these concerns to be addressed. More immediate feedback from managers would improve morale and efficiency.*

Findings indicate that although communication at BDP International is consistent and unambiguous, there is a tendency for it to be overall top-down and lacking in participatory interaction. That, however, while securing operational efficiency, can result in dissatisfaction among the manpower because of a lack of feedback opportunities.

The bidirectional communication strategies (interactive session feedback, open forum discussion) at BDP International can contribute to better internal satisfaction, better leadership performance, and better performance in the organisation.

4.3.5 Sub-theme 1.5: Limited engaging feedback for employee creativity, problem-solving, and growth at BDP International

Effective leadership is an essential engine of staff performance, organisational productivity, and ultimately, business achievement. Although transformational, transactional, and directive leadership approaches are used by BDP International in the KwaZulu-Natal province, the feedback from senior and middle management indicates that there are certain leadership improvements that must be made to achieve higher employee engagement and improve the process of decision-making and communication.

Participant 6: *In logistics operations, employees need to be more participatory in the decision-making processes, as powerful knowledge bases in the decision-making approach, employee participation, and engagement can bring many benefits to logistics operations. But we do not have much of that here.*

Leaders who engage the emotional and interactive components of intelligence and decision-making lead to greater feelings of job satisfaction and employee involvement. Permitting employees to take part meaningfully can foster innovation and problem-solving within the organization.

Participant 7: *Leadership training programs need to be more frequent to empower employees to engage better. Although managers possess technical expertise, most would benefit from motivational leadership and team management training to give employees feedback and engage them more.*

Investment in leadership coaching and mentoring programmes can provide BDP International's managers with the tools they need to create an engaged and productive workforce.

Participant 2: *Employee recognition and reward programs have space for growth. If employees' contributions are manifested, either in the form of an economic reward or a non-economic reward, they become motivated.*

Participant 8: *Communication between management and employees could be improved. Although directives are specified, feedback from the workers is not reflected and acted upon. An open feedback culture can then serve to enhance employee morale and engagement.*

Participant 3: *More flexibility in leadership would be beneficial for employees to grow their decision-making confidence and ability. While structure is important in logistics, a rigid leadership approach can limit creativity and innovation. Employees do not feel confident that they have the right to make decisions and are supported by leaders to exercise flexibility based on the changing situation.*

The responses from participants collectively highlight critical gaps in leadership practices at BDP International, particularly around employee engagement, participatory decision-making, communication, and leadership development. Participants emphasised that limited employee involvement in decision-making and the absence of meaningful feedback loops hinder innovation and morale. There is a clear call for leadership styles that integrate emotional intelligence and motivational support, suggesting that current leadership lacks the soft skills necessary to drive engagement and performance. Participants also noted the need for regular leadership training, coaching, and mentoring to equip managers with relational and team-management competencies. Additionally, concerns about inflexible leadership structures and the lack of recognition and reward mechanisms underscore the need for adaptive leadership that values employee contributions and fosters a more inclusive and communicative work environment. Collectively, these insights reflect a pressing need to transition toward more transformational and participatory leadership approaches to enhance productivity, innovation, and workforce satisfaction within the logistics context.

4.4 Themes depicting how leadership style affects employee performance at BDP International

This qualitative and exploratory study, the second research objective was to examine how leadership styles *affect* employee performance at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal

according to top-level executives and middle managers. The research question which this section of the results of the study seeks to answer is: How do leadership styles affect employee performance at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal according to top-level executives and middle managers?

The study has found five themes revealing how leadership styles affect employee performance. Transactional style for employee operational efficiency and performance culture, structured, constructive but irregular feedback not good for continuous employee improvement, driving employee job satisfaction through clarity of goals, structured expectations and rewards, leadership for employee retention and empowering and adaptive leadership to improve employee performance are the themes which depict the effect of leadership style on employee performance.

4.4.1 Sub-theme 2.1: Transactional style for employee operational efficiency and performance culture at BDP International

Leadership style at BDP International has both strengths and weaknesses for motivation, suggesting a need for a more balanced leadership model. The transactional aspects of achieving employee operational efficiency and performance to achieve targets were expressed as follows by participant 4.

Participant 4: *Our leadership style motivates employees by providing clear goals and structured incentives. Transactional leadership is good in logistics since it provides operational efficiency and performance targets to teams.*

In the logistics industry, clearly defined and thus possibly measurable expectations are essential for operational success; however, an over-reliance on this approach can restrict intrinsic motivation. In a slightly different vein, the structured aspects of transactional leadership style were related to employee motivation.

Participant 8: *Motivation levels depend on the department. In operational roles, employees respond well to structured leadership. However, the risk is that operational and transactional ways are less helpful in more strategic positions. The lack of a transformational leader might leave the employees feeling devalued and not appreciated as human beings.*

Another key aspect of how leadership style at BDP affects employee performance relates to decision-making power and engagement. Participant 1 revealed that Leadership allows efficiency *but can feel restrictive at times, too. Employees have low decision-making power,*

which may lead to disengagement in some jobs. A more participative leadership approach could improve engagement.

Participant 2: *Motivation reaches its peak when the leaders can communicate well and acknowledge success. On the other hand, some managers are over-precise and do not care about employees' satisfaction.*

4.4.2 Sub-theme 2.2: Structured, constructive but irregular feedback is not good for continuous employee improvement

Constructive feedback is one of the key elements of good leadership, affecting employee performance, job satisfaction, and growth in professional fields, but is irregular at BDP. However, feedback frequency and fidelity to employees in BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal depend on factors such as leadership behaviour, organizational division, and operational needs.

