

Understanding the Impact of Management Behavior on Employee Retention

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ABSTRACT

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Employee retention has become a significant challenge for organizations navigating across dynamic labor markets, ever increasing competition, and greatly evolving workforce expectations. This study tries to examine how specific managerial behaviors which exhibit empathy, fairness, communication, and trust shape employee satisfaction, loyalty, and ultimately retention intention. Grounded in Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory, this research explores both the motivational and contextual elements that determine retention outcomes. By analyzing how these behaviors affect employees of different generations, industries, and tenures in Mumbai and Bangalore, the study provides an integrated, evidence-based perspective on leadership effectiveness.

A mixed-method research design was utilized. Quantitative data was collected through structured surveys of 130 employees in Pune and Bangalore, while qualitative data emerged from open-ended responses within the same instrument. Quantitative analysis included descriptive statistics, reliability testing, multiple regression, and ANOVA to assess the predictive power of managerial behaviors and contextual variations. Qualitative data were thematically analyzed to capture experiences, contrasting perspectives, and the nuanced meanings employees ascribe to managerial behaviors.

Findings show significant variations in how managerial behavior is perceived across age groups, job roles, and levels of professional experience. Younger employees emphasized empathy and emotional connection as key retention drivers, whereas experienced professionals placed greater value on fairness, transparency, and structured leadership. Sectoral differences were also observed, with government sector employees associating retention more with job security and process fairness, while private sector respondents highlighted trust, empathy, and communication as critical factors. Thematic analysis identified four core patterns: (1) trust-building during critical moments, (2) fairness as a baseline expectation, (3) empathy as a driver of loyalty, and (4) communication as a key leadership competency.

While relational leadership behaviors such as empathy and communication strongly predict retention, their impact is not universal. The presence of contrasting voices underscores that directive leadership can be equally effective in contexts demanding clarity, structure, or high individual self-motivation. This reinforces the notion that leadership effectiveness is context-contingent, shaped by generational priorities, industry norms, and organizational culture.

This study contributes to leadership and HRM scholarship by integrating relational and directive leadership perspectives to explain employee retention dynamics. It offers practical guidance for organizations to design leadership development programs that build empathetic and structured leadership skills, adapt practices to workforce diversity, and reduce attrition through context-sensitive strategies.

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CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction

Every organization, no matter its size or sector, depends on people to make its vision real. Systems, structures, and technology can only go so far; it is the human element that turns plans into performance. This simple truth lies at the heart of one of the most persistent challenges in business — retaining good employees. The ability to attract and keep talented individuals has become not only a matter of operational efficiency but also a key differentiator for organizational success. High turnover drains institutional memory, weakens morale, and imposes heavy financial and cultural costs. What makes this issue complicated is that retention is not shaped by one single factor. Pays, job roles, and career opportunity matter, but research consistently points to a more personal and often overlooked determinant — the behaviour of managers (Herzberg, 1966; Goleman, 1998; Belete et al., 2018).

Employees may join a company for its brand or benefits, but they usually leave because of their managers. The relationship between a leader and their team defines the daily work experience. It sets the tone for engagement, motivation, and belonging. When this relationship is positive — characterized by empathy, fairness, clear communication, and trust — employees are more likely to stay even when external offers arise. But when it is strained or impersonal, attrition becomes inevitable. As Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory

explains, intrinsic motivators such as recognition, respect, and personal growth strongly influence satisfaction, while their absence can lead to disengagement. Similarly, Transformational Leadership Theory emphasizes the power of leaders to inspire and transform employees by demonstrating care, integrity, and individualized attention (Mayer et al., 1995).

This study begins from the understanding, that managerial behavior is not peripheral but central to employee retention. The daily micro-behaviors of leaders — how they give feedback, handle mistakes or even show concern during stress — accumulate into an emotional climate that shapes retention decisions. The modern workplace, with its high expectations and rapid change, places additional pressure on these dynamics. Employees are no longer bound to employers by loyalty alone; they expect meaning, respect, and emotional safety at work (Goleman, 1998). Consequently, managerial empathy and fairness have become just as vital as technical competence.

At the same time, the study recognizes that the picture is not one-dimensional. What one employee experiences as supportive leadership, another may perceive as intrusive or unnecessary. Leadership effectiveness depends on context, culture, and personal priorities. Younger employees, for example, tend to value empathy, recognition, and growth opportunities, while older employees may prioritize stability, predictability, and fairness (Colquitt et al., 2001; Avolio et al., 2009). Industry conditions also matter. In fast-paced private sectors, where change and competition are constant, leadership behaviors that

promote trust and communication can offset instability and stress. In public or government roles, where job security is higher, employees might view managerial empathy as secondary to procedural clarity.

Understanding these contrasting voices — not as noise but as insight — forms a central focus of this research. The idea that “one leadership style fits all” is neither practical nor supported by evidence. As Wang and Guan (2018) argue, leadership impact must be understood through situational adaptability; leaders who can flex between directive and empathetic approaches often build more resilient teams. Similarly, Du et al. (2020) found that while transformational leadership encourages engagement, directive clarity remains essential in high-pressure environments. These findings underscore the need to view managerial behavior not as a single construct but as a continuum of relational and structural factors influencing retention.

In this context, communication plays a bridging role. Empathy alone is invisible until it is expressed. Fairness remains theoretical until communicated clearly and consistently. Communication converts managerial intent into employee perception. It shapes whether a message of care or fairness is felt as genuine or performative. Employees often evaluate not just what managers say but how they say it — tone, timing, and authenticity all matter. Effective communication thus acts as the link between empathy and trust, reinforcing an environment where employees feel seen and valued. As Transformational Leadership

Theory suggests, authentic and transparent communication helps leaders build credibility, which directly influences engagement and loyalty (Mayer et al., 1995).

Another dimension of this study lies in recognizing the emotional texture of retention. Leaving or staying is rarely a purely rational choice. It is often shaped by moments — a word of encouragement during crisis, or an act of public blame. These moments define how employees interpret their organization's values. They also reveal how psychological safety, an often-unspoken element of workplace culture, emerges from leadership behaviour. When employees feel safe to voice ideas, admit errors, or take initiative without fear, they are more likely to identify with the organization's mission and remain committed to it (Mendes et.al., 2024)

This research therefore positions managerial empathy, fairness, communication, and trust as interdependent components of leadership that collectively determine retention intention. It explores how these behaviors interact across different generations, industries, and experience levels, drawing attention to why their impact may differ. For instance, a mid-level manager in a manufacturing firm may value directive leadership, while a creative professional in a start-up may seek autonomy and emotional connection. The study aims to understand not only which behaviors matter most, but also *why* they matter differently to different people.

The purpose of adopting this lens is twofold. First, it contributes to the academic conversation by bridging two complementary theories — Herzberg’s motivational factors and the relational dimensions of transformational leadership. Second, it offers practical insights for organizations navigating the challenge of high turnover. By mapping out how managerial behavior influences retention across varied contexts, the study provides evidence-based guidance for leadership training and HR strategy.

In today’s workplace, where hybrid models and digital communication have blurred the boundaries of supervision, the role of the manager has expanded beyond oversight. Managers are now expected to embody emotional intelligence, cultural sensitivity, and ethical consistency (Goleman, 1998). These evolving expectations make understanding managerial behavior even more critical. Retention, in this sense, becomes a reflection of leadership maturity — the ability to balance empathy with accountability, and vision with presence.

In essence, this introduction establishes the study’s central proposition: managerial behavior is a human factor with measurable consequences. Its impact on employee retention operates not just through systems or incentives but through relationships, emotions, and daily interactions. By weaving together quantitative evidence and qualitative insight, this research aims to present a holistic understanding of how managers shape retention — not through policies alone, but through the simple, everyday acts that define leadership in practice.

1.2 Research Problem

Employee retention has tacitly become one of the toughest challenges many organizations face today. While salary hikes, perks, and career advancement programs certainly matter, they don't always get to the heart of why people stay or why they walk away. What often tips the balance is the daily experience employees have with their managers. A manager's behavior — how they listen, how fair they are, how they communicate, and how much they can be trusted — shapes whether people feel supported, valued, and motivated to remain with an organization (Avolio et al., 2009; Goleman, 1998; Mayer et al., 1995).

Despite this being widely acknowledged, many organizations still approach retention primarily as a compensation or policy issue. Leadership development programs often focus on broad, generic skills rather than on specific behaviors proven to influence loyalty and commitment. Even more, they often ignore how context matters. Employees from different generations, industries, and career stages don't all respond to leadership in the same way (Lyons & Kuron, 2014). What one group sees as empathetic leadership, another may view as unnecessary hand-holding.

Another layer of complexity is the leadership style itself. While much of the literature celebrates empathetic and transformational leadership, there's evidence that directive leadership can also work well — especially in environments where people value structure

and clarity (Schaubroeck et al., 2017; Wang & Guan, 2018). But this nuance is often missing in retention strategies, leaving a gap between theory and real-world practice.

This research seeks to explore that gap by examining how empathy, fairness, communication, and trust influence employee retention — and how relational and directive leadership approaches might intersect differently across generations, industries, and experience levels in India.

1.3 Purpose of Research

This research is focused on understanding how managerial behavior influences employee retention in a more real and practical way than policy documents or leadership models often reflect. Many organizations focus on pay structures or benefits to retain people, but what often matters most is how employees experience their managers every day — whether they feel heard, treated fairly, supported, and able to trust their leaders (Goleman, 1998; Colquitt et al., 2001; Mayer et al., 1995).

This study aims to explore how specific behaviors — empathy, fairness, communication, and trust — shape employees' decisions to stay or leave. It goes a step further by acknowledging that not all employees respond to leadership in the same way. Generational expectations, industry contexts, and career stages create different lenses through which leadership is experienced (Lyons & Kuron, 2014).

By bringing together relational and directive leadership perspectives, the research seeks to uncover how these approaches work in real workplace settings in India. Ultimately, the goal is to provide organizations with insights they can actually use — to build leadership practices that are not only effective but meaningful to the people they lead (Avolio et al., 2009; Schaubroeck et al., 2017).

1.4 Significance of the Study

- This study is significant both academically and practically. Academically, it contributes to literature on managerial and organizational behavior and HR management by providing a data-driven analysis of empathy's impact on retention (Belete et al., 2018; Kurniawaty et al., 2019). Practically, the findings offer organizations a roadmap to:
 - Develop leadership insights to design training tailored to workforce diversity and contextual needs, moving beyond generic programs.
 - Implement retention strategies that address employees' relational and emotional needs
 - Mitigate financial and operational costs associated with turnover

1.5 Research Purpose and Questions

Building on the objectives outlined above, this research is guided by the following questions:

1. Does empathy as a managerial trait impact an employee's intention to stay with an organization?
2. How do employees across different generations perceive and respond to managerial behavior?
3. What is the relationship between perceived managerial support and employee job satisfaction and loyalty?
4. How do factors such as industry, job role, and career experience affect the impact of managerial behavior on retention?
5. Which leadership competencies should organizations prioritize in training programs to enhance employee retention based on employee feedback?

CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Employee retention has long been at the heart of organizational research, and managerial behavior consistently surfaces as a decisive factor in whether employees choose to stay or leave. Classic theories like *The Motivation to Work* by Frederick Herzberg laid the foundation by distinguishing between motivators—such as recognition, achievement, and growth—and hygiene factors like supervision and working conditions. Both, crucially, are shaped by how managers interact with their teams. Years later, Transformational leadership added a richer layer to this understanding. Empathy, trust, and individualized consideration are no longer “soft” qualities; they have become cornerstones of leadership that influence commitment and loyalty (Avolio et al., 2009).

Modern research builds on these ideas and points to the real impact of everyday managerial behavior on employee decisions. Studies have consistently shown that employees value managers who listen, communicate clearly, treat people fairly, and create psychological safety at work. Emotional intelligence, in particular, has emerged as a strong predictor of how employees perceive leadership (Goleman, 1998; Joseph & Newman, 2010; Harms & Credé, 2010). In practice, this translates into higher engagement, stronger morale, and ultimately, lower turnover. Even during periods of organizational uncertainty—such as restructuring or economic slowdowns—empathetic leadership has been shown to act as a buffer against attrition (Coronado-Maldonado, 2023; Tian et al., 2020).

However, the literature is not unanimous. Alongside the dominant support for relational leadership, there is a quieter but persistent line of research that highlights the effectiveness of directive leadership in specific contexts. In some high power-distance environments or industries that require structure and precision, employees value clarity, rules, and strong direction (Wang & Guan, 2018; Lee et al., 2018). Du et al. (2020) found that directive leadership can reduce attrition when employees are already self-motivated. This creates an interesting tension: what works for one segment of the workforce may not resonate with another.

Generational differences add another layer to this complexity. Younger employees often place greater importance on empathy and open communication, while older cohorts lean toward fairness and consistency over emotional engagement. Industry-specific factors—such as the relative job security in government roles versus private sector competition—also shape how leadership behaviors are experienced and interpreted. These nuances point to an evolving understanding of leadership, where neither empathy nor direction alone can fully address retention challenges.

Taken together, the literature suggests that leadership is less about choosing a single style and more about understanding context, timing, and the workforce itself. Empathetic and transformational behaviors have wide support, but they are not universally effective. Directive approaches, while less celebrated, hold real value under certain conditions. This intersection between relational and directive leadership forms the backdrop for the present

research, which seeks to explore not only whether leadership matters for retention, but how and when it does across different generations, industries, and career stages.

2.4 Meta-Analytic and Systematic Evidence on Leadership and Retention

When looking across the larger body of research, a clear pattern begins to emerge. Empathy, trust, fairness, and communication keep showing up as central anchors of retention. A wide range of studies—from large multi-country investigations to smaller sector-specific inquiries—report consistent positive links between these managerial behaviors and employees’ willingness to remain with their organization. Empathy, in particular, has been tied to stronger job satisfaction, loyalty, and commitment (Goleman, 1998; Coronado-Maldonado, 2023). Fairness and transparent processes build a sense of safety and predictability, while trust helps create the kind of psychological security that makes employees less likely to leave (Mayer et al., 1995).

But the meta-picture isn’t one-sided. As much as the literature celebrates relational leadership, it also contains quieter, contrasting evidence. Several studies suggest that directive leadership—often seen as less “people-centered”—can be equally effective under the right circumstances. Industries with high structure and precision, or roles that involve clearly defined outputs, sometimes favor directive leadership styles. Employees in such contexts may appreciate clarity, structure, and firm decision-making more than emotional connection (Wang & Guan, 2018; Du et al., 2020).

Generational dynamics also come into play. Younger employees tend to lean toward empathetic leadership, often equating it with respect and inclusion, whereas older employees, particularly those in long-tenured roles, may value fairness and consistency above warmth. Context matters. What motivates one segment may barely register for another. The overall evidence suggests that leadership effectiveness is not absolute; it is context-contingent. Empathetic behaviors have broad appeal and strong empirical support, but directive approaches shouldn't be dismissed. Instead, they may act as a stabilizing force in certain organizational settings. This duality—relational warmth on one hand and structured direction on the other—is a critical lens for understanding how leadership shapes retention in real workplaces.

Table 2.0 : Meta-analyses and their relevance to this study

Author(s) & Year	Scope of Review / Meta-Analysis	Key Leadership Dimension	Main Findings on Retention or Turnover	Relevance to Current Study
Meyer et al. (2002)	50+ studies on organizational commitment	Transformational & Affective Commitment	Found strong positive link between transformational leadership and retention through affective commitment.	Supports link between empathetic leadership and long-term employee commitment.
Griffeth et al. (2000)	Meta-analysis of turnover predictors	Supervisory support, fairness	Perceived supervisor support significantly reduces turnover intentions.	Reinforces fairness and trust as retention drivers.
Ng (2017)	Systematic review on generational workforce	Leadership adaptability	Younger workers respond better to empathetic, participative leadership.	Highlights generational difference observed in current study.

Hoch et al. (2018)	Meta-analysis of transformational vs transactional leadership	Transformational Leadership	Transformational leadership correlates strongly with job satisfaction and retention.	Validates use of Transformational Leadership Theory as framework.
Eagly et al. (1995)	145 empirical studies on gender and leadership	Empathy and relational leadership	Female leadership styles with higher empathy predicted higher retention rates.	Supports empathy as a gender-neutral but vital trait.
Wang & Guan (2018)	Cross-cultural meta-analysis	Directive vs Empathetic Leadership	Directive leadership effective in high power-distance cultures, empathy stronger in low power-distance ones.	Explains contrasting voices in Indian context.
Du et al. (2020)	Systematic review of leadership adaptability	Leadership Flexibility	Blended leadership approaches yield best retention outcomes.	Reinforces current study's finding that motivation and structure coexist.

2.5 Research Gap:

Most existing research paints a clear picture of why empathetic and transformational leadership behaviors build trust and loyalty, but it often stops there. The quieter, contrasting evidence that directive leadership can also support retention in specific contexts remains underexplored. This imbalance leaves a gap in understanding not just whether leadership matters, but which leadership behaviors work best in different environments.

Current studies seldom examine how empathy, fairness, communication, and trust interact with structural or directive leadership in shaping employees' intentions to stay. Few address how these dynamics shift across generations, industries, and career stages, where expectations can be worlds apart. This lack of contextual nuance limits how organizations can design retention strategies that truly fit their workforce.

This study steps into that space, bringing both relational and directive leadership perspectives together to explain retention through a more balanced, grounded lens.

CHAPTER III:
METHODOLOGY

3.1 Overview of the Research Problem

Employee retention today is far more intricate than a simple equation of salary, benefits, or convenience. What increasingly determines whether an employee stays or leaves is the texture of their everyday managerial experience—the sense of being treated with fairness, heard with patience, and supported with consistency (Goleman, 1998; Colquitt et al., 2001; Mayer et al., 1995). Modern workplaces demand not only functional leadership but also emotional depth. When managers demonstrate empathy, communicate clearly, and build trust through everyday actions, employees often form stronger attachments to their teams and, by extension, their organizations. Conversely, when these behaviors are missing, even the most talented professionals begin to disengage quietly, long before they formally resign.

The challenge, however, lies in the inconsistency of leadership expectations. What motivates one employee might frustrate another. Research on leadership and retention often assumes a universal response to empathetic or transformational leadership, yet evidence increasingly shows that context shapes how these behaviors are received (Avolio et al., 2009; Hoch et al., 2018). In high-pressure industries or hierarchical environments, employees may value direction, precision, and decisiveness over emotional understanding. Here, directive leadership—long considered rigid—can, in fact, create stability and predictability (Wang & Guan, 2018; Du et al., 2020). It fulfills a different kind of

psychological need: clarity and control. This is particularly evident in roles where mistakes are costly or where structure underpins success.

Generational differences also complicate the picture. Younger workers, shaped by collaborative and feedback-oriented cultures, tend to expect openness and empathy from their managers. In contrast, older generations, whose professional identities were formed in more hierarchical settings, often prioritize fairness and job security over relational warmth (Ng, 2017; Purvanova et al., 2016). These differing priorities make retention a nuanced, context-dependent phenomenon rather than a one-size-fits-all formula. This study directly engages with that complexity. It investigates how empathy, fairness, communication, and trust influence retention across varying professional realities, exploring how contrasting leadership styles—empathetic and directive—coexist, conflict, and ultimately shape employee decisions to stay or leave. By situating these dynamics within diverse workplace contexts, it fills a critical gap in understanding the real-world interplay between leadership behavior and retention intention.

3.2 Operationalization of Theoretical Constructs

This research builds on Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory, which together provide a framework for understanding how managerial behaviors shape employee experiences and ultimately influence retention. Herzberg (1966) distinguished between motivators—factors that create satisfaction and drive engagement—and hygiene factors—those whose absence causes dissatisfaction but whose presence alone does not ensure motivation. Within this lens, managerial behavior can operate as both. For example, fairness and communication act as hygiene elements that prevent frustration, while empathy and trust function as deeper motivators that create meaning, belonging, and emotional investment. Transformational Leadership Theory (Avolio et al., 2009) adds a complementary layer, emphasizing how leaders inspire, guide, and transform employees through individualized consideration, vision, and relational authenticity. When combined, these theories reveal that retention is not a static outcome but an ongoing emotional and psychological process influenced by everyday managerial conduct.

To translate these theoretical insights into measurable variables, four interrelated leadership behaviors were operationalized—empathy, fairness, communication, and trust. These constructs capture the emotional and behavioral dimensions of leadership that directly affect how employees interpret their work environment and relationship with their managers. They are not abstract ideals but observable patterns reflected in tone, response, decision-making, and relational intent. Empathy represents the emotional bridge between

leaders and employees. It was conceptualized as the manager's ability to sense, understand, and respond appropriately to employees' feelings and situations (Goleman, 1998). This goes beyond surface-level concern or professional courtesy; it is about attunement—the quiet but powerful act of listening with genuine interest. When employees perceive empathy, they often report greater psychological safety, resilience, and loyalty. However, when empathy feels performative or inconsistent, it loses its value and may even deepen cynicism. In this study, empathy was measured through Likert-scale items reflecting perceived emotional understanding, approachability, and supportiveness, supplemented with open-ended responses that captured how employees experienced empathy in moments of stress or recognition.

Fairness, the second construct, captures perceptions of equity, procedural justice, and transparency within managerial decisions. Employees continuously evaluate whether promotions, feedback, and workload distribution feel just and unbiased. According to Colquitt et al. (2001), fairness acts as a stabilizing force in the psychological contract between employer and employee. It ensures that even when outcomes aren't favorable, processes are respected. Within Herzberg's framework, fairness primarily functions as a hygiene factor—its absence breeds dissatisfaction and mistrust, but its presence creates the foundation for higher-order motivation. Survey items explored dimensions such as fairness in recognition, clarity in decision processes, and the perceived impartiality of managerial conduct.

Communication was defined as the quality and frequency of information exchange, encompassing clarity, transparency, and feedback responsiveness. In organizational life, communication is the medium through which all other leadership behaviors are interpreted. Without consistent communication, empathy remains invisible, and fairness can be misunderstood. Transformational leadership theory positions communication as the primary vehicle for vision articulation and individualized engagement (Avolio et al., 2009). In this study, communication included both top-down and bottom-up channels, emphasizing openness and the degree to which employees felt heard. Participants evaluated not only message content but also tone, accessibility, and timing—factors often overlooked in quantitative leadership assessments.

