

# A Novel Method for the Evaluation of the Influence of Transformational Leadership Style on Employees' Turnover Intention (IT) in the Retail Industry as Facing the Industrial Revolution 4.0

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## Abstract

Over the past few days, the concept of "Industrial Revolution 4.0" has been mentioned a lot on media and social network. In this context, employees' turnover intention has become a key concern faced by organizations, especially for organizations in retail sector. Base on literature review, many researchers had identified an inverse relationship of the leadership style and employees' intention to quit. However, few studies have examined this relationship in retail industry. This article focuses on studying the influence of the leadership on young employee turnover intention in the retail sector in Vietnam. The research is based on the theory of transformational leadership style. The leadership style scale is adjusted from the scale of MLQ-5X of Bass and Avolio; while turnover intention is reflected by Mobley's scale. A total of 270 employees from nine retail enterprises expressed their ideas on their manager's leadership and their intention to quit. The research results partly support previous studies when showing that there are 4 out of 5 groups of transformational leadership styles and two elements of the transactional leadership that adversely affect the employees' turnover intention. In addition, the management factor by exception-passive (laissez-faire) leadership has a positive influence on employees' intention to quit their jobs. This result indicates that focusing on transformational and transactional leadership style will help organizations reduce their employees' turnover intention. Furthermore, the laissez-faire leadership style should be avoided because this leadership style tends to increase employees' turnover intention.

**Keywords:** Leadership style; transformational leadership; transactional leadership; laissez-faire leadership; turnover intention.

## I. INTRODUCTION

Retail industry plays a critical part in the economic development of most countries [1]. The retail industry in Vietnam has been growing fast in recent years, attracting a huge amount of workers, providing job chances for employees of various vocational and educational backgrounds. Workers in the retail sector play an important connection role between businesses and customers since employees have a direct communication with the customers, and the relationship of the customers-employees is a key factor contributing to the company's success [2]. However, one of the biggest challenges facing the workforce in the retail industry is high

job turnover, especially for young employees. According to the latest survey of Mercer - Talentnet about the rate of job turnover in Vietnam, the retail sector has the highest rate of job turnover with 32.2 % employees have change their jobs at least one time. The problem of high employee turnover rate in retail sector happens in both developed and developing countries [3]. The cost of employee turnover to organization is high since it induces both financial and non-financial consequences. In financial aspects, the cost of replacing an employee is normally much higher than his or her salary [4]. The consequence of high employee turnover is essential in many industries such as education, information technology, health service, manufacturing...and it is inevitably relevant in retail sector [5].

Employee turnover in retail companies has been studied in many studies [1, 5-8]...However, these studies focus on the work results factors such as job satisfaction, job engagement as well as financial and non-financial remuneration policies, and do not pay much attention to the issues belonging to leadership style. The nature of the connection of leadership and staff's intention to leave is still not conclusive [9]. There are many researches on the impact of the style of the leadership on the staff's quitting intention in many areas, such as in education [10, 11], bank [12], sport [13], tourist [14] and health sector [15]... Despite of the significant academic interest works on leadership and employee's turnover intention in other sectors, there exists a scarcity of research investigating this relationship in retail sector, especially in Vietnam.

Young employees in this study are the Y generation workers (millennial). Generation Y is the generation of workers born between 1982 and 1998 [16]. This is the generation of workers who will soon lead the number and management levels in the labour force in next few years. The Y generation workers are rated as friendly, open, intelligent, responsible, social-oriented [17, 18].... However, Y generation workers are often known for their high rate of "job turnover". The Y generation workers look at changing jobs more easily. According to them, "turnover is just a job change, not a measure of loyalty".

This study focuses on the impact of transformational leadership styles on job turnover intention of millennial employees in the retail industry in Vietnam. Focusing on the leadership style can suggest feasible ideas in finding ways to reduce job turnover in the context that the labour market in the retail industry is very competitive.

