

UNIVERSITY OF LJUBLJANA
SCHOOL OF ECONOMICS AND BUSINESS

MASTER THESIS

**THE IMPORTANCE OF SUCCESSFUL MANAGEMENT AND
CORPORATE CULTURE FOR EMPLOYEE PRODUCTIVITY
AND JOB SATISFACTION IN THE TECHNOLOGY INDUSTRY**

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AUTHORSHIP STATEMENT

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP	4
2.1	Defining a manager.....	8
2.2	Defining a leader.....	11
3	CORPORATE CULTURE.....	14
3.1	Corporate culture models and dimensions	17
3.2	Management, leadership and culture.....	19
4	JOB SATISFACTION AND EMPLOYEES' PRODUCTIVITY	21
5	SELECTED INDUSTRIES ANALYSES.....	25
5.1	Overview and division of the technology industry.....	26
5.2	Growth trends.....	28
5.2.1	Growth trends in the software sector.....	28
5.2.2	Growth trends in telecommunications and internet services	29
5.2.3	Growth trends in E-commerce.....	31
5.3	Competition in the technology industry	32
5.4	Employee turnover rate.....	33
6	METHODOLOGY	35
6.1	Primary data collection: In-depth interviews	35
6.2	Explaining Sample Description	36
6.3	Data analysis	38
6.4	Development of research questions	38
7	EMPIRICAL RESEARCH	39
7.1	Overview of findings.....	39
7.2	Thematic overview of findings	41
7.2.1	Lack of clear communication and misalignment.....	41
7.2.2	Pressure and burnout	42
7.2.3	The importance of leadership over management	43
7.2.4	The impact of corporate culture on employee satisfaction and productivity	44

7.2.5	Career development opportunities	44
7.3	Key findings.....	45
8	DISCUSSION	49
8.1	Theoretical implications.....	50
8.1.1	Lack of clear communication and misalignment.....	50
8.1.2	Pressure and burnout.....	50
8.1.3	The importance of leadership over management.....	51
8.1.4	The impact of corporate culture on employee satisfaction and productivity	52
8.1.5	Career development in the technology industry	52
8.2	Practical implications	53
8.3	Limitations and suggestions for future research	55
9	CONCLUSION.....	57
	REFERENCE LIST	58

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1:	Different definitions of management and leadership.....	4
Table 2:	Leaders vs. Managers.....	6
Table 3:	Management vs. Leadership.....	7
Table 4:	Key leadership traits	12
Table 5:	Differences between a successful and an unsuccessful leader	14
Table 6:	Corporate culture definitions.....	16
Table 7:	Deal and Kennedy culture	19
Table 8:	Determinants of job satisfaction	22
Table 9:	Determinants of employee productivity.....	23
Table 10:	Relationship between job satisfaction & employee productivity	24
Table 11:	Different theories of the technology industry.....	27
Table 12:	Three key businesses and sectors within the technology industry	27
Table 13:	Sample description.....	37
Table 14:	Overview of the main themes occurring within topics	46
Table 15:	Overview of the main findings within research questions	48

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Management process.....	9
Figure 2: Leadership styles	10
Figure 3: Schein's model	17
Figure 4: Charles Handy's Typology	18
Figure 5: Mutual traits of leadership and culture	20
Figure 6: Relationship between leadership and culture	21
Figure 7: Software sector expected growth (2023 -2034).....	29
Figure 8: Telecommunications and Internet services market expected growth (2023 -2035)	31
Figure 9: E-commerce market expected growth (2023 -2033)	32
Figure 10: Voluntary and involuntary turnover.....	34
Figure 11: Data structure. 1st order concepts, 2nd order themes, Aggregate dimensions ...	40
Figure 12: Sector-specific insights and mutual traits.....	48

LIST OF APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Povzetek dela v slovenskem jeziku	1
Appendix 2: Questions for interviewees	1

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAGR – Compound Annual Growth Rate

EI – Emotional intelligence

HR – Human Resources

IT – Information Technology

KPI – Key Performance Indicators

R&D – Research and Development

SaaS – Software as a Service

1 INTRODUCTION

Over the past decade, the way we communicate, work, and conduct business has undergone a significant transformation. The global adoption of the internet, cloud-based solutions, and artificial intelligence (AI) has become an important part of everyday life, driving the rapid growth of the technology industry. However, defining the technology industry is challenging, as it encompasses a diverse range of subindustries and businesses that together form the sector, such as software, Software as a Service (SaaS), IT services, telecommunications, e-commerce, and so on (GlobalEdge, 2018).

The global technology industry was valued at approximately \$5.3 trillion in 2022 and is projected to grow at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of 5-7% over the next decade (Statista, 2024). As one of the largest industries, it employs several million people and presents one of the fastest-growing sectors in terms of job creation (Roller, 2024). However, this growth has also increased competition among technology companies. Firms are under constant pressure to innovate and deliver superior products and services to maintain their market positions. This competitive environment presents several challenges, including globalization, technological advancements and employee retention. The latter is higher in the tech industry than in almost any other sector in business, with 13.2% (Gleichauf, 2023).

While turnover is influenced by multiple factors, this statistic highlights the challenges that companies in this industry face and underscores the importance of effectively addressing and resolving these challenges. Leadership plays a crucial role in this context, ensuring organizational synergy and minimizing factors that could contribute to rising turnover rates.

The concept of management is broad and can be divided into management and leadership. Management focuses on executing tasks such as planning, organizing, leading, and controlling, while leadership is characterized by inspiring and motivating others. Both management and leadership are essential for organizational success; management ensures operational goals are met, while leadership fosters long-term employee engagement and development (Northouse, 2007). While managers and leaders are often distinguished as separate roles, their chosen leadership style plays a key role in shaping a company's corporate culture. Corporate culture is also an important determinant of employee job satisfaction and productivity.

Research has shown that companies with well-aligned and supportive cultures tend to experience higher levels of employee satisfaction and retention. Employees who feel valued and motivated are more likely to be engaged and productive (Gallup, 2023). Conversely, misaligned or toxic cultures can lead to disengagement, higher turnover, and decreased productivity (Gallup, 2023). These findings are further supported by research in organizational behaviour, where Yukl (2013) highlights that leadership behaviours such as

providing support, setting clear expectations, and recognizing employee contributions are crucial for enhancing job satisfaction and commitment.

A positive corporate culture, characterized by open communication, collaboration, and shared values, significantly enhances productivity and reduces turnover (Schein, 2010). In contrast, a negative work environment often leads to dissatisfaction and burnout (Gallup, 2022). The relationship between leadership and corporate culture is deeply intertwined, with each influencing and reinforcing the other. The current literature suggests that employee perceptions of their workplace are shaped by this mutual connection, which can directly affect overall productivity and motivation (Azeem et al., 2021). Businesses that prioritize both strong leadership and a supportive corporate culture are better positioned to drive innovation and maintain a competitive edge in an evolving market (Azeem et al., 2021).

Through an in-depth review of existing literature and empirical research, I aimed to explore how leadership and corporate culture influence individual motivation and job satisfaction, rather than solely focusing on organizations. Existing research suggests that ineffective leadership, poor communication, and limited career development opportunities are among the core challenges in the technology industry. However, there remains a lack of empirical evidence on how to effectively address these issues within the sector.

The core objective of my master's thesis is to examine the outcomes of effective leadership and what effective management means for different employees within the technology sector. Moreover, I have also focused on corporate culture, in relation to employee motivation and productivity. I wanted to understand how these two concepts interact within different organizational settings and leadership frameworks, as many technology companies continue to struggle with maintaining high levels of employee satisfaction, which leads to high employee turnovers.

Employee job satisfaction and productivity are influenced by both internal (leadership style, work environment, compensation) and external (industry competition, economic conditions, regulatory factors) elements. Research has shown that companies that prioritize strong leadership and a supportive corporate culture tend to experience higher employee satisfaction, improved retention, and increased productivity (Gallup, 2023). Despite these insights, many technology companies continue to struggle with maintaining a work environment that fosters long-term engagement and motivation. While existing research acknowledges that leadership and corporate culture are fundamental drivers of employee productivity and satisfaction, several research gaps remain. Many studies focus on traditional industries, leaving a limited understanding of how management practices impact employee outcomes in the technology sector, where work environments are often high-pressure, fast-paced, and innovation-driven (Turner, 2024).

While leadership theories such as transformational leadership have been linked to improved productivity and engagement (Bass & Riggio, 2006), there is insufficient research on how

specific leadership approaches interact with corporate culture to influence employee satisfaction within technology companies. Furthermore, the relationship between corporate culture, leadership, and turnover rates in tech firms remains underexplored. Given the high demand for talent, increasing burnout, and employee disengagement, it is important for companies to understand best management practices and cultural frameworks that improve both employee well-being and organizational performance in the technology industry.

To achieve its purpose, the goals of my thesis are:

- to understand which management practices in technology sectors are considered successful and help create great leaders;
- to analyse the relationship between management practices, corporate culture, and their impact on employee engagement, productivity, and job satisfaction in the technology sector;
- to discuss different leadership styles and how they influence company culture and overall employee performance;
- to identify the factors that promote a positive and productive work environment in the tech industry;
- to explore the role of company culture in shaping job satisfaction and employee retention;
- to identify gaps in the current research and suggest areas for further investigation.

The thesis is divided into a theoretical and an empirical/practical part. In the theoretical part, existing scientific and professional literature is examined to explore the concepts of management, corporate culture, employee productivity and their job satisfaction. These theoretical foundations provide the necessary context for understanding the research problem addressed in the thesis.

The empirical part of the thesis is structured into two research methods. Firstly, a qualitative research approach is employed through interviews conducted with employees from three distinct sectors within the technology industry: software development, telecommunications, and e-commerce. The specific characteristics of each of these sectors are analysed and summarized to highlight their unique workplace dynamics. Secondly, the findings from the interviews are systematically evaluated, offering insights into the impact of corporate culture, management practices, and job satisfaction on employee productivity in the technology sector. A thematic analysis of the collected data is presented, allowing for a deeper understanding of recurring patterns and sector-specific challenges.

For the empirical part, my goal was:

- to explore employees' perspectives on the effectiveness of management practices, leadership styles, and company culture in promoting job satisfaction and productivity;
- to identify the main challenges faced by employees in terms of leadership, communication, workload, and career development;

- to provide practical recommendations for companies in the tech sector to improve management practices and adopt a supportive and motivating workplace culture.

In the final part of the thesis, the key findings from the empirical research are synthesized to conclude the broader implications for management and corporate culture within the technology industry. The results contribute to a better understanding of how these factors shape employee experiences and overall business performance in an industry characterized by rapid innovation and high competition.

2 MANAGEMENT AND LEADERSHIP

Every organization consists of individuals who lead the company and work towards its goals, and employees who contribute to achieving these objectives by following the instructions of managers or leaders. Management sets the foundational direction for development, establishes the strategic goals of the organization, and ensures the execution of tasks at all operational levels (Bass, 2008). Often referred to as their management or leadership style, managers use their power and influence to ensure the achievement of the set goals. These styles differ in how they schedule and assign tasks, interact with team members, and demonstrate attitudes and behaviours (Bass, 2008). Leadership, on the other hand, plays a crucial role in inspiring, motivating, and guiding individuals toward a shared vision, promoting engagement, and adaptability (Bennis, 1999; Northouse, 2007). To further clarify the distinction between management and leadership, Table 1 presents various definitions of each concept as proposed by different authors.

Table 1: Different definitions of management and leadership

Author	Definition
MANAGEMENT	
Peter Drucker (1974)	A process that involves planning, organizing, leading, and controlling resources to achieve specific goals.
John Kotter (2009)	Maintaining stability and control, focusing on getting things done efficiently and effectively to meet organizational goals.
Peter Northouse (2007)	The focus is on achieving specific objectives by organizing and coordinating activities, setting short-term goals, and optimizing resources.
Laurie Mullins (2010)	The process of creating a well-functioning organization by making decisions, solving problems, and handling daily operational tasks.
Robbins & Coulter (2017)	Management is the act of coordinating resources and processes to meet organizational objectives, focusing on efficiency, effectiveness, and resource optimization.

(Table continues)

Table 1: Different definitions of management and leadership (cont.)

LEADERSHIP	
Warren Bennis (1999)	The ability to set direction, motivate, and inspire others to bring about positive change.
John Maxwell (2011)	The ability to inspire people to follow a vision by using influence rather than authority.
John Kotter (2009)	Leadership is the capacity for collective action to vitalize.
Peter Northouse (2007)	The process of influencing a group of individuals to achieve a common goal.

Source: Own work

A manager's role involves leading the team, primarily through motivating and inspiring team members, setting the right tone of communication, and establishing values and beliefs that foster group development and achievement of objectives (Northouse, 2007). Management is highly dynamic, adapting to address internal and external organizational needs. Particularly in recent years, with constant changes in the global marketplace, flexibility and adaptability have become crucial characteristics of the management process. There are four key areas of the organization that are crucial for improving organizational efficiency and effectiveness: planning, organizing, leading, and controlling (Abdullahi et al., 2021).

While each managerial function appears to operate independently, they are intricately interconnected. Managers often navigate multiple functions simultaneously, revisiting them throughout the day. A manager's primary focus is to meet organizational goals, achievable through employees' collaborative efforts. Efficiency involves using resources optimally to complete tasks, while effectiveness focuses on achieving desired outcomes. Successful managers typically balance efficiency and effectiveness, aiming to achieve both (Zaleznik, 1981). On the other hand, leadership is also a concept with many definitions, but most emphasize two key aspects: preparing the team to achieve a shared objective and creating a vision (Northouse, 2007). A crucial part of leadership is also the concept of influence (Maxwell, 2011) and the ability to energize collective action (Kotter, 2009). Leadership plays a crucial role, demonstrating style and behaviour during interactions with the team and shaping employees' actions toward meeting organizational objectives.

In Abraham Zaleznik's seminal 1977 article, "Managers and Leaders: Are They Different?" published by Harvard Business Review he presented management and leadership as distinct entities, outlining fundamental differences in their approach to goals, conceptions of work, interpersonal relations, and self-perception, presented in Table 2 (Zaleznik, 1977).

Table 2: Leaders vs. Managers

	Manager	Leader
Direction and goals	Goals created out of necessities Takes an impersonal and passive outlook	Goals created to achieve high ambitions Sets the company's direction Changes how people think about what is possible and desirable
Approach to conflict	Excels at defusing conflicts Aims for compromise and control Avoids risk Quick to resolve problems to maintain order.	Tolerates chaos and a lack of structure Delays closure to understand issues and develop a fresh approach to problems Seeks risk if the opportunity appears promising
Relations and engagement with others	Views work as a process to be managed, focusing on efficiency Focuses on processes and decision-making Seeks stability, predictability, and order. Operational focus, maintains a certain emotional distance.	Views work as a deep engagement, focus on possibilities and change. Attracted to ideas and try to relate with others directly, intuitively and empathetically. Encourages change, transformation, and growth. Inspirational, establishes deep personal engagement with team members.
Decision making	Quick to resolve problems to maintain order.	Willing to explore complex issues before making decisions.
Risk orientation	Sticks to traditional and tried methods.	Seeks new directions and challenges existing boundaries
Personal qualities	Risk-averse, prefers controlled and planned outcomes. Analytical, diligent, result-driven, and process-focused. Short-term goals	Embraces risk for the opportunity of substantial rewards. Visionary, creative, trusting, and emotionally intelligent. Long-term goals

Source: Zaleznik (1977)

Many scholars followed Zaleznik's ideas and further explored the distinctions between the beforementioned concepts. Kotterman (2006) argues that concepts of management and leadership are interdependent and essential for successful modern organizations, stressing the importance of managers maintaining stability and efficiency while leaders drive change

and innovation. John P. Kotter further explored the differences and the meaning of both concepts together and emphasized that while management and leadership have distinct roles within an organization, they are deeply interconnected and complementary. Hence, effective organizations recognize the need for both strong management and visionary leadership. The first one ensures stability, efficiency, and provides order and consistency to organizations, while leadership helps the team to drive change and inspire collective action (Kotter, 2009). The central function of management is to provide order and consistency to organizations, whereas leadership produces movement and seeks adaptive and constructive change (Northouse, 2007). To better illustrate these differences, Table 3 provides an overview of Northouse’s findings on the differences between management vs. leadership, outlining their distinct responsibilities, approaches, and potential outcomes.

Table 3: Management vs. Leadership

Management	Leadership
Planning & Budgeting <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing detailed steps and timetables for achieving set results. • Allocating the resources to achieve results. 	Establishing direction <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a vision, mission, and strategies for producing the changes needed to achieve the vision in the future.
Organising & Staffing <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish a structured environment tailored for executing plan requirements, including appointing personnel and delegating authority. • Develop and implement guiding policies and systems to oversee and ensure proper execution of plans. 	Aligning people <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Effectively communicate the company's goals and strategies. • Seek team commitment by clearly demonstrating organizational strategies, ensuring their validity is recognized and accepted.
Controlling & Problem solving <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitoring results vs. plan in some detail. • Identifying deviations and then planning and organizing to solve these problems. 	Motivating & Inspiring <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Inspiring and energising people • Satisfying very basic, but often unfulfilled, human needs.
Potential for consistent results <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produces a degree of predictability and order. 	Potential to create change <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Produces change, often to a dramatic degree.