Trust, the fourth construct, represents the psychological and relational glue that binds teams together. It encompasses perceptions of integrity, reliability, and confidence in a manager's decisions (Mayer et al., 1995). Trust is often built in moments of vulnerability—how a leader reacts to failure, how they handle accountability, or how consistently they align words with actions. In workplaces where trust is strong, employees report greater engagement, lower stress, and stronger intentions to remain even when challenges arise. Conversely, broken trust accelerates disengagement and quiet quitting. The survey operationalized trust through items assessing perceived dependability, consistency, and safety in raising concerns, complemented by qualitative reflections on past managerial actions that shaped trust.

Crucially, these constructs were not treated as isolated; they interact dynamically. Empathy informs fairness, communication sustains trust, and trust amplifies empathy's impact. The design of this study recognizes that retention emerges from these interwoven relationships rather than from individual traits in isolation. Moreover, perceptions of these behaviors shift depending on organizational culture and personal expectations. Transformational leadership emphasizes relational warmth, connection, and inspiration (Avolio et al., 2009), while directive leadership—sometimes undervalued—emphasizes structure, discipline, and accountability (Wang & Guan, 2018; Du et al., 2020). Both approaches can coexist; their effectiveness depends on context. For instance, an empathetic manager in a high-pressure technical environment might be perceived as indecisive, whereas a directive leader in a creative team might be viewed as stifling. These contrasts make the operationalization of constructs situationally fluid, inviting analysis not just of what behaviors matter but how and when they resonate. By capturing both relational and structural dimensions, this study moves beyond binary categorizations of leadership style. Its operational framework reflects the reality that retention is a dialogue between perception and practice—where empathy meets expectation, and where fairness, communication, and trust transform managerial behavior into a lived experience. This nuanced approach allows the study to trace how leadership behaviors influence not just statistical outcomes but emotional connections, showing that managerial actions form the silent architecture of retention across generations, industries, and organizational cultures.

3.3 Research Purpose and Questions

The purpose of this thesis is to determine how empathetic managerial behavior affects employee retention across generations and industries. The study addresses five research questions:

1. Does empathy as a managerial trait influence employee intention to stay?
2. How do generational differences affect perceptions of managerial behavior?
3. What is the relationship between perceived managerial support and loyalty?
4. How do industry, role, and experience moderate this relationship?
5. Which leadership competencies should be prioritized for retention?

3.4 Research Design

This research adopts a mixed-methods framework to understand how managerial behaviors shape employee retention intentions, recognizing that human behavior rarely fits neatly into numbers alone or only lived stories. Retention is emotional in places, rational in others, and always influenced by the quality of relationships employees share with their managers. A purely quantitative design, while useful for revealing trends, would have flattened the rich personal experiences that give those trends meaning. Likewise, a purely qualitative approach may have captured sentiment but struggled to establish measurable patterns and predictive value. The decision to combine methods was therefore deliberate—rooted in the belief that the truth about why people stay or leave sits somewhere between data and voice,

between measurable association and interpretive understanding (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The quantitative strand functions as the structural backbone of this study. Participants responded to a structured questionnaire using established Likert-style items to rate managerial behaviors across four constructs—empathy, fairness, communication, and trust—alongside their intention to stay. These variables were not chosen arbitrarily; they originate from two influential theoretical traditions that frame managerial influence on morale and turnover behavior. First, Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory positions recognition, emotional respect, and interpersonal quality as motivators that contribute to positive employee experience, while absence of fairness and clarity leads to dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1966; Colquitt et al., 2001). Second, Transformational Leadership Theory emphasizes individualized care, emotional attunement, and inspirational support as key mechanisms for building employee commitment (Avolio et al., 2009; Goleman, 1998; Mayer et al., 1995). Quantitative analysis through descriptive statistics, correlation, regression, and ANOVA allows these theoretical expectations to be tested. It reveals not only the existence of relationships, but also their strength, direction, and the conditions under which they hold true.

However, numbers alone would have missed the nuance. Even a strong correlation cannot tell us what empathy felt like for someone struggling through a missed deadline, nor can it convey the sting of being unsupported during a crisis. For that reason, a qualitative strand

was built alongside the numerical analysis, not beneath it. Open-ended questions invited participants to describe their experiences, without guiding their tone or limiting their vocabulary. These comments provided context and emotion—not sentimental fluff, but lived detail. One respondent might recall a manager standing by them in a difficult team moment. Another might describe a supervisor who publicly blamed them, marking the beginning of a quiet exit. These stories show where loyalty is born and where it breaks, adding weight and spirit to the statistics (Ng, 2017; Purvanova et al., 2016).

A convergent mixed-method structure was chosen to allow both forms of evidence to coexist while retaining their independence during collection. Quantitative and qualitative data were gathered simultaneously, analyzed separately, and then examined together during interpretation. This sequence respects the strengths of each tradition: quantitative precision and qualitative depth. The process also guards against one data type overshadowing the other, reducing the risk of researcher bias. It creates a discipline around listening—to both the measured pattern and the lived narrative—and asking whether they align, contradict, or blend in interesting ways. This triangulation strengthens internal validity and widens interpretive depth, a method particularly suited for organizational behavior research where emotional complexity and structural patterns usually interact (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Context played an important role in shaping this design as well. The study was conducted in Indian metropolitan workplaces, primarily in Pune and Bangalore, cities representing a

blend of traditional industries and rapidly evolving technology-driven environments. The workforce here spans generations—from seasoned professionals raised in stability-driven employment cultures to younger, mobile talent shaped by competitive opportunities and different expectations of leadership. Capturing both voices required a methodology that could detect patterns while also honoring diversity in perception. A linear design would not have been able to hold all of these subtleties; nor would a wholly narrative approach have allowed a structured understanding of the influence of these variables across groups (Ng, 2017; Purvanova et al., 2016).

The analysis process followed the logic of this design. Quantitative data went through descriptive analysis to identify baseline patterns, followed by inferential tests—correlation to explore relational strength, regression to determine predictive capability, and ANOVA to understand group differences across generational, industrial, and experiential lines. These statistical tools help move beyond intuition into evidence, revealing whether empathy truly predicts retention, whether fairness matters more in some sectors than others, and where communication rises above other factors. Meanwhile, qualitative responses underwent thematic coding. Instead of forcing language into rigid categories, coding allowed themes to emerge—trust forming in moments of shared responsibility, resentment building in silence, appreciation appearing through patient guidance, and at times admiration for firm but fair leadership. These themes reflect everyday workplace realities more clearly than broad categories ever could.

Both streams were interpreted side by side. Where numbers suggested empathy predicted retention intention, narratives explained when and why that happened. Where older employees placed less weight on empathetic leadership, qualitative comments revealed their emphasis on stability, propriety, and fairness over emotional support. This mutual reinforcement—and occasional tension—between data types enriched the findings and gave them grounding beyond surface measurement.

Importantly, this research design also accepts leadership as context-sensitive. A leader in a manufacturing plant does not operate in the same cultural rhythm as a leader in a technology startup. An early-career employee navigating the anxieties of their first corporate role perceives leadership behavior differently than someone twenty years in, confident in their skill and grounded in expectations formed long before Gen Z entered the workforce. The mixed-method approach honors these contextual shifts instead of ironing them out into one generic truth (Wang & Guan, 2018; Du et al., 2020).

Finally, this design reflects a philosophical stance as much as a technical one: retention is as much an emotional outcome as it is a rational calculation. People stay for meaning, respect, safety, and connection just as they stay for security and predictability. A methodology that respects this emotional dimension alongside structural variables is essential for doing justice to the complexity of workplace life. Numbers give structure; voices give soul. Together, they form a portrait rather than a snapshot. In that way, this mixed-methods design does more than meet academic standards—it mirrors the lived

rhythm of work itself, where spreadsheets and conversations coexist, where policy meets humanity, and where small managerial moments can quietly shape long-term decisions.

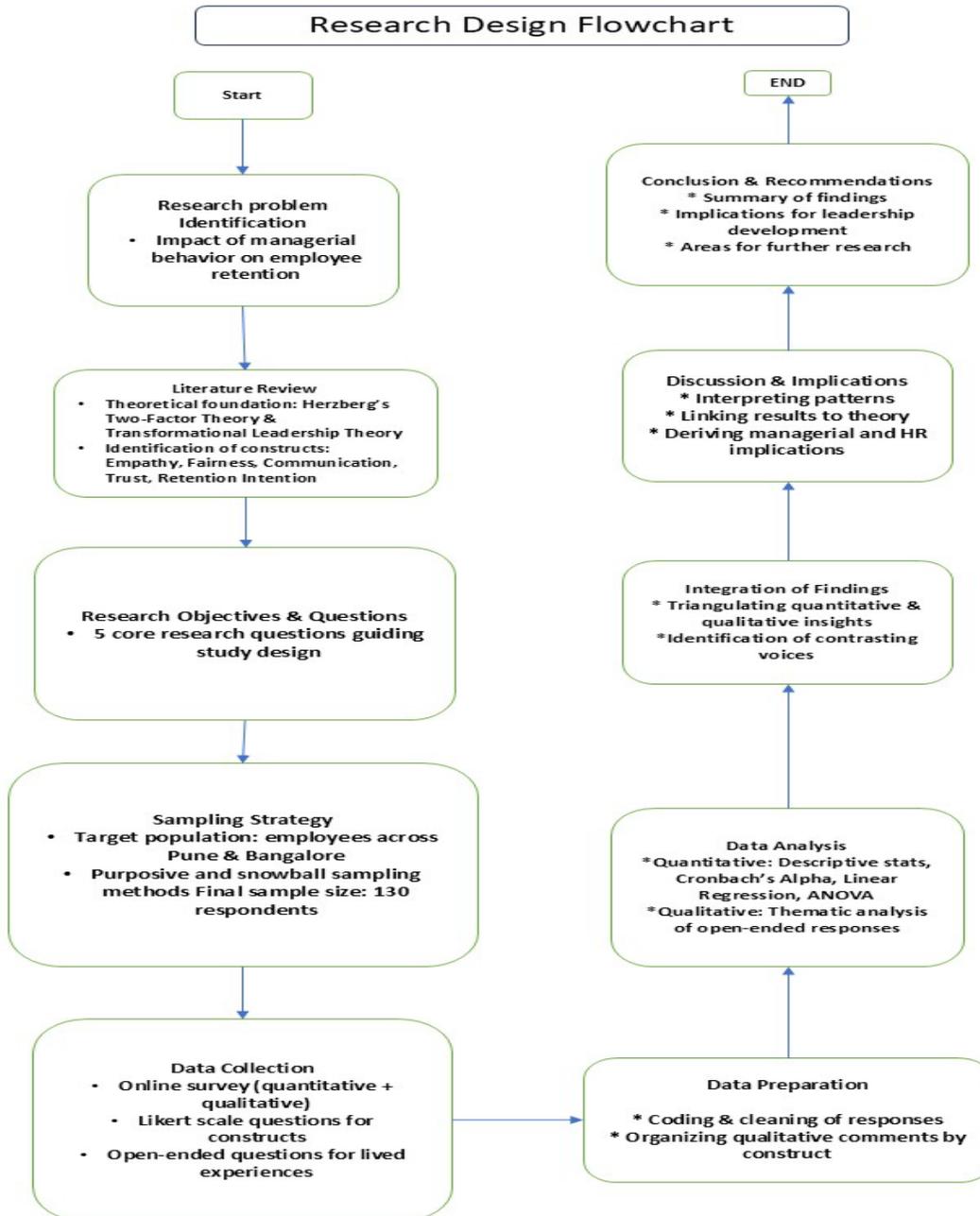


Figure 3.0: Research design flowchart

3.5 Population and Sample

The study focused on employees based in Pune and Bangalore, two of India's most dynamic employment ecosystems. Both cities represent diverse industrial and organizational landscapes—ranging from information technology and manufacturing to banking, services, and creative enterprises. This diversity made them ideal sites for examining how managerial behaviors are interpreted across contexts. Pune, known for its blend of traditional industries and emerging start-ups, often reflects a balance between hierarchical management and evolving collaborative cultures. Bangalore, on the other hand, stands as a hub of innovation and cross-cultural workforces, offering perspectives from both Indian and multinational organizations. Together, they create a realistic snapshot of India's contemporary workplace, where generational expectations, leadership philosophies, and retention patterns coexist in tension and transition.

The target population consisted of working professionals across multiple functions—ranging from individual contributors to middle and senior managers. The goal was not to limit the study to a single industry or job level but to capture how employees at different stages of their career perceive empathy, fairness, communication, and trust. These constructs, grounded in Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory, are deeply shaped by professional exposure, organizational maturity, and role expectations (Herzberg, 1966; Avolio et al., 2009).

A snowball sampling method was chosen to reach participants across various networks and industries. Given the sensitivity of topics like managerial behavior and job satisfaction, this approach encouraged trust and voluntary participation. It also facilitated access to respondents in otherwise inaccessible professional circles. The final sample size of 130 was sufficient to provide both statistical reliability for quantitative analysis and rich diversity for qualitative insights. This size balanced depth and breadth—large enough to reveal significant patterns, yet intimate enough to preserve the human texture behind the numbers (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Such a mix of participants allowed the study to uncover the contrasting leadership voices that define modern workplaces—where some employees prioritize empathy and recognition, while others value clarity, direction, and accountability (Wang & Guan, 2018; Du et al., 2020). By intentionally selecting a heterogeneous population, the study ensured that findings reflected the true complexity of retention decisions across generations, industries, and organizational structures.

Target sample size: 100; actual responses: 130

3.6 Participant Selection

Participants for this study were selected using a snowball sampling method, which allowed the research to reach employees across different industries, functions, and experience levels in Pune and Bangalore. These cities were chosen deliberately—they reflect India’s evolving employment landscape, combining stable, structured workplaces with fast-moving, innovation-driven organizations. This mix created the right conditions to capture multiple perspectives on managerial behavior and its influence on retention.

The selection focused on individuals who had at least one year of work experience, ensuring they had meaningful exposure to managerial styles and organizational culture. This was important because perceptions of leadership take shape over time, not in the first few weeks of a job. It also allowed for insights from both early-career employees, who often value empathy and emotional support, and more experienced professionals, who may lean toward fairness, structure, and clear expectations (Goleman, 1998; Wang & Guan, 2018; Du et al., 2020).

A key consideration in selecting participants was to intentionally seek variation across job roles, generations, and industries. Leadership is not experienced uniformly, and the study aimed to reflect that complexity. Some participants spoke about managers who listen and encourage; others respected leaders who set firm boundaries and offered clarity rather than warmth. By bringing these contrasting voices together, the study captures the nuanced ways employees interpret leadership behavior.

This approach to participant selection wasn't only practical but also strategic. A more homogenous group would have offered less contrast, and much of the story would have been lost. Instead, this sample creates space to examine how different kinds of leadership behaviors resonate—or fail to resonate—across different contexts, deepening the overall analysis of retention drivers.

3.7 Instrumentation

To explore how managerial behavior shapes retention, this study relied on a carefully constructed survey instrument designed to capture both the measurable and the felt dimensions of leadership. Leadership is not experienced only in policies or performance conversations; it unfolds in tone, timing, pauses, and unresolved tensions in everyday interactions. With that understanding, the instrument blended two complementary components: structured Likert-scale items to quantify perceptions, and open-ended prompts to reveal personal experiences that statistics alone cannot fully express.

The closed-ended portion included items aligned with four core constructs—empathy, fairness, communication, and trust. These dimensions were not chosen casually. They reflect fundamental leadership attributes consistently linked to employee morale and organizational commitment in prior research (Goleman, 1998; Colquitt et al., 2001; Mayer et al., 1995). Each construct relates strongly to Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which underscores how interpersonal recognition, respect, and equitable treatment act as motivators while the absence of fairness and clarity creates dissatisfaction (Herzberg,

1966). These items also draw from Transformational Leadership Theory, where individualized consideration, ethical conduct, and open communication strengthen psychological ties between leaders and employees (Avolio et al., 2009).

Likert-scale questions helped produce reliable quantitative data, allowing for statistical testing across employee groups with varying professional backgrounds and generational identities. The items asked respondents to evaluate how often their managers demonstrated understanding, clarity, fairness, and consistency. These responses formed the backbone for correlation and regression analyses used later in the study.

Yet, measurement alone is never enough in leadership research. Leadership moments carry tone, memory, disappointment, pride, and sometimes quiet gratitude—elements that rarely fit inside a number. To capture this nuance, the instrument also incorporated open-ended questions. These prompts invited employees to describe leadership experiences in their own voice, whether a moment of unexpected support, a painful breach of trust, or an instance where firm guidance earned respect more than empathy would have. Some participants spoke about managers who made space for emotional safety; others shared appreciation for leaders who communicated boundaries and accountability first, believing that empathy without structure can feel indulgent or misplaced. These contrasts reflect a broader truth: leadership preferences are shaped by personality, generational values, and workplace culture (Wang & Guan, 2018; Du et al., 2020).

Before deployment, the instrument underwent a small pilot. Not a box-ticking exercise, but a genuine calibration. Feedback helped refine wording, adjust item clarity, and ensure respondents from different industries and career stages could engage meaningfully. This step strengthened content validity and helped avoid ambiguity. Adjustments were subtle but important—phrases softened, examples clarified, and a few prompts widened to leave room for reflection rather than force direction.

By combining structured metrics with open narrative space, the instrument offered a balanced platform: stable enough for statistical rigor, yet fluid enough to let human experience speak. The approach honored the idea that retention is emotional as much as rational. Employees stay not only because numbers align but because something in the workplace feels right, safe, respectful—or because it does not. The full questionnaire appears in Appendix A and stands as both a measurement tool and a window into lived workplace reality.

3.8 Data Collection Procedures

Data were collected through a structured online survey combining Likert-scale questions with open-ended prompts. This approach made it possible to gather both quantifiable trends and personal reflections from employees across industries in Pune and Bangalore. The goal was not only to identify statistical patterns but also to understand how employees articulate their experiences with managerial behavior in their own words. The responses were

exported for analysis in Microsoft Excel and jamovi, ensuring consistency and transparency in processing.

3.9 Data Analysis

The study used a multi-layered analytical strategy to make sense of both the numerical and narrative data gathered from participants. The goal was not merely to generate statistics but to uncover patterns that explain how managerial behavior shapes employee retention on both rational and emotional levels. Since this research follows a mixed-methods convergent design, quantitative and qualitative data were analyzed separately before being integrated to reveal converging or contrasting insights (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018). Each form of analysis contributed differently—quantitative methods highlighted measurable relationships, while qualitative insights added voice, depth, and interpretation.

The quantitative analysis began with descriptive statistics to summarize demographic variables and provide an overview of the participant profile, including age, gender, experience level, industry type, and role. This helped contextualize the responses and identify trends in how managerial behaviors were perceived across groups. Following this, correlation analysis was conducted to examine the strength and direction of relationships among the four core constructs—empathy, fairness, communication, and trust—and the dependent variable, retention intention. These correlations offered preliminary evidence

that each managerial behavior influences retention, but in differing magnitudes and combinations (Goleman, 1998; Mayer et al., 1995).

To probe deeper, multiple regression analysis was used to test the predictive power of these constructs collectively. This statistical method determines how much variance in retention intention can be explained by the four independent variables. Regression not only confirms relationships but also highlights which leadership behaviors hold the greatest weight in influencing employee loyalty. For instance, if empathy or communication yields a higher beta coefficient, it implies a stronger predictive role in retention decisions. This process moves beyond surface-level association to indicate which behaviors most meaningfully affect workplace attachment (Colquitt et al., 2001).

The study further employed one-way ANOVA to compare how retention intention differs across generations, job roles, industries, and levels of experience. This test helped identify whether perceptions of managerial behavior—and its subsequent impact—varied significantly between groups. For example, younger employees might perceive empathetic leadership as vital, while senior professionals might respond more positively to fairness and structure (Wang & Guan, 2018; Du et al., 2020). ANOVA thus allowed for the detection of contextual contrasts, enriching the overall interpretation of leadership effectiveness in different organizational settings.

On the qualitative side, open-ended responses were analyzed through thematic coding, following an iterative process of identifying recurring ideas, sentiments, and experiences related to the four constructs. Each narrative was read multiple times to capture tone, emotion, and subtext—what was said directly and what was implied. Emerging themes such as trust-building during challenges, the importance of fair treatment, and empathy as a retention anchor were categorized and connected back to the quantitative findings. This step revealed not only what participants valued but why these behaviors resonated differently depending on context and personality (Goleman, 1998; Mayer et al., 1995).

All quantitative analyses were conducted using Jamovi and Microsoft Excel, which provided flexibility for statistical modeling and data visualization. Qualitative analysis was performed manually and validated through cross-checking to maintain authenticity and interpretive rigor. Together, these methods created a cohesive analytical framework—one that used numbers to detect structure and narratives to supply meaning. By combining precision with perspective, the analysis illuminated both the measurable impact and the human story behind leadership's influence on retention.

3.9 Research Design Limitations

Every empirical study operates within its own set of boundaries, and acknowledging these constraints is vital for ensuring transparency and academic integrity. While this research offers valuable insights into how managerial behaviors shape employee retention, certain methodological and contextual limitations inevitably influence its scope and

generalizability. The sample size, though sufficient for exploratory mixed-method analysis, remains relatively modest. With 130 respondents drawn from Pune and Bangalore, the findings provide a representative view of these key employment hubs but cannot be assumed to reflect the experiences of employees across all Indian regions or industries. Larger, multi-city studies could yield greater statistical robustness and a more diversified understanding of leadership dynamics in varied organizational cultures (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The geographical focus—Pune and Bangalore—was intentional, as these cities represent diverse yet vibrant corporate environments. However, this also introduces a contextual limitation. Work cultures in these cities are more urbanized, technologically inclined, and organizationally progressive compared to smaller towns or traditional sectors. Therefore, employee expectations and managerial behaviors may differ substantially elsewhere. The findings, while relevant to dynamic and evolving industries, must be interpreted with caution when applied to more conventional or rural work settings (Wang & Guan, 2018; Du et al., 2020).

The reliance on self-reported data is another inherent limitation. Surveys depend on participants' honesty and self-awareness, and responses can be influenced by social desirability bias. Employees might downplay negative experiences to appear diplomatic or, conversely, emphasize dissatisfaction when recounting past grievances. As Goleman (1998) and Mayer et al. (1995) note, emotional perception and memory are fluid; how

individuals recall managerial empathy or fairness can shift depending on context, recent experiences, or even mood at the time of response. While the inclusion of open-ended questions helped balance this by capturing emotion-laden narratives, self-reporting still constrains objectivity.