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### A. Transformational leadership style

The concept of transformational leadership is firstly proposed by Burns [19]. According to his theory, "transforming leadership is a process in which leaders and followers help each other to advance to a higher level of morale and motivation". He identified two definitions: "transforming leadership" and "transactional leadership". These two leaderships are mutually exclusive leadership styles. While a transactional leader bases on a "give and take" relationship, a transforming leader will focus on leader's personal traits, prestige and ability of making changes by articulating an energizing mission and challenging goals. In its perfect form, transforming leadership brings positive and critical changes in the subordinates aiming at developing followers into leaders.

Bass [20] extended the theoretical base for this leadership theory. Using the term "transformational" and "transactional" leadership style, he explained the psychological mechanisms that drive these two leaderships. In addition, he proposed the way in which transformational and transactional leadership is measured. A transformational leader tends to create positive influence on the followers. He transfers and encourages the subordinates by intellectual stimulation, idealized influence and individual consideration [21]. According to Bass [22], the transformational leadership includes four groups of behaviours: Idealized Influence (performs high ethical behaviour, gains trust and respect); Individualized Consideration (attending to staffs' needs, playing as a coach or advisor to the staffs and listening to staff's needs); Intellectual Stimulation (encouraging, taking risks and stimulating staffs' ideas, and Inspirational Motivation (articulating an appealing and inspiring vision to followers). Meanwhile, transactional leaders tend to provide rewards when followers behave in expected manner, and these leaders will use punishment if followers do not behave as expected. They have two groups of behaviours: Contingent Reward (the reward to which followers receive in return for gaining expected work performance); Management-by-Exception-Active (the degree to which leaders manage deviations, mistakes, and errors and then take reaction. In addition, Bass [23] also defined the laissez-faire leadership style, which is reflected by two groups of behaviours: Management-by-Exception-Passive (waiting for a problem to appear and then taking reaction and Laissez-Faire (refusing to take the responsibilities that are functionally related to their position).

In order to assess a full range of leadership style, Avolio and Bass [24] created the survey called "the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire" (MLQ Form 5X). This form includes 9 scales which measure three leadership styles such as 1-transformational leadership, 2-transactional leadership, and 3-laissez-faire leadership along with three scales that measure leadership outcomes. The viability of the MLQ Form 5X is confirmed by the study conducted by John Antonakis and his colleagues [25]. Although the conceptual framework of this questionnaire has been criticized in some area [26-28], it is the most popular instrument to assess full range of

leadership style [29]. According to Ozaralli [30], "the MLQ Form 5X is considered as the best validated measure of transformational and transactional leadership". Many researchers have adapted this form and found it effective when studying transformational leadership style at national level, organizational level as well as enterprise level [31-34].

### B. Turnover intention

Turnover involves "employee leaves any job of any duration" [35] and is usually thought of as being followed by continued regular employment. McPherson [36] classified turnover into voluntary turnover and involuntary turnover. Voluntary turnover happens when an employee makes his own decision whether to continue working or to quit his job. Meanwhile, turnover will be classified as involuntary if the organization holds the control over the staff's decision to keep working or not. Researchers has focused on studying voluntary turnover because it is normally dysfunctional and can cause bad consequences to the organization [37].

Turnover intention refers to the case an employee is considering about leaving a job [38]. In other way, it can be classified as the staff's personal estimated probability of the situation in which he or she has a deliberate intention of stop working in the organization permanently in near time [39]. It is staffs' intention to end their job in the near future [40]. Turnover intention is often given for analysis rather than the actual turnover. This is based on an argument that intention will lead to a voluntary action to leave a job [41]. The word "intention" reflects the likelihood of actual quitting behaviour [42, 43]. In some researches, employee's turnover intention was significantly found to be a precursor of actual job turnover [44-46]. Thus, studying turnover intention helps we understand and predict the actual off-work behaviour [47]. Since worker's turnover intention changes over time, it is normally measured with reference to a specific time interval [47]. It has been mentioned as the last in a sequence of quitting perception to which people consider of leaving and thinking to search for an alternative job [48].