Although some managers continuously conduct feedback discussions to lead, assist, and develop employees, others are more transactional and or directive in their approach. This limits feedback to specific and irregular performance discussions and operational adjustments. Responses from the top and middle rungs of the organisation emphasise both strengths and weaknesses in feedback implementation, suggesting a more organised, but employee-focused approach to feedback may further boost organisational performance.

Participant 1: *Feedback is provided on a rolling basis in periodic performance appraisals. Although this keeps the responsibility on the employee's side, employees would also be able to get more interactive feedback to prevent errors and problems from happening in the first place. The structuring of feedback around times for performance appraisal is good, but less responsive to emerging performance challenges and development, which employees need in between appraisals.*

Although formal performance evaluations are inevitable, additional informal feedback sessions may be able to enhance employee growth.

Participant 7: *Managers provide feedback mainly when something goes wrong. Although corrections are required, more praise for good performance will improve morale and motivation. Unstructured and positive feedback for encouragement and development rather than correction is rare in this organisation.*

Just maintaining a good balance of corrective feedback and net positive reinforcement can make a work environment more motivating.

Participant 9: *Feedback is structured and formalized in most cases. While this helps maintain consistency, it sometimes feels impersonal. More personalized, constructive discussions would be beneficial.*

Encouraging managers to adopt a coaching mindset could strengthen employee relationships and improve performance.

Participant 3: *It depends on the manager. There are leaders who offer continuous comments, and others who comment only as part of a structured review. A more standardized approach would ensure consistency across departments.*

This study reveals that specific, regular, and effective feedback helps employees match organizational goals. Creating a reliable cultural feedback system across the company could improve clarity and performance. Results support that feedback at BDP International is highly organised but not necessarily regular or positive.

4.4.3 Sub-theme 2.3: Driving employee job satisfaction through clarity of goals, structured expectations, and rewards

Results indicate that leadership at BDP International supports job satisfaction to a degree but requires improvements in participative leadership and recognition practices.

Participant 10: *Our leadership style ensures that employees have clear goals and structured expectations, contributing to job satisfaction. However, there is still room for flexibility and participative decision-making from the employee side.*

However, excessive control can reduce intrinsic motivation.

Participant 2: *Expressed how Job satisfaction depends on leadership style. Some managers adopt transformational leadership, which makes their colleagues feel valued and empowered. Others focus too much on operational targets, which can be demotivating.*

In influencing employee performance at BDP, some leaders promote job satisfaction through innovation and professionalisation. Managers who balance performance goals with employee empowerment tend to create a more fulfilling work environment.

Participant 6: *There is efficiency at BDP, but there is a greater need for staff recognition. People rightly wish to be recognized for their hard work, rather than judged on just performance metrics. The leaders here need to understand the numerous ways of financial and nonfinancial recognition of employee performance to encourage employees and others to continue improving.*

Participant 3: *Job satisfaction is moderate. Leadership works well in guiding in setting out expectations, but operatives can feel distanced from the decision-making process, which (sometimes) goes on around them. A more participative leadership approach would improve engagement.*

Results show that although BDP International's leadership style, particularly through well-defined goal-oriented structures and efficiency, contributes to happiness and job satisfaction, there have been unmet demands for more inspirational and participative leadership principles.

4.4.4 Sub-theme 2.4: Leadership for employee retention

The combination of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership approaches within the BDP International programme has implications for the extent to which staff are motivated and dedicated to the company.

Participant 1: *Transformational leadership has been a key factor for maintaining high-talent workforce(s) leaders who provide vision, guidance, and recognition, fostering loyalty and low turnover.*

On the other hand, Participant 2 reported: *While transactional leadership produces the right amount of production, transactional leadership sometimes leads to inflexibility (for the bottom line/bottom performers). Employees unhappy with micro-management abuse or worthlessness are in the strongest position to leave the company for more autonomy.*

Participant 3 also noted that unsystematic leadership styles introduce instability; thus, it becomes challenging for subordinates to be assured of *their jobs*. *A leadership style or plan change may lead high-performing employees to leave the company.* In addition, Participant 4 stated: *Most folks have moved on because there are no growth paces. If leadership fails to provide the necessary support for developing and advancing employees' career aspirations, then attrition rates decline.* Lastly, leadership styles at BDP International significantly

influence employee retention. Transformational leaders create job satisfaction and loyalty, whereas transactional leaders provide operational stability that may result in stoicism if tightly controlled. Maintaining leadership stability, investing in staff development, and managing leadership style should improve retention and a more devoted workforce.

4.4.5 Sub-theme 2.5: Empowering and adaptive leadership to improve employee performance

The effective adoption of the right style of empowering and adaptive leadership can lead to a workplace in which creativity, accountability, and the taking of ownership for creating continuous improvement are promoted. The management of BDP International has several aspects that could be improved to improve staff performance.

Participant 1: *Another of the skills that should be developed is communication to empower others and ensure accountability, i.e., Open and transparent communication by leaders can enable employees to feel secure about their role, task, and about the future of the company, and be clear about the targets they should focus on and achieve.*

Participant 3: *The Leader's task is to give more attention to employees' development and training. Investment in professional development opportunities is essential. It encourages a career ladder mentality and improves the workforce's productivity. Employee who are developed and possess the requisite skills are key and can be easily empowered to make key decisions or exercise accountability for their outcomes.*

Participant 4: *Empowerment and delegation are crucial for leaders at BDP to be adaptable in achieving targets and supporting their followers. Employees perform best when they can operate autonomously and make decisions on the job. At BDP International, there are sometimes aspects of empowering others and using communication to improve employee performance. However, there is room for improvement by enhancing communication, recognising employee contributions, investing in professional development, and promoting empowerment. An adaptive leader model that integrates transformational and transactional principles can create a context for work that demands higher productivity, job satisfaction, and long-term survival of the organisation.*

4.5 Theme 3: Themes depicting recommendations for enhancing leadership practices and improving employee performance at BDP International

The third objective of this exploratory study is to provide recommendations for *enhancing leadership practices* and *improving* employee performance at BDP International (Turner

Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal. As such, the research question this section seeks to answer is: What are the recommendations for enhancing leadership practices and improving employee performance at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal?