Source: Own work based on Northouse (2007).

2.1 Defining a manager

A manager, by a general definition, is a professional who assumes a leadership role within an organization, overseeing a team of employees and often managing a specific department. However, defining a clear definition of management and manager proved difficult due to the various aspects of management, which cover managing a business, managers, employees, and labour itself (Riggio, 2017). Different scholars from various fields offer diverse perspectives and interpretations of a manager. Craig R. Hickman defines a manager as a rational individual who represents the other pole, signifying someone analytical, structured, controlled, and thoughtful. In his view, a manager brings rationality and everyday problem-solving to an organization or a company (Hickman, 1998). However, as per more recent literature and research, Tutova (2020) defines a manager as a professional tasked with balancing organizational goals and employee needs, emphasizing adaptability and the ability to navigate complex environments. This definition highlights the modern manager's need to operate in dynamic contexts, where balancing strategic objectives with workforce satisfaction is paramount. Bolden (2016) adds to this by suggesting that a manager is not merely a figure of authority but also a facilitator of organizational development, focusing on aligning individual and collective goals. Managers are seen as drivers of change who encourage collaboration and foster innovation, enabling organizations to adapt to market disruptions. Combining these perspectives, it becomes clear that the role of a manager has evolved from being solely task-oriented to encompassing broader responsibilities such as promoting innovation, ensuring employee well-being, and leveraging technology. Modern managers are expected to be adaptable leaders who can integrate traditional management principles with contemporary demands, including digital transformation, diversity, and sustainability. Despite this evolution, the role of a manager is still defined by the diversity of tasks they undertake, which can vary widely across industries and organizational structures.

One of the key frameworks for understanding the role of a manager comes from researcher Henry Mintzberg, who analysed the daily activities of managers across various sectors and positions. Mintzberg (1989) proposed that managers adapt their behaviour and switch between different roles based on the requirements of the situation. To support this, he identified six key characteristics of managerial work:

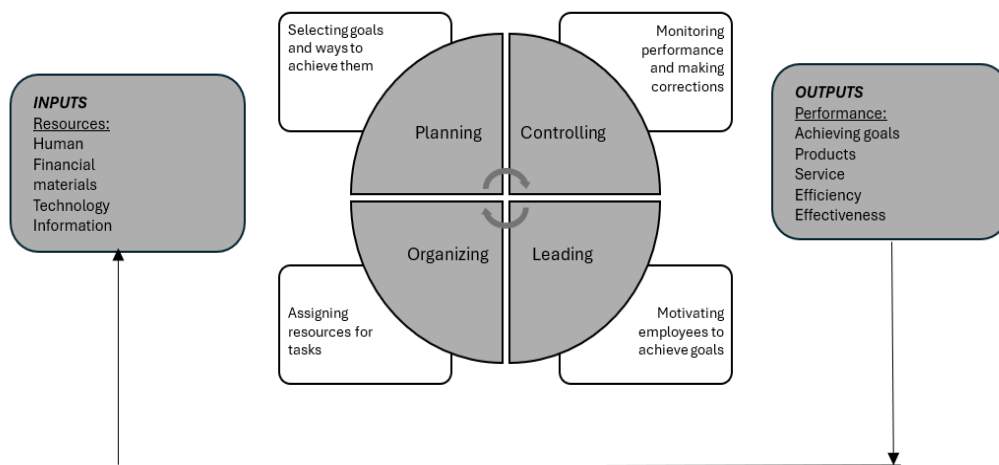
1. High time pressure
2. Relatively short managerial activities
3. Emphasis on action and action-driven activities
4. Importance of verbal communication
5. Interaction with external parties
6. Limited involvement in execution

Based on these characteristics, he formulated ten roles, which he divided into three main categories of roles (Mintzberg, 1989):

- 1) Interpersonal: representing relationships between people
- 2) Informational: for acquiring necessary information
- 3) Decisional: for making decisions using information to achieve company goals.

As previously mentioned, the four core functions of management are planning, organizing, leading, and controlling, which together conduct the management process. As shown in Figure 1, these functions enable managers to utilize resources effectively to achieve organizational goals (DuBrin, 2012). By systematically employing these functions, managers can leverage internal and external resources to deliver optimal outcomes.

Figure 1: Management process



Source: Based on Nascimento-e-Silva et al. (2020)

Planning

Planning is a function of an organization that defines activities, tasks, and the use of resources to accomplish predetermined outcomes or objectives. It is an essential part of efficient management, involving a complex process of goal-setting, strategy-making, and resource allocation to accomplish desired results. Managers have the responsibility to ensure that the company operates in deliberate pursuit of its goals rather than relying on chance. Following the establishment of goals and the identification of pathways to achieve them, managers or leaders must anticipate environmental dynamics and be aware of the risks in the process. By defining goals and expressing the organization's mission, planning ensures alignment with broad objectives and gives all projects a clear direction (Dimovski & Penger, 2003). It is important for managers to continually monitor team progress and adjust as necessary while keeping the organization's overarching objectives in mind.

Organizing

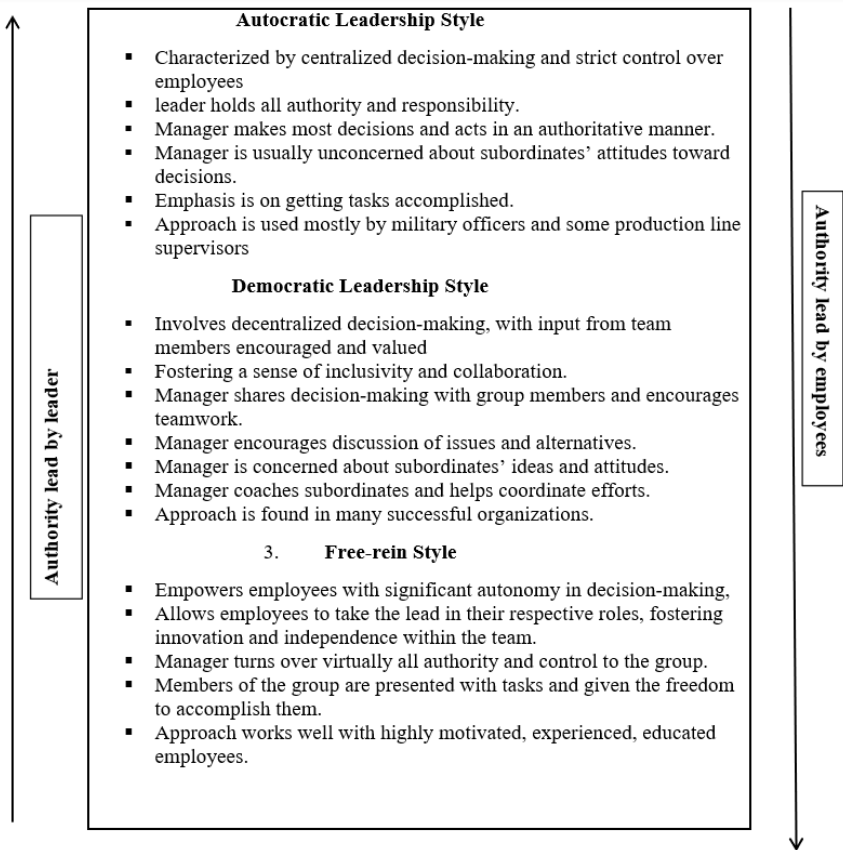
Organizing is an important part of the management process, which involves the coordination and allocation of an organization's resources to achieve desired outcomes. A manager must

adhere to the planning phase and systematically analyse workflow, seeking ways to enhance the company's operations. The manager's efforts toward effectively utilizing available resources and assets are instrumental in leading the company to success (Dimovski & Penger, 2003). The objective of organizing is to facilitate coordinated efforts, where the key concepts of form and structure play crucial roles.

Leading

Leadership is the process of guiding and motivating individuals toward achieving organizational goals, encompassing various theories and approaches. Top managers use leadership skills to establish, communicate, and gain support for the organization's mission, vision, and values (Dimovski & Penger, 2003). Effective leadership involves influencing employees through direct interaction, providing clear direction, setting team goals, and communicating policies or changes, often called transformational leadership (Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014). On the other hand, there is transactional leadership, which focuses more on structured tasks, clear expectations, and rewards for performance, often maintaining a hierarchical approach to decision-making (Sethuraman & Suresh, 2014). Leadership styles vary significantly, influencing organizational performance and employee engagement. Styles range from autocratic and democratic to free-rein approaches, each promoting different levels of control and autonomy within teams, as shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2: Leadership styles



Source: Own work

Controlling

Control, the fourth key function in the management process, evaluates an organization's progress toward its objectives. Despite thorough planning, organizing, and leadership, internal and external factors can lead to deviations, making it crucial to monitor and correct performance (DuBrin, 2012). Control involves comparing results with plans, identifying discrepancies, and implementing measures for improvement. It ensures that the organization stays aligned with its goals and complements the planning process by verifying the execution of strategies (Ferrell et al., 2020). Control serves several purposes: assessing the effectiveness of planning, organizing, and leading; steering employee behaviour toward objectives; and integrating activities across the organization. Scholars have expanded on the basic four functions, adding staffing or problem-solving to address organizational challenges (Higgins, 1991). While theories vary, the fundamental control function remains essential for maintaining efficiency and success across all organizational areas (Dimovski & Penger, 2003).

2.2 Defining a leader

Leading can be understood as the process of influencing individuals or groups within a company to align with the organization's objectives, achieved through effective communication, motivation, and guidance. Thus, a leader is characterized as an individual who significantly impacts employees to improve organizational performance by influencing, guiding, motivating, or otherwise preparing them to perform their work to the best of their ability and align with set goals (Iqbal et al., 2015). Leadership involves creating a vision for the future and motivating organization members to pursue it themselves, and it can thus be perceived as the ability to persuade others to strive to achieve their set goals independently (Iqbal et al., 2015). The diverse nature of organizations prompts leaders to minimize discrimination among employees and enhance their involvement. This can be achieved through authentic, respectful, and inclusive leadership approaches (Ibarra, 2015). It is vital for leaders to contribute to team reorganization to enhance agility, innovation, and alignment with employees' values and goals, which leaders must recognize. This can be achieved through networking, collaboration, ethical and cultural conduct, and connection (Ibarra, 2015).

An important aspect influencing a leader's behaviour and, consequently, the behaviour of the led, is the leader's personality and the related aspect of self-perception and self-acceptance. A positive leader's attitude towards themselves indicates satisfaction with themselves and their lives; to understand others, they must first understand themselves. Each leader forms a certain self-image, envisioning what kind of leader they are and aspire to be (Buzeti & Stare, 2010). The development of new leadership competencies rarely occurs spontaneously; leaders must actively decide and intend to pursue such development. To gain insights into their actions and influence on colleagues, leaders should be open to feedback. It is beneficial for them to have a realistic self-image, be open to criticism, and be willing to hear and

acknowledge truths about aspects they may not be aware of, which may fall within their blind spots (Buzeti & Stare, 2010).

Effective leadership in organizations hinges on the emotional intelligence (EI) of leaders and their ability to embody traits that inspire trust, creativity, and motivation. Emotional intelligence, defined as the ability to manage oneself and relationships effectively, is widely recognized as a cornerstone of successful leadership (Goleman, 2011). Goleman’s framework identifies four critical dimensions of EI: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and social skills. These dimensions enable leaders to navigate complex interpersonal dynamics, foster collaboration, and align teams with organizational objectives (Gutterman, 2023). Leaders with high EI address challenges constructively and create environments that promote innovation and well-being (Landry, 2019). The study of leadership traits has evolved significantly over time. Early theories, such as the "great man" theory, suggested that leadership traits were inherent and limited to certain individuals. Although this perspective has been discredited, it paved the way for contemporary research that emphasizes the role of both innate dispositions and acquired skills in shaping leadership effectiveness (Stogdill, 1948; Mann, 1959). Modern perspectives highlight that traits such as self-awareness, empathy, and adaptability can be developed through training and experience (Gutterman, 2023). This approach underscores that while some leaders may have natural predispositions, effective leadership is often cultivated through deliberate practice and learning.

Leaders with strong EI amplify their ability to navigate decisions, inspire employees, and foster organizational success, as it encompasses the ability to remain self-aware, regulate emotions, demonstrate empathy, and build strong relationships. Leaders who excel in these areas promote trust and creativity, aligning teams toward shared goals and addressing challenges with resilience (Palmer et al., 2001). Conversely, leaders who lack EI may struggle to maintain morale, stifle constructive thinking, and negatively impact team cohesion. In addition to emotional intelligence, specific leadership traits such as integrity, motivation, and vision are instrumental in fostering organizational success. By prioritizing self-awareness and understanding their leadership style, leaders can inspire and motivate teams to achieve optimal productivity (Pathak, 2022). Table 4 shows what different authors count as key leadership traits, with a focus on recent research.

Table 4: Key leadership traits

Author	Key leadership traits
Pathak (2022)	Integrity, vision, innovation, active listening, problem solving, delegation
Justino (2022)	Curiosity, humility, self-discipline, passion, resilience
Destine (2022)	Self-awareness, desire for learning, positivity, realism, empathy
Fries (2018)	Strategic thinking, communication skills, motivation, honesty, leadership capability

Source: Own work

Many scholars highlighted key leadership traits such as integrity, trust, and a clear sense of self-awareness. Good leaders must believe in themselves and have a strong understanding of what they wish to achieve.

Kovač et al. (2004) define typical leadership qualities as:

- Intelligence (ability to quickly adapt to changes);
- Personality (openness, dominance, emotional stability, honesty);
- Expressiveness (clear communication);
- Empathy (understanding others);
- Ethical principles (values, norms);
- Altruism (helping others without expecting anything in return);
- Philanthropy (satisfaction in helping others)
- Positive self-image;
- Creativity (going beyond the known);
- Determination (courage to persist in decisions).

Pathak (2022) identifies the following ten traits of a good leader:

- Leads by example;
- Maintains clear and unambiguous communication with employees;
- Works well in a team;
- Has a clear vision and knows how to plan and organize;
- Cares for the well-being of employees;
- Efficiently controls the work process;
- Is patient, persistent, and tolerant;
- Has a sense of humour;
- Continuously learns and improves;
- Leads like a mentor.

Authors, including Pathak (2022) and Ivanov et al. (2021), have explored both positive and negative leadership traits. Their findings are summarized in Table 5, which shows the differences between good and bad leadership.

Table 5: Differences between a successful and an unsuccessful leader

Successful Leader	Unsuccessful Leader
Takes proper action and plans well.	Does not give clear instructions, only commands.
Serves as a role model.	Enjoys "big boss" attitudes.
Actively listens to others.	Often arrives at work tired.
Keeps promises.	Is disliked and has few friends.
Provides clear instructions and seeks better work methods.	Is stubborn and refuses input.
Knows how to motivate and inspire.	Constantly argues with employees.

Source: Pathak (2022); Ivanov et al. (2021)

Some leaders, despite having the correct characteristics and traits, still fail or are not considered successful leaders. Hence, the effectiveness of leadership is also influenced by situational factors, or situational models, which assume that the situation is critical in determining the appropriate leadership style.

3 CORPORATE CULTURE

Corporate culture forms the foundation of any organization, shaping employee behaviour, decision-making processes, and overall success. It consists of shared values, beliefs, and practices that guide how individuals interact and approach their work (Molenaar, 2002). A strong corporate culture promotes a sense of shared purpose, enhancing teamwork and attracting talent that aligns with the organization's ideals. While the importance of corporate culture has long been recognized, its role has become even more critical in the modern, dynamic workplace (Ojo, 2010). Organizations with cohesive cultures are better positioned to retain top talent, drive innovation, and sustain long-term growth (Molenaar, 2002). Beyond internal cohesion, corporate culture significantly influences organizational performance and resilience. Gorton et al. (2022) highlight that culture acts as an informal governance mechanism, aligning employee behaviour with company objectives without requiring constant monitoring. Strong cultures promote trust, shared norms, and intrinsic motivation, reducing reliance on costly monitoring systems. However, while cultural cohesion enhances efficiency, an overemphasis on uniformity can suppress diversity of thought and adaptability, particularly in dynamic industries such as technology, finance, and healthcare, emphasizing the importance of balancing stability and adaptability. Sarathlal (2019) further explains that transformational leadership is essential for forming company

culture, encouraging team unity, and improving team performance. Organizational flexibility and creativity are strengthened by the engagement, shared vision, and trust that transformational leaders create. According to Zhang & Guo (2024), corporate culture additionally encourages information exchange and innovative problem-solving, which are critical components of technological innovation (Zhang & Guo, 2024). In the IT industry, using deep learning and cutting-edge digital tools in organizational procedures improves communication, decision-making, and resource allocation while strengthening cultural alignment. In an increasingly digitized and competitive environment, these findings emphasize how important it is for organizations to create a culture that encourages personal creativity and technical flexibility.