### C. Relationship between employee's turnover intention and transformational leadership style.

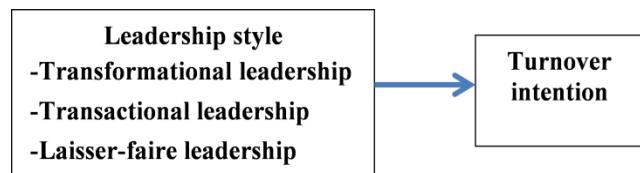
After 40 years since Burns [20] set the theoretical base, many studies on the effects of transformational leadership on staffs' turnover intention has been done. Theoretically, transformational leadership is an affective factor in reducing and palliating turnover intention [24]. However, insufficient proofs are given about the connection between transformational leadership and employee's intention to leave their job [49, 50]. Empirical results vary among specific contexts and research methodology. Transformational and transactional leadership has significantly and inversely affected to staff's intention to quit in various contexts such as in education [33], bank [13], sport [14], tourist [15] and health sector [16]... However, in the research conducted in a Malaysian academic organisation, Long and Thean [12] found no connection between transactional and transformational leadership and academic employee's quitting intention. Similarly, Kleinman [51] concluded that transformational

leadership do not significantly affect to nursing staff's intention of leaving their job. In most research, leadership is categorized into two styles: transactional and transformational leadership. However, some researchers examine the transformational leadership style only [33, 52-55]. In other cases, the leadership style is classified in to 3 types: transactional, transformational and laissez-faire leadership style [56]. The classification of leadership style depends on research analytical framework and specific context.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### A. Research hypotheses

On the basis of the theoretical basis, the analytical framework of this work is proposed as follows:



**Fig. 1.** Research framework

In addition, the research hypotheses are given as:

- H1: The transformational leadership has a negative impact on the employee's turnover intention.
- H2: The transactional leadership has a negative impact on the employee's turnover intention.
- H3: The laissez-faire leadership has a positive impact on the employee's turnover intention.

#### B. Data

This study uses data from 270 employees working in 9 retail businesses in Vietnam. Because of the sensitive nature of the topic, participants did not agree with the author to disclose information about businesses. The employees involved in this study are all employees, not managers. In terms of age, the workers participating in the study are young employees of Y generation (from 24 to 38 years old). The selection of workers in this age group to participate in the research is due to the important help from the HR department of enterprises.

#### C. Instrument

The questionnaire includes 3 parts:

- Demographic questions: asking about individual characteristics of respondents: age, gender, marital status, job position and work experience.
- Leadership style: Questions about leadership style: using the modified leadership style scale based on MLQ - 5X scale (proposed by Avolivo and Bass [22]. MLQ-5X questionnaire includes 45 questions about transformational leadership style, transaction leadership style, laissez-faire leadership style and leadership outcomes. However, this research does not mention about leadership outcomes, thus questions relating to these factors have been removed from the questionnaire. Therefore, the questionnaire used in the study only included 36 questions. In particular, the transformational leadership style is revealed by 5 following factors: Idealized Influence- Behaviors; Idealized Influence- Attributes; Individual Consideration; Intellectual Stimulation and Inspirational Motivation . The transactional leadership style is expressed through 2 factors: Management-by-Exception-Active and Contingent Reward . Finally, the laissez-faire leadership style is reflected by Management-by-Exception- Passive and Laissez-Faire . These scales are used as LIKERT scales which range from 0 to 4, where level 0 is "never", and level 4 is "always".

- Turnover intention questions: The young employee's intention to leave is measured by the scale proposed by Mobley [1]. This scale includes only 4 LIKERT questions, with 5 levels, ranging from level 1 is "very disagree" to level 5 is "completely agree".