The cross-sectional design of the study further limits the ability to infer causality. While statistical tools such as regression and ANOVA were effective in identifying predictive relationships and group-level variations, they do not establish temporal order—whether leadership behavior precedes or follows changes in retention intention. A longitudinal design could address this gap by tracking employees over time, offering richer insights into how sustained managerial behavior shapes long-term commitment and attrition trends (Colquitt et al., 2001).

In addition, while quantitative reliability testing supported the overall strength of the survey instrument, certain constructs—particularly empathy and trust—showed marginal reliability coefficients. This suggests that these behaviors are deeply subjective and context-dependent, requiring more sophisticated tools or refined item wording in future research. Emotional constructs are notoriously difficult to measure with precision because they blend perception, culture, and interpersonal dynamics (Goleman, 1998). Developing more nuanced measures could enhance accuracy in capturing how these feelings manifest in workplace behavior.

Finally, methodological integration—while a strength—also poses interpretive challenges. Merging statistical trends with narrative insights can introduce analyst bias, as researchers interpret qualitative meaning through theoretical lenses. To mitigate this, triangulation and iterative validation were used, ensuring that quantitative data grounded the qualitative interpretation.

Overall, while these limitations constrain the universality of the findings, they do not undermine the study’s contributions. Instead, they provide direction for future inquiry—toward larger, longitudinal, and multi-contextual research that can more fully capture the evolving relationship between leadership behavior and employee retention in diverse work environments.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter outlined the research methodology adopted to examine how managerial behaviors—specifically empathy, fairness, communication, and trust—influence employee retention within Indian organizational contexts. The chapter has described not just the tools of inquiry but also the reasoning behind them, weaving together theoretical grounding, methodological logic, and practical execution. The study relied on a mixed-method, cross-sectional design, combining the strengths of quantitative analysis with the interpretive depth of qualitative insights. This integration was essential because employee retention is

not a purely statistical construct—it is shaped by individual emotion, context, and lived experience (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

The quantitative framework provided a structured approach to identifying measurable relationships between leadership behaviors and retention intention. Likert-scale items offered a way to quantify perceptions, making it possible to identify patterns across large datasets and establish the strength and direction of associations. Techniques such as descriptive statistics, correlation, regression, and ANOVA were employed to uncover predictive relationships and compare variations across demographic, industrial, and generational subgroups (Wang & Guan, 2018; Du et al., 2020). These statistical tools helped translate intangible human perceptions—trust, fairness, empathy—into analyzable data points, revealing which behaviors most strongly influenced employees’ decisions to stay or consider leaving. For instance, regression analysis clarified which of the four constructs held the greatest predictive value for retention, while ANOVA exposed how these perceptions varied among groups with differing professional experience or generational outlooks.

However, numbers alone cannot fully explain why people respond to leadership in particular ways. To uncover the human dimension beneath these relationships, the research incorporated a qualitative strand through open-ended questions embedded in the same survey. These narrative responses allowed employees to describe, in their own words, how managerial behaviors shaped their day-to-day experiences. Using thematic coding, the

study identified recurring patterns—moments when empathy inspired loyalty, when fairness restored trust, and when communication bridged distance or misunderstanding. This interpretive analysis provided emotional texture and psychological realism to the numerical findings, reinforcing the understanding that leadership effectiveness is not universal but contextual.

The theoretical foundation for this methodology rests on Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory. Herzberg’s framework conceptualizes managerial behavior as both a motivator and a hygiene factor—its absence can cause dissatisfaction, but its presence can deeply motivate and retain employees (Herzberg, 1966). Transformational Leadership Theory, meanwhile, emphasizes how relational leadership—through vision, empathy, and individualized consideration—transforms both attitudes and commitment (Avolio et al., 2009; Mayer et al., 1995). Together, these frameworks justify a methodology that examines both the structural and emotional dimensions of retention. They also explain why contrasting leadership styles can coexist: one employee may seek relational warmth, another may crave directive clarity. The methodology, by capturing both quantitative regularities and qualitative exceptions, honors these contrasting voices rather than flattening them into uniformity.

The sample—employees from Pune and Bangalore—was chosen purposefully for its representational diversity. These cities, known as major employment and innovation centers, provided access to a workforce spanning multiple industries, functions, and

organizational cultures. Such variety ensured exposure to different leadership models, from traditional hierarchical systems to modern, participative approaches. Purposive and snowball sampling were employed to reach a broad spectrum of participants, ensuring inclusion of multiple generations, job roles, and tenure levels. This diversity enhanced the richness of both quantitative and qualitative data, allowing for more nuanced analysis of how perceptions shift with age, experience, or industry (Ng, 2017; Purvanova et al., 2016).

Yet, the research design is not without limitations. The sample size, while adequate for exploratory mixed-method research, limits the extent to which findings can be generalized. The geographical concentration—though representing two diverse urban hubs—may not capture the nuances of smaller cities or rural work cultures. Additionally, the use of self-reported data introduces subjectivity; participants' responses are shaped by memory, emotion, and social desirability (Goleman, 1998; Colquitt et al., 2001). The cross-sectional design further restricts causal inference, as it captures a single moment in time rather than long-term behavioral evolution. Future studies adopting longitudinal or experimental designs could better trace how leadership behaviors influence retention trajectories over months or years (Du et al., 2020).

Despite these constraints, the design offers substantial methodological strength. It brings together analytical structure and interpretive sensitivity, balancing objectivity with depth. The mixed-methods approach uncovers both the measurable impact of leadership behavior and the subjective meanings employees attach to it, producing a more holistic view of

retention dynamics. This chapter thus establishes a rigorous and adaptable foundation for subsequent analysis, ensuring that the results and discussions that follow are grounded not only in empirical validity but also in the emotional and contextual realities of the workplace.

In essence, this methodology positions leadership as a multifaceted force—quantifiable in its effects but deeply human in its essence. By combining statistical precision with narrative insight, it enables this study to illuminate not only what managerial behaviors affect retention, but why they matter, to whom, and under what circumstances. This integrative approach sets the stage for a richer exploration of leadership’s role in shaping employee commitment and loyalty, providing both scholarly relevance and practical significance for modern organizations.

CHAPTER IV:

RESULTS

4.1 Research Question One

Does empathy as a managerial trait have an impact on employees' intention to stay with an organization?

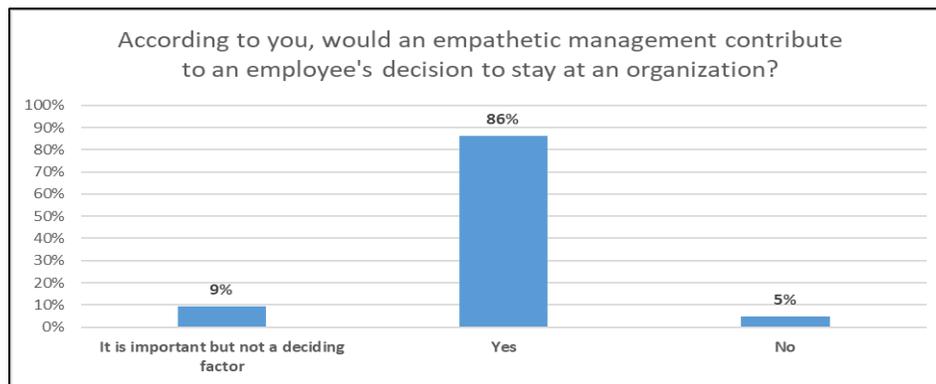


Figure 4.1 : Perceived importance of empathetic management in an employee's decision to remain at an organization

Survey responses revealed a strong association between empathetic managerial behavior and retention. A majority of participants (86%) indicated that managers who demonstrated supportiveness, fairness, and respect increased the willingness of their subordinates to remain with their organization. Even those who denied it as a contributing factor still made a point to call it important. Respondents also emphasized that the behaviour of the immediate manager during conflict resolution, mistakes, or stress situations built trust and loyalty towards the organization. 5% of the responders indicated that they do not consider empathetic management plays any role in an employees' decision to stay or quit a job.

Qualitative Insights for research question one

Below are some comments received in the open ended response section for research question one

- “I felt valued when my manager checked in on me after I missed a deadline instead of blaming me.”
- “Empathy is not about excuses — it’s about understanding what’s behind my mistakes and helping me improve.”
- “I stayed with my last company even when I had better offers because my manager genuinely cared about my personal growth.”
- “Empathy of a manager is a desirable trait but our job is ultimately our responsibility. When a person has responsibilities job security and availability of opportunities rule the game”

These responses reveal that employees interpret managerial empathy in very subtle ways. For many, empathy is tied to feeling valued, supported, and understood, especially during challenging moments. It can strengthen loyalty and trust, sometimes even outweighing better external opportunities. At the same time, one comment underscores a contrasting view: while empathy is appreciated, it doesn’t override personal responsibility or job security concerns. This mix highlights that empathy is powerful but not the only retention driver—its impact depends on individual priorities and context. Some see it as central to commitment, while others view it as secondary to practical career factors.

4.2 Research Question Two

How do employees across different generations perceive and respond to managerial behavior in relation to their decision to stay or leave?

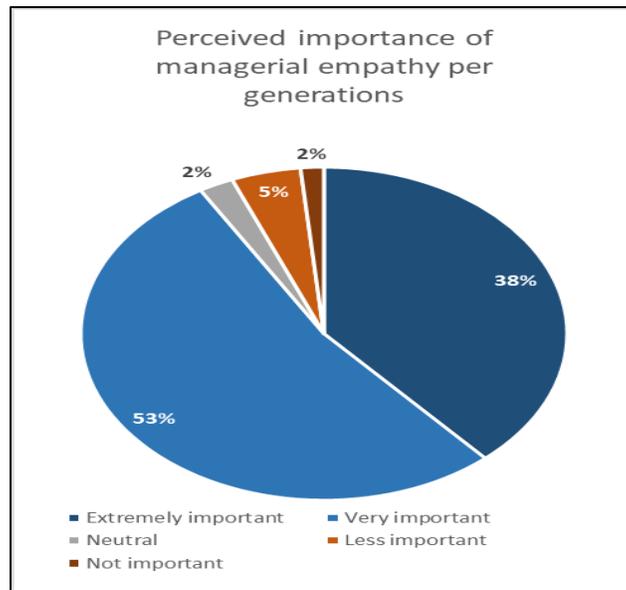


Figure 4.2.1 : perceived importance of managerial empathy

Observations -

- 91 % of responders agreed that Empathy is an important managerial trait
- 2 % of respondents were neutral towards important of empathy
- A total of 7 % marked that empathy is less to not important when its relation to employee retention is concerned

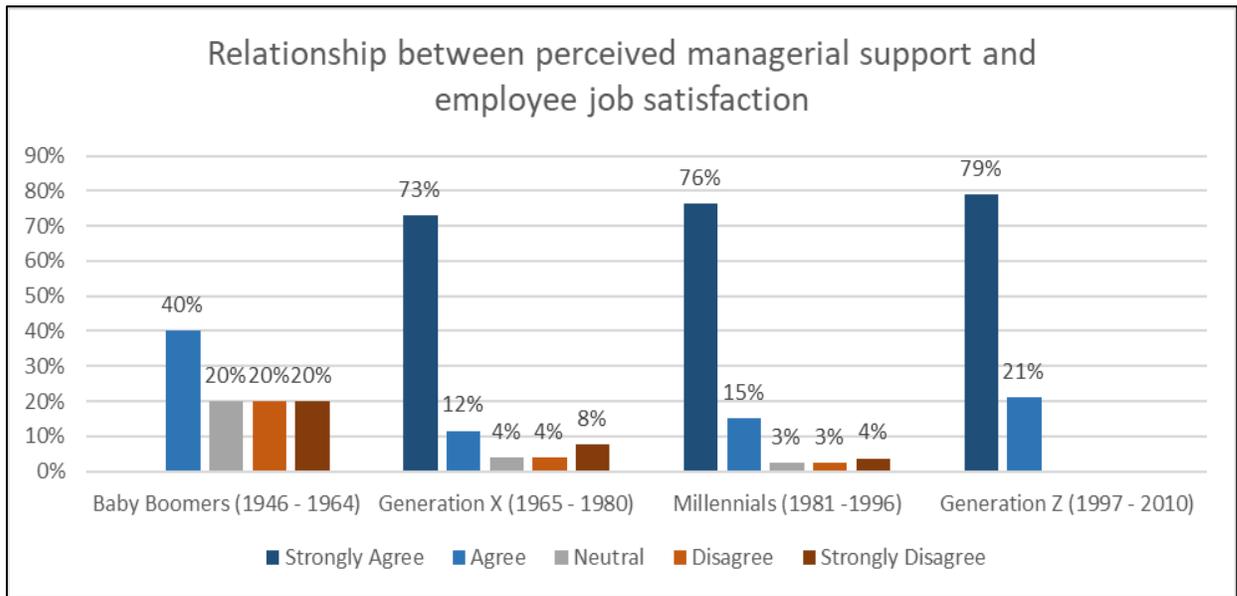


Figure 4.2.2 : perceived importance of managerial empathy per generation

Observations -

- Different generations have different perspectives as far as empathy is concerned
- Gen-Xs, Millennials and Gen-Zs place a higher value on empathetic management.
- The Baby Boomers attribute greater importance to individual responsibility and lower importance to managerial support.

Qualitative Insights for research question two

These are a few comments received in the open ended response for research question two.

- “Empathetic behaviour is a kindness we cannot expect from every manager. Maintenance of quality, integrity and ownership is our burden, manager cannot be expected to all-beenign always” – Baby boomer
- “Empathy is a good trait in a manager but strict and at times rude behaviour act as tools to model employee behaviour sometimes” – Gen X
- “A good salary and perks are important traits, however when I have a manager who stands by me and cares for my growth I will definitely consider that before hopping a job.” – Millennial
- “The manager being supportive is a gamechanger for teams and organization, especially when it comes to retaining talent” – Gen Z

These comments show how empathy means different things to different generations. Older employees see it as kindness, not something to rely on. Gen X values firmness alongside care. Millennials view it as a real reason to stay, weighing it with salary. Gen Z sees supportive leadership as a gamechanger. These voices remind us there’s no single way empathy is received—it depends on expectations, priorities, and life stage.

4.3 Research Question Three

What is the relationship between perceived managerial support and employee job satisfaction and loyalty?

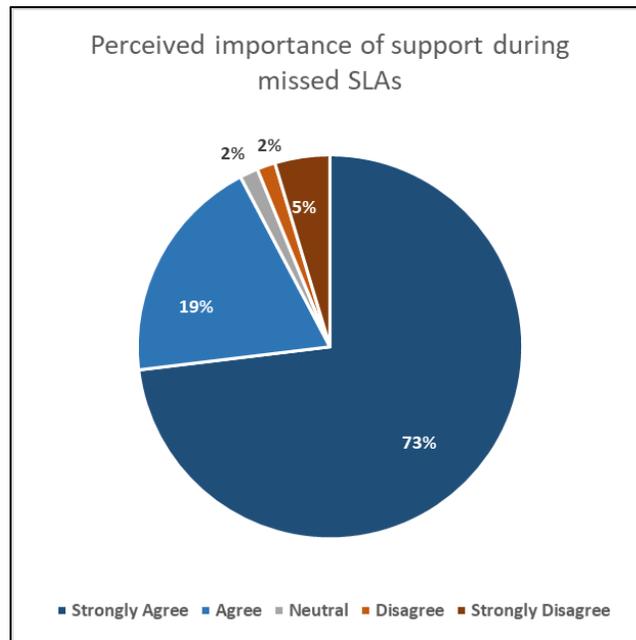


Figure 4.3.1 : perceived importance of managerial support times like missed SLAs

Observations –

- The majority of respondents (73%) indicated that managers' support during crisis-like times, such as missed SLAs, boosts loyalty and confidence in management.
- The respondents who disagreed (9%) were interestingly from the baby boomer and Gen X generations.
- 19% respondents were neutral on the connection between perceived managerial support and employee job satisfaction and loyalty

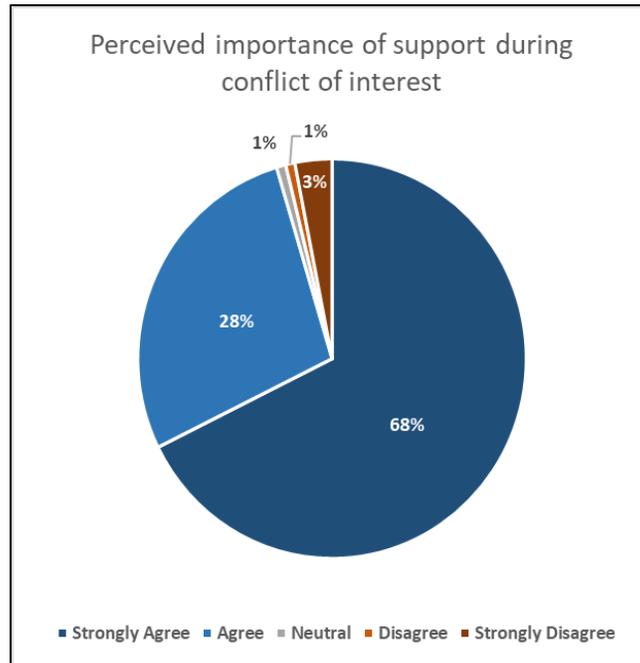


Figure 4.3.2 : perceived importance of managerial support during conflicts of interest

Observation -

- The majority of the respondents (68%) indicated that a manager's support during instances of conflict-of-interest boosts esteem and pride in management.
- Disagreements to the connections between managerial support during conflict of interest, yet again came from senior generations and a few younger employees of of government of India
- 28 % respondents chose to remain neutral on this question

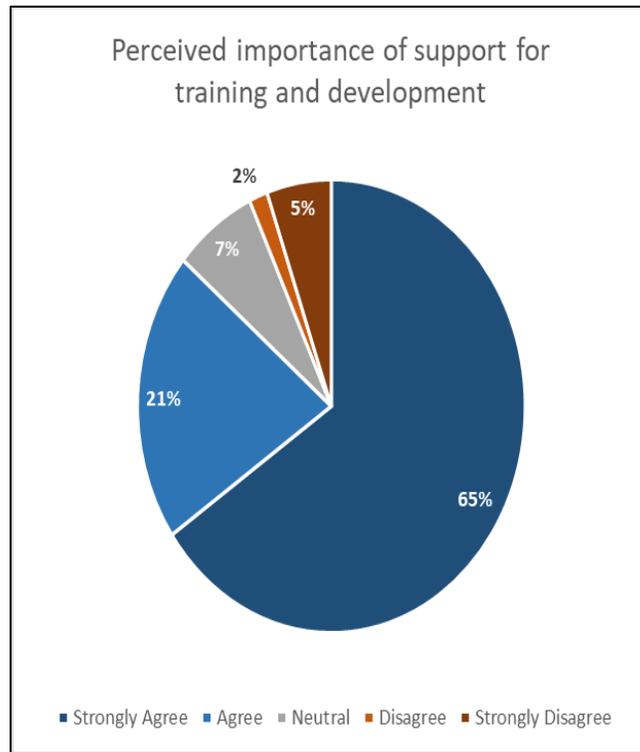


Figure 4.3.3 : perceived importance of managerial support in training and development

Observations –

- The majority of the respondents (65%) indicated that a manager’s support for training and development, inspires loyalty and boosts confidence in teammates to perform.
- 14% of respondents disagreed, respondents mostly from senior generations viewed this support as a mere bonus
- 21% participants chose to remain neutral on this topic

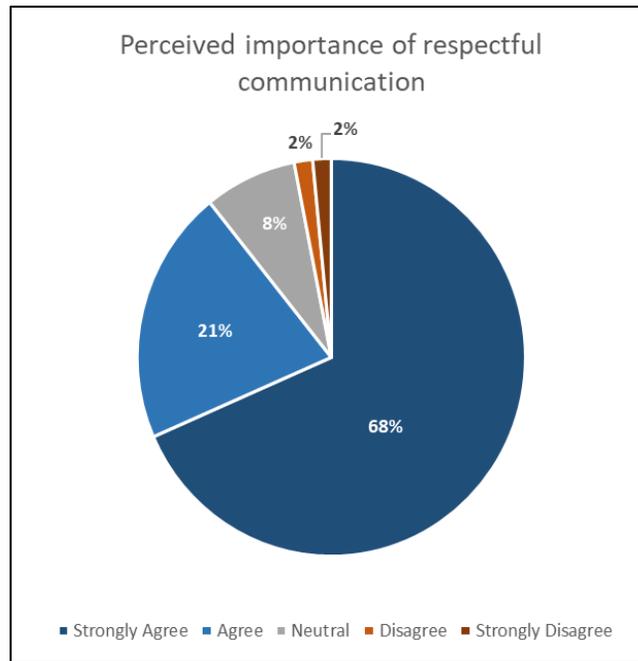


Figure 4.3.4 : perceived importance of respectful communication from management

Observations –

- The majority of the respondents (68%) indicated that a manager’s communication style, especially respectful communication, can be a critical factor in an employee’s decision to stay or move on.
- 12% disagreed with the importance of importance of respectful communication
- 21% participants remained neutral on this question

Qualitative Insights for research question three

- “When my manager took accountability for a team failure, it made me want to work harder for them”
- “I’ve followed a manager across companies because I trust their leadership”
- “Trust is built when a leader doesn’t disappear during tough times — that’s when a manager’s loyalty to their team is tested.”
- “I have seen this one in action, when my manager threw a colleague (and a dear friend) under the bus in front of a client, most of us started harbouring bitterness towards her and eventually jumped out of that job”
- “Support doesn’t necessarily mean covering up, it can mean a gentle nod when we openly accept our miss and a supporting hand when we are trying to make the process work”
- “Making an excuse of a mistake at work my manager was trying to put me on PIP, needless to say I will remember this incidence for the rest of my life”

These voices show how trust isn’t built in big speeches, but everyday situations. When a manager stands with their team, their team mates remember it, and it makes them want to stay and do better. When that trust is broken, the pain lingers in the mind. Quiet support, a shared sense of responsibility, even a tiny nod when things go wrong; are behaviours that matter. They decide whether people want to stay for the company or work only for a pay check, which needless to say any other company can offer a better one.

4.4 Research Question Four

How do factors such as industry, job role, and career experience affect the impact of managerial behaviour on retention?