Developing and maintaining a strong corporate culture is an ongoing process, requiring continuous attention and adaptation. While culture is initially shaped by a founder's vision and values, it must evolve alongside the organization. Entrepreneurial and ethical values are particularly important, as they foster integrity, accountability, and long-term sustainability (Schein, 1990). Culture also fulfills fundamental psychological needs such as belonging, esteem, and confidence, which influence workplace attitudes and behaviours (Maslow, 1985). Employees gradually internalize shared values, shaping workplace interactions and decision-making (Franzoni, 2004; Schein, 1990).

The most successful corporate cultures balance integration and adaptability, allowing organizations to navigate market shifts, leadership transitions, and technological advancements (Moretti, 2017). Strong leadership reinforces culture, fostering team cohesion and collaboration across industries (Sarathlal, 2019). Managing cultural transitions requires stability while remaining open to innovation (Gorton et al., 2022). Organizations that integrate technology and human potential stay competitive in evolving environments (Zhang & Guo, 2024). Ultimately, a well-cultivated culture enhances collaboration, employee satisfaction, and innovation, giving companies a strategic edge. By continuously refining their cultural foundations, organizations can ensure resilience, alignment, and long-term growth (Gorton et al., 2022). To further clarify the various definitions and theoretical perspectives on corporate culture, Table 6 presents an overview of different conceptualizations from key scholars and theories in the field.

Table 6: Corporate culture definitions

Author	Context	Key Findings	Antecedents	Consequences	Potential Moderators	Theories Used
Schein (1990)	Theoretical framework on organizational culture	Culture is deeply rooted in psychological assumptions, influencing organizational behavior and decision-making processes.	Psychological predispositions, shared assumptions	Influence on behaviours, decision-making processes, and organizational dynamics.	Individual cognitive factors, leadership behaviour	Psychological theories of culture
Hofstede (1991)	Cross-cultural analysis of corporate culture	Corporate culture is shaped by national values, internal group dynamics, and external environmental factors.	Cognitive programming, group identity, national cultural influences	Differentiation between organizational groups, shaping leadership approaches and workplace behavior.	National and organizational culture differences, globalization, cultural adaptability	Cross-Cultural Management Theories
Cameron & Quinn (1999)	Organizational culture framework	Organizations exhibit four types of cultures: Clan (collaborative), Adhocracy (innovative), Market (competitive), and Hierarchy (structured).	Organizational values, leadership philosophy	Affects leadership style, flexibility, innovation, and employee satisfaction.	Organizational adaptability, strategic focus	Competing Values Framework
Brown (2001)	Conceptual analysis in organizational culture	Organizational culture develops over time, influencing member behavior and interactions.	Organizational history, collective experiences	Formation of beliefs, values, and behaviors among members, influencing material arrangements and behavior.	Evolution of the organization over time	Cultural evolution theory, Organizational behavior theories
Molenaar (2002)	Literature review on corporate culture and employee behavior	Corporate culture, built on shared values and beliefs, directly influences employee satisfaction, motivation, and behavior.	Shared values, beliefs, understandings	Employees experience higher job satisfaction and motivation when their personal values align with organizational values	Alignment of personal and organizational values	Cultural alignment theory, Behavioral theories
Ojo (2009)	Conceptual analysis on corporate culture	Corporate culture significantly shapes organizational identity, decision-making processes, and employee motivation, influencing overall success.	Organizational identity, employee collaboration	Enhanced decision-making, higher employee motivation, and increased organizational success.	Level of employee engagement, corporate governance structure, and leadership alignment	Organizational identity theory and corporate culture frameworks.
Lanaj, Johnson & Lee (2016)	Daily research of leaders' transformational behaviors and their impact	Engaging in transformational leadership behaviors daily enhances leaders' positive affect through the fulfillment of their psychological needs for autonomy, and competence.	Communication and leaders' engagement in transformational behaviors.	Employee retention, improved corporate culture and well being of employees.	Personality traits; extraverted leaders benefit less, while those high in neuroticism benefit more	Organizational culture (Schein, 2010); Transformational leadership theory (Bass, 2008)
Davis (2023)	Doctoral dissertation	Transformational leadership significantly enhances job satisfaction, performance, and empowerment, contributing to a positive corporate culture.	Leadership behaviour promoting vision and inspiration.	Increased employee engagement, motivation, and productivity, reinforcing a strong organizational culture.	Organizational size, industry type, and leadership tenure	Organizational culture (Schein, 2010); Transformational leadership theory (Bass, 2008), Job demands-resources model
Lewis (2021)	Book about positive psychology and appreciative inquiry in organizations	Implementing positive leadership and appreciative inquiry creates a positive work environment, enhancing employee well-being, engagement, and organizational performance.	Leadership commitment to positive practices; organizational openness to change.	Strengthened corporate culture; increased job satisfaction, productivity, and innovation.	Organizational readiness for change; existing cultural norms; leadership styles	Positive psychology theories
Moretti (2017)	Study of corporate culture across various industries and organizational contexts	Corporate culture varies across contexts and can be integrated, diverse, or fragmented influencing workplace dynamics.	Interests of researchers and practitioners in organizational behavior and culture formation.	Corporate culture is perceived as integrated, diverse, and fragmented, impacting organizational identity, employee engagement, and performance.	Variation depends on industry type, leadership styles, and research perspectives	Organizational culture (Schein, 2010); Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (1991)

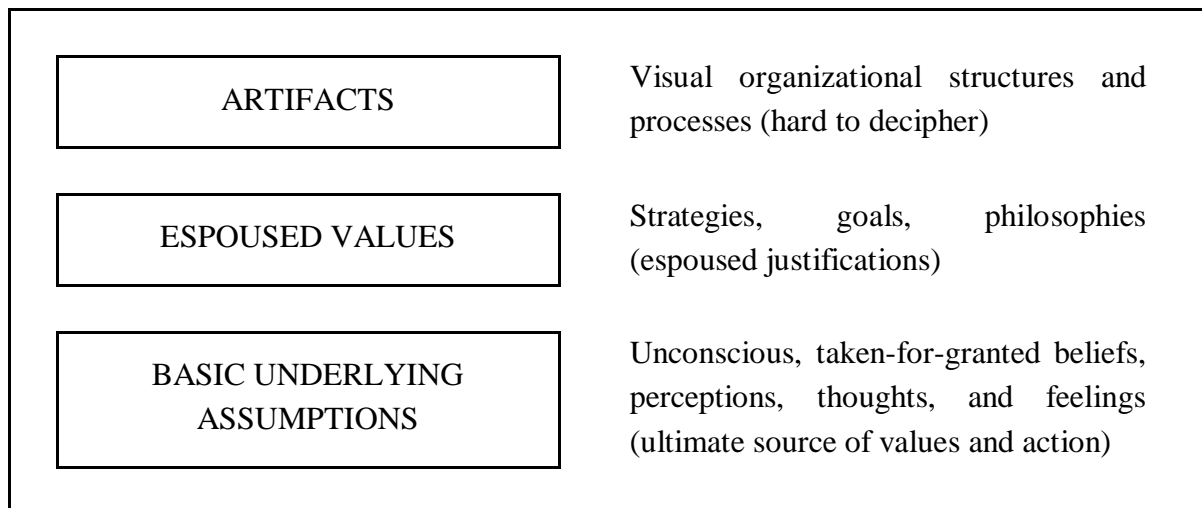
Source: own work

3.1 Corporate culture models and dimensions

Understanding corporate culture types is essential for leaders and employees as it shapes work environments, morale, and organizational success (Naeem et al., 2019). Scholars, such as Charles Handy and Deal & Kennedy, have categorized corporate cultures to simplify the concept and highlight how multiple cultures may coexist within an organization.

Edgar Schein divided culture into three different levels: artifacts, espoused values, and underlying assumptions (unconscious beliefs that shape decision-making). According to him, different levels mean the degree to which the cultural phenomenon is visible to the observer. Schein (2010) agrees that the ambiguity concerning the definition of what culture genuinely arises from the inability to differentiate the levels at which it manifests itself. Schein emphasizes that to fully comprehend a culture, one must look beyond its outward manifestations in the form of artifacts and behaviours. If these levels are not distinguished, culture and its impact on behaviour and organizational dynamics may be understood superficially. Individuals and organizations can develop a deeper awareness of the values, assumptions, and conceptions that underpin their interactions and behaviour by recognizing and examining the various levels of culture and with that improve organizational development, change management, and effective cultural integration. This is better illustrated in Figure 3, highlighting how each level influences organizational behaviour.

Figure 3: Schein's model



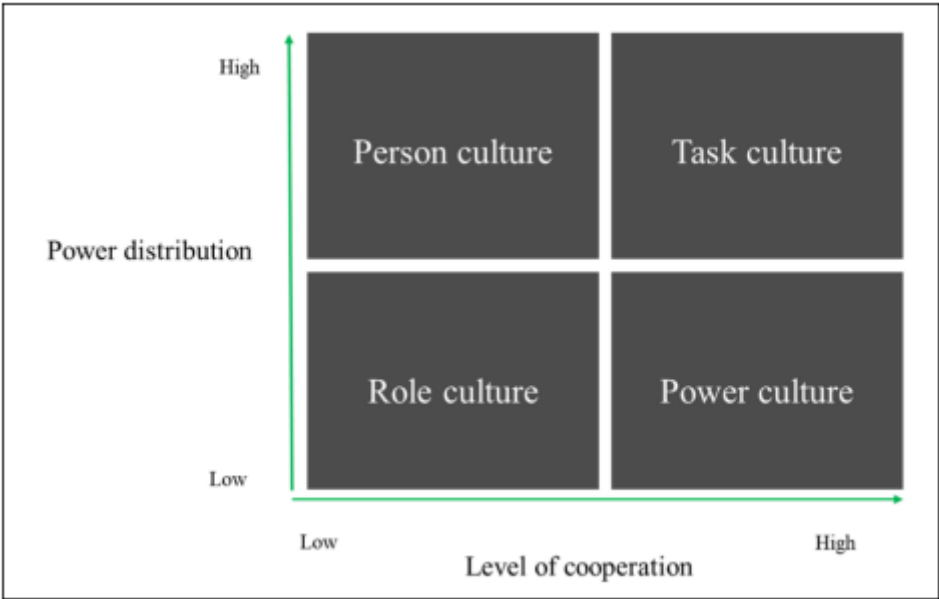
Source: Schein (2010)

Artifacts are the visible and tangible elements of corporate culture, including architecture, language, technology, products, and behavioural patterns within the organization. These are easily observed but often difficult to interpret fully without understanding the context behind them. Artifacts also encompass creative expressions like clothing, emotional responses, and organizational narratives or myths that reflect the culture's surface level. Espoused Beliefs and Values represent the principles, values, and aspirations that justify employees' behaviours. Initially proposed by leaders or founders, these beliefs are tested through collective actions and only evolve into shared assumptions when proven effective repeatedly.

However, espoused values may sometimes misalign with actual behaviours, offering only a partial understanding of culture until deeper layers are explored. Underlying assumptions are the deepest layer of culture, comprising unconscious, ingrained beliefs that guide behaviour and decision-making. These assumptions, often established by founders or management, are embraced by employees over time and become the foundation for how members perceive, think, and act. Deeply entrenched assumptions provide a competitive advantage by aligning organizational decision-making and communication.

Figure 4 shows Charles Handy's Typology (1995), which explains that organizations adhere to four distinct cultures: power culture, role culture, task culture, and person culture. Power culture centralizes authority around a dominant leader, making quick decisions but limiting long-term growth. Role culture thrives in bureaucratic environments, emphasizing hierarchy, specialization, and rigid structures, often at the expense of innovation. Task culture prioritizes teamwork and adaptability, forming dynamic teams to achieve specific goals, making it ideal for project-based organizations (Gomes, 2015). Each culture influences organizational efficiency, decision-making, and employee engagement.

Figure 4: Charles Handy's Typology



Source: Handy (1995)

Table 7, on the other hand, presents Deal and Kennedy's Organizational Culture Model (1982), which classifies corporate culture into four types based on two key factors: the speed of feedback on decisions and the level of risk associated with company operations (Cameron, 1988). The four classifications of organizational culture are: "The Work Hard/Play Hard Culture", "The Tough-Guy Macho Culture", "The Process Culture", and "The Bet Your Company Culture".

Table 7: Deal and Kennedy culture

Type of culture	Key features	Risks/challenges
Work Hard/Play Hard	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fast feedback/reward, low risk - High energy, teamwork-focused - Success tied to collective effort - Encourages camaraderie and competition 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Risk of declining quality due to increasing workload - Overemphasis on speed may overshadow thoroughness
Tough-Guy Macho	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fast feedback/reward, high risk - Individual-focused, thrives on personal success - Present-focused, not future-oriented - Limited teamwork and cohesion 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High turnover rates - Weak group identity and lack of long-term strategy
Process Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Low risk, minimal feedback - Focus on execution methods rather than outcomes - Slow, precise decision-making - Values technical excellence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Difficult to assess results - Risk of inefficiency by prioritizing process over tangible outcomes
Bet-Your-Company	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Slow feedback, high risk - Long-term goals and future-oriented values - Top-level decision-making - Emphasizes experience and careful planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Stress from delayed feedback and high-stakes - Incorrect decisions can have severe consequences - Slow career progression due to reliance on experience

Source: Deal & Kennedy (1983)

3.2 Management, leadership and culture

The relationship between leadership and culture is deeply intertwined. Leaders shape organizational culture through their actions, decisions, and communication, while culture, in turn, influences leadership behaviours and traits. This dynamic is highlighted in Figure 5, which presents key findings from prominent scholars, showing how leadership and culture are mutually dependent. These findings emphasize that leadership traits, values, and

behaviours play a significant role in developing and maintaining organizational culture, while culture also shapes the expectations and actions of leaders.

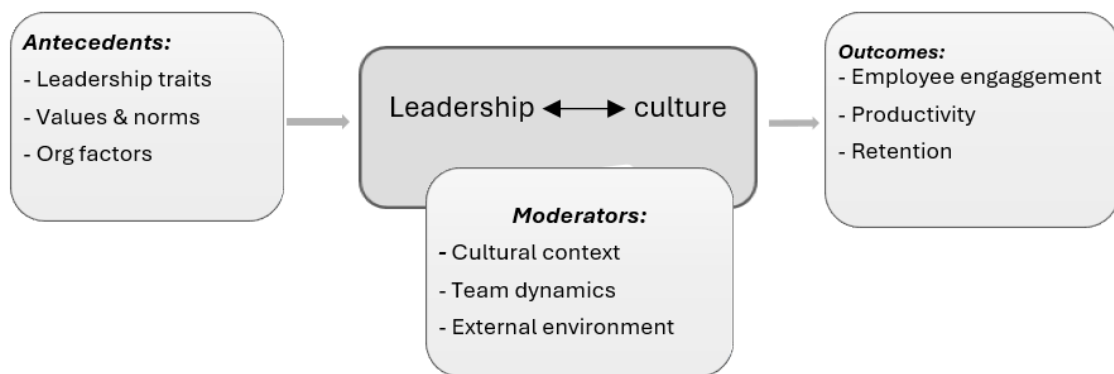
Figure 5: Mutual traits of leadership and culture

Leadership	←————→		Culture
	Finding	Author	
	Leaders impact organizational culture through imitation, identification, and suggestion, while culture influences leaders through facilitation and inhibition.	Schein (1990)	
	Leaders can influence culture through empathy, antipathy, and social pressure, and vice versa.	Schein (1990)	
	Cultural values shape distinct leadership styles, highlighting the reciprocal relationship between culture and leadership	Porras and Hoffer (1986)	
	Where managers shape culture, and as the organization evolves, culture reciprocally shapes leadership traits.	Ogbonna & Harris (2000)	
	The thinking and actions of senior management or leadership is particularly important in the development and strengthening of culture within an organization, as it is through leaders that norms and values are transferred within the organization to lower levels	(Robbins & Judge, 2005)	
	The formation of organizational culture is said to be significantly influenced by a small number of factors, highlighting highlights national culture, leadership, and the broader social environment of the organization as the most important.	Brown (2001)	
	Leaders set behavioural expectations for employees; if they expect subordinates to treat clients with respect, they must also demonstrate consistent respectful behaviour.	Harris & Hartman (2001)	

Source: own work

The findings in Figure 6 illustrate that leadership is not only about guiding employees but also about understanding and respecting the cultural framework of an organization. For example, Schein (1990) highlights that leaders influence culture through empathy and imitation, while culture reciprocally influences leaders through facilitation and inhibition. This dynamic interplay is especially crucial in the early stages of an organization when the founder’s vision often sets the foundation for the culture. Over time, this culture evolves and shapes leadership behaviours as the organization grows. Leadership and culture have a reciprocal relationship, with antecedents, moderators, and outcomes that impact the organization holistically. In Figure 6, I tried to simplify this relationship, illustrating how leadership traits and cultural context influence employee engagement, productivity, and retention, with key moderators such as team dynamics and the external environment.

Figure 6: Relationship between leadership and culture



Source: Own work.