Three key recommendations highlighted by participants in this study are (1) Integrated and regular leadership development for enhancing current performance at BDP International, (2) leadership development for new Growth, and (3) holistic assessment of leadership effectiveness and progression.

4.5.1 Sub-theme 3.1: Integrated and regular Leadership development for enhancing current performance at BDP International

Lastly, results reveal that leadership development in BDP International should be integrated and targeted at transformational leadership, conflict management, emotional intelligence, and mentorship for employee performance in their existing roles and positions. Using all these aspects in a comprehensive training program will help leaders, among other things, improve employee motivation, effectively identify and resolve conflict, create collaboration, and achieve levels of otherwise unattainable performance. Developing diverse leadership skills through focused training will ultimately lead to organisational success and high staff satisfaction with their job performance.

Participant 1: *Transformational experience leadership is essential for the creation of an innovative culture that is innovative and empathetic. Leaders should be trained and prepared to motivate employees and align their work goals with organisational goals.*

In addition to innovation, motivation, and empathy, participants clearly understood the significance of conflict resolution and emotional intelligence. **Participant 2:** *Conflict resolution training is desperately lacking. Managers are frequently involved in workplace conflicts and possess the skills to mediate, promoting a more positive conflict resolution climate for improved performance.*

Participant 3: *Emotional intelligence training is critical for a superior to form strong ties between employees and them. Understanding and managing emotions can lead to better decision-making and a more inclusive work culture.*

Several participants expressed the issues of continuously developing leadership skills in an integrated and regular manner. **Participant 3** added that *Regular leadership training workshops should be implemented to equip managers with modern leadership strategies.*

The logistics industry is continuously developing, so its leaders must respond to new challenges in their current roles arising from the changing environment.

There were also views of how participants recommended coaching and mentorship as key aspects of leadership development methods in achieving integrated leadership development affecting diverse aspects of leadership. **Participant 9:** *Coaching and mentorship training should be made a top priority. Leadership must be able to mentor the workforce, enabling them to develop in their work and career.* **Participant 5** emphasised that *a structured mentorship program is needed to bridge the gap between experienced leaders and emerging managers. Information transfer and mentoring by top management policy can help middle managers develop a leadership trajectory.*

4.5.2 Sub-theme 3.2: Leadership development for new Growth

Results reveal that leadership development is one part of enhancing employees' current performance and growth into new positions and roles at BDP International. Effective leadership directly impacts employees' development into new horizontal or vertical roles, which broaden responsibility, enrich job satisfaction, and expose them to team leadership dynamics and organisational success.

Enhancing leadership practices at BDP requires focusing on the growth of leaders in various abilities, such as motivating, influencing, and creating engaged teams and departments. **Participant 8:** *Leadership growth is imperative to ensure managers can inspire and lead their team to reach company objectives. Without appropriate leadership training and development at BDP, people lose motivation and can become disengaged, poor leaders, or even fail to grow into senior leadership roles.*

Participant 5: *Mentorship and coaching programs should be introduced to prepare middle managers for executive roles. Leadership succession planning is critical to ensure continuity and sustained organisational performance.*

Leadership development for growth also entails growing the ability to create direction and ensure alignment and commitment of others to the common goal. **Participant 10** asserted that: *The better (the more that) people perform in their jobs is when they have a clear direction and when the working leaders back them. Leadership development is also valuable for gaining insight into structuring and communicating expectations/goals and providing constructive feedback to others. Leaders need to grow and master the ability to influence*

others in creating direction, shaping alignment through a continuous realignment process, and sustaining the commitment of every employee.

In a different vein, participants expressed the notion of leadership development as a leadership pipeline. For example, **Participant 3** said that *Leadership development is how we scale up the leadership talent in the organisation. Employees tend to stay and work well when growth and mentoring are provided.* In a slightly different vein, **Participant 9** focused on structured and various key leadership skills: *More structured leadership training should include issues like emotional intelligence, conflict resolution, and strategic decision-making. Many managers are technically competent but lack the soft skills to manage teams effectively.*

Leadership development is also about leaders who create, drive, and sustain desired change. **Participant 7:** *Leaders must be the ones whose nature changes into responding to the new business environments, and continuous leadership development helps to maintain their effectiveness. It may also inhibit employee innovation and morale with a static leadership paradigm.*

4.5.3 Sub-theme 3.3: Holistic assessment of leadership effectiveness and progression

Participant 1: *Performance appraisals should include measures of leadership effectiveness. Leaders also deserve to be reviewed, not just related to financial results, but also their ability to motivate and enable their team.*

Participants recommended that the assessment of leadership effectiveness would be more holistic if performance assessments included leadership competencies, leading to accountability and the development of professionals in management. In this regard, participant 9 emphasised open communication channels and competencies: *Open communication channels should be established between employees and leadership, giving employees anonymous feedback about leadership effectiveness. This would help identify strengths and areas for improvement. Effective communication is key to performance and results, and it is necessary to assess how leaders effectively use it in the organisation.*

Lastly, participants also revealed that BDP International has the potential to improve leadership effectiveness by adopting standardised training programmes, mentoring opportunities, leadership performance assessments, and feedback processes. These techniques may help train flexible and emotionally intelligent leaders who are happy to motivate employees to work and achieve organisational results.

