

Exploring the optimum leadership style for talent retention within a faculty at a higher education institution

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DECLARATION

I, **Verena Lucia Neethling**, student number **28398483**, declare that this study: **“Exploring the optimum leadership style for talent retention within a faculty at a higher education institution”** is my own work apart from where sources are acknowledged.

This study is for the degree Master of Business Administration, submitted to the Faculty of Economic and Management Sciences, North-West University. It has not been previously submitted by me or any other person for a degree at any alternative institute.

Verena Lucia Neethling

Date: November 2022

ABSTRACT

Talent retention in higher education has become extremely significant in recent years as higher education institutions (HEIs) find it challenging to attract and retain academic talent in a highly competitive environment. Academic leadership significantly impacts promoting, attracting, and retaining of academic talent in HEIs. This study aimed to determine, through empirical research, the optimum leadership style for talent retention within a faculty at a South African HEI. Further, this study sought to determine the factors that cause talented employees to leave HEIs and to identify suitable talent management strategies to successfully retain academics within the institution.

A qualitative descriptive research design was employed for the purposes of this study, with interpretivism as its foundation. Using purposeful sampling, eight lecturers at the institution were selected for individual interviews using Microsoft Teams. The researcher adhered to all Protection of Personal Information (POPI) Act-mandated ethical concerns and regulations. Prior to the study, ethics approval was acquired from the relevant ethics committee to ensure that ethical conduct was maintained throughout all phases of the study. The data recordings were transcribed verbatim. Using content analysis, the researcher coded and categorised the data into themes and subthemes, which were validated by the literature.

Four themes and nine subthemes were identified. The four themes included (1) reasons why academics leave the organisation, (2) factors that prevent academics from leaving the organisation, (3) talent retention of academics in an organisation, and (4) specific leadership attributes needed to retain academics during the COVID-19 pandemic or during times of uncertainty. The findings revealed that the leadership style of current managers, the workplace environment and the organisational culture all contribute to academics wanting to leave their current employment. Moreover, specific leadership styles, conducive working conditions and development opportunities for academics were identified as factors preventing academics from leaving the organisation. Lastly, the specific leadership qualities and talent management strategies to successfully retain academics were described.

Based on the findings, the following recommendations were made regarding talent retention in the context of SA higher education: (1) HEIs should prioritise the formulation of appropriate compensation packages and incentives for academic employees, (2) teamwork among employees and management should be fostered, (3) academic mentorship and leadership development programmes need to be implemented, and (4) a culture of continuous learning and development should be encouraged within the organisation. Lastly, career path development and succession planning should be strengthened and reinforced, and a healthy work-life balance should be maintained.

Keywords:

charismatic leadership; democratic leadership; participative leadership; talent management strategies; talent management; talent retention; transformational leadership

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my parents:

Vernon Neethling

and

Bertha Neethling

Thank you, mom and dad, for your endless love, support, encouragement, and prayers throughout my studies.

Thank you for supporting my inquisitive spirit and teaching me that knowledge is power and that it's never too late to pursue my dreams.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

EMS-REC	Economic and Management Sciences Researchers Ethics Committee
HEI	Higher Education Institution
MS	Microsoft
NWU	North-West University
POPIA	Protection of Personal Information Act
RDGC	Researchers Data Gatekeepers Committee
SA	South African
VUCA	Volatile, Uncertainty, Complexity and Ambiguous
WHO	World Health Organisation
WLB	Work-Life Balance

CHAPTER 1 – INTRODUCTION AND PROBLEM STATEMENT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

Talent Management is gaining increasingly more attention among organisations. It is one of the most significant difficulties faced by organisations globally (Algotsson *et al.*, 2016:2). Many organisations are unaware of the risks associated with talent retention and that the strong-performing employees are usually the ones that end up leaving the organisation. Strategic talent management in the higher education (HE) sector is consequently gaining significant importance in the 21st century. Researchers argue that human capital is far more important than innovative technologies or other material or financial resources (Allui & Sahni, 2016:361; Algotsson *et al.*, 2016:1-2). Moreover, human capital may be an organisation's only strategic advantage in an ever-changing and competitive workplace environment. Therefore, the latter is considered an organisation's most significant asset, making talent management and employee retention a necessity (Ng'ethe, 2013:3). Talent management is a key area requiring consistent leadership attention.

A talented employee is a person who stands out due to their intellectual ability, or in the case of academics, their rigorous academic qualities, their scientific knowledge, and academic expertise. Talented employees are analytical and possess a keen intellect (Thunnissen & van Arensbergen, 2014:190). According to the authors, talents are distinguished by their intrapersonal characteristics. They are highly motivated and ambitious, have a strong passion for science, and are willing to work extremely hard. In addition, a talent's record of success demonstrates good grades, numerous publications in high-impact journals, the acquisition of renowned scholarships and grants, and proof of scientific work experience (Thunnissen & van Arensbergen, 2014:191). The changing nature of the workplace environment in the current era has made it difficult for organisations to attract and retain talented and skilled employees

from the labour market (Allui & Sahni, 2016:361). The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a lot of uncertainty in various economic sectors globally.

Moreover, the pandemic affects all segments and impacts the work experience of most of the human capital, including talented employees (Rasheed *et al.*, 2022:35). Numerous employees are faced with sudden job losses due to the pandemic (Elsafty & Ragheb, 2020:51). When employees quit or lose their jobs, or there is an increased turnover rate, it is commonly an indication that something is amiss within the workplace environment (Ng'ethe, 2013:1). Staff retention has therefore been a significant challenge for all economic sectors, including the public and private HE sectors. Given the ongoing shortages of academic staff in HE, talented employees must be retained. The loss of talent may contribute to reduced morale and productivity among individuals and teams, as well as increased recruitment expenditures for the organisation. To attract and retain talented employees, organisations should manage employees effectively and contribute to developing their skills and abilities (Rinaldhy, 2021:1). Moreover, managers should develop competitive strategies for retaining talented individuals within their organisations.

Various factors contribute to effective talent management and employee retention strategies. These factors include continuous training and development of employees, diversity and equality in the workplace; incentives and bonuses; succession planning; job security; managerial support and recognition; and organisational culture (Rinaldhy, 2021:3; Kumar, 2021:22). The retention of employees is therefore highly related to the Human Resources (HR) department's policies and their implementation (Elsafty & Ragheb, 2020:52).

Leaders' functions and specific leadership styles are essential for talent management and retention. The ability of a leader to create a sustainable vision for the organisation and to influence others positively is essential. Since leadership assists in forecasting the future direction of an organisation, the practices and behaviours of its leaders are what motivate their employees to accomplish the objectives of the organisation (Hammadi & Noor, 2020:68). In the increasingly competitive markets in the HE sectors, it is the responsibility of leaders to navigate their organisations through this highly competitive environment (Ng'ethe *et al.*, 2012:297). Good leadership skills are required

to make important decisions at HEIs and determine which strategic goals to prioritise. Leadership skills are challenged to an even greater extent in a volatile, uncertain, complex and ambiguous (VUCA) environment, such as the one experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic.

1.2 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

It is widely acknowledged that the South African (SA) HE sector is currently facing various challenges, including academic staff capacity, quality education and training, and research and social engagement (Higher Education and Training, 2015:1; Seeletse & Thabane, 2016:106). The sector is expected to attract academics with potential in teaching, research, and community involvement, among other areas. The success of these projects depends heavily on the availability of many qualified, experienced, and skilled academic staff. The challenge is multidimensional, involving the slow rate of transformation and change, the ageing workforce, and globalised developments in higher education that require ever-increasing levels of expertise, knowledge, and experience (Higher Education and Training, 2015:1). Furthermore, estimated growth forecasts for student numbers over the next five years indicate the need to substantially increase academic staff recruitment and talent retention. The national and global economic crises and uncertainty amplify policy challenges and possible alternatives, which present an opportunity for the SA government to reconsider its relationship with HE (Wangenge-Ouma & Kupe, 2020:3-5).

The COVID-19 pandemic has been a catalyst for change in higher education, both in terms of how it serves the public and in terms of providing students with the knowledge and skills they need to contribute effectively to the SA economy. As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the HE industry is confronted with momentous technological, financial, human resource, and collaboration concerns (Ramdhany, 2020:1). Academic employment involves recruitment and retention. A prevalent human resources practice in HEIs is the development of talent and talent retention inside HEIs and advancing employees' career pathways (Seeletse & Thabane, 2016:106).

Many factors influence employees' intentions to leave an organisation. Various studies indicate that the latter is influenced by leadership behaviour (Mey *et al.*, 2021:1; Barkhuizen *et al.*, 2014:11). The way leaders treat their employees is one of the most significant factors in talent retention in an organisation (Savarimuthu & Amala, 2018:76-77). Leaders are one of an organisation's most important talent retention resources. Senior managers in human capital-centric organisations should devote at least 50% of their time to talent management.

Moreover, leaders should adopt a new talent retention mindset that is inspired by modern leadership methods, unique business strategies, and innovative leadership skills (Barkhuizen *et al.*, 2014:12). The leadership of the organisation likewise determines the strategic direction of the organisation and provides the objectives that the employees must attain. Leaders must, therefore, not only comprehend the influence of talent on the organisation but also engage in the commitment that outstanding talent can contribute to the organisation's success, particularly during unpredictable times like the COVID-19 pandemic (Barkhuizen *et al.*, 2014:12).

Leadership agility is essential for the key operations and addressing the numerous challenges presented by COVID-19 in the HE sectors. The COVID-19 pandemic introduced instability, uncertainty, complexity, and ambiguity in HEIs. These factors require swift, high-impact responses in the HE environment (Kaul *et al.*, 2020:809). Researchers have refined a standard set of best practices that successful leaders adhere to in typical circumstances. Leaders rely on their intuition and the insights of human resource specialists to ensure that their organisation and employees feel supported.

The COVID-19 pandemic has also compelled leaders to think and act promptly, as employees are more vulnerable in a variety of ways. The pandemic caused traumatic experiences for employees, and leaders should learn how to manage the complexity of these experiences and adjust to the new realities of the workplace. Research has also shown the importance of leadership support, psychological empowerment, positive reinforcement, and appreciation and recognition of work (Dirani *et al.*, 2020:383).

1.3 PROBLEM STATEMENT

Given the importance of HE in South Africa (SA), several research studies have been conducted on the relationship between talent management and employee retention (Hammadi & Noor, 2020:69). Various studies have been conducted nationally and internationally on the factors that influence employee retention and talent management in organisations, especially considering the COVID-19 pandemic (Armstrong, 2010:84; Ng'ethe, 2013:2). However, these studies do not address the optimum leadership styles associated with talent retention in HEIs. For many years, managers have been concerned about employee retention and turnover, particularly the loss of exceptional talent. For organisations in general, the need to attract and retain high-performing employees is both a concern and a challenge.

According to a study published by Higher Education South Africa (2009:7), HEIs are experiencing a crisis in terms of their capacity to attract and retain qualified and skilled academic employees. This has resulted in a gradual loss of academic expertise as well as the loss of senior and more experienced academic employees, resulting in HEIs falling behind in terms of productivity (Mapesela & Strydom, 2004:2). Selesho and Naile (2014:295) stated that universities must attract and maintain distinguished academic employees, retaining a well-developed and engaged academic workforce has become a major concern in SA. South African HEIs are, therefore, ever more challenged to manage talent retention.

Moreover, employee retention is a major concern for HEIs globally due to a scarcity of qualified and experienced academic staff (Erasmus *et al.*, 2015:33). Retaining experienced, qualified, and skilled academic staff is critical because it influences the quality of education offered and because the number of experts in a sector is limited. Due to an ageing workforce and limited opportunities for attracting and maintaining young, talented employees, talent management has become a key challenge for the HE sectors. In addition, an institution's strength is derived from its human capital. Therefore, it is critical to address and manage leadership and management styles, human resource policies, and processes to recruit and retain skilled employees (Erasmus *et al.*, 2015:34). Effective leadership styles and employee retention need

purposeful activities to keep academic employees engaged and focused for them to choose to stay employed and contribute fully to organisational success (Day, 2007:18).

Academic staff continuously seek improved career opportunities, remuneration, and incentives. The ageing workforce holds invaluable expertise that needs to be preserved. These academic employees are responsible for constructing the knowledge base of HEIs. They are also essential for offering guidance, direction and coaching to the younger generations in the workforce. Additionally, the ageing workforce and limited opportunities for younger, talented employees to be recruited and retained contribute to the phenomenon. As a result, employee retention and increased employee turnover are critical challenges (Erasmus *et al.*, 2015:33). Badat (2009:12) stated that if this issue is not addressed, academic offerings, graduate excellence, and university research outputs will deteriorate in the years ahead.

The difficulty in managing talent in South Africa's higher education industry has resulted in the absence of a sustainable group of academics for the next generation. To increase competitiveness, organisations should make talent retention a top priority. Failure to manage talent retention concerns may put organisations at risk, which may result in a lack of skilled and high-performing staff. This may also have a detrimental impact on the organisation's productivity and output (Mey *et al.*, 2021:3). Having an effective workforce talent management strategy that includes effective leadership strategies is one option for dealing with this issue. Research implies that leadership plays a pivotal role in retaining talent. Understanding the preferred leadership behaviours of South African employees is essential for developing leadership abilities that correspond to the needs of the South African workforce and, therefore, also increase talent retention (Mey *et al.*, 2021:3-4).

Considering the study's background and the problem statement above, the following was chosen as the main research question for the study:

What type of leadership style is required for the talent retention of academic employees within a faculty in a HEI?

1.4 OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following objectives have been formulated for the study:

1.4.1 Primary objective

The primary objective of this study was to explore and describe the optimum leadership style for talent retention within a faculty in a HEI.

1.4.2 Secondary objectives

To address the primary objective, the following secondary objectives were set:

- To determine the factors that caused talented employees to leave a specific HEI for employment at another HEI or the public sector.
- To understand the influence of different leadership styles on talent retention within a faculty in a HEI.
- To explore the different talent management strategies that could successfully be employed to improve talent retention within a faculty in a HEI.

1.5 RESEARCH QUESTION

1.5.1 Primary research question

Considering the background of the study and the problem statement above, the following research question was developed:

What type of leadership style is required for talent retention of employees within a faculty in a HEI?

1.5.2 Sub-research questions

To address the primary research question, the following secondary research questions were set:

- What causes talented employees to leave a specific HEI for employment at another HEI or the public sector?
- What is the influence of different leadership styles on talent retention within a faculty in a HEI?

- What talent management strategies can be successfully employed to improve talent retention within a faculty in a HEI?

The main purpose of this study was to determine which factors influence academic talent retention, the leadership style preferences of academic employees in the HE sector, as well as the extent to which various leadership styles influence talent retention of employees.

1.6 SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

In a rapidly changing work environment, organisations place emphasis on their human capital. Talent retention refers to the strategies implemented by management to assist employees in staying with the organisation so that they contribute more effectively to the organisation's success. Talent retention in HEIs has become increasingly significant since employees require specific leadership styles to stay motivated and supported. Productive organisations utilise specific elements to maximise the potential of their human capital. Leaders are responsible for sincere efforts to increase employee satisfaction and support within the workplace context to retain more talented employees. This study is unique and relevant in the context of South African higher education. The research has contributed to the body of knowledge and provided scientific evidence regarding the preferred and optimum leadership styles for talent retention in a HEI. This scientific knowledge assisted the management of the North-West University (NWU) in the development of talent retention strategies.

1.7 PRELIMINARY LITERATURE REVIEW

1.7.1 Leadership and talent retention

A leader can be defined as an individual tasked with directing one or more followers toward the attainment of a predetermined goal. While doing so, the leader must be aware of each follower's strengths and identify opportunities for improvement (Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014:165). As leadership plays a vital role in talent retention, Rao *et al.* (2018:162) state that trust, good communication, coaching, and empathy are key characteristics of an innovative and good leader. The interaction between the leader and the employees plays an essential role in employee retention since

employees need to feel socially connected and valued. A leader should be able to adapt their leadership style dependent on the organisational and external conditions in which the organisation functions to be more efficient, enabling followers and earning their trust and respect. Consequently, adopting an appropriate leadership style is crucial for talent retention and guiding organisations to success, especially during times of uncertainty.

1.7.2 Leadership styles

A leadership style can be defined as the conscious means by which a leader influences a group of individuals within an organisation toward a future state that is commonly perceived to be distinct from the present state (Gandolfi & Stone, 2018:264). Since leadership aids in shaping an organisation's potential direction, its leaders' practices and behaviours motivate its employees to accomplish the organisation's objectives. As a result, employees typically follow their leader's behaviours when executing their tasks. It is therefore important to recognise that the adopted leadership style can substantially impact job satisfaction, behaviour, and, eventually, the retention of employees.

There are many different types of leadership styles, including autocratic, participative, servant, transformational and ethical leadership styles (Hammadi & Noor, 2020:68). Different situations, constraints and challenges in higher education may necessitate the use of various leadership styles. The five major leadership functions, according to Sethuraman and Suresh (2014:165), are (1) creating a vision and focusing on it, (2) maintaining team motivation, (3) maintaining a positive relationship with employees, (4) establishing a high-performing team and (5) increasing employee satisfaction to reduce turnover and increase retention.

1.7.3 The COVID-19 pandemic and higher education

In December 2019, an unknown source of a viral outbreak of pneumonia was reported in Wuhan, China. The World Health Organisation (WHO) formally announced the newly discovered coronavirus, also known as SARS-Cov2, on 9 January 2020. On 11 March 2020, the WHO declared COVID-19 to be a pandemic due to its rapid global spread. On 1 April 2020, HEIs throughout 185 countries were forced to close due to

the pandemic (Marinoni *et al.*, 2020:8). The pandemic has significantly impacted the HE sectors. COVID-19 affected global teaching and learning activities, resulting in the transition of classroom instruction to distant teaching and learning. The transition from face-to-face to remote learning did not occur without challenges, the most significant of which were access to technological capabilities, skills and pedagogies for distance learning and the requirements of specific academic disciplines.

Simultaneously, the transition to distance teaching and learning strategies presented an opportunity to offer more flexible learning options, including blended or hybrid learning (Marinoni *et al.*, 2020:11). The academic staff of HEIs are required to work under a tremendous amount of pressure to successfully adjust to the newly implemented teaching and learning methodologies. The COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly impacted how academics do their work, interact with others, and educate (Wong *et al.*, 2021:328).

This COVID-19 experience affords an opportunity to better prepare HEIs for future crises of a similar nature. Although leaders in HEIs are dealing with the urgency of the problem in the short term, it can be viewed as a unique chance for leaders of HEIs to learn about crisis management in the long term (Marinoni *et al.*, 2020:14). This may increase HEIs future resilience and adaptability in the face of unforeseen problems.

1.7.4 Talent retention in HEIs

Talent retention is one of the most important challenges that all organisations and their leaders struggle with. For organisational leaders to maintain a competitive advantage in the HE markets, retaining qualified talent is essential (Rao *et al.*, 2018:162; Traveler, 2019:4). Leaders' ability to foster a retention culture has become a determining factor in why employees remain with an organisation and what typically causes them to leave (Rao *et al.*, 2018:162-163). Due to the intense pressure and disrupted change imposed by COVID-19 on the HE sectors; leaders must manage and invest in maintaining their talented individuals.

1.8 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Pandey and Pandey (2015:9) define research methodology as a systematic approach to seeking new information or knowledge. The purpose of research is to discover explanations and solutions by applying a scientific procedure to become familiar with a phenomenon or obtain novel insights (Oosthuizen *et al.*, 2020:361-362). The methodology pertaining to the research will be discussed in the sections that follow.

1.8.1 Research paradigm

Numerous scholars have provided a comprehensive definition of the term paradigm, which derives from the Greek for “pattern”. A research paradigm can be defined as a set of assumptions about how certain problems exist and a set of agreements about how these problems might be investigated (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:5; Kamal, 2019:1387). Furthermore, a research paradigm is characterised by action-guiding ideas that are embedded in all research activities (Kamal, 2019:1388). In short, paradigms describe the ideas and values of researchers regarding the world, how they interpret it, and how they function within it. The researcher’s opinions and attitudes relating to the topic they are investigating would ultimately determine how they conduct their research. In other words, the researchers’ investigation is based on their chosen paradigm, including how they collect and analyse data (Kamal, 2019:1387; Oosthuizen *et al.*, 2020:366).

Creswell and Creswell (2018:6-7) distinguish four paradigms widely discussed in the literature: post-positivism, constructivism, transformative, and pragmatism. The constructivist worldview is often combined with interpretivism (Oosthuizen *et al.*, 2020:13). In the interpretivist paradigm, the aim is to understand the reality of *human* experience (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:8; Kamal, 2019:1387). In addition, the interpretivist paradigm necessitates an inductive approach to social reality. Oosthuizen *et al.* (2020:364) suggest that interpretivism is linked with the qualitative research approach and associated research strategies. For this study, the interpretivism research paradigm was selected since the researcher seeks to examine and understand realities through the experiences and views of the participants. As stated

by Oosthuizen *et al.* (2020:366), in addition to learning from what can be seen, each person's goals, beliefs, values, and intentions will also be considered.

1.8.2 Research design

Research designs are types of inquiry that provide specific guidance for steps in a research study using a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed-methods approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:11). The latter is often referred to as strategies of enquiry in research studies. Qualitative research can be defined as research that aims to explore and understand the meaning that individuals or groups assign to a social or human phenomenon. Various research methods that don't rely on statistics or other forms of quantification are classified as qualitative research (Oosthuizen *et al.*, 2020:366). According to various scholars, the aims of qualitative research are to clarify the significance of an event for the participants. Researchers want to know how people make sense of their worlds, explain their own experiences and give those experiences meaning (Kamal, 2019:1387; Oosthuizen *et al.*, 2020:366).

A qualitative research design was selected for this study as the preferred leadership style for talent retention in a HEI because a specific phenomenon will be explored and described. Phenomenological research, according to Creswell and Creswell (2018:13), is an approach to inquiry that combines philosophy and psychology and describes the participants' lived experiences with a phenomenon. The essence of the experiences regarding leadership for academic employees in a HEI who have all encountered the COVID-19 pandemic is captured in this description. To develop a plan for change or transformation, the researcher asked participants what they think retaining talented employees means to them in the context of a single phenomenon.

1.8.3 Population and sampling

The population of interest is the target demographic the study seeks to investigate. Enrolling the full population of interest is frequently neither appropriate nor practical. Instead, researchers will recruit a representative sample from the population of interest for their study. In these cases, the research aims to apply the sample's results to the whole population (Majid, 2018:3).

1.8.4 Study setting

The study setting is an essential component of a research project. The nature, context, environment, and practicalities of the study setting may impact how the research is conducted. Observing a study set before the commencement of data collection enables the researcher to anticipate any practical limitations posed by the study setting's organisation, structure, or layout. This enabled the researcher to avoid such constraints by using appropriate strategies that can be incorporated into the research proposal and ethics submissions (Majid, 2018:3).

The study setting was the Faculty of Health Sciences across two campuses at the NWU. The Faculty of Health Sciences was selected for this study because its academic staff holds a certain set of skills related to the diverse professions within the faculty. Most of these skills are regarded as scarce. The retention of academics with scarce skills in the organisation was, therefore, even more imperative. For the context of this research, the Potchefstroom and Mahikeng campuses were selected since both campuses employ lecturers from various programs within the faculty. The Vaal campus was excluded from this study since it does not provide all programs within the faculty's disciplines. Since this research was intended for a mini-dissertation, only one faculty within the HEI was selected.

1.8.5 Sampling method

Sampling is the process of selecting a sample of the population of interest that is statistically representative. Sampling is an important technique for scientific research since the population of interest typically contains too many individuals to be included in any study effort. A representative sample is a statistical representation of the target population and is substantial to address the research topic (Majid, 2018:3). Pandey and Pandey (2015:36) distinguish between probability and non-probability sampling designs. A probability sample has been selected in such a way that every element chosen has a known probability of being included. Purposive sampling is a type of probability sampling (Pandey & Pandey, 2018:46).

In qualitative research, purposeful sampling is frequently the norm. The latter suggests that the researcher selected participants based on the study's aims and objectives

(Oosthuizen *et al.*, 2020:391). The study employed purposeful sampling since it addressed leadership styles in talent retention within a faculty in a HEI. Purposive sampling enables the researcher to obtain significant information from the data obtained. This enabled the researcher to describe the impact of the results on the population. Academic employees who include junior lecturers, lecturers and senior lecturers from the Faculty of Health Sciences at two NWU campuses (Potchefstroom and Mahikeng campus) were purposively selected to participate in the research study.

1.8.6 Sampling size

The sample size varies depending on the design, which in this case is phenomenological. The sample size of a research study should have sufficient capacity and significance to allow the researcher to be certain that the results of the study cannot be attributable to random variations in the target population (Majid, 2018:5). According to Oosthuizen *et al.* (2020:392), the number of participants in a phenomenological study may range from three to ten participants, or until data saturation is reached. The study's sample was initially made up of 8 academic employees (junior lecturers, lecturers, and senior lecturers) from the NWU's Potchefstroom and Mahikeng campus in the Faculty of Health Science. However, this sample was subject to change as data were collected until data saturation was reached.

1.8.7 Data collection

Data collection is the process of acquiring and quantifying information on variables of interest in a systematic manner that allows one to answer specified research questions, test hypotheses, and assess outcomes (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:16). Data collection is a fundamental part of research across all disciplines. However, the emphasis on ensuring accurate and trustworthy collection stays constant throughout disciplines.

The qualitative research approach focuses on human relationships, feelings, perspectives, perceptions, values, emotions, and experiences (Oosthuizen *et al.*, 2020:390). Most researchers in qualitative studies collect data by conducting interviews with the participants of the study. Interviews are the most direct and efficient

method for collecting rich and detailed information on a phenomenon (Barrett & Twycross, 2018:63). The type of interview used to collect data can be customised to the research question, the demographics of the participants, and the researcher's preferred method.

Most interviews are carried out in person; however, considering the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become increasingly common for interviews to be carried out through the utilisation of technological means (Barrett & Twycross, 2018:63). The key advantages of digital technologies for researchers include improved internet access and increased use of electronic devices globally; the convenience and cost-effectiveness of online methods and the understanding that online methods can recreate, enhance, and potentially improve conventional methods, including face-to-face interviews (Archibald *et al.*, 2019:1-2). Similarly, online interviews may be more appealing to research participants than in-person interviews due to their convenience, efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and adaptability.

In semi-structured interviews, the interviewer makes specific inquiries regarding key aspects of the phenomenon being examined. A well-planned semi-structured interview should make sure that important facts are captured while also giving participants the freedom to contribute their personalities and points of view. Moreover, interviews can be rigorously framed, which allows for greater control by the researcher (Barrett & Twycross, 2018:63; Oosthuizen *et al.*, 2020:392).

To gain an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon, the researcher developed an interview protocol consisting of open-ended questions and probing techniques for this study. The interview protocol was divided into sections A and B. Section A related to participant demographics, while Section B pertained to the study-specific questions. The demographic data allowed the researcher to gain background information on the participants. These questions provided context for the collected data and permitted the researcher to describe the study participants and conduct more thorough data analysis. Without demographic information like age, gender and years of experience, researchers run the risk of adopting an absolutist viewpoint, which holds that the phenomena of interest are identical irrespective of demographic data. Researchers can instead move toward universalism if they have access to precise information on

participant characteristics (Hammer, 2011:261). In addition, a comprehensive description of the participants enables the researchers to understand for whom the research findings are generalisable and permits comparisons among replications of studies. Also, it supplies the data for study synthesis and secondary data analysis.

To acquire access to NWU sites, written approval was obtained from the NWU Research Data Gatekeeper Committee (RDGC). Additionally, permission was obtained from the directors of the schools within the Faculty of Health Science on the campuses. To eliminate bias, the researcher did not select any lecturers with whom she had a personal relationship. Interviews were scheduled with the participants and performed via Microsoft teams for the participants' convenience. Microsoft Teams had a recording and transcription feature to ensure reliable data capturing.

1.8.8 Data analysis

Data analysis is the technique of ordering, structuring, and giving meaning to the acquired data. Its primary objective is to comprehend and derive insights from the data. The researcher analyses, reduces, sorts, and reconstitutes the data using analytical processes (Ghauri *et al.*, 2020:132). Qualitative content analysis is a well-established data analysis technique that has evolved. However, as the humanistic qualitative paradigm became more extensive in social sciences research and researchers became more interested in how people behave in real situations, qualitative content analysis evolved into a more engaging and meaningful approach (Kleinheksel *et al.*, 2020:127).

Since the approach can assist the researcher in acquiring a deeper understanding of a specific phenomenon by providing structure to a significant amount of data through a systematic process of interpretation, qualitative content analysis was utilised for this study. Furthermore, the coding of data and the identification of themes are key phases in data analysis and presentation. All acquired data are analysed in the coding process to determine provisional codes that will serve as labels for recognised categories (Oosthuizen *et al.*, 2020:392). Creswell and Creswell (2018:194-196) propose between 25 and 30 categories on average, after which similar categories can be linked to form five or six themes. Therefore, the researcher reviewed the transcribed one-on-one

interviews, grouped the codes into categories, and analysed the information as part of the data analysis process.

