



The effects of idealised influence on the dimensions of employee resistance to change at the automobile dealerships in the eThekweni region of Kwazulu-Natal, South Africa



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ABSTRACT

The effects of idealised influence as one of the four components of transformational leadership serve as a critical dimension of leadership style. Others include inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and gaining the admiration, trust, and respect of the followers. However, this study focuses on the context of employee resistance to change and its varying dimensions about the role idealised influence plays as a mediator in mitigating resistance to change and facilitating a successful change implementation at selected automobile dealerships in eThekweni Region of KwaZulu-Natal. Idealised influence refers to the leader's ability to act as role model and gain the admiration of employees and by so doing, positively influence employee's resistance to change. The study examines the effects of idealised influence on employee resistance to change at the automobile dealership organisations in the eThekweni Region of KwaZulu-Natal. The study investigates the mediating role of idealised influence on employee resistance to change at the automobile dealership organisations in the eThekweni Region of KwaZulu-Natal. Assessment was based on the effect of this leadership style component and its impact on employees' willingness to accept or resist changes introduced at the selected organisations. Of the 270 staff members identified for participation, 196 questionnaires were returned and analysed using the convergent data analysis as well as the Structural Equation Model (SEM). The study revealed that the idealised influence is positively associated with the staff quick acceptance of change. The study improves the existing framework with regards to understanding how leaders with idealised influence can facilitate change management acceptance of employees by embracing and inculcating the essence of idealised influence. The results can help managers and change management interventionists formulate human resource development to improve change management planning programmes.

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Introduction

In today's rapidly evolving business landscape, the automobile industry plays a significant role in driving economic growth and employment opportunities (Lukin & Bosna, 2022). Automobile dealership organisations, in particular, serve as vital entities within this industry, connecting manufacturers with customers and providing essential sales and after-sales services. However, like any other industry, automobile dealerships also face challenges related to organisational change and employee resistance (Warren & Gibson, 2023; Nakamura, 2023). Organisational change within the automobile dealership occurs as a result of various factors such as the advancements in technology, market dynamics, or strategic shifts in response to customer preferences (Giacosa, Culasso & Crocco, 2022). These changes often require employees adapting to new processes, technologies, or responsibilities, which can create uncertainty and resistance among the workforce. Employee resistance to change can manifest in various forms, including reduced productivity, increased turnover, and negative attitudes towards change initiatives (Flaherty & Schroeder, 2022; Lim, Kim & Agarwal, 2022).

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The aspect of leadership on the other hand, plays a pivotal role in effective organisational management (Soeari, Ilhami & Achmad, 2023). Leadership is the capacity to influence and command others in order to accomplish the goals of the organization, successfully. Leaders have the responsibility to steer everybody in the organisation towards achieving a common goal (Bakti & Hartono, 2022). They demonstrate moral bravery and articulate ideals that go beyond the effectiveness and efficiency of employee performance. They are able to influence their followers' freedom of expression, address their concerns as well as communicate and listen to them (Mutha & Srivastava, 2023). Consequently, leadership styles plays a crucial role in managing employee resistance during times of change. Transformational leadership in particular, which focuses on inspiring and motivating followers, has gained significant attention in leadership research (Islam, 2023; Zhao & Huang, 2022). Transformational leaders exhibit charismatic qualities, stimulate followers' intellectual curiosity, and serve as role models, thereby fostering employee commitment and organisational success (Wang, 2022).

However, this study focuses on idealised influence as a key dimension of transformational leadership that describes leader's ability to embody desirable attributes and serve as a role model for their followers. Leaders that display idealised influence gain their employees admiration and respect, which leads to higher levels of trust, commitment, and willingness to embrace change initiative (Maligsay & Quines, 2023). Yet, the specific impact of idealised influence on employee resistance within the context of automobile dealership organisations in the eThekweni Region in South Africa remains largely unexplored (Qambela, 2022; Charton, 2022 & Southwood, 2022). Given the potential effect of idealised influence on employee resistance, it is important to investigate how these factors interrelate within the specific context of automobile dealerships in the eThekweni Region of South Africa. By understanding the mediating role of idealised influence and its effect on employee resistance, organisations can develop targeted strategies to effectively manage resistance, improve employee attitudes towards change, and enhance overall organisational performance. Hence, this study aims to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by exploring the effect of idealised influence on employee resistance at the automobile dealership organisations in the eThekweni Region of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa. The results provide valuable insights for leaders and managers within this industry, enabling them to enhance leadership practices, foster employee support, and facilitate transformational leadership.