Participant 6: *Although BDP International offers leadership development programs, they are not thorough enough to deal with the changing aspects of the logistics industry. Continuous training is more of a focus than single-time training.*

Participant 3: *Our leadership programs focus mainly on operational efficiency but lack the soft skills necessary for effective people management. There is a need for attention to emotional intelligence and conflict resolution training.*

Participant 9: *The available leadership programs are insufficient for middle managers to transition quickly to senior management. There should be structured mentorship and coaching programmes to assist in the development of a collaborative working relationship between middle management and executive leadership.*

Participant 10: *There is little data on employee opinions on leadership development programs, which makes it difficult to assess the program's efficacy. A more organised endpoint assessment and feedback process should be introduced to capture advances and areas for further development.*

Participant 8: *The organisation should adopt a 360-degree feedback mechanism where employees may evaluate their managers anonymously. This will give helpful information about the effectiveness of leadership and what is still to be improved from the viewpoint of different people interacting with leadership at various levels.*

Improving leadership at BDP International requires a multifaceted approach, including integrating transformational leadership, enhancing training programs, implementing feedback mechanisms, and fostering mentorship initiatives. By following these recommendations, leadership at BDP International will be able to be adaptive, employee-focused, and consistent with the organisation's long-term goals, ultimately promoting both the employees' performance and the organisation's success.

4.6 Chapter conclusion

This chapter presents the findings of this exploratory study, which reveal the crucial influence of leadership style on employees' performance at BDP International. Transformational leadership emerged as a key driver of motivation, engagement, and retention, while transactional leadership provided structure and efficiency. The chapter also recommended leadership training, mentorship, feedback mechanisms, and emotional intelligence training. Adopting these suggestions will help BDP International nurture the company culture and, in

turn, will result in increased performance among staff as well as the success of the organisation. A balanced leadership model would be needed to facilitate the sustainable growth and performance of the exceedingly competitive logistics market. The next chapter of the study will provide recommendations and conclusions.

CHAPTER FIVE: DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

5.1 Introduction

Employment engagement, organisational success, and general performance depend fundamentally on leadership. The study results provide essential clues about the leadership dynamics at BDP International, emphasizing major leadership styles, their effects on staff performance, and the more general consequences for leadership effectiveness. This chapter thoroughly examines these results, which tie them to current leadership theories and literature to offer a complete picture of how leadership at BDP International affects employee motivation, productivity, and workplace satisfaction.

Chapter Four's three primary themes are discussed in this section: (1) BDP International's prevailing leadership styles, (2) the impact of leadership styles on employee performance, and (3) leadership's effect on workplace culture and employee retention. This discussion lays the groundwork for a more complete grasp of the leadership efficiency of the company, as well as provides information on the strong points and areas for development in leadership techniques.

5.2 Objective 1: To identify the predominant leadership styles practiced by managers at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal according to top-level executives and middle managers

- **Main leadership styles at BDP International**

BDP International predominantly utilizes transformational, transactional, and directive leadership styles. Transformational leadership is evident in leaders communicating a compelling vision, supporting innovation and continuous learning, and encouraging employees to grow and contribute meaningfully (Bass and Riggio, 2018). Transactional leadership is visible through performance-based rewards and task-focused supervision, ensuring short-term goals are met efficiently. Additionally, directive leadership is reflected in top-down decision-making, with leaders often relying on authority rather than collaboration. This triad of leadership styles illustrates the strategic balance between control and motivation. However, a critical dimension revealed by the study is the minimal application of emotional intelligence, which hinders relationship building and trust formation within teams. The absence of emotional awareness, empathy, and interpersonal responsiveness limits the transformative potential of leadership, leading to a mechanical rather than human-centric

leadership experience (Goleman, 2004). Overall, these dominant styles shape operational dynamics and influence employee perceptions of leadership effectiveness at BDP.

- **Corporate Culture and Management Approach**

Leadership styles significantly influence corporate culture at BDP International. Findings reveal that directive leadership, while effectively delivering instructions and maintaining control, fosters a rigid culture where innovation and feedback are constrained. In contrast, a cooperative and team-oriented culture emerges where inclusive leadership is practiced, allowing employees to feel valued and involved (Schein, 2010). Managers embracing inclusive practices are more likely to cultivate trust, transparency, and collaboration, which are essential to modern organizational environments. This insight aligns with Objective 1 by demonstrating how leadership style does not exist in a vacuum but is intrinsically tied to the organizational culture it helps shape. The findings suggest that the variation in leadership across departments results in inconsistent employee cultural experiences, ranging from empowering and dynamic to hierarchical and isolating. Such contrasts highlight the need for a unified leadership development framework to harmonize organisational culture, ensuring that leadership promotes performance and people-centered values (Yukl, 2013).

- **Limited Employee Involvement in Decision-Making**

The limited participation of employees in decision-making processes at BDP International further highlights the dominant directive leadership style. Employees report that senior leaders primarily make decisions without adequate consultation or bottom-up feedback, reinforcing a hierarchical structure that discourages innovation and empowerment. This approach is often associated with short-term efficiency but undermines long-term engagement and trust. When participative leadership is absent, employees are less likely to feel ownership over their tasks and the organization's strategic goals, which can negatively affect morale and productivity (Northouse, 2019). Such exclusion from decision-making also reduces opportunities for leadership development among junior staff, stalling succession planning and organizational learning. This finding emphasizes the need for leadership approaches integrating participatory elements to strengthen communication, team cohesion, and motivation. The data therefore support the conclusion that while directive leadership dominates, it must be balanced with more inclusive practices to foster sustainable organizational development and align with contemporary leadership best practices.

