

The impact of different leadership styles during a  
change management process on employees'  
organisational commitment

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## **Abstract**

This research investigates the critical role of leadership in shaping employee commitment during an organisational change. It examines how transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership styles influence organisational commitment. The study specifically focuses on the mediating psychological mechanisms of employees' trust in leadership and their resilience to change.

A quantitative, cross-sectional methodology was employed using a structured online survey distributed to 164 employees from medium to large organisations who had recently undergone a significant change event.

The data was analysed using multiple regression and mediation analysis. The findings revealed that transformational and transactional leadership are significant positive predictors of commitment. Laissez-faire leadership shows no significant direct effect on organisational commitment but exerts a strong indirect negative impact by severely eroding employee trust. Furthermore, trust in leadership emerged as a dominant mediator, fully explaining the positive effect of transformational leadership and the negative impact of laissez-faire leadership. Employee resilience was statistically significant but a substantially weaker mediator across all leadership styles.

The study concludes that during change, employees value active leadership that builds trust. It is the fundamental pathway that secures employee commitment. Practical recommendations are offered for leaders to integrate behaviours to navigate change successfully.

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## **Keywords**

*Keywords:* change management, employee resilience, leadership styles, organisational commitment, trust in leadership.

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## **Plagiarism Declaration**

I declare that this research project is my own work. It is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Business Administration at the Gordon Institute of Business Science, University of Pretoria. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other University. I further declare that I have obtained the necessary authorisation and consent to carry out this research.

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## Abbreviations

CMB	Common Methods Bias
CI	Confidence Interval
CFA	Confirmatory Factor Analysis
EFA	Exploratory Factor Analysis
FRLM	Full Range Leadership Model
KMO	Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin
M	Mediator
MLQ	Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire
OCQ	Organisational Commitment Questionnaire
OTI	Organisational Trust Inventory
POPIA	Protection of Personal Information Act (South Africa)
RAW	Resilience at Work
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
X	Independent Variable
Y	Dependent Variable

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## 1. Introduction

### 1.1. Research Problem

Organisations undergo change management processes as a necessary and inevitable process to remain competitive, relevant and adaptable to their environment (Mansaray, 2019). However, as indicated by Lee (2024), this presents significant challenges to an organisation particularly from its employees which includes resistance to change, decreased morale, and lower productivity. These challenges highlight the need for the organisation's leaders to attain higher levels of organisational commitment from employees during the transition to ensure the success of the change initiative.

The success and sustainability of a change management process is dependent on the leadership style adopted during this transitional period (Alqatawenh, 2018). While existing research has considered the general impact of different styles in change management, there is limited research that comparatively examines the three most prominent leadership styles from the Full Range Leadership Model (FRLM) (Bass, 1985) - transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire - and their distinct impacts on achieving organisational commitment.

Recent studies have also examined the impact of employees' trust in leadership and creating resilience to change for employees which are detailed in the literature review chapter. However, these studies tend to examine these variables in isolation, and do not present a comprehensive evaluation on how leadership styles simultaneously influence trust, resilience and commitment during an organisational change.

Therefore, a critical theoretical gap exists in understanding the efficacy of transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership within a change context. Furthermore, the psychological mechanisms, specifically how trust and resilience mediate these relationships remain underexplored. This fragmentation in the literature and studies can be addressed by providing leaders with evidence-based guidance on which leadership behaviours most effectively cultivate trust and resilience that ultimately drive commitment from employees.

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## 1.2. Purpose Statement

The purpose of this quantitative study is to examine the impact of transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles on employees' organisational commitment during change management.

Furthermore, the study will quantitatively test the mediating roles of employees' trust in leadership and employees' resilience to change in this relationship. This will be achieved by measuring and analysing the direct and indirect effects between these defined constructs to determine how leadership behaviours influence commitment through these psychological pathways.

Using established measurement scales, this research will identify which specific leadership behaviours most effectively build trust and resilience and determine how these factors collectively contribute to employee dedication and alignment with organisational goals during periods of transition.

## 1.3. Research Scope

The research focuses on organisations operating **within English-speaking business environments**, including but not limited to South Africa, Europe, Australia, and the United States. A multi-context approach was intentionally selected for a wide range of organisational experiences and to enhance the generalisability of findings beyond a single geographic or economic setting. This approach was theoretically necessary to distinguish between leadership effects that are universal and those that are context-dependent, thus enhancing the validity of the findings.

To qualify for inclusion, organisations must meet the criteria of a **minimum of 100 employees or annualised revenue exceeding R100 million**, ensuring the investigation of significant change management processes where formal leadership styles are more visible, consistent, and measurable.

This scope encompasses both developed and emerging markets while simultaneously accounting for language barriers in the survey instrument. The study targets a cross-section of knowledge-based and industrial sectors, including professional services, technology, and natural resources, to ensure comprehensive insights across different organisational environments.

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To ensure relevance and recency, only organisational change processes that have occurred **within the last five years** will be included. There are no restrictions on the types of change process experienced by the employees to allow for broad applicability of the findings reached.

The survey targets employees rather than organisational leaders as the primary focus is on employees' perceptions of leadership during a change. This approach is to prevent self-reporting bias commonly associated with leaders. It also recognises that interpretations of leadership from employees are more important than the leaders intended style and are more directly linked to outcomes of trust, resilience and organisational commitment from employees.

The sample will include employees from these organisations across different departments and hierarchical levels to ensure comprehensive insights into the impact leadership had on these employees during the change process. The scope of employees used in the sample will however be limited to those with **a minimum tenure of six months** with the organisation **prior** to the change process so that they had sufficient exposure to leaderships behaviours before and during the change initiative.

The selection of leadership styles for this study was deliberately narrowed to three specific styles viz. transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership. This was to enable a clear, comparative analysis. This selection was justified as it represented a broad spectrum of leadership behaviours, from highly active and inspirational to passive and avoidant. This allowed for a critical investigation of leadership contrasts during an organisational change.

Further justification is due to their dominant presence and their established relevance in change management literature as detailed in Chapter 2. Having been consistently identified in the literature review, it also has the most distinct effects on employee outcomes during change events.

An analysis of these styles directly addresses the research gap, whereas incorporating less frequently studied or overlapping leadership styles would have complicated the model without adding sufficient analytical insight.

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#### **1.4. Contribution of Study to Academia and Business**

This study will add to the academic research with three theoretical contributions. First, it will address the fragmentation in current literature by examining simultaneously the effects of three key FRLM leadership styles where previous research typically tested them in isolation. Second, it advances theoretical understanding by testing empirically the dual mediating pathways of trust and resilience within the same model. This will reveal their relative importance. Third, commitment theory is examined within the three leadership styles as to how they influence the nature of affective, continuance or normative commitment during an organisational change. In this manner, it provides a more nuanced view of the employees' attachment during a transition.

For business practice, this research aims to provide evidence-based guidance on which specific leadership behaviours to emphasise during the different phases of a change management process. The findings could enable organisations to determine when they should implement leadership styles to build emotional commitment (affective) or rather attempt to focus on stability through structure to gain continuance commitment. The findings could also be used to identify and mitigate the risk of leadership behaviours that systematically erode employees' attachment particularly during large organisational changes. In this manner, leaders could effectively mitigate resistance and enhance employees' cohesion with organisational goals.

#### **1.5. Overview of Research Report**

This research report is structured into seven chapters. Chapter 1 introduces the research problem and then outlines the overall purpose of the research. It defines the scope of the research and provides context and justification in both practical and theoretical terms. Chapter 2 presents the literature review, critically engaging with existing research within the context of a change management process. Within this framework, the constructs of leadership styles, employees' organisational commitment, employees' trust in leadership and their resilience to change are explored. The review highlights what is known and what remains underexplored so that this research can seek to address this gap.

Chapter 3 formulates the research question and the associated hypotheses related to the constructs, supported by the literature review. Chapter 4 details the research

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methodology that was followed which incorporates the overall research design, sampling approach, data collection method, analysis techniques, quality control processes and the ethical considerations.

Chapter 5 presents the findings and results from the data gathered by presenting relevant descriptive and statistical findings that are related to the research question and the hypotheses. Chapter 6 builds on the previous chapter, to discuss the results with sufficient depth in comparison to the existing literature. Finally, Chapter 7 concludes the research report by highlighting the main findings, drawing conclusions, presenting recommendations for practice, outlining the limitations of the research and providing considerations for future research.

A list of references is provided at the end of this report along with relevant supplementary information included as appendices to the research report.

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## **2. Literature Review**

### **2.1. Introduction**

This chapter establishes a theoretical foundation for the research by reviewing key concepts, theories, and studies relevant to the research problem. The review refers to the constructs of the study to provide a comprehensive understanding of each.

Chapter 2 begins by examining organisational change management, exploring the well-established models that exist, and the common challenges that arise during implementation across the different types of organisational change events. It then reviews leadership with a specific focus on the three leadership styles that have been highlighted viz. transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership detailing their characteristics and how they are relevant during a change context.

The two key mediating variables are explored, viz. employees' trust in leadership and employees' resilience to change. Finally, the chapter examines the outcome variable, organisational commitment, through the lens of Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model. The chapter concludes by integrating the literature to highlight the known relationships and the existing gaps that this research aims to address.

### **2.2. Change Management Process**

In today's environment, organisational change can be initiated by a range of factors including globalisation, technological advancements, evolving workforce expectations and competitive pressures. The necessity for change from organisations is acknowledged due to the pressure to be adaptive to market conditions, but the capacity to execute the change successfully does not always occur. Scholars broadly define organisational change as the transition from a current state to a more desirable future state to enable the organisation to achieve strategic objectives (Stouten et al., 2018).

Such change may occur due to various events, viz. structural changes from the restructuring or retrenchment of departments; technological changes from a complex software implementation; strategic changes via a new business model; a regulatory or compliance change to adapt to new laws or regulations; a crisis-induced change such as those prompted by the COVID-19 pandemic; or the integration of two

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organisations with different structures and cultures via a merger and acquisition. Each of these changes' present implementation challenges.

To navigate the complexity of a change, organisations utilise structured change management processes. According to Sharma (2024), this structure aims to improve the implementation and to reduce employee resistance, factors which often lead to the failure of the strategic change initiative.

The most widely used and recognised change management framework is Kotter's eight-step change model (Kotter, 1996), which provides a clear sequential roadmap with practical steps for leaders to follow to achieve success. Mouazen et al. (2023) analysed this model and highlighted its alignment with effective leadership. They indicate that leaders should create a sense of urgency for the change to occur; form a coalition with key employees during the change process and communicate the vision of the future through multiple channels. Leaders must also remove any obstacles to the change process so that employees feel empowered to embrace and support the change initiative. Furthermore, Mouazen et al. (2023) emphasise that in the early stages of change, the leaders should celebrate the short-term wins and then consolidate gains for sustained progress. The final step is to anchor the change into the organisational culture.

Other change management processes such as Lewin's three step model (unfreeze, change and refreeze) and the ADKAR Model (Awareness, Desire, Knowledge, Ability and Reinforcement) also provide a structured approach for an organisation to navigate a change (Bekmukhambetova, 2021).

Despite the existence of these structured models to execute a change management process, it remains a complex and problematic process. An examination of the literature indicates that the effectiveness of the change management process is not inherent in the steps undertaken but is dependent on the execution by people particularly by the leaders.

The most significant barrier is not a flawed process but rather the human response to change. This is characterised by employees' resistance to a change process driven by their fear of the unknown, stress about their future roles, and thus a preference to maintain the comfortable status quo (El-Taliawi, 2022; Hubbart, 2023). This resistance

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is often exacerbated by poor communication and a lack of engagement across all organisational levels which creates further hinderance to the process leading to misalignment, mistrust and low commitment to the change initiative (El-Taliawi, 2022). Furthermore, challenges such as change fatigue and the negative impact on employees mental and physical well-being describe the psychological toll of change initiatives (Montreuil, 2022).

Thus, structured models provide a useful guide for navigate a change, but they are not a complete remedy. Their effectiveness is determined by their execution, particularly in the leader's ability to engage with employees meaningfully. Models by Kotter (1996) and ADKAR (Hiatt, 2006, as cited in Bekmukhambetova, 2021) also assume a rational response to change. However, emotional responses from employees to the change often hinder change efforts. This emphasises the importance of examining not only the change management process but the impact of these emotions have on employees' trust levels and their resilience to the change. The literature also indicates that all change management processes are heavily influenced by the leadership style that is adopted, a theme explored in the sections below.

### **2.3. Leadership**

To navigate the employees' challenges encountered during a change requires effective organisational leadership as outlined in the previous section. While there is no universally accepted definition of leadership, traditional and modern perspectives commonly examine leaders' behaviours, attributes and ability to inspire a shared vision (Harrison et al., 2020). Leadership has been defined traditionally by Bass (1985) as the interaction between members in a group, so that shared goals can be achieved. Over time, contemporary scholars have refined the definition of leadership to be more of a relational process aimed at achieving common objectives through influence and persuasion (Northouse, 2021; Yukl & Gardner 2019). The leader's competencies include intellect and management skills but also importantly the social and emotional capabilities that are needed to motivate and adapt to challenging situations (Figueiredo et al., 2022).

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Utilising these relational and adaptive competencies are critical during the organisational change for leaders. Existing research in the field of Organisational Behaviour have established the importance of the role of leadership during an organisational change (Mansaray, 2019; Nweze et al., 2022). Leading an organisation during these changes presents a distinct set of challenges for the leader. These challenges include managing employees' resistance to the change process, maintaining trust and credibility, effectively communicating a vision for the change and sustaining the engagement of the employees through the transition (El-Taliawi, 2022; Montreuil, 2022; Waidyaratne, 2022). However, acknowledging the role of leadership is insufficient, a more important determination is which specific leadership behaviours and styles are most effective, and under what conditions?

The range of leadership styles have been identified by Mansaray (2019) to include authoritarian, autocratic, transformational, transactional, laissez-faire, servant, democratic, strategic and bureaucratic leadership with noticeable overlaps that complicate a clear analysis. Given this complexity a focused approach is necessary to generate actionable insights.

Therefore, this study concentrates on the three most prominent styles (transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire) as justified in Section 1.2, due to their representation of the full leadership behavioural spectrum and their established relevance in change contexts. These styles are formally operationalised through the widely accepted Full Range Leadership Model (FRLM) developed by Bass (1985). The FRLM utilises these three styles as they capture the essential leadership behaviours, ranging from highly active and effective to passive and avoidant. By examining these three styles simultaneously, this study can investigate the contrasting effects of leadership during a change, directly addressing the gap in comparative leadership efficacy. This framework therefore forms the analytical basis for the study. The subsequent subsections will evaluate the established literature on each of these three styles within a change context.

### **2.3.1. Transformational Leadership**

The most widely studied and empirically supported leadership style in organisational research is transformational leadership. It was defined by Bass (1985) to be

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leadership which inspires and motivates their employees above their own self-interests, which results in positively impacting the organisation.

The theoretical strength of this leadership style during change is apparent through its four core components of idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration (Bass, 1985). These components appear to be ideal for navigating the uncertainty and anxiety that is inherent during change processes.

Leaders who can provide **inspirational motivation** through the articulation of a compelling vision for their organisation reduce ambiguity and align with the employees' goals (Alqatawenh, 2018). In the context of organisational change, this is a skill that enables leaders to instil a shared sense of purposes to their employees. By doing this it reduces uncertainty and can maintain employee commitment to align their individual goals to the broader transformative vision.

Similarly, **idealised influence** also known as charisma, occurs when employees can identify with their leader due to their admiration and loyalty to them, due to the leader being ethical and placing the needs of others above their own (Jensen et al., 2020).

Transformational leaders also provide **intellectual stimulation**, by encouraging independent thinking, fostering innovation and supporting calculated risk-taking among employees (Jensen et al., 2020; Kim & Cruz, 2022). This behaviour is valuable during an organisational change as it can empower the employees to be adaptive and evolve as the change occurs.

**Individualised consideration** refers to the way the leader treats their employees based on their own individual needs including cultural differences to maximise their performance at work (Hosna, 2021). This includes reviewing their strengths and weaknesses, serving as a coach or mentor to support their personal and professional development (Mishra, 2023). By creating this supportive environment for employees, trust and loyalty can be sustained especially during the times of change.

Transformational leadership is widely acknowledged for its positive effects as detailed in the four core components above. However, caution should be exercised in not idealising this form of leadership. If only the positives are considered, this could result

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in employees being overly dependent on their leader. This could encourage blind adherence to the leader during the change process and dissenting but worthwhile views of others during the change being suppressed.

Furthermore, the literature often portrays the four components as uniformly applied set of behaviours. In practice however this holistic application may not be possible when leaders navigate large-scale high-pressured change initiatives where resource and time is constrained. This disparity between the literature and the practical feasibility raises critical questions about the style's consistent effectiveness. This makes it necessary to evaluate which components are most critical for sustaining commitment from employees during change management processes.

### **2.3.2. Transactional Leadership**

Bass (1985) describes this leadership style as being more conventional, whereby leaders influence their employees pragmatically by utilising power and offering benefits to them to create stability within the relationship. This style has been further developed and later distinguished from transformational leadership with both forming part of the FRLM. Within this model, transactional leadership focuses on maintaining order and achieving short-term goals through contingent reinforcement mechanisms (Bass, 1985).

The two key characteristics of transactional leadership are **contingent rewards** and **management by exception** (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Leaders provide contingent rewards by setting clear expectations that they expect from their employees and then providing them with incentives for having completed those goals or tasks (Bass & Riggio, 2006; Olley, 2021). Contingent rewards will provide motivation and increase performance in stable organisations but could be less effective where agility and adaptiveness are required from the employees.

A less effective characteristic of transactional leadership is management by exception, which can be done actively or passively (Olley, 2021). Active management by exception is viewed by Olley (2021) as the continuous monitoring of the performance of employees to prevent errors from occurring. By contrast, passive management by exception is when the leader waits for the errors to occur and then intervenes (Bass & Riggio, 2006). Through management by exception, there is a risk of an over-

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reliance on control and creating a culture of fear of failure. This could hinder innovation or trust in employees, particularly when the organisation is undergoing a change management process.

It could be argued that transactional leadership is a less effective and a more elementary approach than transformational leadership. However, within the context of organisational change, this characterisation may require re-evaluation. A transactional leadership style can provide the necessary structure and stability required within the early stages of the change process when clear direction and compliance is needed by the employees. This is indicated by Nanjundeswaraswamy et al. (2025) that a transactional style can influence employees' commitment when clarity, structure and immediate rewards are required by the employees. Therefore, this style represents an important yet often overlooked aspect of effective leadership during organisational changes.

However, while structure and stability are provided in the short-term, this style's capacity to foster long-term affective commitment required for sustained transformation of the change is uncertain (Nanjundeswaraswamy et al., 2025). This inherent limitation has led to the view that a hybrid of transformational and transactional leadership would be better suited. This aligns with the present study's comparative framework, positioning transactional leadership as not being outdated but as a style where there are specific behavioural mechanisms within it that should be understood to better determine its role during a change management process.

### **2.3.3. Laissez-Faire Leadership**

Robert and Vandenberghe (2020) detail laissez-faire leadership as an established distinct leadership style that is explored in organisational behaviour. This is a passive form of leadership characterised by being unavailable when needed, avoiding involvement in decision making, delaying responses, and then only intervening to deal when problems have escalated or resulted in failure (Robert & Vandenberghe, 2020). Their findings indicate that such behaviour undermines organisational effectiveness and can lower the employees' commitment.

Other empirical evidence associates this leadership style to adverse outcomes, including role ambiguity for employees, increased workplace conflict, and a lack of

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direction or direct support to employees (Diebig & Bormann 2020; Lundmark et al., 2021). Furthermore, this passive hands-off approach by leadership has been identified as contributing to workplace stressors like bullying and other adverse psychological effects. (Ågotnes et al., 2023).

Organisations should be cautious of this behaviour when undergoing a change process as they may add to employee stress (Lundmark et al., 2021). Employees that encounter this avoidant leadership are also more likely to communicate negatively about the organisation, due to their weakened organisational relationship (Jin & Men, 2023).

Despite the predominant negative perceptions around laissez-faire leadership, Zheng and Li (2024) present a more nuanced view and highlights the more complex effect it has on employee behaviour. They have similarly highlighted negative impacts of disengagement from some employees, but such leadership may also result in deep engagement from others who enjoy the autonomy and innovation that it could provide (Zheng & Li, 2024).

The literature largely supports that laissez-faire leadership is a liability particularly during an organisational change. During this period, clarity, direction and support are what would be required from employees, yet this style withdraws from providing it. This leadership absence creates a vacuum that erodes trust in leaders. However, the contrasting perspective of Zheng and Li (2024) suggests the impact of laissez-faire being context-dependent and not universally neglectful. It may be interpreted by a subset of employees during the change as empowering trust in them.

This ambiguity warrants further investigation in this research report to investigate it directly with the active leadership styles of transformational and transactional leadership. In this manner, the research can determine whether its effects are consistently detrimental or if its outcomes vary depending on the organisational context and the pressures of an organisational change.

In addition to leadership styles, there are other key constructs that play an important role in understanding employees' experiences during an organisational change including employees' trust in leadership.

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## 2.4. Employees' Trust in Leadership

Trust in leadership is a psychological mechanism through which employees could evaluate and respond to organisational change. Farid et al. (2020) define trust as a reciprocal relationship between individuals willing to be vulnerable with each other. Within a leadership context, trust reflects the employees' belief in their leaders' integrity and their capability to make decisions that benefit the organisation and themselves (Rai & Koodamara, 2025). Trust in leadership is needed across multiple levels within the organisation including at an individual, team and organisational level. Trust can vary depending on situational contexts and the interactions that occur with the leaders.