This model highlights that leadership traits, organizational values, and norms are critical antecedents to shaping culture. Moderators such as team dynamics and cultural context play a role in either reinforcing or challenging the relationship between leadership and culture. The outcomes: employee engagement, productivity, and retention, are vital indicators of a healthy organizational culture. Leaders who fail to consider cultural alignment may inadvertently create dissatisfaction and disengagement among employees, underscoring the need for proactive leadership in culture-building.

4 JOB SATISFACTION AND EMPLOYEES' PRODUCTIVITY

Employee attitudes play a crucial role in management as they significantly influence workplace behaviour and overall organizational performance. The widely accepted notion that "a satisfied worker is a productive worker" has been supported by decades of research. Research done by Cook (2009) shows that job satisfaction enhances cognitive functioning, creating and promoting motivation, leading to improved task performance, and creating a more productive workforce. Job satisfaction directly influences an employee's engagement and performance. Research shows that satisfied employees demonstrate higher levels of motivation, commitment, and efficiency, whereas dissatisfaction often results in absenteeism, lower productivity, and increased turnover (Pushpakumari, 2008).

The most widely used research definition of job satisfaction comes from Locke (1976), who defined it as "a positive emotional state resulting from the appraisal of one's job or job experiences." He emphasizes the importance of affect (feeling) and cognition (thinking) in shaping job satisfaction. When individuals think, they develop feelings about their thoughts, and conversely, when they experience emotions, they reflect on what they feel. Job satisfaction also plays a vital role in employee retention and workplace stability, as

employees' attitudes toward their jobs affect performance, engagement, and career longevity (Weirich, 2016).

Scholars emphasize that job satisfaction is multifaceted, combining both extrinsic and intrinsic factors. Extrinsic determinants such as competitive compensation and flexible work environments ensure financial stability and work-life balance, while intrinsic factors such as leadership quality, career growth opportunities, and recognition contribute to professional fulfilment and motivation (Waqas et al. 2014; Gonzalez et al., 2020). A positive workplace culture, transparent leadership, and opportunities for continuous learning further reinforce employee commitment to and retention. To better understand the key determinants influencing job satisfaction, Table 8 provides an overview of the primary factors identified in the research, along with their significance in shaping employee motivation and commitment.

Table 8: Determinants of job satisfaction

Determinant	Authors	Description	Findings
Compensation & benefits	Vidal et al. (2013), Thompson et al. (2023)	Competitive salaries, stock options, and meaningful benefits (healthcare, remote work stipends, learning budgets).	Fair and competitive pay remains a primary driver of job satisfaction, motivation, and retention, especially in high-demand industries like tech.
Work environment & flexibility	Allen & Shockley (2009)	Supportive work environments, hybrid/remote work flexibility, and positive workplace culture.	Employees in flexible work environments report higher satisfaction, engagement, and productivity, reducing burnout and stress.
Leadership style & organizational culture	Pathak (2022), Goleman (2011), Gonzalez et al. (2020)	Transformational leadership, transparency, fairness, and a strong corporate culture aligned with employee values.	Supportive leadership fosters trust, creativity, and employee engagement, while toxic leadership is a major driver of dissatisfaction and turnover.
Growth & career development	Fernandez & Shaw (2020)	Access to learning programs, mentorship, career advancement opportunities, and skill development.	Employees with clear career growth paths are more likely to remain engaged, committed, and satisfied with their jobs.
Recognition & feedback	Waqas et al. (2014)	Regular feedback, transparent communication, and acknowledgement of employee contributions.	Employees who receive consistent recognition and constructive feedback report higher job satisfaction, motivation, and commitment.

Source: own work

Given its strong impact on workplace behaviour, job satisfaction is important for determining employee productivity, which is defined as the overall contribution an employee makes to an organization during a given period and represents the level of efficiency and effort put into completing assigned tasks, whether related to training, production, or service delivery (Fernandez & Shaw, 2021). Productivity is not a fixed measure; rather, it is shaped

by various internal and external factors that influence an employee's ability to perform optimally. The determinants of employee productivity encompass key elements that significantly impact workforce efficiency and output, while productivity factors are more specific variables that directly affect an individual's performance. Research suggests that when employees' needs are met, their motivation and efficiency improve, making it easier for organizations to achieve their goals (Pandey et al., 2021). Therefore, understanding and managing these productivity drivers is crucial for sustained organizational growth. Zinovieva et al. (2016) examine how various external and internal factors influence an enterprise's stability, focusing on aspects such as self-organization and adaptability. The authors categorize factors into those directly related to the enterprise's operations (internal) and those external to its influence (external). Key external factors include consumers, competitors, and suppliers, while internal factors encompass elements like organizational culture and management style. The study emphasizes that promoting a strong organizational culture is crucial for maintaining enterprise stability. Table 9 presents the most significant determinants, highlighting their impact on workforce efficiency and organizational performance.

Table 9: Determinants of employee productivity

Determinant	Authors	Description	Findings
Skills and Abilities	Allen (2009), Mustafa & Lleshi (2024)	The competencies and expertise employees possess to perform their tasks effectively.	Employees with higher skills and abilities tend to be more productive. Recent studies emphasize the importance of continuous skill development.
Motivation	Locke (1970), Mustafa & Lleshi (2024)	The intrinsic and extrinsic factors that drive employees to achieve their goals.	High motivation, both intrinsic and extrinsic, is associated with increased productivity. Recent research highlights the role of personalized incentives.
Leadership	El-Sabaa (2001), Gonzalez et al. (2020)	The style and effectiveness of leadership and management in guiding and supporting employees.	Effective leadership styles that support and guide employees improve productivity. Modern leadership emphasizes emotional intelligence and adaptability.
Job Satisfaction	Locke (1970), Tripathi & Pandey (2017)	The level of contentment employees feel about their roles, responsibilities, and work conditions.	Higher job satisfaction leads to higher productivity. Recent studies link job satisfaction with improved mental health and sustained performance.
Organizational Culture	Hofstede (1991), Gonzalez et al. (2020)	The values, beliefs, and norms that shape the behaviour and attitudes of employees within the organization.	A strong, positive organizational culture boosts productivity. Recent findings show that cultural alignment across remote teams is increasingly vital.
Communication	Allen (2015), El-Sabaa (2001)	The clarity, frequency, and quality of information exchange between employees and management.	Clear and open communication enhances productivity by reducing misunderstandings and improving workflow.

Source: own work

The relationship between job satisfaction and productivity has been widely studied, with research consistently showing that satisfied employees are more engaged, motivated, and productive, whereas dissatisfaction leads to lower efficiency, higher turnover, and workplace disengagement. As outlined in Table 10, studies conducted by various authors, such as Pushpakumari (2008) and Mishra (2013), emphasise that job satisfaction is shaped by employee expectations and the work environment, directly influencing attitudes and performance. Flair (2023) found that workplace satisfaction boosts productivity by 31%, while dissatisfaction reduces it by 10%. Tripathi & Pandey (2017) confirmed that aligning job roles with employee expectations enhances performance and reduces turnover. These findings are also supported by technology industry-specific studies, such as BambooHR, Pew Research Centre, Gallup and Johnson & Lee. BambooHR (2023) reported declining satisfaction in the tech sector due to layoffs and return-to-office mandates, while Pew Research Centre (2022) found that remote work positively impacts job satisfaction and work-life balance. Gallup (2023) and Johnson & Lee (2023) highlight the role of leadership, communication, and meaningful work in increasing satisfaction and retention.

Table 10: Relationship between job satisfaction & employee productivity

Context of Study	Research Method	Antecedents & Consequences	Potential Moderators + Theory Used	Key Findings
<i>Pushpakumari (2008)</i>				
The connection between job satisfaction and an individual's relationship with their work.	Survey-Based Research	<u>Antecedents:</u> Job aspects, individual expectations. <u>Consequences:</u> Overall job satisfaction.	Employee expectations, job role clarity + Job satisfaction theory	Job satisfaction reflects an individual's emotional response to various job aspects, influencing their overall attitude towards work.
<i>Mishra (2013)</i>				
Examines job satisfaction as an outcome of employees' perceptions of how well their work meets their needs.	Literature review	<u>Antecedents:</u> Perceived needs, job aspects. <u>Consequences:</u> General feelings about work and attitude toward different aspects of the job.	Work environment, personal values + Need fulfilment theory	Job satisfaction reflects how well a job meets the perceived needs of employees, influencing their overall feelings about work.
<i>Flair (2023)</i>				
Investigates the relationship between workplace satisfaction and productivity.	Meta-analysis	<u>Antecedents:</u> Positive workplace satisfaction. <u>Consequences:</u> Increased productivity by 31%, decreased productivity by 10% among dissatisfied workers.	Workplace environment, employee motivation + satisfaction-productivity link	Positive workplace satisfaction is strongly correlated with higher productivity, while dissatisfaction leads to reduced productivity.

(Table continues)

Table 10: Relationship between job satisfaction & employee productivity (cont.)

<i>Tripathi & Pandey (2017)</i>				
Explores the factors contributing to job satisfaction in various industries.	Case study analysis	<u>Antecedents:</u> Work expectations, value alignment. <u>Consequences:</u> Job satisfaction, improved employee performance, reduced turnover.	Industry-specific factors, job role + Job satisfaction theory	Job satisfaction is influenced by the alignment of job roles with employee expectations and values, leading to better performance and lower turnover.
<i>BambooHR (2023)</i>				
Decline in employee happiness in the tech sector	Survey and analysis of tech sector employees	<u>Antecedents:</u> Layoffs, return-to-office mandates, reduced funding. <u>Consequences:</u> Decreased job satisfaction, increased stress	Organizational restructuring, external economic pressures	Tech sector employees are experiencing a decline in productivity due to decreasing job satisfaction, caused by layoffs and return-to-office mandates.
<i>Gallup (2023)</i>				
Global employee engagement and job satisfaction	Global survey	<u>Antecedents:</u> Communication & leadership increased. <u>Consequences:</u> Increased job satisfaction and employee engagement	Cultural differences, economic conditions	Effective communication, strong leadership, and recognition are key drivers of job satisfaction and increase productivity.
<i>Al-Suraihi et al. (2021)</i>				
Employee retention in technology industry	Cross-sectional survey	<u>Antecedents:</u> Job engagement, meaningful work, competitive compensation. <u>Consequences:</u> Higher retention, lower turnover rates.	Competitive market pressures, job role. Technology adoption and satisfaction Theory	High job satisfaction in the tech sector, driven by meaningful work and competitive compensation, is essential for retaining top talent.
<i>Hulin & Judge (2003)</i>				
Investigated job attitudes and their influence on employee turnover.	Meta-analysis and empirical studies.	<u>Antecedents:</u> Job involvement <u>Consequences:</u> Job satisfaction significantly affects turnover intentions.	Job involvement, organizational commitment. Job Attitude Theory	Job satisfaction is essential for reducing turnover intentions.

Source: Own work

5 SELECTED INDUSTRIES ANALYSES

The technology industry is a broad and diverse sector, encompassing various subindustries that drive innovation and economic growth. This section provides a more in-depth analysis of three key industries within the technology sector: software development, telecommunications and internet services, and e-commerce. These industries have been selected based on their significant impact on the global economy, their rapid growth, and their influence on business operations and consumer behaviour. Each of these industries

presents unique characteristics, market trends, and challenges that shape their development. The analysis will first explore the general structure and classification of the technology industry, followed by a more detailed examination of the selected industries, highlighting their role, growth trends, and competitive landscapes.

5.1 Overview and division of the technology industry

It can be challenging to define precisely what a technology company is or what the technology industry encompasses, as the terms "technology sector" and "technology industry" have a variety of definitions, few of which are mentioned in Table 11. According to Tech Nation study, a technological industry is a business “that provides a digital technical service/product/platform/hardware or heavily relies on it as its primary revenue source”. After examining several sources, businesses which are primarily involved in the production, support and R&D of a range of technology-related goods or services can be categorized as technology organizations. Moreover, businesses involved in digital electronics, software, optics, new energy, and internet-related services like cloud storage and e-commerce services frequently fall under this category as well (Global Edge, 2018).

In an increasingly digitalized world, technology plays a critical role in facilitating empowerment for both consumers and businesses. The continuous speed of innovation, considerable investments in research and development (R&D), and the involvement of highly qualified technical experts are the main characteristics of this sector. The sector includes a broad and varied range of companies and business models, all of which are committed to the creation, transfer, and manufacturing of various kinds of technology and technological solutions (Sun et al., 2019).

The technology industry, therefore, has several definitions and diverse arrays of businesses and business models, all dedicated to the development, distribution and production of various forms of technology and technological solutions. According to Kuiken, the fundamental characteristic of the technology industry is its focus on the creation, development, and application of innovative and advanced technological products, services, and solutions (Kuiken, 2021). According to the literature review of Brosnan, O’Brien and other scholars, the industry is centred around the design, production, and provision of a wide array of digital and technical products and services using scientific knowledge, engineering know-how, and cutting-edge technology. Software programs, hardware gadgets, digital platforms, telecommunications services, and numerous web-based options might all fall under this category (Brosnan et al., 2023).

Table 11: Different theories of the technology industry

Author	Definition
Van Kuiken (2022)	The fundamental characteristic of the technology industry is its focus on the creation, development, and application of innovative and advanced technological products, services, and solutions.
Brosnan et al. (2023)	Industry is centred around the design, production, and provision of a wide array of digital and technical products and services using scientific knowledge, engineering know-how, and cutting-edge technology.
Tech Nation study (2021)	A business that provides a digital technical service/product/platform/hardware, or heavily relies on it as its primary revenue source.

Source: Own work

I have decided to dive deeper into three key business sectors within the technology industry, for which short descriptions are added in Table 12.

Table 12: Three key businesses and sectors within the technology industry

Sector + Examples	Description of the Sector	Sources
Software Development <i>Adobe, Microsoft, Oracle, TeamViewer, IBM, Salesforce, SAP, GitHub, Red Hat, Atlassian, Slack</i>	The Software Development sector involves the creation, design, deployment, and maintenance of software applications, systems, and platforms, as well as subfields like system software, middleware, and frameworks. Companies in this domain develop software solutions ranging from operating systems and databases to specialized applications for business intelligence, cybersecurity, and more.	Cusumano et al. (2019), Bass et al. (2015)
Telecommunications and Internet Services <i>Google, AT&T, Verizon, Vodafone, Al, T2, Cisco, T-Mobile, Orange, Nokia, Ericsson, Huawei</i>	The Telecommunications and Internet Services sector includes companies that provide the infrastructure, platforms, and services for voice, video, and data communication. This sector enables global connectivity and contains service providers, telecommunications equipment manufacturers, and companies offering cloud-based services.	Dodd (2002), Bauer (2008), Jordan (2019)

(Table continues)

Table 12: Three Key businesses and sectors within the technology industry (cont.)

<p>E-commerce and Online Retail</p> <p><i>Amazon, Alibaba, eBay, Shopify, Walmart, JD.com, Rakuten, Wayfair, Etsy, Target, Zalando, Flipkart</i></p>	<p>Companies that operate digital marketplaces and platforms facilitating online shopping and transactions. This sector has transformed retail by offering global marketplaces accessible to consumers from anywhere, allowing businesses to reach wider markets. This sector is characterized by rapid growth driven by advancements in technology, logistics, and consumer demand for convenience.</p>	<p>Gupta (2014), Moriset (2018)</p>
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Source: Own work

5.2 Growth trends

In a time of fast technological advancement and shifting economic conditions, businesses need to develop and adapt to stay competitive (Mai & Casady, 2023). The technology industry, which includes both large corporations and independent entrepreneurs, is constantly progressing and experiencing unprecedented growth, driven by transformative trends such as AI, cloud computing, IoT, digital transformation, cybersecurity, and sustainability. These trends are reshaping industries, creating new opportunities, and driving economic growth, which will remain a vital force in shaping the future of the global economy if businesses continue to innovate and adapt to these changes (Mai & Casady, 2023).

5.2.1 Growth trends in the software sector

The SaaS sector has experienced significant growth over the past decade, with projections indicating continued expansion. The global SaaS market was valued at approximately \$215 billion in 2023 and is expected to reach over \$370 billion by 2026, reflecting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of around 11% (Fortune Business Insights, 2023). SaaS adoption has expanded beyond the traditional tech industry, with various sectors such as healthcare, finance, and retail integrating SaaS solutions to streamline operations and enhance efficiency. This widespread adoption is driven by the flexibility and scalability of SaaS platforms (Maximize Market Research, 2023).

The ongoing shift towards cloud computing and digital transformation initiatives has been a major driver of SaaS growth. Organizations are increasingly leveraging SaaS applications to reduce IT infrastructure costs and enhance operational agility (Fortune Business Insights, 2023).