#### D. Research methodology.

The author performs preliminary research and formal research, in which preliminary research is conducted by in-depth interviews with 10 people from two target groups. Group 1 consists of 5 people who are famous lecturers and researchers working at three economic universities in Vietnam. Group 2 is the target respondents including millennial employees working in retail businesses in Vietnam. The results obtained from the preliminary research are used to modify the scales in the questionnaire and complete the research model. The main research was conducted in form of an interview using the modified questionnaires. The author uses a convenient sampling method, with a sample size of 270 workers in 9 retail businesses in Vietnam. Descriptive statistical techniques, explanatory factor analysis (EFA) and regression analysis will be done to test the research hypotheses.

#### IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

##### A. Description of the research sample.

The statistical results describing some of individual characteristics of 270 respondents are presented in the following table.

**Table 1.** Demographic characteristics of respondents

Sample (270)	Classification	No. of observations	Frequency (%)
Gender	Male	105	38.89
	Female	165	61.11
Education level	High school	36	13.33
	Intermediate vocational colleges	35	12.96
	Colleges	76	28.15
	Graduate	118	43.70
	Post graduate	5	1.85
Seniority at the current enterprise	0-3 years	142	52.59
	3-5 years	99	36.67
	> 5 years	29	10.74
Number of job turnover	0	41	15.19
	1	61	22.59
	2	79	29.26
	3	58	21.48
	>3	31	11.48

The data in the table above shows that the number of workers participating in the study has a higher percentage of women than men, which is also a common feature of workers in the retail sector in developing countries [57]. The rate of workers with university education reached the highest with 43.70%. The number of employees with working seniority at the company from 0-3 years reached the highest proportion with the rate of 52.59%. In particular, only 15.19% of workers have never changed their jobs, the percentage of workers who have changed jobs 2 times accounted for the largest part, nearly 30%, particularly, up to 11.48% of workers have ever

moved more than 3 times. That reflects the similarity with previous assumptions about the high level of job mobility of workers in the retail sector [2, 9].

##### B. The reliability of the scales

The reliability of the scales is verified using Cronbachs Alpha coefficient. According to the test results from the data set, there are 5 unsatisfactory observed variables, which should be removed. These are the variables III1 belonging to the factor "Idealized Influence – Attributes (IA)", the variable IS4 belongs to the group of "Intellectual Stimulation (IS)", the variable CR2 belongs to the group of factor "Contingent Reward (CR)", variable MA3 belongs to the group of "Management-by-Exception: Active (MA)" and LF4 variable belongs to the group "Laissez-Faire (LF)". The remaining variables all have Cronbachs Alpha coefficients greater than 0.7, thus achieving the reliability and can be used for explanatory factor analysis as shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2.** Reliability of scales

Factor	No. of items	Cronbach's Alpha
IA	3	0.835
IB	4	0.791
IM	4	0.882
IS	3	0.809
IC	4	0.798
CR	3	0.836
MA	3	0.868
LF	3	0.834
MP	4	0.899
IT	4	0.867

IB for Idealized Influence – Behaviors; IM for Inspirational Motivation; IC for Individual Consideration; MP for Management-by-Exception: Passive.