The background of the study focuses on the South African automotive sector which stands out as a significant contributor to South African economic growth. Despite this fact, the continual decline in automobile sales year-on-year contributed to the loss of 33.5 per cent of South Africa's general manufacturing output in 2015 (Bushe, 2019). Investigation has revealed that the challenges faced by the South African automotive sector were caused by organisational change management (Dube, Nhamo & Chikodzi, 2022; Zondo, 2020; Bushe, 2019). This has resulted to an increased demand for low quality products which hardly meet with global output standards. According to NAAMSA (2016:23), *"the main difficulty faced by the South African automobile sector, is associated with implementing and maintaining new technical changes which comprise artificial intelligence and can only be achieved by the practice of appropriate leadership skills and a successful change management in the industry"*. The lack of appropriate leadership skills often leads to poor work performance of employees and employee-management relationship. These challenges results in worsened labour relations which offset the benefits of inspiring employers to reduce costs. Unfortunately, inadequate development in education and training continually hinders the potential of the South African automobile industry (Chukwuma, Onwubu, Netswera & Anwana, 2022; NAAMSA, 2016). However, these dealership organisations can only prosper and contribute to the economic growth of South Africa if modern skills and technical know-how are applied through the practice of transformational leadership style for effective change management with particular emphasis on the mediating role of idealised influence as an aspect of transformational leadership (Raja, Raju, Husnain, Sarfraz, Malik & Raja, 2022; Tsibidaki, 2021).

Lack of recognizing idealised influence as an effective change management approach in the Automobile Dealership in South Africa is the major problem statement of this study. Since idealised influence as a key dimension of transformational leadership style has been associated with employee wellbeing, improved job performance, increased job satisfaction and a reduction of employee turnover (Reyes et al., 2019; Breevaart & Zacher, 2019; Cheng et al., 2016), the mediating role of idealised influence as a significant aspect of transformational leadership and its effect on reducing employee resistance to change is the focal point of the study. Idealised influence has proven to be successful in remote education setting (Tsibidaki, 2021). However, limited studies have proven its effect on employee resistance to change (Qadan, Jabarin & Chaleila, 2023). Hence, this study advances the effect of idealised influence in reducing employee resistance to change.

Cao and Le (2022) argues that while transformational leadership has been extensively studied in various organisational contexts, there are notable gaps in the literature regarding the specific effect of idealised influence on employee resistance within the automobile dealership industry in South Africa. Notably, transformational leaders are known to inspire and motivate their followers through the effectiveness of idealised influence (Madilo, Awaah & Arkorful, 2023; Idiko & Obah, 2022). This posits the essence of investigating the role of idealised influence as a mediating factor in mitigating employee resistance as this remains relatively unexplored in this specific context. Limited attention has been given to the potential role of idealised influence in reducing resistance to change initiatives within the automobile dealership organisations. Understanding the mechanisms through which idealised influence operates as a mediating factor can provide valuable insights into effective leadership practices in this unique industry. By addressing these several mentioned gaps, we can gain a deeper understanding of how transformational leaders can utilise idealised influence to mitigate employee resistance and facilitate successful organisational change. To date, no empirical research has directly examined the relationship between idealised influence and employee resistance within the automobile dealership industry in South Africa.

Having discussed the problem relating to leadership style practices in the automotive sector, this study advances the effect of idealised influence in reducing employee resistance to change. Hence, the next section presents the study objectives. These will be followed by a theoretical framework considered for this study.

This study investigates the effect of idealised influence on the dimensions of employee resistance to change at dealership organisations in the eThekweni Region of KwaZulu-Natal, South-Africa. It is guided by the following objectives:

- i. to examine if the leadership management practices of idealised influence affect the varying dimensions of employee resistance to change; and
- ii. to establish the influence for idealised influence as a change management leadership approach in the Automobile Dealership in KwaZulu-Natal in South Africa

Literature Review

This section provides an overview of the transformational leadership which comprised of its varying components including idealised influence, inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation and individualised consideration. The role of idealised influence and its effect on varying components of employee resistance to change concludes the theoretical foundation for this study.