- **Lack of Emotional Intelligence in Leadership**

Emotional intelligence is a critical, yet underdeveloped, component of leadership at BDP International. Managers frequently lack the self-awareness and empathy needed to connect with their teams on a human level, resulting in emotionally detached leadership practices. This shortfall affects the quality of interpersonal interactions, conflict resolution, and the ability to provide emotionally appropriate support to staff. Goleman (2004) argues that leaders with high emotional intelligence are better equipped to handle stress, inspire trust, and motivate teams through relational competence. At BDP, lacking such skills creates a work environment where employees may feel undervalued or misunderstood, contributing to stress and disengagement. This insight broadens the understanding of the leadership styles in place by illuminating how they are not only defined by strategy but also by the emotional qualities that drive them. It suggests that any leadership development intervention should address strategy and structure and focus on cultivating emotional intelligence as a core competency for managerial effectiveness and employee satisfaction.

Objective 2: To examine how leadership styles affect employee performance at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal according to top-level executives and middle managers

- **How leadership styles affect employee performance**

The leadership styles of its managers directly shape employee performance at BDP International. Transformational leadership positively influences innovation and job satisfaction by motivating employees through shared vision, intellectual stimulation, and individual consideration (Bass & Riggio, 2018). Employees under such leadership are more engaged, take initiative, and align their personal goals with organizational objectives. Transactional leadership, while less emotionally engaging, provides clear expectations and structured rewards, which enhance task completion and operational efficiency. Adaptive leadership also emerges as impactful, especially in dynamic contexts requiring flexibility and creative problem-solving. This style encourages open communication and responsiveness to change, fostering a performance culture rooted in learning and accountability (Heifetz & Laurie, 2001). Motivation theories such as Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory (1959) further support these findings, indicating that leadership styles that satisfy intrinsic motivators—like recognition and achievement boost performance, while extrinsic focus alone may result in

stagnation. Thus, the performance outcomes at BDP reflect the nuanced interaction between leadership approach and motivational climate created by management.

- **Inconsistent Feedback Systems**

A critical finding related to employee performance is the inconsistency in feedback mechanisms. While some departments maintain regular performance evaluations and constructive feedback loops, others lack structured communication. This inconsistency leads to confusion about expectations, missed development opportunities, and demotivation among staff. Feedback is a cornerstone of effective leadership, allowing employees to improve, feel acknowledged, and align better with organizational goals (London, 2003). The absence of regular, meaningful feedback suggests leadership practices that are reactive rather than proactive, undermining the continuous improvement ethos. Furthermore, when feedback is sporadic or only given during crises or performance appraisals, it loses its developmental value and becomes punitive. Employees are left uncertain about their progress and contribution, affecting performance and retention. This finding supports Objective 2 by showing that leadership styles at BDP that neglect regular feedback mechanisms contribute to decreased productivity and hinder career growth pathways. Addressing this gap through consistent, transparent feedback systems is essential for enhancing performance outcomes.

- **Leadership Impact on Job Satisfaction**

The research indicates that job satisfaction at BDP International is highly dependent on leadership consistency, supportiveness, and communication. Employees who report to transformational or adaptive leaders experience higher levels of satisfaction due to the autonomy, recognition, and personal development opportunities afforded to them. Conversely, job dissatisfaction increases when leadership is inconsistent, overly directive, or unsupportive. Leadership that fails to acknowledge employee contributions, provides limited career growth opportunities, and communicates poorly leads to disengagement and turnover (Robbins and Judge, 2017). These patterns demonstrate the intrinsic link between leadership behaviour and employee morale. Supportive leadership creates an emotionally safe space, enabling creativity, resilience, and team cohesion. Furthermore, satisfied employees are more likely to exhibit organisational citizenship behaviours, such as mentoring others and contributing beyond their formal roles. Therefore, job satisfaction is both an outcome and

driver of performance, illustrating the need for leadership development that prioritizes support, communication, and consistency.

- **Positive Influence of Adaptive Leadership**

Adaptive leadership has emerged as a practical approach to enhancing employee engagement and overall performance. Managers who exhibit adaptive traits such as flexibility, openness to feedback, and the ability to tailor their approach to changing contexts tend to empower teams and stimulate innovation. Employees under such leadership report higher levels of accountability, creativity, and ownership over their work (Heifetz & Laurie, 2001). Adaptive leadership fosters a growth mindset, encouraging staff to embrace change and pursue continuous improvement. Unlike rigid directive styles, adaptive leaders prioritise listening, experimentation, and shared problem-solving, which are critical in today's fast-paced business environments. This style also strengthens relationships by validating employees' insights and promoting inclusive decision-making. The findings reinforce that adaptive leadership enhances performance by improving systems and structures and nurturing a high-trust culture. Therefore, embedding adaptive leadership principles into management practices at BDP could significantly boost individual and team performance, aligning with strategic objectives and employee development goals.

Objective 3: To develop actionable recommendations aimed at strengthening leadership approaches and boosting employee performance at BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal

- **Empowerment through Integrative Leadership**

A central recommendation emerging from the study is the adoption of integrative leadership—blending transformational, transactional, and adaptive styles to address strategic demands and human development needs. This hybrid model encourages leaders to set clear expectations (transactional), inspire innovation and alignment (transformational), and remain flexible in the face of change (adaptive). Integrative leadership empowers employees by promoting autonomy, recognition, and responsibility, boosting motivation and performance (Yukl, 2013). Empowerment is further linked to employee engagement, satisfaction, and retention. This model also addresses the inconsistency in leadership experiences across departments, offering a unified approach that balances authority and participation. To implement this, BDP should invest in leadership training programs focused on emotional

intelligence, feedback mechanisms, and inclusive practices. Integrative leadership is not a compromise but a strategic alignment of diverse styles to foster a responsive, high-performance organisational culture.