4.4.1 Industry-specific trends:

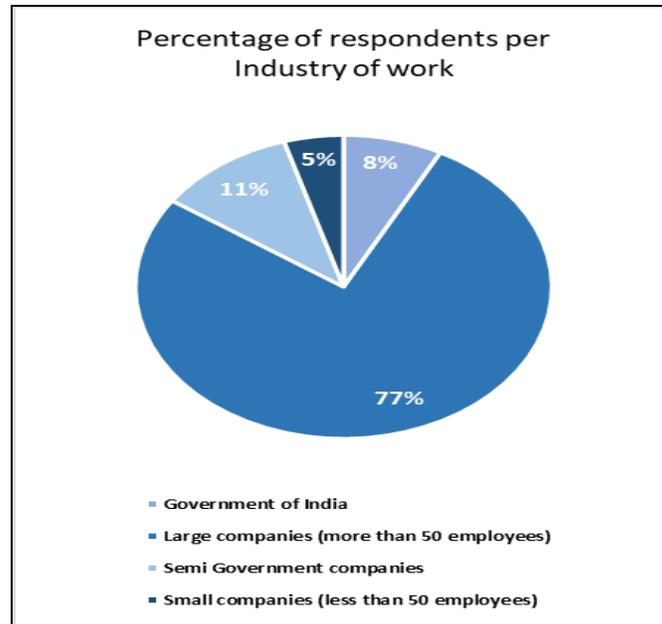


Figure 4.4.1.1 : Percentage of respondents per industry of work

Observations –

- The majority (77%) of responders were from large companies.
- Responders from Government of India and Semi Government companies were 8 % and 11% of the group
- Respondents from small companies formed the smallest group with 5% of respondents

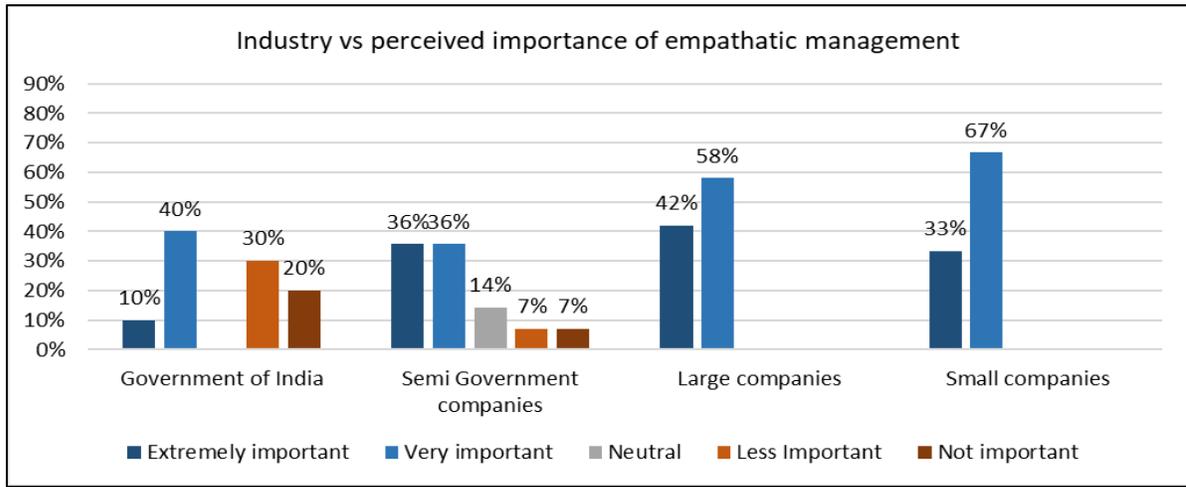


Figure 4.4.1.2 : Perceived importance of empathetic management per industry of work

Observations –

- The respondents from Government of India stood divided at 50-50 on the importance of empathetic management
- 72 % Semi government company employees marked that empathetic management is important
- Whereas large company and small company employees unanimously marked that, empathetic management is important

4.4 Research Question Four

4.4.2 Job role specific trends:

Fig 4.4.2.1

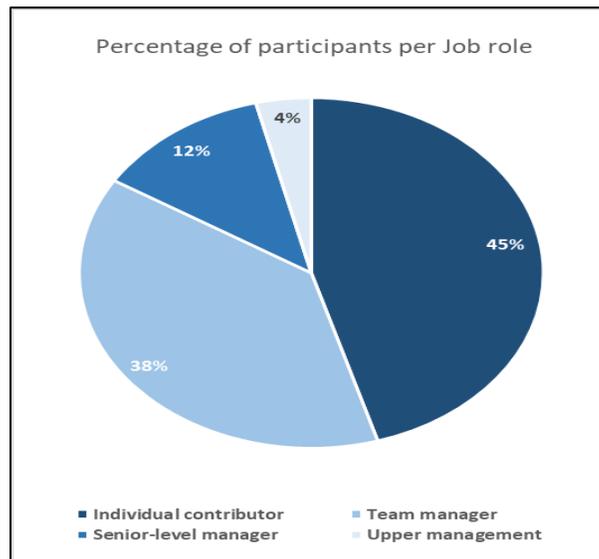


Figure 4.4.2.1 : Percentage of respondents per job role

Observations –

- The majority 45% of responders were Individual contributors. Closely followed by team leaders at 38%
- 12 % of respondents were senior level managers, who managed teams of team leaders
- 4% of respondents were in the upper management

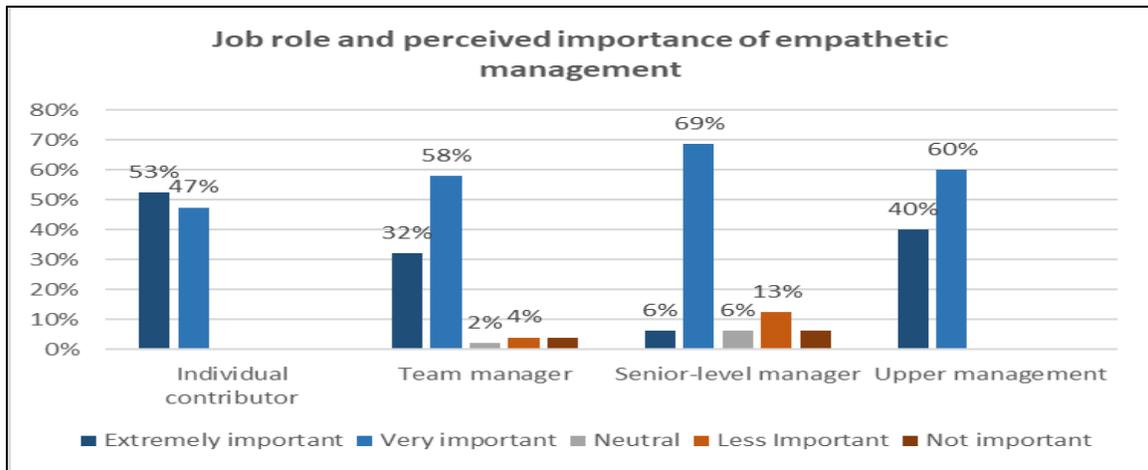


Figure 4.4.2.2 : Perceived importance of empathetic management per job role

Observations –

- The individual contributors and upper management participants agreed 100% on the importance of empathetic management.
- The middle levels like TLs and senior managers, however showed less agreement with the perceived importance of empathetic management
- 10 % of team leaders and 24 % of senior level managers were either neutral or in disagreement of importance of empathetic management

4.4 Research Question Four

4.4.3 Experience-specific trends:

Fig 4.4.3.1

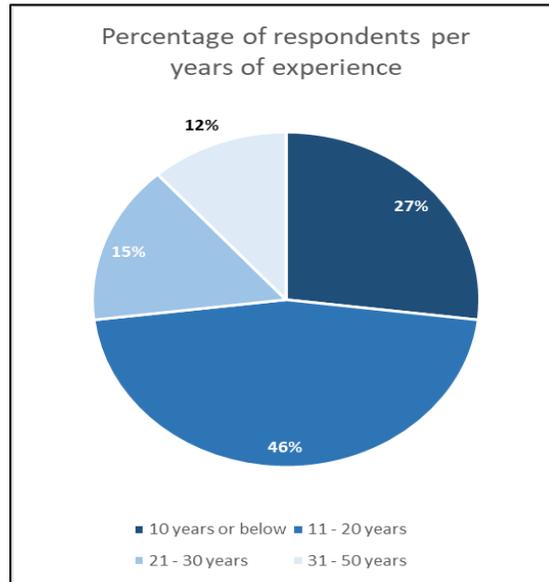


Figure 4.4.3.1 : Percentage of respondents per years of experience

Observation –

- The majority (46%) of responders fall into the 11-20 years category.
- 27% of respondents were from the 10 years or below job bracket.
- 15 % were from 21-30 years job bracket and the lowest representation was from 31-50 years' experience bracket 12%

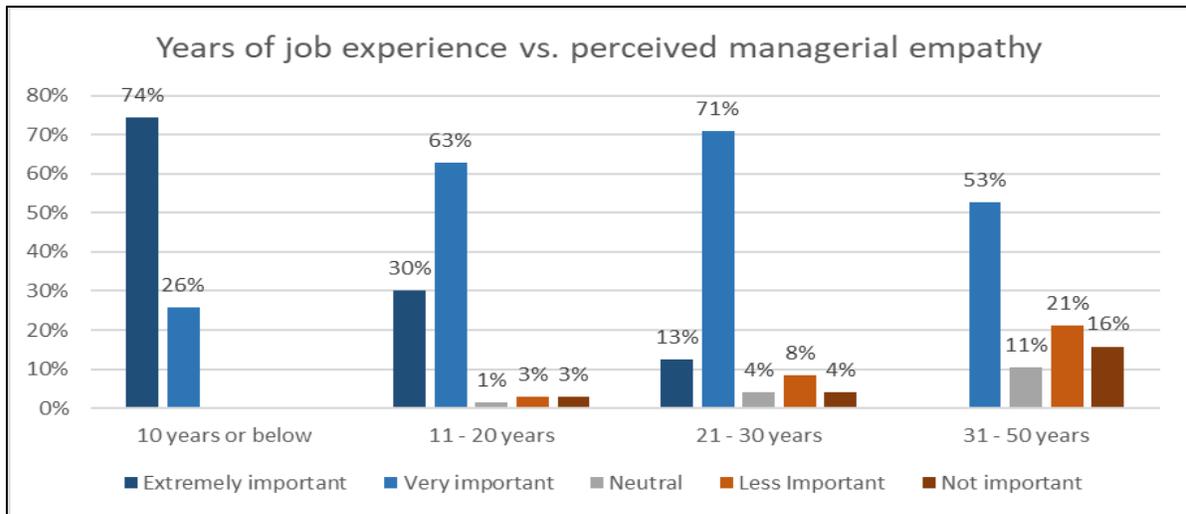


Figure 4.4.3.2 : Perceived importance of empathetic management per years of job experience

Observations –

- Participants with below 20 years of experience majorly agreed on importance of managerial empathy.
- Participants with 20-30 years of job experience showed a slight disagreement, around 16 % of participants marked either neutral or disagree on this topic
- The participants with 31-50 years of work exposure showed an almost 50-50 split with regards to importance of empathy

Qualitative Insights for research question four

- “Empathy is important but it cannot be a deciding factor when it comes to employees holding a job. The adjust with all kinds of people is a valuable skill ” – large company employee, 15 plus years of experience
- “Respectful and inclusive treatment is absolutely non-negotiable” – Large company employee – 3 plus years of experiecne
- “My respect for leadership dropped when I saw them behave rudely to a coworker.” – Millenial, 5 plus years of experiecne
- “Job security is more important for me than empathetic management” – Government employee, 15 years of experience

These reflections show how fairness and empathy are weighed differently depending on personal priorities and context. For some, empathy is a nice-to-have, but security or adaptability matter more. Others see respect and dignity as something that can't be compromised. One moment of disrespect can undo years of trust. These voices remind us that leadership isn't experienced the same way by everyone. What matters most shifts with role, experience, and what people value at work.

4.5 Research Question Five

Which leadership competencies should organizations prioritize in training programs to enhance employee retention based on employee feedback?

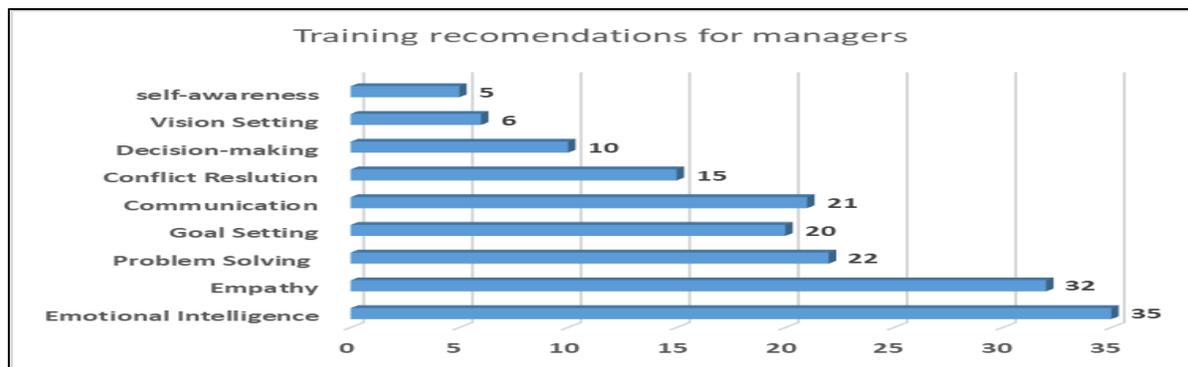


Figure 4.5 : Training recommendations for management

Participants consistently highlighted emotional intelligence and empathy as the most impactful areas for managerial training. These qualities were considered essential for establishing supportive, trust-based relationships that promote employee loyalty and satisfaction. Alongside empathy, respondents frequently recommended training in communication, conflict resolution, problem-solving, and goal setting—skills that equip managers to handle workplace challenges with fairness and clarity. Notably, many participants stressed the need for structured, organization-wide programs that intentionally cultivate emotional intelligence and empathetic leadership, rather than leaving such competencies to chance. This emphasis aligns with prior research, which demonstrates that leadership development in these domains not only enhances workplace culture but also significantly reduces employee turnover (Kristin Malek et al., 2018; Bruce J. Avolio et al., 2009).

4.6 Reliability Analysis

To assess the internal consistency of the constructs used in the study, Cronbach's alpha was calculated for each of the five scales: the results are as follows.

Sr	Scale	Cronbach's alpha	Inference
1	Empathy	0.597	marginal internal consistency
2	Fairness	0.690	borderline acceptable
3	Communication	0.795	stronger reliability
4	Trust	0.599	weaker reliability
5	Retention intention	0.826	stronger reliability
6	average Cronbach's alpha	0.701	minimum acceptability

Figure 4.1.6 : Results Cronbach's Alpha

4.7 Linear Regression Analysis

Linear Regression				
Model Fit Measures				
Model	R	R ²		
1	0.881	0.777		
<i>Note.</i> Models estimated using sample size of N=130				
Model Coefficients - Retention Intention				
Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Intercept	-0.0179	0.00349	-5.14	< .001
Empathy	0.3958	0.19936	1.99	0.049
Communication	0.6225	0.10902	5.71	< .001
Fairness	0.2684	0.13754	1.95	0.053
Trust	0.3189	0.09918	3.21	0.002

Figure 4.1.7 : Results Linear Regression Analysis

A regression analysis was performed to understand how empathy, communication, fairness, and trust affect employee retention intention. The overall model (F-value from Jamovi output, $p < .001$), showcasing the relation between managerial behaviors and

retention intention. Among the predictors, communication came out to ($\beta = 0.623$, $p < .001$). Trust gave the value ($\beta = 0.319$, $p = .002$). Empathy had a value of ($\beta = 0.396$, $p = .049$). Fairness gave the value ($\beta = 0.268$, $p = .053$).

4.8 ANOVA

ANOVA - Retention Intention						
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p	
Generations	10.2	3	3.398	7.26	<.001	
Job category	4.75	3	1.582	3.09	0.029	
Job Role	2.39	3	0.796	1.5	0.217	
Expericence	6.7	4	1.674	3.32	0.013	

Figure 4.4 : Results ANOVA

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to examine whether retention intention differed across generations, job categories, job roles, and years of experience. Results showed significant differences among generations ($F(3, dferror) = 7.26$, $p < .001$). The job category also showed significant variation ($F(3, dferror) = 3.09$, $p = .029$). Experience level demonstrated a significant effect ($F(4, dferror) = 3.32$, $p = .013$). Job role yielded ($F(3, dferror) = 1.50$, $p = .217$).

4.9 Summary of Findings

The results of this study show a clear and consistent relationship between managerial behaviors—empathy, fairness, communication, and trust—and employee retention. Employees who experienced their managers as fair, approachable, and supportive reported a stronger intent to stay with their organizations. Communication and trust emerged as particularly strong predictors in the regression analysis, showing how feeling heard and supported often weighs more than perks or titles when deciding whether to remain in a job (Goleman, 1998; Mayer et al., 1995).

The findings also show that these leadership behaviors don't land the same way for everyone. Generational differences were striking. Younger employees—especially Millennials and Gen Z—placed high value on empathy and open communication, while more experienced employees emphasized fairness, stability, and job security. This split reflects deeper shifts in workplace expectations across age groups (Wang & Guan, 2018; Du et al., 2020). The ANOVA results reinforced this, showing significant differences in retention intention by generation, industry, and years of experience. Government sector employees leaned more on job security, while private sector employees placed more weight on leadership behavior. Similarly, trust-building and fair treatment resonated differently depending on role and experience level.

The qualitative responses added emotional texture. Employees remembered moments of loyalty, fairness, and quiet support just as vividly as moments of betrayal or indifference.

For many, leadership behavior became the deciding factor, especially during difficult situations.

In short, empathy and communication drive retention, but their power is shaped by context. No single leadership approach works for everyone. Instead, the findings point to the need for balanced leadership—one that combines warmth and structure, adapting to different employee expectations while fostering trust and fairness (Avolio et al., 2009).

4.10 Conclusion

The results point to a complex, deeply human relationship between leadership behaviors and employee retention. They show that what makes people stay isn't just salary or role security—it's the way leadership is experienced day to day. Empathy, fairness, communication, and trust consistently surfaced as the most influential behaviors, but their weight shifted depending on context. For some, empathy was the reason to stay through tough phases. For others, especially those with longer tenures, clarity, structure, and fairness held more sway (Goleman, 1998; Colquitt et al., 2001; Mayer et al., 1995).

Quantitative analysis strengthened this narrative. Regression models confirmed that empathy, trust, and communication predicted retention intention. ANOVA revealed clear differences across generations, industries, and experience levels. These differences matter—they tell us that leadership impact is not uniform. A younger employee might stay because they feel seen and heard; an experienced employee may stay because they know

exactly where they stand. Directive leadership was not dismissed; in some contexts, it emerged as a steadying force (Wang & Guan, 2018; Du et al., 2020).

The qualitative voices gave these numbers their texture. They reminded us that loyalty grows when leaders show up during difficult moments and that trust can shatter just as quickly when they don't. It became clear that retention is shaped as much by emotion and perception as it is by structure and policy.

In essence, these results call for leadership that can flex—able to lead with empathy where it matters, and offer direction where it's needed. A single leadership style won't hold an entire workforce. A thoughtful blend just might.

CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION

5.1 Discussion of Results

The findings of this study show a compelling narrative about how leadership behaviors—especially empathy, fairness, trust, and clear communication—shape employees’ emotional connection to their work and, ultimately, their decision to stay or leave. The data points toward a consistent truth: retention is not simply a function of external rewards or professional convenience but is deeply tied to how employees experience their managers on a daily basis. Across industries, job roles, and generations, participants associated empathetic leadership and perceived managerial support with higher morale, stronger organizational loyalty, and a reduced inclination to seek new employment opportunities.

The quantitative results have strengthened this interpretation. Statistical analyses such as correlation and regression revealed that empathy, fairness, communication, and trust all had positive and significant relationships with retention intention. In particular, empathy and communication demonstrated higher predictive values, suggesting that employees who perceive their managers as emotionally intelligent and communicative are far more likely to remain committed to their organization (Goleman, 1998; Mayer et al., 1995). Meanwhile, ANOVA results showed distinct patterns across groups—generational, experiential, and industrial—suggesting that leadership effectiveness is not uniform but shaped by context. Younger employees placed high value on empathy and supportive

communication, while older or more experienced workers leaned toward fairness and job security (Ng, 2017; Purvanova et al., 2016).

The qualitative insights added important depth to these findings. Open-ended responses revealed how employees interpret managerial empathy—not merely as kindness, but as meaningful engagement with their personal and professional realities. Several respondents recounted moments when managers offered understanding during stressful times, such as missed deadlines or personal challenges. These gestures of support were remembered as defining moments that reinforced loyalty and psychological safety. Others emphasized that empathy should coexist with accountability; employees appreciated leaders who balanced compassion with firmness. This echoes prior literature suggesting that transformational leadership—while relational and empathetic—also relies on setting clear expectations and aligning them with organizational goals (Avolio et al., 2009).

When these perspectives were compared with Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory, a clear parallel emerged. Empathy, trust, and recognition function as motivators—factors that enhance satisfaction and intrinsic motivation—while fairness and clarity in communication act as hygiene factors that reduce dissatisfaction (Herzberg, 1966; Mohammed Abdullah, Al Salih et al., 2023). This theoretical alignment explains why the absence of fairness or transparency often provokes disengagement and turnover, even among otherwise motivated employees. The dual role of these behaviors demonstrates that leadership

effectiveness requires balance: while motivators build commitment, hygiene factors prevent frustration from accumulating.

Moreover, Transformational Leadership Theory provides a deeper psychological explanation. Transformational leaders, through individualized consideration and inspirational motivation, help employees connect their roles to a sense of purpose and belonging. When leaders show genuine interest in an employee's development, it reinforces the perception of being valued, which in turn reduces turnover intention (Avolio et al., 2009). The regression analysis from this study supported this pattern, confirming that trust and empathy significantly predicted retention intention, while communication acted as a bridge—translating intent into perceived support.

However, one of the most striking findings was that empathy alone was not universally valued. Participants from more structured or high-pressure sectors—such as manufacturing or government services—placed stronger emphasis on fairness, job stability, and directive clarity than on emotional warmth. For them, reliability and procedural justice were more critical to retention than emotional connection. This variation reveals the importance of contextual leadership, where managerial behavior must adapt to the needs, expectations, and pressures of the specific environment (Wang & Guan, 2018; Du et al., 2020).

Interestingly, several respondents mentioned instances of “contrasting leadership moments”—times when strict or even blunt leadership actually strengthened their respect

for a manager. For example, one participant noted that “being held accountable in a fair way” made them more committed to improving performance. These narratives resonate with studies suggesting that directive behavior, when rooted in fairness and integrity, can positively influence retention by creating clarity and consistency (Judge et al., 2004; Yukl, 2012).