Theoretical and Conceptual Background

Theoretical and Conceptual Background should be efficiently discussed linking hypothesis with empirical reviews. Up-To-date top-class citations will improve the impact of research on readers.

Overview of Transformational Leadership

Transformational leadership is characterised by leaders who inspire and motivate their followers through visionary thinking, intellectual stimulation, individualised consideration, and idealised influence (Bass & Riggio, 2006). According to Chou (2015:26), “*the function of a leader has an immediate impact on job satisfaction of people*”. Varshney (2020) adds that, for adaptation to drastic environmental change, as with the Covid-19 pandemic, organisations can only be well positioned to orientate their employees to adapt effectively if there is room for transformational leadership. Changar and Atan (2021) clarifies that workers are content with their leaders displaying combined attributes of transformational and transactional operations. A research study by Sung and Kim (2021) agrees with existing findings stating a strong link between transformational leadership style and employee resistance to change. To this end, Huynh (2020) relates transformational leadership as an approach to improved working conditions for employees.

There has been significant growing interest within the field of leadership, especially on transformational leadership and its influence on employee resistance to change. Bennis (1995) believed that transformational leaders play a great role in touching the heart of employees. This assertion has been adopted by Burn (1977), who pioneered transformational leadership by suggesting the extreme self-interest of leaders and followers from a comprehensive perspective. Similarly, Bass (1985) found that transformational leadership styles were useful in enhancing performance expectations among employees and addressing their concerns. Transformational Leadership style has been identified as the most frequently discussed form of leadership for organisational change (Albasilim, 2014). It is often associated with employee well-being for improved job performance, increased job satisfaction and a reduction in employee turnover (Breevaart & Zacher, 2019).

Bass and Riggio (2006) divide transformational leadership into four major attributes. These includes the idealised influence, intellectual simulation, individualised consideration and inspirational motivation.

Idealised influence

This comprised of charismatic behaviours displayed by the leader and the elements of leadership attributed to the leader by their followers. This is the extent to which leaders are trusted, appreciated and respected by their followers given the behaviours demonstrated by the said leader.

Intellectual stimulation

This attribute describes the process undertaken by leaders to stimulate their followers to be creative and innovative. Transformational leaders promote an environment where the status quo can be questioned, and the norms of the organisation challenged. This allows followers to become increasingly independent in their thinking, as long as such leaders fosters an environment that is open to ideas without being criticised if these ideas differ to that of the leader.

Individualised consideration

This captures how leaders create a supportive environment and the extent to which the psychological needs of followers are being seen (that is, the need for growth and achievement). This is often achieved in situations where the leaders provide relevant tasks to followers that can aid them in developing themselves. The leader serves as a mentor to assist the follower in seeing the task through.

Inspirational motivation

This focuses on the high expectations that are set by leaders and the extent to which they will motivate and inspire the followers to meet these expectations. These expectations are often set with clear guidelines and the leader demonstrate the same shared value in being equally committed to meet these expectations.

In the context of organisational change, reorganisation, restructuring and turnaround are expected from organisations undergoing transformational change (Tan, Van & Wilderom, 2023). However, organisational change is one of the features of the administrative actions that empower employees and enhance their performance with the effective application of a transformational leadership style. Transformational leadership encourages employees to embrace challenging jobs which results to a positive work performance (Jyoti & hau, 2015). A transformational leader is described as one who depends on self-interest of his or her followers, inspiring both themselves and their subordinates to go beyond merely satisfying self-interest (Idiko & Obah, 2022). In other words, employees under the management of transformational leaders are less likely to resist to change. This result is consistent with the findings by Peneva and Sehic (2014). It reveals a negative relationship between transformational leadership and resistance to change through the effect of idealised influence as an attribute of transformational leadership displayed by such leaders. Leaders with idealised influence encourage their teams and are less likely to engage in behaviours that contradicts as being receptive to change. Likewise, it was hypothesised in an empirical study by Chou (2015) that there is a direct relationship between transformational leadership and behavioral support for change. The result indicated that transformational leadership had a significantly positive relationship with behavioural support for change. Hence, the next section discusses the role of idealised influence and its effect on varying components of employee resistance to change.