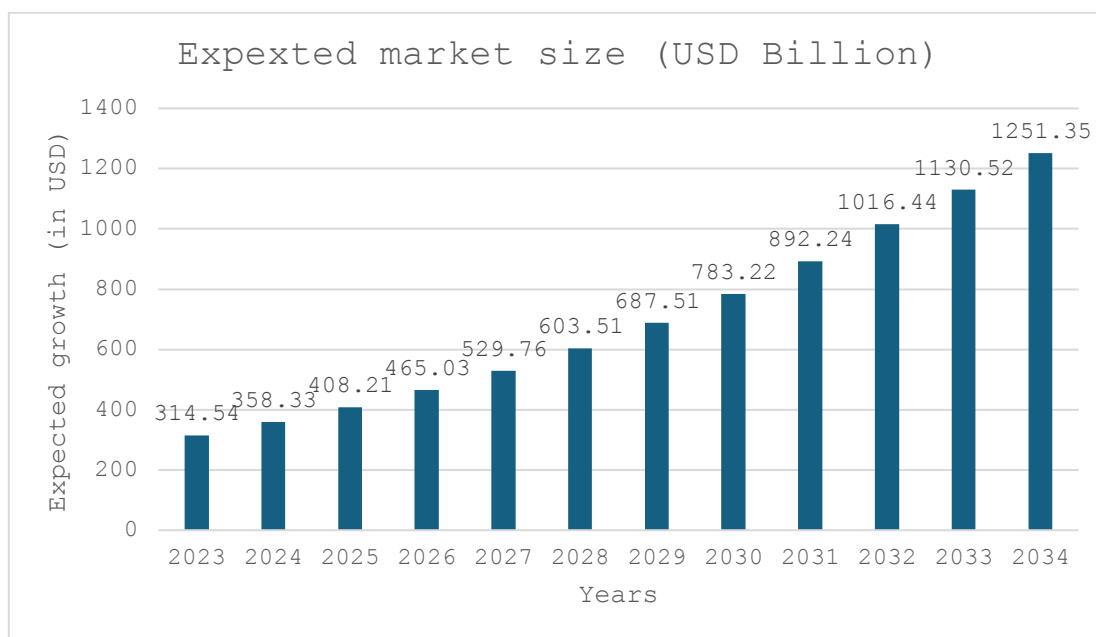
With the pandemic in 2020, there has been a significant rise in remote work, which increased the need for effective collaboration tools - SaaS products like Zoom, Microsoft Teams, and Slack. These tools have become essential for businesses to maintain productivity and communication. In addition, the integration of AI and machine learning capabilities into

SaaS platforms is enhancing product offerings, enabling advanced analytics, personalized user experiences, and automation. This has helped in driving the growth of the sector, and it is expected to drive it even further. Hence, SaaS sector is expected to continue growing, driven by technological advancements, changing work dynamics, and the need for cost-effective, scalable software solutions. Despite challenges related to security and competition, the sector offers significant opportunities for innovation and expansion across diverse industries, which is presented in Figure 7, which represents the expected growth.

Challenges and Opportunities:

- Security and data privacy concerns are very important challenges in SaaS industry, as providers must prioritize hard security measures to build trust and ensure compliance with regulations such as GDPR and CCPA.
- The SaaS market is becoming increasingly competitive, with numerous providers offering similar services. Companies must differentiate themselves through innovation, customer service, and unique value propositions to maintain a competitive edge.
- Based on recent trends, there is an increasing demand for customization and the importance of ease of use of SaaS solutions, especially the seamless integration with existing systems.

Figure 7: Software sector expected growth (2023 -2034)



Source: Adapted from Fortune Business Insights (2023a)

5.2.2 Growth trends in telecommunications and internet services

The global telecommunications and internet services market has experienced substantial growth in recent years, driven primarily by the increasing demand for connectivity and data services. Valued at approximately \$1.74 trillion in 2022, the market is projected to reach \$2.5 trillion by 2027, reflecting a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of around 7%. This

growth is underpinned by several transformative factors, most notably the rollout and expansion of 5G networks. Offering faster data speeds, reduced latency, and greater capacity, 5G technology enables the development of innovative applications and services such as the Internet of Things (IoT) and augmented reality (AR).

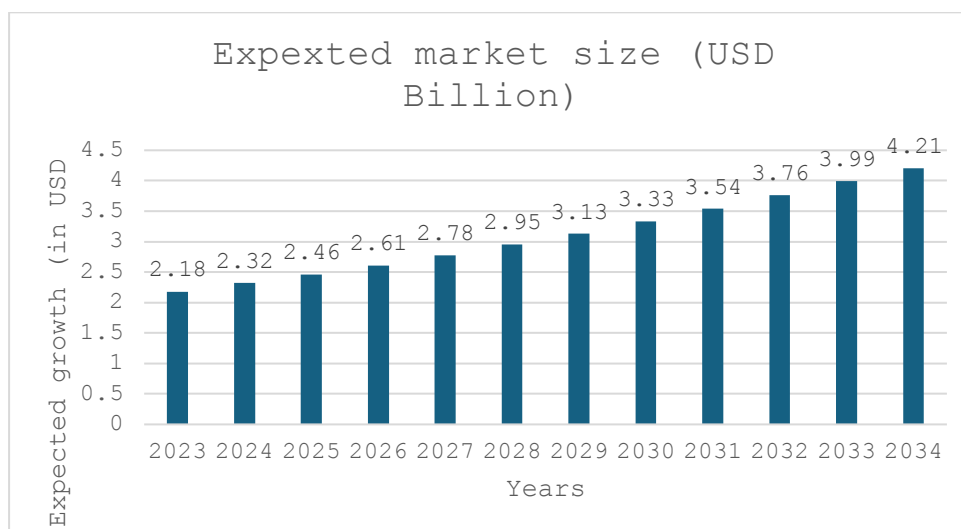
A key driver of this expansion is the continuous rise in internet penetration, particularly in emerging markets, where increasing access to the internet is accelerating the demand for digital content consumption and online services. According to reports from the World Bank Group (2022) and the International Telecommunication Union (2021), global internet accessibility has significantly improved, providing a robust foundation for further growth. Additionally, the COVID-19 pandemic has played a significant role in transforming the telecommunications landscape. The shift to remote work and widespread digital transformation across industries created an urgent need for reliable communication tools and internet services. Businesses, increasingly reliant on telecommunications infrastructure, have driven investment in enhancing service capacity and efficiency. A study by McKinsey & Company (2020) emphasizes how this shift has permanently elevated demand for high-speed connectivity and digital solutions. Despite these promising growth drivers, the telecommunications sector still faces challenges, including infrastructure development and regulatory compliance.

As illustrated in Figure 8, the telecommunications and internet services market is expected to continue expanding significantly through 2035, driven by increasing connectivity demands, advancements in digital infrastructure, and the rapid adoption of emerging technologies. However, despite these promising growth drivers, the sector still faces several challenges, particularly regarding infrastructure development and regulatory compliance.

Challenges and Opportunities in the sector are the following:

- Infrastructure development, as developing the necessary infrastructure to support expanding telecommunications networks, particularly in rural and underserved areas, remains a challenge. Significant investments are required to build and maintain the infrastructure needed for advanced services like 5G.
- Regulatory and compliance issues occur in the telecommunications industry because of regulatory challenges related to data privacy, security, and net neutrality.
- The proliferation of IoT devices and the development of smart cities present significant growth opportunities for telecommunications providers. These technologies require robust connectivity solutions, driving demand for advanced telecommunications services.
- Increased investment in cybersecurity, as the telecommunications and internet services sector grows, the need for robust cybersecurity measures becomes increasingly important. Companies are expected to invest heavily in cybersecurity to protect their networks and customer data.

Figure 8: Telecommunications and Internet services market expected growth (2023 -2035)



Source: Adapted from Fortune Business Insights (2023b)

5.2.3 Growth trends in E-commerce

The E-commerce sector has undergone significant growth and transformation in recent years, driven by a combination of technological advancements, shifting consumer behaviours, and evolving market dynamics. Retailers that embrace innovation and adapt to trends such as mobile commerce, omnichannel integration, and sustainability are expected to secure a competitive advantage and thrive in the rapidly evolving market. A major driver of this growth is the rise of Mobile Commerce (M-commerce). An increasing portion of e-commerce transactions now occur on mobile devices, as consumers increasingly use smartphones and tablets to browse and shop online. Improved mobile-optimized websites and shopping apps have streamlined the purchasing process, offering greater accessibility and convenience. In addition, mobile payment solutions such as Apple Pay and Google Wallet have enhanced the user experience, making transactions seamless and secure (E-marketer, 2022).

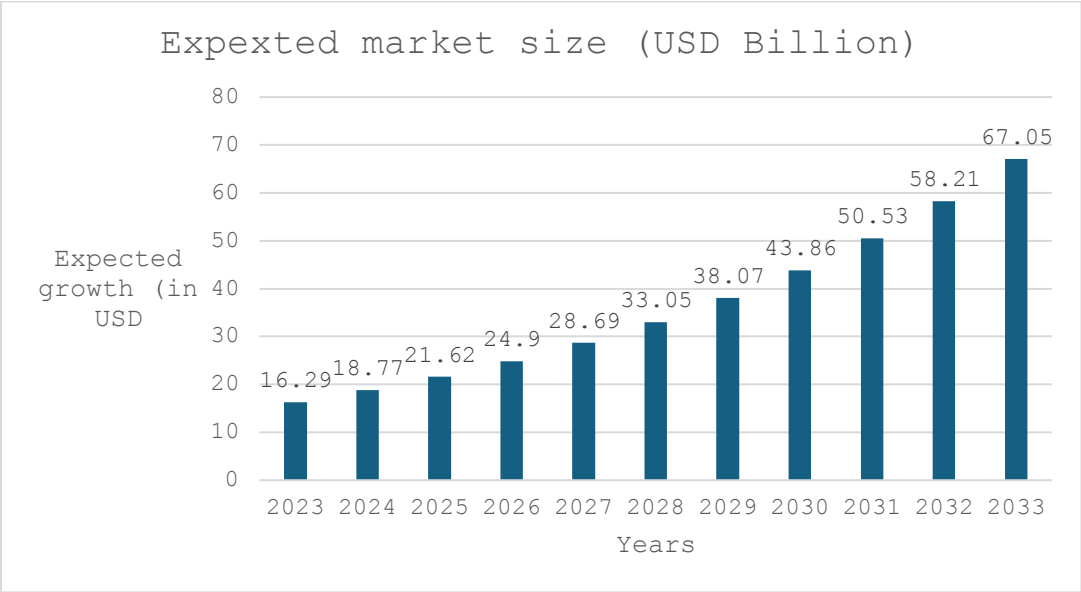
The rise of Social Commerce has further revolutionized the e-commerce landscape. Social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook, and Pinterest have integrated shopping functionalities, allowing consumers to make purchases directly through these channels. This trend leverages the power of influencers and user-generated content to build trust and authenticity, driving consumer engagement and boosting sales (Christison, 2022). Advances in personalization and customer experience are also playing a pivotal role in enhancing e-commerce growth. Retailers are harnessing artificial intelligence (AI) and machine learning to analyse customer behaviour, offering personalized recommendations and targeted marketing campaigns. Tools like chatbots and virtual assistants further enhance customer service by providing real-time support and efficiently guiding users through the purchasing process, improving conversion rates and overall satisfaction (Adobe, 2024). As illustrated in Figure 9, the e-commerce market is expected to continue its upward trajectory, with strong

projected growth from 2023 to 2033. This growth is fuelled by increasing digital adoption, enhanced technological solutions, and evolving consumer preferences. However, along with opportunities, e-commerce businesses must navigate key challenges such as supply chain disruptions, the demand for faster delivery solutions, and the integration of immersive shopping technologies like augmented reality (AR).

Challenges and Opportunities:

- The pandemic accelerated the shift to online shopping as lockdowns and social distancing measures drove consumers to digital channels.
- Shift in consumer behaviour, as there has been an increased demand for essential goods, home office supplies, and entertainment products, impacting product categories and inventory management strategies.
- Interactive product visualizations will remain a challenge because retailers are using AR to provide detailed product visualizations, allowing consumers to explore products in a more interactive and engaging way.

Figure 9: E-commerce market expected growth (2023 -2033)



Source: Adapted from Fortune Business Insights (2023c)

5.3 Competition in the technology industry

Competition within the technology industry is intense, with companies striving to innovate and capture market share in rapidly evolving sectors. Some key aspects of competition in the industry:

- Innovation and product differentiation;
- Pricing strategies;

- Market share and customer acquisition;
- Talent acquisition and retention;
- Intellectual property and patents;
- Geographical expansion;
- Customer experience and support;
- Sustainability and corporate responsibility;
- Strategic alliances and acquisitions.

One of the primary ways companies differentiate themselves is through innovation and product differentiation, particularly in sectors like artificial intelligence (AI), cloud computing, and the Internet of Things (IoT), where new technologies and unique features are critical for market leadership. Pricing strategies also play a crucial role, especially in hardware and consumer electronics, where price competition can significantly impact profit margins. Market share and customer acquisition are central to competition, with companies employing aggressive marketing tactics and forming strategic partnerships to increase their customer base and penetrate new markets (Cusumano et al., 2019). Alongside this, talent acquisition and retention are key competitive factors, as attracting top professionals ensures continuous innovation. Many companies offer attractive compensation and work environments to secure skilled talent. The protection of intellectual property through patents is another vital aspect, with legal disputes often arising over patent infringement to safeguard innovations. Geographical expansion is a common strategy for increasing global reach, enabling companies to tap into diverse customer segments. Customer experience and support are also significant differentiators, as businesses invest heavily in customer relationship management to enhance satisfaction and build loyalty. Increasingly, sustainability and corporate responsibility have become critical competitive dimensions. Consumers are more likely to favour businesses with ethical supply chains and environmentally conscious practices (Cusumano et al., 2019).

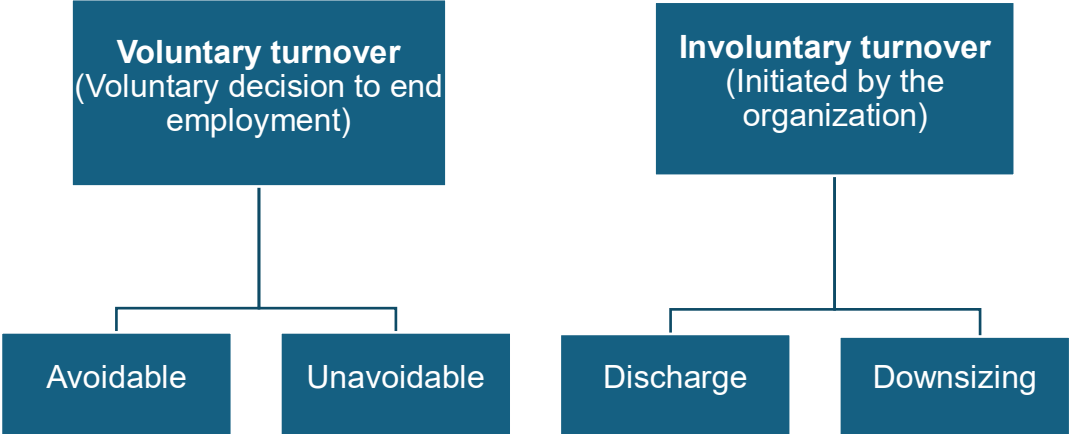
5.4 Employee turnover rate

Employee turnover is a ratio that compares the number of employees a company needs to replace within a certain time to the average total number of employees (Forbes, 2022). While Price (1977) defined employee turnover as “the ratio of the number of organizational members who left during a certain period divided by the average number of people in that organization during that period”, Adams and Beehr (1998) provided a slightly different definition stating that “organizational turnover involves leaving any job of any duration and is usually being followed by continued regular employment”. According to Woods (1995), turnover defines a replacement cycle process of hiring and training a new employee when a certain position is vacated, either through voluntary or involuntary reasons.

If an employer has a high turnover relative to its industry competitors, it means that the company's workforce typically has shorter average tenures in comparison to employees at other firms within the same sector. A high turnover can be detrimental to a company's productivity, especially when skilled workers frequently depart, leaving a higher percentage of inexperienced workers. (Forbes 2023). The term “employee turnover” is frequently used when assessing the relationship of employees and the organization they leave, regardless of the underlying reasons (Gustafson, 2002). The metric is a matter of significant concern for most companies, especially in industries such as technology, multimedia, and healthcare, where the turnover rate tends to be the highest. (Gustafson, 2002). Therefore, most companies want to monitor the movement of employees outside of the organization to raise awareness, act accordingly and minimize causes of turnover.

According to Heneman et al. (2019), employee turnover can be classified into four distinct types categorized under two main groups. Broadly, turnover is divided into voluntary and involuntary categories, displayed in more detail in Figure 10.

Figure 10: Voluntary and involuntary turnover



Source: Based on Heneman & Judge (2019)

Voluntary turnover occurs when an employee voluntarily decides to end their employment, whereas involuntary turnover is initiated by the organization. The first one, voluntary turnover, is broken down into avoidable and unavoidable turnover, where the avoidable one could potentially be prevented by certain management actions, such as a pay raise or a new job assignment. Unavoidable turnover, on the other hand, happens under unavoidable circumstances.

Involuntary turnover is also split into two types, discharge turnover and downsizing turnover (Heneman et al., 2019), where discharge turnover is aimed at the individual employee, while downsizing occurs as part of an organizational restructuring or cost-reduction program. The latter usually aims to improve organizational effectiveness and increase shareholder value (Heneman et al., 2019), while the first happens due to an individual’s discipline and/or his/her job performance problems.