Another recurring theme involved communication as the connecting thread. While empathy sets the emotional tone of leadership, communication translates it into action. Employees repeatedly described how transparent feedback, open dialogue, and acknowledgment of challenges made them feel seen and respected. Communication thus functioned as both a motivational tool and a structural mechanism—ensuring that empathy did not remain abstract but became visible in workplace interactions. This aligns with research by Colquitt et al. (2001) emphasizing that procedural clarity and interpersonal transparency directly strengthen trust and commitment.

The combined results of this study underscore that employee retention is an intricate interplay of emotional and structural elements. Quantitative analyses provided the evidence of pattern and strength, while qualitative insights illuminated the underlying human reasoning. Together, they affirm that managerial empathy and fairness cannot be treated as isolated “soft skills.” Instead, they form the foundation of a retention strategy that merges human connection with organizational structure.

In essence, the findings point toward a relational model of retention, where leadership behavior acts as both a stabilizing and motivating force. Empathy fuels trust, fairness sustains integrity, communication builds connection, and together, these dynamics create environments where employees choose to stay—not because they have to, but because they want to. This interplay between structure and emotion defines modern retention, marking a shift from transactional management to a more integrated, human-centered leadership approach (Goleman, 1998; Avolio et al., 2009).

5.2.1 Discussion of Research Question One

Does empathy as a managerial trait have an impact on employees' intention to stay with an organization?

The findings of this study reveal something that most professionals intuitively know but seldom quantify: empathy is not a “soft” or optional managerial skill—it’s a structural element that influences how long people stay and how deeply they engage. When employees were asked about what keeps them rooted in an organization, many spoke not of salary, incentives, or promotion cycles, but of the feeling that their manager understood them as a person. In workplaces where pressure is constant and mistakes can be career-defining, the experience of being treated with patience and perspective makes all the difference. As one respondent put it, “My manager checked on me after a missed deadline instead of blaming me—that’s why I stayed.” This sentiment, echoed across several responses, captures the invisible but powerful role empathy plays in retention.

From a theoretical standpoint, these results align with Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory, which distinguishes between motivators—factors that drive satisfaction—and hygiene factors, whose absence leads to dissatisfaction. Empathy functions as a motivator by enhancing an employee’s sense of belonging, recognition, and self-worth. It reinforces the perception that one’s contribution matters beyond metrics (Herzberg, 1966; Mohammed Abdullah, Al Salih et al., 2023). Similarly, within Transformational Leadership Theory, empathy is the foundation of individualized consideration—the leader’s ability to see

people as unique individuals rather than replaceable cogs in a system (Avolio et al., 2009; Goleman, 1998). Managers who consistently listen, acknowledge personal challenges, and adapt their approach based on emotional context foster loyalty that often surpasses monetary incentives.

The quantitative results lend statistical weight to this idea. Regression analysis showed a strong and significant positive relationship between perceived managerial empathy and retention intention. Employees who reported higher levels of empathy from their leaders were notably more inclined to express a desire to remain within their current organization. In other words, empathy didn't merely correlate—it predicted loyalty. When viewed through the lens of motivation theory, this suggests that empathy acts as both an emotional glue and a stabilizing force, particularly during times of stress or organizational change (Belete, 2018; Chendroyaperumal Chendrayan et al., 2010).

Yet, the numbers alone only tell half the story. The qualitative responses revealed how empathy operates in real-life workplace interactions—small, human moments that ripple into long-term attachment. Many participants described how a manager's simple gesture of support during personal or professional difficulty transformed their perception of the workplace. One employee wrote, "I stayed with my last company even when I had better offers because my manager genuinely cared about my personal growth." Another shared that they followed a trusted leader across two organizations, illustrating a phenomenon

known as relational retention—where loyalty is directed toward the leader rather than the institution (Mayer et al., 1995).

However, empathy is not experienced or valued uniformly across all contexts. The contrasting voices within the dataset shed light on an important nuance: while empathy is deeply appreciated by many, others interpret it differently—or, at times, view it as secondary. A group of respondents, largely comprising Baby Boomers and employees in government organizations, placed more importance on job security, procedural fairness, and predictability. For them, empathy was seen as an added benefit, not a prerequisite. One participant noted, “Empathy is good, but my job is my responsibility. What matters more is stability and opportunity.” This reflects a generational and structural divide in how empathy is perceived—a finding consistent with prior studies suggesting that older employees, having built careers in hierarchical systems, may prioritize consistency over emotional engagement (Ng, 2017; Purvanova et al., 2016).

Interestingly, even among those who valued empathy, some pointed out its limitations. They argued that excessive empathy could lead to leniency or blurred accountability. One respondent wrote, “Empathy is good, but a manager can’t always be kind—sometimes you need tough feedback.” This tension highlights an important truth: empathy without structure can become indulgence, and structure without empathy becomes rigidity. The balance between the two is what defines effective managerial behavior. This is consistent with recent leadership models that emphasize the coexistence of directive and relational

leadership as complementary rather than opposing forces (Wang & Guan, 2018; Du et al., 2020).

Empathy's influence also appeared intertwined with communication, functioning as the medium through which understanding is both expressed and perceived. Respondents who rated their managers highly on empathy often cited clarity and transparency as accompanying traits. Empathy, when communicated well, translates into trust; when poorly expressed or inconsistent, it can appear performative or hollow. This finding aligns with Colquitt et al. (2001), who established that procedural and interpersonal justice—the perception that one's voice is heard and respected—strengthens an employee's attachment to their organization. In this way, communication becomes the bridge between emotional intelligence and behavioral consistency, turning empathy into something employees can feel rather than just infer.

The data also suggests that empathy's impact intensifies under pressure. During crises—tight deadlines, internal conflicts, or personal distress—employees recall empathetic interventions vividly. Managers who stood by their teams in difficult moments were often remembered years later, even after leaving the organization. This finding resonates with research in emotional contagion theory, which posits that managerial emotions and behaviors spread through teams, shaping collective morale and engagement. When leaders display calm, compassion, and perspective, they model resilience and set a tone that

mitigates stress across the group. In contrast, absence of empathy during such moments can accelerate disengagement and turnover.

From a cultural perspective, these results take on added significance. In India's evolving corporate environment—where global work standards coexist with hierarchical traditions—empathy represents a bridge between modern and traditional leadership paradigms. Younger professionals, influenced by participative and feedback-oriented management cultures, expect emotional authenticity from their leaders. Meanwhile, older employees may view empathy as a sign of flexibility or even weakness if overemphasized. This dynamic interplay explains why empathy's effectiveness is contingent not only on managerial intent but also on organizational maturity and cultural expectations (Singh & Krishnan, 2007).

The implications for practice are substantial. Organizations often invest heavily in engagement programs and retention bonuses but overlook the everyday relational behaviors that drive long-term loyalty. Training managers in emotional intelligence, active listening, and constructive empathy could yield greater retention outcomes than purely transactional incentives. However, such training must be contextual, acknowledging that empathy manifests differently across roles and environments. A manager in a manufacturing plant might demonstrate empathy through fairness and resource support, while one in a creative firm might express it through flexibility and autonomy. The

underlying principle remains constant—the recognition of human experience as central to productivity and commitment (Goleman, 1998; Avolio et al., 2009).

In summary, the data presents empathy as a quiet but decisive force in shaping employee retention. It is not universally prioritized, yet when it matters, its absence leaves a visible void. The findings extend existing theories by positioning empathy as both a motivator (enhancing satisfaction) and a hygiene factor (reducing disengagement). Moreover, empathy's influence appears to amplify through trust and communication, reinforcing the interconnectedness of these constructs.

Ultimately, what emerges is a portrait of leadership that is neither purely transformational nor entirely directive—it is adaptive, rooted in understanding when to listen and when to act. Managers who can read the emotional climate of their teams and respond with appropriate empathy foster not just compliance but genuine commitment. In doing so, they turn retention from a policy objective into a shared emotional contract—one built quietly, day after day, through simple human awareness (Belete, 2018; Chendroyaperumal Chendrayan et al., 2010; Du et al., 2020). This research has taught me something simple but profound, ‘the memory of how someone treats us at work lasts much longer than the projects or deadlines we share’.

5.2.2 Discussion of Research Question Two

How do employees across different generations perceive and respond to managerial behaviour in relation to their decision to stay or leave?

Leadership, like language, is not interpreted the same way by everyone who hears it. What feels reassuring to one generation can feel patronizing to another. The data in this study made that distinction clear. Employees from different age groups did not simply describe different experiences—they lived in entirely different emotional contracts with their managers. Each generation brought its own story about what leadership should look like, what it should offer, and when it had failed. These stories were not random; they reflected broader economic, social, and cultural shifts that shaped how people understood work itself.

For younger employees, particularly Millennials and Gen Z, the link between managerial empathy and retention was unmistakable. They spoke not only about the tasks they performed but also about how those tasks made them feel. They wanted leaders who were present—not only to correct but to listen. Open communication, flexibility, and fairness emerged as non-negotiables. Many younger respondents described how a simple act—like a manager checking in after a stressful week or acknowledging the human effort behind a missed target—made them feel “seen.” One participant wrote, “I can handle pressure, but when my manager treats me like a person instead of a resource, I feel loyal to the team.”

This emphasis on connection is consistent with Transformational Leadership Theory, which identifies individualized consideration and emotional intelligence as critical to fostering commitment (Avolio et al., 2009; Goleman, 1998). Younger workers have grown up in workplaces that prize inclusion and purpose. They do not see empathy as an extra benefit—it is an expectation. Their loyalty is not bound by long-term contracts but by emotional alignment. This generation’s relationship with leadership is relational rather than transactional, shaped by a world that constantly tells them they have choices (Ng, 2017; Purvanova et al., 2016).

The quantitative data supported this interpretation. The ANOVA results revealed statistically significant generational differences in how managerial behaviours were perceived. Millennials and Gen Z rated empathy and open communication substantially higher than their older counterparts. For these groups, empathy appeared as a strong predictor of retention intention, while fairness and communication worked as reinforcing mechanisms. Regression analysis also confirmed that perceived empathy explained a significant portion of variance in younger employees’ intent to stay. In short, the numbers confirmed what the narratives revealed—connection sustains commitment.

But the story shifted when we listened to Baby Boomers and Gen X respondents. For them, leadership wasn’t expected to be emotionally expressive. What mattered most was fairness, structure, and accountability. They respected leaders who upheld standards, set clear expectations, and treated everyone with consistency. Many of these participants came from

eras where authority was equated with competence. A manager who was fair but firm inspired confidence. One Gen X respondent explained, “Empathy is fine, but I value a manager who knows what needs to be done and helps me get there.” Another added, “Adaptability is part of being a professional—you work with different personalities and still perform.”

This pattern echoes Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory, where fairness and clarity operate as hygiene factors—necessary to prevent dissatisfaction but not necessarily sources of motivation (Herzberg, 1966). For older generations, empathy does not vanish as a need, but it sits lower in their hierarchy of priorities. Security, recognition, and respect are what hold them steady. Their professional identities were built during periods when long tenure was rewarded and emotional expression was seen as secondary. In their context, trust is earned through reliability, not warmth.

These generational contrasts do not signal opposition—they reveal evolution. Each cohort entered the workforce under distinct social contracts. Baby Boomers matured during a time of organizational loyalty and clear hierarchies. Gen X inherited the turbulence of economic liberalization and learned to value autonomy. Millennials came of age in an era of globalization, where purpose and flexibility became guiding values. Gen Z, the youngest cohort, is growing up in a digital, post-pandemic world that prizes psychological safety and authenticity. These histories explain why one generation may interpret managerial firmness as strength, while another perceives it as rigidity.

The qualitative data brought these nuances to life. Younger participants repeatedly described supportive managers as decisive factors in their decision to remain. One respondent shared that after a manager defended them publicly during a project setback, they “decided to stay and prove their worth.” In contrast, a Baby Boomer participant wrote, “Empathy is kindness, but it cannot replace professionalism.” Another said, “A fair boss who stands by principles earns my respect more than one who is overly friendly.” Such remarks show how the same behavior—empathetic or directive—can be interpreted through entirely different value systems.

These differences also highlight how leadership effectiveness is context-dependent. The modern manager is often caught between expectations: to be empathetic yet assertive, approachable yet authoritative. The findings of this study echo recent literature suggesting that adaptive leadership—the ability to read situational and generational cues—is the true hallmark of effectiveness (Wang & Guan, 2018; Du et al., 2020). Managers who fail to adapt risk alienating at least one segment of their workforce.

Communication plays an important role in bridging these generational divides. The research showed that younger employees value open dialogue as proof of empathy, while older employees interpret clear, structured communication as a sign of respect. Both interpretations point to one truth—communication is how leadership intentions become visible. Without it, even genuine empathy or fairness can go unnoticed. Studies have

consistently shown that transparent communication fosters psychological safety, which in turn enhances retention (Colquitt et al., 2001; Mayer et al., 1995). In practice, this means that leaders must not only feel empathy but learn to express it through feedback, recognition, and everyday clarity.

The implications of these generational differences are significant. Organizations often design leadership programs based on uniform principles, assuming that one leadership style can fit everyone. Yet, as this study shows, a multigenerational workforce requires differentiated leadership. For younger cohorts, engagement thrives in participative cultures that encourage dialogue, flexibility, and recognition. For older employees, stability, fairness, and consistency serve as anchors of trust. Balancing these needs is not about alternating between warmth and structure—it's about integrating them. Managers who can adapt their tone and approach based on who they are leading will create environments where everyone can feel secure and valued (Avolio et al., 2009).

This adaptability also matters for retention strategy. Younger employees tend to view empathy as part of workplace culture—a sign of whether the organization aligns with their personal values. They are more likely to leave if they feel emotionally disconnected. Older employees, conversely, may leave when fairness erodes or when leadership appears inconsistent. Thus, improving retention requires nuanced interventions: empathy and coaching initiatives for emerging leaders, structural clarity and process integrity for established teams.

From a broader sociological view, the data reflects a shift in how work is experienced. For older generations, work provided security; for younger ones, it must also provide meaning. This transition mirrors global research trends, where empathy, inclusion, and emotional safety are emerging as central to engagement and retention (Hoch et al., 2018). The study's findings reinforce that leadership behaviors cannot be divorced from cultural and generational context.

It is also worth noting that generational differences can sometimes be overstated. Within each age group, there were exceptions—young employees who preferred structure and older professionals who valued empathetic leadership. This variation suggests that personality, role type, and individual life stage may intersect with age to shape leadership preference. Hence, while generational trends offer broad guidance, they should not replace individual understanding. Effective leadership depends on curiosity—the willingness to ask, observe, and adapt.

In sum, this research confirms that managerial empathy, fairness, communication, and trust do not operate in a vacuum. Their meaning changes depending on who experiences them. For younger generations, empathy is a bond; for older ones, fairness is stability. Both are necessary. The challenge for modern managers lies not in choosing one approach but in learning how to move fluidly between them.

The results ultimately reinforce the idea that generational diversity is not a leadership obstacle but an opportunity. Each group, with its distinct values, teaches managers a different language of trust. When leaders learn to speak those languages—firmly to some, compassionately to others—they build the kind of workplace that can hold many perspectives without fracturing. That is what retention in the modern age demands: not a single leadership formula, but a capacity for empathy, fairness, and balance expressed in ways that resonate across generations (Du et al., 2020; Wang & Guan, 2018; Ng, 2017).

5.2.3 Discussion of Research Question Three

What is the relationship between perceived managerial support and employee job satisfaction and loyalty?

The relationship between managerial support and employee job satisfaction emerged in this study not merely as a correlation, but as a lived human experience—woven through moments of reassurance, accountability, and trust. When employees were asked to reflect on their managers, few mentioned policies or formal procedures. Instead, they recalled small, personal acts—an encouraging word after a missed target, a manager stepping in during a conflict, or simply being acknowledged after taking on a difficult project. These interactions, though brief, shaped how employees felt about their work and, more importantly, whether they wanted to remain with the organization. Support, in essence, became the invisible thread binding satisfaction to loyalty.

This connection finds its theoretical grounding in Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, which argues that satisfaction arises from motivators such as recognition, responsibility, and interpersonal relationships, while dissatisfaction stems from hygiene factors like supervision, policy, or work conditions (Herzberg, 1966). Managerial support acts as a dual agent—it enhances motivators by providing recognition and interpersonal connection, and it mitigates dissatisfaction by improving communication and reducing ambiguity. When employees feel supported, they experience psychological safety, a condition in which they

can engage without fear of blame or unfair treatment. This sense of security transforms ordinary workplace exchanges into lasting bonds of trust.

Parallel to Herzberg's model, Transformational Leadership Theory adds another dimension. Transformational leaders demonstrate individualized consideration—attending to employees' personal needs, listening actively, and helping them grow professionally (Avolio et al., 2009; Goleman, 1998; Mayer et al., 1995). This study's data affirmed that such leadership behaviors were not abstract ideals; they translated into tangible loyalty. Respondents consistently noted that managers who were accessible, empathetic, and fair fostered a sense of belonging that made employees think twice before leaving. The quantitative findings reinforced this: regression and correlation analyses revealed that perceived managerial support had a strong positive relationship with job satisfaction and, by extension, with retention intention.

However, the qualitative narratives revealed what the statistics could not—the emotional tone of those experiences. One employee described how a manager who took responsibility for a team's failure inspired renewed dedication: "When my manager owned up for the team instead of blaming me, I wanted to prove I was worth that trust." Another recounted how a single public humiliation from a superior destroyed years of goodwill: "When my manager blamed a colleague in front of clients, it changed how we all saw her. Most of us left within months." These contrasting stories highlight how managerial support, or its

absence, carries deep psychological weight. It shapes not just satisfaction but an employee's entire relationship with the organization.

The fragility of trust emerged as a recurring theme. Support is slow to build and quick to break. Employees tend to remember moments of genuine advocacy for years, while betrayals of trust—public blame, inconsistency, or perceived injustice—linger just as long. These findings align with social exchange theory, which posits that workplace relationships operate through reciprocity: employees repay perceived support with loyalty, engagement, and discretionary effort (Settoon, R. P., Bennett, N., & Liden, R. C. (1996); Eisenberger et al., 2002). Conversely, when support is absent, employees withdraw—first emotionally, then physically, through resignation or disengagement.

Yet, support does not manifest uniformly. The interpretation of support varied across participants, reflecting both personality and context. For some, emotional empathy mattered most; for others, practical assistance—such as providing resources or protecting workloads—was the true mark of a supportive leader. Employees in high-pressure or technical roles, for example, tended to value fairness and clarity more than emotional expression. They equated support with consistency and competence. This echoes research by Wang and Guan (2018), who argue that directive leadership, when balanced with fairness, can also foster loyalty by creating structure and predictability.

Meanwhile, younger employees often saw managerial support as synonymous with empathy and flexibility. They appreciated leaders who acknowledged mental fatigue or work-life balance without judgment. This reflects a generational shift toward valuing emotional intelligence as part of leadership capability (Ng, 2017; Purvanova et al., 2016). For them, being supported meant being understood as a person, not just an employee. These nuances reinforce that effective support is contextual, and the best managers adapt their approach based on who they lead.

The quantitative evidence provided further clarity. Correlation analyses showed strong positive relationships between managerial support, job satisfaction, and retention intention. Regression models indicated that managerial support significantly predicted satisfaction scores even after controlling for demographic variables like age, experience, and industry type. This confirms that perceived support acts as a key mediator—strengthening the link between leadership behavior and retention outcomes (Eisenberger et al., 2002; Colquitt et al., 2001). In plain terms, support doesn't just make people happier; it keeps them anchored.

Another dimension worth noting is communication, which frequently appeared as the conduit through which support was conveyed. Employees described how simple acts—clarifying expectations, acknowledging contributions, or giving honest feedback—signaled respect and fairness. When communication faltered, even well-intentioned managers were seen as unsupportive. This reinforces findings by Mayer et al. (1995) and Colquitt et al. (2001), who noted that transparent communication underpins perceptions of

organizational justice and trust. Communication, therefore, transforms empathy into evidence. Without it, support risks remaining invisible.

It is also important to consider that managerial support plays a buffering role during stress. Respondents who reported strong managerial backing described being more resilient during organizational turbulence—mergers, restructuring, or heavy workloads. They viewed their managers as anchors amid uncertainty. This aligns with research on leader-member exchange theory (LMX), which suggests that supportive leader relationships mitigate burnout and turnover by fostering high-quality exchanges built on trust and reciprocity (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). In contrast, employees who lacked such support described feeling expendable, often leading to silent disengagement.

Support also interacts with fairness. Many participants linked their sense of being supported to how equitably decisions were made. When promotions, rewards, or workload distribution were handled transparently, employees perceived managerial behavior as fair—and therefore supportive. When decisions appeared arbitrary, even emotionally warm managers were viewed with suspicion. This dual requirement—empathy with fairness—echoes the intersection of Herzberg’s motivators and hygiene factors. Emotional warmth motivates, but fairness sustains.

The practical implications of these findings are substantial. Organizations often treat support as an innate personality trait rather than a trainable skill. Yet, as this study suggests,

managerial support can be cultivated through deliberate training in emotional intelligence, active listening, and conflict resolution. Workshops that help leaders understand how to balance empathy with accountability can prevent the erosion of trust. Importantly, organizations should also create systemic support structures—clear communication channels, peer mentoring, and accessible grievance mechanisms—so that managerial support becomes cultural rather than individual.

Interestingly, some participants viewed support not as an emotional resource but as a form of professional empowerment. For them, the best managers were those who trusted them with autonomy, defended them in critical meetings, and gave them space to grow. In their view, overprotectiveness was not support—it was constraint. This perspective introduces another nuance: too much support can backfire if it undermines competence or self-efficacy. Effective managers know when to step in and when to step back. This resonates with findings by Avolio et al. (2009), who noted that transformational leaders combine empathy with empowerment, enabling employees to develop confidence and independence.

At its core, managerial support is about emotional consistency. Employees can handle tough feedback and demanding expectations if they sense fairness, empathy, and reliability behind them. The absence of support, however, creates an emotional vacuum that policies or pay cannot fill. It is not the occasional grand act but the everyday gestures—listening

without interruption, defending a team member when it counts, following through on promises—that build the credibility from which satisfaction and loyalty grow.

In conclusion, the study's findings affirm that perceived managerial support sits at the intersection of motivation, trust, and retention. It enhances Herzberg's motivators by nurturing respect and recognition while reducing dissatisfaction through fairness and communication. It embodies the individualized consideration of transformational leadership and the reciprocal trust described in social exchange theory. Its presence is subtle but profound: employees may not always articulate support when it exists, but they notice its absence immediately.