Role of idealised influence and its effect on varying components of employee resistance to change

According to Changar and Atan (2021), a leader is attributed to idealised influence when organisational members sense the leader's ethics and standards, which earn the leader profound admiration. The optimistic ambitions of effective leaders heighten their followers' contentment (Gassemi, Papastamatelou & Unger, 2021). In other words, employees become confident in their leaders and more dedicated and committed to achieving the vision of the organisation. Studies reveal that a leader with idealised influence articulates a clear future vision, communicates expectations to followers and is committed to achieving set goals, very enthusiastic and is capable of staying positive (Chebon, Aruasa, & Chirchir, 2019). Nji (2021) adds that idealised influence is identifiable in an energising working environment that makes room for empowering followers and ensuring that they are accountable. This was supported by Liao, Lee, Johnson and Lin (2021), whose interest was in making the world a better place by calling organisations to serve the needs of their members, as well as the least privileged in society, which they deemed to be the best test of servant leadership. However, the findings are comparable with other studies, which agree that leaders with idealised influence have a positive effect on employee's performance in terms of embracing change. Idealised influence significantly transforms employees and organisations towards positive outcomes (Chebon, et al., 2019; Trang, 2016; Kouzes & Posner, 2012).

Koo and Lee (2021) noted that the consequence of idealised influence tends to occur with top instead of middle-managers. This occurs in a scenario where the followers are restricted by managerial guidelines. This reduces their capacity to initiate creative ideas and further lessens their desire to achieve expected outcomes. Rasul, Rogger and Williams (2021) add that the clarity of responsibility is very important in effectively producing idealised performances in employees. The implication of idealised influence as a component of transformational leadership is that it paves the way for employees to easily accept change. Abdullah (2011) describes idealised influence as an aspect of transformational leadership style that encourages high quality performance and provide a conducive working environment. This description relates with Haider and Riaz (2010) who claim that a leader should be a "role model" and sought to influence the followers. Chong (2014) also asserted that leaders who possess idealised influence were perceived to be noble and inspiring by followers. This implies that the extent of leaders being viewed by the followers would be strongly linked to expectations placed on them. Leaders that possess the attribute of idealised influence would always be able to recognise the capabilities and concerns of their employees when change is introduced in an organisation (Adewale, 2011).

On the other hand, a multidimensional interpretation of change opposition, otherwise referred to as employee resistance to change, speculates that undesirable responses to change are conveyed through three distinctive channels: emotional, cognitive and behavioural (Luminel, Nielson & Ridout, 2021; Piderit, 2010). Piderit (2010) suggests that it is possible that employee responses to change can be seen in an ambivalent context where feelings, behaviours, and thoughts about change differ. On the other hand, Luminel et al. (2021) suggests that all studies on behaviour revealed patterns of deficits that were not restricted to emotional contexts. Piderit (2015) adds that uncertainty can arise in the cognitive and behavioural spheres, when a worker trusts that change introduced in an organisation is vital but that the intended change is inadequate. In this case, an effort to fight against change can arise. The worker might follow his or her reasoning by displaying resistance through unsigned explanations in the recommendation box. However, open opposition to change might not be expressed, owing to fear of a manager's reactions (Idiko & Obah, 2022).

Based on Piderit (2010) conceptualisation of resistance, Oreg (2003) led a study to explore resistance to change and identified four factors that define an individual's tendency to resist change. These include the routine seeking, emotional reaction, short-term focus and cognitive rigidity. Such factors facilitate an improved ability to envisage detailed, change-related performance rather than other dispositions, such as distinct inaction, individual resilience and self-efficacy (Tsidaki, 2021; Yang, Zhou, Cao, Xia & An, 2019; Wanberg & Baner, 2011).

Hence, the following sub-sections describe the effect of idealised influence on the varying components of employee resistance to change and the varying roles they play.

Effect of idealised influence on routine seeking

Routine seeking is an interactive aspect involving an act, or reason for reacting to a change (Bolten, 2020). This element clarifies two significant features of a person's propensity to accept or resist change. Whereas, one area of repetitive search centres on a person's desire for inspiration and novelty, the other area stresses an unwillingness to give up old practices towards resistance to change (Guttman, Gilboa & Partouche-Sebban, 2021; Karandashev, 2021).

A study on the role of idealised influence on routine seeking establishes that leaders motivate high productivity and a higher propensity to accept change through flexible and creative ideas that conveys the need for change (Chacha, 2021). It stresses the relationship between idealised influence and routine seeking by emphasising on the need for this style of leadership behaviour for the critical success of effective change management (Chacha, 2021).