Trust in leadership encompasses two key interconnected dimensions, viz. **cognitive-based trust** and **affective-based trust** (Legood et al., 2022). Cognitive-based trust refers to the confidence of the leader's ability and competency, while affective-based trust is more relational and the emotional bond that has been created with the leader (Legood et al., 2022). A key insight for change management is that both dimensions are crucial. Employees trust in leaders are based not only on whether their leaders have the ability and capability to manage the change (cognitive-based trust) but also whether have genuine care for the employees affected by it (affective-based trust). This insight is affirmed by the research of Farid et al. (2020), who investigated the impact of authentic leadership on organisational behaviour and found that affective-based trust and cognitive-based trust positively mediated this relationship. This study suggests that when leaders act authentically, they create reciprocal trust with their employees to positively support the organisational goals.

The duality is underscored by research indicating that both dimensions of trust are crucial. The more relational aspect of trust being affective-based trust (also termed disclosure-based trust) has a more substantial impact on change capability (Cao & Le, 2022). This is due to the employees trusting their leaders on an emotional level, which results in deeper engagement, open communication and higher levels of organisational commitment.

This theoretical framework provides clarity as to how leaders build trust. Behaviours that demonstrate overall competence, strategic insight and decision-making

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capabilities primarily fosters cognitive-based trust (Cao & Le, 2022). Those actions that exhibit empathy, fairness, authenticity and honesty in interactions with employees build up affective-based trust (Liu, 2024).

Verčič (2021) has identified that trust can also be built by active employee engagement. In this manner the engagement of employees during the change process will reduce resistance to the process. The leaders must also exhibit inclusivity by being consistent in their communication and actions (Liu, 2024). This is done through following up on items that they have previously promised, continuous dialogue with employees around their concerns and providing transparent and consistent communication of the change process which will increase the employees' confidence (Liu, 2024).

Consequently, the dual-dimensional nature of trust provides the theoretical basis for it to be used as a mediator in the relationship between leadership styles and organisational commitment. It is likely that different leadership styles activate the trust dimensions unevenly. Transformational leadership may for instance build a sound cognitive trust through the inspirational vision the leader creates while their individualised consideration for their employees could foster the deeper affective trust required. By contrast, the transactional leader may build cognitive trust by highlighting the clarity and structure they have created during the change process but if they fail to build on a potential promise of contingent rewards, they may impact the development of deeper affective-based trust. A laissez-faire leader's absence may erode both cognitive and affective trust which could create a leadership vacuum.

In summary, trust functions as an essential conduit through which the abstract leadership behaviours are translated into employee commitment. By positioning trust as a mediating variable, it can explain why some change efforts falter despite seemingly competent leadership during the process. It might relate to the underdevelopment of all dimensions of trust.

## **2.5. Employees' Resilience to Change**

Employees' resilience to change is the ability of the employees to adapt and recover from disruptions and uncertainties that occur due to an organisational change (Mehta et al., 2024). Resilience not only protects employees from negative outcomes such

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as anxiety, burnout and depression but could even foster positive psychological states like self-efficacy, emotional well-being and job satisfaction (Sipondo & Terblanche, 2024). During organisational change, resilience can be crucial for employees to sustain performance and remain engaged despite the disruption. Thus, resilience is often viewed as an internal capability within employees.

However, additional research indicates that leadership behaviours have a significant role in strengthening or depleting employee resilience. For instance, authentic leadership behaviours of self-awareness, transparency, communication and ethical decision-making to employees, and this has shown to have a positive impact on employee resilience which results in them adapting effectively to change (Mao et al., 2022).

Similarly, Waidyaratne (2022) found that transformational leadership positively impacts employees' resilience during times of crisis. The study indicated that transformational leaders articulated a shared vision of the organisation, offered individualised support to their employees, and provided intellectual stimulation. As a result, this contributed towards employees' adaptability, emotional strength and proactive behaviours which are all key aspects of resilience.

More recently, Breevaart and van Woerkom (2024) highlighted the role of strengths-based leadership, where leaders focus on employees' inherent strengths, capabilities and talent. Employees then feel valued and empowered, positively influencing their resilience. The study found that higher levels of employees' resilience resulted in increased organisational engagement.

This collective evidence solidifies the role that a leadership style can play a key influence in cultivating the resilience of employees during an organisational change. This could be key to supporting a sustainable change. This underscores its relevance in the present study. However, the magnitude of leadership's influence relative to other factors is an important consideration. Trust in leadership is a direct reflection of the leader-employee relationship, whereas resilience remains an individual capacity within employees that may be buffered by personal coping strategies, other external support systems or the personality of the employee.

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This study will therefore investigate the role of resilience not in isolation but determining its potency in translating difference leadership styles into organisational commitment. This can provide a nuanced understanding of how leaders can most effectively secure employees' dedication during the change management process.

## 2.6. Organisational Commitment

Organisational commitment is the psychological attachment employees feel toward their organisation, which will keep them content to remain with the organisation (Meyer & Allen, 1991). Organisational commitment is not a single uniform variable. There are rather three key components that exist for achieving sustainable change initiatives. **Affective, continuance and normative commitment** have been identified by Meyer and Allen (1991) in their framework which is still widely accepted and influential in use by contemporary organisational behaviour research.

Latha and Kiranmayi (2023) have identified affective commitment as the experience an employee has with their organisation to provide an emotional attachment. The stronger the affective commitment, the more likely an employee would **want to** remain with that organisation voluntarily, as their expectations are mirrored by their actual experiences within the organisation (Latha & Kiranmayi, 2023; Park et al., 2023). During an organisational change process, affective commitment by employees has been determined to have a significant impact on the employees' readiness for change by providing stronger emotional ties (Haffar et al., 2022).

Continuance commitment is when employees are aware of the costs associated with leaving the organisation, and the employees remain because they **have to** (Meyer & Allen, 1991). This is considered passive involuntary commitment by Park et al. (2023) as there is an economic exchange relationship in place where the employees have considered what the pros and cons of are if they leave the organisation. Continuance commitment needs to be viewed with caution, as employees could be disengaged in the organisation through lack of emotional attachment yet be unwilling to leave the organisation. During an organisation change, this form of commitment can present challenges, as employees may resist the transformation or fail to actively support it.

Meyer and Allen (1991) referred to normative commitment as when the employees have the sense of obligation to remain at the organisation i.e., they believe that they

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**ought to** remain with the organisation. This sense of duty extends beyond the normal convention and may a degree of self-sacrifice by the employee (Latha & Kiranmayi, 2023). When normative commitment is driven by obligation rather than enthusiasm it could lead to adverse outcomes. Stark et al. (2025) found that when there is a lack of employment alternatives, normative commitment by employees could result in low well-being and reduced work performance. Thus, the context under which normative commitment exists should be considered to ensure it is not detrimental to the organisation.

While organisational commitment is often viewed as a desirable outcome from employees; not all types of commitment are equally beneficial. Affective commitment creates a sense of belonging to the organisation and will promote alignment to the shared goals of the organisation. This form of commitment from employees is especially valuable in executing a change process. Continuance or normative commitment might bring about a sense of obligation or entrapment and might result in the employees who exhibit this form of commitment not fully embracing the change initiative.

Thus, leaders need to take consideration that their leadership style invokes commitment, and the right kind of commitment. This study will aim to identify evidence-based guidance as to how to secure the different forms of employee commitment.

## **2.7. Chapter Summary**

This chapter provided an overview of the key variables within the study. The literature affirms that transformational and transactional leadership styles generally have a positive influence on employee outcomes. However, they have distinct impacts in a change management process, and this requires further comparative analysis. Laissez-faire leadership is primarily associated with a negative impact although its effects may be context dependent.

Crucially, trust in leadership, (which includes both cognitive-based trust and affective-based trust) and employees' resilience to change have emerged as pivotal psychological mechanisms. This merits further investigation in the study as a mediator to determine the role in employees' adaptiveness to change.

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The literature review reveals three interconnected gaps. First, the existing literature and research often examines leadership styles in isolation, lacking a comparative analysis of the three prominent FRLM styles particularly within a change management process. Second, the role of these leadership styles in simultaneously impacting the key mediating variables of employees' trust in leadership and their own resilience to change remains underexplored. Third, there is a gap of how the leadership behaviours, and the psychological mechanisms collectively influence organisational commitment during a change process beyond a specific industry (Orabi et al., 2024).

Having established these gaps, the research report formalises the investigation in Chapter 3. This chapter presents the specific research question and the hypotheses derived from this literature review.

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### **3. Research Question**

#### **3.1. Introduction**

Building directly from the literature review in Chapter 2, the purpose of this chapter is to translate the identified theoretical gaps into a structured, measurable framework that will guide the subsequent data collection and analysis. This is done by articulating a precise research question and testable hypotheses.

The study examines the relationship where leadership styles (independent variables) - transformational, transactional and laissez-faire - influence employees' organisational commitment (dependent variable) during a change management process. Employees' trust in leadership and resilience to change are included in the investigation as mediating variables.

#### **3.2. Research Question**

Based on the literature reviewed, the following research question was formulated to address the gaps in the literature:

How do the different leadership styles (transformational, transactional and laissez-faire) impact the employees' organisational commitment during a change management process, and how do employees' trust in leadership and employees' resilience to change mediate this relationship?

#### **3.3. Theoretical Foundation for Hypotheses Development**

The formulation of the following hypotheses is grounded in the literature reviewed in Chapter 2.

There are three hypotheses that test the direct effect of leadership on organisational commitment, as the literature has justified leadership to be a consistent predictor of organisational commitment. Transformational leadership is expected to foster commitment by inspiring and aligning employee goals with the organisation's vision (Hosna, 2021; Mishra, 2023). Transactional leadership is anticipated to have a positive relationship by providing essential clarity and structure during uncertainty (Olley, 2021; Nanjundeswaraswamy et al., 2025). Conversely, laissez-faire leadership

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is hypothesised to negatively impact commitment through its absence of guidance, which leads to disengagement (Robert & Vandenberghe, 2020).

For the mediation hypotheses, prior literature suggests that effective leadership fosters trust (Liu, 2024), which in turn builds active employee engagement (Verčič, 2021). However, the specific mediating role of trust in the relationship between the three FRLM leadership styles and organisational commitment remains underexplored, representing a key gap. Similarly, while leadership is known to impact employee resilience (Breevaart & van Woerkom, 2024; Mao et al., 2022) and resilient employees exhibit higher commitment during difficult times (Sipondo & Terblanche, 2024), the mediating role of resilience between these specific leadership styles and commitment has not been directly tested. Six mediation hypotheses are proposed to test these indirect effects and address the gaps.

### **3.4. Hypotheses**

The following nine hypotheses derived from the theoretical foundation above will be tested using the statistical procedures that are detailed in Chapter 4:

#### **3.4.1. Direct Effect Hypotheses**

H1: Transformational leadership has a positive effect on organisational commitment

H2: Transactional leadership has a positive effect on organisational commitment

H3: Laissez-faire leadership has a negative effect on organisational commitment

#### **3.4.2. Indirect Effect Hypotheses (Mediation Hypotheses)**

H4: Employees' trust in leadership positively mediates the effects of transformational leadership on organisational commitment

H5: Employees' trust in leadership positively mediates the effects of transactional leadership on organisational commitment

H6: Employees' trust in leadership negatively mediates the effects of laissez-faire leadership on organisational commitment

H7: Employees' resilience to change positively mediates the effects of transformational leadership on organisational commitment

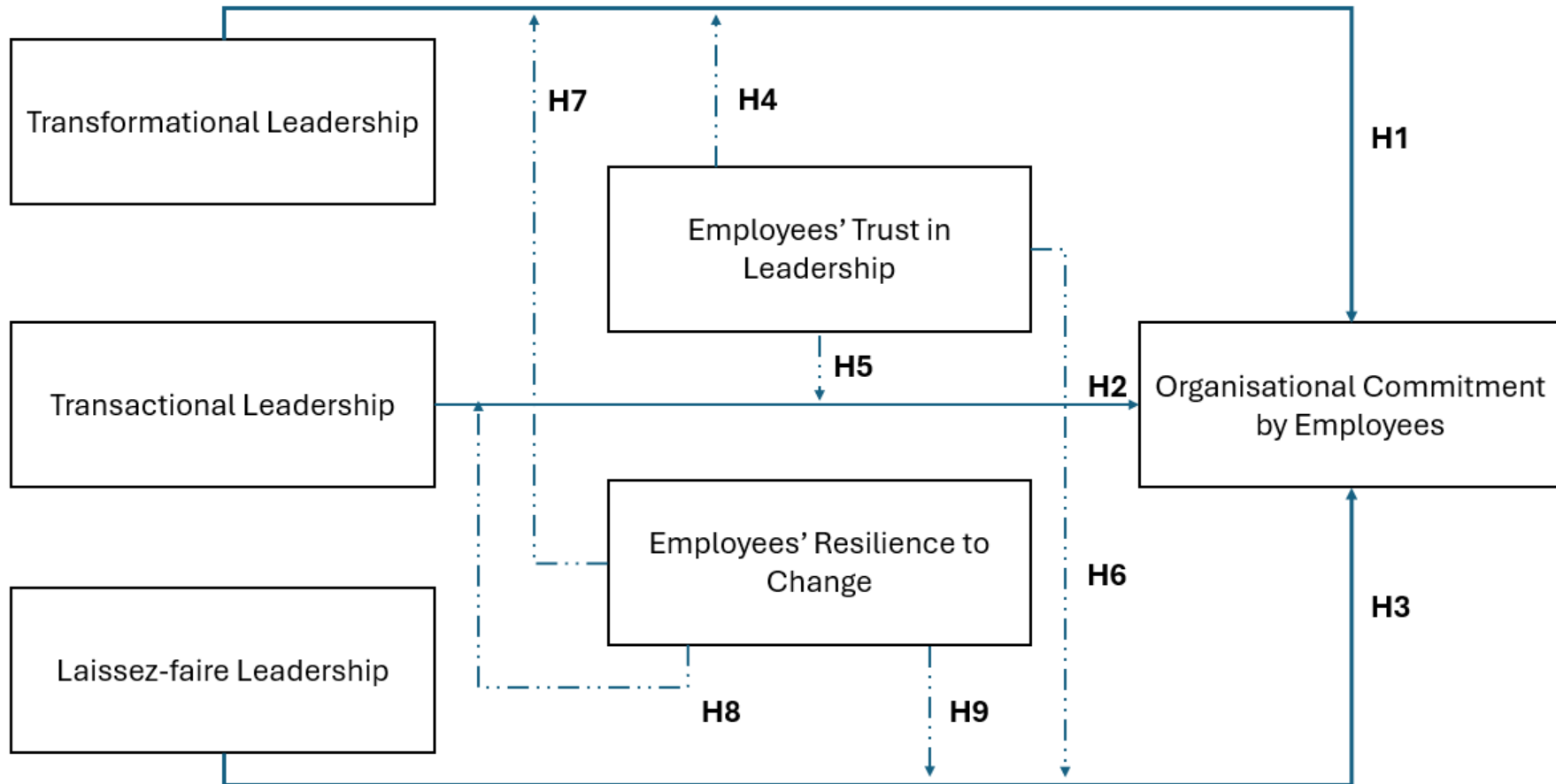
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H8: Employees' resilience to change positively mediates the effects of transactional leadership on organisational commitment

H9: Employees' resilience to change negatively mediates the effects of laissez-faire leadership on organisational commitment

Refer to Figure 1: Conceptual Framework below for a graphic overview of the hypotheses. Having outlined the hypotheses, Chapter 4 will detail the methodology that will be used to test these relationships.

Figure 1: Conceptual Framework



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## 4. Research Methodology

### 4.1. Introduction

This chapter details the research design and the research methodology that was employed for this study. It justifies the purpose of research design and philosophy that were selected, the population and the sampling strategy that was employed, and outlines the techniques that were followed for the data collection and analysis process. The chapter also details the quality controls that were undertaken to ensure the reliability and validity of the data obtained. The chapter concludes by discussing the ethical considerations of the chosen research methodology.

The overall research process was guided by the principles of the research onion to ensure a structured and credible approach (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Saunders & Lewis, 2018).

### 4.2. Purpose of Research Design

The research design followed a combined **descriptive and explanatory purpose**. This approach was selected to directly address the research gaps identified in the literature review, specifically examining multiple leadership styles simultaneously and their mediating pathways (Orabi et al., 2024). The descriptive component served as a precursor to the explanatory study (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). The descriptive aspect was necessary as it reviewed the prevalence of leadership styles, trust and resilience within organisations providing a necessary foundation. The explanatory component was then essential for testing the hypothesised relationships and mediating effects between these variables, thereby delving into causality, such as how leadership influences commitment through trust and resilience—as called for in the literature (Casula et al., 2020; Farid et al., 2020; Waidyaratne, 2022).

### 4.3. Philosophy

A **philosophy of positivism** was adopted which was appropriate for the study's aim to objectively test hypotheses that were derived from established theoretical frameworks such as the Full Range Leadership Model (Bass, 1985) and the Three-Component Model of Commitment (Meyer & Allen, 1991). The collection of quantifiable data was used to observe realities within organisations and then derive

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causal generalisations (Alharahsheh & Pius, 2020). This philosophy was aligned with the study's approach of hypothesis testing, focused on large sample studies to produce accurate and measurable data. By examining the relationships between different leadership styles and the employee outcomes (employees' trust in leadership, employees' resilience to change and the organisational commitment of employees) positivism could determine statistically significant relationships.

#### **4.4. Approach Selected**

A **deductive research approach** was adopted for this study, consistent with the principles of theory-testing research where hypotheses are derived from existing literature and then empirically tested (Barroga et al., 2023). The implementation of this approach followed the five sequential stages for deductive research outlined by Saunders and Lewis (2018), and as applied in this study.

First, in this study, a research question was formulated based on existing theory regarding leadership and organisational commitment. Second, specific hypotheses (H1 to H9) were derived from this theory to operationalise the research so that clear predictions would be enabled. Third, data was collected through a structured instrument as detailed in the below sections. Fourth, the data was analysed and the relationship between the different constructs (independent variable, dependent variable and mediators) were evaluated as detailed in Chapter 5. Finally, the findings were interpreted in Chapter 6 with conclusions drawn in Chapter 7 to confirm or challenge the initial theory that guided the study.

#### **4.5. Methodological Choices**

A **mono-method quantitative choice** was made for the research process which was aligned with the research question and the hypotheses (H1 to H9) that had been developed from the literature. A quantitative method was optimal for collecting standardised measurable data that ensured consistency, reliability and statistical validity (Jain, 2021). A mixed method was not considered due to the time constraints of the research study, which limited the feasibility of incorporating qualitative methods of interviews or focus groups. The study's focus on numerical data analysis allowed for objective conclusions to be drawn on the impact of the three independent leadership variables on the dependent variable which made the quantitative method

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appropriate. Similarly, a mono approach had been deemed suitable as it simplified the process used in the strategy below while it addressed the research problem comprehensively.

#### **4.6. Strategy**

The most appropriate strategy for this study, based on the research questions and hypothesis, was a **survey-based strategy**. This was through a **pre-designed, structured questionnaire** sent to employees of organisations which captured their perceptions of leadership behaviours and attitudes, their trust in leadership, their resilience to change and their organisational commitment. The questions were formulated to be within the context of an organisational change process that had occurred. Through this approach a large amount of primary data was obtained and analysed in a cost-effective manner which would be representative of the entire population. This approach aligned with the research's positivist philosophy and deductive methodology which ensured reliable and generalisable insights (Rashid et al., 2021).

#### **4.7. Time Horizon**

A **cross-sectional time horizon** was used during the study. According to Saunders and Lewis (2018), a cross-sectional design involves collecting the data at a single point in time and provides a snapshot of the participants' responses. For this research it provided an efficient and cost-effective manner compared to a longitudinal study given the time constraints of the research study. Importantly, the cross-sectional design enabled a collection of a larger sample, whereas a longitudinal design would have likely limited the sample size due to the additional time commitment required from participants.

This study focused on examining perceptions and relationships between the constructs, rather than changes over time. The research question sought to uncover the structural link between the constructs and not how they evolved. This made a cross-sectional design well suited to that purpose.

The study also asked the participants responses to their psychological state (trust or commitment) in relation to a specific organisational change event. The participants

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reflected on a specific defined period that had occurred. Thus, the cross-sectional time horizon captured their aggregated retrospective perceptions of their leaders' styles during that period appropriately. A longitudinal study would not have been possible as it would have required data collection before the occurrence of an unpredictable change event.

Cross-sectional designs were commonly used and represented the accepted time horizon in the literature review relevant to this study (Farid et al., 2020; Mao et al., 2022; Waidyaratne, 2022). By aligning with this established approach, it ensured that the findings from this study were comparable to the existing body of knowledge that was reviewed in Chapter 2.

#### **4.8. Population**

A population refers to the group that the research is focusing on, it provides guidance around the research scope and overall context (Hossan et al., 2023). The population for this research study consisted of every employee within organisations that have undergone a change management process within the past five years. To ensure the population consisted of sizeable and significant change processes, the employees from the population were limited to organisations with a minimum of 100 employees or an annualised revenue of R100 million or more.

Importantly this study excluded leaders as survey participants. The focus was on the employees' perception of the leadership behaviours they experienced during the change process. Leadership styles were assessed through the employees' responses and captured their views on how the leaders behaved, communicated and influenced the change. This is consistent with the literature review in Chapter 2 of prior empirical studies evaluating perceived leadership rather than self-reported leadership behaviour.