1.9 DEFINITION OF KEY TERMS

1.9.1 Talent management

Algotsson *et al.* (2016:3) refer to talent management as an integrated set of organisational processes, policies, and social norms planned and implemented to attract, develop, deploy, and retain talent to fulfil strategic objectives and meet future organisational needs. The talent management process involves identifying skills gaps, sourcing and onboarding suitable candidates and growing them with a focus on the future to achieve long-term organisational objectives.

1.9.2 Talent retention

Talent retention refers to the procedures implemented to retain talent within an organisation (Algotsson *et al.*, 2016:3-4). Managing employee retention is therefore implementing strategic measures to maintain employee motivation and commitment so that they would choose to remain employed and are fully productive for the benefit of an organisation (Traveler, 2019:26).

1.9.3 Leadership

Gandolfi and Stone (2018:263) define a leader as an individual who selects, equips, trains, and influences an employee or a follower with a diverse set of skills and abilities and focuses the follower on the organisation's mission and objectives. The leader influences the follower to dedicate their emotional and physical energy to a determined and coordinated effort to achieve the goals of the organisation. According to Traveler (2019:15), leadership is a process by which managers examine the collective learning potential of their workforce. Effective leadership can be attained through teamwork, and it may be the determining factor in whether teams succeed or fail. Leadership is, therefore, a collaborative endeavour between and among individuals.

1.9.4 Leadership style

A leadership style refers to a leader's distinctive approach to directing, motivating, guiding, and managing groups of individuals. It can be characterised based on a

behavioural or situational perspective (Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014:165). Consequently, an individual's leadership style will differ depending on his or her personality attributes and the workplace environment.

1.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

The set of ethical guidelines that guide researchers in conducting and disseminating scientific research is known as research ethics (Oosthuizen et al., 2020:393). The guiding principles are designed to safeguard participants and ensure that research is conducted responsibly. Ethical standards encourage values essential to collaborative work, such as trust, accountability, mutual respect, and fairness, since research frequently requires a considerable degree of cooperation and coordination among individuals. Leadership styles in the workplace are sensitive subjects, and ethical considerations must therefore be considered in this study, as there is a concern for individual confidentiality, anonymity, and trust.

The following ethical considerations were considered during the conduct of this research.

1.10.1 Voluntary participation

The principle of voluntary participation in research requires that potential participants be informed as thoroughly as possible in advance to enable them to make an informed decision regarding involvement in the study (Flick *et al.*, 204:336). No individual should be compelled, coerced, or forced into participation. Furthermore, the participant must be informed of his or her right to withdraw from the study at any time once participation has started, according to Oosthuizen *et al.* (2020:393). The researcher also adhered to this prescript.

1.10.2 Informed consent

Informed consent occurs when a person provides consent to engage in a research project consciously, voluntarily, and intelligently. Informed consent is linked to the individual's autonomous right to participate in the research (Oosthuizen *et al.*, 2020:393). Individuals who agree to participate will sign a letter of consent to confirm

their participation is voluntary. The informed consent form described the nature of the study and all its requirements. Furthermore, the researcher adhered to all rules contained in the Protection of Personal Information Act (POPIA), Act No.4 of 2013. Participants' expectations were also noted, along with the expected risks and benefits of the study.

1.10.3 Confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity

Oosthuizen *et al.* (2020:393) state that participant confidentiality must be maintained throughout the study. This implies that the identity and responses of participants were protected and that all responses were handled in confidence and anonymity during this study. In addition, the collected data for this study was only analysed for the purposes and objectives of this research study, as suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018:208). The researcher ensured that all participant information was kept confidential and not shared; and that the principle of anonymity was adhered to. The participants' responses were used exclusively for the purposes of this study.

1.10.4 Researchers' responsibilities

The researcher coordinated all the study activities. During the study's data collection and analysis stages, the researcher's role was to form a relationship of trust with the participants. The researcher was responsible for ensuring that all aspects of data preparation and collection, participant engagement during interviews, appointment scheduling, and data analysis were managed and supervised by the researcher with the utmost integrity, professionalism, and moral application (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:184). Furthermore, the researcher obtained informed consent from all participants before the initiation of the study. Ethical approval was obtained from the relevant research ethics committee. At no point during the research process were participants' identities or names disclosed. Moreover, confidentiality and privacy were ensured throughout the study. Participants responses were anonymised in Chapter 4.

1.11 CHAPTER OUTLINE

Oosthuizen *et al.* (2020:394) state that several chapters must be planned to cover all components of the study. The layout of the study is presented below.

1.11.1 Chapter 1: Introduction and problem statement

In this chapter, the introduction and background of the research were discussed, including the study's objectives, problem statement, design, and methods. In addition, ethical considerations for the study were presented.

1.11.2 Chapter 2: Literature review

This chapter will review and discuss the relevant literature on the topic.

1.11.3 Chapter 3: Research methodology

This chapter will thoroughly analyse the research methods utilised in this study. It also gives an overview and explanation of the research approach, research questions and goals, and methods for gathering data.

1.11.4 Chapter 4: Data analysis and discussion of findings

The study findings will be presented in Chapter 4.

1.11.5 Chapter 5: Conclusion, recommendations, and limitations

This chapter concludes the study and provides a summary of its findings. This chapter also provides recommendations based on the study's literature and empirical findings.

1.12 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided background to the study, highlighting the importance of talent retention in HEIs. An introduction was given, leading to the formulation of a neatly defined problem statement. Further, the primary and secondary objectives of the study were specified, following the primary and sub-research questions. The chapter also presented a preliminary literature review that defined and described the key terminology of the study. Following this, the study's research methodology and ethical considerations were discussed.

The following chapter will offer an in-depth analysis of the literature relating to the study topic.

CHAPTER 2 – LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter contains a comprehensive literature review relating to the study objectives and various aspects concerning leadership, academic talent retention and talent management in HEI. In any organisation, talent management is key in ensuring effective retention over time. Leadership is viewed as one of the primary factors that could strengthen the relationship between leadership and employee retention.

A literature review can be defined as a systematic summary of previous research on a particular topic. The literature review articulates, defines, and objectively evaluates the research conducted and may provide context or background for the research project (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:26-27).

The purpose of the literature review in this study was to:

- Explore and describe the optimum leadership style for talent retention within a faculty in a HEI.
- Determine the factors that cause talented employees to leave a specific HEI for employment at another HEI or the public sector.
- Investigate the impact of different leadership styles on talent retention within a faculty in a HEI.
- Explore the different talent management strategies that leaders can successfully employ to improve talent retention within a faculty in a HEI.

Keywords used to conduct the search were ‘talent retention’, combined with ‘leadership’, ‘leadership styles’, ‘higher education’, ‘talent management’ and ‘COVID-19’. The search was expanded by including key terms from the study objectives with the abovementioned keywords. Academic articles were selected from various electronic databases, accredited academic journals, the NWU library and Google Scholar.

The literature review for the study will be presented according to the following framework:

- Factors causing talented employees to leave HEIs
- Leadership and talent retention
- Talent management strategies
- Integrated theoretical framework

2.2 FACTORS CAUSING TALENTED EMPLOYEES TO LEAVE HEIs

Human resources are one of an organisation's most valuable assets. In today's competitive environment, higher education institutions battle to retain their employees (Anees *et al.*, 2021:1). Since the quality of academic employees who work within HEIs is directly related to their level of success, retaining talented employees has emerged as a significant concern and challenge in the 21st century (Thompson & Nawar, 2018:190).

Talented employees can be defined as individuals with inherently above-average skills that enable them to outperform others (Ansar & Baloch, 2018:214). In addition, talent is commonly viewed as a natural gift and acumen or the ability to accomplish exceptional achievements through one's inherent abilities or performance (Latukha & Tsukanova, 2015:21). To achieve strategic objectives, organisations require talented employees; and consequently, they should invest in the optimal deployment of talent for their own advantage (Ansar & Baloch, 2018:214; Latukha & Tsukanova, 2015:21-22).

Employee turnover refers to the number of employees who resign from their positions or otherwise depart an organisation within a given period. Increased academic talent turnover rates in HEIs can be attributed to a variety of factors (Erasmus *et al.*, 2015:34). Retaining talented employees is of paramount importance; hence, it is essential to investigate and comprehend the causes of voluntary turnover in HEIs. The monitoring and measurement of turnover are critical for efficient decision-making within HEIs. Understanding the difference between 'push' and 'pull' factors is one approach to better understanding turnover and retention. Pull factors (hereafter referred to as

external factors) attract employees to other organisations offering more attractive remuneration packages and fringe benefits.

In contrast, push factors (hereafter referred to as internal factors), such as dissatisfaction with the working environment, cause individuals to seek other employment opportunities. Therefore, pull factors can be discussed in relation to factors outside the organisation, whilst push factors can be discussed in relation to internal organisational and individual factors (Reyes *et al.*, 2019:15). By recognising the reasons why individuals leave their positions, HEIs can build more effective retention strategies to retain talented and productive employees (Reyes *et al.*, 2019:15). The various factors that influence employee turnover and retention will be discussed in the subsequent subsections. The framework for the discussion is summarised in Table 2.1 below.

Table 2.1: Factors that influence employee turnover and retention

Factors inherent to the individual
• Job satisfaction • Career advancement and growth • Personal and trait-based factors • Burnout • Balancing work and family life • Autonomy and ownership • Recognition
Organisational factors
• Training and development • Interpersonal relationships within the organisation • Organisational culture and work climate • Leadership and managerial factors • Remuneration and fringe benefits • Organisational commitment • Unbiased and fair appraisal systems • Job fit and clear role expectation • Flexible working arrangements

External factors
• The financial and economic crisis • Alternative employment opportunities • Employer branding and reputation • Family-related factors

Source: Authors own.

2.2.1 Factors inherent to the individual

Employee retention in HEIs can be affected by a variety of individual factors that are inherent to the individual. As presented in Table 2.1, these factors will be discussed in the following subsections.

2.2.1.1 Job satisfaction

According to Mamun and Hasan (2017:64), job satisfaction is one of the determinants of turnover intent. Job satisfaction can be described as the level of contentment an employee has with his or her job and working conditions. It, therefore, directly relates to employees' expectations regarding their work environment (Salam, 2017:207). Mamun and Hasan (2017:64) assert that job-related factors are the primary determinants of employee job satisfaction, organisational commitment, and intention to leave the organisation. If benefits and working conditions are given to employees as expected, this will likely increase their level of job satisfaction. Employee experience can also have a significant impact on the latter. Lower levels of job satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviour are linked to higher employee turnover rates (Anees *et al.*, 2021:2; Salam, 2017:207-208).

2.2.1.2 Career advancement and growth

According to Sawaneh and Kamara (2019:44), career advancement exemplifies the theory of a compensation strategy, which is defined as the "deliberate use of the compensation system as an essential integrating mechanism by which the efforts of various individuals are directed toward the achievement of the organisation's strategic objectives." Combining remuneration, promotion, incentives, and other types of awards would be the most effective method for promoting and motivating employees. In addition, emphasis is placed on individual learning and learning opportunities. The

training and development of employees have become an essential business activity for organisations' success and talent retention. Thus, by implementing promotion and growth opportunities, an organisation would be able to retain talented employees and provide better career development opportunities for those employees.

2.2.1.3 Personal and trait-based factors

Personal or trait-based factors pertain to the factors that are inherent to the individual. Personal factors may include a change in family status or the individual's desire to acquire a new skill or practice a new profession. Personality or trait-based factors are those factors that determine job performance and undesirable behaviours (Reyes *et al.*, 2019:16). Bozogáňová and Ivan (2018:58) state that a variety of individual personality factors can influence turnover intention. These factors include conscientiousness, emotional stability, and individual aspiration levels. An individual's intentions concerning turnover are influenced by moral and ethical motive forces, which are influenced by conscientiousness. Instead of acting impulsively or spontaneously, conscientious employees are more likely to evaluate the long-term implications of their decisions.

Moreover, a lack of emotional stability can decrease job satisfaction. Employees who lack emotional stability are more prone to acquire and convey negative information and perceive themselves and their surroundings negatively. An inadequate level of emotional stability is related to an inclination to leave stressful and indecisive career goals. Therefore, employees experiencing negative emotions like anger are less likely to receive social support from their co-workers; instead, they are more likely to experience an interpersonal conflict that will significantly raise their stress level and, consequently, their likelihood of leaving the organisation.

Additionally, the authors state that a person's job satisfaction depends on whether they achieve goals that align with their ambitions. Individuals may experience dissatisfaction if their ambitions are very high and their goals are too difficult to attain. On the contrary, satisfaction occurs when what has been completed is in line with individual expectations.

2.2.1.4 Burnout

Burnout is a psychological syndrome that develops as a prolonged response to severe interpersonal pressures in the workplace. This response is characterised by exhaustion, feelings of cynicism and disengagement from daily tasks, and a sense of ineffectiveness and a lack of success (Maslach & Leiter, 2016:104). According to Scott (2019:5), other burnout symptoms include low job satisfaction levels, increased absenteeism rates, and decreased overall performance quality. Burnout is described by three independent but interrelated features, namely emotional weariness, cynicism or depersonalisation, and a sense of unfulfilled personal potential, according to Kelly and Hearld (2020:583). The author asserts that emotional exhaustion is sometimes seen as the initial indicator of burnout and describes the strong sensation of having run out of both physical and emotional energy because of a person's long-term exposure to suffering and other pressures.

Varghese and Kumar (2019:1086) argue that the intention to leave their current employer continues to increase due to burnout. Most employees who desired to leave their organisations were emotionally and physically fatigued. Moreover, rapid employee turnover is a risk to the organisation. The authors noted that job stress and burnout are directly associated with a desire to leave the organisation. Therefore, it may be concluded that symptoms of burnout are closely associated with indicators of an intention to leave (Varghese & Kumar, 2019:1086-1087).

2.2.1.5 Balancing work and family life

Work-Life Balance (WLB) is becoming increasingly difficult in the 21st century. Khateeb (2021:28) defines WLB as the attainment of rewarding experiences in the numerous facets of life that call for diverse resources, such as energy, time, and commitment. Brough *et al.* (2020:475) conceptualised WLB as the notion of allocating resources equally between work and family and other life roles. In the current competitive business environment, employees prefer flexible work schedules that allow them to manage their personal and professional life. Work opportunities that provide a work-life balance will allow employees to attend to their families and other commitments. The latter will increase employee retention, whereas work environments that lack work-life balance would experience higher turnover rates (Senevirathna, 2017:5). Shakeel and Sahar (2015:34) state that WLB policies will improve work engagement, which will

have a favourable impact on staff retention. Retention becomes challenging if managers do not pay attention to their employees' personal life activities and engagements. Too much responsibility at work, therefore, significantly impacts personal life and employee retention.

2.2.1.6 Autonomy and ownership

Academics and researchers have started focusing on ownership as a psychological phenomenon as opposed to merely a business phenomenon. Olckers and du Plessis (2012:2585) describe ownership as the feeling that the individual themselves is the target of ownership. The latter indicates that psychological ownership among employees might positively impact organisational effectiveness. Motloba (2018:418) refers to autonomy as self-governance, self-determination, and self-ownership. This refers primarily to a person's entitlements, rights, privileges, and independence to make decisions without interference.

Moreover, autonomy can be described as the process through which an individual behaves in a self-determined manner, with the source of such action residing within the individual (Motloba, 2018:419). When there is a greater sense of ownership in the workplace, there is a greater likelihood of success in the organisation. A sense of ownership in the workforce is created by providing employees with autonomous opportunities. Yousuf and Siddiqui (2019:48) state that giving employees more responsibility and autonomy in their work contributes to a sense of ownership and belonging in the organisation. This will help employees feel more secure and improve performance, which will increase long-term talent retention.

In addition, Olckers and du Plessis (2012:2590) note that employees' sense of ownership may be enhanced by creating and sustaining work conditions that empower individuals and permit them to exercise control over significant aspects of their work arrangements. The latter facilitates the development of positive attitudes associated with the workplace, such as job satisfaction, organisational self-esteem, and nurturing behaviours. The authors, therefore, confirm a significant relationship between autonomy at work and positive employee attitudes and behaviours.

2.2.1.7 Recognition

Mngomezulu *et al.* (2015:372) define employee recognition as a return on an employee's effort, dedication at work, and outcomes, in addition to the acknowledgement of an individual or team's conduct, effort, and achievements that complement the organisation's aims and values. Employee recognition is crucial to organisations and is associated with many positive outcomes. These include employees knowing that their expertise is valued and appreciated. The latter will result in good employee morale and motivation, which in turn increases employee loyalty to the organisation. Employees will develop a sense of ownership, create a supportive and conducive work atmosphere, and increase the organisation's retention rate (Mngomezulu *et al.*, 2015:372).

According to Ibidunni *et al.* (2016:7), recognition in the workplace allows for improved performance, efficiency, and dedication, which provides opportunities for employee growth and self-development. If employees are provided with meaningful engagement in decision-making and performance feedback, employee retention will increase, and employees will be motivated to perform better. In addition, when strong employee performance is noted, it must be reinforced with criteria for recognition and promotion.

2.2.2 Organisational factors

There are numerous organisational factors which might have a considerable impact on employee retention. These organisational factors, as presented in Table 2.1, will be addressed in the following sections.

2.2.2.1 Training and development

Employee turnover is significantly influenced by training and development opportunities. Individuals cannot develop their talents and abilities if the organisation does not offer them the opportunity to learn. Employees will therefore be unlikely to achieve self-realisation and thus be unable to grow in the organisation (Mamun & Hasan, 2017:64). Jaipong *et al.* (2022:7) state that training and development initiatives enable employees to become more productive and create significant value for themselves. Therefore, the organisation must continue to develop and train high-performing employees for future potential roles and execute programs to identify their knowledge gaps to improve employee competencies.

Chen (2014:356) asserts that all employees desiring career advancement is a significant motivator for remaining with the organisation. Providing effective training is one method for retaining talented individuals within an organisation. If training is implemented appropriately, job satisfaction and organisational commitment may grow, and employees may remain with the organisation longer. The authors affirm that training encompassing knowledge, skill, and ability is beneficial to both organisations and employees. Investments in human capital, particularly through training and development, are increasingly essential to organisations' success (Chen, 2014:357).

2.2.2.2 Interpersonal relationships within the organisation

Interpersonal relationships can be defined as the intention of humans to develop relationships with other people (Dalimunthe *et al.*, 2017:347). Humans are social beings who require connection and respect from one another to avoid being alone and to have positive working relationships. Interpersonal relationships are, therefore, interactions between groups of individuals at work or inside an organisation that serves as a catalyst for cooperative behaviour. Mamun and Hasan (2017:64) state that interpersonal relationships within departments substantially affect employee turnover intent.

When an organisation or department has multifaceted interpersonal relationships, employees may find it difficult to interact with colleagues or management. Employees are more likely to quit their jobs when they must invest a substantial amount of effort to maintain favourable interpersonal relationships within the organisation (Mamun & Hasan, 2017:64). To develop strong and mutually supportive teams and increase employee retention, organisations depend largely on positive interpersonal interactions with co-workers and managers (Dalimunthe *et al.*, 2017:347).

2.2.2.3 Organisational culture and work environment

Madueke and Emerole (2017:246) define organisational culture as a collection of attitudes, behaviours, and values that set one organisation apart from another. An organisational culture entails the stability of the organisation's beliefs and practices, and it gives a sense of identity to employees in the organisation. Employee turnover is influenced by an organisation's entire organisational culture, according to Mamun and Hasan (2017:65). The management team's trust and integrity are the most important

factors. Employees will remain with an organisation if they are valued, treated with respect, and given remuneration, benefits, and incentives that reflect these values.

Jaipong *et al.* (2022:7) state that organisational culture influences the working environment and demonstrates various facets that make a passionate workplace conducive to managing and maintaining talent retention. According to Reyes *et al.* (2019:16), organisational culture is yet another factor which influences employee retention. The more an organisation's ability to elicit a sense of commitment from its employees and its cultivation of a sense of shared goals, among other things, the greater the job satisfaction of its employees and, consequently, the lower its turnover intentions.

Furthermore, strengthened employee dedication, engagement, and job satisfaction have been demonstrated to positively impact the employee retention rate. Additionally, acknowledgement and knowledge sharing have improved both individual and organisational performance (Jaipong *et al.*, 2022:7-8; Sawaneh & Kamara, 2019:42-43). Employees value a workplace where communication is transparent, management is approachable, leaders are approachable and respected, and the strategic direction is clear and easily understood.

In addition, a lack of recognition is one of the major contributors to employee turnover (Mamun & Hasan, 2017:65). A conducive work environment appears to be a key factor in employee retention. The latter involves adaptability, pleasant working conditions, and appropriate resources (Yousuf & Siddiqui, 2019:48). The authors assert that organisations must try to improve unpleasant working conditions that might lead to employee turnover. Changing these work circumstances enhances employee satisfaction and increases the likelihood that employees will stay with their current organisation.

2.2.2.4 Leadership and managerial factors

The ability of leaders to foster a culture of retention has become a determining factor as to why employees remain with a firm and what typically causes them to leave (Rao *et al.*, 2018:162). The retention of a company's most valuable personnel should be the top priority for any organisation. This is because people quit organisations because of

their managers, not the organisations themselves. The impact of leadership on employee retention can be evaluated from two distinct angles, namely management's support and leadership style (Yousuf & Siddiqui, 2019:48). The way an organisation's employees are led and managed, in addition to the leadership style itself, are major factors determines whether an employee will remain with the company. Employees' levels of work satisfaction and motivation are substantially impacted by their leadership as well as the relationship they maintain with their top management (Yousuf & Siddiqui, 2019:48). The volatility in an organisation's leadership can contribute to high employee turnover (Mamun & Hasan, 2017:66).

Encouragement and support from managers are significant factors in employee retention. When a manager and employee create a positive and resilient relationship, the trustworthiness and attachment to the organisation will increase, allowing the organisation to retain such individuals. This is because employees' perceptions of their job are strongly influenced by their relationship with and affinity with their manager (Rao *et al.*, 2018:163).

Moreover, fluent and open communication between employees and their managers motivates them to perform effectively in the workplace. In addition, this courteous relationship between managers and employees fosters the growth of staff capabilities and innovative abilities among employees. Conversely, the absence of transparency with the managers may result in more strain on employees and stress among co-workers, resulting in a loss of productivity and performance. Therefore, managers and employees must establish a compassionate and engaging relationship to increase retention rates and enhance organisational performance and efficiency (Sawaneh & Kamara, 2019:42-43).

2.2.2.5 Remuneration and fringe benefits

Remuneration is a benefit provided in return for services provided to an organisation. The latter has been crucial in retaining and rewarding talent (Sawaneh & Kamara, 2019:42-43). Mamun and Hasan (2017:66) argue that remuneration is an important factor in both the retention of high-quality human capital and the allocation of rewards for employees. A lower salary is a significant variable contributing to employee

turnover. Most employees are of the opinion that they are worth more than what they are paid.

Similarly, the perceived lack of fairness in the allocation of salaries has caused tension between employers and their employees (Reyes *et al.*, 2019:16). When employees are given a lower salary and insufficient financial benefits, they typically do not remain with the organisation for long. It is a common belief that an adequate salary can be a significant driver of job satisfaction, contributing to higher levels of productivity within an organisation. Yousuf and Siddiqui (2019:49) believe that employee retention is significantly impacted by compensation contentment and that employees tend to remain loyal to an organisation if they are satisfied with the operations and compensation structure of the organisation in which they are employed.

A fringe benefit is an incentive added to or supplementing an employee's remuneration, such as medical allowances or annual performance bonuses (Sawaneh & Kamara, 2019:42-43). In addition, fringe benefits are essential for recruiting, retaining, and motivating individuals who are likely to continue working toward the success of an organisation. A considerable number of organisations operate as a source of inspiration for their workers by offering fringe benefits, rewards, and official recognition of their accomplishments (Mamun & Hasan, 2017:66-67). Moreover, Reyes *et al.* (2019:16) suggest that employees' remuneration and fringe benefits should be transparent to ensure fairness and prevent perceptions of favouritism in the workplace. Mngomezulu *et al.* (2015:372) advise that organisations should reward and acknowledge employees to establish a balance between employees' aspirations and the organisation's goals and to maintain employees' morale, as this would result in increased employee retention rates.

2.2.2.6 Organisational commitment

Bell and Sheridan (2020:3) define organisational commitment as an individual's involvement and affiliation in his or her specific work environment. Organisational commitment includes an individual's acceptance of the organisation's mission and values, as well as a strong desire to continue working for the organisation. Gopinath (2019:701) describes organisational commitment as the strong belief of employees to accept the aims, values, acceptance, and effort on behalf of the organisation to achieve

these goals, as well as the strong desire to continue affiliation with the organisation. The latter is closely correlated with the desire to continue affiliation with the organisation and the willingness of employees to invest significant effort on behalf of the organisation (Gopinath, 2019:702). Organisational commitment helps determine employee job satisfaction, engagement, leadership deployment, work performance, job insecurity, and other related characteristics.

Moreover, organisational commitment is widely regarded as one of the most significant factors influencing employee turnover intentions. Employees who were more dedicated to their organisations were shown to have a lower intention to leave their organisations than those employees who had a lower level of organisational commitment (Madueke & Emerole, 2017:247). In addition to being indicative of employee turnover and positively related to intention to stay, research suggests that employees who believe that their work groups are supportive and cohesive are less critical of the organisation and, as a result, are more likely to remain employed by the organisation (Bell & Sheridan, 2020:3). The authors indicate that an individual's commitment to the organisation is related to the individuals' commitments outside the organisation. This suggests that it is important to establish a healthy work-life balance.

2.2.2.7 Unbiased and unfair appraisal systems

Performance management is a structured process with five essential aspects: agreement, measurement, feedback, positive reinforcement, and communication. Organisations utilise performance appraisal systems to assess the efficacy and efficiency of their employees. Modern employee performance evaluation is one of the most efficient strategies for employee growth, motivation, and evaluation (Islami *et al.*, 2018:95). Nguyen (2017:23-24) describes a performance appraisal as a systematic method for establishing a communicative process and commitment between organisations and employees, such as feedback, reward, and equity, to manage and improve the performance of its employees.

According to Yousuf and Siddiqui (2019:49), unbiased and fair performance measures play a pivotal role in fostering employee confidence in their organisations. Understanding and evaluating an employee's performance is essential for career advancement and growth. In addition to measuring an individual's overall participation

in an organisation, it also assesses prospects for advancement, as well as personal traits and job performance. The organisation will thus be able to better understand employee satisfaction levels and enhance staff development through feedback with the use of a successful performance assessment system (Islami *et al.*, 2018:94; Yousuf & Siddiqui, 2019:49). Nguyen (2017:49) notes that employees will leave the organisation if they are not adequately rewarded for their efforts or if the appraisers bias the outcomes of their performance reviews. Moreover, recognition and rewards are vital since they represent the recognition and commitment of employees.

2.2.2.8 Job fit and clear role expectation

Job fit is the degree to which an individual's abilities, knowledge, interests, and behaviours meet the company's job requirements (Iqbal *et al.*, 2020:530). When employees possess the necessary talents and skills to do the tasks, it significantly impacts their attitudes toward work. Stich (2021:361) defines job fit as a match between a characteristic presented or perceived in the job and the degree to which individuals want or require this attribute to be present.

Traditionally, job fit is separated into the demands-capabilities fit, and the needs-supplies fit. The former occurs when an individual's knowledge, skills, and talents match those of the work, whereas the latter occurs when an individual's needs, desires, or preferences are matched by employment (Stich, 2021:361-362). Sawaneh and Kamara (2019:44) stated that job satisfaction would increase if the qualities of the employees complement those qualities of the job. It is, therefore, necessary to distinguish between the employees' aspirations and the organisation's needs. Organisations will increase their effectiveness if they employ qualified workers and take the required steps to increase job satisfaction. However, turnover cannot be reduced unless employees are dissatisfied with their jobs.

Consequently, management must address the urgent issue of staff turnover and work satisfaction by employing individuals that fit the job requirements. One of the primary reasons for employee turnover is employees leaving the organisation without clear role expectations for newly hired employees. As a result, it is more imperative than ever for an organisation to recognise employees' employment expectations and properly define new employees' roles (Sawaneh & Kamara, 2019:44).

2.2.2.9 Flexible working arrangements

The need for flexible working arrangements has increased in recent years. Balancing work and family responsibilities will continue to be a major issue for individuals now and in the future. A flexible work schedule appears to be an essential element of an organisation's obligation to its employees (Idowu, 2020:23). Flexibility regarding working hours has been shown to be one of the most influential factors in retaining employees. This flexibility at work can have several aspects, including work hours, shift work, and working from home. According to Yousuf and Siddiqui (2019:48), this enables employees to remain within the organisation since the employer offers them the most flexibility to manage their professional and personal lives.