6 METHODOLOGY

This master's thesis is based on primary qualitative research, specifically semi-structured in-depth interviews conducted with employees in the technology industry. The theoretical framework was developed through a deductive approach, moving from broader concepts of management and corporate culture to specific examples relevant to job satisfaction and productivity. To explain key theoretical concepts, I used a descriptive method, drawing on relevant scientific literature, academic articles, and empirical studies from foreign and domestic sources.

The empirical part of the study follows the principles of qualitative research, where I aim to explore employees' perspectives on company culture, management practices, and workplace dynamics. I have chosen this method, as it is particularly suited for understanding subjective experiences, perceptions, and attitudes, as it allows for deeper insights into the social and organizational context (Fink, 2012). This methodology aligns with the research objectives, as it enables an exploratory and interpretative approach to understanding the connection between corporate culture, leadership, job satisfaction, and productivity.

6.1 Primary data collection: In-depth interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted with 15 employees from the technology industry, representing three sectors: 6 from software development, 4 from telecommunications and internet services, and 5 from e-commerce. The interviews were designed to explore two main areas: Company culture and personal experiences. In the first part of the interviews, I focused on understanding how employees perceive company culture and its connection to management and leadership within their organizations. In the second part, I delved into employees' personal feelings about company culture and leadership style, exploring how these elements influence their well-being, job satisfaction, and productivity.

The purpose of the interviews was to gain a deeper understanding of employees' personal experiences and perspectives. I have decided to use the qualitative research method because it is particularly effective for clarifying concepts, identifying patterns, and creating theoretical frameworks (Fink, 2012). One important feature of qualitative approaches is their flexibility, which allows for spontaneous and adaptive interactions between the researcher and participants (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 2007).

In-depth semi-structured interviews are especially useful in social science research for examining individual attitudes, in-depth interpretations, and contextual settings (Golden-Biddle & Locke, 2007). Such interviews are based on a pre-arranged framework of themes, but they allow for flexibility in the conversation, enabling a deeper understanding of the subject matter (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). The inclusion of open-ended questions provided opportunities to explore diverse perspectives and uncover new insights (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

The interviews were conducted between June 2024 and August 2024, with each session lasting 35 to 60 minutes. They were conducted in person, via Microsoft Teams, or over the phone, depending on the availability and preference of the participants.

6.2 Explaining Sample Description

My data collection was based on a combination of convenience and purposive sampling, focusing specifically on employees within the technology industry. The sample includes individuals from three main sectors: Software Development, Telecommunications, and E-commerce. I selected employees from a range of departments within these sectors to ensure diverse perspectives. Interviewees varied in terms of age, job role, and company size, providing a comprehensive view of how different aspects of corporate culture and management affect their experiences. I have divided them into 8 different categories, as shown in Table 14.

The only employees excluded from the sample were C-level executives or individuals who did not have direct managers above them. This was done to focus on employees who have more direct interactions with their managers and are more likely to be impacted by management practices. Additionally, interviewees came from different countries, reflecting the global nature of the technology sector. Having worked in this industry for several years, I leveraged my professional network to connect with individuals from diverse backgrounds and companies.

The interviewees had an average age of 34 and represented a range of professional levels, from junior employees to experienced managers. This variety allowed for an in-depth exploration of how age, career stage, and department impact perceptions of corporate culture and leadership within the technology sector.

Table 13: Sample description

Respondent	Age	Gender	Position / Job Title	Industry	Size of Company
Respondent 1	29	Female	Partner Program Manager	Software Development	1 - 50
Respondent 2	26	Female	Business Intelligence Analyst	Software Development	1 - 50
Respondent 3	29	Male	Business Development Representative	Software Development	50 - 100
Respondent 4	29	Female	Sales Operations Manager	Software Development	200 - 300
Respondent 5	31	Female	Key Account Manager	Software Development	500+
Respondent 6	29	Male	Business Developer Manager	Software Development	1 - 50
Respondent 7	23	Female	Business Intelligence Analyst	Telecommunications	200 - 300
Respondent 8	52	Female	Logistics Department	Telecommunications	5000+
Respondent 9	35	Male	Technical Specialist and Support	Telecommunications	200 - 300
Respondent 10	35	Female	Senior Account Manager	Telecommunications	500+
Respondent 11	28	Female	Director of eCommerce (Global Markets)	E-commerce	500+
Respondent 12	27	Female	E-commerce Content Marketing Specialist	E-commerce	1 - 50
Respondent 13	39	Female	Account Manager	E-commerce	500+
Respondent 14	40	Female	Affiliate Specialist	E-commerce	200 - 300
Respondent 15	52	Male	eCommerce Specialist	E-commerce	50 - 100

Source: Own work

6.3 Data analysis

I conducted in-depth interviews with 15 employees from technology companies: six from the software development sector, four from telecommunications and internet services, and five from e-commerce. The interviews were carried out both in person and via video calls, depending on the availability of the participants. Each interview included 15 open-ended questions.

The interviews were analysed using thematic analysis (TA), which supports a coherent and logical interpretation of qualitative data. This method allows the identification of patterns within the data, allowing me to identify areas of agreement or disagreement among interviewees (Castleberry & Nolen, 2018). Thematic analysis enables a detailed description of findings, as it is highly adaptable and comprehensive (Boyatzis, 1998).

A key requirement for conducting thematic analysis is having a rich, descriptive data set, which helps the researcher to identify recurring patterns and salient themes. After collecting the data, I followed a typical TA process by first familiarizing myself with the dataset. I carefully reviewed all 15 transcripts, underlining possible themes and reflecting on the responses. After that, I grouped related data into categories and eliminated unnecessary information, focusing only on the most relevant insights. For each theme, I ensured there was enough supporting data; if a theme was weak or redundant, I either consolidated or eliminated it. I also named the themes using superscripts to identify key pieces of information related to each theme. The thematic analysis goes beyond simply stating facts; it offers deeper interpretations and insights based on the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

6.4 Development of research questions

The purpose of this master's thesis is to explore the impact of leadership styles and corporate culture on employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention within the technology industry. While this topic is highly relevant in today's workplace, there remains a noticeable gap in research specifically focused on the technology sector. At the beginning of this thesis, I introduced my goals, from which I further developed the following research questions:

- Q1: What management practices are considered successful in the technology sector, and how do they influence company culture?
- Q2: How do management practices and corporate culture collectively impact employee engagement, productivity, and job satisfaction in the technology sector?
- Q3: What factors promote a positive and productive work environment in the tech industry?
- Q4: What role does company culture play in shaping job satisfaction and employee retention in the technology sector?

To address these questions, this thesis consists of both primary and secondary sources. The theoretical framework is based on secondary data obtained from a comprehensive review of relevant literature, including academic journals, books, research papers, and articles. The empirical section, on the other hand, primarily focuses on qualitative findings derived from interviews conducted with employees in the technology sector.

Through this research, I aim to provide further insights into how technology companies can develop more effective and supportive work environments. These research questions will be further explored in Chapter 7: Empirical Research, where qualitative data from employee interviews will serve as the basis for answering them more in-depth.

7 EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

This chapter presents the key findings derived from the in-depth interviews conducted with employees across different sectors within the technology industry. The objective of this chapter is to identify recurring themes related to employee satisfaction, productivity, and engagement, offering insights into how corporate culture, leadership, communication, and career development influence workplace dynamics. By analysing qualitative data, this section aims to highlight both common challenges and differences between specific sectors, providing a structured framework for understanding the factors shaping employee experiences in the technology industry. The findings are organized into key thematic areas, which will be explored in detail in the following subsections.

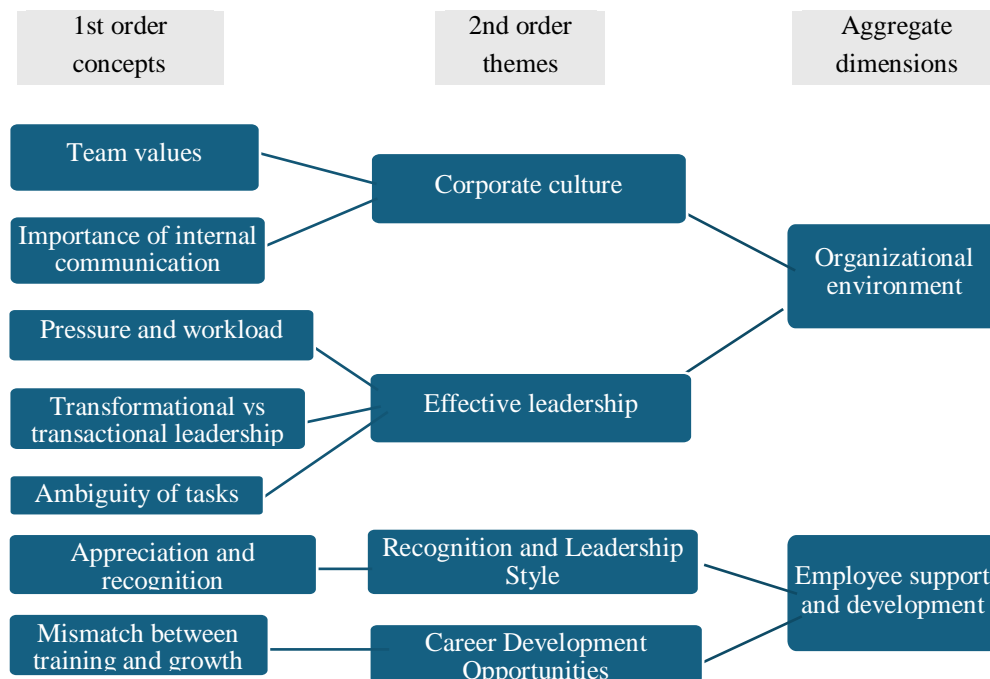
7.1 Overview of findings

After analysing the in-depth interviews, several key themes emerged that reflect the critical factors influencing employee satisfaction, productivity, and engagement across the technology industry. In Figure 11, I organized these findings into a clear and systematic framework for a deeper understanding of the emerging themes. Figure 11 presents the data in three levels:

1. 1st order concepts, representing the specific insights and recurring ideas expressed by participants during the interviews. These raw observations capture challenges such as team values, pressure and workload, the ambiguity of tasks, and the lack of recognition and growth opportunities.
2. 2nd order Themes, which emerge from the grouping of 1st-order concepts, these broader themes highlight critical areas of concern, including:
 - Corporate culture: Emphasizing team dynamics, communication practices, and cultural alignment.
 - Effective leadership: Addressing the contrasting leadership styles and their impact on workload clarity, employee pressure, and motivation.

- Recognition and leadership style: Reflecting on the importance of appreciation and acknowledgment in creating a positive work environment.
 - Career development opportunities: Highlighting frustrations related to training gaps, growth pathways, and the mismatch between daily tasks and long-term goals.
3. Aggregate dimensions, which are second-order themes synthesized into two overarching dimensions:
- Organizational environment: This encompasses corporate culture and effective leadership, showing how internal communication, leadership styles, and workload clarity shape the overall employee experience.
 - Employee support and development: This dimension underscores the importance of leadership styles, consistent recognition, and structured career development opportunities in enhancing employee satisfaction and retention.

Figure 11: Data structure. 1st order concepts, 2nd order themes, Aggregate dimensions



Source: Own work.

The figure shows how specific challenges and experiences expressed by employees contribute to broader themes and dimensions. It highlights the interconnectedness of leadership practices, organizational culture, and employee growth opportunities, all of which are crucial for improving job satisfaction, productivity, and well-being in the technology industry. This structured approach offers a clear foundation for the analysis that follows, with each theme being explored in detail in subsequent sections. I grouped all themes into four major categories:

- Lack of clear communication and misalignment between managers and employees;
- Pressure and burnout;

- The importance of leadership over management;
- The impact of corporate culture on employee satisfaction and productivity;
- Career development in the technology industry.

7.2 Thematic overview of findings

The interviews revealed a range of factors that influence employee satisfaction, productivity, and engagement within the technology industry. I have collected, structurally analysed, and grouped these factors into key themes. By identifying common patterns across different sectors, this thematic overview provides a deeper understanding of the challenges employees face, as well as the organizational dynamics that shape their work experiences. The analysis is divided into distinct themes, including communication and alignment between employees and management, workplace pressure and burnout, leadership effectiveness, corporate culture, and career development opportunities.

7.2.1 Lack of clear communication and misalignment

A recurring theme among interviewees was the significant impact that company culture and communication practices have on job satisfaction. Few participants mentioned how communication breakdowns between management and employees negatively affected productivity and job satisfaction. “Our company's culture is, quite frankly, not good. Employees often feel underappreciated and overworked, with their efforts going unnoticed. Communication between staff and management is poor, leading to frustration.” (Respondent 1, software development).

This statement from an employee of a software development sector reflects a common sentiment among respondents, particularly those in software development and telecommunications, where there was a disconnect between management’s expectations and the realities experienced by employees.

Another respondent mentioned the external image the company projected through public events and social media but commented that it did not match the internal company culture, saying, “Externally, the culture looks perfect...but the relationship between management and employees is not in line with what is promoted publicly.” (Respondent 3, software development). This misalignment was also noted in other sectors. A respondent 2, though working in a smaller team, shared that communication within their company was better: “Our company's culture is generally good, with strong communication and mutual respect among the team members.” However, even in this case, the respondent remarked that the small team size limited opportunities for collaboration, highlighting how communication, although present, didn’t fully alleviate all challenges in the workplace.

In telecommunications and software development, employees described a disconnect between the company’s external portrayal of a unified, supportive culture and the actual

internal communication practices. For instance, participants noted that upper management often failed to convey clear goals or provide timely feedback, resulting in confusion about the company's direction and expectations.

“Our managers are genuinely nice people who try their best to uphold a strong company culture. They continue to introduce new initiatives aimed at enhancing our work environment, although the execution of these ideas sometimes lacks clear planning.” (Respondent 7, Telecommunications).

Across all three sectors, the lack of clear communication and the gap between the company's image and internal reality were prevalent, with e-commerce standing out as the sector where communication was more structured but still constrained by the rapid pace of operations. Ultimately, this misalignment and lack of transparency in communication undermined employees' trust in leadership and decreased overall satisfaction.

7.2.2 Pressure and burnout

High levels of stress and pressure were frequently mentioned by interviewees, particularly in the software development and e-commerce sectors. Employees described feeling overwhelmed due to constant deadlines and unrelenting job demands. This pressure was also evident in the telecommunications sector, though respondents here emphasized task ambiguity as a primary stressor. For example, one employee from a SaaS company stated: “The constant deadlines and pressure to deliver new features really push us to the edge. Sometimes it feels like no matter how much we do, there's always more expected, and it's exhausting.” (Respondent 5, Software Development).

Another respondent, a Partner Program Manager, explained how initial motivation went down over time, eventually leading to burnout: “The high-pressure environment is motivating in the short term, but over time it becomes too much. Creativity gets stifled because you're always racing against the clock.” (Respondent 1, Software Development).

“There are so many tasks that need to be done quickly, and management just gives us more and more. It's like you're constantly juggling and can't take a breath.” (Respondent 2, telecommunications).

In e-commerce, employees faced similar challenges, noting that the industry's fast pace stifled creativity. One respondent said: »We're always trying to innovate, but the deadlines make it impossible to explore new ideas properly. It's like there's no room to breathe because we're always chasing the next big thing for the customers.” (Respondent 12, E-commerce).

An e-commerce specialist added that "work is rewarding, but the constant pressure to perform at a high level really wears you down. Even with flexible work arrangements, the stress is always there because we're expected to deliver so much in such a short time." (Respondent 15, E-commerce).

Across all three sectors, tight deadlines, high expectations, and a lack of recovery time contributed to widespread reports of burnout. Many employees found it difficult to maintain motivation and creativity, impacting their overall job satisfaction and well-being.

7.2.3 The importance of leadership over management

Many participants stressed the significant impact effective leadership has on job satisfaction and overall productivity. While management typically focuses on task execution and short-term objectives, leadership is seen as essential for long-term motivation, employee development, and fostering a positive work culture.

“My manager had a very old-school mindset and believed that employees should feel privileged just to work for the company. There was little effort to engage with the team, address their concerns, or create a supportive and motivating workplace.” (Respondent 1, Software Development).

“I am very happy with my manager, who is very transparent and always encourages positive as well as negative (constructive negative) feedback. He is always prepared to help and is very skilful in his work. His leadership style is supportive and competent, making him highly effective in guiding and assisting the team.” (Respondent 2, Software Development). This highlights the importance of leaders who engage with their teams, encourage feedback, and offer support, creating a more cohesive and satisfied workforce.

In telecommunications, the disconnect between management's focus on tasks and leadership's broader role in employee well-being was noticed from the interviews. “There are so many tasks that need to be done quickly, and management just piles more on. It’s like you’re constantly juggling and can’t take a breath. It feels like no one cares about how much pressure we’re under.” This frustration reflects the need for leadership that takes a more holistic view of employee well-being, rather than merely driving task completion (Respondent 10, Telecommunications).