The population for these organisations included employees across all hierarchical levels and all departments. No limitations were applied to either hierarchical levels or different departments, as all employees are exposed to leadership behaviours or characteristics within their organisation. The overall leadership style of top management ultimately affects all employees through strategic direction, communication and culture. However, to ensure significant insight and awareness of

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the leadership behaviours was evident, employees with a minimum tenure of six months in organisation prior to the change process were only considered.

#### **4.9. Unit of Analysis**

Hossan et al. (2023) refers to the importance of defining the unit of analysis correctly to provide the foundation to the research, and to ensure that the data collection and analysis align with the research objectives. The unit of analysis was the individual employees who had undergone a change management process in the last five years. This choice was justified as the research sought to determine their individual-level perceptions to leadership behaviours, and how those perceptions impacted their level of trust in leadership, their resilience to change and their organisational commitment.

#### **4.10. Sampling Method and Size**

Saunders and Lewis (2018) have defined a sample as a subset of the entire population. In the context of this research, collecting data from a sample was more practical, time efficient, and resource efficient as it would not have been possible to analyse data for every employee in all organisations that had ever experienced a change management process. By focusing rather on a sample of the population this allowed the researcher the appropriate time to focus on other critical aspects of the research study (Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

The availability of a full population list or sampling frame determines whether a sampling technique or a non-probability sampling technique would be used (Saunders & Lewis, 2018). It would have not been feasible to obtain a list of all employees who had ever undergone a change management process, so a non-probability sampling technique was employed. A **purposive non-probability sampling technique** was used by the researcher. This approach allowed the researcher to use their own expertise and judgement in choosing the sample most relevant to the research objectives (Zickar & Keith, 2022). Through purposive sampling, it allowed for the targeting of specific employees.

The targeted participants referred to employees who had undergone a change management process in the last five years. They were also required to have a minimum tenure of six months at the organisation prior to the change. To ensure

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substantial organisational change processes were included in the study, further targeting was done to include employees from organisations who had a minimum of 100 employees or had annualised revenue exceeding R100million. This technique complemented the mono-method quantitative methodological choice, by ensuring the data collected was relevant to the proposed hypotheses. Campbell et al. (2020) confirms this as an advantage of using purposive sampling when selecting a sample, for being more aligned with the overall research objectives and so that valid findings can be provided.

The sample size was determined so that it was reflective of the entire population as this allowed for the research to be credible. In determining the sample size, the research objectives, the number of variables and the practical considerations were considered. The research question aimed to identify a statistically significant relationship between the variables. In addition, there were numerous hypotheses to be tested (H1 to H9), so the sample needed to be large enough to ensure sufficient statistical analysis of mediating or regression tests could be done. Finally, the practical considerations of non-responses, delays in responses and having sufficient participants complete the survey were accounted for in determining the relevant sample size.

Rahman (2023) indicates that a large sample size enhances the generalisability of results across the population, however researchers need to be cautious of excessively large samples which could lead to statistically significant results for relationships even when there is none. The general rule of thumb is for the sample size to be ten times greater than the number of variables selected (Rahman, 2023). Using this guideline, the practical sample size target identified was **150-200 employees** who met the inclusion criteria.

#### **4.11. Measurement Instrument**

A **structured online survey questionnaire** was used as the measurement instrument for this study. This method was selected as it was the most appropriate to effectively gather quantitative data from a large, geographically dispersed sample. It allowed for a standardised measurement of perceptions and attitudes of employees.

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The measuring instrument was designed to operationalise the variables defined in the literature review.

The questionnaire was structured into six sections (Sections A-F) with a total of 42 items. To maximise the response rates and the quality of data, the instrument was designed for a completion time of 20 minutes or less. This duration was considered optimal for maintaining the engagement of the participants. Participants were informed in the consent form that their responses should reflect experiences with an organisational change process they had encountered. Importantly, these experiences were tied to the organisation in which the change occurred and did not need to refer to their current employee or current leaders.

**Section A: Demographic Information** captured categorical data such as age, gender, job level, industry, organisational size, revenue and the nature and timing of the change event. These items enforced the inclusion criteria of the study, provided descriptive statistics for the sample to be profiled and eased the participants into the survey.

**Sections B-E** were the sections that formed the core of the instrument covering the core constructs viz. leadership styles (Section B), employees' trust in leadership (Section C), employees' resilience (Section D) and organisational commitment from employees (Section E).

They were designed using a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree) for all questions within these sections. These closed-ended questions allowed for standardised, quantifiable data for rigorous statistical analysis that was required to test the study's hypotheses. The use of balance scales around a neutral midpoint was done to minimise response bias. Within Section B: Leadership, items measuring the three different leadership styles were randomised to reduce any ordering effects. The questionnaire incorporated four established measurement scales, with one specific scale selected for each variable based on their validation and reliability in prior research and relevance to the study context.

**Section F: Other** provided the participants the option to add any additional comments related to their experience of organisational change or their leaders.

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To measure the leadership styles in Section B, the survey incorporated the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) which is widely recognised as the leading tool to assess leadership behaviours and is applicable to the overall Organisational Behaviour domain (Batista-Foguet et al., 2021). The scales in Section B captured the three leadership styles that were applicable to the study.

For organisational commitment, the study employed the Organisational Commitment Questionnaire developed by Meyer and Allen (1991) to provide accurate scales for capturing affective, continuance and normative commitment. (Khajuria & Khan, 2022). This section of the questionnaire tested their organisational commitment in terms of attachment, likely continuation within the organisation and their gratitude towards the organisation (Khajuria & Khan, 2022).

Trust in leadership was measured using the Organisational Trust Inventory (OTI) developed by Shockley-Zalabak et al. (2000) while employees' resilience to change was tested utilising the established Resilience at Work (RAW) scale developed by Winwood et al. (2013). This scale evaluated the employees' ability to adapt and recover from change-related stressors.

By integrating four well-established and validated measurement tools into the overall questionnaire, the study also enhanced the robustness of the findings. Refer to Appendix A: Survey Instrument for a breakdown of the survey that was sent out.

#### **4.12. Pre-testing**

The questionnaire was designed as an online survey using Google Forms during July 2025. To ensure the data quality, a pre-testing phase was completed on 22 July 2025 with six volunteers. Two of the six volunteers completed the survey on their mobile device to ensure it displayed correctly on various devices. The completion time ranged from 12 to 17 minutes indicating that the original 20-minute estimate was conservative but remained appropriate to manage participants expectations. Feedback from the volunteers led to the correction of two minor spelling errors.

The overall usability and logical flow of the survey instrument was affirmed by the volunteers, and the survey had worked as intended. They confirmed the readability of the survey, the clarity of the informed consent document and the technical functionality

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across both the mobile and desktop platforms. There were no issues from any of the volunteers on the terminology used in the survey nor were any questions viewed as ambiguous by them. Their responses were all excluded from the final data analysis to prevent any contamination of the main dataset.

#### **4.13. Data Collection**

The final corrected questionnaire was distributed electronically on 29 July 2025. A link to the survey was provided to participants via email and social media platforms including LinkedIn for completion, using a snowball sampling method. LinkedIn was chosen as the primary social media platform due to its status as the largest professional networking platform, utilised across various industries and organisational levels. This platform provided the researcher direct access to employed individuals who were most likely to have experienced an organisational change. This aligned closely to the study's population. To reach the targeted 150-200 participants, the researcher also leveraged professional networks, including business colleagues, networks from the corporate world (locally and internationally), and many LinkedIn connections, to reach employees who had experienced organisational change.

The survey remained active for five weeks closing on 2 September 2025. This duration was selected to provide a sufficient data collection window while balancing with a focused timeframe for analysis. This aligned with the cross-sectional time horizon of the study.

Regular weekly follow-ups via emails and on social media platforms were done each Monday during the five weeks which encouraged additional participation and improved the response rates. The survey was closed at the start of September for appropriate analysis and quality control checks of the data received.

#### **4.14. Data Analysis Approach**

The data analysis was collected and analysed using IBM SPSS Software (SPSS) to test the research hypotheses (H1-H9). The process followed a structured sequence from data preparation to advanced statistical testing.

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#### 4.14.1. Data Preparation and Cleaning

Prior to uploading the data into SPSS, the raw data underwent a comprehensive preparation and coding phase to ensure its integrity and suitability for further analysis. The quantitative data collected from the online form was exported into a comma-separated values (.csv) file. A total of 204 respondents were received over the 5 weeks with 54% of responses received within the first week. Following the pre-defined purposive sampling criteria, 40 responses were excluded as they did not meet the inclusion criteria:

- their change management process occurred more than 5 years ago,
- the participant's tenure was less than 6 months at the organisation prior to the change,
- the organisation they were employed at during the change had less than 100 employees and their annual revenue was below R100million.

This filtering process resulted in a final, valid sample size of **N=164** for all subsequent analyses.

Each survey question was assigned a unique variable in SPSS for efficient coding and analysis. A coding book was kept and is listed in Appendix B: Complete Variable Coding Scheme.

Demographic items (Section A) were coded sequentially as DEMOG1 to DEMOG9 with numerical values assigned to each response option (See Table 1).

Table 1: Coding Scheme for Demographic Variables

Final	Reference	Coding of response options to a numerical value
DEMOG1	Age	1. 20 - 29 year old 2. 30 - 39 year old 3. 40 - 49 year old 4. 50 - 59 year old 5. 60 - 65 year old
DEMOG2	Gender	1. Female 2. Male 3. Prefer not to say

DEMOG3	Job level	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Executive</li> <li>2. Senior</li> <li>3. Middle</li> <li>4. Junior</li> </ol>
DEMOG4	Industry	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Agriculture &amp; Food</li> <li>2. Mining, Minerals &amp; Chemicals</li> <li>3. General Manufacturing &amp; Industrial</li> <li>4. Energy, Fuel &amp; Utilities</li> <li>5. Financial &amp; Professional Services</li> <li>6. Technology &amp; ICT</li> <li>7. Logistics &amp; Supply Chain</li> <li>8. Government &amp; Parastatal</li> <li>9. Consumer, Retail &amp; Leisure</li> <li>10. Healthcare, Pharma &amp; Medical</li> <li>11. Automotive &amp; Aviation</li> <li>12. Construction</li> <li>13. Water &amp; Wastewater Services</li> <li>14. Property Development &amp; Real Estate</li> </ol>
DEMOG5	Employees in the organisation	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. &lt;100 employees</li> <li>2. 100–500 employees</li> <li>3. 501–1,000 employees</li> <li>4. 1,001–5,000 employees</li> <li>5. 5,001–10,000 employees</li> <li>6. 10,001+ employees</li> </ol>
DEMOG6	Annual revenue	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Small or not known: R0m – R100million</li> <li>2. Lower to Mid: R100million – R1billion</li> <li>3. Mid to Upper: R1billion – R10billion</li> <li>4. Large: &gt;R10billion</li> </ol>
DEMOG7	Timing of Change Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Older than 5 years</li> <li>2. 5 years ago</li> <li>3. 4 years ago</li> <li>4. 3 years ago</li> <li>5. 2 years ago</li> <li>6. 1 year ago</li> <li>7. This year</li> </ol>
DEMOG8	Nature of Change Process	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Restructuring</li> <li>2. Ownership &amp; Corporate Structure</li> <li>3. Strategic &amp; Directional</li> <li>4. Technological &amp; Digital Transformation</li> <li>5. Leadership &amp; People</li> <li>6. Operational &amp; Cultural</li> <li>7. Externally Driven</li> </ol>

DEMOG9	Tenure Prior to Change	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Shorter than 6 months</li> <li>2. 6 months or longer</li> </ol>
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For the main construct variables (the leadership styles variables, mediators and the dependent variables) they were coded as follows:

- Section B: Transformational leadership: FORM1–FORM5
- Section B: Transactional leadership: TRANS1–TRANS5
- Section B: Laissez-faire leadership: FAIR1–FAIR5
- Section C: Trust in leadership: TRUST1–TRUST5
- Section D: Resilience to change: RESIL1–RESIL5
- Section E: Organisational commitment: ORGCO1–ORGCO7

Once uploaded into SPSS, all variables were defined in the SPSS Variable View. Demographic variables (DEMOG1-DEMOG9) were classified as either Nominal or Ordinal, depending on their measurement level. All the Likert-scale were defined as Scale within SPSS. This coding ensured that the dataset was structured correctly for subsequent reliability, validity, descriptive and inferential statistical analyses.

Subsequently, composite mean scores were created for each major construct. The composite variables were used in all inferential analyses as they provided a more reliable and parsimonious measure of each construct. They are indicated as follows:

- FORM\_MEAN = MEAN (FORM1, FORM2, FORM3, FORM4, FORM5)
- TRANS\_MEAN = MEAN (TRANS1, TRANS2, TRANS3, TRANS4, TRANS5)
- FAIR\_MEAN = MEAN(FAIR1, FAIR2, FAIR3, FAIR4, FAIR5)
- TRUST\_MEAN = MEAN(TRUST1, TRUST2, TRUST3, TRUST4, TRUST5)
- RESIL\_MEAN = MEAN(RESIL1, RESIL2, RESIL3, RESIL4, RESIL5)
- ORGCO\_MEAN = MEAN(ORGCO1, ORGCO2, ORGCO3, ORGCO4, ORGCO5, ORGCO6, ORGCO7)

After completing the quality control checks of validity, reliability and confirmatory factor analysis, the analysis proceeded with statistical analysis techniques. The quality control checks performed are detailed in section 4.15 below.

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#### **4.14.2. Descriptive and Inferential Analysis (Direct Effects)**

Descriptive statistics including frequency were generated to profile and describe the key variables. Thereafter, inferential analyses were done to test the hypotheses. For the direct effects (H1-H3), a multiple linear regression analysis was performed with the dependent variable (ORGCO\_MEAN) and the three leadership styles (FORM\_MEAN, TRANS\_MEAN, FAIR\_MEAN).

Multiple linear regression was the most appropriate choice to examine simultaneously the relationship between several independent variables and a single outcome variable, controlling for the influence of each predictor (Hayes, 2022). Via a multiple regression test, the strength of the relationships could be analysed by referring to the regression coefficients  $\beta$  values and their statistical significance (p-values). In the test the direction of the relationship between the independent variables and the dependent could be determined by assessing whether there was a positive or negative  $\beta$ .

Testing H1-H3 through multiple linear regression was justified due to the literature that demonstrates that leadership is a predictor of organisational commitment. By modelling all three simultaneously via a multiple regression analysis, the study could identify their relevant contributions to organisational commitment and control for overlap. This provides more accurate understanding of which leadership behaviours will drive the commitment outcomes.

#### **4.14.3. Mediation Analysis (Indirect Effects)**

For the mediation hypotheses (H4-H9), they were tested using Model 4 of the PROCESS macro for SPSS. This method is advocated by Hayes (2022) over traditional techniques like the Sobel test as the preferred method for testing simple mediation. Six separate mediation models were run to test the indirect effects of the three leadership styles on the employees' organisational commitment through the two mediating variables (trust in leadership and resilience to change).

In each model, a bootstrapping procedure with 5,000 resamples was applied as recommended by Hayes (2022) and Hair et al. (2019) as it provided robust bias-corrected confidence intervals for the indirect effect of leadership styles on employees' organisational commitment through the mediators (trust and resilience). An indirect

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effect was considered statistically significant at the  $\alpha = 0.05$  level if its 95% bias-corrected confidence interval does not contain zero.

#### **4.14.4. Sample Size Justification and Level of Significance Used**

As a rule of thumb, a sample size of over 200 is useful for complex mediating models. However, this study's mediation models (H4-H9) only had three variables in each model which reduced the complexity of the model. In addition, the bootstrapping approach did not rely on normality assumptions and could still provide robust confidence intervals for smaller samples as advocated by Hayes (2022). Finally, the actual results yielded several statistically significant effects to indicate that the sample power was sufficient to detect meaningful relationships. Thus, the sample of 164 for this study was deemed sufficient for analysis of the mediating effects in the hypotheses.

All statistical tests were conducted at a **5% level of significance ( $\alpha = 0.05$ )**. This was consistent with the guidelines recommended by Hair et al. (2019) and Hayes (2022), where results with p-values less than 0.05 were considered statistically significant. The specific assumptions and limitations associated with these statistical tests are discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 7 respectively.

#### **4.15. Quality Controls**

##### **4.15.1. Foundational Quality Controls**

Quality control measures were necessary for this study to ensure reliable and valid data. To enhance clarity and validity, the questionnaire was pre-tested with a select group of individuals as indicated in Section 4.12. Furthermore, well-established measurement scales (viz. MLQ, OCQ, OTI and RAW), were incorporated to ensure accurate validated scales and to align the research with prior studies. The oversight by a GIBS appointed seasoned supervisor also enhanced the quality of the planning, execution and compilation of the research study.

The personal bias of the researcher was managed during the research project by maintaining a reflexive journal. This allowed the researcher to increase their self-awareness, track whether any of their decision-making was influenced by subjective bias or grounded in evidence and supported transparency. Personal biases were

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further mitigated by the interpretation of the results from the research supervisor and acknowledging positionality of the researcher's organisational role, professional background and how their perspective may have influenced the study.

While the use of established measurement scales provided the foundation, it was still necessary to confirm their suitability for this study. Therefore, the validity and the reliability of the constructs were statistically examined to reduce measurement error Hair et al. (2019).

#### **4.15.2. Convergent Validity**

The convergent validity of each construct within the study were assessed using Pearson's correlation test. This analysis calculated the correlation between each individual question (item) and the total mean score of its respective construct. A strong positive correlation indicates that the item was successful in measuring the same underlying concept as the overall construct (Hair et al., 2019). The results of this analysis are presented in Chapter 5 (See Table 2).

#### **4.15.3. Construct Validity: Exploratory Factor Analysis**

Despite the use of well-established scales in the survey, an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) was conducted using IBM SPSS to validate whether the items in the underlying factors were grouped accordingly. The use of an EFA was preferred over a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) due to the sample size (N=164) which was below the recommended threshold of 200 preferred by most researchers for a robust CFA application (Hair et al., 2019).

EFA was performed using Principal Axis Factoring with Promax rotation on the 32 items that measured the six primary constructs. The adequacy and suitability of the data being grouped were assessed using the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity (Allee et al., 2022). The results of the EFA, including the KMO, Bartlett's Test statistic and the pattern matrix of the factor loaders are presented in Chapter 5.

#### **4.15.4. Reliability**

The internal consistency reliability of each multi-item construct was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. According to Bujang et al. (2018), Cronbach's alpha is a statistic

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that is a key determinant of the internal consistency and the reliability of a questionnaire. This statistic indicates the extent to which items within the different constructs are moving within the same direction. A Cronbach's alpha value of 0.70 or higher is generally regarded as acceptable evidence of good internal consistency (Bujang et al., 2018; Hair et al., 2019). The results of the reliability analysis for each construct are presented in Chapter 5 (See Table 4).

#### **4.16. Research Ethics**

Ethical clearance was obtained from the GIBS Masters Research Ethics Committee on 28 July 2025, confirming that the study met established ethical standards. The data collection process included an informed consent form at the beginning of the survey. This form outlined the purpose of the survey, explained confidentiality measures, confirmed voluntary participation and allowed participants to withdraw at any time without consequence. Refer to Appendix C: Informed Consent Form for the detailed version of the informed consent form that accompanied the survey.

To protect the participants identity, the study also adhered to strict anonymity and confidentiality protocols. There was no identifying personal information that was collected in the survey. The individual respondents could not be identified in the research data or in any published findings.

The data was collected and stored electronically to minimise the risk of a loss of information which could have arisen from the use of manual questionnaires. Data was collected in adherence with the requirements of the Protection of Personal Information Act, Act 4 of 2013 and there was no free sharing of the research data. Data was stored on an online network drive which was password protected and prevented unauthorised access to the information. Data will be deleted after a period of two years.

#### **4.17. Chapter Summary**

The chapter outlined the research methodology that was followed in the study. The research design was grounded in a positivist philosophy, employing a deductive approach and a mono-method quantitative strategy. Data was collected via a

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structured survey using validated measuring instruments from existing literature. Over a period of five weeks, a purposive sample of 164 respondents was obtained.

The data preparation, coding and statistical techniques were detailed. These techniques included multiple regression analysis to assess the direct effects of hypotheses H1 to H3 and mediation analysis using PROCESS Macro to evaluate the indirect effects of hypotheses H4 to H9. This was supported by quality control measures such as validity testing, internal consistency reliability and exploratory factor analysis all of which confirmed the robustness of the constructs of the study. The ethical considerations of the study were addressed through the informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality and compliance with POPIA.

Overall, the methodological choices and approach ensured that the study was rigorous, valid, reliable and aligned with the objectives of the research question. Having detailed the process through which the data was prepared for the hypotheses testing, Chapter 5 presents the statistical findings and results of the analyses conducted.

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## **5. Findings and Results**

### **5.1. Introduction**

This chapter presents the empirical findings and results from the quantitative data analysis conducted to address the hypotheses (H1-H9) from Chapter 3. The purpose of the chapter is to report the results clearly and objectively without interpretation, which is reserved for Chapter 6.

The chapter begins with an assessment of the measurement model to confirm the validity and reliability of the constructs. It is then followed by a demographic profile of the sample analysed. The descriptive statistics of the key constructs are presented, after which the hypotheses are tested for both the direct and mediating effects. The assumptions of the statistical tests are outlined. The chapter concludes with a summary of the findings, highlighting which hypotheses were supported and which were rejected.

### **5.2. Assessment of the Measurement Model: Validity and Reliability**

Prior to testing the hypotheses, the measurement model was statistically assessed for reliability and validity. This confirms that the data was suitable for inferential analysis.