Ultimately, managerial support is less about supervision and more about stewardship. Managers who invest in their employees' well-being and dignity create workplaces where people feel safe, valued, and inspired to stay. This is not a sentimental conclusion—it is an empirical one. Support builds satisfaction, satisfaction builds loyalty, and loyalty sustains organizations. What holds people is not the system they work in, but the people who stand beside them within it (Goleman, 1998; Herzberg, 1966; Avolio et al., 2009; Eisenberger et al., 2002).

5.2.4 Discussion of Research Question Four

How do factors such as industry, job role, and career experience affect the impact of managerial behavior on retention?

Leadership, as the findings of this study reveal, is not experienced in a uniform or isolated way. The way employees interpret managerial behavior depends deeply on their professional context—where they work, what they do, and how long they’ve been doing it. These three dimensions—industry, job role, and career experience—together create a filter through which leadership is understood, judged, and ultimately internalized. It is this filter that determines whether empathy, fairness, trust, or communication actually translate into retention intention.

Industry Context: The Environment Shapes the Expectation

Industry differences emerged as one of the clearest dividing lines in this research. Employees from government organizations consistently placed their emphasis on job stability and predictability. For them, managerial empathy and communication were viewed as positive but secondary traits. What mattered most was reliability and procedural consistency. These respondents often came from environments with long-established hierarchies, standardized processes, and structured promotion systems. In such contexts, leadership is less about emotional engagement and more about ensuring fairness and continuity. As one respondent put it, “My manager’s empathy is nice to have, but job security is what keeps me here.”

This aligns with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, where hygiene factors—like job security and organizational policy—carry greater weight in stable, bureaucratic environments (Herzberg, 1966; Colquitt et al., 2001). In government roles, dissatisfaction tends to arise from administrative lapses or unclear expectations rather than from emotional disconnection. Leadership, in this sense, becomes procedural—a system that guarantees fairness rather than an experience that inspires loyalty.

In contrast, employees from private and fast-paced sectors—especially technology, consulting, and service industries—painted a very different picture. Here, empathy, trust, and open communication were non-negotiable. These environments are characterized by fluid hierarchies, performance pressures, and intense competition, where employees often have multiple career options. The study found that in these settings, managerial behavior could be the deciding factor in whether employees stay or leave. Respondents from startups and private firms described empathetic managers as “anchors” during uncertain times, while others said poor communication or lack of trust drove them to resign despite good pay.

This distinction echoes findings from Transformational Leadership Theory, which asserts that leadership in dynamic environments must be emotionally intelligent and motivational to drive engagement and retention (Avolio et al., 2009; Goleman, 1998). In such contexts, empathy and trust act as buffers against burnout and turnover. They fill the gaps left by instability and constant change. The industry-specific results suggest that the faster the pace of change, the higher the emotional demands on leaders.

Job Role: Leadership Expectations Shift with Responsibility

Job role emerged as another key factor in shaping how leadership behavior is perceived. The findings showed that senior leaders and individual contributors both valued empathy and trust highly, but for different reasons. Senior leaders viewed empathy as essential to maintaining credibility and influence within their teams. Many described it as the trait that allowed them to “connect without losing authority.” For individual contributors, empathy symbolized recognition—the sense that their voice mattered in decision-making.

Interestingly, middle managers and team leads demonstrated the most variation in perception. Some in these positions leaned toward directive leadership, emphasizing accountability, clarity, and control. Others saw empathy as a way to build stronger, more cooperative teams. This tension reflects the dual pressures of middle management—the need to enforce policies from above while managing people’s emotions and expectations below. The data suggests that employees in these roles often feel trapped between empathy and performance metrics. One team lead described it as “the space where you must care but also deliver.”

This finding resonates with research by Wang and Guan (2018), which highlights that mid-level managers often lack the training to balance relational and task-oriented leadership effectively. It also ties back to Herzberg’s idea that the same factor can act differently depending on context—empathy can motivate at one level and frustrate at another if it appears to undermine authority or structure.

For organizations, this presents both a challenge and an opportunity. The inconsistency in perception among middle managers implies a training gap—an area where leadership

development programs can make a measurable difference. Managers at this level are the operational link between strategy and execution. If they misjudge when to apply empathy versus firmness, it directly affects team morale and retention. Targeted programs that develop emotional intelligence alongside decision-making skills could strengthen retention outcomes across the hierarchy (Du et al., 2020).

Career Experience: Shifting Priorities over Time

Experience brought yet another layer of complexity. Employees early in their careers—particularly those with less than 10 years of experience—viewed empathetic leadership as central to their sense of belonging. They appreciated managers who coached, guided, and provided constructive feedback. For this group, empathy was a marker of psychological safety—the feeling that they could take risks and learn without fear of punishment. This reflects elements of Transformational Leadership Theory, where individualized consideration fosters growth and self-efficacy (Avolio et al., 2009).

In contrast, employees with 20 years or more of experience tended to focus more on fairness, autonomy, and stability. They valued managers who were dependable, consistent, and technically competent. One veteran respondent remarked, “Empathy is nice, but clarity and accountability are what I need from my manager.” This pragmatic orientation reflects how long-term employees internalize their roles. Having experienced multiple leadership styles, they tend to judge leaders less on emotion and more on credibility and consistency.

Quantitatively, this pattern was clear. The ANOVA results showed statistically significant differences across experience levels in how empathy, trust, and communication were rated. Younger employees scored empathy and communication higher, while older employees rated fairness and consistency as stronger predictors of retention intention. These findings align with cross-cultural research showing that employee needs evolve with career maturity—early-career professionals seek mentorship and affirmation, while seasoned employees prioritize stability and fairness (Ng, 2017).

Intersecting Effects: Context, Role, and Tenure

While industry, role, and experience were analyzed separately, their combined influence was often visible in qualitative responses. For example, a young employee in a private IT firm may value empathy far more than a similarly aged worker in a government department. Likewise, a middle manager in manufacturing might interpret “support” as resource allocation, whereas a creative professional in a startup might define it as emotional validation. These layered interpretations confirm that leadership is relational and situational—its impact cannot be divorced from context.

This intersectionality has practical implications. When organizations assume a one-size-fits-all leadership model, they risk alienating key segments of their workforce. Leadership programs that fail to differentiate by industry pace, job role, or employee experience may produce leaders who are technically sound but emotionally tone-deaf. As Wang and Guan (2018) and Du et al. (2020) note, effective retention strategies must match managerial

behaviors to the lived realities of employees—something that requires adaptive awareness rather than rigid policy.

Communication as the Crosscutting Bridge

Across all three variables—industry, role, and experience—communication consistently appeared as the common thread linking managerial behavior to retention. For government employees, clear communication reinforced trust in procedures. For private sector workers, it signaled transparency and empathy. For middle managers, it was the tool for balancing authority and approachability. And for experienced professionals, it represented respect. In each case, communication acted as the mechanism through which empathy, fairness, and trust were expressed and understood (Colquitt et al., 2001; Mayer et al., 1995).

In this sense, communication is not a separate construct but the bridge between managerial intention and employee perception. A manager might feel empathetic or fair, but unless that sentiment is communicated effectively—through tone, timing, and follow-up—it remains invisible. This underscores why communication training should sit at the heart of leadership development.

The Broader Implication: Contextual Intelligence

The findings collectively highlight the importance of what can be termed contextual intelligence—the ability of leaders to sense and adapt to the unspoken dynamics of their environment. This is not about changing one’s principles, but about expressing them differently depending on who is in front of you. An empathetic word may retain a young

employee, while a promise of stability may reassure a senior one. A data-driven directive may engage a technical team, while a heartfelt acknowledgment may inspire a creative one.

Such adaptive leadership aligns with the emerging literature that frames retention not as a static goal but as a dynamic exchange between employee expectations and managerial responsiveness (Hoch et al., 2018). It reminds us that leadership cannot be standardized; it must be interpreted—by every employee, in every context.

In sum, the impact of managerial behavior on retention is profoundly shaped by the industry in which it operates, the role an employee holds, and the experience they carry. These contextual layers determine whether empathy feels empowering or indulgent, whether fairness feels procedural or personal, and whether communication feels transparent or performative. Leaders who grasp these nuances can create workplaces where people don't just stay because they must—but because they choose to.

Such insight doesn't make leadership easier—it makes it more human. And perhaps that's the point: retention is not only about what managers do, but how and where their actions resonate (Wang & Guan, 2018; Du et al., 2020; Colquitt et al., 2001).

5.2.5 Discussion of Research Question Five

Which leadership competencies should organizations prioritize in training programs to enhance employee retention based on employee feedback?

When employees spoke about what kind of leadership truly mattered to them, their words pointed not only to personality traits but to trainable competencies—skills that could be taught, practiced, and strengthened over time. Empathy, fairness, communication, and trust surfaced not as innate gifts bestowed upon a few “naturally good managers,” but as leadership muscles that can and should be deliberately developed. These were the behaviors employees most frequently connected to their sense of belonging and commitment. When these competencies were present, employees described feeling safe, valued, and motivated; when absent, they described quiet frustration, emotional withdrawal, and eventually, a desire to leave.

This understanding reframes leadership from being a matter of personal style to a matter of organizational investment. Leadership training is no longer peripheral—it becomes the central mechanism through which retention can be influenced. Participants repeatedly emphasized that the gap between “good” and “difficult” managers often came down to the ability to listen, to communicate clearly, to handle pressure with fairness, and to respond with composure rather than defensiveness. These are teachable skills, and the data makes clear that organizations that fail to train for them are effectively leaving retention to chance.

Building Empathy through Emotional Intelligence

Among the competencies identified, empathy stood out as the one most consistently linked to retention. Respondents described empathy not as leniency or softness but as understanding context—recognizing when someone is struggling, acknowledging effort, and maintaining respect even when delivering criticism. The findings align closely with Transformational Leadership Theory, particularly the dimension of individualized consideration—where leaders attend to the unique needs of employees, fostering loyalty and motivation (Avolio et al., 2009; Goleman, 1998).

Empathy training, then, must move beyond surface-level awareness. True empathetic leadership involves perspective-taking—being able to sense what drives another person’s behavior and responding in a way that balances compassion with accountability. In practice, this might mean equipping managers with coaching techniques that help them guide rather than judge. For instance, one respondent described how their manager “checked in after a missed deadline instead of reprimanding me—it made me want to stay and prove myself.” Another recounted leaving a job after their manager “dismissed my family emergency as an excuse.” These contrasting moments show how quickly trust can be built or broken by a leader’s response.

This insight underscores the role of emotional intelligence (EI) training, which helps managers understand and regulate their own emotions before responding to others. Studies show that leaders with higher EI scores create more cohesive teams and report lower turnover rates (Goleman, 1998; Mayer et al., 1995). When leaders can control frustration and approach conversations with composure, they model emotional balance that cascades

through teams. Emotional regulation becomes not just a personal strength but a stabilizing force for the organization.

Communication as the Bridge Between Intention and Perception

The second competency—communication—surfaced repeatedly in both quantitative and qualitative data. It served as the bridge between leadership intention and employee perception. Managers might feel empathetic or fair, but unless that is communicated effectively—through tone, timing, and follow-up—employees may not experience it. As one participant put it, “I knew my boss cared, but he never said it; after a while, it stopped feeling true.”

Effective communication, in this context, is more than message delivery—it is relational transparency. Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory positions clarity and feedback as hygiene factors: their absence breeds dissatisfaction even if other motivators are present (Colquitt et al., 2001). Inconsistent communication leads to misunderstandings that can erode trust faster than any single incident. Conversely, transparent dialogue fosters psychological safety, the sense that employees can express themselves without fear of negative consequences (Mayer et al., 1995).

Training programs, therefore, should not focus solely on “presentation skills” but on conversational intelligence: listening actively, asking the right questions, and providing feedback that is specific, fair, and actionable. Managers who communicate in ways that reinforce fairness and trust help anchor employees’ sense of security—even during times of change or uncertainty.

Fairness and Decision-Making Integrity

Fairness emerged as another central competency that employees perceived as a marker of credible leadership. Across industries, fairness was described as the backbone of loyalty. Participants didn't necessarily expect all outcomes to favor them, but they expected decisions to be transparent and justifiable. When promotions, workload distribution, or performance reviews were handled equitably, employees described a deep sense of respect for their managers. When fairness was lacking, even empathetic behavior felt hollow.

These findings align with Organizational Justice Theory, which connects perceptions of fairness to job satisfaction and retention (Colquitt et al., 2001). Fairness is particularly vital in multi-generational and cross-functional environments where perceptions of favoritism can easily arise. Training programs that incorporate fairness must include bias-awareness sessions, ethical decision-making frameworks, and simulations that allow leaders to practice equitable behavior in realistic scenarios.

Trust as the Outcome of Consistent Leadership

While empathy, communication, and fairness function as leadership behaviors, trust operates as their cumulative result. It is not a single competency to be taught but a condition that emerges when the others are consistently practiced. Trust determines how employees interpret managerial actions—whether they see feedback as constructive or critical, policy changes as fair or manipulative. Once lost, it is difficult to rebuild.

Trust grows when leaders keep promises, take accountability, and demonstrate competence under pressure. This aligns with the idealized influence component of Transformational Leadership Theory, which posits that ethical and consistent leadership creates deep loyalty (Avolio et al., 2009). Training that integrates reflective exercises—such as 360-degree feedback or leader self-assessment—can help managers identify gaps between their intentions and how their behavior is perceived.

Adapting Training to Context

The study's findings also make clear that contextual intelligence must underpin leadership training. What employees expect from their managers varies across industry, job role, and career experience (Wang & Guan, 2018; Du et al., 2020). For example, employees in high-pressure industries may need leaders who can balance empathy with decisiveness, while those in stable sectors may value procedural fairness over emotional expression. Similarly, early-career employees crave mentorship and psychological safety, whereas senior professionals value autonomy and accountability.

One respondent summarized this best: “A good manager doesn't always need to be kind—but they need to know when kindness matters.” This statement encapsulates what adaptive leadership training must aim to teach—not uniform empathy, but situational empathy. Programs that include case-based learning, role-playing, and scenario-driven coaching allow managers to understand how their behavior lands differently depending on the audience and context.

The Ripple Effect: Retention Through Leadership Continuity

A striking pattern in the qualitative responses was the ripple effect of strong leadership. Several respondents shared that they had followed trusted managers across roles or even organizations. Their loyalty was not to the brand but to the person who had led with fairness and empathy. As one participant wrote, “I didn’t think twice about joining my old boss again—she made work feel safe.” This finding echoes social exchange theory, which suggests that high-quality leader–employee relationships drive reciprocal loyalty (Eisenberger et al., 2002).

This ripple effect demonstrates why leadership training is not merely about skill-building but about shaping organizational culture. When trained managers create environments of respect and fairness, these values spread horizontally across teams and vertically through hierarchies. In contrast, when untrained or poorly equipped managers behave inconsistently, distrust cascades in the same way.

The Business Case for Leadership Development

Leadership training, while often viewed as a “soft” investment, has tangible outcomes. Research consistently links effective leadership development to reduced turnover, higher engagement, and stronger financial performance (Avolio et al., 2009; Hoch et al., 2018). The present study’s quantitative results reinforce this by showing that empathy, communication, and fairness significantly predict retention intention. In practical terms, organizations that invest in leadership development are not just improving morale—they are safeguarding institutional knowledge and reducing recruitment costs.

To strengthen these efforts, training should be continuous and iterative. One-off workshops rarely change behavior. Instead, organizations should adopt coaching-based models where leaders receive ongoing feedback, peer mentoring, and experiential learning opportunities. Embedding these practices into annual performance cycles ensures that leadership development remains a living process rather than a checkbox exercise.

5.2.6 Discussion Cronbach's Alpha:

The reliability analysis showed that the constructs this study looked at have varying degrees of internal consistency. Together, the average Cronbach's alpha across the constructs was 0.701, which meets the minimum threshold of acceptability in social science research (Tavakol, M., & Dennick, R. et. al (2011)).

The multifaceted nature of empathy and trust may be the reason for their relatively poor reliability. Respondents may view empathy differently, for instance, and it may include both active listening and emotional support. In a similar vein, ideas of organizational justice and interpersonal relationships may serve as the foundation for trust. It's possible that these differences played a role in the uneven answers to different things.

Notwithstanding these drawbacks, the dependability findings offer insightful recommendations for further study. Refinement of empathy and trust scales may be possible through factor analysis to examine underlying dimensions or the creation of new items. Crucially, because of their theoretical relevance, their inclusion in our study still offers valuable information. Reliability coefficients are known to be sensitive to the number of items, and scales with fewer items often produce lower alpha values even when conceptually coherent (Cortina, 1993). The strong reliability demonstrated by communication and retention intention provides confidence that these measures effectively captured employee perceptions and intentions. Overall, the results support the continued

use of these constructs in examining the relationship between managerial behavior and employee retention, while acknowledging the limitations inherent in scale development.

Although empathy and trust yielded lower scores, these were retained in the analysis because of their theoretical significance and their centrality to the study's research questions.

5.2.7 Discussion – Linear regression analysis:

The regression analysis demonstrated that managerial behaviors significantly predict employee retention intention, though their influence varied by construct.

- Communication emerged as the strongest predictor, aligning with prior studies that emphasize transparent and consistent communication as a cornerstone of employee loyalty (Dirks & Ferrin, 2002; Kirstin Malek et al., 2018).
- Trust also showed a strong effect, supporting transformational leadership theory's claim that integrity and reliability form the basis of enduring employee commitment (Avolio et al, 2004).
- Empathy had a weaker but still significant impact, suggesting that while employees value emotional support, its influence may be more nuanced and context-specific (Goleman, 1998).
- Fairness was positively related but showed only a marginally significant value

These findings suggest that communication and trust are the strongest drivers of retention, while empathy and fairness exert more moderate or context-dependent effects. This nuanced picture reinforces the need for organizations to prioritize communicative and trust-

building behaviors in managerial training while continuing to cultivate empathy and fairness as complementary retention strategies.

5.2.8 Discussion – ANOVA

The ANOVA findings provide further nuance to the descriptive patterns identified earlier. Consistent with the descriptive results, employees with fewer than ten years of experience placed significantly higher importance on empathetic management, whereas its perceived relevance declined with tenure. This reinforces the idea that early-career employees are more sensitive to managerial support in shaping their retention decisions.

Industry effects also aligned with earlier observations: government employees reported higher job security and correspondingly placed less importance on empathetic management, while employees in private companies rated empathy as a stronger driver of retention. This confirms that sectoral context influences how managerial behaviors are valued.

By contrast, the ANOVA results did not confirm significant differences by job role, even though descriptive data suggested individual contributors and top management consistently emphasized empathy more than middle levels. This indicates that while trends exist, variability within groups reduces their statistical reliability.

Overall, the ANOVA adds depth by confirming generational, experiential, and industry effects while clarifying that role-based differences are less robust than earlier indicated.

5.2.9 Perspectives from contrasting voices

The findings of this research don't speak with one voice—and that's precisely what makes them powerful. Leadership, as experienced by employees, is not a single story told in one tone. It is a collection of individual interpretations shaped by context, career stage, and personal priorities. When participants reflected on what makes them stay—or consider leaving—their perspectives formed a spectrum rather than a consensus. Some spoke about empathy as if it were the heartbeat of good leadership, something that made work worth showing up for. Others acknowledged its value but placed stronger faith in structure, stability, or the assurance that comes from clarity and accountability. And a few positioned themselves in the middle ground, believing that the best leaders balance warmth with firmness. These voices, while contrasting, collectively reveal that retention is not driven by one universal leadership style but by a complex interplay between emotional connection and structural reliability.

Empathy as an Anchor for the New Workforce

For a significant portion of respondents—especially Millennials and Gen Z—empathy emerged as non-negotiable. They described it as the quality that transforms a workplace from an obligation into a space of belonging. The younger participants often used words like “seen,” “supported,” and “valued,” pointing to a deep need for acknowledgment beyond transactional exchanges. One Gen Z respondent wrote, “The manager being supportive is a gamechanger for teams and organizations, especially when it comes to retaining talent.” For them, empathy wasn't a managerial courtesy—it was leadership itself.

This aligns with Transformational Leadership Theory, which positions empathy and individualized consideration as critical for fostering intrinsic motivation and loyalty (Avolio et al., 2009; Goleman, 1998). Younger employees, shaped by dynamic career landscapes and constant connectivity, expect managers to demonstrate emotional intelligence in the way they lead (Mayer et al., 1995). In such an environment, leadership that lacks empathy feels outdated. It risks alienating those who see the workplace as an extension of personal values, not merely a paycheck.

Interestingly, these younger employees also linked empathy to trust-building and transparency. They emphasized that when a leader genuinely listens or supports them through challenges, it reinforces loyalty even in uncertain times. This supports findings from Eisenberger et al. (2002), who argue that perceived organizational support strengthens emotional commitment, reducing turnover intentions. For these respondents, empathetic behavior was not indulgence—it was strategy. It built emotional capital that translated into commitment.

Structure and Security: The View from Experience

Yet, not all voices sang the same tune. Baby Boomers and Gen X employees—especially those in government or traditional industries—were notably more reserved in their expectations. They often prioritized job security, fairness, and predictability over emotional connection. For them, a reliable system was the truest form of care. A senior government employee put it bluntly: “Empathy is nice, but job security and clarity are what keep me here.”

This echoes Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory, which suggests that hygiene factors such as job stability, clear expectations, and fair policies reduce dissatisfaction, even if they don’t

actively motivate (Colquitt et al., 2001). For this group, empathy wasn't irrelevant—it was simply not essential. Many of them entered their careers in eras when loyalty was reciprocal: employees offered consistency, and organizations provided lifelong employment. Leadership, in their view, was defined by integrity and order, not emotional resonance.

Moreover, several older respondents cautioned against overemphasizing emotional leadership. One Baby Boomer noted, “Empathetic behaviour is a kindness we cannot expect from every manager. Maintaining quality, integrity and ownership is our burden.” This sentiment reflects a work ethic rooted in self-reliance and professional responsibility. It also highlights how generational norms influence expectations: empathy, while appreciated, is not considered a managerial duty. Instead, fairness and consistency remain their primary measures of leadership quality.

These insights underscore a crucial point—leadership effectiveness is not universal. A management approach that motivates one generation might leave another unmoved. The difference lies not in right or wrong leadership styles, but in the contexts and experiences that shape what employees value.