- **Leadership and Employee Retention**

The stability and quality of leadership heavily influence employee retention at BDP International. High turnover is often linked to poor mentorship, lack of recognition, and inconsistent communication, hallmarks of directive or disengaged leadership styles. Employees are more likely to remain with organizations that invest in their growth and provide a clear pathway for development (Robbins & Judge, 2017). Therefore, actionable recommendations include implementing structured mentorship programs, enhancing leadership visibility, and establishing inclusive decision-making processes. These strategies support individual career trajectories and strengthen organizational memory and continuity. Retention-focused leadership fosters trust, loyalty, and job satisfaction, directly contributing to productivity. Creating a culture of care and development, underpinned by supportive leadership, is essential for long-term organizational success.

- **Poor Communication Channels**

One recurring challenge is the lack of structured and effective communication platforms. This breakdown affects feedback delivery, decision transparency, and employee involvement. Poor communication contributes to misunderstandings, reduced morale, and performance inefficiencies. Leaders must have communication tools and training to facilitate open-door policies, regular team meetings, and clear performance dialogues. Establishing digital communication platforms such as intranets or feedback dashboards can also enhance information flow. Effective communication is foundational to any leadership strategy, enabling alignment, cohesion, and swift problem resolution (Hackman and Johnson, 2013). Implementing structured communication policies and training leaders in active listening and feedback delivery will ensure staff feel heard and informed. These actions will significantly improve organizational responsiveness and collaboration.

- **Leadership Shapes Corporate Culture**

Leadership at BDP plays a critical role in shaping the organization's culture. Findings suggest that the dominant leadership style directly influences whether the culture is rigid or collaborative. A value-driven leadership approach can foster a culture that promotes creativity, respect, and teamwork. Leaders must embody organisational values and model desired behaviours to institutionalize a healthy culture. Recommendations include leadership development programs focused on ethical leadership, inclusivity, and value alignment. When leaders actively reinforce core values through recognition, behaviour modelling, and team development, culture becomes a performance asset rather than a barrier (Schein, 2010). Building a positive corporate culture requires intentional effort from leadership at all levels to move beyond control-based systems and towards trust-based engagement. This shift will enhance employee performance and strengthen the overall organizational brand and resilience.

5.3 Chapter conclusion

The significant results of the research have been discussed in the context of leadership styles at BDP International and their influence on employee performance and the company's corporate culture. The results underline how closely communication styles, feedback systems, and chances for worker growth are linked with effective leadership. Transactional leadership guarantees efficiency; transformational leadership encourages sustained commitment and creativity. Still, employee motivation and retention difficulties arise from inconsistent leadership, limited communication, and no clear feedback channels. Connecting these results to accepted leadership theories gives one a more thorough grasp of leadership effectiveness at BDP International. The research underlines the need for adaptive leadership, constant feedback, and all-encompassing decision-making in building a top-level corporate culture. The next chapter provides a detailed evaluation of the recommendations and conclusions of the study.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter will synthesize the findings from the qualitative research on leadership styles at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal to draw meaningful conclusions and provide actionable recommendations. This chapter will begin by summarising the predominant leadership styles identified among top-level executives and middle managers, highlighting how these styles are perceived to influence employee performance within the organization. The analysis will focus on the insights gathered from interviews and discussions, emphasising the nuances of leadership practices at BDP International. Subsequently, the relationship between identified leadership styles and employee performance will be explored in detail, examining how various approaches to leadership can either enhance or hinder productivity, motivation, and overall job satisfaction among employees. This chapter synthesises the key empirical and theoretical insights generated by the study, draws explicit conclusions, and sets out the study's implications, contributions, limitations, and avenues for future research. The structure is designed to provide a coherent narrative flow from findings to actionable recommendations.

6.2 Key Findings

The research aim was to explore how leadership practices at BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal can be enhanced to improve employee performance. The objectives were met through a critical literature review and primary data gathered from top-level executives and middle managers.

6.2.1 Synthesis of the Literature Review

- **Leadership styles:** Transformational, transactional, democratic, and directive styles influence engagement, culture, and performance. Transformational leadership fosters innovation and shared purpose, while excessive reliance on transactional control can erode intrinsic motivation.
- **Communication and decision-making:** Transparent, two-way communication underpins psychological safety and trust; top-down channels alone risk alienating staff.
- **Positive work culture:** Leaders who model integrity, inclusivity, and support strengthen organisational values, morale, and productivity.
- **Challenges:** Balancing flexibility and structure is essential; autocratic tendencies disempower staff and stifle creativity.

- **Employee morale:** Inclusive, supportive leadership correlates with higher satisfaction, whereas authoritarian approaches depress morale.
- **Employee perceptions:** Supportive behaviours and participatory decision-making enhance commitment and performance.