#### **5.2.1. Convergent Validity**

Convergent validity assessed whether the individual items within each construct were strongly correlated to the overall construct score. This indicated whether they measured the same underlying concept. Pearson's correlation analysis was conducted between each item and its corresponding constructs total mean score.

The results as summarised in Table 2, all items demonstrated strong, positive and statistically significant correlations ( $p$ -value $<0.05$ ) to the total of their respective construct. This confirms that all questions (items) were valid indicators of their intended constructs and were appropriate to retain in the survey instrument, which provides strong evidence of convergent validity across all six constructs. The frequency distributions for all individual items are provided in Appendix D: Frequency Distribution of Survey Items.

Table 2: Convergent Validity Statistics

Construct	Number of Items	Range of Item-Total Correlation (r)	p-value for All Items
FORM	5	0.769 to 0.899	<0.05
TRANS	5	0.696 to 0.831	<0.05
FAIR	5	0.692 to 0.789	<0.05
TRUST	5	0.830 to 0.910	<0.05
RESIL	5	0.682 to 0.821	<0.05
ORGCO	7	0.581 to 0.736	<0.05

N=164 for all constructs

### 5.2.2. Construct Validity: Exploratory Factor Analysis

An Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) using Principal Axis Factoring was conducted on the 32 items measuring the study's six primary constructs. A Promax rotation was employed to achieve a simpler, more interpretable factor structure.

Both KMO and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity were conducted as preliminary tests to assess the suitability of the data for factor analysis. The KMO measure of sampling adequacy was 0.918, classified as 'marvellous' according to Kaiser's (1974) interpretation that factor analysis would yield reliable factors. The Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was statistically significant ( $p < 0.05$ ) indicating that the correlation matrix was not an identity matrix, and meaningful correlations existed among the items. Together, these results provide strong evidence that the dataset was highly appropriate for conducting factor analysis.

Using the Kaiser criterion (eigenvalues  $> 1$ ), a six-factor solution was extracted which explained 65.04% of the total variance. The eigenvalues values and variance explained by each factor are detailed in Table 3.

Table 3: Total Variance Explained by the Six-Factor Solution

Factor	Total	Initial Eigenvalues % of Variance	Initial Eigenvalues Cumulative %
1	12.303	38.446	38.446
2	3.011	9.409	47.855
3	2.030	6.344	54.199
4	1.252	3.914	58.113
5	1.172	3.661	61.774
6	1.046	3.269	65.044

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

A rotated factor matrix (see Appendix E: EFA Rotated Factor Matrix for the complete matrix) revealed a clear and interpretable structure. This structure aligned with the study's six theoretical constructs. There were some notable and insightful exceptions.

**Factor 1** from the six-factor solution was dominated by combining all items measuring **Transformational Leadership** (FORM1-FORM5) and **Transactional Leadership** (TRANS1-TRANS5). This suggests that within the context of the sample, the participants viewed both constructs as a single factor i.e. an active leadership construct.

Despite this, the subsequent analysis tested the original hypotheses (H1-H9) using these two styles as distinct constructs. This decision was made for two primary reasons. First, the objective of this study was to address the gap in literature, by determining the distinct impact each of these specific leadership styles have on the mediating variables and the outcome variables, Second, the constructs of transformational and transactional leadership are grounded in the well-established theory from the FRLM by Bass (1985). This decision was made to maintain theoretical consistency and to allow for the direct test of these well-established distinct leadership styles against the dependent variable. The high correlation between the two constructs has been considered in the detailed findings and the relevant conclusions that have been drawn. They will also be acknowledged as a limitation in Chapter 7.

**Factor 2** clearly defined all items measuring **Trust in Leadership** (TRUST1-TRUST5) which loaded strongly on this factor, confirming it as a distinct construct.

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**Factor 3** defined items measuring **Laissez-Faire Leadership** (FAIR1-FAIR5) all with strong negative loadings, which confirmed the distinct and passive leadership style.

**Factor 4** was defined by all the items measuring **Resilience to Change** (RESIL-RESIL5) which confirmed it also as a distinct construct.

The **Organisational Commitment** items loaded onto two distinct factors providing support for the multidimension nature of the construct as proposed by Meyer and Allen (1991). **Factor 5** was defined by items reflecting **Affective Commitment and Continuance Commitment**. This suggests that during an organisational change, the employees' emotional attachment and their perceived costs of having to leave the organisation are aligned, which results in the forming of a single dimension.

**Factor 6** was defined by items reflecting **Normative Commitment** which reflected a distinct sense of a moral obligation to remain with the organisation. A composite mean score of the full construct (ORGCO\_MEAN) was retained for the primary analysis to ensure the direct testing of the original hypotheses which specify the organisational commitment as a single dependent variable. However, the nuanced understanding of the relationship provided by this factor structure was considered in the subsequent discussion of the results, to offer deeper insight.

Overall, EFA demonstrated the measurement model possessed good construct validity. The solution confirmed four of the intended constructs (Trust, Laissez-Faire Leadership, Resilience and the multidimensionality of Organisational Commitment). While transformational leadership and transactional leadership were loaded as a single factor, all constructs were deemed sufficiently valid to proceed with the testing of the study's hypotheses. Thus, the composite scores for each construct, were used in the subsequent inferential analyses.

### 5.2.3. Reliability

The internal consistency of each construct was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. This measured the extent to which the items within the construct correlated with each other.

As represented in Table 4 all constructs demonstrated excellent internal consistency, with the Cronbach's alpha coefficients exceeding the widely accepted threshold of

0.70 (Cao & Le, 2022; Mao et al., 2022; Nanjundeswaraswamy et al., 2025; Waidyaratne, 2022). This confirmed that the items within each construct reliably measured their intended dimensions and aligned with the standards per the research.

Table 4: Reliability Statistics

Construct	Number of Items	Cronbach's Alpha ( $\alpha$ )
Transformational leadership	5	0.868
Transactional leadership	5	0.812
Laissez-faire leadership	5	0.815
Employees' trust in leadership	5	0.933
Employees' resilience to change	5	0.812
Employees' organisational commitment	7	0.819

N=164 for all constructs

### 5.3. Demographic Profile

The characteristics of the 164 participants included in the final analysis are detailed below. The information refers to the data from Section A: Demographic Information from the survey. Frequency distributions and percentages present the personal, organisational and change event contexts of the participants. All respondents met the respective inclusion criterion to be included in the survey.

#### 5.3.1. Personal Demographic Characteristics

Table 5 below provides an overview of the personal demographics. The sample was predominantly composed of mid-career to senior-level professionals. The majority were between 30-59 years old, with the largest single group being 40–49-year-olds (38.4%). Gender representation favoured males (62.8%) and the positions occupied were largely in senior or middle-management positions (76.8%). This composition is typical of the average participant profile found in large organisations, who have significant professional experience and exposure to organisational leadership and change processes.

Table 5: Personal Demographics

<b>DEMOG 1 (Age)</b>	<b>Coding</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
20-29 years old	1	1	0.6
30-39 years old	2	57	34.8
40-49 years old	3	63	38.4
50-59 years old	4	38	23.2
60-65 years old	5	5	3.0
Total		164	100.0

<b>DEMOG 2 (Gender)</b>	<b>Coding</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Female	1	60	36.6
Male	2	103	62.8
Prefer not to say	3	1	0.6
Total		164	100.0

<b>DEMOG 3 (Job Level)</b>	<b>Coding</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Executive	1	32	19.5
Senior	2	73	44.5
Middle	3	53	32.3
Junior	4	6	3.7
Total		164	100.0

### 5.3.2. Organisational Demographic Characteristics

The organisational demographics of the sample are presented in Table 6. The participants represented a diverse cross-section of key industries. The most significant representations were from Technology & ICT (17.7%), Mining, Minerals & Chemicals (14.0%) and Financial & Professional Services (12.8%).

Importantly, all the participants' organisations met the study's inclusion criteria. Specifically, the 6 respondents with fewer than 100 employees were from organisations exceeding R100m in revenue. Similarly, the 18 respondents from

organisations with annual revenue below R100m were from organisations with more than 100-employees. This validation confirms that the sample is composed exclusively of medium to large organisations as intended.

The data shows a strong presence of substantial organisations, with nearly half (49.5%) of participants who have worked in organisations with more than 1,000 employees and similarly 59.7% have worked in organisations with revenue exceeding R1billion annually. This profile ensures that the participants experienced significant, formal change processes with their organisations. This provides a robust foundation for analysing the leadership impact.

Table 6: Organisational Demographics

<b>DEMOG 4 (Industry):</b>	<b>Coding</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Agriculture & Food	1	15	9.2
Mining, Minerals & Chemicals	2	23	14.0
General Manufacturing & Industrial	3	11	6.7
Energy, Fuel & Utilities	4	18	11.0
Financial & Professional Services	5	21	12.8
Technology & ICT	6	29	17.7
Logistics & Supply Chain	7	10	6.1
Consumer, Retail & Leisure	9	12	7.3
Other*	8, 10-14	25	15.2
<b>Total</b>		<b>164</b>	<b>100.0</b>

\*Note: The “Other” industry refers to a consolidation of all industries that represented less than 4% of the sample each. These industries were Government & Parastatal, Healthcare, Pharma & Medical, Automotive & Aviation, Construction, Water & Wastewater Services and Property Development & Real Estate.

<b>DEMOG 5 (Organisation Size: Employees):</b>	<b>Coding</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
0-99 employees	1	6	3.7
100-500 employees	2	41	25.0
501-1,000 employees	3	36	22.0
1,001-5,000 employees	4	26	15.9
5,001-10,000 employees	5	29	17.7
10,000+ employees	6	26	15.9
Total		164	100.0

Note. The total percentage is 100.0% despite the sum of the individual rounded percentages being 100.2% due to rounding.

<b>DEMOG 6 (Organisation Size: Revenue):</b>	<b>Coding</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Small or not known: R0m – R100m	1	18	11.0
Lower to Mid: R100m – R1b	2	48	29.3
Mid to Upper: R1b – R10b	3	42	25.6
Large: >R10b	4	56	34.1
Total		164	100.0

### 5.3.3. Organisational Change Characteristics

The characteristics of the change events experienced by the participants are detailed in Table 7 below. The important inclusion criterion was confirmed in DEMOG9 that all 164 participants had been with their organisation for at least 6 months prior to the change event having occurred. This ensured that all respondents had an established understanding of the organisation and its leadership before the change began.

The timing of the changes per the data indicate that they were overwhelmingly recent changes. In total 71.3% of the reported changes have occurred within the last two years. This recency likely enabled the participants to recall their experiences and perceptions of leadership being expected with greater clarity and accuracy.

The nature of the change shows a dominance of restructuring events which accounted for 60.4% of all changes analysed. Restructuring events are typically more complex and challenging as they can impact reporting lines, job security and the organisation's culture which makes their inclusion in this study relevant.

Table 7: Organisational Change Demographics

<b>DEMOG 7 (Timing of Change Process):</b>	<b>Coding</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Older than 5 years	1	0	0.00
5 years ago	2	18	11.0
4 years ago	3	12	7.3
3 years ago	4	17	10.4
2 years ago	5	32	19.5
1 year ago	6	45	27.4
This year or current	7	40	24.4
Total		164	100.0

<b>DEMOG 8 (Nature of Change Process):</b>	<b>Coding</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Restructuring	1	99	60.4
Ownership & Corporate Structure	2	19	11.6
Strategic & Directional	3	12	7.3
Technological & Digital Transformation	4	17	10.4
Leadership & People	5	11	6.7
Operational & Cultural	6	4	2.4
Externally Driven	7	2	1.2
Total		164	100.0

<b>DEMOG 9 (Tenure Prior to the Change):</b>	<b>Coding</b>	<b>Frequency (n)</b>	<b>Percentage (%)</b>
Shorter than 6 months	1	0	0.0
6 months or longer	2	164	100.0
Total		164	100.0

#### 5.4. Descriptive Statistics of the Key Constructs

Following the demographic profile, descriptive statistics were calculated for the composite scores of the six primary constructs. These constructs (transformational leadership, transactional leadership, laissez-faire leadership, trust in leadership, resilience to change and organisational commitment) relate directly to the variables specified in the research hypotheses (H1-H9). This provides an overview of the participant's perceptions during the context of the organisational change event. The results are summarised in Table 8.

Table 8: Descriptive Statistics of Key Constructs

<b>Construct:</b>	<b>No of Items</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>	<b>Minimum</b>	<b>Maximum</b>
Transformational leadership (FORM_M)	5	3.34	1.02	1.00	5.00
Transactional leadership (TRANS_M)	5	3.15	0.90	1.00	5.00
Laissez-faire leadership (FAIR_M)	5	2.64	0.98	1.00	4.80
Employee trust in leadership (TRUST_M)	5	3.17	1.17	1.00	5.00
Employee resilience (RESIL_M)	5	3.94	0.66	2.20	5.00
Organisational commitment (ORGCO_M)	7	3.32	0.90	1.14	5.00

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All constructs were measured on a 5-point Likert scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree). The Valid N (listwise) was 164 for all constructs, confirming no missing data in the final sample.

An analysis of the construct scores revealed insights into the sample's experience during organisational change. The participants on average, viewed their leaders exhibited moderate levels of both transformational leadership (M=3.34) and transactional leadership (M=3.15). The perception was the laissez-faire was lower with M=2.64, below the midpoint of the scale.

With regards to the mediating variables, trust in leadership was above the midpoint of the scale suggesting moderate but not strong level of trust in their leaders during the change process. By contrast, the employee's resilience to change was the highest of all constructs (M=3.94). This indicated their ability to adapt to organisational changes.

The dependent variable score of M=3.32 suggested a moderate level of attachment to the organisation among the participants following the change event.

The standard deviation for the three leadership styles and trust constructs indicated a considerable spread of responses around the mean. This indicated that there was significant variation in how employees perceived their leaders and their trustworthiness, which will be useful for detecting relationships in the subsequent inferential analysis. The smaller deviation for the resilience construct suggests greater consensus among the participants for them to adapt to a change. The minimum and maximum values for the construct highlight that the full range was used on most constructs.

While the composite scores provided a high-level overview, a more granular analysis of individual frequency items (see Appendix D: Frequency Distribution of Survey Items) reveals further nuance into how the different components of the leadership styles and the mediators were perceived. These nuances are explored in the discussion chapter (Chapter 6).

## 5.5. Testing of the Assumptions

Before interpreting the results of the multiple regression analysis and the mediation analyses, several key assumptions were verified using IBM SPSS to ensure the validity of the findings. For the **multiple regression analysis** for hypotheses H1 to

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H3, these assumptions included linearity, the independence of errors, homoscedasticity, the normality of residuals and the absence of multicollinearity.

Linearity was assessed by visual inspection of scatterplots, that revealed no curvilinear patterns. The independence of errors was confirmed with a Durbin-Watson statistic of 1.965 which is close to the ideal value of 2. Homoscedasticity was verified by the plot of standardised residuals versus the standardised predicted values which showed a random, rectangular distribution. The normality of residuals was also confirmed, the examined P-Plot indicated points close to the diagonal line. Finally, the assumption of the absence of multicollinearity was ensured, the Variance Inflation Factor (VIF) for the independent variables were within the range of 1.895 to 3.039, below the conservative threshold of 5 (Hair et al., 2019). Overall, of the required assumptions of the multiple regression analysis were satisfied.

With regards to the **mediation analyses** for the hypotheses H4 to H9, the standard regression assumptions were also assessed for both models that made up the mediation pathway. These include the model for the effect of the independent variable (X) on the mediator (M) and the effect of both X and M on the dependent variable (Y).

There were key assumptions specific to mediation that were considered. First, the reliability of the two mediator measurements were supported by their good internal consistency indicated via their Cronbach Alpha's reported in Section 5.2.3. Second, the theoretical models assumed that there were no unmeasured confounding of the relationships between X and M and M and Y. This cannot be tested statistically but is grounded in the study's literature review.

### **5.6. Hypothesis Testing: Direct Effects (H1 - H3)**

The direct effects of three different leadership styles on organisational commitment were conducted via a multiple regression analysis. Utilising a multiple regression allowed all three independent variables to be tested in the same model, as opposed to testing in isolation. This allowed a more accurate combined effect.

The analysis assessed the ability of transformational leadership (FORM\_MEAN), transactional leadership (TRANS\_MEAN) and laissez-faire leadership (FAIR\_MEAN) to predict the levels of organisational commitment (ORGCO\_MEAN).

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### 5.6.1. Overall Model Fit

As shown in Table 9, the combination of the three leadership style variables indicated a moderate relationship to organisational commitment. The independent variables accounted for 26.5% (R Square of 0.265) of the variation in employee's organisational commitment scores.

Table 9: Multiple Regression Model Summary

R	R Square	Adjusted R Square	Std. Error of the Estimate
0.515	0.265	0.251	0.776

Note: Predictors: (Constant), Transformational Leadership, Transactional Leadership, Laissez-Faire Leadership

The ANOVA results from Table 10, indicate that the regression model was statistically significant  $F(3, 160) = 19.217$ ,  $p$  value  $<0.01$ . This confirms that the combined three leadership styles **significantly predict** organisational commitment. Therefore, the regression model is a better predictor than using the mean organisational commitment value.

Table 10: ANOVA

	Sum of Squares	Df	Mean Square	F	p-value
Regression	34.731	3	11.577	19.217	<.001
Residual	96.391	160	0.602		
Total	131.121	163			

Dependent Variable: ORGCO\_MEAN

Predictors: (Constant), FAIR\_MEAN, TRANS\_MEAN, FORM\_MEAN

### 5.6.2. Analysis of Hypothesis Testing

All statistical tests were conducted at a 5% level of significance ( $\alpha = 0.05$ ). The analysis of the direct relationship between the leadership styles and organisational commitment provided the following results for the hypotheses (see Table 11):

**Hypothesis H1** predicted a positive effect of transformational leadership on employees' organisational commitment. The results show a significant positive relationship ( $\beta = 0.247$  and p-value of 0.038). Therefore, the hypothesis **H1 is supported**.

**Hypothesis H2** predicted a positive effect of transactional leadership on employees' organisational commitment. The results show a significant positive relationship ( $\beta = 0.336$  and p-value of 0.004). Therefore, the hypothesis **H2 is supported**.

**Hypothesis H3** predicted a negative effect of laissez-faire leadership on employees' organisational commitment. The results show a positive, non-significant relationship ( $\beta = 0.060$  and p-value of 0.522). Therefore, the hypothesis **H3 is not supported**.

Table 11: Regression Coefficients for Direct Effects

Predictor	Unstandardised B	Std. Error	Standardised Coefficients Beta	T	p-value
(Constant)	1.389	0.487		2.853	0.005
Transformational Leadership	0.218	0.104	0.247	2.092	0.038
Transactional Leadership	0.334	0.116	0.336	2.894	0.004
Laissez-faire Leadership	0.055	0.086	0.060	0.642	0.522

In summary, both transformational and transactional leadership were significant positive predictors of employees' organisational commitment during change, while laissez-faire leadership was not a significant predictor.

### 5.7. Hypothesis Testing: Mediating Effects (H4 - H9)

The analysis conducted was to test the hypotheses of the indirect effects of the mediators (employees' trust in leadership and employees' resilience to change) on the relationship between the three leadership styles and organisational commitment.

To examine these indirect effects, the study utilised a series of simple mediation analyses using Model 4 of the PROCESS macro for SPSS.

The method employed bootstrapping with 5,000 resamples to generate bias-corrected confidence levels. A significant indirect effect was indicated when the 95% confidence level did not contain zero. This ensured robust estimates that did not rely on the assumption of normality of the sample distribution for the indirect effect (Hayes, 2022).

### 5.7.1. Mediation via Employees' Trust in Leadership (H4, H5 and H6)

The mediation analyses conducted to test hypotheses H4, H5 and H6 proposed that employees' trust in leadership mediated the relationship between each leadership style and organisational commitment as indicated in Table 12.

Table 12: Mediation Pathway for Employees' Trust in Leadership

Hypothesis	Pathway: (Independent Variable (X) - Mediator (M) - Dependent Variable (Y))
H4	Transformational leadership → Trust in leader → Commitment FORM_MEAN → TRUST_MEAN → ORGCO_MEAN
H5	Transactional leadership → Trust in leader → Commitment TRANS_MEAN → TRUST_MEAN → ORGCO_MEAN
H6	Laissez-faire leadership → Trust in leader → Commitment FAIR_MEAN → TRUST_MEAN → ORGCO_MEAN

**Hypothesis H4** proposes that the employees' trust in leadership positively mediates the effects of transformational leadership on organisational commitment. The results are presented in Table 13.

A significant positive total effect of transformational leadership on organisational commitment was observed ( $\beta = 0.42$ , 95% CI [0.30, 0.54]). Crucially, the indirect effect through employees trust in leadership was positive and statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.37$ , Boot SE = 0.09, 95% Boot CI [0.19, 0.55]). As the bootstrapped confidence interval for the indirect effect does not contain zero, the mediation is confirmed.

Furthermore, the direct effect of transformational leadership becomes non-significant without the mediator in the model ( $\beta = 0.05$ , 95% CI [-0.15, 0.25]). This indicates that employees' trust in leadership **fully mediates** the relationship between the transformational leadership style and organisational commitment. Therefore, the hypothesis for **H4 is supported**.