Effect of idealised influence on emotional reaction

Oreg (2003) alludes that emotional reactions are an expressive aspect that reveals the attitudes of workers when faced with change. Keifer (2021) notes that employees could be faced with high levels of stress and frustration if the work environment is poorly organised and managed. This implies that control over one's circumstances is significantly connected with the capability to cope with managerial change. For people with a stronger locus of control, change is apparently an anticipated occurrence that will lead to enhancement and growth of an organisation and its members. However, workers with less control over their surroundings are vulnerable to fear and anxiety, or fear of success (Howard, 2021; Oreg, 2003). This limits their willingness to change in a poorly organised work environment. Employees experience high levels of stress and frustration, which may lead them to be involved in interpersonal conflicts that may spiral into a bullying situation.

Research study on the effect of idealised influence on emotional reaction has shown to have a significant relationship. Yoke and Panatik (2015) investigates the role of management behaviour towards idealised influence and its impact on employees' emotional reaction towards conflict resolution, job burn out, job support and turnover intention. Other similar studies on emotional intelligence, entrepreneurial intention and empowerment were also explored (Mia, Humphrey & Pollack, 2018; Shaikat & Yousaf, 2017). Findings from these studies suggest that the practice of idealised influence by managers attribute to high ethical conducts of employees who are rigorously willing to emulate charisma exemplified by their leaders, thereby curtailing high stress levels, anxiety and a stronger locus of control by employees (Mia, Humphrey & Pollack, 2018; Shaikat & Yousaf, 2017).

Effect of idealised influence on short term focus

Short-term focus implies that a person's focus at work wavers, thereby limiting a worker's capacity to accept innovative ways of working (Rice & Reed, 2021). This element includes an unwillingness to take risks and exhibits narrow-mindedness towards change and change management practices. Substantial change overtly necessitates that workers familiarise themselves with the new practices or procedures, and this can generate an intolerance to adjusting to the changes that are working (Rice & Reed, 2021). Rationally, workers typically liken their present abilities with the expectation of meeting their responsibilities. Additionally, employees will compare the results of their previous routine with the possible results of the new arrangement (Ofoe, Anderson & Ntourou, 2018).

Studies on the practice of idealised influence as a leadership style of management practice has proven to reduce short term focus by increasing work performance, commitment and interest of organisational goals (Farrukh, Ansari, Raza, Wu & Wang, 2022). Findings from similar studies regarding the effect of idealised influence on short term focus indicates employee's optimism towards change, thereby necessitating room for the overall efficiency, performance and productivity of employees (Ouko, 2022; Morales, 2022).

Effect of idealised influence on cognitive rigidity

Cognitive rigidity is the fourth aspect of resistance to change. It refers to a worker's opinions and principles regarding change (Stephen, Byars & Stanberry, 2018). Oreg (2003) stressed how a person's thoughts and principles bring about change, once the individual is able to adjust his or her beliefs and principles in order to accept change. Stephen et al. (2018) point out the need for change to be guided by seeking individual interests in alignment with organisational goals. This aspect refers to the ease and occurrence of a person's ability to conform to the expected change in actions and behaviour. Consistencies in psychological personalities can be addressed through concerns such as intellectual complications, dictatorship and rigidity, as well as sensitivity (Malka, Soto, Inzlicht & Lelkes, 2014). Rigid persons are naturally closed-minded and less likely to embrace innovative conditions, hence their resistance to change (Stephen et al., 2018).

The practice of idealised influence as a leadership style encourage employees to feel motivated and inspired to be creative, innovative and flexible towards organisational changes. This is possible due to the charismatic style of leadership as it easily rubs off on the employees' willingness and open mindedness to change (Stephen et al, 2018). Having discussed the theoretical foundation of the study, the next subsection presents the hypothesis developed for this study.

Empirical Review and Hypothesis Development

Based on the contextual background of the study, the following hypotheses has been developed:

H1: Idealised influence has a significant relationship with routine seeking

The hypothesis is based on the assumption that idealised influence as a leadership practice affects routine seeking by causing employees to embrace the flexibility that comes with change rather than stick with a routine way of working which hinders the acceptance of change. Leaders that possess idealised influence could show conviction, take their stands, emotionally appeal to followers, and are seen as role models by followers (Elmary & Bakri, 2019; Judge & Piccolo, 2004).