6.2.2 Primary Research Findings

- **RQ1 – Predominant leadership styles:** A hybrid of transformational, democratic, and transactional practices emerged, with transformational leadership most evident in articulating vision and developing staff. Transactional methods dominate in process-driven units, directive styles surface in high-pressure logistics functions.
- **RQ2 – Impact on performance:** Transformational and democratic behaviours boost motivation, collaboration, and discretionary effort. Transactional rewards secure short-term results but may curb creativity; directive leadership safeguards compliance, yet can limit autonomy. Weak feedback loops and inconsistent communication undermine performance.
- **RQ3 Recommendations for enhanced practice:** Participants advocated leadership development in emotional intelligence and adaptive skills, stronger feedback mechanisms, wider employee involvement, and a more flexible, trust-based culture.

6.3 Implications and Contributions

6.3.1 Theoretical Implications

The study extends contingency and transformational leadership theories by illustrating how a calibrated blend of styles operates in a time-sensitive logistics environment in the Global South.

6.3.2 Practical Implications

BDP International should institutionalise leadership development programmes focused on emotional intelligence, participatory practices, and continuous feedback, aligning leadership behaviour with strategic goals.

6.3.3 Contribution to Knowledge and Practice

The research provides an empirical model linking hybrid leadership configurations to employee outcomes in South African logistics, offering a template for similar organisations.

6.4 Areas for Future Research

Future research on leadership within the logistics sector can benefit from a multifaceted approach that includes longitudinal, comparative, and intersectional analyses. A longitudinal evaluation of leadership development interventions is essential to understanding their sustained impact on organizational performance metrics such as employee retention, operational efficiency, and customer satisfaction. This would provide evidence of the long-term value of leadership training investments. Additionally, comparative studies across multiple logistics firms can help identify how context, such as firm size, structure, and regional operations, affects the efficacy of specific leadership styles, offering insights into best practices across diverse environments. Furthermore, examining gender and cultural diversity in leadership roles can reveal how inclusive leadership dynamics enhance or hinder decision-making, innovation, and team cohesion within multinational supply chains, where diversity is both a strength and a challenge. Lastly, the increasing pressure of digital transformation driven by technologies like AI, automation, and data analytics necessitates exploring how leaders adapt their styles to manage digital disruption, foster technological adoption, and navigate cultural resistance. Collectively, these research directions can enhance the theoretical understanding of leadership in logistics while offering practical insights for building agile, inclusive, and high-performing leadership frameworks in a globalised economy.

6.5 Recommendations

Based on the study's findings and conclusions, the following recommendations are proposed to enhance leadership practices and improve employee performance at BDP International:

- **Implement Leadership Development Programmes**

BDP International should prioritise establishing continuous leadership development initiatives focusing on emotional intelligence, adaptive leadership skills, and situational awareness. Such programmes will equip leaders at all levels to better respond to the dynamic demands of the logistics sector.

- **Enhance Communication and Feedback Mechanisms**

To foster a culture of trust and engagement, it is essential to develop transparent, two-way communication channels that encourage regular feedback between managers and employees. Instituting structured feedback loops will help identify challenges promptly and reinforce positive behaviours.

- **Promote Employee Participation in Decision-Making**

Encouraging greater involvement of employees in relevant decisions can increase their sense of ownership and motivation. Managers should adopt participatory leadership practices where feasible, particularly in operational areas allowing collaborative input.

- **Balance Leadership Styles Contextually**

Leaders should be supported in applying a flexible blend of transformational, transactional, democratic, and directive styles depending on situational requirements. Training on situational leadership and emotional intelligence can enhance their capacity to switch approaches effectively.

- **Strengthen Organisational Culture through Role Modelling**

Senior management should actively demonstrate behaviours that promote inclusivity, integrity, and support, thereby reinforcing a positive work culture aligned with organisational values and performance objectives.

- **Invest in Monitoring and Evaluation of Leadership Practices**

Establishing metrics to assess leadership effectiveness and its impact on employee outcomes regularly will enable BDP International to make evidence-based adjustments and sustain improvements over time.

6.8 Chapter Summary

This chapter has rearranged and clarified the study's principal findings, highlighted four core conclusions, and articulated their theoretical and practical implications. Limitations have been acknowledged, and a future research agenda has been proposed. Collectively, the evidence underscores the importance of an emotionally intelligent, participatory, and adaptive leadership approach for sustaining employee performance in fast-paced logistics operations.

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Appendix A: Gatekeeper's Letter



29 April 2024

Dear Mrs. NNP Ndinisa

PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH AT BDP INTERNATIONAL IN KWAZULU-NATAL

I hope this letter finds you well.

I am pleased to inform you that the BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal has granted full permission for you to conduct your research, "An investigation into the leadership styles at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal and their effect on employee performance."

BDP International may impose any other condition it deems appropriate in the circumstance having regard to the nature and extent of access to and use of the information requested.

We would be grateful if your key research findings could be submitted to BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal upon completion of your studies.

Kindest regards



Pravin Naidoo
HR Manager

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Appendix B: Ethics Approval



14 October 2024

Nonsikelelo Nonhlanhla Prudence Ndinisa (200204947)
Grad School of Bus & Leadership
Westville Campus

Dear NNP Ndinisa,

Protocol reference number: HSSREC/00007775/2024

Project title: An investigation into the leadership styles at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal and their effect on employee performance

Degree: Masters

Approval Notification – Expedited Application

This letter serves to notify you that your application received on 20 September 2024 in connection with the above, was reviewed by the Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) and the protocol has been granted **FULL APPROVAL**. Kindly take note of the following conditions:

- Findings of the study must be shared with the gatekeeper.

Any alteration/s to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study, Research Approach and Methods must be reviewed and approved through the amendment/modification prior to its implementation. In case you have further queries, please quote the above reference number.

PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the discipline/department for a period of 5 years.

Incidents of adverse events and serious adverse events (AEs and SAEs) should be reported in writing to HSSREC, the study sponsors, and any regulatory authority (where appropriate), within 7 working days of the occurrence for local sites and 14 days for all other South African sites.