Table 13: H4: Effects for the Mediation of Transformational Leadership (X) on Organisational Commitment (Y) by Trust in Leadership (M)

Path	Effect ( $\beta$ )	Boot SE	95% Boot CI LL	95% Boot CI UL
Total effect of X on Y	0.4197	0.0610	0.2993	0.5401
Indirect effect of X on Y i.e. through M the mediator	0.3699	0.0915	0.1858	0.5491
Direct effect of X on Y	0.0498	0.1032	-0.1539	0.2535

\*Note: X = Transformational Leadership, Y = Organisational Commitment, M = Trust in Leadership. N = 164. Bootstrap sample size = 5,000. Confidence intervals (CI) for the total and direct effects are normal CIs. The confidence interval for the indirect effect is bootstrapped. LL = Lower Limit, UL = Upper Limit.

**Hypothesis H5** proposes that the employees' trust in leadership positively mediates the effects of transactional leadership on organisational commitment. The results are presented in Table 14.

A significant positive total effect of transactional leadership on organisational commitment was observed ( $\beta = 0.49$ , 95% CI [0.36, 0.63]). The indirect effect through employees' trust in leadership was positive and statistically significant ( $\beta = 0.30$ , Boot SE = 0.08, 95% Boot CI [0.14, 0.45]).

However, unlike the findings for transformational leadership, the direct effect of transactional leadership remained significant ( $\beta = 0.19$ , 95% CI [0.01, 0.38]). This indicates that the employees' trust in leadership was only a **partial mediator** in the relationship. Therefore, the hypothesis **H5 is supported**.

Table 14: H5: Effects for the Mediation of Transactional Leadership (X) on Organisational Commitment (Y) by Trust in Leadership (M)

Path	Effect (β)	Boot SE	95% Boot CI LL	95% Boot CI UL
Total effect of X on Y	0.4917	0.0679	0.3577	0.6256
Indirect effect of X on Y i.e. through M the mediator	0.2989	0.0773	0.1437	0.4486
Direct effect of X on Y	0.1927	0.0944	0.0063	0.3791

\*Note: X = Transactional Leadership, Y = Organisational Commitment, M = Trust in Leadership.

N = 164. Bootstrap sample size = 5,000. Confidence intervals (CI) for the total and direct effects are normal CIs. The confidence interval for the indirect effect is bootstrapped. LL = Lower Limit, UL = Upper Limit.

**Hypothesis H6** proposes that employees' trust in leadership negatively mediates the effects of laissez-faire leadership on organisational commitment. The results are presented in Table 15.

A significant negative total effect of laissez-faire leadership on organisational commitment was found ( $\beta = -0.29$ , 95% CI [-0.43, -0.16]). Crucially, the indirect effect through employees' trust was negative and statistically significant, as confirmed by a bootstrapped confidence interval that does not contain zero ( $\beta = -0.41$ , Boot SE = 0.06, 95% Boot CI [-0.54, -0.28]).

The direct effect was positive but not significant ( $\beta = 0.12$ , 95% CI [-0.05, 0.28]), indicating that the damaging effect of laissez-faire leadership on commitment is **fully mediated** by its severe erosion of employee trust. Therefore, hypothesis **H6 is supported**.

Table 15: H6: Effects for the Mediation of Laissez-faire (X) on Organisational Commitment (Y) by Trust in Leadership (M)

Path	Effect ( $\beta$ )	Boot SE	95% Boot CI LL	95% Boot CI UL
Total effect of X on Y	-0.2933	0.0684	-0.4284	-0.1583
Indirect effect of X on Y i.e. through M the mediator	-0.4109	0.0642	-0.5365	-0.2830
Direct effect of X on Y	0.1175	0.0835	-0.0474	0.2824

\*Note: X = Laissez-faire Leadership, Y = Organisational Commitment, M = Trust in Leadership.

N = 164. Bootstrap sample size = 5,000. Confidence intervals (CI) for the total and direct effects are normal CIs. The confidence interval for the indirect effect is bootstrapped. LL = Lower Limit, UL = Upper Limit.

### 5.7.2. Mediation via Employees' Resilience to Change (H7, H8 and H9)

The mediation analyses conducted to test hypotheses H7, H8 and H9 proposed that employees' resilience to change mediated the relationship between each leadership style and organisational commitment as indicated in Table 16.

Table 16: Mediation Pathway for Employees' Resilience to Change in Leadership

Hypothesis	Pathway: (Independent Variable (X) - Mediator (M) - Dependent Variable (Y))
H7	Transformational leadership → Resilience → Commitment FORM_MEAN → RESIL_MEAN → ORGCO_MEAN
H8	Transactional leadership → Resilience → Commitment TRANS_MEAN → RESIL_MEAN → ORGCO_MEAN
H9	Laissez-faire leadership → Resilience → Commitment FAIR_MEAN → RESIL_MEAN → ORGCO_MEAN

**Hypothesis H7** proposes that employees' resilience to change positively mediates the effects of transformational leadership on organisational commitment. The results are presented in Table 17.

There was a significant positive total effect of transformational leadership on organisational commitment as indicated by  $\beta = 0.42$ , 95% CI (0.30, 0.54). The indirect effect through resilience was positive and statistically significant as the bootstrapped confidence interval did not contain zero ( $\beta = 0.07$ , Boot SE = 0.03, 95% Boot CI [0.03, 0.13]). The magnitude for resilience as a mediator was smaller than trust was as a mediator for transformational leadership on organisational commitment.

Thus, unlike the full mediation seen with trust, the direct effect of transformational leadership remained significant after accounting for resilience ( $\beta = 0.35$ , Boot SE = 0.06, 95% CI [0.22, 0.47]). This indicated that resilience acts a significant but **partial mediator**, so that transformational leadership had built commitment via resilience, but also commitment was enhanced through other mechanisms. Therefore, hypothesis **H7 is supported**.

Table 17: H7: Effects for the Mediation of Transformational Leadership (X) on Organisational Commitment (Y) by Resilience to Change by Employees (M)

Path	Effect ( $\beta$ )	Boot SE	95% Boot CI LL	95% Boot CI UL
Total effect of X on Y	0.4197	0.0610	0.2993	0.5401
Indirect effect of X on Y i.e. through M the mediator	0.0731	0.0273	0.0267	0.1326
Direct effect of X on Y	0.3466	0.0622	0.2238	0.4695

\*Note: X = Transformational Leadership, Y = Organisational Commitment, M = Resilience to Change.

N = 164. Bootstrap sample size = 5,000. Confidence intervals (CI) for the total and direct effects are normal CIs. The confidence interval for the indirect effect is bootstrapped. LL = Lower Limit, UL = Upper Limit.

**Hypothesis H8** proposes that employees' resilience to change positively mediates the effects of transactional leadership on organisational commitment. The results are presented in Table 18.

A significant positive total effect of transactional leadership on organisational commitment was found ( $\beta = 0.49$ , 95% CI [0.36, 0.63]). A significant indirect effect

through resilience was identified as the bootstrapped confidence level did not contain zero ( $\beta = 0.08$ , Boot SE = 0.03, 95% Boot CI [0.02, 0.15]). However, while statistically significant, the magnitude of this indirect effect is small. Thus, it represents a relatively minor mechanism in the relationship.

This is further confirmed by the direct effect of transactional leadership on organisational commitment, which remained statistically significant without the mediator ( $\beta = 0.41$ , Boot SE = 0.07, 95% CI [0.27, 0.55]). Thus, resilience acts a significant **partial mediator**, but its role is modest. Transactional leadership builds commitment through other more influential mechanisms not measured in this model. Resilience is a secondary albeit significant role. Therefore, hypothesis **H8 is supported**, but the mediating effect of resilience is limited.

Table 18: H8: Effects for the Mediation of Transactional Leadership (X) on Organisational Commitment (Y) by Resilience to Change by Employees (M)

Path	Effect ( $\beta$ )	Boot SE	95% Boot CI LL	95% Boot CI UL
Total effect of X on Y	0.4917	0.0679	0.3577	0.6256
Indirect effect of X on Y i.e. through M the mediator	0.0803	0.0301	0.0284	0.1468
Direct effect of X on Y	0.4113	0.0694	0.2743	0.5484

\*Note: X = Transactional Leadership, Y = Organisational Commitment, M = Resilience to Change

N = 164. Bootstrap sample size = 5,000. Confidence intervals (CI) for the total and direct effects are normal CIs. The confidence interval for the indirect effect is bootstrapped. LL = Lower Limit, UL = Upper Limit.

**Hypothesis H9** proposes that employees' resilience to change negatively mediates the effects of laissez-faire leadership on organisational commitment. The results are presented in Table 19.

A significant negative total effect of laissez-faire leadership on organisational commitment was found ( $\beta = -0.29$ , 95% CI [-0.43, -0.16]). Through the mediator resilience the indirect effect was also negative and statistically confirmed as the bootstrapped confidence interval did not contain zero ( $\beta = -0.05$ , Boot SE = 0.03, 95%

Boot CI [-0.11, -0.01]). However, like the finding for transactional leadership (H8), the small magnitude (as indicated by the  $\beta$ ) indicates that resilience is a minor mechanism in the overall negative relationship.

This is confirmed by the direct effect of laissez-faire leadership being significant and negative ( $\beta = -0.24$ , 95% Boot CI [-0.37, -0.11]) on organisational commitment. Thus, resilience acts as a significant but only **partial mediator**. Laissez-faire leadership erodes commitment through diminishing resilience but as a secondary pathway. This leadership style and its negative impact is primarily driven by other mechanisms not measured in this model. Overall, **hypothesis H9 is supported**.

Table 19: H9: Effects for the Mediation of Laissez-Faire Leadership (X) on Organisational Commitment (Y) by Resilience to Change by Employees (M)

Path	Effect ( $\beta$ )	Boot SE	95% Boot CI LL	95% Boot CI UL
Total effect of X on Y	-0.2933	0.0684	-0.4284	-0.1583
Indirect effect of X on Y i.e. through M the mediator	-0.0521	0.0254	-0.1081	-0.0078
Direct effect of X on Y	-0.2412	0.0651	-0.3698	-0.1126

\*Note: X = Laissez-Faire Leadership, Y = Organisational Commitment, M = Resilience to Change

N = 164. Bootstrap sample size = 5,000. Confidence intervals (CI) for the total and direct effects are normal CIs. The confidence interval for the indirect effect is bootstrapped. LL = Lower Limit, UL = Upper Limit.

## 5.8. Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the findings from the study, initially with the validation of the measurement model. Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) and reliability tests also confirmed the constructs and their reliability. All necessary statistical assumptions for the multivariate analysis were tested and satisfied.

The subsequent analysis tested the direct effects of hypotheses H1 to H3 via multiple regression analysis and the indirect effects of hypotheses H4 to H9 using a series of mediation analyses.

The multiple regression analysis revealed that both transformational and transactional leadership are significant positive predictors of organisational commitment by employees (H1 and H3 were supported). However, laissez-faire leadership was not a significant predictor (H3 was not supported).

The mediation analyses found trust in leaders to be a powerful mediator. It fully mediated the relationship between transformational leadership and organisational commitment and partially mediated the relationship for transactional leadership. Furthermore, it had a strong negative mediating effect i.e. the erosion of trust by laissez-faire leadership on commitment. The hypotheses H4 to H6 were supported.

Resilience to change by employees also served as a statistically significant mediator for all three leadership styles. However, its effect was consistently smaller than trust, indicating it to be a secondary mechanism.

The outcomes of all the hypotheses are summarised in Table 20 below, allowing for the discussion of these results in Chapter 6.

Table 20: Summary of Hypothesis Testing Results

H	Independent Variable (X)	Mediator (M)	Dependent Variable (Y)	Result	Key Statistic (Indirect Effect)
H1	Transformational leadership		Organisational commitment	Supported	$\beta = 0.247$ , $p = 0.038$
H2	Transactional leadership		Organisational commitment	Supported	$\beta = 0.336$ , $p = 0.004$
H3	Laissez-faire leadership		Organisational commitment	Not supported	$\beta = 0.060$ , $p = 0.522$
H4	Transformational leadership	Trust	Organisational commitment	Supported Full mediator	$\beta = 0.37$ , Boot CI [0.19, 0.55]
H5	Transactional leadership	Trust	Organisational commitment	Supported Partial mediator	$\beta = 0.30$ , Boot CI [0.14, 0.45]

H6	Laissez-faire leadership	Trust	Organisational commitment	Supported Full mediator	$\beta = -0.41$ , Boot CI [-0.54, -0.28]
H7	Transformational leadership	Resilience	Organisational commitment	Supported Partial mediator	$\beta = 0.07$ , Boot CI [0.03, 0.13]
H8	Transactional leadership	Resilience	Organisational commitment	Supported Partial mediator	$\beta = 0.08$ , Boot CI [0.03, 0.15]
H9	Laissez-faire leadership	Resilience	Organisational commitment	Supported Partial mediator	$\beta = -0.05$ , Boot CI [-0.11, -0.01]

Note: CI = Confidence Interval. Bootstrapped CI (Boot CI) based on 5,000 samples.

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## 6. Discussion of Results

### 6.1. Introduction

The previous chapter presented the findings from the study, by confirming the reliability and validity of the measurement model; and then detailing the statistical findings of the direct and indirect hypothesis tests. The results demonstrated a significant direct relationship between two of the three styles predominantly utilised by leaders during a change management process. Furthermore, the mediating factors of trust in leadership and employees' resilience to change revealed the central pathways through which they influence employee commitment.

This chapter moves beyond reporting what these statistical relationships are, to interpret the meaning of these findings and their broader significance. The discussion contextualises these results in relation to the established body of literature reviewed in Chapter 2. This involves reconciling to established or expected theoretical outcomes from the literature but also providing a nuanced argument in relation to differences that have emerged.

The discussion of the results will be structured around the study's hypotheses to provide a clear overview. The key areas of focus in this chapter include interpreting the direct influence of the two active leadership styles and unpacking the nuanced finding from the laissez-faire leadership style around it having a more powerful indirect influence. Further analysis includes contrasting the dominant role of trust in leadership versus secondary impact of employees' resilience during change.

Overall, these insights help explain the psychological pathways through which leadership behaviours can either foster or hinder commitment during times of change. By drawing on Meyer and Allen's (1991) framework, the discussion will consider how the different leadership styles may influence the nature of the commitment that is achieved. This framework includes positive, emotional attachment (**affective commitment**) and an obligatory bond (**continuance commitment** or **normative commitment**) to the organisation. Distinguishing between these types are critical, as it ultimately determines the sustainability of the change initiative.

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## 6.2. The Nature of the Organisational Commitment during the Change

Prior to the discussion of the direct and indirect effects of leadership on commitment, it is essential to understand the nature of the organisational commitment the leaders were influencing. An analysis of the organisational commitment items (ORGCO1 to ORGCO7), indicate a complex blend of commitment.

The items related to **affective commitment** (ORGCO1 to ORGCO3) had a moderately positive score (Mean=3.37) to indicate a reasonable level of emotional attachment was maintained. There were also similar positive scores (Mean=3.46) around **continuance commitment** related items (ORGCO4 to ORGCO5) to suggest that many respondents were as influenced by the perceived necessity to stay due to limited alternatives or a personal cost to leave. However, the lowest scores for **normative commitment** (Mean=3.09) indicate a sense of moral obligation or duty was the least compelling driver of retention following the change.

This indicates that the employees were driven by a combination of desire and necessity but not by obligation. It also suggests that a portion of the workforce could have felt a sense of entrapment and their commitment is because they need to stay rather than because they strongly felt that they ought to.

## 6.3. Discussion of the Direct Effects of Organisational Commitment

### 6.3.1. The Validated but Nuanced Role of Transformational Leadership (H1)

The significant positive relationship between transformational leadership and organisational commitment, (H1:  $\beta = 0.247$ ,  $p = 0.038$ ) provides empirical support for its efficacy in retaining employees' attachment during times of disruption, aligned with the established literature of Alqatawenh (2018), Bass (1985) and Hosna (2021).

However, a deeper analysis of this style into its core components (viz. inspirational motivation, idealised influence, individualised consideration and intellectual stimulation) reveals a more nuanced hierarchical application of this leadership style during times of change.

The data indicates that the items designed to measure **inspirational motivation** (FORM1 and FORM2) had highest mean scores (3.45 and 3.57 respectively) and were the most strongly affirmed by respondents. This finding is significant given that

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over 60% of the respondents' change events related to a restructure which is inherently associated with anxiety and job insecurity. In the context of uncertainty, employees relied on the leaders who could articulate a compelling and clear vision of the future that includes the respondents a critical part of it. This result confirms the principle of Kotter (1996), which was further advanced by Mouazen et al. (2023), that a clear vision is critical for reducing ambiguity and creating **affective commitment** by emotional attachment that is necessary for the employees to navigate the change. It can be argued that affective commitment is the most desirable type of commitment for change as it leads to voluntary and enthusiastic support rather than mere compliance.

However, the analysis indicates a slight divergence in the practical application of the other transformational components. Notably, **individualised consideration** (FORM3 Mean=3.26) and **intellectual stimulation** (FORM4 Mean=3.21) yielded positive but comparatively lower scores than inspirational motivation. This contrast suggests that while transformational leaders frequently provide the overarching vision to their employees, the more demanding, time-consuming behaviours required to cater for the employees' unique circumstances, provide personalised support, or encourage critical thinking from employees are less commonly demonstrated.

This study was conducted for large scale organisational change events; thus, the findings highlight a common challenge for transformational leaders in the larger organisations. They tend to prioritise the organisational stability and provide high level communication for overall clarity and focus. This could come at the expense of individual attention or intellectual stimulation of employees.

Similarly, **idealised influence** (FORM5 Mean=3.23) scored lower than inspirational motivation. This indicates that the difficult circumstances around navigating a change event, can lower the employees' perception of the leader as a role model or demonstrating the highest standard of ethics.

Overall, the findings confirm that transformational leadership via hypothesis H1, remains a valid and effective driver of organisational commitment, particularly affective commitment during times of change due to it being an active form of leadership. The communication of an inspirational vision emerges as its foundational behaviour to sustain employees' commitment. The other core components of

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transformational leadership can often be curtailed due to the change event and leaders need to be cognisant of addressing these so that they can deepen the overall commitment.

### 6.3.2. The Impactful Short-Term Efficiency of Transactional Leadership (H2)

The multiple regression analysis supported Hypothesis H2 to indicate the significant positive relationship between transactional leadership and organisational commitment (H2:  $\beta = 0.336$ ,  $p = 0.004$ ). More surprising was the standard coefficient ( $\beta$ ) being larger than that for transformational leadership (H1), indicating a transactional style to be a more powerful predictor of obtaining employees commitment to the organisation during a change process.

This finding challenges the traditional view advanced by Bass (1985) who argued that transformational is superior to the more foundational transactional leadership style due to its deeper influence on employees. However, the result of this study aligns to the work of Nanjundeswaraswamy et al. (2025) who indicates that both leadership styles can be effective in shaping various aspects of employee commitment.

To interpret the effectiveness of this leadership style a component-level analysis was conducted. The data indicates that the leaders used this style to focus on **short-term, measurable outcomes** (TRANS4 Mean=3.34) and engage in **active monitoring** behaviours (TRANS3 Mean=3.15, TRANS5 Mean=3.23). This suggests that during an organisational change, the leaders leveraged control and monitoring to ensure compliance, achieve short-term targets and overall stability. This aligns with the principle from Bass and Riggio (2006) that having clarity and structure reduces role ambiguity and anxiety that occurs from an organisational upheaval.

By contrast, there were lower scores for the provision of **contingent rewards** (TRANS1 Mean=3.05, TRANS2 Mean=2.98). This indicates that the employees were less satisfied with tangible or psychological rewards they received for successfully navigating the change. This results in a “promise gap” from unmet expectations for financial incentives or insufficient recognition and praise. This gap can weaken the long-term motivational impact of transactional leadership despite its short-term efficiency.

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This “promise gap” impacts the type of commitment that is created. The focus on clarity and structure appeared to strengthen **continuance commitment** as the employees calculated that it was safer and more beneficial to stay which is consistent with the work of Stark et al. (2025). However, the failure to deliver on the contingent rewards limited obtaining deeper affective commitment. The commitment under transactional leadership based on the findings was more pragmatic and calculative than emotional or voluntary.

In summary, the effectiveness of transactional leadership in this context was from being pragmatic rather than inspirational. It prevented a leadership vacuum from occurring by demonstrating visible engagement and control during the change process. This leadership style provided employees with the fundamental need for predictability which outweighed the limitations of unfulfilled contingent rewards to the employees. While transactional leadership is unlikely to inspire employees in the long-term, its short-term efficiency reinforces continuance commitment and confirms its value as a stabiliser during the organisational change process.

### **6.3.3. The Ambiguity of Laissez-Faire Leadership (H3)**

Hypothesis H3 proposed that laissez-faire leadership had a negative effect on organisational commitment. However, the regression analysis from Chapter 5 did not support this hypothesis (H3:  $\beta = 0.060$ ,  $p = 0.522$ ). The finding of a small non-significant positive effect is contrary to the established literature that links this avoidant passive leadership style to negative outcomes of employees’ commitment (Diebig & Bormann, 2020; Lundmark et al., 2021; Robert & Vandenberghe, 2020).

This difference between the hypothesis finding and prior literature suggests that the role of laissez-faire leadership may be more context-dependent and complex. This perspective is also supported by Zheng and Li (2024) who note that the ineffectiveness of such a leadership style is dependent on the situational and organisational dynamics at play. For this reason, it requires a deeper exploration as to how the respondents experienced laissez-faire leadership during their change process.

The overall mean score across the items in the survey (FAIR1 to FAIR5) was low at 2.64, which confirms the characterisation in the MLQ that it is generally a passive and

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avoidant style. An analysis at granular level indicates that the experience of laissez-faire leadership is concentrated within specific demographic and organisational contexts which likely explains the non-significant direct effect when these varied experiences of 164 responses were aggregated.