H2: Idealised influence has a significant relationship with cognitive rigidity

The hypothesis assumes that idealised influence as a leadership practice affects employees' cognitive rigidity by causing their thoughts and principles to bring about change, once the individual is able to adjust his or her beliefs and principles in order to accept change (Stephen et al. 2018). It was noted that effective leadership improves consistencies in psychological personalities and reduces dictatorship, rigidity, and sensitivity since rigid persons are naturally close minded (Stephen et al., 2018; Byars & Stanberry, 2018; Malka, Soto, Inzlicht & Lelkes, 2014).

H3: Idealised influence has a significant relationship with emotional reaction

The hypothesis assumes that idealised influence as a leadership style positively affects employee's emotional reaction. A number of studies confirm this assumption thus identifying a lower level of stress, job burn out and minimal frustration ensuring a better and more organised work environment and capability to cope with circumstances as related to change (Mia, Humphrey & Pollack, 2018; Shaikat & Yousaf, 2017).

H4: Idealised influence has a significant relationship with short term focus

This hypothesis assumes that idealised influence as a leadership style affects short term focus. Worker's capacity to accept innovative ways of working and commitment are increased. This includes their interest towards the adaptation of the organisational change. The next Figure 1 presents a snap-shot of the hypothesised relationship of idealised influence with the four factors that define individual's tendency to resist change.

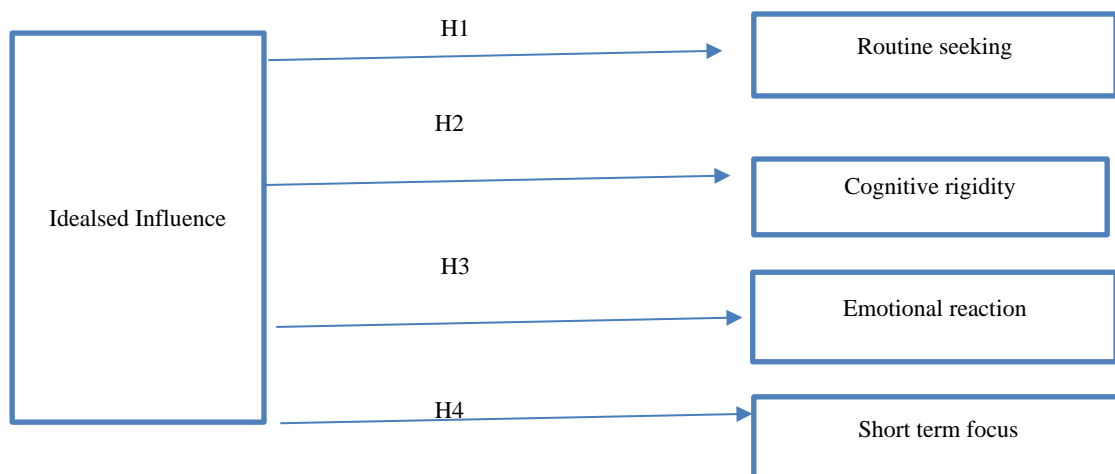


Figure 1: Hypothesis development

This study investigates the effects of idealised influence on employee resistance to change at the automobile dealership organisations in the eThekweni Region of KwaZulu-Natal. It assesses the mediating role of idealised influence on employee resistance to change. Hence, the next section discusses the methodology considered for this study.

Research Methodology

The method for this study will be discussed under the following headings: the target population, sample size, data collection method, as well as, the measurement and analysis.

Target Population

The National Automobile Car Dealership Association (NADA) in South Africa reported about 660 automobile organisations in South Africa, with 278 in KwaZulu-Natal province and 35 in the eThekweni Region (NADA, 2015). The number of employees in all the

automobile dealerships in the eThekweni Region is 1,750. The population in which the study was conducted involved 6 major branded dealership organisations, which comprised of their sub-divisions that are also situated in the eThekweni Region of KwaZulu-Natal.

Sample Size

The selection of sample size was based on the purposive sampling method. This enabled researcher identify organisations whose change management approach were transformational for participation (Dong, Ma, Cai, Liu, Yue, Zhang, Xu, Li & Song, 2021). Hence, the research sites were purposely identified and judgments were made to determine the organisational contexts that were likely to fit the objectives of the study. However, this type of sampling reduces the possibility of generalisability to a wider population. Consequently, 196 individuals representing automotive dealerships participated in the study.