[This approval is valid until 14 October 2025.](#)

To ensure uninterrupted approval of this study beyond the approval expiry date, a progress report must be submitted to the Research Office on the appropriate form 2 - 3 months before the expiry date. A close-out report to be submitted when study is finished.

HSSREC is registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (REC-040414-040).

Yours sincerely,



Professor Dipane Hlalele (Chair) /nng

Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee

Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban, 4000, South Africa

Telephone: +27 (0)31 260 8350/4557/3587 Email: hssrec@ukzn.ac.za Website: <http://research.ukzn.ac.za/Research-Ethics>

Founding Campuses: ■ Edgewood ■ Howard College ■ Medical School ■ Pietermaritzburg ■ Westville

INSPIRING GREATNESS

Appendix C: Data Collection Instrument

Section A: Demographic Information (Please provide responses by selecting the appropriate option or filling in the blanks where necessary.)

1. What is your age group?
2. What is your gender?
3. What is your current job position level (Top management or Middle management) at BDP International?
4. How many years have you been working in the logistics industry?
5. What is your highest level of education?

Section B: Predominant Leadership Styles at BDP International

6. How would you describe the dominant leadership style practiced at BDP International?
7. How frequently do managers at BDP International involve employees in decision-making?
8. Do you believe that the leadership style at BDP International aligns with the company's goals and objectives?
9. How would you rate the communication between managers and employees at BDP International?
10. In your opinion, what leadership improvements are needed at BDP International?

Section C: Leadership Styles and Employee Performance

11. How would you describe the impact of leadership styles on employee motivation at BDP International?
12. How often do employees receive constructive feedback from their managers?
13. Does the leadership style at BDP International contribute to employee job satisfaction?
14. How do leadership styles at BDP International affect employee retention?
15. What aspects of leadership at BDP International could improve employee performance?

Section D: Recommendations for Enhancing Leadership Practices

16. What type of leadership training do you think is most needed at BDP International?
17. How important do you think leadership development is for improving employee performance?
18. What methods should be implemented to enhance leadership effectiveness at BDP International?
19. How would you rate the current leadership development initiatives at BDP International?

20. What additional recommendations do you have for improving leadership at BDP International?

THANK YOU FOR PARTICIPATING!!!

Appendix D: Information Sheet and Consent to Participate in Research

Date: 4 November 2024

Good Day

I am Nonsikelelo Nonhlanhla Prudence Ndinisa, a Master of Commerce student in Leadership Studies at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN). I am conducting a research study on leadership styles at BDP International (Turner's Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal and their impact on employee performance. You are invited to participate in this study as an executive or middle-level manager at BDP International. Your participation will provide valuable insights into how different leadership styles influence employee motivation, engagement, and performance in the logistics sector.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to examine the leadership styles practiced at BDP International and their effects on employee performance. The findings will contribute to a deeper understanding of leadership effectiveness in the logistics and transportation industry and provide recommendations for leadership improvement.

Study Participation

A total of 10 participants, consisting of executive and middle-level managers from BDP International (Turner Shipping) in KwaZulu-Natal, will be interviewed for this study. Data collection will be conducted through structured interviews, either in-person, telephonically, or virtually. Each interview will take approximately 20–40 minutes. Your responses will remain confidential, and all findings will be presented anonymously.

Ethical Considerations

This study has been approved by the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee (HSSREC) (approval number: UKZN/HSSREC/2025/NNPN). Participation in this study is voluntary, and you may withdraw at any time without any consequences. Your anonymity and confidentiality will be strictly maintained throughout the research process. Data collected will be securely stored and used solely for academic purposes.

Potential Risks and Benefits

There are no anticipated risks associated with participating in this study. While you may not directly benefit from participation, the findings of this research will help improve leadership practices within the logistics sector and contribute to the academic understanding of leadership effectiveness.

Contact Information

If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact me or the UKZN Humanities and Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee at the following:

Researcher

Contact Details: [REDACTED]

Name: Nonsikelelo Nonhlanhla Prudence Ndinisa

Email: [REDACTED]

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001 Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557- Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Thank you for considering participation in this study. Your insights and experiences will be invaluable in understanding leadership effectiveness at BDP International.

CONSENT FORM

I have been informed about the study entitled “An examination of leadership styles at BDP International in KwaZulu-Natal and their effect on employee performance”.

I understand the purpose and procedures of the study (add these again if appropriate).

I have been given an opportunity to answer questions about the study and have had answers to my satisfaction.

I declare that my participation in this study is entirely voluntary and that I may withdraw at any time without affecting any of the benefits that I usually am entitled to.

I have been informed about any available compensation or medical treatment if injury occurs to me as a result of study-related procedures.

If I have any further questions/concerns or queries related to the study I understand that I may contact the researcher.

If I have any questions or concerns about my rights as a study participant, or if I am concerned about an aspect of the study or the researchers then I may contact:

HUMANITIES & SOCIAL SCIENCES RESEARCH ETHICS ADMINISTRATION

Research Office, Westville Campus Govan Mbeki Building

Private Bag X 54001 Durban

4000

KwaZulu-Natal, SOUTH AFRICA

Tel: 27 31 2604557 - Fax: 27 31 2604609

Email: HSSREC@ukzn.ac.za

Additional consent, where applicable I hereby provide consent to:

Audio-record my interview / focus group discussion YES / NO Video-record my interview
/ focus group discussion YES / NO Use of my photographs for research purposes
YES / NO

Signature of Participant

Date

Signature of Witness

Date (Where applicable)