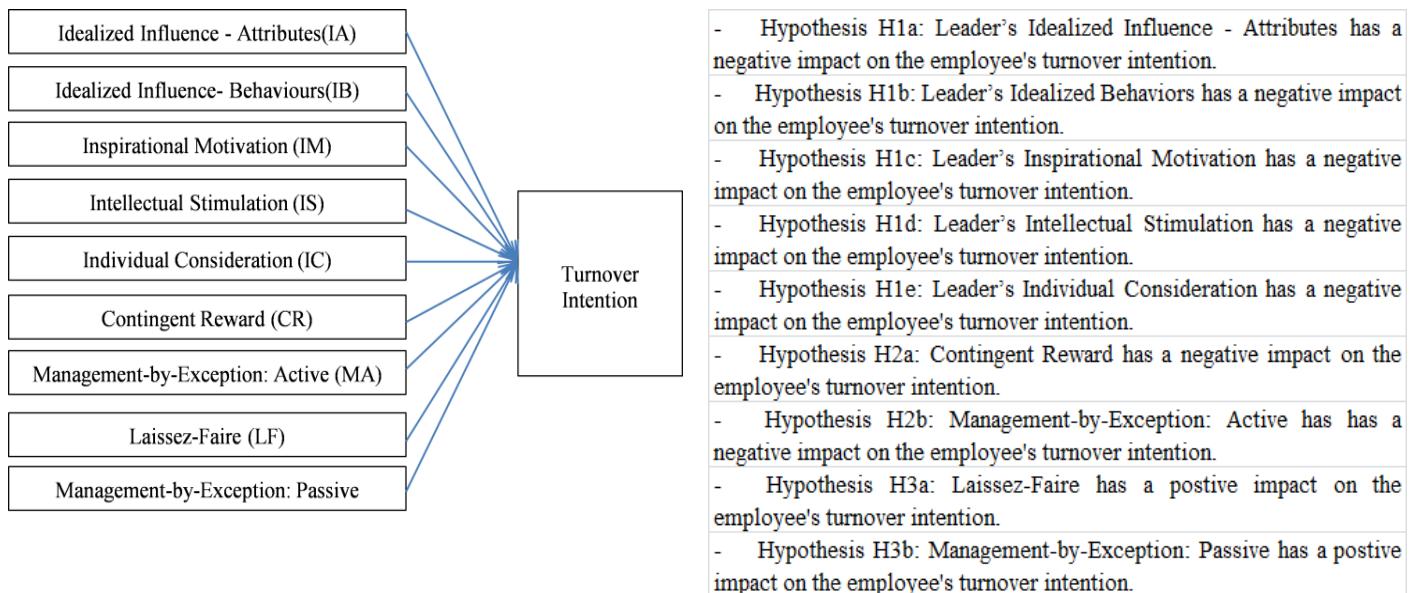
##### C. The explanatory factor analysis (EFA) result

After the data has ensured reliability, the author conducts the EFA technique and gets the following result:

**Table 3.** Rotated component matrix

<b>Factors</b>	<b>Component</b>								
	<b>1</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Leadership style</b>									
IA	IA2	0.827							
	IA3	0.811							
	IA4	0.805							
IB	IB1		0.732						
	IB2		0.618						
	IB3		0.624						
	IB4		0.705						
IM	IM1			0.593					
	IM2			0.628					
	IM3			0.701					
	IM4			0.663					
IS	IS1				0.545				
	IS2				0.702				
	IS3				0.699				
IC	IC1					0.813			
	IC2					0.826			
	IC3					0.756			
	IC4					0.801			
CR	CR1						0.710		
	CR3						0.786		
	CR4						0.693		
MA	MA1							0.689	
	MA2							0.861	
	MA4							0.776	
LF	LF1								0.788
	LF2								0.751
	LF4								0.723
MP	MP1								0.814
	MP2								0.801
	MP3								0.765
	MP4								0.823
KMO = 0.836; Sig=0.000; Eigen value = 2.768 ; Extraction variance = 77.255%									
<b>Turnover intention</b>									
IT	IT1				0.687				
	IT2				0.907				
	IT3				0.802				
	IT4				0.824				
KMO = 0.769; Sig=0.000; Eigen value =2.889 ; Extraction variance = 72.222%									

Based on the results of the above exploratory factor analysis, the research model and the research hypotheses are now given in detail in Fig. 2.