Moreover, employers and human resource managers must recognise the importance of flexible working hours to ensure that employees are not overworked, diminishing their productivity, which may increase employee turnover and workplace stress. Therefore, organisations would benefit, and employees will be motivated by flexible working hours in the long term. Organisations should consequently adopt flexible working hours to decrease employee stress and boost employee performance and job retention (Idowu, 2020:23-24). The author asserts that flexible work arrangements, such as leave or a shift in working hours, provide an opportunity to align the demands of the individual with those of the organisation.

2.2.3 External factors

Although organisations cannot influence the external factors that influence talent retention, some steps can be taken to promote employee retention in conjunction with the internal factors (Chen, 2014:356). The external factors that influence employee retention, as presented in Table 2.1, are discussed in the following sections.

2.2.3.1 The financial and economic crisis

The financial and economic crisis has several repercussions for both organisations and employees (Wynen & Op de Beeck, 2014:3). Employees are more likely to develop turnover intention for several economic reasons (Sawaneh & Kamara, 2020:45). According to Wasserman (2018), economic growth is beneficial for the development of business operations and the creation of new jobs. However, it also has the potential to

bring about a variety of challenges. An employee is more likely to resign if he or she no longer finds the organisation suitable.

Moreover, a thriving economy may be the impetus for high turnover, although remuneration tenure compared to experience is among the leading causes of employee turnover (Wasserman, 2018). The author emphasises that another factor contributing to employee turnover is the availability of salary information. Today, employees have greater access to online resources that indicate how others in their industry with comparable expertise are remunerated. Therefore, the transparency surrounding remuneration directly impacts turnover and retention. However, in times of crisis, employees who perceive alternative employment alternatives are more inclined to leave their organisation. Consequently, this indicates that the financial and economic crisis positively correlates with turnover intent (Wynen & Op de Beeck, 2014:4).

2.2.3.2 Alternative employment opportunities

An alternate employment opportunity is a position in the same or a similar field as your current profession. Employees will leave an organisation if they find alternative employment with more favourable working conditions. However, depending on external environmental conditions such as employment opportunities and the unemployment rate, it is viewed as an uncontrollable situation (Sawaneh & Kamara, 2019:44; Mamun & Hasan, 2017:67). The authors found a significant relationship between employment availability and voluntary turnover.

More specifically, perceived market conditions and academic background may amplify alternative opportunities. This is seen when employees with a better educational background are more qualified and experienced, allowing them to consider other employment options. Therefore, higher-educated employees are more likely to be promoted than less-educated employees and are more likely to perceive their education as a competitive advantage (Sawaneh & Kamara, 2019:44; Mamun & Hasan, 2017:67). Employees may therefore be inclined to pursue rewarding employment opportunities elsewhere.

On the contrary, several events or circumstances related to professional stagnation can lead employees to seek better opportunities with other organisations. Furthermore, the labour market, in its entirety, influences perceptions and expectations of alternative employment opportunities. Perceived alternative work opportunities and job satisfaction are associated with retention. When employees encounter more alternative employment options and accept offers from other employers, they evaluate the advantages and disadvantages of their current position versus the alternative position (Ramlawati *et al.*, 2021:513). It follows that the stronger the perception of opportunities outside the organisation, the greater the intention to leave. Hence, the availability of alternative employment opportunities significantly impacts employee retention.

2.2.3.3 Employer branding and reputation

Today's modern employment climate is becoming increasingly competitive. In such a competitive market, employer branding is rapidly gaining traction as a long-term human resource strategy to recruit and retain talented employees (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016:186). Employer branding, or the experience of what it will be like to work for a firm, is the perception of the organisation by both current and prospective employees. It is also seen as the culmination of the company's initiatives to convey to current workers and prospective candidates that it is a desirable place to work.

Moreover, employer branding can be described as the practice of informing employees about the organisation's distinctive value proposition (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016:188). Hadi and Ahmed (2018:4) define employer branding as the collection of functional, economic, and psychological benefits associated with a particular organisation. The authors found a significant relationship between employer branding and employee retention. Therefore, employer branding is a long-term approach that focuses on the organisation's constant flow of innovative skills and the retention of talent within the organisation.

2.2.3.4 Family-related factors

Irshad and Afridi (2011:16) imply that the presence of family support and family-related factors, such as work-family culture, location of workplace and home, relocation of a spouse or other family members, and pregnancy, influence the retention of employees.

Additionally, the authors state that organisations that assist their employees in balancing family and work decrease their intention to leave their jobs. In the developing world, women leave larger corporations for smaller ones because they desire greater flexibility for family-related responsibilities (Irshad & Afridi, 2011:16-17).

2.3 LEADERSHIP AND TALENT RETENTION

While numerous factors influence employee retention, an organisation's leadership considerably impacts talent retention. Leadership styles affect organisational culture, employee engagement, inspiration, and motivation. The following section will discuss the impact of leadership on talent retention.

2.3.1 Leadership defined

Leadership is essential to any endeavour that includes people (Mwita *et al.*, 2018:186). Leadership issues have resonated repeatedly within the context of corporate discourse. This is due to its significance in achieving the aims and objectives of organisations. It is argued that the purpose of any organisation is to achieve a predetermined objective and that leaders have a decisive influence on organisational success. The author asserts that the capacity of management to execute collaborative endeavours is contingent on effective leadership.

Consequently, a strong leader not only inspires the key potential of subordinates to increase productivity but also addresses their needs in the process of accomplishing organisational objectives (Nwokocha & Iheriohanma, 2015:186). Therefore, leadership is one factor that influences employee retention and should be treated with the highest priority. Organisations are tasked with identifying and analysing significant catalysts for individual and organisational success and proactively managing them (Mwita *et al.*, 2018:186).

Mwita *et al.* (2018:275-276) describe leadership as the process by which an individual encourages others to achieve a goal and drives the organisation to become more unified and purposeful. According to Nwokocha and Iheriohanma (2015:186), leadership is the practice of motivating other individuals to perform to the best of their

abilities to achieve the desired outcome. According to the authors, this necessitates formulating and communicating a compelling vision for the future and motivating and soliciting individuals' participation. Genza (2021:131) defines leadership as the capacity to influence and develop individuals, teams, and organisations to realise a vision that fulfils the current needs of everyone and everything affected by their work. Jais *et al.* (2021:9) describe leadership as a relational, transformational, process-oriented, educated, and change-directed phenomenon.

2.3.2 Leadership in HE

When referring to leadership in HE, the terms educational leadership, school leadership, and academic leadership are most used (Genza, 2021:134). Academic leadership is demonstrated by academics who are influential experts in their respective fields and engage in meaningful activities. Academic leaders pursue science and research with the utmost integrity, whether they are developing new concepts and theories or instructional innovation and driving substantial social engagement (Jais *et al.*, 2021:10). Academic leadership includes demonstrating leadership in research, professional practice, or teaching and learning, as well as mentoring others to achieve academic success.

Institutional leadership refers to the top and middle management of a HEI who perform management activities and encourage the accomplishment of the institution's mission and vision. Institutional leaders exhibit managerial skills by being adaptable, flexible, strategic, and, most importantly, efficient. They excel in academics and inspire others by fostering, preserving, and promoting situations that encourage talent development. To advance the well-being of students, staff and the community, institutional leaders integrate their strategic and management skills with human values (Jais *et al.*, 2021:10). Jais *et al.* (2021:11-12) highlight that leadership in HE consists of five major grouping including (1) personnel effectiveness, (2) cognition, (3) leading, (4) impact and influence and (5) achievement and action.

Figure 2.1 displays a leadership competency framework in HE as developed by the author.



Figure 2.1: Higher education leadership competency framework

Source: Adapted from Jais *et al.* (2021:12).

It is important to note that effective leadership in higher education, from the individual to the institutional level, should embrace all the competency groupings, as depicted in Figure 2.1. Spendlove (2007:415) further highlights that competencies such as adaptability, knowledge of academic processes, logical thinking, clear communication, mentoring, and honesty are essential for effective leadership in HE. The following section will further strengthen these competencies by discussing the characteristics associated with the various leadership styles.

2.3.3 Leadership vs management

Effective leadership is characterised by a diversified combination of traits and behaviours that deal with and lead followers dependent on the situation. Therefore, situational factors play a significant role in determining a leader's leadership style. In addition, the contingency theories suggest that a leader's style in each situation is determined by a variety of elements, including the nature of the task, the attributes of subordinates and leaders, the maturity of subordinates, the organisation, and other external factors (Alsarrani *et al.*, 2021:155). Alsarrani *et al.* (2021:156) define

leadership styles as a characteristic of the leader and approach to guiding and encouraging employees. However, leadership styles and behaviours are ambiguous, as they are typically treated as synonyms and interchangeable notions.

According to Saputra and Mahaputra (2022:763), a leadership style is a natural behaviour that an individual exhibits when attempting to influence the behaviour of others. For a leader to influence their subordinates, they must employ an effective and appropriate leadership style. Consequently, a leader's performance in motivating their employees can also be influenced by their leadership style. Moreover, Alsarrani *et al.* (2021:156) state that leadership styles incorporate qualities and behavioural theories that contribute to the development of an individual style; this personal style strives to establish an approach that inspires followers for organisational success and guides future leaders.

Leadership and management can be described as two separate functions (Azad *et al.*, 2017:1). Although there are some similarities between management and leadership, leadership has been characterised as an influencing process that results in the accomplishment of desired goals. This sets it apart from management, which entails sustaining an organisation's current activities efficiently and effectively and implementing its policies (Spendlove, 2007:408). Generally, leadership is described as "visionary" and "doing the right thing". In contrast, managerial skills are described as "task-oriented" and "doing things right" (Wajidi, 2017:75). Since leading and managing are complementary, they are basically the same notion utilised to illustrate distinct performance or organisational effectiveness taxonomies (Azad *et al.*, 2017:1).

Together, the two concepts create the framework for the qualities and skills required of an individual to lead a successful team. The author asserts that leadership and management functions are interdependent and cannot be separated. Many of these functions are used to describe the roles of both leaders and managers (Wajidi, 2017:75), merging their respective definitions and functions into a continuum (Azad *et al.*, 2017:1).

Figure 2.2 demonstrates the leadership and management continuum as described.

Leadership		Management
• Focuses on people • Articulates a vision • Trusts and develops • Creates change • Uses influence • Authority comes from personal relationships • Thinks strategically • Delegates responsibility • Appropriate risk-taking and innovation		• Focuses on things • Executes a plan • Directs and coordinates • Manages change • Uses authority • Authority stems from a position in an organisation • Determines strategies • Acts decisively • Decides how to utilise personnel and resources

Figure 2.2: Leadership and management continuum

Source: Adapted from Azad *et al.* (2017:2).

2.3.4 Leadership styles

The concepts of employee and talent retention have a strong resonance with leadership. Nwokocha and Iheriohanma (2015:186) posit that ineffective or inadequate leadership styles directly impact the performance and retention of employees in modern organisations. Mwita *et al.* (2018:278) discovered a substantial association between leadership styles and academic talent. This indicates that the perceived quality of a leadership style can impact employees' decisions to stay within or leave an organisation. The findings are corroborated by a study by Nwokocha and Iheriohanma (2015:187), which sought to investigate the relationship between leadership styles, employee retention, and employee performance. According to the findings of this study, an effective leadership style is critical for accomplishing organisational goals.

Furthermore, as illustrated in Table 2.1, numerous factors such as job satisfaction, autonomy and ownership, recognition, and organisational commitment mediate the association between leadership style and academic talent retention. This suggests that leadership is vital in assisting organisations in achieving their stated objectives, one of which is retaining employees since organisations cannot thrive and sustain themselves

without human resources (Mwita *et al.*, 2018:276). In the section that follows, the various leadership styles that may influence talent retention are discussed.

2.3.4.1 Autocratic leadership

Lugman *et al.* (2019:26) characterise the autocratic leadership style as a well-defined classic approach. In this form of leadership, the leader is the most powerful and solely has decision-making authority. Autocratic leaders make key decisions independently and favour imposing strict standards, managing procedures, and maintaining formal, professional relationships with subordinates (Dyczkowska & Dyczkowski, 2018:195). Joseph (2018:4) explicates the notion of autocratic leadership, stating that the autocratic leader hardly ever permits people to have input and voice their thoughts and is frequently detached from the employees. This type of leadership is often called coercive because it is imposed upon employees. Authoritarian leaders conduct the decision-making process; however, employee engagement may be solicited but is rarely considered (Joseph, 2018:5-6).

There are four types of authoritarian leadership behaviours, according to Wang *et al.* (2019:3). First, authoritarian leaders keep strict control over their employees and demand unquestioning devotion. To protect their absolute influence within organisations, authoritarian leaders are cautious about empowering their employees. In addition, leaders with a high level of authoritarianism are hesitant to share information with their employees and employ a top-down communication style. Second, the authors state that authoritarian leaders frequently overlook employees' ideas and contributions. Such leaders are more likely to attribute success to themselves and blame employees for failure. Thirdly, authoritarian leaders place a high value on their dignity and are always self-confident. These leaders manage and manipulate information to maintain a power advantage and create and maintain a positive image through manipulation. Lastly, strong authoritarian leaders demand that their employees achieve the highest levels of organisational performance and make all key team decisions (Wang *et al.*, 2019:3-4).

Dyczkowska and Dyczkowski (2018:195) state that autocratic leadership fails to build a learning mentality, which is vital for encouraging proactive attitudes among employees. As previously noted, authoritarian behaviours create isolation and distrust

between employees and leaders, resulting in poor employee performance (Wang *et al.*, 2019:4). Luqman *et al.* (2019:26) posit that authoritarian leadership has no meaningful impact on employee commitment. The authors assert that if a leader employs an authoritarian leadership style, employee commitment to the organisation would be limited, which would significantly impact employee retention. Khan *et al.* (2015:87-88) highlight that autocratic leadership should not be utilised when employees feel frightened and anxious or when organisational morale is low and there is a high incidence of employee turnover and absenteeism. The authors argued that organisations with authoritarian leaders have higher employee turnover and absenteeism than other organisations and that the younger generation of employees has proven to be highly resistant to this managerial style (Khan *et al.*, 2015:87). The advantages and disadvantages of autocratic leadership are listed in Table 2.2 below.

2.3.4.2 Democratic / Participative leadership

Nwokocha and Iheriohanma (2015:190) define participative leaders as those who encourage staff participation in problem-solving and ongoing operational decision-making. The authors posit that the roles and contributions of employees are significant and that the leader will solicit staff perspectives, recommendations, and feedback prior to making decisions or issuing team directives. Thus, the involvement of the employees influences the team's direction.

Democratic leadership is often referred to as participative leadership. It is a leadership style that allows people to engage in organisational decision-making (Nwokocha & Iheriohanma, 2015:190). The democratic leader keeps their employees informed of everything that impacts their work and shares responsibility for decision-making and problem-solving. Moreover, democratic leadership can produce high-quality and high-quantity work (Khan *et al.*, 2015:88). Many employees appreciate the trust placed in them and respond with participation, team cohesion, and good morale (Khan *et al.*, 2015:88; Tedla & Vilas, 2022:179).

According to Tedla and Vilas (2022:179), democratic leadership allows employees to experience a feeling of ownership, accountability, and inclusion. Democratic or participative leadership is more effective when both the leader's communication skills and employees' skills are comparable. Khan *et al.* (2015:89) assert that democratic

leadership is often the most efficient leadership style and that employees are more motivated and innovative when they feel engaged in the process, which may positively impact employee retention. The advantages and disadvantages of the democratic leadership style are summarised in Table 2.2 below.

2.3.4.3 Charismatic leadership

According to Hu and Dutta (2022:5), charisma is both a value-added human attribute and a personal quality that enables leaders to exert a significant level of social influence on those around them. Often considered "visionary" and "extraordinary," charismatic leaders are capable of influencing others by generating enthusiasm for a shared purpose. The authors assert that charismatic leaders' strategic decisions are influenced by their innate individual values, such as courage, resistance to the status quo, and self-assurance (Hu & Dutta, 2022:5).

A charismatic leader is one whose followers assign exceptional qualities, also described as charisma, to them (Levay, 2010:128; Yukl, 1999:293). Furthermore, charismatic leadership can be characterised by the extent of the leader's impact on followers and the nature of the resulting leader-follower relationship (Hu & Dutta, 2022:6; Yukl, 1999:293). Neo-charismatic leadership theories, according to Putriastuti and Stasi (2019:100), focus primarily on the charismatic and transformational leadership approach which imply that leaders influence followers by fulfilling the objectives of a team or organisation. The four dimensions of transformational leadership are a representation of the most recent iteration of this theory. These qualities include (1) inspirational motivation, (2) personalised consideration, (3) intellectual stimulation, and (4) charisma, also referred to as idealised influence.

According to Cetin and Kinik (2015:521), leaders exhibit idealised influence when they enhance the organisation's performance by taking risks alongside their followers, maintaining behavioural consistency, and being dependable. In this approach, the followers of a leader can sense the trust and positive attitude they developed within the organisation. Table 2.2 below summarises the advantages and disadvantages of charismatic leadership.

2.3.4.4 Transformational leadership

According to Cetin and Kinik (2015:520), transformational leaders transform followers' values and beliefs to support the organisation's vision and objectives by providing an atmosphere where relationships can be built and by establishing a climate of trust where visions can be shared. In addition, leaders adhering to the transformational leadership style strive to change followers, therefore establishing a climate in organisations where values are equitably shared. As a result of this effect on followers, transformational leadership has become the preferred strategy for most organisations in various industries (Cetin & Kinik, 2015:520).

Hickman and Akdere (2017:101) state that four elements constitute transformational leadership, namely (1) idealised influence, (2) inspirational motivation, (3) individualised concern, and (4) intellectual stimulation. Transformational leaders are fully acquainted with their followers, develop a compelling vision imbued with values, and foster a blame-free culture where the emphasis is on problem-solving rather than shifting blame (Tedla & Vilas, 2022:181). Furthermore, transformational leaders focus on the accomplishment and self-actualisation of their followers. A successful transformational leader can employ a variety of leadership styles to inspire people to achieve individual and organisational goals by providing members with encouragement, setting clear goals, acting with fairness and integrity, and providing recognition and support (Quainoo *et al.*, 2020:169). As a result, Transformative leadership is acknowledged as a two-way interaction that transforms followers into leaders and leaders into moral agents (Cetin & Kinik, 2015:520). The advantages and disadvantages of transformative leadership are summarised in Table 2.2 below.

2.3.4.5 Advantages and disadvantages of the various leadership styles

Effective leadership styles can change depending on the circumstances, and most successful leaders adopt a balanced approach. For organisations to succeed, it's imperative to adapt and take more thoughtful leadership decisions. Table 2.2 below lists the advantages and disadvantages of the various leadership styles described above.

Table 2.2: The advantages and disadvantages of the various leadership styles

Autocratic leadership	
Advantages	• Effective in times of crisis, leaders make decisions without consultation (Khan <i>et al.</i>, 2015:88). • A clear chain of demand, top-bottom channel (Tedla & Vilas, 2022:179). • Discipline and improved employee performance (Khan <i>et al.</i>, 2015:88).
Disadvantages	• Frustration, demoralisation, and exploitation of employees (Tedla & Vilas, 2022:178-179). • Group interests are suppressed, and talents are not recognised and, therefore, are not promoted (Khan <i>et al.</i>, 2015:88). • Employee burnout and attrition (Tedla & Vilas, 2022:179).
Democratic or participative leadership	
Advantages	• Increase employee motivation, job satisfaction and retention (Tedla & Vilas, 2022:179). • Produces creativity, team cohesion, and high levels of productivity (Khan <i>et al.</i>, 2015:89; Tedla & Vilas, 2022:179). • Promotes openness, confidence, a productive workplace, and transparent communication channels (Tedla & Vilas, 2022:179).
Disadvantages	• Time-consuming for the leader (Khan <i>et al.</i> (2015:89). • Ineffective during times of crisis (Nwokocha & Iheriohanma, 2015:190). • Communication may be unsuccessful when conflict arises (Tedla & Vilas, 2022:179).
Charismatic leadership	
Advantages	• Utilises inspiration, motivation, and charm to drive employees (Tedla & Vilas, 2022:181). • Positive leader-follower relationship (Hu & Dutta, 2022:6). • Powerful in bringing about change (Levay, 2010:129).

Disadvantages	• Consistent encouragement, inspiration, and charisma can be time-consuming (Tedla & Vilas, 2022:181). • Misleading focus may result in diminished compassion (Hu & Dutta, 2022:6).
Transformational leadership	
Advantages	• Increases trust and confidence amongst employees (Tedla & Vilas, 2022:181). • Ensures balanced short-and long-term organisational goals (Tedla & Vilas, 2022:181). • Improves healthy workplace relationships and increases talent retention (Nwokocha & Iheriohanma, 2015:204).
Disadvantages	• It could initially be ineffective until trust and rapport are established (Tedla & Vilas, 2022:181). • Misuse of power can be risky and disruptive (Nwokocha & Iheriohanma, 2015:203).

Source: Author's own.

2.3.5 Leadership during times of uncertainty

According to Jena (2020:78), the global HE sector has been significantly impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. Since the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, academics have shown considerable interest in studies that provide recommendations on how to manage teams and organisations most effectively through this crisis (Schaninger, 2022:1). In essence, all significant challenges that companies face in uncertain times reduce to leadership. Aherin and Loh (2020:266) state that for leaders, the significant uncertainty imposed by COVID-19 intensifies the difficulties involved with decision-making and necessitates a quick and effective response that is uncommon in more typical organisational situations. Therefore, it is necessary to adopt an effective leadership style to manage the crisis.

According to Fernandez and Shaw (2020:40), rapid leadership action was necessary for successful crisis management during the pandemic. The rapid response of HEIs to the current crisis was assisted by the existence of authentic systems of shared leadership that permit local decision-making. According to the authors, HEIs utilising a

shared leadership model have gained a greater degree of agility, innovation, and collaboration, as well as superior peer support in a crisis, than institutions clinging to an obsolete and rigid hierarchical leadership paradigm (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020:40).

Moreover, in response to the crisis, supporting vertical or hierarchical leaders may develop a sort of distributed leadership in which employees from various levels of organisation overcome potential obstacles to exercise influence during times of transition. According to Bhaduri (2019:541), leadership competencies affect whether crisis management initiatives fail or succeed. Emotional intelligence characteristics such as understanding, self-awareness, influence, teamwork skills, and the capacity to manage relationships for leaders are important during crisis management. In addition, shared decision-making, transparent communication, fostering an effective workplace culture and developing human capital are important (Bhaduri, 2019:541).

Finally, Fernandez and Shaw (2020:41) suggest that the best practices for leaders in crisis situations are to connect with people, distribute leadership, and communicate clearly. The authors emphasised the significance of connecting with all stakeholders as individuals and creating mutual trust, delegating leadership duties to teams with situational awareness, and communicating clearly and frequently within teams and organisations. Future challenges can be solved more successfully and with less effort by leaders who have the adaptability and capability to learn from and change because of managing a crisis. These leaders may well be the ideal leader for HEIs (Fernandez & Shaw, 2020:44).

2.4 TALENT MANAGEMENT

2.4.1 Talent management defined

The terms human resource planning, talent management, talent strategy, and succession management are frequently used interchangeably. Globally, talent management is one of human resource management's most significant and urgent aspects. It remains one of the most pressing concerns for many large organisations (Singh, 2021:44). According to Gupta (2019:4151), talent management is the systematic identification, development, attraction, commitment, retention, and deployment of highly talented and efficient employees to occupy critical positions that

have a significant impact on the organisation's sustainable competitive advantage. Rumawas (2021:249) refers to talent management as the totality of an individual's abilities, experiences, capabilities, attitudes, and behaviour as they relate to organisational performance. Talent management, according to the author, is a set of long-term organisational objectives that utilise human capital to the organisation's competitive advantage, in addition to a portfolio of integrated human resource initiatives that result in the placement of the right people with the right competencies in the right position at the right place and the right cost.

Singh (2021:44) describes talent management as a mission-critical process that ensures organisations have the right number and calibre of individuals to accomplish current and future business objectives. The process encompasses all essential components of the life cycle of an employee, including selection, development, succession planning, and performance management. According to the authors, organisations utilise talent management to acquire, leverage and safeguard their unique strategic assets. Therefore, talent management can be categorised as a supporting human resource strategy. According to Singh (2021:45), a variety of factors, including talent shortages, demographic and societal trends, corporate social responsibility (CSR), diversity, the ongoing transition to a knowledge-based economy, and the increasing significance of emerging markets, have contributed to the growth of talent management.

2.4.2 Talent management in HE

HEIs are competing in global markets, and as a result, they are adopting management styles and strategies from the corporate and industrial sectors. This is evident in the fierce competition for qualified academic personnel (Gandy *et al.*, 2018:597; Mohammed *et al.*, 2020:1271). Academic employees are highly flexible knowledge workers with distinct characteristics. HEIs must therefore manage their talent positively and proactively to avoid talent loss considering their resources' changing context and uniqueness. Staff turnover is an important indicator of talent for the HE sectors and other industries. The latter offers insightful information about what is occurring in the talent pool in the sector (Gandy *et al.*, 2018:597-598).

Mohammed *et al.* (2020:1271) suggest that there are a variety of practical advantages for HEIs that prioritise talent. These advantages include assisting HEIs in managing performance and productivity, improving HEI rankings, and increasing the profitability of the HEI. This is further supported by Gupta (2019:4150), who asserts that the development, acquisition, and retention of talent through the implementation of efficient talent management strategies guarantees market dominance and an increase in the organisation's overall financial performance. Moreover, talented employees significantly contribute to the performance of a HEI by attracting and retaining students, conducting high-quality teaching and learning, performing high-level research, and gaining funding for research and innovation.

In addition, the benefits of HEIs include the growth of a skilled workforce, the development of individual productivity, the facilitation of effective planning, and the improvement of human resource management (Mohammed *et al.*, 2020:1271-1272). Additionally, Whysall *et al.* (2019:119) highlight that the identification of key talent is an integral part of any strategic talent management system and that the focus of talent management literature has shifted from identifying good performers to identifying key positions with the potential to differentially impact on sustainable competitive advantage.

2.4.3 Talent management process

Strategic talent management processes align with the organisation's business objectives and allow the organisation to sustain and maintain credibility in the industry. According to Mohammed *et al.* (2020:1275), talent management facilitates the employee journey. The latter begins with how employees are attracted to the organisation and continue throughout their employment. Common practices in talent management include hiring and selection, learning and development, engagement and culture building, and succession planning. Traditionally, the talent management process comprises the following steps, (1) planning, (2) attracting talent, (3) selecting talent, (4) developing talent, (5) retaining talent and (6) transitioning talent (Mohammed *et al.*, 2020:1275; Musakuro, 2018:17). The talent management process is illustrated in Figure 2.3.

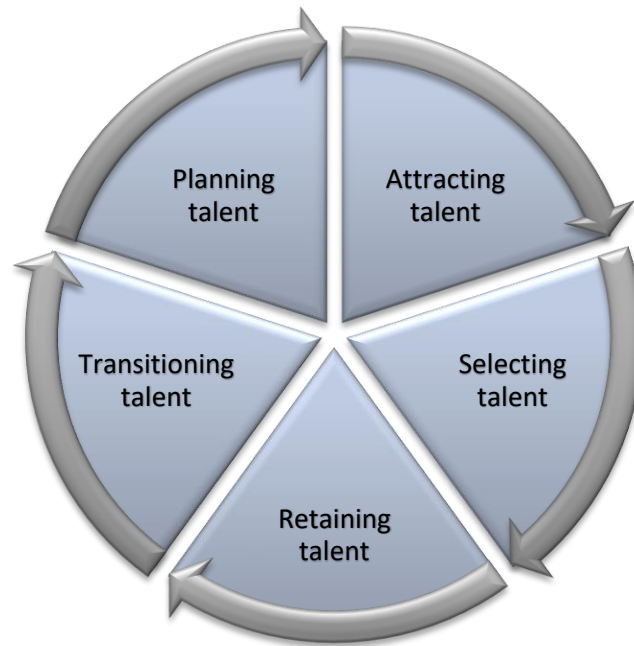


Figure 2.3: Talent management process

Source: Adapted from Musakuro (2018:17).

2.4.4 Talent management strategies

Talent management has become an important strategic issue for profitable organisations, particularly in the private sector, and therefore organisations have started employing various talent management strategies (Tanwar & Prasad, 2016:186). It is important to identify and select an appropriate talent management strategy to transform global challenges and existing negative factors within the context of organisations into opportunities. In addition, it is important to investigate the practical application of these strategies by evaluating the characteristics of various industries (Savanevičienė & Vilčiauskaitė, 2017:243).