Employees at the two extremes of their careers, the youngest (20–29-year-olds) and those nearing retirement (60–65-year-olds) reported the highest levels of avoidant leadership with an average mean score of 4.00 and 3.92 respectively. This suggests that leaders have a disproportionate disengagement with these age groupings due to their perceived lower organisational influence they can make to the change process or that they are nearing exit (pre-retirement). Female respondents (Mean=2.78) reported a noticeably higher experience of laissez-faire leadership than the male counterparts (Mean=2.56), which points to an inequity in leadership support, a critical factor often overlooked in change management processes.

Moreover, laissez-faire leadership was more pronounced during change events that were external events from regulatory shifts, pandemics, mergers and acquisitions (i.e. those coded as Externally Driven (Mean=4.00) or Ownership & Corporate Structure (Mean=3.16)). This supports the view by Stouten et al. (2018) that if change events bring extreme uncertainty, leaders themselves may become overwhelmed or uncertain which leads to avoidant behaviours.

The respondents from mid-sized organisations with between 1,001 to 5,000 employees reported the highest level of laissez-faire leadership (Mean=3.35). This may indicate that these organisations are large enough that the leaders may become distant from their employees during the change process but not large enough to have a robust, detailed change management process.

Therefore, the non-significant result for H3 should not be interpreted that the laissez-faire leadership is harmless. It is rather indicative of its impact being not universally constant in line but context dependent (Zheng & Li, 2024). Its damaging effect is not a direct path to commitment but rather through the complete erosion of trust, as demonstrated by its full mediation detailed under Hypothesis H6.

The overall presence of laissez-faire leadership can be regarded as a risk factor during the change management process. Its visibility during complex change initiatives to

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certain employee groups may result in them not receiving the appropriate leadership behaviours. This analysis supports the conclusion that laissez-faire leadership leads to a reduced score on the commitment scale but also fails to generate any affective commitment necessary for the successful change. It could be argued that continuance commitment may even be negative as employees stay on from a lack of alternatives in the market but remain disengaged and resistant to the change process.

#### **6.3.4. Key Takeaways from the Direct Hypothesis Discussion**

The discussion of the direct effects of hypothesis H1 to H3 indicate that there is a clear requirement for active leadership during a change management process. Both transformational and transactional leadership styles were significant positive predictors of organisational commitment from employees. The higher overall impact for transactional leadership indicates that providing clarity, structure and stability is slightly more valued than the overall vision that the leadership may communicate.

It is important to note that the EFA in Chapter 5 indicated that the respondents perceived transformational and transactional leadership behaviours as part of a broader 'active leadership' construct. While this study analysed them separately based on the theoretical discussions in established frameworks like the MLQ, the high correlation suggests in practice during change, employees may value actively engaged leadership that combines both elements of transformational and transactional.

Conversely, while the direct effect of laissez-faire leadership was statistically non-significant, the granular analysis reveals its context-dependent nature highlights it as a risk factor. Its apparent ambiguity underscores the finding that it is passive avoidance which can create a leadership gap precisely when the employees need active guidance and support the most.

The significance and strength of the different leadership styles and organisational commitment can be expanded upon further by reviewing the underlying psychological mechanism to indicate how these leadership behaviours include the employee attachment during the change. The analysis thus examines the mediating role of trust and resilience.

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## 6.4. The Central Mediating Role of Employees' Trust in Leadership

### 6.4.1. Introduction to the Mediating Pathway of Trust

In this section, the discussion extends beyond analysing the direct effects of leadership styles, towards understanding how underlying psychological mechanisms (viz. employees' trust in their leaders and their personal resilience) can help explain **how** leadership influences the employees' commitment during the change. As established in the literature review in Chapter 2, trust is a multi-dimensional construct. It comprises employees' confidence in their leaders' ability, competence and reliability (**cognitive-based trust**) and the belief that their leaders have feelings of mutual respect, genuine concern and an emotional bond to the employees (**affective-based trust**) (Farid et al., 2020; Legood et al., 2022).

Within this context, trust functions as a mediating bridge linking leadership behaviours to the employees' overall attitude and behaviour during organisational change. The preceding analysis confirmed that **active** leadership styles have a significant direct relationship to commitment. This section now discusses Hypotheses H4, H5 and H6 as to the role of trust not as an outcome of leadership but rather as a powerful mediating mechanism across all three different leadership styles.

### 6.4.2. Trust as an Essential Mediating Pathway for Transformational Leadership (H4)

The analysis confirmed that Hypothesis H4 was supported, revealing that employees' trust in leadership acts as a **fully mediator** between transformational leadership and organisational commitment. This finding indicates that the significant direct effect from hypothesis H1 becomes non-significant when trust is incorporated into the model. Therefore, the entire positive influence of transformational leadership on commitment during the change process is channelled through the capacity of leaders to build trust, with no independent direct effect remaining. This result provides validation of the foundation of transformational leadership (Bass, 1985), that leaders influence employees through a process that is built on trust.

This finding aligns with the work of Farid et al. (2020) who demonstrated that trust functions as a mediator between authentic leadership and organisational citizenship behaviour. Like authentic leadership, transformational leadership emphasises

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inspiring followers, upholding ethical conduct and creating positive social exchanges with employees. Moreover, the core components of trust - reliance-based trust and disclosure-based trust (corresponding to affective and cognitive trust) - have also shown to act as a powerful mediator between transformational leadership and organisational change (Cao & Le, 2022).

The mechanisms behind this mediation can be understood by examining the fundamental elements of transformational leadership. Cao and Le (2022) have highlighted that transformational leaders have a clear vision which they communicate clearly to their employees to guide them of the desired future of the organisation. This energises the employees, leads to enthusiasm and then ultimately fosters organisational commitment. This is consistent with the findings of this study that the **inspirational motivation** items (FORM1 and FORM2) of transformational leadership were the most strongly perceived components. These items align with obtaining cognitive (reliance-based) trust as they show confidence in the competence and ability of the leader to provide direction. At the same time, they also contribute to a secondary development of affective (disclosure-based) trust by creating emotional bonds between the employees and their leader. However, for trust to be fully realised in an organisation, particularly affective trust crucial for navigating change, the other components of transformational leadership are also critical.

A leader's compelling vision can build the foundation of trust, but on its own it is insufficient to build the deep, resilient trust to navigate the anxiety an organisational change will bring about. This provides an explanation of the layered application of the transformational components that were observed in the direct effects analysis in hypothesis H1 (Section 6.3.1).

The full mediation effect indicates that trust is an essential pathway, but the lower average mean scores for the other three core components of transformational leadership (**idealised influence**, **intellectual stimulation** and **individualised consideration**) suggest that insufficient depth of trust is being built by transformational leaders. Leaders prioritise vision setting (inspirational motivation) over the time-intensive requirements of affective trust creation through mentoring (individualised consideration) or consistently displaying ethical integrity (idealised influence). Cao and Le (2022) contend that disclosure-based (affective) trust has as

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great an impact on an organisational change capability as it allows the employees to feel safe to express their challenges before resistance festers.

Thus, leaders need to adopt a balanced application of all components of transformational leadership using inspirational motivation to establish initial cognitive trust but then cultivate the deeper affective trust through their ethics, intellectual stimulation of the employees and one-on-one engagement. This holistic approach to gaining trust of the employees will drive their commitment to the organisation and increase the likelihood of a change event being successful.

The full mediation suggests that trust primarily cultivates the more important affective commitment within employees. This is through their inspirational vision and the other supportive behaviours which build an emotional bond to the leader and organisation, making the employees want to stay and contribute to the change process. It may also have the secondary benefit of continuance commitment as the organisation may be a desirable place to be at.

#### **6.4.3. Trust as a Partial Mediator for Transactional Leadership (H5)**

Transactional leadership had a significant direct effect on organisational commitment (H2). When trust was included as a mediator it also had a significant indirect effect on commitment. Therefore, the hypothesis H5 was supported. However, unlike the full mediation observed for transformational leadership, the results indicated there was only **partial mediation** in hypothesis H5. This suggests that the effectiveness of transactional leadership is not derived solely from building trust but there are multiple pathways that transactional leaders can secure organisational commitment from their employees.

The partial mediation can be understood by the fundamentals of transactional leadership which is grounded in exchange-based relationships (Bass, 1985; Bass & Riggio, 2006). In this framework, leaders influence their employees by clarifying their expectations and leverage two primary measures: offering them **contingent rewards** for compliance and **managing by exception** to correct deviations. This structure provides a direct pathway to commitment by reducing ambiguity, which explains why the significant direct effect remains even when trust is accounted for.

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The component level analysis from Section 6.3.2 supports this interpretation, which shows that transactional leaders were effectively engaged with their employees during the change process via active monitoring (TRANS3 and TRANS5) and short-term measurable outcome-focused behaviours (TRANS4). These actions had built cognitive-based trust in the leader's capability and involvement which is particularly valuable during the uncertainty of the change event.

The same component analysis also revealed a critical limitation that explains the partial nature of the mediation, leaders' weak application of contingent rewards. The relatively lower scores for the items (TRANS1 and TRANS2) suggest that leaders failed to consistently deliver on promised rewards or adequately recognise the employees' contributions which created a "promise gap". This "promise gap" hindered the development of deeper affective-based trust being achieved (Legood et al., 2022) which is rooted in perceptions of benevolence and integrity from their leaders.

Consequently, trust served as only a reinforcing mechanism based on active engagement, but not sufficiently supplemented by the richer, affective trust that would emerge from consistent reward delivery. It was not robust enough to be the full mediating pathway to commitment as is the characteristic of transformational leadership. This finding aligns with Nanjundeswaraswamy et al. (2025) who noted that trust is less strongly associated with transactional leadership compared to transformational leadership due to the focus on structured exchanges only.

Within the context of an organisational change, the partial mediation of trust highlights a key strength of a transactional leadership style. By providing structure and clarity, it can foster **continuance commitment** to raise the perceived cost of leaving the organisation. This reinforcement of trust is especially valuable particularly during the early stabilising phases of a change management process. This is when uncertainty is highest, and employees need predictability and a foundation so that they can navigate the change.

#### 6.4.4. The Erosive Effect of Trust in Laissez-Faire Leadership (H6)

The mediation analysis from Chapter 5 supported Hypothesis H6, demonstrating that employees' trust in leadership acts as a **full mediator** of the negative relationship between laissez-faire leadership and organisational commitment. This finding is

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important for elaborating on the earlier non-significant direct effect of this leadership style on employee commitment (H3).

The non-significant in Hypothesis H3 did not indicate an absent relationship, but rather the damaging effect of laissez-faire leadership occurs primarily through the indirect significant erosion of trust. Once trust is included as a mediator, the negative total effect becomes non-significant at the direct level. This reveals that the collapse of trust is the primary and central pathway through which laissez-faire leadership undermines commitment from employees undergoing a change management process.

The mediating mechanism of trust can be examined using the component-level data (FAIR1 to FAIR5) and how these behaviours undermine the foundations of trust. The behaviours that were measured in this study included avoidance of decisions, absenteeism and failure to provide direction or to act promptly which were all opposed to the behaviours noticed in the active leadership styles of transformational and transactional. When leaders were perceived to be absent, disengaged or unresponsive as reflected in the component-level data, they violated the key dimensions established in the literature. Specifically, these actions erode cognitive trust by demonstrating a lack of competence and reliability as a leader and damage affective trust by signalling a lack of benevolence and care (Legood et al., 2022).

During an organisational change this breakdown of trust is accentuated and more damaging. Specifically, leaders' absence and unavailability can create a perception of neglect among employees during challenging periods like an organisational restructure (Lundmark et al., 2021). This withdrawal is interpreted as a lack of support which then erodes trust. Robert and Vandenberghe (2020) also emphasise that such leadership weakens the essential relational bonds and organisational support that employees depend on which can result in the collapse of the leader-employee relationship.

Therefore, this analysis empirically validates that laissez-faire leadership dismantles the foundations of cognitive and affective trust, both of which are critical to sustaining employee commitment in times of organisational change. The leader dismantles the foundation for **affective commitment** as there is no emotional bond. Simultaneously, this avoidance behaviour can increase negative **continuance commitment**, where

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employees feel trapped in a neglectful environment and see no alternative. This leads to active disengagement.

## **6.5. The Supplementary Mediating Role of Employees' Resilience**

### **6.5.1. Introduction to the Mediating Pathway of Resilience**

Following the analysis of trust, this section discusses the second proposed mediator, employees' resilience to change. Mehta et al. (2024) indicated that employees' resilience arises through their capacity to adapt and recover from adversity. In this study, it has emerged as a **statistically significant mediator** for all three leadership styles (Hypotheses H7, H8 and H9 were all supported).

However, a critical finding from Chapter 5 was the consistently smaller magnitude of the indirect effects through resilience ( $\beta$  values of 0.07, 0.08 and -0.05) compared to those through trust ( $\beta$  values of 0.37, 0.30 and -0.41). This indicates that while resilience plays a role, it is a secondary psychological pathway (**partial mediator**) compared to the importance of the leader-employee relationship encapsulated by trust the employees have in their leaders.

The disparity in these two mediating constructs can be understood by examining the fundamentals of each. Trust in leadership is inherently a relational and a direct variable that is dynamically shaped by leader's behaviour, interaction with the leader and a view of the leader's integrity (Cao & Le, 2022). By contrast, resilience in employees is characterised at an individual-level as a psychological resource or capacity (Sipondo & Terblanche, 2024). It can be reasoned that leadership can undoubtedly influence resilience, but there are numerous other factors beyond the leaders' control that can also impact the employees' resilience in the workplace. For example, Sipondo and Terblanche (2024) have considered factors such as personality traits, social support and other life experiences as also having an impact on employees' resilience.

Consequently, leadership styles explain a smaller portion of the variance in resilience compared to trust, which is more directly attributable to the leader's actions. This understanding of resilience as a secondary mediatory provides the necessary context to interpret the findings across the different leadership styles.

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### 6.5.2. Resilience as Supplementary Mediator for the Active Leadership Styles (H7 and H8)

The previous section established employee resilience as a **significant** but **partial secondary mediator** for both transformational (H7) and transactional (H8) leadership styles. Given this role, the discussion focuses on how these distinct active leadership styles – one more inspirational and the other more structural – support employee resilience as a pathway to organisational commitment.

For both active styles, resilience serves as a reinforcing, ancillary mechanism to the primary mediating pathway of trust. While trust is built through the direct relational exchanges with employees such as articulating a vision (transformational) or providing the necessary clarity of the short-term objectives (transactional), resilience is indirectly enhanced as a result. This enhancement allows the employees to cope with the change event rather than have their capacities or capabilities be depleted by uncertainty or anxiety.

This view is supported by Waidyaratne (2022) who has examined the influence of **transformational** leaders on employee resilience. The study emphasised that leadership behaviours, including inspiring a vision, play a significant role in strengthening employees' resilience particularly during difficult and unsettling times. Transformational leaders help employees absorb change, persevere through the challenges, cultivate greater emotional strength and empathy all which reinforce their capacity to navigate change events (Waidyaratne, 2022).

Resilience could be substantially enhanced through other core components of transformational leadership such as **individualised consideration**. By providing personalised support through mentoring or coaching, this can create psychological safety and reduce the emotional impact of the change event (Sipondo & Terblanche, 2024). This could help to conserve the employees' resilience.

However, the component-level analysis reveals lower mean score for the individualised consideration component (Mean=3.26) than for **inspirational motivation** (Mean scores of 3.45 and 3.57). This suggests that during the turbulence of a large-scale change, the more-intensive transformational behaviours required to exhibit individualised consideration appear to be curtailed. This limited application of

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a resilience-building leadership behaviour provides a compelling explanation for the modest mediating effect of resilience ( $\beta=0.07$ ) identified for hypothesis H7.

**Transactional leadership** supports resilience through a more structural and pragmatic approach compared to the inspirational style of transformational leadership. It can be conceptualised through its impact on employees' **cognitive load**. As highlighted by Ramlan et al. (2025), the transactional style's reliance on clear goals, defined roles and structured processes creates a stable and predictable environment. These unambiguous expectations can lower the effort that employees must expend on understanding events during a change process, which minimises their confusion and frees up mental resources. This reduction in the cognitive load allows the employees to redirect their focus on adaptive coping, which improves their own internal resilience during the change process.

However, the effectiveness of this structured approach is contingent upon its application by the leader. An overreliance on control and active management-by-exception can inadvertently increase the cognitive load and stress (Ramlan et al., 2025). This aligns with the findings of this study, where the component-level analysis revealed a "promise gap" in the provision of contingent rewards as previously discussed under Hypothesis H2 and H5. This gap indicated an incomplete exchange between leader and employee, which likely undermined the employees' feeling of fairness, a key factor for reducing stress and building resilience.

Consequently, transactional leadership appears to build a foundation to prevent any erosion in resilience with employees. However, without providing the intrinsic motivation as evident in transformational leadership and consistent application of contingent rewards, it is unlikely to build a deeper resilience within their employees. This provides a compelling explanation for the modest effect ( $\beta=0.08$ ) of employees' resilience as a mediating pathway between transactional leadership and organisational commitment.

### **6.5.3. Resilience as a Diminished Mediator under Laissez-Faire Leadership (H9)**

In Hypothesis H9, the mediation analysis supported that employees' resilience had a **significant negative partial mediating** effect ( $\beta=-0.05$ ) of laissez-faire leadership on organisational commitment during a change management process. This finding

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established the erosion of resilience as a secondary, yet distinct, psychological pathway through which this avoidant style undermines employee stability during change. While the effect size is smaller than that for trust as a mediator, its significance confirms that laissez-faire leaders damage not only the employee-leader relationship but also the employees' internal capacity to cope.

The breakdown of trust as previously established in Hypothesis H6, is the primary pathway due to it severing the relational bond and leading to active disengagement. The erosion of resilience, represents a parallel and compounding damage, depleting the employees' own internal capacity to cope. Thus, the collapse of trust in the leader destroys the external system and the depletion of resilience weakens the employees' own internal foundation. Laissez-faire leadership creates a vacuum where employees cannot face the stresses of change as they do not have any guidance or reinforcement (Diebig & Bormann, 2020). Employees must deplete their own psychological resources to manage the uncertainty and anxiety due to the unsupportive environment.

The modest effect size ( $\beta=-0.05$ ) requires explanation when contrasted with the more powerful effect for trust ( $\beta=-0.41$ ). The discrepancy is underscored by the fundamental difference between these two constructs. The damage caused by loss of trust is direct and immediate due to the leader's absence or unreliability (Lundmark et al., 2021). Resilience as noted by Breevaart and van Woerkom (2024), is more an internal capacity within employees influenced by leadership but also by other factors including the employees' own personality and their overall support system. Its relative stability buffers it from being as instantly or severely impacted by this passive leadership style as trust is.

The combined findings of both mediators on laissez-faire leadership (hypotheses H6 and H9) on commitment indicate that it can systematically dismantle both the external support structure (trust) and then erode the internal coping mechanism (resilience). This will leave the employees feeling isolated and ill-prepared to navigate the change process. This explains why, despite the non-significant direct effect in hypothesis H3, this leadership style is a high-risk approach that will jeopardise the success of any change initiative.

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## 6.6. Chapter Summary

This chapter provided a detailed discussion and interpretation of the empirical findings from Chapter 5, contextualising them within the existing literature on leadership, organisational commitment and change management. The analysis explained the nuanced mechanisms through which the three different leadership styles influence the nature and degree of employee commitment during a change management process.

The discussion initially interpreted that employees' attachment following change was primarily a combination of affective commitment (emotional attachment) and continuance commitment (necessity-based retention). Notably normative commitment was the weakest type of commitment, indicating that change context created attachments that failed to inspire a deeper moral sense of duty to remain.

An examination of the direct effects revealed that both transformational and transactional leadership were significant drivers of commitment. Transactional leadership's focus on clarity and structure resulted in a slightly stronger direct effect. The analysis highlighted how these styles shaped commitment; transformational leadership aligned more with building affective commitment while transactional leadership reinforced continuance commitment. The non-significant direct effect of laissez-faire leadership was reinterpreted as context-dependent, with its negative impact channelled through its indirect pathways.

A key contribution of this research was the interpretation of these indirect mediating pathways. The analysis confirmed that trust in leadership is the primary, fundamental mediating mechanism. It fully explained the effect of the transformational leadership and played a significant partial role in transactional leadership. Also, laissez-faire leadership's primary damage is the severe erosion of trust.

Employee resilience was also established as a significant, yet secondary mediator. It had a more modest role across all three leadership styles, underscoring that resilience is influenced by leadership but also buffered by other factors. Trust is a more direct and immediate consequence of the leader's behaviour.

In answering the primary research question, this chapter demonstrated that leadership impacts commitment during change through the distinct psychological pathways. The

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findings also highlighted what was not achieved when these leadership styles were examined, that within the context of organisational change, they were ineffective in fostering a strong sense of normative commitment.

The insights from this discussion form the foundation for Chapter 7. It will present the definitive conclusions from this study and actionable recommendations.

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## **7. Conclusion and Recommendations**

### **7.1. Introduction and Research Significance**

This final chapter builds upon the insights established in Chapter 6 to present conclusive answers to the study's research question. It moves to consolidate the findings into definitive conclusions, translating them into practical recommendations for business leaders and outline their contribution to academic research. The chapter concludes by detailing the limitations of this research' and propose future research suggestions.