Similarly, in e-commerce, while leadership efforts are well-intentioned, the execution of initiatives is sometimes lacking. As described by an employee from a big e-commerce company: “Our managers are genuinely nice people who try their best to uphold a strong company culture. They continue to introduce new initiatives aimed at enhancing our work environment, although the execution of these ideas sometimes lacks clear planning.” This indicates that even with good leadership intentions, clear planning and direction from upper management are critical for success (Respondent 13, E-commerce).

Employees frequently emphasized the importance of leaders who engage with their teams, provide recognition, and offer clear direction, in contrast to managers who prioritize task execution without fostering a supportive work environment. This demonstrates that leadership has a more profound and lasting impact on employee satisfaction, motivation, and productivity than management alone. Two dominant leadership styles emerged from the

interviews: transformational and transactional approaches. Transformational leadership was characterized by empathy, vision, and a focus on innovation and growth, which led to higher job satisfaction and a sense of belonging. Employees who experienced this style reported feeling valued and motivated to contribute.

“My manager promotes an inclusive culture, encouraging us to help each other with projects and organizing weekly team meetings to maintain good communication.” (Respondent 2, Software Development). In contrast, transactional leadership and micromanagement were often linked to employee dissatisfaction and burnout. These styles emphasized task completion and performance metrics but often lacked the personal support needed for long-term success.

7.2.4 The impact of corporate culture on employee satisfaction and productivity

Corporate culture was another commonly mentioned theme across the interviews, with employees highlighting its strong influence on job satisfaction and productivity. Supportive, well-aligned cultures led to higher levels of motivation and engagement, while toxic environments hindered both morale and performance.

“My manager promotes a culture of respect and teamwork, always ensuring that our contributions are acknowledged and appreciated” (Respondent 2, Software Development).

“We have a positive culture where team members respect each other, and management consistently demonstrates our core values in daily interactions” (Respondent 12, E-commerce). In contrast, employees working in companies with misaligned or toxic cultures described feelings of frustration, burnout, and disengagement.

“Externally, the culture looks perfect... but internally, we’re overworked, undervalued, and the feedback we give doesn’t seem to matter.” (Respondent 13, E-commerce).

“There was no genuine support for career development or personal growth; the environment was toxic, and employees often felt neglected or unheard.” (Respondent 1, Software Development).

The interviews concluded that companies that prioritize building strong, authentic cultures aligned with their core values are more likely to see higher productivity and employee satisfaction in the long term.

7.2.5 Career development opportunities

While some companies offered training programs or professional development workshops, employees frequently expressed frustration over unclear career progression pathways and a disconnect between the availability of training and its impact on actual growth.

"There are training opportunities, but they are limited to what the company thinks we need. I like that we have options, but our ideas about what we would like to improve or conferences we'd like to attend are not considered." (Respondent 6, Software Development).

"The company supports development through various initiatives, but the execution is often as disorganized as other areas of management. There's a gap between the intention and actual support received" (Respondent 13, E-commerce).

"We have monthly targets to hit, but there's no real pathway to develop beyond that. You're always doing more tasks, but it's unclear how that helps you grow." (Respondent 9, Telecommunications). From this comment, we can understand there is a gap between daily tasks and long-term career development, contributing to frustration and a lack of engagement among employees.

After having conversations with employees from technology companies, it's notable that employees want clear opportunities for advancement and personal growth that are aligned with their professional goals. When these opportunities are lacking, it contributes to dissatisfaction, stagnation, and ultimately, disengagement.

7.3 Key findings

The main goal of this thesis is to determine whether employees' job satisfaction, productivity, and the factors that drive motivation correlate with managers' values, beliefs, and the culture promoted by the company. In the next part, the responses will be analysed and the research questions, identified at the beginning of the thesis, will be answered.

The interviews helped understand how leadership, communication, and genuine cultural promotion can significantly impact employee satisfaction and productivity. Leaders who inspire and support their teams, combined with a company culture that values feedback and employee well-being, are more likely to cultivate positive work environments and successful business outcomes. In Table 16, I summarized the main findings by topics that have emerged while researching the data I collected through the interviews.

Table 14: Overview of the main themes occurring within topics

Key Areas	Findings
Leadership	Positive, supportive, and non-micromanaging leaders significantly improve employee satisfaction. Transparent communication, providing both positive and negative feedback, is highly valued in the tech industry. Transformational leadership, characterized by support and empowerment, is linked to higher job satisfaction.
Communication	Clear communication from management increases productivity and employee engagement. Companies with open communication between managers, employees, and C-level executives exhibit a better culture.
Company Culture	Companies promoting genuine internal culture see greater employee satisfaction and productivity. A disconnect between the external image and internal culture leads to dissatisfaction and reduced productivity.
Workplace Relationships	Strong interpersonal relationships among employees positively impact work attitude, even if management is not favoured. Peer support in teams contributes to higher satisfaction, even when management is lacking.
Workplace Pressure	High industry pressure negatively impacts satisfaction, especially when managers fail to buffer that pressure. Teams with effective management of workplace pressure show higher satisfaction and productivity.
Key Performance Indicators (KPIs)	Clear KPIs are crucial for employee self-assessment of productivity and goal setting.
Recognition and Reward	Employees are more satisfied when their contributions are recognized, leading to higher engagement and retention.
Managerial Training	Companies where managers receive leadership training and focus on development report better cultural outcomes.
Employee Turnover	Higher turnover is more closely linked to dissatisfaction with leadership rather than company size.

Source: Own work

All topics overlap across sectors, but the interviews revealed that certain issues are more prominent in one sector than another. For example, in software development, it became evident that autocratic leadership is prevalent, with a focus on task execution rather than employee empowerment. This often results in managers being disconnected from the realities of day-to-day tasks, leading to frustration and employee overwhelm. Employees in this sector highlighted that positive contributions are undervalued, and recognition, when present, feels superficial or staged. While flexibility in remote work improves satisfaction, the lack of support for growth and creativity reduces motivation. Lastly, in some companies,

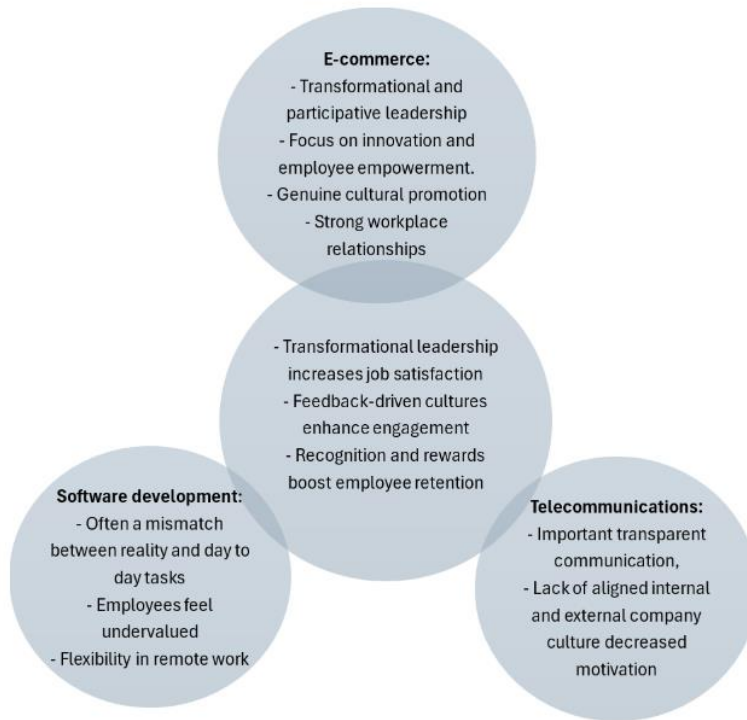
as described by employees, there is a noticeable mismatch between the internal culture and the external image, which creates distrust and dissatisfaction.

In telecommunications, there is a mix of transactional and transformational leadership styles, depending on the manager. Some managers demonstrate strong support and empathy, while others tend to micromanage. The interviews revealed a strong emphasis on innovation, with opportunities for professional development, although these are often difficult to access due to high workloads. Work-life balance is promoted through flexibility, but the intense workloads can overshadow these efforts. Recognition in this sector is quite inconsistent; while rewards are available, achievements are sometimes overlooked.

E-commerce has been shown to have strong transformational and participative leadership, with managers focusing on inclusivity, innovation, and employee empowerment. Most interviews mentioned that managers support open communication, collaboration, and flexibility, fostering a supportive work culture. Recognition of achievements is consistent and meaningful, contributing to high employee morale. Many chances for training and development are given to staff members, which are in line with the company's values of innovation and growth. Work-life balance is actively supported through remote work and flexible schedules.

Across all sectors, transformational leadership styles are consistently associated with higher employee satisfaction and productivity. However, a lack of recognition or inconsistent acknowledgement significantly undermines motivation in every sector. In terms of workplace culture, there is often a disconnect between the external branding or image of the company and the internal reality, particularly in the software development and telecommunications sectors. Employee satisfaction is notably higher when managers actively promote a sense of belonging, making employees feel valued and included. Flexible work options also enhance job satisfaction and productivity, though some employees expressed missing interpersonal connections in remote or hybrid settings. As shown in Figure 12, regardless of the sector, the research highlights that clear goals and fair feedback are critical drivers of productivity.

Figure 12: Sector-specific insights and mutual traits



Source: Own work

Through my research, I aimed to answer my research questions, as presented in Chapter 6.4. My findings show that successful leadership in the technology sector relies on emotional intelligence, transparency, and alignment with company culture. While strong management practices and an inclusive corporate culture improve engagement, productivity, and retention, discrepancies between stated company values and actual practices often lead to frustration and disengagement. Additionally, work-life balance, career development opportunities, and recognition are crucial factors shaping employee satisfaction. I will further present my findings below in Table 15.

Table 15: Overview of the main findings within the research questions

Research Question	Empirical Findings
Q1: What management practices are considered successful in the technology sector, and how do they influence company culture?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Emotional intelligence is the most important leadership trait. • Open communication, frequent feedback, and transparency foster a strong company culture. • Micromanagement and unclear expectations lower motivation and trust. • Leadership must align with employee values to create a productive work environment.

(Table continues)

Table15: Overview of the main findings within research questions (cont.)

<p>Q2: How do management practices and corporate culture collectively impact employee engagement, productivity, and job satisfaction in the technology sector?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive alignment between leadership and culture increases engagement and productivity. • Disconnection between external branding and internal culture causes frustration. • Poor communication, unclear expectations, and lack of transparency reduce employee commitment. • Employees feel most engaged when they receive recognition, fair treatment, and clear growth opportunities.
<p>Q3: What factors promote a positive and productive work environment in the tech industry?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supportive leadership: managers monitoring stress and workload improve productivity. • Clear role expectations reduce frustration and increase efficiency. • Structured career development: employees value mentorship, training, and growth opportunities. • Psychological safety: encouraging open feedback promotes innovation and motivation.
<p>Q4: What role does company culture play in shaping job satisfaction and employee retention in the technology sector?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong, well-aligned cultures improve retention, while misalignment leads to disengagement. • Key factors influencing retention: <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Transparency & inclusivity: open communication and leadership build loyalty. 2. Recognition & rewards: lack of structured recognition increases turnover. 3. Career growth & stability: employees without growth paths are more likely to leave. 4. Work environment alignment: if values are not reflected in practice, trust in leadership decreases.

Source: Own work

8 DISCUSSION

In this chapter, I summarize the main findings from the interviews with a connection to existing literature. The discussion is organized into theoretical implications, managerial implications, research limitations, and future research directions. In the first part, theoretical implications, I summarized the main findings by topics that have emerged during the data research collected through the interviews.

8.1 Theoretical implications

I have decided to explore the theoretical implications derived from the findings and write them under the same batches as in chapter 7.2. I have delved into all subsections, discussing their theoretical relevance and alignment with prior research while offering insights into how they align within the software development, telecommunications, and e-commerce sectors.

8.1.1 Lack of clear communication and misalignment

From the interviews I have conducted, I concluded that effective management practices prioritize clear and transparent communication to boost employee productivity and satisfaction within the team. Communication breakdowns, such as unclear goals and expectations from upper management, were repeatedly mentioned as significant sources of frustration and demotivation across all sectors, particularly in software development and telecommunications. Employees noted that managers who openly share company goals, project updates, and feedback create a sense of trust and alignment. This aligns with Yukl (2013), who has highlighted that leadership behaviours such as providing support, setting clear expectations, and recognizing employee contributions are crucial for enhancing job satisfaction. Locke (1976) also emphasized the importance of aligning employee needs and expectations with their work experiences. Similarly, Schein (2010) argues that misalignment between stated values and actual practices can lead to cultural dissonance, reducing employee trust and engagement.

Interviewees also pointed out that providing consistent and actionable feedback helps them understand how their efforts align with organizational goals, which increases their sense of contribution and productivity. These practices align with transformational leadership approaches, which focus on inspiring employees, creating a supportive work environment and increasing employee motivation (Allen & Shockley, 2009).

Most of the employees I have interviewed explained that the culture directly impacts their engagement and productivity, primarily through communication within the company. Where the external portrayal of culture and internal practices are disconnected, interviewees mentioned dissonance and dissatisfaction. These were mostly mentioned in the software development and telecommunications sectors.

8.1.2 Pressure and burnout

Burnout emerged as a recurring theme across all sectors, driven by high stress, tight deadlines, and overwhelming workloads, leading to decreased job satisfaction and productivity. This finding aligns with existing research that emphasizes the detrimental effects of workplace pressure on employee well-being and performance. Specifically, Allen & Shockley (2009) highlight that supportive work environments and flexibility significantly reduce burnout, while organizations with structured workplace cultures experience lower

levels of employee exhaustion. Additionally, research by Pathak & Jha (2024) and Gonzalez (2020) reinforces that leadership style and organizational culture play a crucial role in mitigating burnout by fostering trust, engagement, and a sense of purpose.

Bakker & Demerouti (2007) emphasize that support from managers helped in reducing burnout and enhancing engagement, which I found to be a similar feeling for the people I have interviewed, especially common in the telecommunications sector. Many have pointed out that they appreciate managers who check in regularly and address stress levels, reflecting supportive leadership practices.

My findings indicate that transformational leaders, who emphasize vision and innovation, are more likely to inspire employees to think beyond immediate deadlines and routine tasks. By creating a culture of long-term growth, creativity, and continuous improvement, they create an environment where employees feel empowered and motivated to develop new ideas and solutions. Additionally, employees reported feeling most valued, productive, and responsible in a task-oriented culture and an employee-centred culture. A task culture prioritizes achieving specific objectives through collaborative, project-based teams, allowing flexibility in work approaches and encouraging employees to leverage their unique skills. Meanwhile, a person-centred culture focuses on well-being, ensuring that leadership prioritizes mental health, work-life balance, and overall job satisfaction, ultimately fostering a positive and engaged workforce (Handy, 1995).

Person culture is aligned with Schein's "espoused values" and "underlying assumptions" that emphasize the well-being of employees as a core belief within the company. Employees highlighted the importance of managers who recognize the impact of stress and adjust workloads accordingly. Supportive cultures often emphasize employee well-being, promote recovery time, and encourage managers to provide regular check-ins with employees to monitor their well-being. This aligns with employees' desire for leadership that recognizes the need for recovery time, reduced ambiguity, and supportive feedback.

8.1.3 The importance of leadership over management

Employees consistently highlighted the value of leadership over traditional management. Leaders who inspire, support, and develop their teams are seen as more effective than those who focus solely on task delegation. Leaders who are following traditional management, more focused on tasks, are, according to Bass & Riggio (2006), using the transactional leadership tactic, while those who are more focused on a vision and inspiration follow transformational leadership.

After many conversations with employees from different companies, it became clear that leadership, rather than traditional management, has a profound impact on employee satisfaction, productivity, and motivation in the technology industry. While management practices often focus on task execution and short-term objectives, effective leadership

emphasizes long-term goals, employee development, and fostering a supportive work environment (Bass & Riggio, 2006).

What has proved as an important characteristic is emotional intelligence, which is a combination of four pillars that are important for a leader: self-awareness, self-management, social awareness and relationship management within the team (Landry, 2019). Leaders who showed empathy, recognized employee challenges, and supported their teams during high-pressure periods positively influenced employee well-being, job satisfaction, and productivity, which was already found in 1998 by Goleman, suggesting that leaders with high emotional intelligence create more engaged teams.

8.1.4 The impact of corporate culture on employee satisfaction and productivity

Corporate culture emerged as a major driver of job satisfaction and productivity, particularly in cases where employees felt aligned with company values. Respondents in organizations with strong, people-centric cultures reported higher engagement and retention, supporting Schein's findings, with emphasis on employee alignment with company values. Similarly, Gallup (2023) highlights the role of recognition in boosting employee engagement and retention. Employees also emphasized recognition and appreciation as crucial motivators, aligning with the findings of Aljumah (2023), who highlights that both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation play a vital role in shaping job satisfaction. His study found that while intrinsic motivators, such as personal growth and recognition, enhance employee engagement and long-term satisfaction, extrinsic motivators, including financial rewards and performance-based incentives, also contribute to overall job satisfaction when mediated by transactional leadership.