The Middle Ground: Balancing Empathy with Structure

Between these contrasting ends lies a nuanced middle. A segment of respondents—mainly Gen X and early Millennials in mid-level roles—saw empathy and structure not as opposites but as complementary. They believed good leadership meant knowing when to be kind and when to be firm. One respondent described it aptly: “Empathy is a good trait in a manager, but strict and at times rude behavior acts as tools to model employee behavior.”

This balanced perspective mirrors findings in leadership studies suggesting that transformational and directive leadership can coexist effectively (Avolio et al., 2009; Du et al., 2020). In practice, employees in operational or client-facing roles often appreciate empathy—but only when it doesn’t dilute accountability. For them, structure provides psychological safety just as much as compassion does. Too much softness, they argued, risks compromising standards or discipline.

This duality also surfaced in the qualitative narratives. Several respondents expressed that they respected managers who were emotionally intelligent yet decisive. As one participant phrased it, “A manager who understands you but still challenges you to do better is the kind you’ll always follow.” Such comments highlight that empathy without boundaries can feel hollow, just as authority without understanding can feel oppressive. The most effective leadership, therefore, resides in balance—a dance between human warmth and professional rigor.

Industry, Role, and Context: The Shades Behind the Voices

The diversity of perspectives is not accidental—it reflects the organizational ecosystems participants come from. Employees in private and high-pressure sectors, such as IT and consulting, placed greater importance on empathy and open communication. For them, frequent change and competition make emotional safety a vital stabilizer. In contrast, workers in government or manufacturing sectors valued reliability and procedural fairness over emotional expressiveness. Their sense of stability already came from the structure around them; they didn’t need emotional validation to feel secure.

Similarly, job role and seniority influenced these perspectives. Middle managers and team leads, often caught between top-level directives and frontline demands, viewed empathy

as situational. They admired it when used judiciously but saw overuse as risky in performance-driven contexts. On the other hand, senior leaders and individual contributors both placed higher importance on trust and respect—albeit for different reasons. Leaders valued trust as the currency of influence, while contributors viewed it as protection from arbitrariness.

Career experience also reshaped expectations. Younger employees equated empathy with mentorship, while seasoned professionals saw it as a bonus rather than a requirement. Over time, employees appeared to transition from emotional needs to pragmatic expectations. What keeps a new hire engaged—connection and care—may not be what retains a veteran—fairness and stability. This mirrors the life-cycle theory of leadership, which posits that leadership effectiveness depends on employee maturity and readiness (Hersey & Blanchard, 1988).

Quantitative Patterns Supporting Qualitative Depth

The study's quantitative results reinforced these narrative contrasts. Regression analysis demonstrated that empathy, communication, and trust were significant predictors of retention intention. However, the ANOVA tests revealed statistically significant differences across generations, industries, and job roles. What motivates one demographic may not work for another. These aren't contradictions—they're validations of leadership's contextual nature. Leadership behaviors don't function in isolation; they interact with the expectations and experiences of those receiving them.

The qualitative findings provided the emotional logic behind these numbers. Respondents' stories showed how loyalty is built not just on what managers do but how employees interpret those actions. A manager defending a team in a crisis earned lifelong allegiance.

Conversely, a public humiliation of a colleague shattered trust irreparably. Some participants said they followed empathetic managers across companies, while others admitted they stayed for paychecks and security. Such diversity of reasons emphasizes that retention is as much about personal values as it is about policy.

5.2.10 Why Contrasting Voices Matter

These differences are not statistical noise—they are leadership intelligence. They remind us that people’s motivations are not uniform, and leadership cannot be mechanized. A one-size-fits-all approach to leadership training or policy will inevitably alienate sections of the workforce. Leaders who fail to read these distinctions risk creating disconnection even with good intentions.

The theoretical frameworks guiding this study—Herzberg’s Two-Factor Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory—together help explain why these voices diverge. Herzberg (1966) teaches us that satisfaction arises from motivators like recognition and growth, while dissatisfaction stems from hygiene factors like job security and policy. The contrast between generational preferences—empathy versus stability—maps perfectly onto this model. Meanwhile, Transformational Leadership Theory (Avolio et al., 2009; Goleman, 1998) explains why younger employees, who seek purpose and inspiration, are more responsive to empathetic and communicative leaders.

In this way, the contrasting voices reflect theoretical balance. They show that both relational and structural leadership have a place. In organizations where emotional connection is scarce, empathy becomes retention fuel. In environments already stable, structure itself is the reassurance employees seek.

Echoes in Literature

The diversity of perspectives found here isn't unique to this study—it resonates across leadership literature. Goleman (1998) and Avolio et al. (2009) emphasize that emotionally intelligent leadership enhances satisfaction and loyalty, particularly among younger generations. Conversely, studies on directive leadership show its continued effectiveness in maintaining discipline and performance in high-accountability roles (Du et al., 2020; Wang & Guan, 2018). Similarly, Colquitt et al. (2001) underline fairness and procedural justice as critical retention drivers across age groups.

These scholarly echoes validate the importance of listening to all sides of the leadership equation. The coexistence of empathy-focused and structure-focused expectations isn't contradiction—it's evolution. It signals that leadership, like the workforce itself, is diversifying.

Conclusion: Learning from the Tension

Ultimately, these contrasting voices are not signs of confusion—they are reflections of human complexity. They remind us that leadership is not about enforcing uniformity but about embracing difference. Retention grows not from imposing a single leadership style but from cultivating flexibility.

Leaders who listen to these differences—who can recognize when empathy heals, when fairness stabilizes, and when structure motivates—will be better equipped to lead diverse,

multi-generational teams. The lesson is not to choose between compassion and clarity but to learn the rhythm between them.

In the end, retention is not about a single formula—it’s about fit. When leadership meets people where they are, employees don’t just stay out of necessity; they stay because they feel understood. And that—more than any paycheck or policy—is what transforms workplaces into communities (Avolio et al., 2009; Herzberg, 1966; Goleman, 1998; Du et al., 2020).

Employee Group / Context	Primary Retention Drivers	Preferred Leadership Behaviours	Response to Empathy	Response to Directive Style	Strategic Managerial Approach
Gen Z (early-career)	Growth, belonging, psychological safety	Supportive, authentic, feedback-oriented	Strongly positive; empathy builds identity & connection	May perceive strictly directive tone as dismissive	Coaching-style leadership, high communication, meaningful check-ins
Millennials (mid-career)	Career development, fair opportunities, work-life balance	Transparent, collaborative, empathetic	Positive; linked to loyalty & staying through challenges	Acceptable when paired with fairness & clarity	Blended approach: empathy + accountability
Gen X (experienced employees)	Stability, autonomy, fair evaluation	Practical, consistent, respectful	Appreciated but not essential	Often comfortable; structure supports clarity	Respect autonomy, set clear expectations, fairness first
Baby Boomers (late-career)	Job security, clarity, consistency	Fair, dependable, formal leadership style	Neutral; “good to have, not required”	Often preferred; seen as professional	Directive but respectful; honour legacy knowledge

Government / Highly-stable sectors	Security, process clarity, predictability	Rule-aligned, consistent management	Limited influence on retention	Strong preference; seen as professional & reliable	Strengthen clarity, fairness, communication structure
Private sector / High-speed environments	Recognition, growth, team climate	Transformational, relational, adaptive	High impact; improves morale & retention	Risk of disengagement if overused	Empathy + development focus + agility
Early-career professionals	Mentorship, learning, feedback	Supportive, developmental	Strong retention driver	May feel overwhelmed by harsh/direct style	Coaching + structured learning pathways
Mid-career managers	Credibility, performance, career stability	Balanced empathy & firmness	Appreciated but practical priorities dominate	Strong preference under pressure	Train in “situational leadership” & emotional intelligence
Senior leaders	Strategic autonomy, trust, respect	Vision-driven, fair, consistent	Valued but secondary	Comfortable with decisiveness	Empowerment + trust + strategic communication

Table 5.2.10 : Divergence in leadership expectations

5.2.11 Directive vs. Transformational Leadership Across Industry Contexts

Leadership behaviors don't operate in a vacuum; they are shaped and amplified by the environments in which they occur. The contrast between directive and transformational leadership becomes particularly clear when viewed through the lens of industry context. In high-velocity, private-sector industries such as technology, consulting, and media, employees often face ambiguity, shifting priorities, and pressure for innovation. In these spaces, transformational leadership thrives. Leaders who inspire, communicate a clear vision, and show empathy provide the emotional stability and shared meaning that buffer against volatility (Avolio et al., 2009; Goleman, 1998). When change is constant, people need more than instruction—they need purpose. Transformational behaviors such as individualized consideration and intellectual stimulation not only retain employees but sustain performance under uncertainty (Mayer et al., 1995; Du et al., 2020).

By contrast, directive leadership tends to be more effective in industries built on hierarchy, regulation, or procedural precision—such as manufacturing, banking, and public administration. In these settings, clarity, control, and fairness are perceived as safety nets. Employees in such contexts often view leadership authority as necessary for maintaining consistency and quality. The data from this study showed that workers in government roles valued structure and accountability more than emotional connection. For them, predictability fosters trust, not necessarily warmth. This aligns with Herzberg's hygiene factors, where stability and procedural fairness prevent dissatisfaction, even if they do not actively motivate (Colquitt et al., 2001).

Interestingly, neither style exists in isolation. Many organizations now operate at the intersection of stability and change—where directive clarity must coexist with transformational empathy. Effective leaders in these hybrid environments are those who adapt, shifting between firmness and flexibility as context demands (Wang & Guan, 2018). This balance is not about tempering leadership identity but expanding it. The most enduring retention outcomes arise when direction meets inspiration—when structure offers safety, and empathy gives meaning.

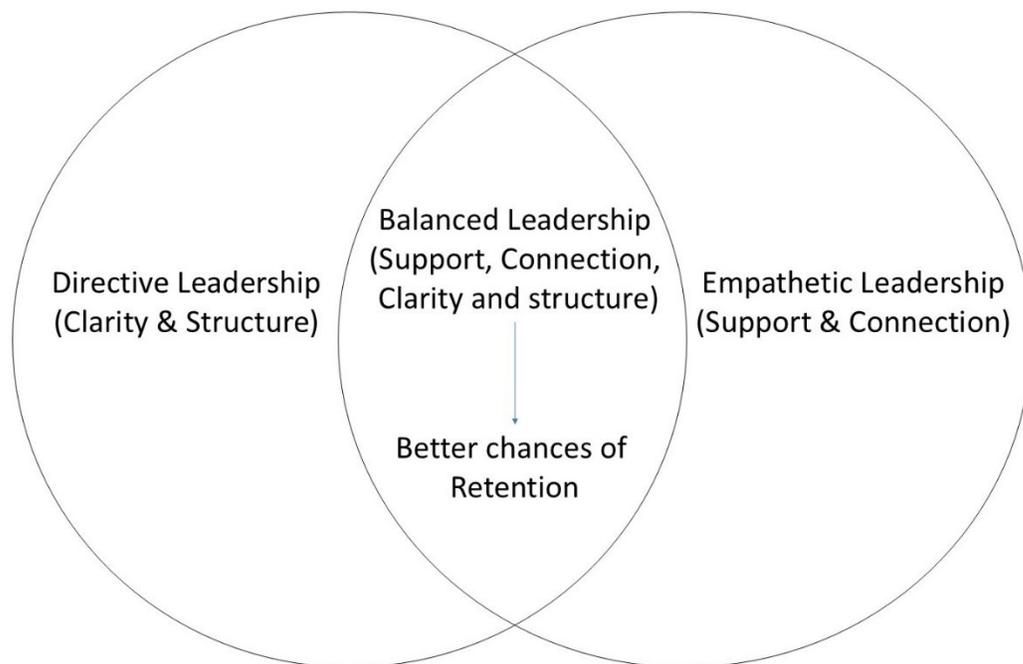


Figure 5.2.11: Conceptual overlap showing balance between directive and empathetic leadership for optimal retention.

CHAPTER VI:

SUMMARY, IMPLICATIONS, AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Summary

This study began with a simple but profound question: Why do people choose to stay at their jobs or leave them? Although organizational strategy, pay, and structure are undoubtedly important, the results suggest something much more delicate might be at play: managers' actions influence the emotional fabric of retention. Empathy, fairness, communication, and trust emerged as central forces in how employees interpreted their relationship with their manager and formed opinions about their organizations. These opinions were acted upon through different lenses—shaped by industry, job role, generational identity, and individual experience.

One important takeaway is that empathy on the part of managers serves as a strong retention anchor. Employee retention was significantly higher for the managers who had understanding, encouraging leadership during trying times. Over time, trust was developed as a result of feeling heard, appreciated, and valued as more than just a task-bearer. These insights align with Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, where respect and recognition function as strong motivators, and Transformational Leadership Theory, which identifies individualized consideration as a foundation of employee loyalty (Goleman, 1998; Mayer et al., 1995).

But the picture isn't clean-cut. While empathy carried tremendous weight for some, it held much less sway for others. For older employees and those in stable public-sector roles, a secure job and fair treatment were more important than emotional connection, and clarity and consistency were viewed as more critical than empathy. In contrast, younger workers in competitive industries often framed empathy as decisive—something that made or broke their commitment. These contrasting voices are not contradictions. They reveal that retention is a mosaic, built from different needs and expectations. Leadership behaviors matter, but they don't land the same way on everyone.

This complexity is reflected in both the numbers and the stories. Quantitative analysis confirmed that empathy, trust, fairness, and communication were significant predictors of retention intention. At the same time, ANOVA results revealed sharp differences across generations, industries, and experience levels. The qualitative narratives deepened this picture. While some employees remembered moments of support as the reason they stayed, others were more pragmatic: if the job was stable, empathy was a bonus, not a need.

It is here that communication stands out as a crucial bridge. Empathy on its own isn't always visible. For employees to feel it, it must be communicated clearly, consistently, and credibly. It isn't only about what managers feel, but how they express it that shapes the perception of their respective teams. A manager who listens carefully, keeps true to their commitments, and communicates openly and authentically during stressful times makes empathy tangible. In this way, communication acts as a conduit—transforming managerial

intent into employee trust. It's where leadership becomes real. And when this bridge is missing, even good intentions fall flat.

Job roles added another dimension. Individual contributors and senior leaders tended to value empathy and trust, describing them as essential to feeling respected and motivated. Middle managers, however, often leaned toward structure and accountability. This difference reflects the unique pressures at each organizational layer. People who are closer to execution may need clearer boundaries to thrive, while those at the top or bottom of the hierarchy often look for a more personal human connection.

Career experience also shaped perceptions. Employees with fewer than ten years of work experience valued empathetic leadership, which made them feel valued and secure. Those with longer tenures viewed empathy in a different light. Many said that while it was a valued trait, it didn't supersede their need for stability, fairness, or self-reliance. This shift showcases the evolution of retention drivers over time: what might matter at an early stage in a career may not be the same a few years later (Colquitt et al., 2001).

Industry context amplified these patterns. Employees in stable public sectors leaned on job security. Those in dynamic private industries weighed managerial behavior more heavily. In fast-paced settings, where opportunities are abundant and competition intense, the way leaders communicate and respond can tip the scale. A single gesture—a show of support during a tough moment—can become the deciding factor between staying and moving on.

The contrasting voices in these findings are echoed in the wider literature. Empirical work has long suggested that leadership expectations differ across generations and contexts (Goleman, 1998; Colquitt et al., 2001; Avolio et al., 2009). While transformational leadership and empathy are shown to strengthen commitment, other studies highlight that structure and directive clarity can be equally valued, particularly by employees prioritizing stability (Wang & Guan, 2018; Du et al., 2020). These dualities are not contradictions—they are reflections of a plural workforce.

Another important insight is the role of trust and loyalty as dynamic forces. Many employees described staying not for the organization, but for a manager they respected. Some even followed trusted managers across roles and companies. Others, however, recounted single moments when that trust was broken—often through public blame or a lack of support—and how those moments eventually led to their departure. Loyalty, then, isn't static; it lives and dies in everyday interactions.

The study also underscores that empathy and structure are not mutually exclusive. A number of respondents, particularly those in mid-career stages, valued a balanced leadership approach—a mix of clarity, accountability, and understanding. This resonates with Bruce J. Avolio and colleagues' argument that transformational and directive leadership can work in tandem rather than in opposition (Avolio et al., 2009). A manager

who can set firm expectations while remaining approachable creates psychological safety without diluting performance standards.

These nuances matter because they challenge the notion of a single “best” leadership style for retention. Organizations often search for neat formulas: train managers to be empathetic, and people will stay. But retention doesn’t work like that. What keeps someone anchored depends on their context, values, and stage of life. Empathy may inspire some, while fairness and stability sustain others. Communication, in turn, threads these pieces together—ensuring intent is experienced, not just implied.

The findings also point to the transformative potential of targeted managerial training. Many respondents identified emotional intelligence, communication, and conflict resolution as priority areas for leadership development. By equipping managers with the ability to read their teams and adapt their styles accordingly, organizations can respond more intelligently to this spectrum of needs. This is where the practical and the human meet.

Finally, these contrasting voices reveal something essential about retention itself. It isn’t just a number or a statistic to optimize. It’s a lived experience. People stay—or leave—for reasons that are both emotional and rational. A manager’s behavior is often at the intersection of those two forces. Leaders who can balance empathy with structure,

communicate clearly, and build trust through action rather than slogans stand the best chance of holding on to a diverse workforce.

The study, grounded in Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and Transformational Leadership Theory, confirms what many practitioners already sense but don't always articulate: retention lives in relationships. It is carried in how people talk to each other, how they feel when things go wrong, and whether they trust the person leading them. It lives in empathy that is felt, fairness that is practiced, and communication that bridges intent and experience. The thing that this research journey taught me is, that the heart of retention is not strategy alone, but the human need to belong and to feel valued in the spaces where we spend most of our waking hours.

6.2 Implications

The findings carry practical lessons for organizations.

- First, leadership development can't stop at process mastery or operational competence. Managers need to be equipped with deeper human skills—emotional intelligence, active communication, and conflict resolution—to lead diverse teams effectively. These capabilities help them adapt across generational and industry contexts, building trust and loyalty in real time (Kristin Malek et al., 2018; Goleman, 1998; Avolio et al., 2009). Without this foundation, even strong systems struggle to retain people.
- Second, organizations should weave empathy into the fabric of their culture, not treat it as a passing initiative. Recognizing and rewarding supportive leadership behaviors through structured performance metrics helps make empathy visible and valued. When empathy is measured and reinforced, it shifts from being optional to expected, creating lasting behavioral change (Goleman, 1998; Mayer et al., 1995; Colquitt et al., 2001). This alignment strengthens trust and boosts retention.
- Mid-level managers' less vocal emphasis on empathy suggests a critical gap in leadership alignment. This group often operates under intense operational pressure, focusing more on delivery than relational engagement. Targeted interventions—through coaching, experiential workshops, or reflective leadership programs—could build both awareness and tactical empathy at this level

(Goleman, 1998; Avolio et al., 2009). Strengthening this layer may create a cascading effect, reinforcing trust and retention organization-wide.

By aligning managerial development with these expectations, organizations can strengthen loyalty and reduce turnover costs.

6.3 Tailoring Leadership Practices to Workforce Diversity

Recognizing contrasting voices within the workforce carries significant implications for leadership practice. It challenges the long-held notion that one leadership model can universally apply to all employees. Instead, it calls for a more adaptive and differentiated approach—one that aligns leadership development with the varied needs, motivations, and expectations of different employee groups. This study's findings underscore that while empathy, communication, fairness, and trust all matter, their relative importance shifts with context, generational identity, and professional experience (Goleman, 1998; Colquitt et al., 2001; Du et al., 2020).

For early-career employees and younger generations, such as Millennials and Gen Z, leadership development must emphasize empathy, communication, and trust-building. These employees often seek belonging, mentorship, and purpose at work. Leadership programs aimed at this group should, therefore, focus on developing emotional intelligence, active listening, and transparent communication. Managers who understand how to recognize effort, support growth, and offer constructive feedback help create a climate of psychological safety—one that reduces turnover and enhances engagement (Mayer et al., 1995; Avolio et al., 2009).

In contrast, employees in government, public sector, or highly secure organizational contexts may not need emotionally expressive leadership to the same degree. Their retention depends more on procedural fairness, transparency in decision-making, and

consistency in managerial conduct. For this cohort, training should strengthen ethical decision-making, accountability, and fairness frameworks. The predictability of leadership behavior becomes a signal of trustworthiness—one that replaces the emotional connection younger employees seek with structural assurance (Colquitt et al., 2001).

Mid-career professionals—particularly those in supervisory or operational roles—require yet another blend. They often value performance-driven leadership but may underplay the importance of empathy. For them, training should integrate emotional intelligence with goal alignment, helping managers balance empathy with clarity and accountability. This balance echoes Transformational Leadership Theory, which suggests that both emotional resonance and high expectations are necessary to drive commitment (Avolio et al., 2009; Wang & Guan, 2018).

Tailoring leadership in this way not only increases relevance but also optimizes resource allocation. It ensures that leadership interventions address the specific motivational levers that drive retention across employee segments. In practice, such differentiated training helps organizations move from generic leadership rhetoric to actionable, context-aware strategy—cultivating managers who can flex, adapt, and connect with the distinct realities of their teams. Ultimately, this nuanced approach transforms leadership from a static competency into a living, responsive practice capable of sustaining long-term retention in an increasingly diverse workforce.

Implications for Theory

The study enriches existing theories of motivation and leadership. Herzberg's framework is reinforced, with empathy and recognition clearly acting as motivators that drive job satisfaction. At the same time, hygiene factors such as fairness and communication remain essential in preventing dissatisfaction. Transformational Leadership Theory is also validated: individualized consideration and inspirational motivation emerged as central to building trust and reducing attrition. The findings suggest that integrating both theories offers a more holistic lens for understanding modern retention challenges. This study recognises that contrasting employee expectations are not inconsistencies but context-specific retention drivers. Rather than treating variation as noise, it serves as a diagnostic tool for building adaptive leadership systems. Future organisational practice must therefore balance relational leadership skills with clarity, structure, and fairness aligned to role, industry maturity, and employee life-cycle.

6.4 Recommendations for Future Research

While this study provides valuable insights, it also highlights opportunities for future inquiry:

- Larger and more diverse samples across different regions of India and globally would strengthen generalizability.
- Longitudinal studies could explore how managerial behavior impacts retention over time, moving beyond cross-sectional snapshots.
- Comparative research across industries (IT, healthcare, education, manufacturing) could refine sector-specific retention strategies.
- Experimental interventions—such as leadership training programs—should be evaluated for their effectiveness in reducing turnover.
- Cultural factors could be integrated to examine how organizational culture interacts with managerial empathy in shaping retention.