This study investigated the interplay between prominent leadership styles, key employees' psychological responses and the impact on their organisational commitment during change management processes. This research was considered significant due to change being essential for adaptation and competitiveness in a volatile and evolving global environment. However, this change can present challenges of employee resistance, decrease the morale and lower productivity which could then derail the strategic initiative (Lee, 2024). The failure rates of change processes highlight that human factors, along with a strategic plan, are instrumental in the success of the change event (Lee, 2024).

The research addresses this persistent business problem by moving beyond an examination of leadership. Rather, it provided a more detailed understanding of the leadership behaviours that influence employee attachment. By quantitatively testing the two mediating roles of employees' trust in leadership and their resilience to change, this allowed an exploration of the psychological pathways by which leaders can either foster commitment or lead to disengagement. Ultimately, it provides evidence-based information for leaders to navigate a change event successfully and cultivate commitment from their employees.

### **7.2. Research Context and Scope**

The findings of this study were contextualised within medium to large organisations (determined by either having over 100 employees or R100million in annualised revenue) operating primarily within English-speaking business environments. The focus on organisations of scale was deliberate, as they undergo sizable change

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processes where leadership styles are the most visible and their impact highly felt by employees. This approach enhances the generalisability of the findings, by ensuring the insights reflect a diverse range of regions and industries.

The change events that formed part of the data were recent with over 71% of them having occurred within the last two years. Most of them (60%) were restructuring processes. This context is crucial as restructures are among the more complex and personally impactful form of change for employees. They directly affect their job security, reporting lines and the organisational culture. Thus, the need for effective leadership during restructures is most acute.

The focus on employees' perceptions of leadership rather than self-assessments by the leaders, ensured that the data captured the realised experiences by those directly impacted by leadership during the change. This approach mitigated self-reporting bias and recognised that employees' interpretations are more directly linked to their own trust, resilience and commitment to the organisation.

Furthermore, by including the requirement for a minimum of six-month tenure prior to the change, this ensured that participants had sufficient exposure to the leaders and the organisational context. It created a meaningful baseline prior to the change against which to evaluate the change's impact.

In summary, the specific research context represents situations where the cost of leadership failure would be considerable and where change processes would deeply impact employees. The findings would refer directly to challenges of leading through the most demanding organisational transition, and insights could be relevant and academically robust.

### **7.3. Synthesis of Existing Knowledge and Identified Gaps**

The literature review established a robust theoretical foundation confirming leadership as a critical success factor during change management (Mansaray, 2019). The Full Range Leadership Model (Bass, 1985) provided a framework for three prominent leadership styles with distinct influences. Transformational leadership is widely recognised for having the ability to inspire followers (Alqatawenh, 2018), while transactional leadership is more effective by operating on an exchange principle for

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achieving short term goals (Bass & Riggio, 2006). By contrast the passive avoidant style of laissez-faire leadership is consistently linked to detrimental outcomes (Robert & Vandenberghe, 2020).

The desired outcome of these leadership behaviours is organisational commitment. The work by Meyer and Allen (1991) has clearly identified the different dimensions of organisational commitment, encompassing affective (emotional attachment), continuance (cost-based) and normative (obligation-based) components. These components need to be considered for enhancing overall commitment from employees.

The literature identifies key psychological mechanisms that bridge leadership and commitment. Trust in the leadership and employees' own personal resilience to a change event have been researched and are considered important individual factors that enhance adaptability and mitigate resistance during change (Farid et al., 2020, Waidyaratne, 2022).

The synthesis of the literature revealed three interconnected gaps that this research sought to address. The existing research was characterised by a **comparative gap**, as studies often analysed a leadership style in isolation. There was a lack of simultaneous, comparative analysis of the three prominent FRLM styles within a single change context.

Second there was a **mechanism gap** that remained. Trust and resilience were individually recognised as important but their role as simultaneous mediators in the relationship between leadership and commitment was underexplored. Thus, the primary psychological pathway was unclear.

Finally, a **contextual gap** was evident with limited research on these dynamics across a diverse range of organisations and industries. Most studies were confined to specific sections. This resulted in fragmentation in the literature, where an integrated evidence-based guidance on leadership could be beneficial to emphasise how to foster commitment through leadership behaviours and which pathways are the most effective.

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#### **7.4. Research Questions Addressed**

The study provided definitive answers to the research question:

How do the different leadership styles (transformational, transactional and laissez-faire) impact the employees' organisational commitment during a change management process, and how do employees' trust in leadership and employees' resilience to change mediate this relationship?

The empirical evidence demonstrated that leadership styles impact organisational commitment during change not primarily through direct effects but through distinct psychological pathways.

Specifically, regarding the direct effects, both transformational (hypothesis H1) and transactional (hypothesis H2) leadership were confirmed as significant drivers of commitment, while laissez-faire leadership (hypothesis H3) indicated no significant direct effect, instead its influence as more indirect.

With regards to mediation, the employees' trust in leadership emerged as the dominant psychological pathway. This indirect effect fully mediated the effects of transformational leadership (hypothesis H4) and the negative impact of laissez-faire leadership (hypothesis H6). It also partially mediated the effect of transactional leadership (hypothesis H5). The second mediator, resilience to change, emerged as statistically significant but consistently a secondary mediator across all three leadership styles (hypothesis H7, H8 and H9).

The commitment that was fostered was a blend of affective and continuance commitment with a notable weaker normative commitment across all three styles.

The study suggests that during a change management process, employees perceive transformational and transactional leadership as complementary components of a broader active leadership construct rather as entirely distinct styles.

#### **7.5. Research Methodology**

This study employed a quantitative, positivist research methodology. This was used to objectively test the hypothesised relationship between the leadership styles,

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mediating variables and organisational commitment. A deductive approach was adopted using a cross-sectional design to collect data at a single point in time.

Data was collected through a structured online questionnaire to a purposive non-probability sample of 164 employees from sizable organisations who had experienced a significant change event. This ensured a meaningful evaluation of the change effect. The survey incorporated four well-established, validated scales (Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), Resilience at Work scale (RAW), Organisational Trust Inventory (OTI) and Organisational Commitment Questionnaire (OCQ)) to ensure that the measurements were reliable and valid.

The subsequent data analysis was conducted using IBM SPSS software, which involved two statistical procedures. The direct effects of leadership styles on organisational commitment (Hypothesis H1 to H3) were tested using multiple linear regression. Furthermore, the indirect effects via the mediating factors of trust and resilience, were tested using a mediation analysis (Hypothesis H4 to H9). This analysis used Hayes' PROCESS Macro (Model 4) with bootstrapping to rigorously test the impact of the mediators.

Overall, this research methodology provided a robust structure to analyse the psychological pathways through which leadership behaviours influence organisational commitment during a change process. The choice of methodology utilised in this study was consistent with methodologies applied in prior research on leadership and organisational behaviour (Breevaart & van Woerkom, 2024; Diebig & Bormann, 2020; Nanjundeswaraswamy et al., 2025; Park et al., 2023; Waidyaratne, 2022). It allowed for deriving evidence-based conclusions that directly addressed the research questions and the hypotheses.

## **7.6. Summary of Key Findings and Interpretations**

This section synthesises the findings of the research to provide a deeper understanding of the leadership-employee commitment relationship during an organisational change. The analysis reveals that during the change event, different leadership styles can result in specific behaviours from the leaders which trigger psychological responses from their employees which then determine their commitment.

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### 7.6.1. The Direct Effect

The initial analysis of the direct effects indicated that **active leadership** (transformational and transactional) is effective **and passive leadership** is ineffective. This was interpreted further into how these effects are transmitted. The non-significant direct effect of laissez-faire leadership proved to be key, as it revealed that the damage is rather done indirectly through the erosion of psychological resources. This finding shifted the perspective from identifying which leadership style works during a change management process to **which mechanism** do leadership styles exert their influence over?

### 7.6.2. The Dual Mediating Pathways of Trust and Resilience

The mediation analysis revealed the indirect effect of the dual distinct psychological pathways of trust and resilience. Trust in leadership emerged as the **primary fundamental pathway**. It fully mediated the positive influence of transformational leadership on commitment during the change and was the principal mechanism by which laissez-faire leadership dismantled commitment. Employees' trust in their leaders is impacted by the leader's integrity, competence and behaviour which makes it a **relational resource** (Legood et al., 2022).

Employee resilience to change was confirmed as statistically significant but a **weaker, supplementary pathway**. Resilience represents an **internal capacity** that the leadership can support but not create. It is also influenced by other factors that are beyond the leader's control (Breevaart & van Woerkom, 2024).

### 7.6.3. The Nature of Organisational Commitment

The mediating pathways had the impact on the outcome of organisational commitment from the employees being achieved. This overall commitment was a blend of attachments each with different implications for sustainable change. The nature of commitment aligns with Meyer and Allen's (1991) three-component model.

**Affective commitment** (I want to stay) was identified as the most desirable outcome, as it was driven by a trust in the leader and deep emotional bond to the organisation. Continuance commitment (I need to stay) was a secondary outcome, reinforced by the trust of the leader and the structural clarity a transactional leader displays during

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the change process. The final component, **normative commitment** (I ought to stay) was notably weaker indicating that during the change management process the leaders failed to inspire a moral sense of obligation from their employees.

#### 7.6.4. Emergent Active Leadership Construct

During the turbulence brought about by change, employees perceived transformational and transactional leadership as a single active leadership factor. Employees seem to crave leadership that is visionary but remaining pragmatic so that the leader provides meaning while still giving direction simultaneously during the change process.

#### 7.6.5. The Conceptual Model of Influence: A Summary of “What” and “How”

The interpretations have been collated via a cascading conceptual model as displayed in Figure 2 below. It represents the sequential psychological process that explains both **what happens** and **how it happens**, when a leader navigates a change management process. The conceptual model integrates all findings into a framework that moves beyond the preliminary direct effects to include the nuanced psychological journey that employees experience during the change.

The model illustrates that leadership impacts change not through a single direct command but rather through a defined psychological sequence. It begins with observable leadership behaviours, progresses through different psychological pathways and culminates with different forms of organisational commitment.

The cascade begins with the **leader’s behavioural style** during the change event. Active leadership styles (transformational and transactional) serve as positive catalysts that engage the psychological process either through inspiration or providing structure to the change. Conversely, the passive laissez-faire style acts negatively, that disengages the employees through absence and neglect.

The actions of the leader result in an immediate reaction in the form of **trust building or erosion**. This is considered a critical point of the change event. During change, uncertainty is high in employees, and they scrutinise their leaders for signs of reliability and benevolence. Active leadership builds the essential relational bridge (strong or moderate positive pathway). However, a laissez-faire leader demolishes trust (strong

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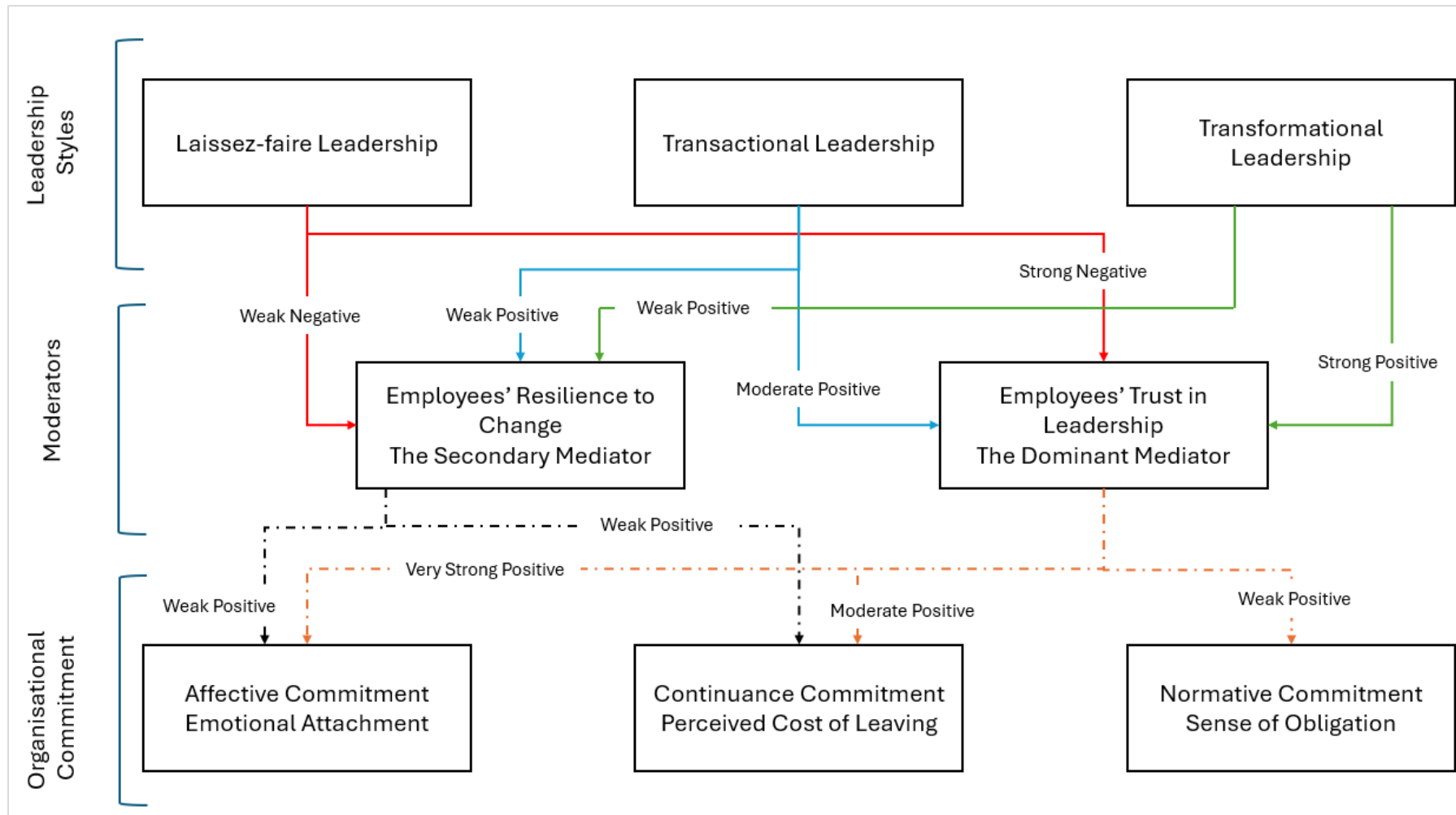
negative pathway). Thus, trust is a fundamental conduit through which subsequent influence flows.

Simultaneously, but to a notably lesser degree is a **secondary reaction** to the leader's behaviours on employee resilience. It impacts their internal capacity either through an encouraging leader (weak positive pathway) or a neglectful leader (weak negative pathway). The supplementary effect of resilience underscores it as a complementary buffer to the primary mechanism of trust building or erosion. Thus, while it is valuable for employees to cope with the stress brought about the change, it cannot compensate for an absence of trust in the leader.

The combined psychological resources of trust and resilience form the outcome, organisational commitment. A powerful flow of trust unlocks **affective commitment** (I want to stay), which is genuine voluntary commitment to the change success. Weaker flows contribute to **continuance commitment** (I need to stay). The pathway of **normative commitment** (I ought to stay) is a pathway that remains underdeveloped, and the leadership behaviours analysed reveal limitations in creating this moral obligation of commitment during the change to an organisation.

This cascading conceptual model provides leaders with a strategic understanding for successful change leadership. They need to initiate consciously and harness a positive psychological sequence. By using active, integrated leadership behaviours they build and sustain trust. This is the most powerful mechanism for fostering emotional attachment. This can transform a change implementation from compliance to sustainable success.

Figure 2: The Cascading Conceptual Model of Influence



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## 7.7. Theoretical Contributions to Scholarly Debate

This study makes four distinct theoretical contributions that address gaps in literature and can advance scholarly debate of understanding the leadership role during an organisational change.

The first distinct contribution is the quantitative evidence provided that **trust** is not merely supporting in obtaining commitment but rather the **fundamental mediating mechanism** in the change context. This study positions it as a non-negotiable conduit without which other leadership behaviours become significantly less effective.

This research also provides empirical support for a more nuanced application of the Full Range Leadership Model (FRLM) during a change event. The Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) showed employees perceive transformational and transactional leadership as a single factor is significant insight. It suggests that during the highly uncertain and stressful times that change contributes to, the theoretical distinction between these styles become blurred in the minds of the employees. This proposes that an **active leadership construct** with a combination of inspiration (transformational) and structure (transactional) is more important than a theoretical distinction in style.

The third contribution offered is a clarification around employee resilience. Numerous studies have highlighted the key role that employee resilience plays in organisational commitment (Mao et al., 2022; Waidyaratne, 2022), the findings of this research rather reveal it to be a less important **secondary mediator**. The mediating effect in resilience is consistently weaker than trust in this study, thus this research suggests that resilience is an internal capacity that leaders can only support but not create.

The final theoretical contribution made in this research is a reinforcement of Meyer and Allen's (1991) Three Component Model by demonstrating how different leadership pathways drive **different types of organisational commitment** during change events. The findings indicate that leadership behaviours can be highly effective at fostering affective commitment, moderately effective at continuance commitment and largely ineffective at building normative commitment.

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## 7.8. Practical Implications and Business Recommendations

The findings of this study can assist leaders of organisations to navigate change management processes. Leaders need to **prioritise building trust** with their employees during the entire process as a strategic imperative. This can be done through transparency regarding the rationale for the change, acknowledging the challenges and present a credible change plan. Active listening will enhance trust by showing a genuine understanding for their concerns and this needs to be advanced by following up on promises and being present and available.

Another recommendation would be to move beyond theoretical styles and rather work as an **active integrator** during the change process. Combining the best of many styles can result in providing direction and meaning behind the change. Thus, leaders can cover a wider spectrum of the psychological needs of employees during this uncertain period.

Organisations should proactively work at identifying and **mitigating passive leadership** during the change initiative. The findings have demonstrated this to not be a neutral style of leadership but rather a behaviour that erodes trust and commitment. The organisation can coach leaders who may retreat into passive behaviours and educate them on their potential damaging effect of disengagement during the process.

Businesses can also benefit from utilising **a targeted approach** to cultivate specific **commitment outcomes** from their employees. The long-term goal should be affective commitment implemented throughout the organisation, but this can be done by reinforcing other forms of commitment in the short-term. Continuance commitment can be promoted by leaders emphasising skill development of their employees and clear communication of post-change opportunities within the organisation for employees. This can be built on by crafting affective commitment through tools like visionary communication and involving the employees in decision-making. Leaders should also be cognisant that normative commitment is less possible during the disruptive change and should not place an emphasis on it.

By embedding these recommendations into their change management process, leadership can significantly increase the success rate of change initiatives.

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## **7.9. Limitations and Future Research Directions**

While the study provides insights into the relationship between leadership and organisational commitment during change, it is necessary to acknowledge the limitations of the research that affect the scope and the interpretation of the findings. Addressing these limitations results in transparency but also highlights areas where future research could build on the current study.

### **7.9.1. Limitations**

While the cross-sectional design was strategically selected due to the efficiency, cost-effectiveness, and the ability to capture a large sample size (Saunders & Lewis, 2018), utilising this time horizon limited the ability to observe how the variables evolve during the different stages of a change management process.

The measurement instrument used was a structured online survey questionnaire to measure the independent, mediating and dependent variables. The collection of data was from a single source using the same instrument at the same point in time. This could have created potential for Common Methods Bias (CMB), which could artificially inflate the relationship between the constructs (Hair et al., 2019). The anonymity of the respondent, utilising validated scales and randomising the questions were procedures used to reduce this risk however an inherent CMB risk will remain as a limitation in the research design.

There was a deliberate focus on employee perceptions which was justified to prevent self-reporting bias from leaders and because employee interpretations are more directly linked to outcomes. However, this approach was a limitation as it did not triangulate the employees' perceptions with objective measurements (performance metrics of leaders, actual turnover rates under their leadership) or the leader's self-assessment.

In addition, these employees were asked to reflect on a change event that had occurred which may have been up to five years ago. This introduced the risk of recall bias from these participants as their memories may be inaccurate or influenced by subsequent experiences after the change process had occurred.

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The use of the purposive non-probability sampling technique during this study limits the generalisability of the findings, as the sample may not be representative of the entire population of employees who have undergone a change management process.

The focus on English-speaking business environments and the exclusion of non-English speaking contexts limits the cross-cultural applicability of the findings.

The study's concentrated on the three most prominent FRLM styles which was a deliberated and justified choice to enable a clear comparative analysis of leadership behaviours. However, this focused scope necessarily excluded other potentially relevant leadership styles that might also influence commitment during a change process. Similarly, the conceptual model used in this study did not include all possible variables that could influence organisational commitment. Factors such as the quality of change communication, organisational culture, individual employee personality traits were not controlled for in this study.

Finally, the sample size (N=164), was below the recommended threshold of 200 for a robust Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) which required an Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA) to be used. While the mediation analysis was sufficient as indicated by obtaining significant across all three leadership styles, it would have been more robust with a larger sample size. The EFA revealed that the transformational and transactional leadership loaded onto a single factor, suggesting that the employees did not perceive them as separate distinct constructs in the change context. This challenged the approach used in the study of three distinct leadership styles as per the FRLM but helpfully informed and aligned with the emergent concept of an active leadership construct as discussed in the findings.

### **7.9.2. Future Research Directions**

Building directly from these limitations, there are several targeted avenues for future research that emerge.

To address the methodological constraints, future research should adopt a longitudinal time horizon to measure leadership behaviours, trust, resilience and the commitment of the employees at different stages of the change process. This would

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solidify the causal claims of the cascading conceptual model and capture the dynamic evolving nature of these psychological pathways.