Yukl (2013) highlights that transparent communication is a key element of transformational leadership, which was also something I found out during the interviews, as employees highlighted that clear and open communication from leadership creates a sense of direction and purpose for them. Employees valued constructive feedback that helped them grow and improve, rather than punitive measures. Similarly, it was argued by London & Smither (2002) that feedback is most effective when it is constructive and focused on growth.

8.1.5 Career development in the technology industry

From the conversations I had, it is clear that career development opportunities play a crucial role in shaping employee satisfaction. Employees across all three sectors emphasized the importance of having clear career pathways, continuous training, and growth opportunities, describing these factors as key motivators to remain with their company. Employees who perceive that their employer actively supports their growth are more likely to remain committed and motivated (Gallup, 2022).

When employees have a clear understanding of how they can progress within the organization, they develop a stronger sense of purpose and are more likely to remain engaged in their roles. Companies that establish well-defined promotion and advancement opportunities provide employees with a sense of stability and long-term. This is also reflected in turnover rates, as both my interviewees and existing research highlight that career development opportunities contribute significantly to better retention rates. In companies where training and mentorship were neglected, and employee aspirations were not met, interviewees reported experiencing significantly higher turnover rates in recent years compared to organizations where career development is a regular practice. This aligns with the findings of Griffeth et al. (2000), who identified the lack of career development as one of the top reasons employees leave their jobs, particularly in high-demand industries like technology. It is also important to mention that career development was particularly emphasized by younger interviewees rather than older employees. This suggests that younger professionals may place greater value on opportunities for learning and advancement.

8.2 Practical implications

Practically, this thesis provides a research foundation for companies operating in the technology industry, highlighting the critical role of effective management practices, leadership styles, and corporate culture in shaping employee satisfaction, engagement, and productivity. As companies have identified high employee turnover as a key challenge and expressed interest in understanding the connection between leadership, corporate culture, and employee satisfaction (Gleichauf, 2023), both companies and managers can benefit from these insights. In the research, I identified key challenges that persist when management practices fail to address employee needs effectively, particularly in the areas of communication, burnout, leadership, corporate culture, and career development. By addressing these, managers can create a more supportive work environment, enhance employee retention, and improve overall business performance.

One of the findings was that transformational leadership leads to higher job satisfaction and productivity, in contrast to transactional or autocratic leadership styles, which were frequently associated with stress, disengagement, and employee turnover. Employees valued leaders who provided clear communication, mentorship, and support in managing workloads, which aligns with Sarathlal's (2019) transformational leadership theory, arguing that leaders who inspire, challenge, and develop their employees foster higher engagement and motivation. Additionally, emotional intelligence emerged as a key leadership trait valued by employees, as managers who demonstrated empathy, active listening, and interpersonal awareness were perceived as more effective. This aligns with Goleman's (2011) emotional intelligence framework, which suggests that leaders who cultivate self-awareness, relationship management, and social intelligence create more engaged and motivated teams. Thus, managerial strategies should focus on developing leadership programs that enhance

transformational leadership skills and emotional intelligence to foster a more motivated workforce.

Corporate culture also plays a defining role in shaping job satisfaction and workforce stability. Employees in organizations with strong, people-centric cultures reported higher engagement, lower turnover, and greater alignment with company values. This finding supports Schein's (2010) organizational culture model, which underscores the importance of shared values and cultural alignment in fostering a positive work environment. However, employees in companies where internal culture did not match the external branding expressed dissatisfaction and a lack of trust in leadership. This disconnect aligns with research by Kristof-Brown et al. (2005), who found that person-organization fit is a significant determinant of job satisfaction and employee retention. Organizations that fail to align their internal practices with their publicly promoted values risk experiencing higher turnover rates and disengagement among employees. To address this, managers should focus on building an authentic, transparent culture that prioritizes employee well-being, inclusivity, and recognition. This is supported by Gallup (2022), which found that organizations that implement structured recognition programs experience significantly higher employee engagement and retention.

Career development emerged as another key factor influencing employee retention. Employees emphasized the need for mentorship programs, continuous learning opportunities, and well-defined career progression pathways. This aligns with Mowday et al. (1982), who established that employees who perceive strong growth opportunities within their organization are more likely to remain committed and motivated. The study also found that employees in companies that lacked structured career development programs experienced significantly higher turnover rates. This finding is supported by Griffeth et al. (2000), who identified a lack of career advancement as one of the primary reasons employees leave their jobs, particularly in high-demand industries like technology. Thus, organizations should invest in structured learning programs, mentorship initiatives, and transparent career pathways to enhance job satisfaction and long-term employee retention. This is especially important for younger employees, who emphasize career growth and learning opportunities than their older counterparts.

One of the most frequently mentioned challenges in the research was workplace stress and burnout, particularly in high-pressure industries such as software development and e-commerce. Employees expressed frustration over unrealistic deadlines, excessive workloads, and a lack of managerial support, leading to decreased motivation, disengagement, and reduced productivity. To mitigate these challenges, managers should adopt proactive workload management practices, such as setting realistic deadlines, monitoring stress levels, and implementing structured recovery periods. Research by Bakker & Demerouti (2007) highlights that managerial support plays a crucial role in reducing burnout and increasing engagement, a sentiment echoed by employees in this study. Additionally, work-life balance initiatives, including flexible work arrangements and mental

health support programs, should be prioritized. This aligns with Charles Handy's (1995) organizational culture framework, which emphasizes the role of employee well-being and task-oriented work environments in fostering higher productivity and engagement.

Another key managerial takeaway from the study is the importance of transparent communication in fostering trust, engagement, and organizational alignment. Employees consistently valued clear expectations, open dialogue with leadership, and constructive feedback, reinforcing the importance of structured communication channels within organizations. This finding supports Yukl (2013), who argues that transparent communication is a fundamental element of transformational leadership, as it fosters trust, clarity, and engagement among employees. Additionally, London & Smither (2002) highlight that feedback is most effective when it is constructive and growth-focused, rather than punitive. To improve communication within organizations, managers should implement structured communication strategies, such as regular one-on-one meetings, transparent leadership updates, and structured feedback sessions, to ensure alignment between organizational goals and employee expectations.

The findings from this study provide clear managerial implications for companies operating in the technology sector, particularly in software development, telecommunications, and e-commerce. By prioritizing transformational leadership, strengthening corporate culture, investing in career development programs, managing workplace stress, and improving communication strategies, managers can create more engaging, supportive, and productive work environments. Implementing these managerial strategies will not only improve employee retention and satisfaction but also contribute to overall business success in an industry characterized by rapid innovation and competition.

8.3 Limitations and suggestions for future research

Before concluding my thesis, I want to discuss the limitations of my research. The first limitation is that I focused on specific subfields within the technology sector (software development, telecommunications, e-commerce), which may not be generalizable to the entire tech industry. While these industries provide valuable insights into leadership, corporate culture, and employee satisfaction, the findings may not be entirely generalizable to other technology sectors, such as cybersecurity, fintech, or AI-driven enterprises. Each sub-sector has unique workplace dynamics and leadership styles, which may influence job satisfaction and productivity differently. Focusing on one sub-sector in greater depth or comparing multiple sub-sectors to assess differences in leadership effectiveness, job satisfaction, and engagement could provide more precise conclusions.

Additionally, companies within the tech industry vary greatly in size, from startups to corporations and multinational enterprises. This variation could significantly influence workplace dynamics, leadership styles, and company culture. A more balanced sample might

have been achieved by focusing the research on only one type of company, allowing for more in-depth analysis and nuanced conclusions.

The study included companies of various sizes, from startups to multinational corporations, yet company size was not a primary factor of analysis. Research suggests that organizational structure, management hierarchy, and resource availability vary significantly between small and large companies (Drucker, 1974), potentially influencing job satisfaction and productivity. A more controlled study focusing on companies of similar sizes would allow for a more detailed analysis of how leadership and corporate culture vary across different organizational structures.

Perhaps another limitation would be the cultural contexts of the interview participants, as almost all my interviewees are Slovenians, however, few of them are working for national companies. Maybe the sample that would include different cultures would provide different answers, as per Hofstede's cultural dimensions theory (1991), some cultures perceive the working conditions differently than others.

Although my discussions with respondents were thorough and interviews provided rich insights, quantitative data could offer more generalized conclusions. Qualitative research captures perceptions, emotions, and lived experiences, but it does not allow for statistical testing of relationships between leadership, corporate culture, and productivity. Moreover, the study was conducted in a specific time frame, post-pandemic (2024), during which hybrid and remote work models were still evolving. Given that technology industry trends shift rapidly, factors such as new management styles, emerging leadership expectations, and evolving workplace policies may alter job satisfaction and productivity dynamics over time.

In my thesis, I confirmed many established theories but also highlighted several gaps that could be explored in future research. For example, based on my interviews, I observed that employees experience frustration due to the misalignment between external company branding and internal workplace reality, which has been a relatively under-researched topic. While several studies are focusing on clarity and transparency in organizational communication (Yuwono et al., 2023), very few have examined how discrepancies between external and internal messaging impact employee trust and engagement.

Additionally, many employees I interviewed cited task ambiguity, unrealistic deadlines, and insufficient managerial support as key drivers of burnout. While Maslach & Leiter (2017) emphasize excessive workload as a primary cause of burnout, my findings suggest that these additional factors are equally important.

The findings revealed that employees across different tech sub-sectors had varied perceptions of leadership effectiveness, even when exposed to similar leadership styles. While some employees thrived under transformational leadership, others felt that a more structured, task-oriented approach was necessary for success in their specific industry context. This suggests that industry culture plays a significant role in shaping how leadership is perceived and experienced by employees. Existing research, such as Hofstede's Cultural

Dimensions Theory (1991), primarily focuses on national cultural differences and their impact on workplace behaviours and leadership styles. However, there is limited research on how industry-specific cultures influence leadership effectiveness and employee engagement. Future studies could further explore whether leadership styles need to be adapted based on industry norms, competitive pressures, and employee expectations, helping organizations develop more effective leadership strategies in rapidly evolving technological landscapes.

Goleman's (2011) work on emotional intelligence (EQ) establishes a strong link between EQ and leadership success, which I find as a quite relevant and important factor for further research in this study. Currently, most studies focus on general corporate or managerial roles, rather than technology-driven workplaces, where rapid innovation, high workloads, and cross-functional collaboration play significant roles. Understanding how emotional intelligence influences employee engagement, job satisfaction, and team performance in tech environments could provide valuable insights for leadership development, talent acquisition, and employee retention strategies.

9 CONCLUSION

The purpose of this master's thesis is to explore the impact of leadership styles and corporate culture on employee satisfaction, productivity, and retention within the technology industry. By analysing key management practices, organizational structures, and leadership approaches, this research aims to provide insights into how companies can create more effective and supportive work environments. The study highlights the significance of transformational leadership and strong corporate culture as essential factors in improving employee engagement, reducing turnover, and fostering innovation in a highly competitive sector.

Firstly, the thesis introduces the key concepts of leadership, corporate culture, and employee engagement, emphasizing their interconnected role in shaping workplace dynamics. The discussion is based on existing literature and theories on leadership effectiveness, organizational culture, and motivation, particularly in the context of the fast-evolving technology industry. The analysis focuses on sectors such as SaaS, telecommunications, and e-commerce, which have been experiencing rapid growth driven by advancements in AI, cloud computing, and digital transformation. While these sectors present significant opportunities for innovation, they also face critical challenges such as high employee turnover, workplace stress, and the need for continuous professional development.

Based on the theoretical framework, qualitative research was conducted through semi-structured interviews with employees from various technology companies, allowing for an in-depth examination of the real-world implications of leadership and corporate culture. The findings reveal that companies with strong leadership and well-defined corporate cultures tend to have higher employee satisfaction, stronger team cohesion, and better overall

performance. Furthermore, the research identifies communication, professional growth opportunities, and recognition as key management practices that significantly enhance workplace engagement and retention. Although leadership strategies will continue to evolve in response to technological advancements and changing workforce expectations, this study provides a foundation for organizations to refine their management practices and create a more dynamic, inclusive, and employee-centred culture. As the industry evolves, investing in leadership development programs and ensuring that managers adopt proven strategies for employee engagement will be crucial for maintaining a competitive edge. If companies prioritize leadership training and actively place qualified individuals in managerial roles, they can accelerate cultural improvements and create more cohesive and higher-performing teams. With these improvements in place, organizations can expect higher productivity levels, stronger employee retention, and improved overall company performance. By continually refining leadership approaches and cultivating positive corporate cultures, technology firms can navigate the challenges of a rapidly evolving industry while securing long-term success and sustainability.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Povzetek dela v slovenskem jeziku

Glavni cilj magistrskega dela je pridobiti boljše razumevanje o vplivu vodstvenih stilov in organizacijske kulture na zadovoljstvo in produktivnost zaposlenih v tehnološki industriji. S pomočjo analize ključnih vodstvenih praks, organizacijskih struktur in vodstvenih pristopov, moje magistrsko delo ponuja vpogled v to, kako lahko podjetja ustvarijo bolj učinkovita in podpirna delovna okolja. Poudarek je na transformacijskem vodenju in močni kulturi podjetja, kot ključna dejavnika za izboljšanje angažiranosti zaposlenih, zmanjšanje fluktuacije in spodbujanje inovacij v konkurenčnem sektorju.

V teoretičnem delu magistrske naloge so predstavljeni osnovni koncepti vodenja, organizacijske kulture in produktivnosti zaposlenih, pri čemer je poudarjena njihova medsebojna povezanost pri oblikovanju delovne dinamike. Pregled obstoječe literature in teorij o vodstveni učinkovitosti, organizacijski kulturi ter motivaciji služi kot podlaga za nadaljnjo analizo. Poseben poudarek je na področjih programske opreme kot storitve (SaaS), telekomunikacij in e-trgovine, ki doživljajo hitro rast zaradi napredkov na področju umetne inteligence, računalništva v oblaku in digitalne transformacije. Čeprav ta področja predstavljajo mnogo priložnosti za inovacije, se hkrati srečujejo z izzivi, kot so visoka fluktuacija zaposlenih, stres na delovnem mestu in potreba po stalnem strokovnem razvoju.

Empirični del raziskave temelji na polstrukturiranih intervjujih z zaposlenimi, kjer sem pridobila dodatni vpogled v vodenje in organizacijsko kulturo med različnimi tehnološkimi podjetji. Rezultati intervjujev kažejo, da imajo podjetja z uspešnim vodstvom in jasno definirano organizacijsko kulturo, višjo stopnjo zadovoljstva in povezanost med zaposlenimi, tako kot boljše poslovne rezultate. Ključne ugotovitve magistrskega dela temeljijo na pomembnosti jasne komunikacije, možnosti strokovnega razvoja in sistematičnega prepoznavanja prispevka zaposlenih, saj ti dejavniki pomembno vplivajo tako na stopnjo produktivnost, kot na fluktuacijo v podjetju.

V svojem magistrskem delu potrjujem, da je prilagajanje vodstvene strategije nujno za spodbujanje in podporo zaposlenim, ter za ohranjanje delovne sile v podjetju. Kljub temu lahko organizacije že zdaj izboljšajo svoje vodstvene prakse in ustvarijo bolj dinamično, ter na zaposlene osredotočeno kulturo. Ključnega pomena je konstantno vlaganje v razvoj programov za usposabljanje vodij in učinkovite strategije vodenja, saj podjetja s tem višajo oranjanje svoje konkurenčne prednosti.

S strateškimi izboljšavami na področju vodenja in organizacijske kulture lahko podjetja pričakujejo višjo produktivnost, večjo zvestobo zaposlenih in izboljšano poslovno uspešnost. Nadaljnja rast in uspeh tehnološke industrije sta v veliki meri odvisna od tega, kako dobro podjetja upravljajo z zaposlenimi, se prilagajajo novim trendom ter vzpostavljajo pozitivno delovno okolje, ki spodbuja inovacije in dolgoročno rast.

Appendix 2: Questions for interviewees

- 1) How would you describe your company's culture?
- 2) What is your manager doing to promote the company's culture?
- 3) Are you satisfied with your job? Do you believe that company culture and management practices influence your job satisfaction?
- 4) How would you describe your manager? What leadership style would you say they employ? (You may use adjectives such as authoritative, democratic, supportive, or laissez-faire to describe their style).
- 5) What factors do you believe have the greatest impact on your productivity?
- 6) Have you ever felt unmotivated at work?
- 7) Do you have an option to work from home? How does that (for both cases) affect your productivity and job satisfaction?
- 8) Can you describe a specific scenario where your productivity was either positively or negatively affected?
- 9) In what ways does your company support employee growth and development? How do you find that? Are you missing something?
- 10) Do you feel valued at work? Any specific scenario when you felt most valued / not valued / appreciated?
- 11) How does your manager handle conflicts and disagreements among team members?
- 12) How does your company communicate changes to employees? How does your company encourage feedback and suggestions from employees to improve the work environment?
- 13) Does your company promote a work-life balance for employees? How do you feel that? Do you feel overworked or underworked?
- 14) How does your company foster a sense of belonging among employees, especially in remote work settings?
- 15) Can you share any examples of how your company celebrates successes and achievements? How did that make you feel?