Singh (2021:45) identified four methods for successfully optimising talent, which includes (1) developing a sound organisational culture, (2) the provision of relevant and interactive training and development opportunities, (3) cultivating an engaging work environment and (4) provide clear and appropriate career advancement opportunities. It is essential to recognise that there is a distinction between exclusive and inclusive talent management strategies. These strategies are based on the talent management process described in Figure 2.3 above (Savanevičienė & Vilčiauskaitė, 2017:246).

The exclusive talent management strategy is designed for individuals who are valued and unique, exhibit good potential or occupy strategically significant roles within the organisation. In the context of the current talent shortage, exclusive talent management refers to the vigorous planning, attracting, recruiting, and selecting of high-potential employees (see Figure 2.3). Consequently, the exclusive talent management strategy evaluates the potential to recruit candidates essential to the organisation's success. Investing in these individuals fosters commitment and motivation among this critical group of employees, and organisations could gain a competitive advantage (Savanevičienė & Vilčiauskaitė, 2017:246-247). An alternative to an exclusive talent management strategy is an inclusive one.

The premise of an inclusive talent management strategy is that all employees have the necessary valuable traits or talents that may be employed productively within an organisation (Savanevičienė & Vilčiauskaitė, 2017:247). This strategy can be characterised as the acknowledgement that all employees have the necessary talent and are being employed in positions that are most suited to fit their skills and experience, offering the best potential for these employees. This strategy primarily focuses on talent acquisition techniques such as training and development to retain these individuals (as illustrated in Figure 2.3).

The objective of an inclusive talent management strategy is to bring out the best in every employee, allowing them to achieve their full potential at work. Deery and Jago (2014:463-464) suggest the following talent management strategies to assist in employee retention:

- Improved training and development initiatives.
- Ensuring fair remuneration packages for talented employees.
- Offering opportunities for career advancement.
- Offering better employment conditions.
- Providing rewards and benefits for talent.
- Maintaining a healthy work-life balance.
- Maintain high-calibre leadership within an organisation.
- Organisational and career commitment.
- Appropriate education and job fit.

Deery and Jago (2014:466) further propose that organisational and employee variables that contribute to higher attrition rates should be mitigated. These reasons may include excessive work hours, low income, a lack of opportunities for career advancement, and contingent employment. Additionally, employee stress, occupational burnout, and emotional exhaustion should be reduced. Work-life conflict issues, such as severe workloads, flexibility, and low job integration, may also increase employee turnover.

2.5 INTEGRATED CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THE STUDY

A conceptual framework informed by the reviewed literature was constructed and adopted as the basis for this study. The study's conceptual framework is founded on three primary variables: (1) individual and organisational causes and influential factors, (2) the effect of leadership styles, and (3) external factors relating to the retention of academic talent. Along with reducing faculty turnover and enhancing academic talent retention, the study's primary aim was to explore the optimal leadership style for talent retention and provide sound talent management strategies for faculty within a HEI. Figure 2.4 provides a graphic representation of this study's conceptual framework.

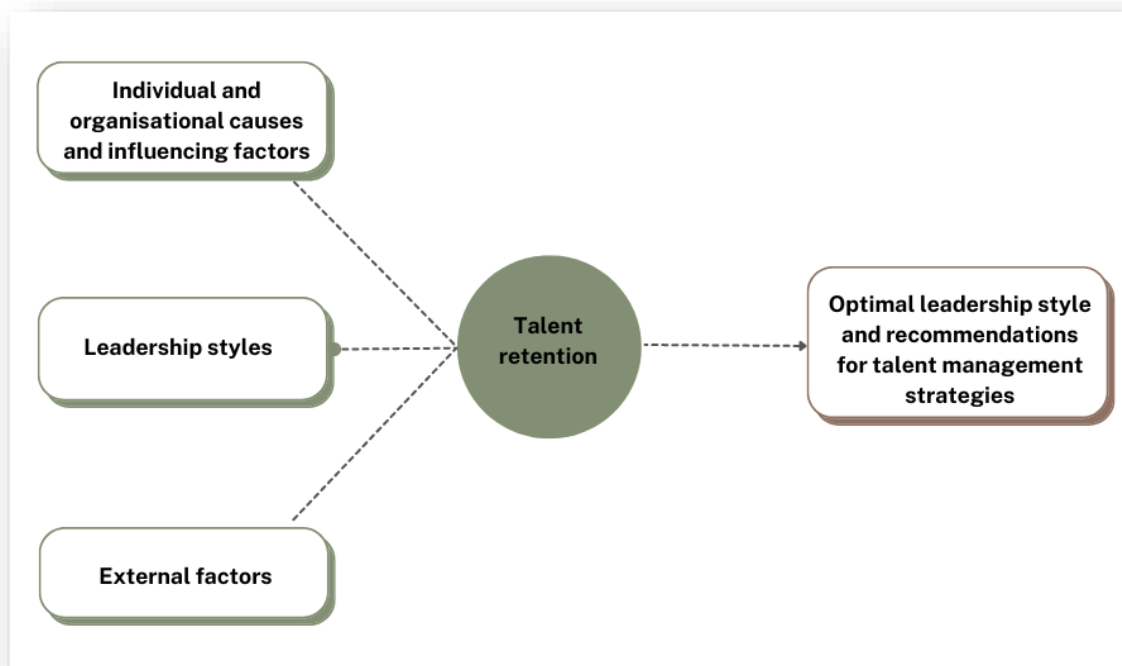


Figure 2.4: An integrated conceptual framework of the study

Source: Authors own.

Badubi (2017:44) asserts that in all organisations, motivation plays a critical role in motivating individuals towards the fulfilment of personal ambitions, organisational goals, and, to a lesser extent, societal goals. Motivation focuses on two factors in particular: the emotional commitment an employee has to their job and the employer's conscious evaluation of an employee's work. In addition, Badubi (2017:45) asserts that an employee's motivation may stem from external causes (extrinsic), such as rewards, or from within (intrinsic), such as a desire to perform better. There are numerous theories of motivation, the majority of which relate to or influence the outcomes of employee work satisfaction, which in turn influences employee retention.

The theoretical foundation of the study is therefore based on three underpinning theories. These theories include McClelland's Needs Achievement Theory, Herzberg's Two-Factor Theory and McGregor's Theory Y.

McClelland's need achievement theory suggests that certain individuals are motivated to succeed by a desire for personal achievement as opposed to a need for rewards. This idea readily applies to academic institutions and clarifies why certain academics are high performers despite their challenges. These academics set high ideals for themselves, and achieving these objectives is what inspires them (Badubi, 2017:46).

Moreover, its two-factor theory of Herzberg identifies five factors that contribute to job satisfaction: achievement, recognition, the work itself, responsibility, and advancement. In contrast, Herzberg highlighted institutional politics, the leadership approach, supervision, remuneration, work relationships, and the working environment as discouraging elements for employees. According to the authors, organisations are increasingly implementing Herzberg's theory to provide their employees with possibilities for personal growth, development, and acknowledgement, which may have a favourable effect on talent retention, as described in the literature (Badubi, 2017:46).

Lastly, McGregor's theory Y assumes that the mental and physical inputs at work are equivalent to those at leisure. External considerations or external threats may not be the only motivator for investing efforts. Employees or individuals can practice caution and discipline to achieve objectives. However, their desire to commit to objectives is

contingent on the magnitude of the benefits of rewards associated with that achievement (Badubi, 2017:46). Therefore, it can be deduced that an employee will provide their best effort and perform well at work if the benefits and rewards are adequate. Additionally, the latter will enhance job satisfaction, significantly affecting employee retention.

2.6 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter detailed the literature review to address the study's objectives. The factors influencing employee turnover and retention in the HE context were discussed. These factors included the inherent factors to the individual, the organisational and the external factors to the organisation. Thereafter, leadership in the context of talent retention was discussed by describing the concept and discussing leadership in the HE environment. The various leadership styles that can affect the retention of talent were addressed. Following this, a review of the advantages and disadvantages of each leadership style was offered.

Next, talent management was discussed by defining the concept and detailing the talent management process and retention strategies for academic talent retention.

Finally, an integrated conceptual framework for the study was provided by describing the underpinning theories of motivation.

The research methodology and ethical considerations followed in the study will be discussed in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 3 – RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The preceding chapters offered an overview of the background and rationale of the study, as well as an extensive literature review on the factors and leadership styles that impact academic talent retention at HEIs. This chapter will discuss the research methodology employed in conducting this qualitative phenomenological investigation. The chapter will also focus on the pertinent methods for achieving the research objectives of this study. The discussion includes the research philosophy, paradigm, approach, and design used. Moreover, the data collection and analysis phases are highlighted. Thereafter, data validation is discussed, followed by a description of the ethical considerations that were considered during the conduct of this study. Table 3.1 provides an overview of the layout of the study.

Table 3.1: Research methodology overview

Research	Description
Philosophy/ Paradigm	Interpretivism
Approach	Qualitative/ Inductive reasoning
Design	Phenomenological
Data collection	Literature review/ Semi-structured interviews
Data analysis	Coding and categorising/ content analysis
Data validation	Trustworthiness

Source: Authors own.

3.2 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The research questions were derived from the problem statement and research objectives. The primary and secondary research questions are presented in Table 3.2.

Table 3.2: Primary and secondary research questions

Research Question	Description
Primary	1. What type of leadership style is required for the talent retention of employees within a faculty in a HEI?
Secondary	2. What causes talented employees to leave a specific HEI for employment at another HEI or the public sector? 3. What is the influence of different leadership styles on talent retention within a faculty in a HEI? 4. What talent management strategies can be successfully employed to improve talent retention within a faculty in a HEI?

Source: Authors own.

3.3 PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS AND RESEARCH PARADIGM

Research philosophy is a framework that guides how research should be conducted based on ideas about reality and the nature of knowledge (Abu-Alhaija, 2019:123). The research philosophy can therefore be described as the development of research assumptions, knowledge, and its essence. The assumption is viewed as a preliminary statement of reasoning, yet it is founded on the philosopher's knowledge and insights, which are the result of intellectual activity. The philosophy of scientific research is a strategy that, when used, enables scientists to transform research thoughts into knowledge (Zukauskas *et al.*, 2018:122-123).

A research paradigm comprises certain philosophical assumptions that guide the reasoning and conduct of researchers (Abu-Alhaija, 2019:123). The connections between paradigms and research philosophies must be understood in terms of philosophical affinity, not equivalence, and should be approached with caution and thought. In management research, the terms 'paradigms' and 'philosophies' are sometimes used interchangeably to express the underlying assumptions of

researchers (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:143). There are four distinguishable major trends in research paradigms and worldviews, namely positivism, interpretivism (often combined with constructivism), pragmatism, and realistic research philosophies (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:130, Zukauskas *et al.*, 2018:123).

The paradigm of interpretivism underpins this research study. Interpretivism is commonly used when using the qualitative research approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:7; Oosthuizen *et al.*, 2020:365). In the paradigm of interpretivism, individuals seek to comprehend the world in which they live and work and create subjective interpretations of their experiences (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:148). These meanings are diverse, requiring the researcher to focus on the complexity of perspectives rather than reducing them to a few categories or concepts (Abu-Alhaija, 2019:123).

The purpose of interpretivist research is to generate new, more detailed interpretations of social settings and environments. This requires researchers to examine organisations from the views of several groups of individuals (Saunders *et al.*, 2019:149). Therefore, researchers rely as heavily as possible on the participant's perceptions of the phenomenon under investigation, which in this context is the effect of leadership styles on the retention of academic talent. The questions become broad and generic so that the participants can construct the meaning of a given scenario. Open-ended questions are utilised as it permits the researcher to listen attentively to individuals' views within their specific environments (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:8). The researcher typically holds a subjective, epistemological stance towards the participants in the study (Oosthuizen *et al.*, 2020:366).

3.4 RESEARCH APPROACH

All philosophical assumptions contribute to a research approach. There are three approaches to conducting research: quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:17). The latter is illustrated in Figure 3.1 below. Generally, researchers use the quantitative technique to address research issues requiring numerical data, the qualitative approach to address research questions requiring textual data, and the mixed methodologies approach to address research problems

requiring both numerical and textual data (Williams, 2007:65). The interpretivist paradigm is commonly linked to the qualitative research approach (Oosthuizen *et al.*, 2020:366). A qualitative research approach was adopted for this study, as depicted in Figure 3.1 below.

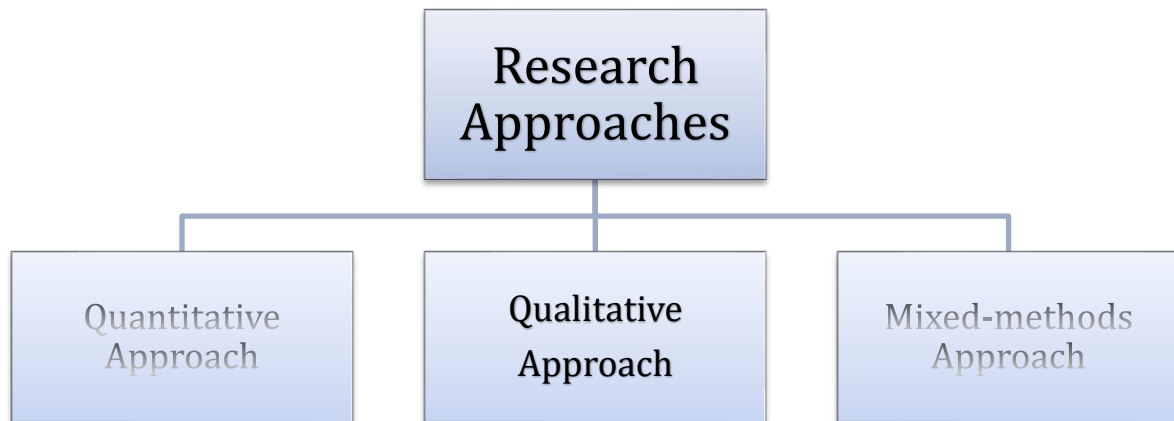


Figure 3.1: Research approaches

Source: Adapted from Creswell and Creswell (2018:16).

Qualitative research is a holistic method which is based on discovery (Austin & Sutton, 2014:436). Qualitative research can be defined as a developing model that takes place in a natural setting and allows the researcher to establish a level of understanding through active participation in the actual experiences (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:17). Aspers and Corte (2019:142) define qualitative research as a multimethod approach with an interpretive, naturalistic approach to its topic. This signifies that the qualitative researcher examines individuals in their natural surroundings, aiming to understand and interpret phenomena based on the meanings that individuals assign to them. The method employs literature, text, and discussions to generate concepts that improve the comprehension of social phenomena. It investigates, documents, analyse and interprets how individuals generate and assign meaning to their experiences (Azungah, 2018:384). Additionally, qualitative research entails the carefully considered utilisation and gathering of a wide range of empirical data that represent ordinary and problematic events and their significance thereof in individuals' lives (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:17; Williams, 2007:67).

A distinguishing characteristic of qualitative research is the social phenomenon explored from the participant's perspective (Williams, 2007:67). Leedy and Ormrod

(2016:269) note that qualitative approaches have two characteristics. First, they frequently focus on events that occur in natural contexts. Secondly, they entail collecting and investigating the intricacy of these events. Researchers who use qualitative methods seldom attempt to simplify the phenomena they observe. Instead, they acknowledge that the problem they are investigating has many facets and attempt to present it in all its complexity. The key features of the qualitative research approach are summarised in Table 3.3.

Table 3.3: Key features of the qualitative research approach

Qualitative research	Brief description
Examines	• Phenomena.
Interpretation	• Employs a series of interpretive techniques that intend to describe, interpret, and translate ideas and/or phenomena.
Selected	• When interpretation is required. • Where the research is needed in relatively new research areas.
General context	• Related to observation. • Uses flexible questionnaires. • Uses methods like interviews.
Question form	• Open-ended questions.
Advantages	• Allows an understanding of the nature and complexity of the phenomenon under study. • Supports the examination of the phenomenon in its natural environment. • Supports in-depth research and facilitates research in new areas of study.

Source: Adapted from Basias and Pollalis (2018:95).

Research approaches can be described as either inductive reasoning or deductive reasoning (Young, 2019:1122). Qualitative research is often equated with the inductive

reasoning approach, often referred to as the “bottom-up” approach. When an inductive approach is utilised, the researcher begins by gathering data pertinent to the area of study. The researcher will seek patterns in the data and build a theory to explain those patterns (Azungah, 2018:384). Therefore, when researchers employ an inductive reasoning approach, they begin with a collection of observations and then progress from these specific experiences to a more general set of predictions regarding these experiences. As a result, they transition from data to theory. An inductive reasoning approach was utilised for the purposes of this study. Figure 3.2 outlines the phases of the approach.

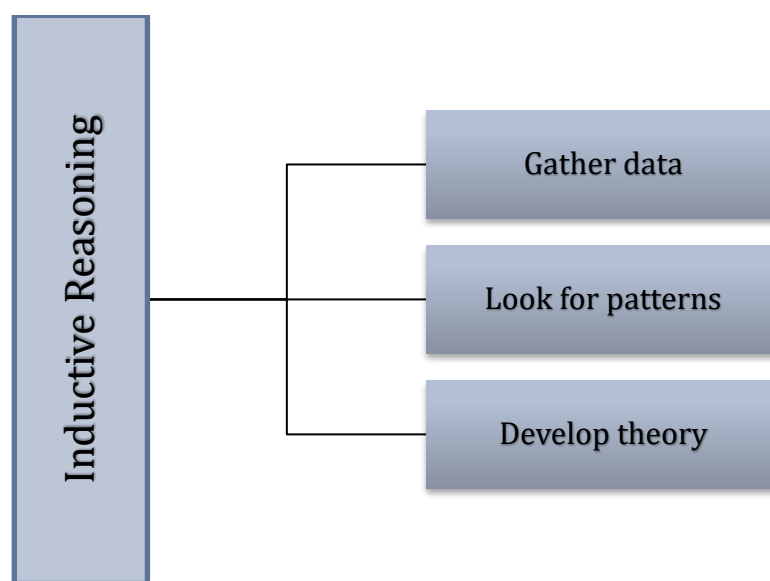


Figure 3.2: Inductive reasoning

Source: Authors own.

3.5 RESEARCH DESIGN

A research design is a plan for addressing a study question with empirical evidence (Oosthuizen *et al.*, 2020:390). A well-planned research design ensures that the techniques align with the research objectives and that the appropriate type of data analysis is employed. This strategy focuses on acquiring a holistic understanding of a particular context or phenomenon and allows for greater creativity and flexibility in study design (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018:271). Qualitative designs tend to be less strictly defined. Various types of research designs utilise qualitative research techniques to outline the research approach. The different techniques significantly influence the

research strategies employed (Williams, 2007:66). Leedy and Ormrod (2018:271-276) highlight five different qualitative research designs. Figure 3.3 provides a visual representation of these configurations.

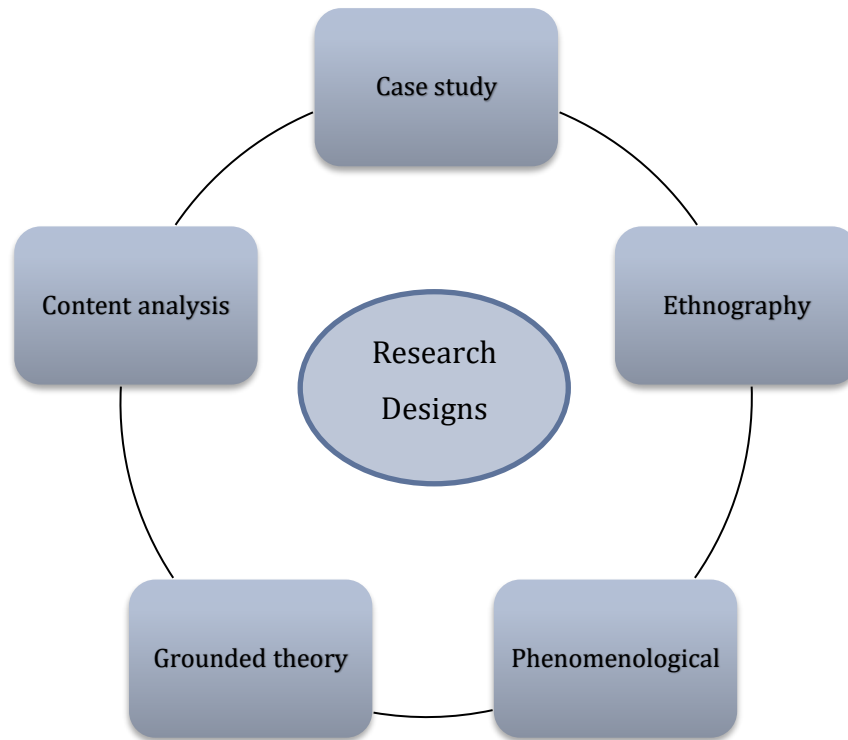


Figure 3.3: Qualitative research designs

Source: Authors own.

This investigation will employ a phenomenological research design. Phenomenology is a qualitative research approach specifically tailored to facilitate inquiry (Neubauer *et al.*, 2019:91). The latter aims to grasp the perceptions and views of individuals in relation to a specific circumstance. More simply stated, phenomenology refers to an individual's interpretation of the significance of an experience, as opposed to the phenomenon, as it exists independently of the individual (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018:273). Neubauer *et al.* (2019:90) describe phenomenology as a research method that aims to describe the nature of a phenomenon by examining it through the perspectives of individuals who have experienced it.

The purpose of phenomenology is to describe the significance of this experience in terms of both what and how it was experienced. In certain instances, the researcher has personal experience with the topic under study and seeks to gain a deeper

understanding of the experiences of others. By examining several perspectives on the same scenario, the researcher can then draw generalisations from the perspectives of others. The phenomenological design has strong philosophical foundations and typically involves conducting in-depth interviews with a relatively small and selective group of participants (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:13).

3.6 DATA COLLECTION

Data collection is a fundamental aspect of research across all disciplines. The latter can be defined as a systematic process of acquiring and quantifying information on variables of interest that allows the researcher to answer specified research questions, test hypotheses, and evaluate outcomes (Kabir, 2016:202). Although data collection methods differ depending on the field of study, the overall objective of accurate and ethical data collection is a priority. A significant amount of information will be generated during the process, regardless of the researcher's philosophical underpinning or the data collection method (Sutton & Austin, 2015:226).

Moreover, all data collection aims to gather high-quality evidence that can be translated into a detailed data analysis and used to construct a convincing and credible response to the research questions posed (Kabir, 2016:202; Paradis *et al.*, 2016:263). Moser and Korstjens (2018:12) note that participant observation, interviews, and focus group discussions are the most used data collection methods. Participant observation is a data collection technique that involves long-term engagement in and observation of a group or individuals (Paradis *et al.*, 2016:264).

In interviews, participants are asked questions face-to-face, telephonically, or online. In focus group discussions, a small number of participants discuss a certain topic, typically under the guidance of a moderator who asks leading questions (Paradis *et al.*, 2016:263; Austin & Sutton, 2015:227). In qualitative research, using multiple data collection techniques in a single study is common. The qualitative research interview aims to explain the significance of key themes in the participants' lives. The primary goal of an interview is to ascertain the meaning of the participant's responses (Moser & Korstjens, 2018:12).

Two types of data collection procedures were utilised in this study. First, a comprehensive literature review was conducted to acquire information on the characteristics and leadership styles that influence academic talent retention in a HEI. This information was used to compare the data acquired in this study with other South African and international studies on similar topics. The second technique involved conducting semi-structured interviews with academics working within a faculty at a HEI. Interviews consist of interactions between the interviewer and the interviewee based on interview questions posed (Moser & Korstjens, 2018:13).

Kabir (2016:212) asserts that semi-structured interviews guide the researcher with a clear set of instructions that can yield trustworthy, comparable qualitative data. Questions can be prepared in advance, allowing the researcher to be adequately prepared. The order of the questions has been pre-determined, and the sequence of the interviews depends on the participants and how the interviews progress. As the conversation unfolds, the researcher alternates between the questions (Moser & Korstjens, 2018:13). Interviews using a semi-structured format also permit participants to express their opinions in their own words. Annexure D contains the interview protocol, which is discussed in cf. 3.6.5.

3.6.1 Study setting

The research setting refers to either the physical, social, or experimental context in which the research is conducted. In qualitative research, it is essential to investigate and have access to the selected research site (Creswell & Poth, 2018:154). The authors note that it is critical to choose suitable and accessible research sites and to obtain permission and access from the institutional gatekeepers. Consequently, the semi-structured interviews of this study were conducted at the Faculty of Health Sciences across two campuses at the NWU, under the conditions of which ethical clearance (Annexure A) was obtained. The Potchefstroom and Mahikeng campuses were selected for the study context since both campuses employ academics from diverse programs within the faculty. The permission letter from the institutions' RDGC is included in Annexure B.

The consent letter (Annexure C) for the participants outlined the participants' right to voluntarily withdraw from the study at any time, as well as the study's goals, the methods to be used for data collection and how participants' privacy would be protected. Moreover, the anticipated advantages and potential risks associated with participation were also mentioned in the consent letter. Furthermore, the researcher will adhere to all rules contained in the POPIA, Act No.4 of 2013.

3.6.2 Study population

Hu (2014:766) defines the study population as a subset of the target population from which the actual sample is selected. The study population is broader than the sample frame and consists of the specific participants selected for a study. Creswell and Poth (2018:153) suggest that participants must all have encountered the phenomenon under investigation and should be able to express their lived experiences. Consequently, academic employees from the Faculty of Health Sciences at the NWU participated in this investigation. The participants will have the opportunity to describe their personal experiences about the various factors and leadership styles that impact the retention of academic talent within the faculty at the NWU.

3.6.3 Sampling

A sampling design is a specific strategy for acquiring a sample from a given population. It refers to the technique or approach the researcher would use to select the sample (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018:280). Sampling is required since conducting research on the entire population may be impractical and nearly never economically feasible. This is due to the large size of many populations, the time issue, and the inaccessibility of a portion of the population (Mujere, 2016:11). The most pertinent sampling strategies for qualitative research are described in Table 3.4 below.

Table 3.4: Sampling strategies in qualitative research

Sampling	Definition
Purposive	Selection of participants based on the researchers' judgement about what potential participants will be most informative.

Sampling	Definition
Criterion	Selection of participants who meet pre-determined criteria of importance.
Theoretical	Selection of participants based on the emerging findings to ensure adequate representation of theoretical concepts.
Convenience	Selection of easily available participants.
Snowball	Selection of participants through referrals by previously selected participants or persons with access to potential participants.
Typical case	Selection of the most typical or average participants.

Source: Adapted from Moser and Korstjens (2018:10).

Purposeful sampling, a type of non-probability sampling, is a technique that is frequently utilised in qualitative research to identify and select information-rich cases linked to the phenomenon of interest (Palinkas *et al.*, 2015:533). The latter entails identifying and selecting individuals with specific experience or knowledge about a topic of interest. In addition to knowledge and experience, the authors emphasise the importance of the availability and willingness to participate, as well as the ability to share perspectives and experiences articulately and reflectively.

Academic employees from the Faculty of Health Sciences at two of the NWU campuses were purposefully selected for the study and included junior lecturers, lecturers, and senior lecturers. Oosthuizen *et al.* (2020:392) assert that the number of participants in a phenomenological study may range from three to ten participants or until data saturation is reached. The study's sample constitutes eight academic employees employed at various schools within the faculty.

The RDGC indicated that the researcher is not permitted to contact the participants to ensure compliance with the POPIA and to eliminate potential bias, as the faculty also employ the researcher. The researcher sent an invitation email containing a link to

Google Forms to the school directors within the faculty. Interested individuals could fill out the Google Form. Whereafter the researcher received an email containing their contact information. Thereafter, interested individuals were contacted to schedule an interview at a convenient date and time. This email also included the informed consent form (Annexure C) that participants were required to complete, sign, and return to the researcher before the interview.

3.6.4 Data collection instrument

Data collection instruments refer to the tools used by researchers to collect data in the research process. The data collection instrument, hereafter referred to as interview protocol, was designed to align the research questions with the study objectives by making use of open-ended questions and probing techniques. The objective of the interview protocol is to explore the various factors and leadership styles that have an impact on academic talent retention within the higher education industry. The demographic data, as seen in section A of the interview protocol, includes questions relating to age, position level and years of employment at the institution. The demographic data provides the researcher with background information about the participants. These questions provide context for the collected data, allowing the researcher to describe the study participants and conduct a more comprehensive data analysis. Section B of the interview protocol consists of study-specific questions designed to address the objectives of the study. The framework for the interview protocol is provided in Annexure D.