To expand on the key findings from this report, a deeper investigation into the emergent active leadership construct is warranted. Qualitative research can explore how leaders can practically integrate inspiration and structure into their daily activities.

To explore on the research, future research should investigate the context-dependent nature of laissez-faire leadership by examining moderators such as employee autonomy and team maturity. This could determine under which of these conditions is a laissez-faire leadership ineffective or being actively harmful. Furthermore, the model should be expanded upon by introducing additional mediators such as psychological safety, to create a more comprehensive understanding of the leadership-commitment relationship.

Finally, to enhance the generalisability and rigour of the findings, future research should seek to replicate this study in different cultural and linguistic contexts. It should also utilise multi-source data to strengthen the validity and broader applicability of the findings already established in this study.

#### **7.10. Overall Conclusion**

This research set out to investigate the interconnection between leadership styles, employees' trust in leadership, the resilience of employees and their organisational commitment during a change management process. The study was motivated by the challenge of sustaining commitment from employees, amidst an organisational change as this commitment is a critical factor in the success and sustainability of the change initiative. A quantitative analysis of data of 164 employees who had experienced a substantial organisational change, provided robust evidence that leadership styles are not only influential but also fundamental in shaping the commitment from employees through key psychological pathways.

The findings position trust as the fundamental mechanism in which leadership behaviours influences commitment. Transformational leadership's positive impact is fully mediated by trust while the damaging effect of a laissez-faire leadership is entirely channelled through the erosion of trust. Transactional leadership is an effective style

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particularly in providing structure during an uncertain time when the change occurs, but this leadership only partially builds commitment through trust. This is indicative of the promise gap that occurs which limits its full potential to foster deeper affective attachment. In contrast, employee resilience, while a statistically significant mediator, plays a secondary mediating role being more of an internal capacity that leaders can support but not solely create.

The study also revealed that during the period of change, employees perceive transformational and transactional leadership not as distinct styles, but as complementary components of a broader active leadership construct. This emergent construct highlights that leaders need to integrate inspiration with structure providing both why and how they will guide their teams effectively during the change process.

By incorporating these findings, the study provides a cascading conceptual model of influence, which maps the psychological environment that the leader must create. The model indicates that successful change leadership is a sequential process which is initiated by active leadership behaviours. These behaviours are channelled through the powerful mediator of trust and supported by employees' resilience, to culminate in organisational commitment.

Thus, the success of any change initiative is determined by both the initial plan but also by the leader's ability to initiate and sustain a positive psychological cascade in the environment. Leader's need to embrace the role of being an active trust-building integrator, which can transform change from a period of disruption into a more commitment and resilient organisation.

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## 9. Appendix A: Survey Instrument

### Introductory Statement

This survey is intended for employees who have undergone a change management process (within an organisation with a minimum of 100 employees or an annual revenue exceeding R100 million).

Please complete if you have been part of this change management process within the last five years and had a tenure with the organisation of greater than six months prior to the organisational change.

The questions are based on your views as an employee of the organisation. It is your perceptions of your organisation's leadership during that change process whenever it may have been, and how it affected your trust, resilience, and commitment to that organisation during that period.

All questions below including your demographic information refer to the time when the respective organisation undertook the change management process and your perception of the leadership of the organisation during that change process. The change can include structural changes (restructuring or retrenchments); technological changes (software implementation); strategic changes (new business model); a regulatory or compliance change; a crisis-induced change; or the integration of two organisations with different structures and cultures via a merger and acquisition.

### Section A: Demographic Information

Code	Question	Scale
A1	What is your age?	Open-ended
A2	What is your gender?	Open-ended
A3	What was your job level? (e.g., Junior, Middle, Senior, Executive)	Open-ended
A4	Which industry does your organisation operate in?	Open-ended
A5	Approximately how many employees does your organisation have?	Open-ended

A6	What is your organisation's approximate annual revenue?	Open-ended
A7	When did the change management process occur? (Year or range)	Open-ended
A8	What was the nature of the change? (e.g., Restructuring, Merger, Digital Transformation, etc.)	Open-ended
A9	What was your tenure within the organisation prior to the change?	Open-ended

### Section B: Leadership During the Change Management

Think back to the leadership you experienced during the change process. Please rate the extent to which you agree with the following statements.

Code	Question	Scale
B1	My leader articulated a compelling vision during change	1-5 Likert Scale
B2	My leader provided rewards for achieving performance goals	1-5 Likert Scale
B3	My leader was absent or unavailable when needed during the change	1-5 Likert Scale
B4	My leader provided corrective feedback when standards were not met	1-5 Likert Scale
B5	My leader treated me as an individual with empathy and respect during the change	1-5 Likert Scale
B6	My leader seemed disengaged or unresponsive during the change process	1-5 Likert Scale
B7	My leader talked enthusiastically about what needed to be accomplished during change	1-5 Likert Scale
B8	My leader focused on short-term goals and measurable outcomes	1-5 Likert Scale
B9	My leader avoided making key decisions during the change	1-5 Likert Scale

B10	My leader actively monitored for deviations or performance problems	1-5 Likert Scale
B11	My leader inspired confidence and commitment to the change goals	1-5 Likert Scale
B12	My leader failed to act until problems became serious during the change	1-5 Likert Scale
B13	My leader clearly outlined expectations and the rewards for meeting goals	1-5 Likert Scale
B14	My leader encouraged me to think about problems in new ways during the change	1-5 Likert Scale
B15	My leader avoided providing direction during the change	1-5 Likert Scale

**Section C: Trust in Leadership**

Indicate your agreement with the following statements about your leader during the change process.

<b>Code</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Scale</b>
C1	I felt confident in my leader's ability to manage the change.	1-5 Likert Scale
C2	I believed my leader had the best interests of employees in mind.	1-5 Likert Scale
C3	My leader communicated openly and honestly.	1-5 Likert Scale
C4	I trusted my leader to make the right decisions during the change.	1-5 Likert Scale
C5	My leader followed through on commitments made during the change.	1-5 Likert Scale

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### Section D: Resilience to Change

These questions refer to how you personally responded to the change process.

<b>Code</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Scale</b>
D1	I adapted quickly when changes were introduced.	1-5 Likert Scale
D2	I was able to maintain a positive attitude during the change.	1-5 Likert Scale
D3	I looked for ways to make the change work in my role.	1-5 Likert Scale
D4	I remained focused on my work despite the uncertainty.	1-5 Likert Scale
D5	I bounced back easily from challenges during the change.	1-5 Likert Scale

### Section E: Organisational Commitment

Please indicate how you felt about your organisation during and after the change process.

<b>Code</b>	<b>Question</b>	<b>Scale</b>
E1	I would have been very happy to spend the rest of my career here, even considering the changes that took place	1-5 Likert Scale
E2	I really felt as if the organisation's problems during the change process were also my own problem	1-5 Likert Scale
E3	This organisation held a great deal of personal meaning for me, even during and after the change	1-5 Likert Scale
E4	It would have been very hard for me to leave at that time, even though the organisation had undergone changes	1-5 Likert Scale
E5	Leaving the organisation at that time would have required considerable personal sacrifice	1-5 Likert Scale

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E6	I stayed because I believed loyalty was important and I felt a sense of moral obligation to the organisation following the change	1-5 Likert Scale
E7	I was taught to value loyalty to one organisation, which influenced how I felt about staying after the change had occurred	1-5 Likert Scale

Section F: Other

Code	Question	Scale
F1	Do you have any comments about your experience with leadership and organisational change?	Open-ended

Likert Scale:

1 = Strongly Disagree      2 = Disagree      3 = Neutral  
 4 = Agree      5 = Strongly Agree

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## 10. Appendix B: Complete Variable Coding Scheme

This appendix provides the comprehensive coding scheme used for all variables in the SPSS dataset. The scheme includes demographic variables, main construct variables, and computed composite variables.

### Demographic variables

Variable Name and Description	Measurement Level	Coding Details
DEMOG1 Age	Ordinal	1 – 20-29 years old 2—30-39 years old 3 – 40-49 years old 4 – 50-59 years old 5 – 60-65 years old
DEMOG2 Gender	Nominal	1 – Female 2 – Male 3 – Prefer not to say
DEMOG3 Job Level	Ordinal	1 – Executive 2 – Senior 3 – Middle 4 - Junior
DEMOG4 Industry	Nominal	1 – Agriculture & Food 2 – Mining, Minerals & Chemicals 3 – General Manufacturing & Industrial 4 – Energy, Fuel & Utilities 5 – Financial & Professional Services 6 – Technology & ICT 7 – Logistics & Supply Chain 8 - Government & Parastatal 9 – Consumer, Retail & Leisure 10 - Healthcare, Pharma & Medical 11 - Automotive & Aviation 12 – Construction

		13 – Water & Wastewater Services 14 – Property Development & Real Estate
DEMOG5 Organisation Size (Employees)	Ordinal	1 - 0-99 employees 2 - 100-500 employees 3 - 501-1,000 employees 4 - 1,001-5,000 employees 5 - 5,001-10,000 employees 6 - 10,000+ employees
DEMOG6 Organisation Size (Revenue)	Ordinal	1 - Small or not known: R0m – R100m 2 - Lower to Mid: R100m – R1b 3 - Mid to Upper: R1b – R10b 4 - Large: >R10b
DEMOG7 Timing of Change Process	Ordinal	1 - Older than 5 years 2 - 5 years ago 3 - 4 years ago 4 - 3 years ago 5 - 2 years ago 6 - 1 year ago 7 - This year or current
DEMOG8 Nature of Change Process	Nominal	1 - Restructuring 2 - Ownership & Corporate Structure 3 - Strategic & Directional 4 - Technological & Digital Transformation 5 - Leadership & People 6 - Operational & Cultural 7 - Externally Driven
DEMOG9 Tenure Prior to Change	Nominal	1 - Shorter than 6 months 2 - 6 months or longer

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## **Main Construct Variables**

(5-point Likert Scale: 1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly Agree)

### **Transformational Leadership Items**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Item Text</b>	<b>Scale</b>
FORM1	My leader articulated a compelling vision during change	1-5
FORM2	My leader talked enthusiastically about what needed to be accomplished during change	1-5
FORM3	My leader treated me as an individual with empathy and respect during the change	1-5
FORM4	My leader encouraged me to think about problems in new ways during the change	1-5
FORM5	My leader inspired confidence and commitment to the change goals	1-5

### **Transactional Leadership Items**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Item Text</b>	<b>Scale</b>
TRANS1	My leader clearly outlined expectations and the rewards for meeting goals	1-5
TRANS2	My leader provided rewards for achieving performance goals	1-5
TRANS3	My leader actively monitored for deviations or performance problems	1-5
TRANS4	My leader focused on short-term goals and measurable outcomes	1-5
TRANS5	My leader provided corrective feedback when standards were not met	1-5

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### Laissez-faire Leadership Items

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Item Text</b>	<b>Scale</b>
FAIR1	My leader avoided making key decisions during the change	1-5
FAIR2	My leader was absent or unavailable when needed during the change	1-5
FAIR3	My leader avoided providing direction during the change	1-5
FAIR4	My leader failed to act until problems became serious during the change	1-5
FAIR5	My leader seemed disengaged or unresponsive during the change process	1-5

### Trust in Leadership Items

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Item Text</b>	<b>Scale</b>
TRUST1	I felt confident in my leader's ability to manage the change	1-5
TRUST2	I believed my leader had the best interests of employees in mind	1-5
TRUST3	My leader communicated openly and honestly	1-5
TRUST4	I trusted my leader to make the right decisions during the change	1-5
TRUST5	My leader followed through on commitments made during the change	1-5

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### Resilience to Change Items

Variable	Item Text	Scale
RESIL1	I adapted quickly when changes were introduced	1-5
RESIL2	I was able to maintain a positive attitude during the change	1-5
RESIL3	I looked for ways to make the change work in my role	1-5
RESIL4	I remained focused on my work despite the uncertainty	1-5
RESIL5	I bounced back easily from challenges during the change	1-5

### Organisational Commitment Items

Variable	Item Text	Scale
ORGCO1	I would have been very happy to spend the rest of my career here, even considering the changes that took place	1-5
ORGCO2	I really felt as if the organisation's problems during the change process were also my own problem	1-5
ORGCO3	This organisation held a great deal of personal meaning for me, even during and after the change	1-5
ORGCO4	It would have been very hard for me to leave at that time, even though the organisation had undergone changes	1-5
ORGCO5	Leaving the organisation at that time would have required considerable personal sacrifice	1-5
ORGCO6	I stayed because I believed loyalty was important and I felt a sense of moral obligation to the organisation following the change	1-5
ORGCO7	I was taught to value loyalty to one organisation, which influenced how I felt about staying after the change had occurred	1-5

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### **Computed Composite Variables**

<b>Variable name</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Computation Method</b>
FORM_MEAN	Transformational Leadership Composite	MEAN(FORM1 to FORM5)
TRANS_MEAN	Transactional Leadership Composite	MEAN(TRANS1 to TRANS5)
FAIR_MEAN	Laissez-Faire Leadership Composite	MEAN(FAIR1 to FAIR5)
TRUST_MEAN	Trust in Leadership Composite	MEAN(TRUST1 to TRUST5)
RESIL_MEAN	Resilience to Change Composite	MEAN(RESIL1 to RESIL5)
ORGCO_MEAN	Organisational Commitment Composite	MEAN(ORGCO1 to ORGCO7)

All Likert-scale variables were defined as Scale in SPSS.

Demographic variables were defined as Nominal or Ordinal based on their measurement level.

Reverse coding: Not applicable as all items were phrased in the direction of the construct.

This coding scheme ensured transparency and reproducibility of the data analysis procedures detailed in Chapters 4 to 6.

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## 11. Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

I am currently a student at the University of Pretoria's Gordon Institute of Business Science (GIBS) and completing my research in partial fulfilment of the requirements of an MBA.

I am conducting research to investigate the impact of different leadership styles during a change management process on employees' organisational commitment, with particular focus on the mediating roles of trust in leadership and employee resilience to change.

As part of this research, you are invited to complete a short survey that asks questions about your experiences and perceptions of leadership during a change management process that you encountered. All questions in this survey reflect to the organisation where you had undergone the change and your view of leadership during that change process.

The survey should take no more than 20 minutes to complete. Your participation is completely voluntary, and you are free to withdraw at any time without any penalty. All responses are anonymous and confidential, no identifying information will be collected or linked to your responses. Only aggregated findings will be used for research reporting purposes.

If you have any questions or concerns about the study, please feel free to contact me or my research supervisor. Our details are provided below:

**Researcher:** xxxxx

Email: [20072628@mygibs.co.za](mailto:20072628@mygibs.co.za)

Phone: +27 xx xxx xxxx

**Research Supervisor:** xxxx

Email: [xxxxx@xxxx.co.za](mailto:xxxxx@xxxx.co.za)

## 12. Appendix D: Frequency Distribution of Survey Items

Initial	Coding	Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Count
<b>B1</b>	FORM1	My leader articulated a compelling vision during change	10	29	34	60	31	164
<b>B7</b>	FORM2	My leader talked enthusiastically about what needed to be accomplished during change	12	24	27	61	40	164
<b>B5</b>	FORM3	My leader treated me as an individual with empathy and respect during the change	24	26	31	49	34	164
<b>B14</b>	FORM4	My leader encouraged me to think about problems in new ways during the change	20	34	29	54	27	164
<b>B11</b>	FORM5	My leader inspired confidence and commitment to the change goals	17	36	33	48	30	164
<b>B13</b>	TRANS1	My leader clearly outlined expectations and the rewards for meeting goals	18	41	36	53	16	164
<b>B2</b>	TRANS2	My leader provided rewards for achieving performance goals	30	30	33	56	15	164

Initial	Coding	Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Count
<b>B10</b>	TRANS3	My leader actively monitored for deviations or performance problems	15	40	33	57	19	164
<b>B8</b>	TRANS4	My leader focused on short-term goals and measurable outcomes	13	29	38	58	26	164
<b>B4</b>	TRANS5	My leader provided corrective feedback when standards were not met	15	29	41	61	18	164
<b>B9</b>	FAIR1	My leader avoided making key decisions during the change	26	46	31	37	24	164
<b>B3</b>	FAIR2	My leader was absent or unavailable when needed during the change	44	51	29	24	16	164
<b>B15</b>	FAIR3	My leader avoided providing direction during the change	32	52	28	38	14	164
<b>B12</b>	FAIR4	My leader failed to act until problems became serious during the change	33	45	36	30	20	164
<b>B6</b>	FAIR5	My leader seemed disengaged or unresponsive during the change process	54	49	23	28	10	164

Initial	Coding	Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Count
<b>C1</b>	TRUST1	I felt confident in my leader's ability to manage the change	29	29	25	51	30	164
<b>C2</b>	TRUST2	I believed my leader had the best interests of employees in mind	29	27	34	44	30	164
<b>C3</b>	TRUST3	My leader communicated openly and honestly	24	33	30	51	26	164
<b>C4</b>	TRUST4	I trusted my leader to make the right decisions during the change	24	33	28	50	29	164
<b>C5</b>	TRUST5	My leader followed through on commitments made during the change	15	29	42	53	25	164
<b>D1</b>	RESIL1	I adapted quickly when changes were introduced	1	14	32	71	46	164
<b>D2</b>	RESIL2	I was able to maintain a positive attitude during the change	5	20	44	65	30	164
<b>D3</b>	RESIL3	I looked for ways to make the change work in my role	2	1	12	99	50	164
<b>D4</b>	RESIL4	I remained focused on my work despite the uncertainty	2	7	17	80	58	164

Initial	Coding	Statement	Strongly Disagree (1)	Disagree (2)	Neutral (3)	Agree (4)	Strongly Agree (5)	Count
D5	RESIL5	I bounced back easily from challenges during the change	1	12	27	87	37	164
E1	ORGCO1	I would have been very happy to spend the rest of my career here, even considering the changes that took place	28	27	33	48	28	164
E2	ORGCO2	I really felt as if the organisation's problems during the change process were also my own problem	13	26	32	59	34	164
E3	ORGCO3	This organisation held a great deal of personal meaning for me, even during and after the change	13	18	40	57	36	164
E4	ORGCO4	It would have been very hard for me to leave at that time, even though the organisation had undergone changes	20	20	34	48	42	164
E5	ORGCO5	Leaving the organisation at that time would have required considerable personal sacrifice	17	24	31	48	44	164

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<b>Initial</b>	<b>Coding</b>	<b>Statement</b>	<b>Strongly Disagree (1)</b>	<b>Disagree (2)</b>	<b>Neutral (3)</b>	<b>Agree (4)</b>	<b>Strongly Agree (5)</b>	<b>Count</b>
<b>E6</b>	ORGCO6	I stayed because I believed loyalty was important and I felt a sense of moral obligation to the organisation following the change	29	22	29	55	29	164
<b>E7</b>	ORGCO7	I was taught to value loyalty to one organisation, which influenced how I felt about staying after the change had occurred	32	28	34	50	20	164

### 13. Appendix E: EFA Rotated Factor Matrix

Item	Factor 1	Factor 2	Factor 3	Factor 4	Factor 5	Factor 6
FORM1	0.757	0.136	0.206	0.162	0.173	-0.044
FORM5	0.651	0.487	0.299	0.090	0.029	0.072
FORM2	0.618	0.374	0.137	-0.012	0.107	0.073
TRANS1	0.580	0.272	0.366	0.043	0.259	0.183
TRANS3	0.512	0.150	0.240	0.210	0.140	0.112
TRANS5	0.491	0.292	0.404	0.149	0.102	0.151
TRANS4	0.490	0.208	0.168	0.181	0.028	0.190
FORM4	0.472	0.391	0.317	0.127	0.179	0.133
TRANS2	0.468	0.089	0.409	0.073	0.144	0.033
TRUST2	0.380	0.692	0.320	0.172	0.128	0.107
TRUST3	0.413	0.648	0.303	0.178	0.229	0.170
TRUST4	0.333	0.606	0.386	0.207	0.200	0.095
TRUST1	0.453	0.588	0.378	0.158	0.217	0.161
FORM3	0.378	0.581	0.283	0.176	0.138	0.115
TRUST5	0.280	0.528	0.400	0.130	0.269	0.089
FAIR2	-0.089	-0.374	-0.676	-0.060	0.026	-0.053
FAIR4	-0.423	-0.205	-0.609	0.033	-0.051	-0.067
FAIR5	-0.194	-0.380	-0.572	-0.068	-0.074	-0.102
FAIR3	-0.323	-0.238	-0.550	-0.071	0.000	0.004
FAIR1	-0.239	-0.040	-0.508	0.031	-0.084	-0.019
RESIL1	0.137	0.173	-0.054	0.748	0.053	0.100
RESIL2	0.158	0.323	0.046	0.674	-0.037	-0.019
RESIL5	0.110	0.019	-0.026	0.670	0.074	-0.025
RESIL4	0.091	-0.053	0.095	0.647	0.264	0.089
RESIL3	-0.026	0.069	0.103	0.590	0.133	0.091
ORGO4	0.069	0.136	0.092	0.165	0.726	0.064
ORGO3	0.137	0.152	0.072	0.213	0.648	0.167

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ORGCO5	0.084	0.077	-0.005	-0.048	0.531	0.114
ORGCO2	0.134	0.010	0.063	0.268	0.478	0.177
ORGCO1	0.305	0.299	0.310	0.348	0.391	0.279
ORGCO6	0.142	0.185	0.138	0.128	0.274	0.787
ORGCO7	0.129	0.091	0.016	0.085	0.341	0.684

Extraction Method: Principal Axis Factoring.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalisation.

Rotation converged in 8 iterations.