**Fig. 2.** Research model and scheme of the research hypotheses

#### D. Regression result

To test these hypotheses, a multi regression model is proposed as follows:

$$IT = \beta_1 + \beta_2 IA + \beta_3 IB + \beta_4 IS + \beta_5 IM + \beta_6 IC + \beta_7 CR + \beta_8 MA + \beta_9 LF + \beta_{10} MB + \varepsilon_i \quad (1)$$

Using the data set to run the regression model, there are two independent variables that are not significant: IA and LF. After conducting the variable dropping test, the final regression model is obtained and shown in Fig. 3.

Dependent variable: IT		No. of obs: 270		
Independent variables	Unstandardized coefficient	Standardized coefficient	t-Statistic	Prob.
Constant	0.06	0.06	0.124	0.902
IB	-0.317	-0.314	-6.253	0.000
IM	-0.192	-0.193	-3.851	0.000
IC	-0.265	-0.253	-5.043	0.000
IS	-0.152	-0.154	-3.019	0.000
CR	-0.251	-0.247	-4.939	0.001
MA	-0.174	-0.176	-3.511	0.001
MB	0.225	0.224	4.479	0.000
R-squared	0.34	F-statistic	22.612	
Adjusted R-squared	0.325	Prob(F-statistic)		0.000
Durbin-Watson	1.757			

**Fig. 3.** Regression analysis

With the above regression result, it can be seen that most independent variables have the opposite effects on the millennia's turnover intention except for the last one. The most influential factor to the employee's quitting intention is the factor "*Idealized Influence – Behaviours*". The second influential factor is the factor "*Individual Consideration*". The factor of "*Contingent Reward*" ranks as the third. In 5 groups of factors belonging to transformational leadership style, there are 4 groups of factors have strong adverse influence on the millennia's intention to quit. As expected, both groups of factors belonging to transactional leadership styles have a negative effect on the employee's quitting intention. Only one factor "*Management by passive exception*" has a positive effect on the workers' intention to quit. This result is quite similar to previous studies of Ali [58], Gyensare, Anku-Tsede [33], and Alexandrov, Babakus [59]. In short, the impact of leadership factors on the millennia's turnover intention can be summarized as Fig. 4.

Hypotheses	Statement	Expectation	Result
H1a	Leader's Idealized Influence - Attributes has a negative impact on the employee's turnover intention.	-	Rejected
H1b	Leader's Idealized Behaviours has a negative impact on the employee's turnover intention.	-	Accepted
H1c	Leader's Inspirational Motivation has a negative impact on the employee's turnover intention	-	Accepted
H1d	Leader's Inspirational Motivation has an inverse relationship with the employee's turnover intention	-	Accepted
H1e	Leader's Individual Consideration has a negative impact on the employee's turnover intention	-	Accepted
H2a	Contingent Reward has a negative impact on the employee's turnover intention	-	Accepted
H2b	Management-by-Exception: Active has a negative impact on the employee's turnover intention	-	Accepted
H3a	Laissez-Faire has a positive relationship with the employee's turnover intention	+	Rejected
H3b	Management-by-Exception: Passive has a positive relationship with the employee's turnover intention	+	Accepted

**Fig. 4.** Conclusion on research hypothesis

## V. CONCLUSIONS

This current work is based on the theory of transformational leadership style to analyse the influence of the leadership on the young employees' turnover intention in the retail business in Vietnam. The achieved results of the work is quite consistent to previous researches when finding that almost factors belonging to the style based on transformational leadership and transactional leadership have a significant impact on reducing the employees' intention of leaving. Meanwhile, the laissez-faire leadership style tends to increase the young employees' intention to quit their jobs. However, it is worth noting that what we expected do not happen to the items "Idealized Influence- Attributes" and "Idealized Influence-Attributes". These two factors have no impacts on the millennia's intention to leave their jobs. The research results still have some limitations related to sampling methods and sample size. In addition, result from exploratory factor analysis is also a guide for further studies on this issue using more efficient quantitative techniques such as confirmatory factor analysis as well as structural equation model.

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