3.6.5 Interview schedule

The researcher conducted the semi-structured interviews using Microsoft (MS) Teams during the week of 27 September 2022 to 08 October 2022. The MS Teams interviews were conducted at a convenient and pre-determined time, as indicated by the participant. The interviews lasted between 30 and 60 minutes. Before recording the interviews started, the researcher engaged in brief, polite conversation with each participant to build rapport and establish a trusting relationship. Thereafter, the researcher explained the interview process and reassured the participants of the confidentiality of the data obtained. The researcher maintained a steady pace and direction throughout the interview to avoid distraction. Each of the eight participants

consented to the interview being recorded and felt at ease addressing the questions posed to them. When a participant was unable to understand a question, the researcher rephrased it without changing its meaning to assist in comprehension. Further, the researcher employed probing techniques like clarification, refinement, and follow-up questions. To ensure validity, the researcher avoided using leading questions, as suggested by Nieuwenhuis (2019:109). The interview schedule is presented in Table 3.5.

Table 3.5: Interview schedule

Date	Time	Participant	Venue
27/09/2022	10:00-10:35	Participant 1 (P1)	Online MS Teams recording
29/09/2022	08:00-08:50	Participant 2 (P2)	Online MS Teams recording
29/09/2022	09:00-09:35	Participant 3 (P3)	Online MS Teams recording
29/09/2022	12:30-13:10	Participant 4 (P4)	Online MS Teams recording
30/09/2022	09:05-09:35	Participant 5 (P5)	Online MS Teams recording
08/10/2022	10:00-10:45	Participant 6 (P6)	Online MS Teams recording
06/10/2022	17:00-17:45	Participant 7 (P7)	Online MS Teams recording
07/10/2022	10:10-10:55	Participant 8 (P8)	Online MS Teams recording

Source: Authors own.

3.6.6 Role of the researcher

The researcher is responsible for coordinating all aspects of the study. The role of the researcher is outlined below.

- Ethics approval was obtained from the institution's relevant research ethics committee (EMS-REC).
- The institutional gatekeepers (RDGC) granted permission to perform the study.
- The researcher is responsible for making sure that all aspects of data preparation and collection, participant engagement during interviews, appointment scheduling, and data analysis are managed and supervised with the utmost integrity, professionalism, and ethical application, as advised by Creswell and Creswell (2018:184).
- Informed consent was obtained from all participants before the commencement of the study.
- During the data collection phase of the study, it is the researcher's responsibility to establish a rapport of trust with the subjects.
- The researcher needs to ensure that the identities or names of participants be revealed during the research process.
- Aspects pertaining to confidentiality, privacy, and anonymity will be maintained throughout the entire study.

3.7 DATA ANALYSIS

In its wider definition, qualitative data analyses provide context to a set of data by analysing a variety of sources, such as conversational data, observations, and unstructured, semi-structured, or structured interviews. Similarly, qualitative data analysis is associated with a variety of methodologies, theoretical perspectives, research traditions, and fields of study (Lester *et al.*, 2020:95). The authors point out that there is no one correct technique to analyse qualitative data and that it is important to develop creative ways think about the data. Qualitative data analysis is performed to derive meaning from text and image data, as described by Creswell and Creswell (2018:190). The process calls for a sequence of steps to be performed, from the specific to the general, requiring many levels of analysis, as illustrated in Figure 3.4.

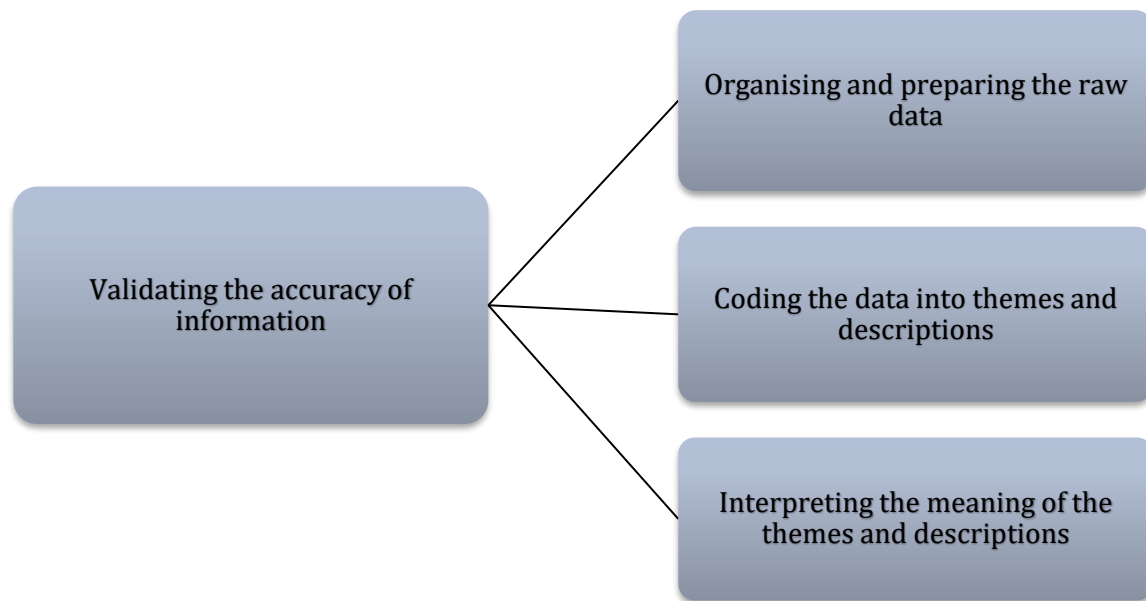


Figure 3.4: Qualitative data analysis process

Source: Adapted from Creswell and Creswell (2018:194).

3.7.1 Organising and preparing the raw data for analysis

This phase includes transcribing the interviews, visually scanning all materials, typing up the field notes, and sorting and arranging the data according to the sources of information. The researcher should familiarise herself with all the data to get an overview of the information and an opportunity to assess its overall significance (Creswell & Creswell, 2018:193). MS Teams transcribed the interviews whilst they were taking place. After the interview, the researcher reviewed it to see whether the transcription was done accurately. The data was transcribed verbatim, as everything said was preserved for analysis. After a detailed review of the data, it was categorised and coded into themes.

3.7.2 Coding the data and generating themes and descriptions

Coding is a tool utilised in the process of transforming raw qualitative data into an understandable and reliable narrative (Creswell & Creswell, 2019:193; Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019:7). The process of coding entails selecting a meaningful section of your empirical data, whether it is a word, a paragraph, or a page, and categorising it with a single word or phrase that captures its essence. Coding is the process of identifying themes and attaching codes to index them. Coding is essential to qualitative analysis because it reduces the volumes of empirical material, makes data easily

available for analysis, and improves the quality of the analysis and findings (Linneberg & Korsgaard, 2019:3). Human investigators may code data, also referred to as coders, or in certain content analyses, by computer programs employing specified search algorithms (Brough, 2019:211). A coder was utilised to assist with the coding process.

The coding technique is employed to describe the setting or individuals, as well as categories or themes for analysis. After the data had been coded into textual data and structural data, participant experiences were described in writing (Creswell & Creswell, 2019:194). The data is then categorised into meaningful themes using thematic analysis. The researcher characterises themes of the participant narratives that describe the perceptions and experiences that are pertinent to the research issue. Thereafter, the themes are analysed and shaped into a general description. The description should present differing perspectives from different individuals and be supported by a variety of quotes and specific examples.

ATLAS.ti™, a computer program used in qualitative research data analysis, was utilised for this study. ATLAS.ti™ is an analytical tool to assist researchers in arranging, reassembling, and managing materials and data in a systematic but creative way (ATLAS.ti, 2020).

3.7.3 Interpreting the meaning of the themes and descriptions

Interpretation in qualitative research entails various steps, including summarising the general findings, comparing the findings to the literature, expressing a personal perspective on the findings, and stating limitations and future research. Therefore, interpretation in qualitative research can take several forms, be suited to various types of designs, and be adaptable to portray personal, research-based, and action-oriented meanings (Creswell & Creswell, 2019:198). In addition to a comparison of the findings to the relevant literature, the interpretation includes suggestions for further research. Therefore, the analysed data was placed in the context of existing theory and literature to validate existing information and add new insight or understanding to the body of knowledge.

The coded data for this study were analysed by employing content analysis. The content analysis supports the researcher in interpreting the data by adjusting the

handling of the data to accommodate new facts and insights into the data (Erlingsson & Brysiewicz, 2017:94).

3.8 DATA VALIDATION

Noble and Smith (2015:34) define validity as the integrity and application of the methodologies employed and the accuracy with which the conclusions represent the data. In contrast, reliability refers to the consistency of the analytical procedures employed. Qualitative researchers employ a wide array of techniques to improve the validity and reliability of a study (Leedy & Ormrod, 2018:278; Sousa, 2014:213).

These techniques include:

- Considering personal biases that may have influenced findings.
- Recognising sampling biases and continual critical reflection of methods to guarantee adequate depth and relevance of data collection and analysis.
- Meticulous record keeping, demonstrating a clear decision trail, and assuring consistent and transparent data interpretations.
- Developing a comparative case and identifying similarities and contrasts between narratives to ensure that diverse perspectives are reflected.
- Including detailed verbatim explanations of participant accounts to substantiate conclusions.
- Displaying clarity in thought processes while conducting data analysis and providing subsequent interpretations.
- Collaborating with other researchers to minimise bias in research.
- Data triangulation whereby several approaches and perspectives assist in the production of a more thorough collection of findings.

It is essential to adopt strategies that improve the credibility of the study during the research design and implementation phases (Noble & Smith, 2015:34-35). Although there is no commonly acknowledged terminology and criterion for evaluating qualitative research, the following section outlines techniques that help increase the trustworthiness of study results.

3.8.1 Trustworthiness

Sousa (2014:213) describes trustworthiness as a series of steps that necessitates a clear and rigorous description of all the methodological steps employed in the research process. These criteria include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018:121). Data for this study was collected through semi-structured interviews on MS Teams. This method of inquiry must be trustworthy and consistent with the results.

Due to the researcher's subjective involvement as an employee of the Faculty of Health Sciences, the trustworthiness of the data is of paramount importance. Validity in this study was ensured by applying and meeting the criteria for trustworthiness. The four criteria of trustworthiness are explained in cf. 3.8.1.1 to cf. 3.8.1.4.

The definitions of the quality criteria and strategies to ensure trustworthiness are presented in Table 3.6.

Table 3.6: Quality criteria, definitions, and strategies of trustworthiness in qualitative research

Credibility	
The degree of confidence in the trustworthiness of the research findings. Credibility identifies whether the research findings represent credible information derived from the participants' original data and are an accurate interpretation of the participants' original perspectives.	
Strategy	• Prolonged engagement • Persistent observation • Triangulation
Transferability	
The extent to which qualitative research results can be applied to various contexts or settings with different participants. The researcher supports the intended user's evaluation of transferability through a detailed description.	
Strategy	• Detailed context/ thick description

Dependability	
The stability of findings throughout time. Dependability refers to the participant's evaluation of the study's findings, interpretation, and recommendations if the participant's data support all.	
Strategy	• Audit trail
Confirmability	
The extent to which other researchers could validate the research study's findings. Confirmability is concerned with demonstrating that the data and interpretations of the findings are not fabrications of the researcher's imagination but are clearly delineated from the data.	
Strategy	• Audit trail

Source: Adapted from (Korstjens & Moser, 2018:121).

3.8.1.1 Credibility

Credibility is the quantitative research equivalent of internal validity and is concerned with trustworthiness (Wood *et al.*, 2020:457). Strategies to ensure trustworthiness are outlined in Table 3-6. Researchers must select which tactics will be implemented, as not all may be appropriate (Korstjens & Moser, 2018:121). Triangulation and prolonged engagement with data is used in this study to demonstrate that the findings of a research study are reliable and valid. Triangulation entails employing several methods, data sources, or theories to comprehensively understand the topic under investigation. It is used to ensure that the findings of the research are rigorous, comprehensive, and well-developed (Carter *et al.*, 2014:545).

The prolonged engagement was achieved by asking several probing questions pertaining to the study's unique topic and research questions. The researcher analysed the interview transcripts until a theory was formed that described the nature of the phenomenon under investigation. To enhance the credibility of the data presented, the researcher also ensured that the data collected from the participants were accurately documented and analysed.

3.8.1.2 Transferability

Transferability pertains to the characteristic of applicability (Korstjens & Moser, 2018:122). It is the responsibility of the researcher to offer a detailed description of the participants and the study process so that the reader may determine if the findings apply to their situation. In addition, the researcher will provide a detailed overview of descriptive data, including the research context, sampling frame, sample size and strategy. This latter will be further supported by including a description of the demographics, interview technique and topics, variations in interview questions based on the iterative research process, and excerpts from the interview guide. Moreover, the researcher will employ precise coding techniques during the data analysis process to ensure descriptive findings that improve application or transferability to other similar scenarios and offer value to future research.

3.8.1.3 Dependability

Dependability pertains to the aspect of consistency (Korstjens & Moser, 2018:122). The researcher must determine if the analysis process adheres to the acknowledged standards for a specific design. The researcher is accountable for providing a comprehensive set of notes regarding decisions taken during the research process, reflective thoughts, sampling, research materials used, the emergence of the findings, and information regarding data management. The researcher guaranteed consistency by creating documentary evidence of all the steps taken and decisions made during the research, as well as the results of all analyses and interpretations. This allows the auditor to examine the research path's transparency using an audit trail as stipulated in Table 3.6.

3.8.1.4 Confirmability

Korstjens and Moser (2018:122) indicate that confirmability concerns the aspect of neutrality. The researcher must ensure that the data are intersubjective. The interpretation should not be based on the researcher's inclinations and opinions but on the data itself. The focus here is on the interpretation process embedded within the analysis process. As suggested by Creswell and Creswell (2018:200), the researcher's bias toward the study was also acknowledged. An audit trail is used to determine validation during this step, as described in cf. 3.8.1.3.

3.9 REPORTING

The iterative nature of conducting qualitative research is reflected in the process of writing up the study (Korstjens & Moser, 2018:123). The final presentation of the research will typically assume the form of a report or a paper; hence, it must adhere to standard academic guidelines as advised by Sutton and Austin (2015:229). The research report provides the knowledge obtained from the study, an analysis of the collected data and findings, recommendations, and conclusions.

More specifically, the report will begin with an introduction to the research that includes a literature review and the rationale of the study. A section on the selected methodology will be presented, followed by a brief explanation of why the qualitative approach best fits the research problem. After describing the research methodology, the body of the report or paper will consist of the research findings. The findings section consists primarily of synthesis and interpretation, with frequent references to empirical data (Korstjens & Moser, 2018:123).

As suggested by Sutton and Austin (2015:230), the findings will be presented as a narrative, and there will be no extended discussion section at the conclusion. Much of the discussion will revolve around participant quotes so that all that is required to conclude the report or paper is a summary, the research's limitations, and its implications for practice. Assumptions will be derived from the participant narratives to provide a comprehensive description of the phenomenon under study.

3.10 ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

Researchers in qualitative studies are commonly questioned about their position in the research process. The researcher is involved in all steps of the qualitative research approach, from concept definition to design, interviews, transcriptions, analysis, verification, and reporting (Sanjari *et al.*, 2014:2). All research studies should consider the protection of human participants by implementing the appropriate ethical principles. Due to the in-depth nature of the research process, ethical questions have a special resonance in qualitative studies (Arifin, 2018:30). researchers must take the time to

explore any potential ethical issues that may develop throughout the life cycle of their research.

The following standards have been met in accordance with the North-West University research ethics guidelines:

- To obtain permission to conduct the research, university approval was requested by applying for ethical clearance at the relevant ethics committee (EMS-REC). The ethics approval letter is included in Annexure A. The EMS-REC deemed this study to be low risk.
- To acquire permission to proceed with the research, the researcher obtained permission from the institution's relevant gatekeeper (RDGC). The permission letter from the RDGC is supplied as Annexure B.
- Before the commencement of the interviews and after obtaining ethical clearance, participants were notified of the primary purpose of the research and written informed consent was obtained from participants. The informed consent document is provided as Annexure C.
- Participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time during the research process.
- The participants' verbal consent to record the interviews was obtained at the start of each interview.
- Participants were informed that they were not required to disclose the information if they did not wish to or if doing so made them feel uncomfortable.
- To safeguard the anonymity of participants, neither the transcriptions nor the research report contained any identifying information. Alias names were created to protect the identities.
- To ensure compliance with the POPI Act and to minimise potential bias and conflict of interest, the researcher who performed the semi-structured interviews with participants was not permitted to recruit or contact potential participants. Instead, a link to Google Forms was distributed to the school directors so they could invite their personnel to participate in the study. After interested individuals submitted the Google Form, the researcher received an email with their contact information. These individuals were then contacted to arrange an interview at a time that was convenient for them.

- The participant's right to privacy, dignity, and reputation was always maintained.
- The researcher strictly adhered to the questions outlined in the interview protocol (Annexure D) and utilised probing questions only to clarify information and eliminate ambiguity.
- The researcher will share all the study findings and report on numerous perspectives.
- The researcher committed to providing only the truth and presenting data without bias.
- All references used in this study were referenced in accordance with North-West University's referencing guidelines.

3.11 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter provided context and justification for the qualitative research approach. The interpretivism paradigm was employed to provide more in-depth findings through participant interactions. In addition to expanding on the information presented in chapter 1, this chapter discussed various research methodologies utilised in the study. The selected methodological approaches allowed the researcher to explore both the historical and current perspectives of the research problem under investigation. The data were evaluated using content analysis and are discussed in tandem with the literature review findings. The data collection, analysis, and reporting procedures were described. Finally, the ethical considerations considered in this investigation are highlighted.

In the following chapter, the empirical research findings will be presented.

CHAPTER 4 – ANALYSIS OF THE RESULTS

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This study aimed to explore the optimum leadership style for academic talent retention within a faculty at a HEI. HEIs need to attract and retain talented staff, and great efforts must be made to train and develop these employees. The retention of this staff is essential for the transfer of valuable knowledge to the enrolled students of the institution. This will cause a cascading effect as this knowledge will be utilised in the work situation.

In this chapter, the data analysed from the eight semi-structured interviews with the individual participants will be provided. Each participant was given an alias name to safeguard their anonymity and prevent them from being identified. Therefore, throughout this chapter, each participant's verbatim quotation will be indicated next to his or her unique alias.

The findings obtained herein aimed to address the following empirical research questions:

- What type of leadership style is required for talent retention of employees within a faculty in a HEI?
- What causes talented employees to leave a specific HEI for employment at another HEI or the public sector?
- What is the influence of different leadership styles on talent retention within a faculty in a HEI?
- What talent management strategies can be successfully employed to improve talent retention within a faculty in a HEI?

Qualitative data analysis aimed to identify common words, phrases, or themes that would enhance the researcher's comprehension and interpretation of the phenomenon under investigation. The transcribed data revealed four themes and nine subthemes. The demographic information of the study participants will be discussed next.

Afterwards, the themes, subthemes, and categories will be presented and discussed in logical application of information rather than in order of importance.

4.2 DISCUSSION

Hereafter, find the discussion of the demographic information as well as the discussion of the themes and sub-themes.

4.2.1 Demographic information

This study aimed to determine the optimum leadership style for academic talent retention within a faculty at a HEI. The demographic data enabled the researcher to acquire more information concerning the participants' backgrounds and experiences, which assisted in contextualising the data that had been gathered. The demographic data included age, position level of current employment, and years of employment with the organisation. Table 4.1 provides a summary of the participant's demographic data.

Table 4.1: Demographic information of participants.

Participant	Age	Position Level	Years of service
P1	31-40 years	Lecturer	6-10 years
P2	41-50 years	Senior lecturer	16 years and above
P3	31-40 years	Lecturer	1-5 years
P4	26-30 years	Junior lecturer	1-5 years
P5	31-40 years	Lecturer	1-5 years
P6	51 years and above	Lecturer	1-5 years
P7	51 years and above	Lecturer	6-10 years
P8	51 years and above	Lecturer	6-10 years

Source: Authors own.

The age-related demographic data indicated that most participants were between the ages of 31-40 and 51 years and above. Only one participant was under 31, and one was between 41-50 years old. Matarid *et al.* (2018:1811) reported that academics over 41 years are more likely to remain employed by an organisation than those younger

than 40. This may be related to the fact that older employees have more responsibilities and dependents and therefore choose to remain employed for employment security. Furthermore, these employees will continue to work at their current place of employment, as they have been there for many years and may be eligible for promotional opportunities.

Moreover, six participants indicated that they were lecturers, whereas only one participant was a senior lecturer, and one participant was a junior lecturer. This suggests that there are limited chances for promotion and development, as only one individual holds a senior position. When asked about the number of years of employment at the organisation, four participants indicated that they were employed between 1-5 years, three participants between 6-10 years, and only one participant above 16 years. This signifies those employees do not remain in the organisation for a long time and could be ascribed to various factors. These factors could include a lack of promotion opportunities, training, and professional development opportunities.

According to Matarid *et al.* (2018:1811), employees with more than eleven years of service were more likely to stay employed within the organisation than those with less than one year of service. The results indicate that employee retention might vary depending on demographic factors such as age, position level, and length of service, which can significantly impact employee retention.

4.2.2 Discussion of themes and sub-themes

The study aimed to explore the optimal leadership style for talent retention within a faculty at a HEI. The themes, subthemes and categories that emerged from the study are discussed in the following section and are presented in Table 4.2 to Table 4.5.

Table 4.2: Summary of theme 1: Reasons why academics leave the organisation

Theme 1: Reasons why academics leave the organisation (cf. 4.2.3)		
Subtheme 1.1: Current leadership style of managers contributes to academics wanting to leave their current job (cf. 4.2.3.1)	Subtheme 1.2: Current workplace environment contribute to academics wanting to leave their current job (cf. 4.2.3.2)	Subtheme 1.3: Current organisational culture contributes to academics wanting to leave their current job (cf. 4.2.3.3)
Categories		
• Unsupportive managers (cf. 4.2.3.1.1) • Making staff feel unworthy and demotivated (cf. 4.2.3.1.2) • Lack of recognition (cf. 4.2.3.1.3) • Unsympathetic manager (cf. 4.2.3.1.4) • Autocratic leadership style (cf. 4.2.3.1.5)	• Competitiveness (Better salaries, bonuses, and benefits at other organisations) (cf. 4.2.3.2.1) • Staff feel discouraged, not valued and not good enough (4.2.3.2.2) • No promotion or development opportunities (cf. 4.2.3.2.3) • Staff are overworked and experience job dissatisfaction (cf. 4.2.3.2.4) • Shortage of staff (cf. 4.2.3.2.5) • Overwhelming stress among academics (cf. 4.2.3.2.6)	• Unfair workload distribution (cf. 4.2.3.3.1) • High levels of favouritism (cf. 4.2.3.3.2) • Work politics causes a division between and gossiping amongst academics (cf. 4.2.3.3.3)

Source: Author's own.

4.2.3 Theme 1: Reasons why academics leave the organisation

The changing nature of academia has contributed to an increase in uncertain working conditions at many HEIs. A growing percentage of the academic workforce is seeking alternative employment opportunities in either other HEIs, the public sector or the corporate environment. Multiple factors have been outlined in the literature as motivations for the exodus of academics from the sector. The researcher has observed that the number of resignations in the higher education industry is increasing and that the impact of academic leadership and the workplace culture and climate at HEIs is a significant contributing factor. Within theme 1, three subthemes emerged that describe why academics intend to leave the organisation. Participants were asked what they considered the main reasons academic employees leave their positions to work at other HEIs or in the public sector. Figure 4.1 illustrates the identified subthemes that will be discussed in the subsequent section.

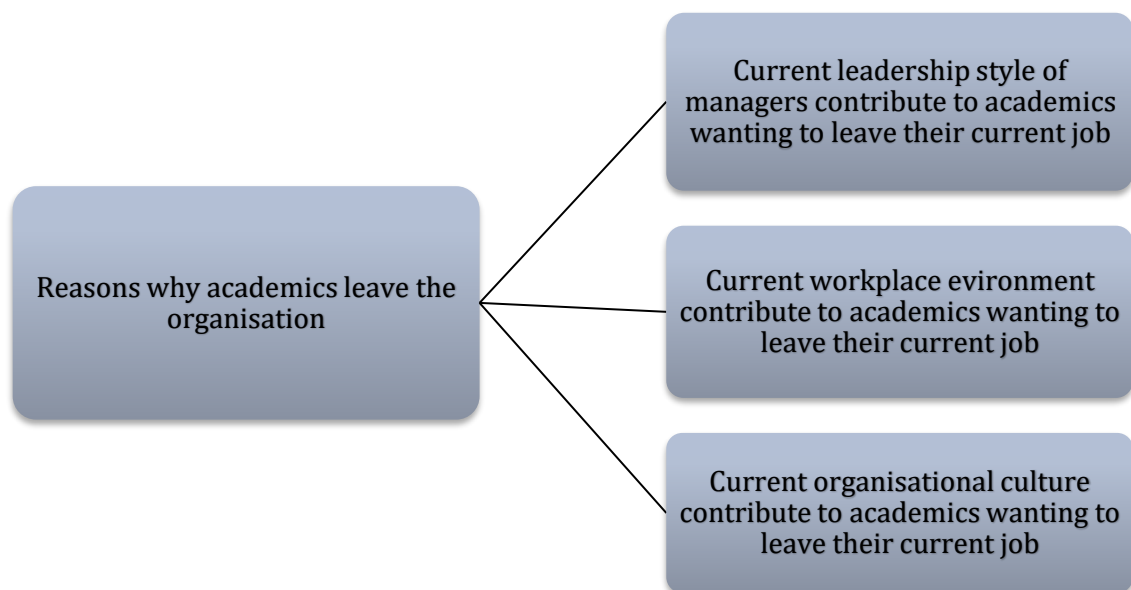


Figure 4.1: Theme 1 with subthemes

Source: Authors own.

4.2.3.1 Subtheme 1.1: Current leadership style of managers contributes to academics wanting to leave their current job

Leadership shapes an organisation's strategy, implementation, and efficacy by motivating individuals to exceed organisational targets, ultimately attaining the organisation's stated goals. Similarly, poor leadership styles influence whether

employees are loyal to their employer (Puni *et al.*, 2016:1). Subtheme 1.1 relates to managers' current leadership style that contributes to academics' turnover intention. The categories relating to this subtheme are discussed in the following section.

4.2.3.1.1 Unsupportive managers

Unsupportive managers result in disengaged and demotivated personnel, which can significantly impact employee turnover rates. Maaitah (2018:24-25) reported that leadership characteristics are seen as an important component that influences organisational commitment and directly impacts turnover intention.

Most participants indicated that the current leadership style of their manager contributes to them wanting to leave their current job. Three participants revealed that an unsupportive manager is one of the reasons why they would leave their current employment, as evidenced by the following quotations:

P2: "if you do not have a supportive manager, that's maybe a reason why academics leave".

P:3: "not being given support, you are not being understood; it makes it hard for you to stay within such an environment".

P8: "foremost reason is the lack of support systems".

It is imperative to recognise that ineffective leadership harms the rate of turnover. According to the findings of Dawson *et al.* (2014:2), a lack of leadership support leads to an increase in employees' intentions to leave their jobs and a decline in their performance. Therefore, by adopting the proper leadership and managerial styles consistent with the strategic initiatives, organisations can increase employee retention and performance and decrease turnover intention (Maaitah, 2018:25).

4.2.3.1.2 Making staff feel unworthy and demotivated

Low morale and demotivation at work can be attributed to various factors, which vary amongst individuals. Interactions between managers and their employees have been identified as one of the key contributors to low employee motivation. In addition, employees do not perform their best work since their efforts are not valued, and they receive no recognition for their efforts.

P2 and P4 indicated that managers who make their employees feel unworthy and demotivated would contribute to them wanting to leave their job. The direct excerpts of the participants are as follows:

P2: "I don't feel worthy enough".

P4: "There is no motivation to come to the office anymore".

According to Tran *et al.* (2020:3), turnover intentions can be reduced by building sound relationships between managers and employees and supporting employee motivation in the workplace. This can further be strengthened by Khan *et al.* (2016:124), that asserts that motivation and turnover intention has a significant relationship. The authors have emphasised the importance of employee motivation for attaining organisational commitment and the value of employee motivation for lowering turnover intentions.

4.2.3.1.3 Lack of recognition

Employee rewards and recognition have attracted much attention as a strategy for employee retention. Organisations strive to increase their employee's loyalty to the organisation and make their work environments more attractive by recognising employee successes and rewarding exceptional performance. The absence of recognition for work performed may induce insecurity in employees, which may result in excessive feelings of stress. This may lead to low morale, which is detrimental to the company.

A significant total of five participants noted that a lack of recognition from their managers would contribute to them wanting to leave their current job, as evidenced by the following verbatim quotations:

P2: "nobody recognises how you really try to keep the organisation's name high".

P3: "It's lack of recognition. If you don't get the credit for your outputs, it becomes frustrating".

P4: "I have never received recognition".

P7: "I don't get any recognition for my work".

P8: "for me would be the lack of recognition from the institution".