6.5 Practical Applications for HR and Leadership Development Programs

Translating these findings into practice means moving beyond generic leadership workshops and designing development pathways that reflect the diversity of expectations in today's workforce. One clear insight from this research is that retention strengthens when managers know how to adapt—combining clarity with compassion and structure with genuine human connection. HR programs therefore need to cultivate leaders who can flex across situations rather than rely on a single style (Avolio et al., 2009; Wang & Guan, 2018).

The first step is embedding emotional intelligence and empathy-based training into existing leadership tracks. But this cannot be limited to classroom content; leaders learn empathy by practicing reflection, listening, and structured feedback conversations (Goleman, 1998). Shadow coaching, confidential employee feedback loops, and scenario-based simulations can help leaders build comfort with emotional nuance. For younger or innovation-driven talent pools, such relational competence is viewed not as a perk but as a sign of trust and recognition—both powerful anchors for staying.

At the same time, development plans should recognize that directive clarity also plays a role, particularly in regulated or stability-oriented environments. Programs can incorporate modules on expectation-setting, boundary-management, and fair decision-making, ensuring that empathy does not dilute accountability (Colquitt et al., 2001; Du et al., 2020).

In practice, this means fostering leaders who are kind without being permissive, and firm without being authoritarian.

Targeted interventions for mid-level managers are especially crucial. This layer often carries operational pressure and receives fewer developmental resources, yet employees report they shape daily experience the most. Tailoring training for this tier—focusing on balanced communication, coaching mindsets, and psychological-safety practices—can create ripple effects across teams (Mayer et al., 1995).

Ultimately, HR’s role shifts from “training for compliance” to building leadership maturity that understands when to direct, when to empathize, and when to do both. Organizations that internalize this subtle but strategic approach are better positioned to retain talent in environments defined by choice and change.

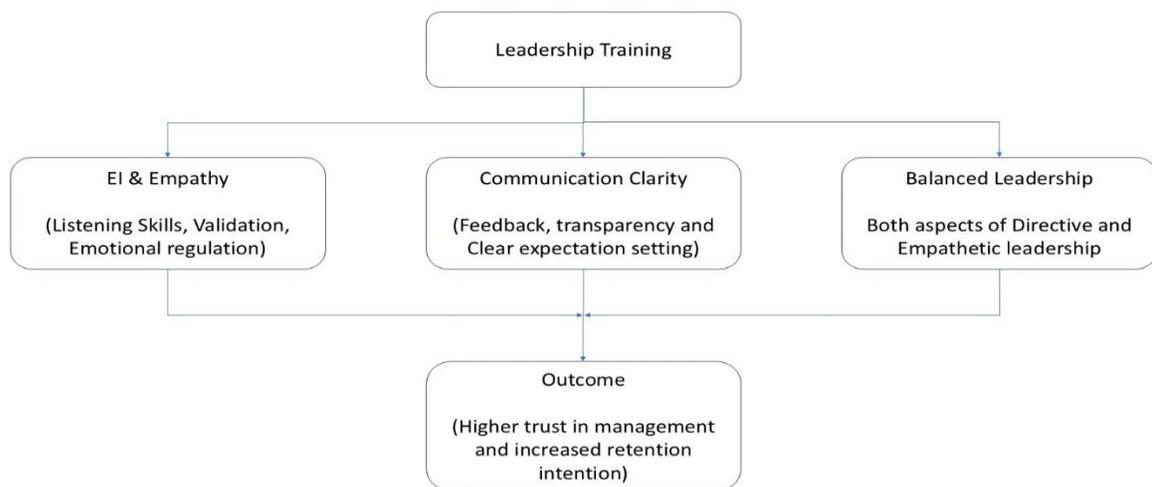


Figure 6.5: Process flow of leadership development inputs leading to improved trust and retention outcomes.

6.6 Conclusion

It would be fair to say, after a close examination of all the findings, that managerial behavior is one of the quiet yet decisive forces shaping employee retention. What began as an exploration of empathy, trust, fairness, and communication evolved into something much deeper—an understanding that leadership is not a fixed trait or checklist but a living relationship between people who bring their own histories, values, and expectations into the workplace. This study revealed that retention is not linear. It is layered, emotional, contextual, and deeply personal. The act of staying—or choosing to leave—is rarely about salary alone; it’s about what the job feels like every day.

At the center of this dynamic are four leadership traits: empathy, fairness, trust, and communication. Together, they form the foundation of how employees experience managerial behavior. Yet, their relative influence is far from uniform. What resonates as supportive leadership for one person might feel overbearing or unnecessary for another. Some employees attach value to being understood and emotionally supported, while others define good leadership through structure, accountability, and predictability. This divergence doesn’t dilute the findings—it strengthens them. It confirms that effective leadership cannot exist in isolation from context (Goleman, 1998; Mayer et al., 1995; Colquitt et al., 2001).

One of the most striking takeaways from the data is the presence of contrasting voices across generational and professional lines. For younger employees—particularly

Millennials and Gen Z—empathetic leadership often became the deciding factor in whether they stayed or left. They described empathy not as a luxury but as a necessity. To them, a good leader is one who listens, checks in, and acknowledges the human behind the role. This aligns strongly with Transformational Leadership Theory, where individualized consideration and emotional connection inspire intrinsic motivation and commitment (Avolio et al., 2009; Goleman, 1998). Many participants from this group shared moments of loyalty built on small, humane gestures—a manager offering understanding during a personal crisis, or simply taking responsibility in times of failure.

For older generations, the story is different but equally compelling. Baby Boomers and many Gen X professionals tended to see empathy as valuable but secondary to fairness, job stability, and procedural clarity. Their experiences were forged in organizational cultures that valued discipline, consistency, and endurance. For them, the ideal leader is reliable and just rather than overtly emotional. This echoes Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory, where hygiene factors such as job security and transparent decision-making prevent dissatisfaction but do not necessarily create motivation (Herzberg, 1966; Colquitt et al., 2001). Thus, the same empathetic gesture that feels transformational to a younger worker might register as unnecessary or even distracting to someone from an earlier generation.

The importance of context goes beyond generational boundaries. Industry, job role, and tenure also shape how leadership behaviors are interpreted. Employees in dynamic, high-pressure industries—like technology, consulting, and media—place a higher premium on

empathy and open communication. These sectors often involve constant change, long hours, and ambiguity, making emotional intelligence a stabilizing force (Du et al., 2020; Wang & Guan, 2018). In contrast, employees in more traditional or bureaucratic sectors, such as government or manufacturing, seek reassurance in predictability and fairness. There, structural consistency becomes the emotional anchor. This suggests that empathy and structure are not rivals but contextual counterparts—each finding strength in the absence of the other.

Another notable finding involves mid-level managers, who often occupy the tension point between strategic leadership and operational delivery. Many in this group were less vocal about empathy as an essential trait, viewing it as secondary to performance and accountability. However, this perspective underscores an opportunity rather than a limitation. Targeted training at this level could help managers integrate empathy with direction—creating leaders who are both firm and fair, able to balance results with relationships. As research by Avolio et al. (2009) and Goleman (1998) suggests, leaders who can blend transformational behaviors (inspiration and care) with transactional clarity (structure and feedback) tend to foster stronger engagement and lower turnover.

Across the findings, communication emerged as the invisible bridge that connects all other leadership traits. Empathy, trust, and fairness are only as effective as the way they are expressed. Employees rarely feel cared for through unspoken intention; they perceive empathy through action—active listening, transparency in decisions, timely feedback, and

genuine dialogue. As Mayer et al. (1995) noted, trust grows through consistent, open communication that minimizes ambiguity. When leaders communicate with honesty and warmth, they turn empathy from a sentiment into a tangible experience. Conversely, when communication falters, even well-meaning empathy can appear insincere or manipulative.

It is also essential to acknowledge that structure and empathy do not exist at opposite ends of a spectrum. They are two forces that, when balanced, produce the most effective form of leadership. Too much empathy without boundaries can blur accountability, while excessive structure without compassion can breed resentment. This study found that employees do not seek unending kindness or rigid control—they seek fit. The kind of leadership that recognizes when to lean in with understanding and when to step back with direction. As Du et al. (2020) argue, directive leadership and transformational leadership are not mutually exclusive; in practice, they often reinforce each other by providing both emotional and procedural stability.

This study also contributes to a broader understanding of leadership as a practice of adaptation. The most successful leaders in this research were not defined by their temperament but by their awareness. They read their teams, adjusted their tone, and responded to the specific needs of the moment. In doing so, they demonstrated what situational leadership theory described as the ability to shift between guiding, supporting, delegating, and coaching based on the readiness and maturity of employees. Such adaptive

behavior appears increasingly vital in contemporary organizations where generational, cultural, and industrial diversity coexist.

Also as discussed in Section 5.2.9, contrasting employee perspectives highlight that retention is shaped not by a single leadership style but by context, individual preference, and career stage.

From a practical perspective, these insights underline the importance of tailoring leadership development programs. Training cannot assume that all employees respond to the same motivational triggers. For early-career employees, workshops should focus on empathy, emotional intelligence, and authentic communication (Goleman, 1998; Avolio et al., 2009). For seasoned professionals, leadership initiatives should emphasize fairness, consistency, and accountability. For middle managers, programs should teach balance—how to be approachable without losing authority. Customizing leadership training in this way ensures that resources are invested in approaches that reflect real-world complexity rather than theoretical ideals. Another implication of these findings is that employee retention must be reframed as a shared responsibility. It is not merely an HR function but a daily leadership practice embedded in relationships. Retention lives in how a manager handles mistakes, recognizes effort, communicates expectations, and maintains fairness under pressure. The study's qualitative data repeatedly showed that employees remember specific interactions—moments where they felt supported or betrayed—and these moments quietly

determine whether they stay or leave. Retention, therefore, is emotional before it is logistical.

Ultimately, this research reinforces a truth that modern organizations often overlook: people stay not for perks, but for people. They stay for leaders who make them feel respected, understood, and treated with dignity. When empathy meets communication, and structure meets fairness, a sense of belonging takes root—and belonging is the real antidote to attrition. In conclusion, this thesis contributes to the growing understanding that employee retention is not a single-variable equation but a relational ecosystem. Leadership behaviors shape this ecosystem daily, often in subtle, human ways. It is in these moments—when a manager listens without judgment, when fairness replaces favoritism, when trust is built quietly over time—that the decision to stay is made. Leaders who master this balance—between heart and structure, empathy and clarity—don't just reduce turnover. They build cultures that endure. And that, in essence, is the heartbeat of sustainable retention (Herzberg, 1966; Goleman, 1998; Mayer et al., 1995; Avolio et al., 2009; Du et al., 2020; Wang & Guan, 2018).

6.7 Future Directions: Reimagining Leadership Training Models

The findings of this study point toward a leadership landscape that can no longer rely on static, one-dimensional training models. Traditional leadership programs often teach skills in isolation—communication here, performance management there, and emotional intelligence somewhere on the side. But what emerges clearly from employee voices in this research is that leadership today is more fluid, relational, and contextual. Modern leadership training must therefore move from teaching competencies as checkboxes to developing leaders as adaptive human systems capable of shifting between structure and empathy depending on the moment (Avolio et al., 2009; Goleman, 1998).

In the future, leadership training will need to embed situational adaptability as a foundational capability. Instead of coaching managers to fit a single leadership mold, programs could emphasize “leadership range”—the ability to move from directive clarity to empathetic support and back again with intention. This aligns with emerging thinking in leadership science, where contextual intelligence and relational adaptability are recognised as key to building trust and influence in diverse teams (Wang & Guan, 2018). Organizations that prepare leaders to assess context, understand emotional tone, and respond with agility will see stronger retention outcomes, especially in dynamic markets.

Another direction is placing psychological safety and trust-building at the core of training frameworks. The study makes clear that employees do not stay merely because leaders are kind—they stay because leaders create a climate where they feel respected, supported, and

fairly treated. Future leadership models may therefore integrate modules on relational courage, feedback transparency, and accountability without humiliation (Mayer et al., 1995; Colquitt et al., 2001). Training exercises could include reflection circles, role-reversal simulations, and guided exposure to conflict scenarios, helping managers build emotional strength without losing compassion.

Generational diversity will also reshape how training is designed. Younger employees expect mentorship, inclusion, and psychological safety, whereas more experienced employees may prefer clarity, resource stability, and principled fairness. Leadership development will need layered pathways—not one program, but multiple tracks aligned to workforce demographics. For example, training for first-line and middle managers may prioritize humility, communication presence, and listening-centered practices, while senior leaders may lean into vision building, trust-architecture, and empowerment systems.

Technology will likely accelerate these shifts. Digital learning ecosystems, adaptive learning modules, AI-supported simulations, and behavioral nudging tools can tailor leadership development to individual needs, pacing, and emotional readiness. But technology alone is insufficient—human reflection and coaching will remain critical so that behavioral change is lived, not only learned.

Finally, leadership programs of the future must measure more than competencies. Instead of evaluating leaders solely on performance metrics, organizations may track indicators

like team trust levels, psychological climate, learning engagement, internal mobility, and voluntary retention—signals that reflect the lived experience of leadership. This research underscores that leadership success is not only seen in outputs; it is felt in whether people believe they can grow and stay.

In essence, the future of leadership learning is not about teaching leaders to be softer or stricter. It is about helping them become emotionally intelligent, ethically grounded, and contextually aware decision-makers who can respond to the human side of work as thoughtfully as they manage tasks. In environments where employees have choice, leaders must earn followership—not assume it.

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APPENDIX A:
SURVEY ON EMPATHETIC PEOPLE MANAGEMENT AND EMPLOYEE
RETENTION

1. I have read the introductory section and understand that the data I provide will remain confidential and private. I voluntarily agree to participate in this survey.
 - A. YES
 - B. NO
2. NAME
3. ORGANIZATION (PRESENT OR LATEST WORKED)
4. AGE
5. AGE-WISE GENERATION
 - A. BABY BOOMERS (1946 - 1964)
 - B. GENERATION X (1965 - 1980)
 - C. MILLENNIALS (1981 -1996)
 - D. GENERATION Z (1997 - 2010)
6. GENDER
 - A. MALE
 - B. FEMALE
 - C. NON-BINARY
 - D. PREFER NOT TO SAY

7. JOB CATEGORY

- A. SMALL COMPANIES (LESS THAN 50 EMPLOYEES)
- B. LARGE COMPANIES (MORE THAN 50 EMPLOYEES)
- C. SEMI GOVERNMENT COMPANIES
- D. GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

8. JOB ROLE

- A. INDIVIDUAL CONTRIBUTOR
- B. TEAM MANAGER
- C. SENIOR-LEVEL MANAGER
- D. UPPER MANAGEMENT

9. TOTAL YEARS OF EXPERIENCE

10. TOTAL NUMBER OF JOBS HELD IN THE ENTIRE CAREER

11. IN A SITUATION WHERE YOU COMMITTED AN ERROR WHICH LED TO SOME SERIOUS REPERCUSSIONS, PLEASE RATE THE MANAGER'S BEHAVIOR ON ASPECTS SUCH AS SUPPORTIVENESS, FAIRNESS, EMOTIONAL CONTROL, AND COMMUNICATION DURING THE SITUATION.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My manager remained calm and emotionally composed.	<input type="radio"/>				
My manager communicated clearly and constructively	<input type="radio"/>				
My manager was supportive and focused on solutions rather than blame.	<input type="radio"/>				
My manager treated me fairly and with respect.	<input type="radio"/>				
The experience strengthened my trust in my manager.	<input type="radio"/>				
Their response motivated me to continue working at the organization.	<input type="radio"/>				

12. IN YOUR OWN WORDS, HOW DID YOUR MANAGER'S RESPONSE TO THE SITUATION AFFECT YOUR FEELINGS ABOUT STAYING WITH THE ORGANIZATION?

13. HOW DOES YOUR IMMEDIATE MANAGER RESPOND WHEN YOU'RE UNDER PRESSURE TO DELIVER A CRITICAL TASK, AND AN UNEXPECTED REQUEST FOR SUPPORT FROM A TEAMMATE OR VENDOR ARISES?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My manager assesses the situation calmly and helps prioritize effectively.	<input type="radio"/>				
My manager supports me in focusing on the critical deliverable.	<input type="radio"/>				
My manager communicates decisions clearly to all stakeholders involved.	<input type="radio"/>				
My manager balances urgency and expectations without creating unnecessary stress.	<input type="radio"/>				
I feel supported by my manager in managing sudden conflicting demands.	<input type="radio"/>				
The way my manager handles such situations affects my trust and willingness to stay.	<input type="radio"/>				

14. CAN YOU SHARE AN EXPERIENCE WHERE YOUR MANAGER’S HANDLING OF CONFLICTING PRIORITIES IMPACTED YOUR PERFORMANCE, STRESS LEVELS, OR YOUR INTENT TO STAY WITH THE ORGANIZATION?

15. HOW DOES YOUR IMMEDIATE MANAGER APPROACH PLANNING AND SUPPORTING TRAININGS AND DEVELOPMENT OPPORTUNITIES FOR YOU AND YOUR TEAM?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My manager actively identifies relevant training and development opportunities for the team.	<input type="radio"/>				
My manager discusses individual growth needs during goal-setting or review discussions.	<input type="radio"/>				
Training plans are aligned with both organizational goals and my personal career aspirations.	<input type="radio"/>				
My manager ensures that I have time and support to attend learning sessions.	<input type="radio"/>				
I feel encouraged to pursue professional growth due to my manager’s support.	<input type="radio"/>				
My manager’s involvement in my development positively affects my engagement and intent to stay with the organization.	<input type="radio"/>				

16. CAN YOU SHARE AN EXAMPLE WHERE YOUR MANAGER’S SUPPORT (OR LACK OF IT) FOR YOUR LEARNING AND DEVELOPMENT INFLUENCED YOUR GROWTH OR YOUR COMMITMENT TO THE ORGANIZATION?

17. HOW DOES YOUR IMMEDIATE MANAGER RESPOND WHEN THEY ARE INTERRUPTED BY A TEAMMATE WHILE EXPLAINING SOMETHING IMPORTANT IN A TEAM MEETING?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My manager handles interruptions respectfully and maintains composure.	<input type="radio"/>				
My manager ensures all voices are heard while keeping the discussion on track.	<input type="radio"/>				
My manager addresses interruptions constructively rather than defensively.	<input type="radio"/>				
My manager models respectful communication even in tense or disruptive moments.	<input type="radio"/>				
I feel psychologically safe during team meetings due to my manager’s response to disruptions.	<input type="radio"/>				
My manager’s communication style during team interactions positively affects my engagement.	<input type="radio"/>				

18. CAN YOU DESCRIBE HOW YOUR MANAGER'S RESPONSE TO INTERRUPTIONS OR DISRUPTIONS DURING MEETINGS AFFECTS THE TEAM DYNAMIC OR YOUR PERCEPTION OF LEADERSHIP?

19. HOW DOES YOUR IMMEDIATE MANAGER RESPOND WHEN A TEAM MEMBER CHOOSES TO OPT OUT OF A PLANNED TEAM OUTING OR GROUP ACTIVITY?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
My manager respects individual choices without pressuring team members to participate.	<input type="radio"/>				
My manager seeks to understand the reason for opting out without judgment.	<input type="radio"/>				
My manager maintains a sense of inclusion even when someone declines to join a group activity.	<input type="radio"/>				
My manager ensures no one feels left out or alienated due to personal preferences or boundaries.	<input type="radio"/>				
My manager promotes a culture of respect and psychological safety in such situations.	<input type="radio"/>				
The way my manager handles such situations positively impacts team cohesion and my sense of belonging and remaining with this organization	<input type="radio"/>				

20. Can you describe how your manager's response to individual preferences in team bonding or social activities affected your perception of inclusion and leadership?

21. ACCORDING TO YOU, IS AN EMPATHETIC PEOPLE MANAGEMENT IMPORTANT TO YOUR OVERALL JOB SATISFACTION?

- A. NOT IMPORTANT AT ALL
- B. SLIGHTLY IMPORTANT
- C. MODERATELY IMPORTANT
- D. VERY IMPORTANT
- E. EXTREMELY IMPORTANT

22. ACCORDING TO YOU, WOULD AN EMPATHETIC MANAGEMENT CONTRIBUTE TO AN EMPLOYEE'S DECISION TO STAY AT AN ORGANIZATION?

- A. YES
- B. NO
- C. IT IS IMPORTANT BUT NOT A DECIDING FACTOR WHEN IT COMES TO DECISION OF STAYING OR QUITTING A JOB

23. PLEASE PROVIDE ANY ADDITIONAL COMMENTS OR SUGGESTIONS
REGARDING YOUR PEOPLE MANAGEMENT PRACTICES AND THEIR IMPACT
ON TEAM MEMBER'S DECISION TO STAY WITH OR LEAVE THE COMPANY.

24. WHAT TRAINING WOULD YOU RECOMMEND FOR LEADERSHIP AND
PEOPLE MANAGEMENT POSITIONS (RESPONSE TO THIS QUESTION IS NOT
MANDATORY)

APPENDIX B
SURVEY COVER LETTER

Thank you for participating in this survey on empathetic people management and its impact on employee turnover intentions. Your input is incredibly valuable in helping us understand how empathetic management practices influence job satisfaction and retention. The insights gathered from this survey will contribute to improving management strategies and fostering a supportive work environment.

Why Your Participation Matters:

Empathetic people management is crucial for creating a positive workplace culture where employees feel valued and understood. By sharing your experiences and perspectives, you will help us identify key areas where managers can better support their teams. This, in turn, can lead to higher job satisfaction, improved performance, and reduced turnover.

Confidentiality and Privacy:

We understand that your privacy is important. Rest assured that all responses will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. The data collected will be used solely for research purposes and will never be shared with anyone. Your honest feedback is essential, and we appreciate your trust in providing it.

Instructions:

Please answer the following questions based on your work experience. The survey should take approximately 10-15 minutes to complete. There are no right or wrong answers; we are interested in your genuine opinions and experiences.

Thank you for your time and contribution to this important research.

APPENDIX C
INFORMED CONSENT

Confidentiality and Privacy:

We understand that your privacy is important. Rest assured that all responses will be kept strictly confidential and anonymous. The data collected will be used solely for research purposes and will never be shared with anyone. Your honest feedback is essential, and we appreciate your trust in providing it.

The first question in the survey was used to obtain an acknowledgement from responders regarding informed consent