According to a study by Elstad and Vabo (2021:747), a lack of recognition in the workplace has a distinct and significant effect on employee turnover intention. Moreover, the authors found that employees who felt they were not valued strongly considered leaving their jobs. Formal methods of employee recognition include public acknowledgement of an employee's performance and offering incentives to high-performing employees. Employees that exhibit signs of job satisfaction and organisational commitment are frequently more likely to be employed by an organisation with well-organised employee recognition programs (Elstad & Vabo, 2021:747).

4.2.3.1.4 Unsympathetic manager

When attempting to balance work and family responsibilities, it is beneficial to have an understanding and sympathetic manager. The latter was particularly challenging during the COVID-19 pandemic when many people's work and personal lives overlapped. Employees value managers who show empathy for difficulties faced by employees as well as managers who are encouraging and understanding through trying times.

P3 indicated that an unsympathetic manager could also be a reason why academics would want to leave the organisation.

P3: "most of the time, she is not sympathetic".

According to Barcan (2019:181), leaders are guided by their personal qualities and relationships with employees, through which they acquire support and sympathy. Detachment occurs between leaders and employees because of unsympathetic behaviour. Therefore, these characteristics and interactions have a profound effect on employee retention.

4.2.3.1.5 Autocratic leadership style

There is often no opportunity for flexible decision-making under autocratic leadership, and autocratic leaders unknowingly make their employees unhappy by denying them autonomy. There is no collaboration between managers and employees under autocratic leadership, which challenges rule acceptance. In many instances,

employees do not perceive the necessity of meeting their managers' expectations. Managers that include their employees in the decision-making process, therefore, increase employee buy-in for required activities. An autocratic leadership style has numerous adverse implications, including employee dissatisfaction, the suppression of group interests, and increased turnover rates.

Two participants revealed that the autocratic leadership style contributes to academics wanting to leave their current employment. The direct quotations of the participants are as follows:

P6: "Leadership should not be controlling, like the autocratic leadership style".

P7: "If your leader is rigid and not flexible, people will resign. I do not prefer an autocratic or laissez-fair leader, as that style comes with its own problems".

According to Puni *et al.* (2016:5), there is a substantial relationship between autocratic leadership style and turnover intentions. The result of the study suggests that the greater the perception of autocratic leadership styles among employees, the greater their intention to leave their positions. In addition, the authors noted that employees would consider alternative employment and leave an organisation if they were not included in the decision-making process, a characteristic of the autocratic leadership style.

4.2.3.2 Subtheme 1.2: Current workplace environment contribute to academics wanting to leave their current job

Subtheme 1.2 is based on the current workplace environment that contributes to the turnover intention of academics. Qureshi *et al.* (2013:766) state that one of the high turnover variables in the workplace is the organisation's working environment, which includes unsatisfactory workplace communication, the political atmosphere and the behaviour of colleagues and managers. High employee turnover intentions are also ascribed to unfavourable and poor working conditions. Poor and unattractive working conditions make employees lethargic and discouraged, which inhibits the organisation's overall success. Inadequate technology when working from home, unrealistic workloads, and a lack of leadership are some of the most prominent instances of poor working conditions.

Significantly, all the participants reported that their current workplace environment adds to their desire to leave their current position. Various factors that contribute to the latter were identified, and include industry competitiveness, employees feeling discouraged, no promotion or development opportunities, job dissatisfaction, a shortage of staff and the overwhelming stress amongst academics. The next section discusses the categories related to this subtheme.

4.2.3.2.1 Competitiveness

Employee reward systems influence turnover intentions (Akhtar *et al.*, 2016:660). The authors accentuate those factors such as remuneration packages, bonuses, and other benefits influence the intention to leave an organisation. In most industries, remuneration is negatively associated with the intention to leave. Employees are leaving their organisation because they can earn a higher salary elsewhere. Therefore, the intention to leave is greater among employees who value their compensation packages. This can be strengthened further by Bhatt and Sharma (2019:377), who found an important relationship between employee compensation and turnover intention. The significance of remuneration practices in any organisation is critical to gain a competitive advantage.

A notable total of six participants indicated that competitive-related factors, including better salaries, bonuses, and fringe benefits at other organisations, may contribute to them wanting to leave their current job, as evidenced by the following verbatim quotations:

P1: "If you look at other jobs at other institutions, you can see that the remuneration is much higher at different institutions".

P3: "The academic environment is very competitive. People will quit their jobs in an instant if they receive better salaries and benefits elsewhere".

P4: "Better employment opportunities".

P7: "The salary or wages, and the incentives or benefits they receive".

P8: "not receiving bonuses after you have worked so hard".

Bhatt and Sharma (2019:377) found that the influence of employee turnover rates can have unfavourable consequences for the organisation due to the highlighted reasons.

Therefore, organisations must prioritise the implementation of sound remuneration practices as one of the retention strategies, particularly for high-performing employees.

4.2.3.2.2 Staff feel discouraged, not being valued and not good enough

Employees in higher education institutions are unhappy due to restricted opportunities for growth and a lack of recognition for their efforts. This may result in tension and a demoralised workforce, which may increase absenteeism and stress-related illnesses. Additionally, employees may feel inadequate, which is detrimental to the outcomes of their daily operations.

Five participants pointed out that they feel discouraged, and a feeling of not being good enough and not being valued makes them want to quit their current positions. Furthermore, a lack of respect has also been highlighted as a reason for turnover intention. The direct excerpts of the participants are stated below.

P1: "Sometimes I feel valued, but other times I must say I do not feel valued".

P2: "If there is no encouragement and they do not think you are good enough, it will be negative, and that might be a reason why academics resign".

P4: "I also look for a job where I feel I can make a difference and a job where I find meaning in my work. Where I feel valued".

P7: "I am overworked, I feel burnout, and it seems as if no one notices or no one cares".

P8: "I will refer to a lack of respect. If there is no respect, you can feel undervalued as a lecturer".

Managers can play an essential role in fostering a respectful work environment by promoting a warm and supportive environment and a workplace where employees feel valued and respected (Nouri *et al.*, 2019:3). The study showed that a lack of managerial support is a barrier to developing a respectful work environment and that relationships that are built on trust and mutual respect can contribute to a positive workplace and thereby enhance employee retention rates.

4.2.3.2.3 No promotion or development opportunities

When employees find limited opportunities for progression at their current workplace, they frequently seek new employment elsewhere. When applications for promotions were first made available, a lot of employees submitted their applications, but only a select few were chosen for the positions. It was apparent that employees were disengaged and dissatisfied. It was also observed that promotion opportunities were unjust and that there were few opportunities for career growth within the organisation. These have a detrimental effect on employee morale.

Participants (P2, P4, P5 and P6) indicated an intention to leave due to a lack of and difficulty in applying for promotion and developmental opportunities, as stated in the following verbatim quotations:

P2: "I've been at this institution for many years, and with promotion, every year, promotion is made more difficult".

P4: "my leader does not develop people in our school. There is no transparency when it comes to opportunities".

P5: "If people are given the opportunity to grow at their organisation or for progression into a promotional position at your workplace, they will stay".

P6: "there is no progression in your career".

These statements are accentuated by the literature suggesting that individuals exposed to personal growth and opportunities for promotion are less likely to leave an organisation because they feel worthy and appreciated (Yuan *et al.*, 2016:446). The organisation will benefit from and see improved retention rates from developing an organisational plan for employee promotions.

4.2.3.2.4 Staff are overworked and experience job dissatisfaction

Job dissatisfaction can be attributed to a variety of professional and personal causes, including a lack of promotion opportunities, inadequate management, and a limited work-life balance. Throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, employees worked extremely long hours and faced numerous teaching and learning-related challenges. Even after the pandemic, employees are still expected to work long hours to compensate for the lost time. To comply with COVID-19 regulations, only a limited number of students

were permitted in class when students returned to campus. This required academics to lecture module content multiple times. In addition, these employees did not receive much support or assistance.

Two participants revealed that work overload and job dissatisfaction contribute to their wanting to leave the organisation. The following verbatim quotations evidence this:

P5: "if they are not satisfied in their jobs, they will leave the organisation, and you may also want to leave if you are overworked".

P7: "People are unsatisfied in their jobs because the work is too much".

According to Ramlawati *et al.* (2021:511), employee turnover can be caused by various factors, and job dissatisfaction has been the most reliable indicator. The authors emphasise that a loss of job satisfaction leads to thoughts of quitting their current positions, which might ultimately lead to the intention to quit. In addition, Rifin and Danaee (2022:13) discovered that burnout and work satisfaction were the only significant predictors of intent to leave. A correlation was shown between burnout and the intention to leave. This signifies that the higher the employee burnout, the greater their intention to quit. The findings of this study also revealed that moderate to high levels of employee burnout were experienced during the COVID-19 pandemic. In addition, many employees experienced a greater proportion of exhaustion burnout than disengagement. To decrease employee burnout, individual and organisational interventions to improve retention should be adopted for academics.

4.2.3.2.5 Shortage of staff

Staff shortages resonate with burnout and job dissatisfaction. In an environment where HEIs are experiencing a shortage of appropriately qualified employees, retaining the current workforce is more critical than ever. Several variables make it difficult for HEIs to recruit experienced and qualified employees. A contributing factor is the ageing of the workforce, as many of the older workers are retiring. Additionally, the younger workforce seeks flexibility to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Additionally, there is not enough funding to hire temporary employees to help with the excessive workloads.

Two participants stated that a staff shortage leads to work overload and that this may contribute to a stressful work environment that may lead to the intention to leave the organisation. P6 and P7 had the following to say about staff shortages:

P6: “to have resources that support your daily work, there are no skilled people that can assist you”.

P7: “there is a shortage of staff. Work overload causes people to become sick and have burnout”.

Staff shortages continue to be a concern for organisations, according to Creapeau *et al.* (2022:146), since these shortages can lead to burnout and attrition among existing employees, which impacts the retention of talented staff. When there is a staffing shortage, the duties and workloads of existing staff members increase, resulting in mistakes and other inefficiencies and detrimental to both individual performance and, ultimately, organisational performance.

4.2.3.2.6 Overwhelming stress among academics

The most prevalent drivers of stress for academics include high workloads, long working hours, a lack of resources, growing work demands, and employee conflict. These stressors have a negative effect on both the performance of employees and their morale in the workplace. Workplace stress can also contribute to mental and physical illness, putting further demand on the current workforce.

Participants (P6 and P8) stated that the overwhelming stress amongst academics might lead to an increased turnover intention. The direct excerpts of the participants are as follows:

P6: “The teaching and learning workload can also be overwhelming if you have too many modules”.

P8: “I will say this overwhelming stress amongst lecturers because there's always demands in the faculty to perform better and to take on more workload”.

The literature indicates that job stress emerges because of work-related pressures and job demands. The individual responses to these stressful situations may vary. As a

result, individuals may experience nervousness, chronic anxiety, an increase in emotional tension, and mental and physical changes (Ramlawati *et al.*, 2021:513). According to Akinmayowa and Kadiri (2014:74), work stress significantly impacts not just the performance and innovation of employees but also their health, well-being, and morale. The authors observed that stress is destructive not just to an individual's immediate emotional stability and behaviour but also to his or her long-term psychological health. An employee's productivity and overall performance at work could be negatively impacted by excessive workplace stress. These factors may result in negative perceptions within the workplace, which may increase employee turnover rates.

4.2.3.3 Subtheme 1.3: Current organisational culture contributes to academics wanting to leave their current job

The qualities, behaviours, and values characterising an organisation are known as its culture. Poor work culture is an organisation's atmosphere controlled by practices, policies, and leadership behaviours that foster harmful habits and conflict amongst groups. A negative organisation culture might lead to employee discontent and frustration, which drives individuals to seek alternative employment. In addition, negative organisational cultures also encourage unethical behaviour, which may destroy trust relationships within the organisation.

Subtheme 1.3 is concerned with the existing organisational culture, which contributes to academics' decision to leave. The next section discusses the categories related to this subtheme.

4.2.3.3.1 Unfair workload distribution

Workload refers to the amount of work assigned to a particular employee. Unfair workload distribution in HEIs may involve the allocation of academic modules and the number of postgraduate research students to lecturers. It was observed that some lecturers receive fewer academic modules and postgraduate research supervision than others, causing discontent among colleagues.

Three participants revealed that an unfair workload distribution contributes to their intention to leave their current positions. The verbatim quotations from the participants are provided below.

P1: "I think that the work distribution, the workload needs to be distributed more fairly".

P2: "The workload distribution should be according to the level of expertise".

P6: "I feel that work should be shared more equally, and the leaders should ensure that lecturers don't feel overwhelmed".

These statements are supported by the literature that states that workload is a crucial factor in employee productivity and turnover because, if the workload exceeds the typical workload, employees are likely to get overwhelmed. This will result in problems such as burnout, as well as negative feelings and unhappiness, ultimately causing individuals to leave their positions for less demanding ones (Inegbedion *et al.*, 2020:2). Moreover, Qureshi *et al.* (2013:232) indicated an association between workload, stress, and intention to leave the organisation. A substantial relationship was found between workload and stress, as well as stress and turnover. So the authors anticipate that stress will serve as a mediator between workload and turnover intentions (Qureshi *et al.*, 2013:232-234).

4.2.3.3.2 High levels of favouritism

Workplace favouritism arises when an individual in a position of authority, such as a manager, favours or gives preferential treatment to certain employees. Preferential treatment may cause a significant amount of unhappiness in the workplace, which leads to gossiping and a low level of employee morale. Furthermore, preferential treatment promotes a feeling of mistrust among colleagues.

According to three participants, high levels of favouritism influence an organisation's culture that is not conducive to the retention of academics. The participants' direct excerpts are as follows:

P2: "There is also a high level of favouritism which is not good for employees' morale".

P4: "There is favouritism like I was explaining. A certain group of colleagues always favour each other, and the managers also favour them".

P7: "There is favouritism here, and it makes you feel discouraged".

In the literature, favouritism is frequently referred to as preferential treatment. Iqbal (2016:486) asserts that favouritism exists at all organisational levels. Favouritism is the practice of showing someone favour based on personal bias. Favouritism and other forms of organisational corruption negatively impact employees' intentions to leave their employment. According to research, when preferential treatment is thoroughly ingrained in an organisation, it negatively influences the intention to leave, and it causes a sense of discouragement in employees (Iqbal, 2016:487-488).

4.2.3.3.3 Work politics causes division between and gossiping among academics

Organisational politics depend on the organisation's environment since the atmosphere facilitates political activities and favouritism. Organisational politics is the informal means by which employees seek authority by merit or luck. It is a social process in which individuals try to gain and maximise self-interest. Sometimes, employees engage in silent politics and gossiping within a company to satisfy personal interests. Spreading rumours exacerbates the situation of mistrust, which in turn can have a harmful effect on job satisfaction.

Ahmed (2018:14) stated that employees involved in organisational politics respond in two ways: absenteeism and employee turnover. Moreover, the author asserts that poor autonomy and an increase in tasks add to an individual's weakness, which increases organisational politics (Ahmed, 2018:15). The following participants' quotes support these statements.

P4: "There are a lot of work politics when it comes to this department. There's always been this division between people".

P6: "the main thing that bothers me is the gossiping within the school, and my leader entertains it".

P7: "She listens to other people and will just act on what other people are saying instead of finding the facts".

According to Ahmed (2018:16), organisational politics creates a lack of trust within the organisation. Moreover, Tan *et al.* (2020:3) assert that workplace gossip is linked to poor psychological health. The authors believe that the perceived prevalence of work-related gossip is a negative element that reduces individuals' psychological well-being, as well as employees' incapacity to develop strong emotional ties or trusting relationships with their managers and co-workers, which could lead to high turnover intentions.

4.2.3.4 Summary of theme 1

In theme 1, it is evident that individuals expressed a desire to leave their current work due to various factors relating to their manager's current leadership style, their current work environment, and the organisational culture. The primary categories that emerged from theme 1 are a lack of recognition, competitiveness, which includes improved compensation packages, employees feeling discouraged and undervalued, and a lack of appreciation. In addition, a lack of development and promotion opportunities was listed as a significant factor in academics' intention to leave the organisation. Finally, favouritism and workplace gossip have been identified as reasons why academics will leave their current jobs.

Table 4.3: Summary of theme 2: Factors that prevent academics from leaving the organisation

Theme 2: Factors that prevent academics from leaving the organisation (cf. 4.2.4)		
Subtheme 2.1: Preferred leadership style (cf. 4.2.4.1)	Subtheme 2.2: Conducive working conditions (4.2.4.2)	Subtheme 2.3: Development opportunities for academics (cf. 4.2.4.3)
Categories		
• Democratic, participative, and charismatic leadership style (cf.4.2.4.1.1) ✓ Foster participation ✓ Open relationship ✓ Increase flexibility ✓ Shared decision-making ✓ Create a sense of belonging ✓ Acknowledge the viewpoint of staff ✓ Good communication and listening skills • Transformational leadership style (cf. 4.2.4.1.2) ✓ Lead by example ✓ Inspiring your staff ✓ Encourage life-long learning	• Create a trusting environment (cf. 4.2.4.2.1) • Encourage autonomy in decision-making (cf. 4.2.4.2.2) • Instil feelings of inclusiveness (cf. 4.2.4.2.3)	• Provide opportunities for career development (growth, study further) (cf. 4.2.4.3.1) • Provide financial support to attend conferences (information sharing) (cf. 4.2.4.3.2)

Source: Author's own.

4.2.4 Theme 2: Factors that prevent academics from leaving the organisation

Several factors need to be in place to discourage academics from leaving an organisation. These factors include effective leadership practices, the implementation of favourable leadership styles, factors that contribute to a conducive working environment, and various development opportunities for employees. The increasing prevalence of turnover among academic employees from HEIs could lead to inefficiency in the profession. Academics are valuable human resources that must be nurtured, cared for, and retained for HEIs to operate efficiently (Pieters *et al.*, 2022).

Three subthemes which describe the factors that can assist in the retention of academics within an organisation surfaced within theme 2. The participants were asked what leadership qualities or characteristics they consider important for retaining academic employees in the faculty. They were also asked if their current manager's leadership style influenced their decision to stay with the organisation. The subthemes that will be discussed in the next section are depicted in Figure 4.2.

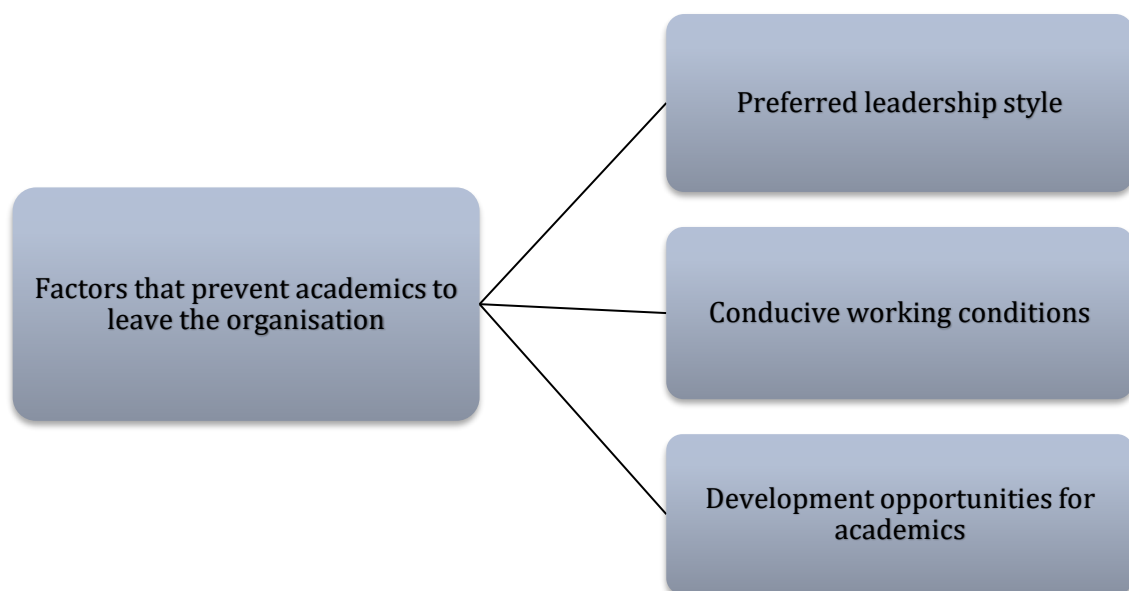


Figure 4.2: Theme 2 with subthemes

Source: Author's own.

4.2.4.1 Subtheme 2.1: Preferred leadership style

Subtheme 2.1 refers to the leadership style preferred by the employees. The responsibility for an organisation's success in achieving its goals and objectives rests on its leaders and their leadership behaviour. In other words, leadership must create activities to inspire employees and establish roles for an individual or group towards goal achievement. The style is the pattern of behaviour that defines a leader's approach to organisational problems. Numerous distinct styles can be identified among diverse leaders. Every style has its own set of positive and negative characteristics (Maaitah, 2018:24).

The categories associated with the preferred leadership style are addressed in the following section.

4.2.4.1.1 Democratic, participative, and charismatic leadership

Employer commitment and work satisfaction are two outcomes that effective leadership strategies can positively influence. One of the most important responsibilities of leadership is to create a work atmosphere that will attract employees to the organisation. It also involves persuading these individuals to remain with the organisation despite the availability of alternative employment possibilities (Wakabi, 2016:415). Wakabi (2016:415) emphasised the importance of leadership and supervision in retaining employees.

A total of three participants indicated that a democratic and participative leadership style would promote academic retention within the organisation, as evidenced by the following verbatim quotations:

P2: "I like a democratic leader and a leader who fosters participation. I feel everybody's input is important".

P6: "more of a democratic style where decision-making is shared. They should be guided, and they should communicate clearly. They should also encourage participation. They should allow employees to share their ideas, and they should make one feel at home, sort of creating a sense of belonging".

P7: "we need leaders who will be understanding and flexible".

The democratic leadership approach is often referred to as participative leadership. It is a style of leadership that encourages employee participation in the decision-making process within an organisation. A democratic leader shares decision-making and problem-solving responsibilities with their employees and informs them of anything that impacts their work. A participatory leader is a leader who encourages the participation of employees in problem-solving and decision-making for ongoing operational matters. Prior to making decisions, the leader will solicit the staff's ideas, suggestions, and comments (Nwokocha & Iheriohanma, 2015:190). The latter is supported by Olayisade and Awolusi (2021:50), who argue that participative leadership fosters innovation and creativity by allowing every team member to contribute to decision-making, which facilitates the adoption and implementation of decisions made.

Two participants emphasised that a charismatic leadership style would impact their decision to remain with the organisation, as evidenced by the following participant quotations.

P3: "So, I would say a democratic, a participative and charismatic leadership style".

P5: "I would prefer charismatic leadership. A leader who doesn't force things on people. You know, a leader who gets people's views and considers those views before taking decisions. Charismatic leaders have good communication skills, and they listen to their employees".

These statements are supported by the literature that notes that the charismatic leadership style focuses on attracting followers by means of the leader's personality and conduct. This results in increased dedication to the leader's mission and increased follower output (Olayisade & Awolusi, 2015:50). According to the authors, charismatic leaders have a high level of emotional intelligence, are extremely self-confident, and have a strong dedication to organisational strategies. Similarly, Masood Mir *et al.* (2019:37) discovered a significant relationship between charismatic leadership style and employee retention. According to the author, charismatic leadership is both a talent and a process that motivates followers to feel a sense of belonging, and this leadership style improves retention in organisations.

4.2.4.1.2 Transformational leadership

Employees place a high value on leaders who are willing to accept responsibility, are receptive to novel and original ideas, and provide employees with the latitude to develop their own work habits and the ability to be creative in their work. Transformational leadership centres itself on current challenges, establish new benchmarks, fosters awareness, and encourages and influences the behaviour of subordinates to effectively achieve organisational goals.

Three participants reported that they prefer a transformational leadership approach in the organisation. The verbatim quotations of the participants are as follows:

P4: "Leading by example and inspiring colleagues also resonates with the transformational leadership style".

P7: "she leads by example, and you value her leadership. If my leader follows a transformational leadership style and she inspires me, then I might stay at the institution".

P8: "displays qualities of a transformational leader. She encourages intellectual stimulation and life-long learning. She motivates me into continuous learning".

All three participants indicated that leading by example is a significant retention driver. P7 noted that a leader who inspires them would motivate them to stay at the institution, as indicated by the preceding statement. In addition, P8 stated that a transformational leader encourages intellectual stimulation and life-long learning. These statements are supported by the literature that posits that transformational leaders are individuals with inspirational qualities. Transformational leadership also focuses on the ability to discover the potential in followers and shows leaders how to encourage and motivate subordinates to reach their maximum potential (Arokiasamy & Tat, 2020:857).

These leaders motivate their subordinates to exceed their abilities and capabilities to attain organisational objectives (Tian *et al.*, 2020:3). Tian *et al.* (2020:7-8) confirm that the ability of leaders to define a compelling vision, the ability to express confidence in achieving objectives, new perspectives on issue solutions, and investing time on the training and development of the team, have a significant impact on employee retention. Therefore, it may be inferred that transformative leaders can assist in promoting

employee retention (Yamin, 2020:316). According to Tian *et al.* (2020:3), the role of every manager in a company is to be a leader, not just a manager.

4.2.4.2 Subtheme 2.2: Conducive working conditions

A conducive work environment is essential to retention. Workplaces that promote trust, shared purpose, cooperation, safety, moral principles, responsibility, and equity have been shown to be conducive environments. In addition, environments that promote clear and transparent communication, as well as healthy working relationships, are thought to be beneficial to productivity. Concerning developments in the HE industry include a growth in the number of HEIs, an inadequate supply of skilled employees, and the lack of a conducive working environment. Consequently, the HE sector has been confronted with a great deal of concern and recurring challenges. It has been reported that there are issues concerning internal governance and vulnerability, favouritism, and unsatisfactory working conditions (Torsabo & Ezekiel, 2021:350).

Subtheme 2.2 is concerned with favourable working conditions. According to Hanai (2021:43), the work environment consists of all physical, psychological, and social factors that influence the physique and mind of an employee. In addition, the work environment includes the workplace's physical, psychosocial, and organisational characteristics. Following is a discussion of the categories relevant to this subtheme.

4.2.4.2.1 Creating a trusting environment

The development of trusting relationships between all members of a team and management is essential to the success of an organisation. When there is trust in the workplace, it indicates a culture of honesty, psychological safety, and mutual respect among the staff members and management. A culture of trust in the workplace makes it easier for workers to feel comfortable in their positions, which in turn lowers employee turnover rates. Additionally, trust in the workplace helps people feel safe in their positions, which minimises turnover.

P4 stated that the workplace should foster trust and positivity to promote academic retention. This statement is supported by the following direct quote:

P4: “There should be a positive atmosphere when it comes to the workplace environment”.

A lack of trust in the workplace environment can have significant repercussions on employee productivity, engagement, and, ultimately, retention (Hanai, 2021:43). This notion is also supported by Bibi *et al.* (2018:116), who identified a significant relationship between trust in the workplace and retention.

4.2.4.2.2 Encourage autonomy in decision-making

When it comes to decision-making, employees place high importance on autonomy, particularly when it comes to decisions that affect their own work. Employees are left feeling dissatisfied because there are few opportunities for flexible decision-making within the organisation, depriving them of the autonomy required to do their work effectively. Some employees prefer working independently and making decisions independently since they are aware of their strengths and weaknesses.

According to P5, autonomy in decision-making is important and should be encouraged, as is seen from the following quotation:

P5: “I would like some autonomy when it comes to decision-making in my own work. Then, I also think a leader should grant you the opportunity to grow”.

Based on the recent literature of Kossivi *et al.* (21:264), autonomy is described as the ability to determine how to perform one’s personal work, exert influence over one’s work, and have freedom in making work-related decisions. The author implies that autonomy influences employee intentions to remain with the organisation, thereby influencing employee retention.

4.2.4.2.3 Instil feelings of inclusiveness

Every human being has an innate need to feel a sense of belonging, both in their personal and professional lives. An inclusive workplace is one in which individuals with a wide variety of differences experience a sense of belonging and are recognised and appreciated for their contributions. When employees do not see that their ideas,

presence, or contributions are respected or taken seriously by their employer, they will eventually leave the organisation.

According to P6, fostering an inclusive culture within the organisation has a direct impact on the working environment, as indicated by the following verbatim quotation:

P6: "Also, the university should instil a feeling of inclusiveness".

Inclusivity can be described as the extent to which employees perceive themselves as productive members of a work group by receiving treatment that satisfies their desire for belongingness and individuality (Lauring & Jonasson, 2022:2). Cultivating a sense of belonging and being treated as a respected and important group member, have been highlighted as central components in attaining inclusion and have significantly contributed to improving well-being and retention (Lauring & Jonasson, 2022:1).

4.2.4.3 Subtheme 2.3: Development opportunities for academics

Employees can acquire skills and remain current with the most recent developments in their industries through the process of professional development. Employees' confidence can be strengthened through acquiring professional development opportunities. A higher level of self-assurance can, in turn, lead to increased levels of overall job satisfaction, staff performance, overall productivity, and general morale. Training and development are a human resource management approach that assists organisations in gaining a competitive advantage by referring to the number of training individuals receive to develop their abilities within the organisation (Bibi *et al.*, 2018:115). Academic career development opportunities are the focus of subtheme 2.3.

The next section discusses the categories associated with this subtheme.

4.2.4.3.1 Provide opportunities for career development

The process of enhancing one's capabilities and making progress along a chosen career path is referred to as career development. An employee's journey toward their ideal work, set of skills, and environment should be viewed as a continuous process of learning new things and making decisions. Employees tend to remain with their employers for longer periods of time if they can advance in their careers. Suppose

most individuals have the goal of progressing in their professions, but their employer does not afford them the possibility for career growth. In that case, these individuals are likely to leave their job as soon as a better opportunity presents itself.

According to P2 and P4, providing academics with opportunities for professional development and professional growth will prevent them from leaving the organisation. The participants' direct quotations are presented below.

P2: “you should give your people opportunities, opportunities to develop themselves. So, you don’t get a chance to save money to attend the conferences”.

P4: “opportunities for growth and opportunities to study further. The organisation can offer more financial assistance when it comes to studying”.

Personal and professional development is a determinant of employee retention, and opportunities for growth strengthen employees' willingness to stay within the organisation. Kossivi *et al.* (2021:262) also identified promotion and opportunities for career development as significant factors in employees' decisions to leave or remain within an organisation. They went on to identify influential factors regarding career growth opportunities, such as succession planning and internal promotions. Therefore, it can be concluded that retention is high when employee training and development are discouraged (Kossivi *et al.*, 2021:262).

4.2.4.3.2 Provide financial support to attend conferences (information sharing)

HEIs need to offer some form of financial assistance for research purposes. It is acknowledged that there are limited opportunities for funding research projects, particularly for younger academics just starting their careers within the organisation. This results in stagnant research, which is particularly difficult for novice researchers. A lack of guidance from more experienced colleagues is another factor that contributes to the latter.

Four participants indicated that the provision of financial support for research initiatives, such as conference attendance and funding for research initiatives and workshops, will contribute to a conducive working environment. This is evident in the following participant quotes.

P5: “allowing staff to attend conferences and contributing financially”.

P6: “Academics should be allowed to pursue their goals. And they should be supported in that aspect. Support in terms of attending conferences”.

P7: “training opportunities, even for going overseas for conferences or going to workshops. They should try to empower everybody to be able to attend these types of training”.

P8: “There is not always money available for you to go to workshops or conferences”.

Bibi *et al.* (2018:116-117) suggest that supervisory and research support consistently have a positive relationship with the commitment and retention of employees. Moreover, according to Kehoe *et al.* (2022:3), early exposure to research activities is the main factor influencing the decision to pursue and maintain a career in academia. Although costly, attending conferences and the willingness to share information at research conferences and workshops can be encouraging and improve the academic experience in certain research focus areas.

4.2.4.4 Summary of theme 2

The second theme highlights the fact that factors like leadership styles, a conducive work environment, and development opportunities for academics will promote employee retention at the organisation. The democratic, participatory, charismatic, and transformational leadership styles have been identified as the primary drivers for increased retention in subtheme 2.1. Evidently, the cultivation of a trustworthy work environment, autonomy in decision-making, and instilling a sense of belonging all contribute to a conducive work environment. Lastly, several academics noted that professional development and research-related activities are pivotal retention factors.

Table 4.4: Summary of theme 3: Talent retention of academics in an organisation

Theme 3: Talent retention of academics in an organisation (cf. 4.2.5)	
Subtheme 3.1: Leadership qualities and characteristics needed for talent retention of academics (cf. 4.2.5.1)	Subtheme 3.2: Talent management strategies needed to successfully retain academics (cf. 4.2.5.2)
Categories	
• Demonstrate fairness (cf. 4.2.5.1.1) • Give recognition for and acknowledge work done (cf. 4.2.5.1.2) • Be hard-working, positive and innovative (cf. 4.2.5.1.3) • Trust and respect staff (cf. 4.2.5.1.4) • Motivate, inspire, and empower staff (cf. 4.2.5.1.5) • Trustworthy, honest, transparent, and reliable (cf. 4.2.5.1.6) • Create a sense of belonging (cf. 4.2.5.1.7) • Display integrity (cf. 4.2.5.1.8)	• Better remuneration, incentives, and bonuses (cf. 4.2.5.2.1) • Team building workshops to improve the morale of staff members (cf. 4.2.5.2.2) • Mentoring programmes (cf. 4.2.5.2.3) • Support for research development and outputs; and fair distribution of resources for research (cf. 4.2.5.2.4) • Rewards systems (cf. 4.2.5.2.5) • Implement leadership development courses (cf. 4.2.5.2.6)

Source: Author's own.

4.2.5 Theme 3: Talent retention of academics in an organisation

While it is essential for organisations to attract and retain talented employees through the employment process, it is even more essential to develop strategies for retaining their talented people. Retention of human resources refers to the efforts made to retain employees and reduce voluntary turnover. Therefore, the primary objective of employee retention is to keep talented workers from leaving the organisation, as their resignation could have negative consequences on productivity and organisational performance (Wakabi, 2016:412). The retention of talented employees not only increases productivity but also encourages higher levels of employee engagement, which eventually results in an improvement in organisational success.

Within theme 3, two subthemes emerged that recognise the organisational aspects that would increase academic talent retention. The subthemes pertain to the leadership characteristics and qualities necessary for talent retention, as well as the talent management strategies that must be implemented to successfully retain academics within the organisation. Participants were asked what leadership qualities or characteristics they believe are essential for the talent retention of academic employees within the faculty, as well as what talent management strategies they think can be successfully implemented to improve the talent retention of academics within the faculty. The subthemes that will be discussed in the next section are shown in Figure 4.3.

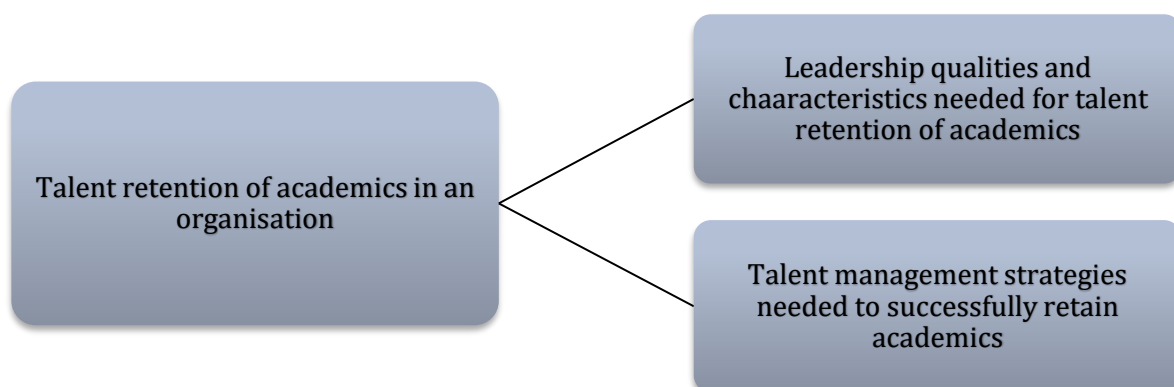


Figure 4.3: Theme 3 with subthemes

Source: Author's own.

4.2.5.1 Subtheme 3.1: Leadership qualities and characteristics needed for talent retention of academics

A high-performing workplace, which supports employee engagement and retention, may be created and maintained with the assistance of effective leaders, which is an advantage to organisations. Several different leadership attributes influence the latter. These may include leaders who are trustworthy, honest, and dependable, in addition to leaders who are creative and innovative. Mey *et al.* (2021:2) emphasise that leaders play an integral role in retaining talent. To develop leadership abilities that match the needs of the HE industry workforce and consequently improve talent retention, it is important to fully understand the leadership behaviours and qualities that academic employees value.

The categories affiliated with this theme are addressed in the next section.

4.2.5.1.1 Demonstrate fairness

Being fair to others is one of the essential qualities of a good leader. A trustworthy, open-minded, honest, and thoughtful leader is one who shows consideration for their employees. Fostering an atmosphere of fairness in the workplace can help cultivate a positive and productive environment for all individuals. Employees are more inclined to trust and depend on leaders who display fairness since these leaders are more approachable. In addition, fairness strengthens loyalty and confidence in leaders.

The following remarks were expressed by participants on displaying fairness as a leadership attribute.

P1: “a leader that's fair”.

P3: “Equally fair treatment for all would do”.

P7: “leaders should be fair. I can just say someone who always appreciates you and who will give you opportunities if opportunities should become available”.

Organisational fairness is a key concern when it comes to working with employees; therefore, demonstrating this attribute is essential. The above entails listening to employees' opinions, communicating clearly and honestly with them, and making fair judgments regarding all individuals (Isiramen, 2021:14). It is highly unlikely that the

employees will trust their leaders if fairness procedures are not followed, and these will result in an intention to leave. Therefore, to retain talent within the organisation, leaders must act ethically and treat all employees fairly.

4.2.5.1.2 Give recognition for and acknowledge work done

Employee recognition is the practice of showing appreciation to employees for contributing significantly to an organisation. The purpose of employee recognition in the workplace aims to promote specific behaviours, practices, or actions that result in improved performance and beneficial outcomes for the institution. The recognition of employees is an important factor in retaining employees since it increases job satisfaction and commitment to the organisation.

The following excerpts from P1 and P2 highlight how leaders who give recognition and acknowledge work done by employees will increase retention.

P1: "You know, giving recognition where it's due and reprimanding where it's needed".

P2: "It's important that people should receive recognition for their work".

According to Mngomezulu *et al.* (2015:372), employee recognition is important for any organisation and is related to a range of favourable outcomes. According to the authors, this approach will lead to satisfied and enthusiastic employees, who will consequently be more committed to the organisation, improving the retention of talented employees.

4.2.5.1.3 Be hardworking, positive, and innovative

The advantages of being a hard worker and being positive produce a strong feeling of competence and awareness in employees. This indicates that they are cognisant of the fact that they are performing their duties to the very best of their abilities. This is an advantage that can assist employees in feeling more confident in their work. As a result, employees are aware that they are having a positive effect not only on their professional life but also on their personal life, in addition to contributing to the attainment of the goals and objectives of their organisation.

Two participants revealed that hardworking, positive, and innovative leaders would improve the retention of talented employees. The verbatim quotations from the participants are provided below.

P1: "I would hope that she's also hard working. Must be positive and have a positive influence".

P4: "Leaders should also be innovative in the workplace environment".

Kossivi *et al.* (2021:262-264) emphasised that a leader should work diligently and maintain a positive attitude. This will have a favourable effect on retention. In addition, innovative leaders align with the transformational leadership style that assists in improving talent retention.

4.2.5.1.4 Trust and respect staff

Individuals must demonstrate a high level of trust and respect for one another for their relationships to be effective and sustainable. The act of trusting another individual frequently leads to the individual becoming more courageous and vulnerable. Many approaches may be adopted to cultivate a long-term relationship based on trust between a company's leaders and its employees. These include demonstrating concern for employees, keeping promises made to them, providing assistance when needed, and successfully communicating with them. Leaders who cultivate a trusting relationship with their organisation will protect their employees and refrain from intentionally harming them.

Among leadership qualities, trust and respect are key factors in talent retention, according to a significant total of 6 participants. This is evident in the following participant quotes.

P2: "There should be a relationship of trust with employees, and they should feel safe with that person".

P3: "should be able to trust them".

P4: "they need to trust their employees and their employees need to be able to trust them".

P6: "a leader who is supportive and who trusts me with my tasks".

P7: “should also be someone that you can trust”.

P8: “creates a culture of trust, respect, and openness. Leaders should also be professional”.

According to Kariuki *et al.* (2022:54), a relationship between a leader and their employees develops over time. It is based on a personal understanding between the two, resulting in a relationship of mutual trust and respect. The researchers noted that employees who had positive relationships with their managers felt valued and were so satisfied that they were more likely to remain with their organisation. Conversely, employees with conflicted relationships with their managers felt less appreciated and more likely to leave the organisation. The ability of a leader to cultivate trust has been found to be directly related to the perception of that leader's effectiveness in overcoming challenges (Norman *et al.*, 2010:351).

4.2.5.1.5 Motivate, inspire, and empower staff

For employees to yield beneficial results for their organisation, leaders need to focus intensively on inspiring and motivating their employees. These characteristics are aligned with a transformative leadership approach. Such leaders look for ways to improve the potential of their staff members by training them, challenging them, and providing them with possibilities for further growth and development in their careers. There are a significant number of leaders that have the ability to inspire their personnel with enthusiasm. However, there are only a handful of leaders who demonstrate passion in their activities. These characteristics distinguish an exceptional leader from an average one.

According to P1 and P7, a leader who motivates inspires, and empowers employees will increase talent retention within the organisation. The direct quotations of the participants are as follows:

P1: “a leader is positive and motivates the staff”.

P7: “The leader should be someone who is empowering. It should be someone that is open, someone to whom you can easily go to and talk with”.

The transformational style of leadership inspires and motivates followers. These leaders formulate an aspirational vision and express it to their employees. Moreover, these leaders inspire intellectual followers and employ charismatic leadership with a range of expertise and self-promotional personality (Barcan, 2019:184). Kariuki *et al.* (2022:64) found that there is a substantial relationship between transformational leadership and employee retention. The authors revealed a significant and positive impact of inspirational motivation on employee performance. The findings support the tenets of transformational leadership, as these leaders can influence followers to outperform their expectations (Kariuki *et al.*, 2022:65).

4.2.5.1.6 Trustworthy, honest, transparent, and reliable

Good leaders accept responsibility for their actions, inspire the best in their employees, interact effectively, are trustworthy, have strong interpersonal skills, and have an ongoing interest in their employees' personal growth. The lack of trust between leaders and employees is detrimental to retention. Further, employees admire leaders whose actions and decision-making processes are transparent. This will ensure that employees perceive their leaders as trustworthy.

Participants reported that leaders should be trustworthy, honest, transparent, and reliable to ensure talent retention of academics, as evidenced by the following verbatim quotations:

P2: "a leader that is trustworthy and reliable".

P4: "it would be honesty, trustworthiness, empathy, and clear communication".

P5: "I want a manager who is transparent".

According to Norman *et al.* (2010:352), communication openness is the sending and receiving information by managers, employees, and colleagues regarding the task, personal, and innovative topics. Open communication would encompass both the leader and his or her followers in terms of how they exchange information and the honesty and transparency of their respective relationships. Thus, communication transparency has been found to be positively associated with higher levels of organisational success and employee work satisfaction, which has a beneficial effect

on employee retention. The characteristics mentioned above also resonate with the authentic leadership approach as described by Zeb *et al.* (2020:301).

4.2.5.1.7 Create a sense of belonging

As previously noted, every individual desires a sense of belonging or belonging within a group or organisation. Developing a feeling of inclusiveness in the workplace increases employee productivity and performance. Developing a feeling of belonging within an organisation is consistent with democratic, participative, and charismatic leadership styles. Moreover, by developing a sense of inclusiveness, leaders will build the organisation's climate and culture, leading to increased productivity and job satisfaction.

According to the following verbatim quotations from P2 and P6, leaders need to foster a sense of belonging within the organisation.

P2: "The sense of belonging must be given to everybody".

P6: "a leader should create a sense of belonging".

According to Masood Mir *et al.* (2019:37), the charismatic leadership style has been proven to inspire employees and foster a sense of belonging within the organisation. Moreover, employees value a work environment in which leaders are approachable and accessible and where they build an atmosphere in which employees feel included and valued (Mamun & Hasan, 2017:65).

4.2.5.1.8 Display integrity

Integrity refers to the attribute of being truthful and maintaining strong moral principles. Integrity is valuing honesty, accepting responsibility and accountability for one's actions, respecting oneself and others, and expressing gratitude when necessary. Integrity-displaying leaders contribute to an organisation's positive culture by acting in accordance with its guiding principles. Leaders can improve their organisation's image and earn the respect of their employees by considering the attributes associated with integrity and learning how to implement them.

Two participants responded that leaders should demonstrate honesty and integrity during decision-making. The direct excerpts of the participants are stated below.

P6: “leaders should be honest, and they should display integrity in all decisions they make”.

P8: “a leader must ensure that he or she has integrity”.

Nangoli *et al.* (2020:825) define perceived leadership integrity as employees' perceptions of the consistency between managers' words and actions regarding organisational operations. The authors observed that the perception of leadership integrity has a favourable and significant impact on organisational commitment, which influences the intention of employees to stay within the organisation.

4.2.5.2 Subtheme 3.2: Talent management strategies needed to successfully retain academics

Subtheme 3.2 relates to the talent management strategies needed to successfully retain academics within the organisation. Participants were asked what talent management strategies they think can successfully be employed to improve the talent retention of academics within the faculty.

Talent management can be defined as the processes that are strategically focused and designed to manage employees with unique qualities. Talent Management focuses on developing and effectively applying an organisational strategy to effectively deploy the talent pool to ensure a continual supply of talented employees to achieve organisational objectives (Ansar & Baloch, 2018:182-183).

4.2.5.2.1 Better remuneration, incentives and bonuses

Remuneration, incentives, and bonuses emerged strongly as important contributors to turnover intention in the HEIs in relation to subtheme 1.2, which concerns competitiveness as a contributing factor in turnover intention. Since employees are constantly seeking better opportunities and benefits, the degree of remuneration and rewards that an organisation provides is one of the most important factors in the retention of its workforce. Due to the increase in pressures brought on by the volatile economy, it is imperative that organisations provide their employees with benefits that

will keep them engaged and assure job satisfaction. When employees feel appreciated, they are motivated to accomplish more and perform better, which is advantageous for the organisation.

P1 and P7 indicated that the offering of better remuneration packages, incentives and bonuses can be utilised as a talent management strategy within the organisation. The participants' direct quotations are presented below.

P1: “they need to look at the remuneration”.

P7: “the incentives, promotions and career growth are important for talent retention”.

According to Tiwari and Shrivastava (2013:7), remuneration and bonuses are linked to employee performance and the development of their competencies, which is directly related to talent retention. This is supported by Yousuf and Siddiqui's (2019:49) assertion that employee satisfaction with compensation significantly affects employee retention and may be used effectively as a talent management strategy.

4.2.5.2.2 Team building workshops to improve the morale of staff members

Numerous groups and divisions exist within the faculty and organisation. Working with a team is a leadership technique that entails engaging in several activities to increase the efficiency and production of the organisation's teams. Management must hold substantial knowledge, critical thinking, and keen observation to build a powerful and capable team. The achievement of the organisation's vision and objectives is a significant motivator for team-building activities. Teambuilding's benefits include improved communication and collaboration among employees and organisations, as well as the establishment of meaningful boundaries and trust.

As highlighted by the following quote, one participant suggested that team-building workshops or activities can be utilised as a talent management strategy since it improves employee morale.

P2: “I think interactive fun and type of workshops on team building, for instance, where everybody can bond by doing things to build teamwork. Team building will improve the morale of staff members”.

A study by Marinakou and Giousmpoglou (2019:3869) revealed that team spirit and team-building activities engage employees in social activities. Managers observed that these team-building events boost employees' loyalty and dedication to the organisation because it creates a sense of belonging and inclusivity, which may increase employee retention. The involvement of employees in charitable work and community projects may also be an element of these engagement activities; hence, this may be utilised as a talent management strategy.

4.2.5.2.3 Mentoring programmes

Traditionally, mentoring is a two-way, interactive interaction between a senior and younger employee for the development and professional growth of the mentee. In the workplace, the mentee is provided structural support from the mentor. Competent mentors set an example for their mentees, serve as sounding boards, and provide guidance to help them achieve their goals. In addition, the mentor-mentee relationship is based on mutual trust and respect, and the mentoring process provides guidance and direction. The mentor influences the mentee's personal and professional growth and development in the workplace.

According to P2 and P6, mentorship programs can be successfully implemented to retain academics within an organisation. The participants' direct quotations are presented below.

P2: “they should give mentoring”.

P6: “a leader should have mentoring and coaching characteristics. Academic should have mentoring programmes”.

According to Riccio (2010:34), coaching and mentoring are two organisational success factors that many leaders refer to since both enable objective feedback and direction. While coaching programs aim to improve the individual's job-related skills, mentoring seeks to promote the individual's personal and professional growth in its entirety. Therefore, it is essential to consider both while developing talent management strategies.

4.2.5.2.4 Support for research development and outputs and fair distribution of resources for research

The support for research outputs and developments is consistent with the findings of subtheme 2.3, which showed that the organisation provides limited opportunities for research initiatives. As said, acquiring professional development possibilities, including research development and outputs, can reinforce employees' confidence. Therefore, it is imperative for HEIs to provide financial support for the growth, development, and outputs of research so that the younger generation of employees will have the opportunity to apply for promotions and progress in the field of academic research.

Three participants indicated that support for research development and research outputs could be adopted as a talent management strategy to retain academics. P2, P6 and P7 likewise indicated that leaders should be fair in distributing resources for research, as evidenced by the following verbatim quotations:

P2: "there should be more support for research outputs" and "be fair in distributing resources for research".

P6: "we are one university, and all of us should have access to the same resources and support".

P7: "they should be consistent in supporting staff with research".

According to Mousa and Ayoubi (2019:838), academic research is essential for developing academics and offering prospects for professional advancement and promotions. This category strongly resonates with subtheme 2.3, which indicates that training and development can assist organisations in retaining talent. Therefore, support for research purposes is pivotal for retaining talent within the organisation and can be employed as a strategy for talent management.

4.2.5.2.5 Rewards systems

Reward systems are an organisation's monetary and non-monetary benefits to its employees. As previously noted, employee reward systems influence turnover intentions and are, therefore, an essential talent management strategy. Reward systems may also involve assistance from the organisation for a variety of professional development opportunities and acknowledgement of work that was done. Good reward

systems keep employees motivated and improve organisational loyalty and dedication. Moreover, it ensures that employees remain motivated and continue to consistently provide quality work.

Two participants indicated that the implementation of reward systems for high performers would motivate staff and assist in the retention of talents within the organisation. Participants P3 and P7 had the following to say about rewards systems:

P3: “Managers need to recognise and reward their top performers. That will also motivate me to be better”.

P7: “put reward systems in place to motivate the staff”.

According to Mabaso *et al.* (2021:3), reward preferences are a factor in attracting high-performing personnel, as some employees are attracted to monetary benefits. It is essential to maintain a balance between the contributions an employee makes to the organisation and the rewards the organisation offers in exchange for those contributions. Consequently, rewards may be critical to an organisation's success and directly impact employee performance and retention, as stated in the section. The findings revealed that compensation packages, incentives, and reward systems affect the intention to leave an organisation.

4.2.5.2.6 Implement leadership development courses

Leadership development is the process of enhancing an individual's capacity to assume leadership roles within an organisation. Leadership development has been recognised as an effective retention strategy that supports organisations in achieving long-term success by attracting and maintaining academic talent. The latter enables employees to enhance their decision-making and communication abilities, as well as promote potential employees into leadership roles that are beneficial to the work environment and the organisation.

P4 indicated that the organisation could implement leadership development courses, as evident in the following verbatim quotation.

P4: “They need to implement leadership development courses so that they can manage and lead more effectively”.

According to Chami-Malaeb and Garavan (2013:4047), leadership development practices help leaders to gain the necessary skills and competencies for effective leadership roles. The authors note that common leadership development practices include coaching, mentoring, and formal development programs. Additionally, it was shown that organisations invest in leadership and talent development techniques to achieve a variety of goals, including increased competitiveness, job performance, talent retention, and the creation of talent pools (Chami-Malaeb & Garavan, 2013:4047-4048). Therefore, leadership development is an essential element of any talent management strategy that aims to successfully retain competent, skilled, and talented people.

4.2.5.3 Summary of theme 3

The third theme highlighted the leadership qualities and characteristics needed to maintain academic talent within the organisation and the talent management strategies required to retain academics successfully. Fairness, trust and respect, motivation, honesty, transparency, and integrity were the most prevalent leadership qualities that emerged from this theme. In addition, the organisation can use teambuilding, mentorship programs for the employees, research support, reward systems, and leadership development as talent management strategies.

Table 4.5: Summary of theme 4: Specific leadership characteristics or attributes needed to retain academics during a pandemic or times of uncertainty

Theme 4: Specific leadership characteristics or attributes needed to retain academics during a pandemic or times of uncertainty (COVID-19 pandemic) (cf. 4.2.6)
Subtheme 4.1: Leadership attributes to retain academics during a pandemic or times of uncertainty (COVID-19 pandemic) (cf. 4.2.6.1)
Categories
• Able to adapt to change and be flexible (cf. 4.2.6.1.1) • Improved communication (cf. 4.2.6.1.2) • Show care and compassion (cf. 4.2.6.1.3) • Provide more support and encouragement (cf. 4.2.6.1.4) • Display more empathy (cf. 4.2.6.1.5)

Source: Author's own.

4.2.6 Theme 4: Specific leadership characteristics or attributes needed to retain academics during a pandemic or times of uncertainty (COVID-19 pandemic)

Leaders in the HE industry and elsewhere were confronted with unprecedented challenges because of the COVID-19 pandemic. The implications of COVID-19 made it difficult for leaders to respond and induced panic among employees and other stakeholders. The primary task of the leader is to ensure that the team remains risk-free, cohesive, and productive in the face of uncertainty, as well as to keep members of the group oriented on the organisation's mission and priorities.

Within theme 4, one subtheme emerged that emphasises the specific leadership characteristics or attributes required to retain academics during a pandemic or in times of uncertainty, such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Participants were asked if they believed the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated unique leadership qualities from their managers and, if so, to name such attributes. Figure 4.4 depicts the subtheme that will be discussed in the subsequent section.

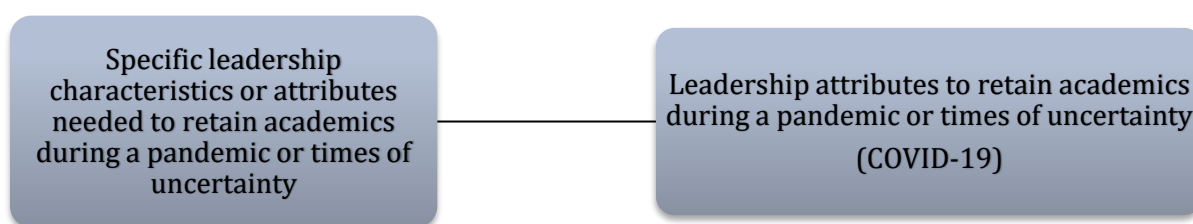


Figure 4.4: Theme 4 with subthemes

Source: Author's own.

4.2.6.1 Subtheme 4.1: Leadership attributes to retain academics during a pandemic or times of uncertainty (COVID-19 pandemic)

The COVID-19 pandemic has impacted the HE industry significantly. The vast majority of HEIs have faced numerous challenges, and HEIs have been urged to establish pandemic management strategies to ensure sustained operations (Khan, 2021:2). Leaders had to adopt novel strategies considering the pandemic, which forced them to reconsider how they engaged with their employees. During the pandemic, it became patently clear that some of the attributes that were required during this crisis were empathy, vulnerability, self-awareness, and agility.

The following section discusses the categories related to this theme.

4.2.6.1.1 Able to adapt to change and be flexible

Working with other people inevitably brings about change, which may be beneficial to organisations, and having the ability to adapt to change can relieve stress and even increase productivity. For leaders to effectively adapt to the changes occurring, they must first acknowledge that these changes are taking place. Therefore, they should look at the positive aspects of the change, embrace it, and adjust their way of thinking to obtain a new perspective.

Four participants indicated that their leaders should be able to adapt to change and be more flexible during times of crisis, such as the COVID-19 pandemic. This is asserted by the participant quotes that follow.

P1: "They had to adapt. Managers had a bigger responsibility to make sure that all the work is done".

P4: "I also think the pandemic required some flexibility and adaptability".

P7: "A leader should also be a change agent; leaders should embrace change and motivate their staff to do the same".

P8: "Leaders had to display resilience and adaptability to navigate through this uncertain time".

According to Isley *et al.* (2021:63), flexibility has become a catchphrase since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. It is essential to acknowledge that the COVID-19

pandemic and the operating environment of organisations will depend on the decisions leaders of leaders. Leaders are tasked with guiding their organisations and employees through the crisis caused by COVID-19 (Ramlachan & Beharry-Ramraj, 2021:17225). The authors assert that leaders had to acquire new skills to confront uncertainty. In addition, organisational agility or flexibility has been highlighted as an important leadership competence throughout this period (Ramlachan & Beharry-Ramraj, 2021:17230).

The research revealed from personal experience that organisations benefit from flexible leaders who can accept, embrace, and lead through change, particularly during uncertain circumstances like the COVID-19 pandemic

4.2.6.1.2 Improved communication

During a pandemic, an efficient communication system is of paramount importance. Since the onset of the pandemic, a lack of communication has been observed, which has prompted concern among employees who were primarily working from home. Because of the limits imposed by COVID-19, leaders exclusively engaged with their teams using email, and there were very few opportunities for meetings or face-to-face engagement. This resulted in information being lost along the process, and it also led employees to feel insecure.

A significant total of five participants indicated that improved communication is a key leadership attribute during a pandemic, as evident in the following verbatim quotations:

P1: “better or improved communication because it was uncertain times”.

P3: “I do, however, think that clear communication was necessary during COVID-19”.

P6: “during a crisis, leaders should have strong communications skills”.

P7: “a leader that communicated clearly”.

P8: “the communication and collaboration during the COVID times”.

Ramlachan and Beharry-Ramraj (2021:17230) affirmed that an essential factor in shaping the crisis management process is obtaining a greater understanding or clarity of the crisis and necessitating leaders to adopt a new set of complex leadership competencies, which includes effective communication. This can assist organisations

and leaders in successfully and efficiently resolving crises and achieving human capital resilience. Moreover, Khan (2021:5) asserts that HEIs must improve their communication planning and execution. During a crisis, unclear communication can cause stress and anxiety among employees and students. The analyses further strengthen these findings, which indicate that democratic, participative, and charismatic leadership styles encourage effective communication and listening skills.

4.2.6.1.3 Show care and compassion

The COVID-19 pandemic's demands have resulted in an increase in stress, anxiety, and mental disorders for employees across industries. Since all employees are individuals with families and emotional endeavours, compassion and care are essential in these uncertain times. Therefore, leaders were required to demonstrate compassion and care for their employees. Employees also place a high value on leaders who maintain continuous communication with them and leaders who are concerned about the well-being and satisfaction of their employees.

P1, P5 and P7 reported that leaders should display care and compassion towards employees during times of crisis like the COVID-19 pandemic. The direct excerpts from the participants are as follows:

P1: “sort of motivational for me knowing that somebody cares. To have more meetings just to and just check in meetings to see if you are ok”.

P5: “they had to show compassion, and they had to be kind”.

P7: “And then very important, compassion, especially because I’m talking about the well-being of the staff”.

De Zulueta (2021:1) defines compassion as an evolving, iterative procedure with four components, including (1) awareness and openness to the hardship of others, (2) empathy and consideration towards others, (3) a strong desire to relieve the suffering of others thoughtfully and appropriately, and (4) self-compassion that leads to compassionate action. The author added that compassionate leadership could be characterised by four fundamental components consistent with the previously defined compassion process. The four components of compassionate leadership are attentiveness, empathy, comprehension, and support. Leaders should be highly self-

aware and responsive to the needs of others. In times of crisis, they must also be able to control their emotions and respond with wisdom and calmness. According to Sheshadri and Aranganathan (2020:57), the humanistic qualities of compassion, care, empathy, and sensitivity perceptions could enhance employee and talent retention.

4.2.6.1.4 Provide more support and encouragement

Motivated employees accomplish their duties more efficiently and are more innovative and versatile. In addition, they have the drive and determination to accomplish what is required to succeed in their careers. Employees must feel encouraged and supported as individuals if they persevere amid periods of difficulty, change, and uncertainty. These aspects are consistent with the care and compassion that were previously discussed. Employees have a high level of respect for leaders that offer them consistent support and encouragement. Employees further value leaders who take an interest in their personal and professional challenges.

Two participants indicated that leaders should provide more support and encouragement during times of crisis and uncertainty. The verbatim quotations from the participants are provided below.

P2: “received more support and consideration”.

P3: “Maybe they could have been more supportive as well”.

According to Awada and Ismail (2019:1498), support from leaders complements the achievement of positive outcomes for the organisation. This notion is strengthened by Hamouche (2021:11), who states that managers require pertinent information that will assist them in navigating the crisis successfully and efficiently to support their employees and sustain the core operations of their organisation. In addition, employees should receive the organisational support necessary to develop the competencies required during and after the pandemic.

4.2.6.1.5 Display more empathy

Empathy has always been a key characteristic for leaders, but the COVID-19 pandemic elevated its significance and importance. Empathy is a skill of high priority that leaders must exhibit to create an ideal environment for engagement, satisfaction,

and performance. In times of crisis, empathy is even more critical since it helps pull individuals and teams together. Moreover, it helps leaders develop themselves and drives change within the organisation. Despite the risk that empathy brings, it is important because it helps leaders to focus and improve their skills.

As evidenced by the following quotations, four participants indicated that empathy from their leaders is a key leadership characteristic during a pandemic.

P5: “to display more empathy towards staff”.

P6: “they had to display empathy and support with everyone”.

P7: “COVID-19 necessitated empathy and patience from leaders”.

P8: “empathy is very important. Empathy towards staff and empathy towards students.”

According to Hofmeyer and Taylor (2020:300), empathy consists of sharing a person's feelings and understanding their perspective. The authors note that empathy abilities are crucial for teamwork and communication, as leaders must use empathetic language to comprehend the problems and difficulties their employees face and provide emotional support and direction during times of crisis. Therefore, it is obvious that empathy is a crucial trait during times of uncertainty, and leaders should endeavour to consistently demonstrate empathy and sympathy towards their employees.

4.2.6.2 Summary of theme 4

Theme 4 highlighted the leadership characteristics and behaviours required to retain academics amid a pandemic or crisis. This theme revealed that the most prominent leadership skills for crisis management include the ability to adapt to change, flexibility, enhanced communication, expressing care and compassion, providing support and encouragement, and demonstrating empathy. These characteristics are, therefore, central to talent management in the organisation.

4.3 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This chapter presented the findings of the analysis of the eight semi-structured interviews conducted for this study's purposes. Four themes, nine subthemes, and forty-one categories were defined and discussed using pertinent literature as support.

The findings revealed that academics would leave the organisation due to the current leadership style of managers, the work environment, and the organisational culture. In addition, employees have highlighted their preference for specific leadership styles, a conducive work environment, and development opportunities as reasons for remaining with the organisation. The democratic, participative, charismatic, and transformative leadership style will dissuade academics from leaving the organisation.

Furthermore, certain leadership characteristics for retention and talent management strategies were highlighted. Lastly, participants reported that the most prominent leadership skills for times of crisis, like the COVID-19 pandemic, include the ability to adapt to change, flexibility, enhanced communication, expressing care and compassion, providing support and encouragement, and demonstrating empathy.

The next chapter presents the conclusions, recommendations, and limitations of the study.

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND LIMITATIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will provide a summary of the previous chapters. Following this, a summary of the research findings, as outlined in chapter four, is provided, supported by the pertinent information obtained from the literature review. The study's primary objective was to determine the optimal leadership style for talent retention within a faculty at a HEI. In addition to the study's limitations, the recommendations resulting from the study findings and the recommendations for future research will be presented.

The recommendations are based on the findings of the following empirical research questions:

- What type of leadership style is required for talent retention of employees within a faculty in a HEI?
- What causes talented employees to leave a specific HEI for employment at another HEI or the public sector?
- What is the influence of different leadership styles on talent retention within a faculty in a HEI?
- What talent management strategies can be successfully employed to improve talent retention within a faculty in a HEI?

5.2 SUMMARY OF THE CHAPTERS

Chapter one provided context for the study, which emphasised the significance of talent retention in HEIs. The introduction resulted in the development of a clearly articulated problem statement. In addition, the study's primary and secondary objectives were outlined, followed by the primary and secondary research questions. Considering this, an initial literature review was conducted to identify and describe the study's key concepts. These included leadership, talent retention, leadership styles and leading during times of uncertainty like the COVID-19 pandemic. Other important

aspects embedded in chapter one includes the research methodology, the definition of the key terms, and the ethical considerations that were considered throughout the conduct of this research.

Chapter two detailed the study's theoretical background and literature review. The literature review was presented under four main topics, which include (1) the factors causing talented individuals to leave a HEI, (2) leadership and talent retention, (3) talent management strategies, and (4) the proposed integrated theoretical framework of the study. The study's theoretical foundation and underpinning theories were described and discussed.

Chapter three describes the research design theory and methodology pertinent to the study. The research approach used to conduct this study, namely qualitative phenomenological research, was highlighted. Furthermore, the interpretivism research paradigm formed the basis for this qualitative investigation. A total of eight participants were interviewed, and the interviews were transcribed verbatim. The results were analysed using content analysis, where themes and categories were presented. The essential features of data trustworthiness and ethical guidelines were strictly adhered to during the conduct of this research.

Chapter four presented the research findings that were analysed through qualitative content analysis. The themes and categories that emerged from the online interviews with the participants yielded these results. Before delving into the research questions, the chapter presented and discussed the participants' biographical information. The findings from the research questions were presented in the order described in chapter one of the study. The results were supported by peer-reviewed literature.

Chapter five provided a summary of the chapters of the dissertation, the summary of findings, the recommendations, and the limitations of the study.

5.3 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

This study explored the optimum leadership style for talent retention within a faculty in a HEI. The findings will be presented next by answering each of the research questions.

5.3.1 What type of leadership style is required for talent retention of employees within a faculty in a HEI?

This section sought to identify the preferred leadership style that prevents academics from leaving the organisation. It has been suggested that the democratic, participatory, charismatic, and transformative leadership styles are ideal for retaining academic talent. Academics favour organisational leaders that encourage participation, demonstrate improved flexibility, adopt a shared decision-making process, and fosters a sense of belonging within the organisation. In addition, academics similarly prefer leaders who lead by example, motivate teams, and encourage lifelong learning. Work recognition, trust, respect, as well as honesty and integrity have all been listed as factors that increase employee retention. These findings are supported by the literature that suggests that democratic, participative, charismatic, and transformative leaders can assist in employee retention (Mir *et al.*, 2019:37; Olayisade & Awolusi, 2021:50; Sawaneh & Kamara, 2019:42-43; Yamin, 2020:316).

In addition to those mentioned above, it has been noted that the leadership qualities necessary to retain academics during uncertain times such as the COVID-19 pandemic include the capacity to adapt to change, flexibility, increased communication, demonstrating more empathy, and providing support and encouragement.

5.3.2 What causes talented employees to leave a specific HEI for employment at another HEI or in the public sector?

This section investigated why academics would choose to leave the organisation. This research question generated three. According to academics, their current manager's leadership style, workplace environment, and organisational culture all contribute to their desire to leave their current employment. As contributory factors to increased turnover intention, academics listed unsupportive managers, managers who lack to give recognition, unsympathetic leaders, and autocratic leadership styles. In addition, factors that contribute to an unfavourable work environment include competitiveness,

work overload, job dissatisfaction, and staff shortages. Unfair workload distribution, high levels of favouritism, and work politics may also contribute to academics' intentions to leave the organisation.

5.3.3 What is the influence of different leadership styles on talent retention within a faculty at a HEI?

This section aimed to examine the impact of various leadership styles on talent retention. According to the research, organisations with authoritarian leaders have higher employee turnover and absenteeism, and the newer generation of employees has shown to be particularly resistant to this leadership style (Khan et al., 2015:87). It has been demonstrated that the adoption of the democratic, participative, charismatic, and transformative leadership increases talent retention. Participants indicated a preference for leaders who foster participation, share decision-making and develop a sense of belonging. In addition, the findings found that employees favour adaptable, empathetic leaders and demonstrate effective communication skills.

5.3.4 What talent management strategies can be successfully employed to improve talent retention within a faculty at a HEI?

This study question is intended to identify and describe talent management strategies for improving the retention of academic talent. This theme generated two subthemes. The first subtheme refers to the leadership characteristics and abilities necessary for academic talent retention. These attributes include, among others, fairness, trust, respect, transparency, and reliability. The next subtheme provided academic retention strategies. These included improved compensation, incentives, and bonuses, as well as the implementation of mentorship programs, support for research and development initiatives, rewards systems, and leadership development programs.

5.4 RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE STUDY

In this section, the researcher will provide recommendations based on the study's findings and recommendations for further research.

5.4.1 General recommendations

Considering the findings, it was vital to establish a talent retention strategy for the institution, given that most participants indicated an intention to leave the organisation. The employee retention strategy is designed to retain academically talented employees who have indicated their intention to leave. The strategy may include articulating and identifying organisational goals and objectives, mentoring, leadership development, addressing training and development needs, and enhancing the industry's competitiveness. The latter will assist in improving organisational and career commitment.

Based on the study's findings and conclusion, the following general recommendations can be made:

- HEIs should prioritise the formulation of appropriate remuneration packages, incentives, and performance bonuses for academic employees.
- Team-building workshops and initiatives should be implemented to improve morale and foster teamwork among employees and management.
- Academic mentorship programmes for teaching and learning, as well as research development, needs to be implemented.
- Considering research development and outputs, adequate research funding and equitable resource allocation amongst employees for this purpose should be maintained.
- The organisation should implement and maintain a fair performance management system.
- Leadership development courses should be offered for employees who demonstrate interest and potential.
- A culture of continuous learning should be encouraged within the organisation.
- Career path development and succession planning should be strengthened and reinforced in HEIs.
- All the steps within the talent management process should be adopted, as illustrated in Figure 2.3.
- To develop talent, the organisation should offer its employees enhanced training and development programs.
- A healthy work-life balance should be maintained.

- Organisational and employee factors that contribute to high attrition rates should be mitigated.
- To promote retention, organisations should promote employee engagement and organisational commitment.

5.4.2 Recommendations for further research

This study aimed to explore the optimum leadership style for talent retention within a faculty in a HEI by investigating the factors that influence the retention of academics and by determining the impact of various leadership styles on academic talent retention. Furthermore, various talent management strategies that could successfully be employed to improve talent retention within a faculty in a HEI were explored.

The following recommendations are proposed for future research:

- Participants in this study were employed in one faculty within the larger HEI, limiting the generalisation of the study's findings. Therefore, it is recommended that the researcher include data from other faculties within the institution in future studies to increase the generalisability of the results to the institution as a whole and offer data for comparison.
- Moreover, this research can be conducted at other HEIs to determine the ideal leadership style for academic talent retention throughout the HE sector and that more academics should participate in studies of this nature.
- According to the findings of this study, the democratic, participatory, charismatic, and transformational leadership styles have been proposed as the ideal styles for academic talent retention within the faculty of a HEI. Based on these findings, future research should evaluate the impact of these specific leadership styles on intention to leave and retention.

5.5 LIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The researchers acknowledged that the success of a research project is contingent upon the availability of a variety of resources, including access to participants and sufficient time. Due to time constraints and participant availability, the researcher could not include academics from all schools within the faculty of the HEI. Additionally, the

researcher could not interview academics from all the campuses of the HEI. As a result, the study's findings cannot be generalised, and further investigation into their applicability in different contexts is recommended. Lastly, the methodology employed in this study was a qualitative approach. A mixed-method study with quantitative results might have strengthened the conclusions.

5.6 THE EXPECTED CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study will contribute to the discipline's body of knowledge by identifying the optimum leadership styles for academic talent retention and providing various talent management strategies to enhance the retention of academic talent in the HE environment. The published articles from this study will also significantly contribute to the academic body of knowledge by supporting the institutions' management and the HR department in understanding the factors influencing retention and identifying the most effective leadership styles for retaining talent.

5.7 CHAPTER SUMMARY

This final chapter presented a summary of all preceding chapters. After that, the findings from this study were discussed and strengthened by the relevant literature. Based on the findings of this study, conclusions were drawn, and recommendations that could be applied for academic talent retention at a HEI were presented. In addition to the recommendations for future research, the study's limitations were also provided.

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LIST OF ANNEXURES

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ANNEXURE A – ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER



Private Bag X1290, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222
Fax: 018 299-4910
Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Senate Committee for Research Ethics
Tel: 018 299-4849
Email: nkosinathi.machine@nwu.ac.za

29 August 2022

ETHICS APPROVAL LETTER OF STUDY

Based on approval by the **Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee (EMS-REC)** on 26/08/2022, the Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee hereby **approves** your study as indicated below. This implies that the North-West University Senate Committee for Research Ethics (NWU-REC) grants its permission that, provided the special conditions specified below are met and pending any other authorisation that may be necessary, the study may be initiated, using the ethics number below.

Study title: Exploring the optimum leadership style for talent retention within a Faculty at a Higher Education Institution																																							
Study Leader/Supervisor (Principal Investigator)/Researcher: Prof AMF Pelser - MBA																																							
Student: Neethling, VL (28398483)																																							
Ethics number:																																							
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Institution				Study Number						Year			Status																										
Status: S = Submission; R = Re-Submission; P = Provisional Authorisation; A = Authorisation																																							
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Risk: <table border="1"><tr><td>Low</td></tr></table>										Low																													
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Approval of the study is initially provided for a year, after which continuation of the study is dependent on receipt and review of the annual (or as otherwise stipulated) monitoring report and the concomitant issuing of a letter of continuation.																																							

Special in process conditions of the research for approval (if applicable):

•

General conditions:

While this ethics approval is subject to all declarations, undertakings and agreements incorporated and signed in the application form, the following general terms and conditions will apply:

- The study leader/supervisor (principal investigator)/researcher must report in the prescribed format to the EMS-REC:
 - annually (or as otherwise requested) on the monitoring of the study, whereby a letter of continuation will be provided, and upon completion of the study; and
 - without any delay in case of any adverse event or incident (or any matter that interrupts sound ethical principles) during the course of the study.
 - The approval applies strictly to the proposal as stipulated in the application form. Should any amendments to the proposal be deemed necessary during the course of the study, the study leader/researcher must apply for approval of these amendments at the EMS-REC, prior to implementation. Should there be any deviations from the study proposal without the necessary approval of such amendments, the ethics approval is immediately and automatically forfeited.
 - Annually a number of studies may be randomly selected for an external audit.
 - The date of approval indicates the first date that the study may be started.
- In the interest of ethical responsibility, the NWU-SCRE and EMS-REC reserves the right to:*

- request access to any information or data at any time during the course or after completion of the study;
- to ask further questions, seek additional information, require further modification or monitor the conduct of your research or the informed consent process;
- withdraw or postpone approval if:
 - any unethical principles or practices of the study are revealed or suspected;
 - it becomes apparent that any relevant information was withheld from the EMS-REC or that information has been false or misrepresented;
 - submission of the annual (or otherwise stipulated) monitoring report, the required amendments, or reporting of adverse events or incidents was not done in a timely manner and accurately; and / or
 - new institutional rules, national legislation or international conventions deem it necessary.
- Please note that the ethics approval of this application is subject to the Covid-19 protocols.

The EMS-REC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your study. Please do not hesitate to contact the EMS-REC or the NWU-SCRE for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Mark
Rathbone

Digitally signed by Mark Rathbone
DN: cn=Mark Rathbone, o=North-
West University, ou=Business
management,
email=mark.rathbone@nwu.ac.za,
c=ZA
Date: 2022.09.09 10:37:26 +02'00'

Prof Mark Rathbone
Chairperson: NWU Economic and Management Sciences Research Ethics Committee

ANNEXURE B – RESEARCHERS DATA GATEKEEPERS

COMMITTEE PERMISSION LETTER



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom
South Africa 2520

Tel: +2718 299-1111/2222

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

Research Data Gatekeeper Committee

NWU RDGC PERMISSION GRANTED / DENIED LETTER

Based on the documentation provided by the researcher specified below, on 16/09/2022 the North-West University (NWU) Research Data Gatekeeper Committee (NWU-RDGC) hereby grants permission for the specific project (as indicated below) to be conducted at the NWU:

Project title: Exploring the optimum leadership style for talent retention within a Faculty at a Higher Education Institution.

Project leader: Prof A.M.F. Pelser

Researcher/Project Team: V.L. Neethling

Ethics reference no: NWU-00728-22-A4

NWU RDGC reference no: NWU-GK-22-068

Specific Conditions:

- The Researcher may request the Director to advertise the research study to the prospective participants through their various means of communication with the designated group of participants.
- The participants may respond directly back to the Researcher for further information and signing informed consent to participate in the study
- No personal data such as contact details of prospective participants may be provided or used by the researcher without the consent of the prospective participants.

Approval date: 16/09/2022

Expiry date: 15/09/2023

General Conditions of Approval:

- The NWU-RDGC will not take the responsibility to recruit research participants or to gather data on behalf of the researcher. This committee can therefore not guarantee the participation of our relevant stakeholders.
- Any changes to the research protocol within the permission period (for a maximum of 1 year) must be communicated to the NWU-RDGC. Failure to do so will lead to withdrawal of the permission.
- The NWU-RDGC should be provided with a report or document in which the results of said project are disseminated.

- Due to the COVID-19 pandemics the Committee would like to advise the researcher to practice the necessary caution and adhere to the National Covid-19 Guidelines when conducting research with participants.

Please note that under no circumstances will any personal information of possible research subjects be provided to the researcher by the NWU RDGC. The NWU complies with the Promotion of Access to Information Act 2 of 2000 (PAIA) as well as the Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013 (POPI). For an application to access such information please contact Ms Annamarie De Kock (018 285 2771) for the relevant enquiry form or more information on how the NWU complies with PAIA and POPI.

The NWU RDGC would like to remain at your service as scientist and researcher, and wishes you well with your project. Please do not hesitate to contact the NWU RDGC for any further enquiries or requests for assistance.

Yours sincerely



Prof Jeffrey Mphahlele

Chairperson NWU Research Data Gatekeeper Committee

Original details: (22351930) C:\Users\22351930\Desktop\test 2.docm
13 November 2018

Current details: (22351930) M:\D8818533\Monitoring and Reporting Cluster\Ethical Applications RDGC\Updated RDGC Permission Letter.docm
15 November 2018

File reference: 1.1.4.3

ANNEXURE C – INFORMED CONSENT FORM



BUSINESS SCHOOL
BESIGHEIDSKOOL
SEKOLO SA KGWEBO



Private Bag X6001, Potchefstroom

South Africa 2520

Tel: 018 299-1111/2222

Web: <http://www.nwu.ac.za>

**Faculty of Economics and Management
sciences**

Researcher: Verena Neethling

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Supervisor: Prof AM Pelser

Tel: +2782 375 6636

Email: amspelser@hotmail.com

Date: 07 July 2022

DEAR PARTICIPANT

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION AND CONSENT FORM

I herewith wish to request your consent to voluntarily participate in this research study, which involves answering a few questions about leadership and talent retention through a MS Teams interview. The interview will be arranged at a time convenient to you and will not be more than an hour. Before giving consent, please peruse the information below.

The details of the research are as follows:

TITLE OF THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Exploring the optimum leadership style for talent retention within a faculty in a higher education institution.

WHAT IS THIS RESEARCH ABOUT?

Aim

This study aims to identify the optimum leadership style for academic talent retention within a faculty in a HEI.

Objectives

- To determine the factors that causes talented employees to leave a specific HEI for employment at another HEI or the public sector.
- To investigate the impact of different leadership styles on the talent retention within a faculty in a HEI.
- To explore the different talent management strategies that leaders can successfully employ to improve talent retention within a faculty in a HEI.
- To explore and describe the perceptions of employees regarding effective leadership styles to promote talent retention within a faculty in a HEI.

Participants

Lecturers employed within the Faculty of Health Sciences at the Potchefstroom and Mahikeng campus of the NWU.

What is expected of you as a participant?

You have been selected to participate in this research due to your employment as a lecturer within the Faculty of Health Sciences at the NWU. Your responses and suggestions will assist the researcher to identify the preferred leadership style for talent retention during times of crisis. Your expertise will give credibility to the study. The study will entail you answering a few questions about leadership styles and talent management/retention. The questions will be answered through a semi-structured interview via MS Teams which should not last for more than an hour.

Benefits to you as a participant

The benefits of this study will include assisting the management of the NWU to identify academic talent management strategies for academic employees which are based on leadership to improve retention and limit turnover.

Risks involved for participants

There are no risks associated with participating in this study. You reserve the right to withdraw at any stage of the research process without any consequence, and there are no anticipated consequences of declining or withdrawing from the study at any time during the process.

Confidentiality and protection of identity

Information obtained during the study will be kept confidential and will only be used for research purposes e.g., publishing.

Anonymity

Safeguarding all participants' identities will receive high priority, and the privacy of information and anonymity of participants will be kept protected at all times.

Withdrawal at any time

The participant may withdraw at any time during the study, without any consequences.

Dissemination of findings

The feedback procedure will entail meetings and a written report to discuss the research findings and the distribution of research findings to all participants.

If you have any further questions or inquiries regarding your participation in this research, please contact the researcher for more information.

POPI ACT

Please note that the researcher will adhere to all rules contained in the POPI ACT, Act No.4 of 2013.

COVID-19 REGULATIONS

Hereby the researcher wishes to inform you that she will adhere to all the Covid-19 regulations set. She will also see to it that the participants adhere to the Covid-19 regulations. Data will be collected via MS Teams meeting, which makes it possible to adhere to the Covid-19 regulations.

Yours sincerely,

Verena Neethling

DECLARATION BY PARTICIPANT:

By signing below, the participant agrees to take part in a research study entitled:

Exploring the optimum leadership style for talent retention within a faculty at a higher education institution.

I declare that:

- I have read this information and consent form and understand what is expected of me in the research.
- I have had a chance to ask questions to the researcher, and all my questions have been adequately answered.
- I understand that participating in this study is voluntary, and I have not been pressured to participate.
- I may choose to leave the study at any time and will not be penalized or prejudiced in any way.
- I may be asked to leave/end the research process before it has finished if the researcher feels it is in my best interests or if I do not follow the research procedures as agreed to.
- I am of the full understanding that the data obtained from the study will be treated with the strictest level of confidentiality and I will not be exposed in any way.
- I am of the full understanding that the study will be done anonymously, and my identity will not be revealed.
- I am of the understanding that the data will be used for research purposes e.g., publishing

Signed at (place) _____ on (date) ____/____/2022.

Signature

ANNEXURE D – INTERVIEW PROTOCOL



BUSINESS SCHOOL
BESIGHEIDSKOOL
SEKOLO SA KGWEBO



Time of interview: _____

Place: _____

Interviewer: Verena Neethling

Code of interviewee: _____

About the project: The research study aims to explore and describe the optimum leadership style for academic talent retention within a faculty in a HEI.

INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

1. Tell the participant a little bit about yourself and what the nature of the study is.
2. Provide the participant with a consent form.
3. Provide an overview of the consent form and respond to enquiries and concerns. Reiterate that participation is voluntary, the interview may be stopped at any time, and that all information gathered is confidential.
4. Ask the participant for consent to record the interview session.
5. Turn on the recording function in MS Teams to start session recording.
6. Capture the date and time of the participant's verbal consent on the recording device.
7. Provide the participant with their individualized alias name e.g., participant 4.
8. Start the interview session beginning with question #1 and continuing to question #12.
9. Ask probing questions as necessary.
10. Conclude the interview session.
11. Provide the participant with a detailed explanation of the next steps in the research process.
12. Provide the participant with my contact information for easy reference regarding additional questions or follow-up.
13. Thank the participant for participating in the research study.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Section A: Demographic information

1. What is your age?

20-30 years	31-40 years	41-50 years	51 years-above
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2. What is your current position level?

Junior lecturer	Lecturer	Senior lecturer	Programme manager / Director
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3. How many years have you been employed at the organisation?

1-5 years	6-10 years	11-15 years	16 years-above
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Section B: Study-specific interview questions

4. What types of leadership qualities or characteristics do you think are important for the talent retention of academic employees within the faculty?

5. What do you consider to be the main reasons why academic employees leave their jobs to work at another HEI or in the public sector?

6. Do you think that the leadership style of your manager has influenced you to stay at the institution? Why do you say so? What leadership style do you prefer?

7. Do you believe that the COVID-19 pandemic necessitated different leadership attributes from your manager? If so, name those attributes.

8. Have you ever considered leaving your current job? If so, does your manager's leadership style contribute to this?

9. Do you have any problems or concerns with the current leadership style of your manager?

10. Does your leader inspire you?

11. Do you feel valued and recognised in the organisation?

12. What talent management strategies do you think can be successfully employed to improve the talent retention of academics within the faculty?

ANNEXURE E – TURNITIN SUMMARY

Turnitin Originality Report

Processed on: 19-Nov-2022 07:03 SAST

ID: 1958458860

Word Count: 45649

Submitted: 1

28398483:Verena_Neethling_Mini_Dissertation__MBA_19112022.docx
By VERENA NEETHLING

Similarity Index		Similarity by Source	
10%		Internet Sources:	8%
		Publications:	4%
		Student Papers:	5%

ANNEXURE F – LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

Research Advisory
Institute of South Africa



LANGUAGE EDITING CERTIFICATE

This document certifies that the manuscript listed below has been edited for proper English language, grammar, punctuation, spelling and overall presentation by one or more editors of Research Advisory Institute of South Africa (RAISA) Language Editing Services.

Manuscript Title:

Exploring the optimum leadership style for talent retention within a faculty in a higher education institution

Author(s):

VL Neethling (28398483)

Date Issued:

24 Nov 2022

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