Data Collection Method

Data was collected from 6 main automobile dealership organisations. They comprised of 13 sub-divisions spread across the eThekweni Region as indicated in Table 1. Questionnaires were physically distributed for completion by participants. Consequently, the return rate was 60 per cent, which is considered acceptable as determined by Baruch and Holtom (2008). The following Table 1 presents the main and their sub-division organisations that participated in the study.

Table 1: Main and their sub-division organisations that participated in the study

Organisation (actual undisclosed)	names names	Locations of the organisation’s Head Offices in the eThekweni Region	Locations of sub-division organisations	Total number of sub-divisions for each of the main dealership organisations
Organisation A		Main division at Durban Central	-Hillcrest -Durban North -Amanzimtoti -Pinetown	4
Organisation B		Main division at Umhlanga	-Durban North -The Bluff -Ballito	3
Organisation C		Main division at Durban Central	-Pinetown -Ballito	2
Organisation D		Main division at Durban Central	-Pinetown	1
Organisation E		Main division at Umhlanga	-Pinetown	1
Organisation F		Main division at Durban Central	-Hillcrest -The Bluff	2

Measurement and the Analysis of data

Based on the research framework, the study measured four dependent variables of employee resistance to change as against their relationship with idealised influence as an independent variable using a questionnaire. The study employed a likert scale, ranging from 1 (strongly agree) to 5 (strongly disagree). Spearman’s correlation analysis was applied on the effect of idealised influence on the varying dimensions of employee resistance to change. The structured equation model (SEM) was also used and presented the relationship between idealised influence and the varying dimensions of employee resistance to change.

The Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS) version 2.1 was used for data analysis.

Findings

This section assesses the significant relationship between the role of idealised influence and the varying dimensions of employee resistance to change. These include the emotional reaction, routine seeking, cognitive rigidity, and short-term focus. The first subsections present the empirical results of the study. This is followed by statistical measurement and item loading for the constructs. Fitness of the SEM Model concludes this section

Empirical results

Data in Table 2 presents the factor analysis conducted on a set of measured variables relating to the idealised influence (IF), Routine Seeking (RS), Cognitive Rigidity (CR) and the Short-term Focus (SF). Factor loadings, means and Cronbach's alphas are provided for each measured variable of the constructs.

Table 2: Factor analysis and reliability of the measured constructs

Construct	Measured variables	Factor loadings	Mean (sd)	Cronbach's Alpha
Idealised Influence	IF1 It feels good to work with my manager	0.967	4.21 (0.998)	0.950
	IF2 I am proud to be associated with my manager.	0.953	4.23 (0.955)	
	IF3 My manager's values and beliefs are very impressive.	0.933	4.14 (1.090)	
Routine seeking and Emotional reaction	RS1 I will take a routine day over a day full of unexpected events at any time	0.610	3.19 (1.341)	0.900
	RS2 I like to do same old things rather than try new and different ones.	0.688	2.42 (1.349)	
	RS3 I sometimes find myself avoiding challenges that I know will be good for me.	0.721	2.45 (1.355)	
	RS4 If my boss changed the criteria for evaluating employees, it would probably make me feel uncomfortable even if I thought I would do just as well without having to do any extra work	0.661	2.66 (1.283)	
	RS5 I would rather be bored with work than surprised to new and different ones	0.802	2.24 (1.361)	
	RS6 If I were be informed that there is going to a significant change regarding the way things are done at work, I would probably feel stressed	0.686	2.76 (1.329)	
	RS7 When I am informed of a change of plans, I tense up a bit.	0.590	2.69 (1.307)	
Cognitive rigidity	CR1 I generally consider change to be a negative thing	0.786	2.36 (1.262)	0.907
	CR2 Changing plans seems like a real hassle to me	0.779	2.45 (1.315)	
	CR3 Often, I feel a bit uncomfortable, even about changes that may potentially improve my life.	0.753	2.46 (1.376)	
	CR4 When someone pressures me to change something, I tend to resist it even if I think the change may ultimately benefit me.	0.773	2.42 (1.267)	
	CR5 Whenever my life forms a stable routine, I look for ways to change it	0.682	2.82 (1.270)	
Short term focus	SF1 When things do not go according to plans, it stresses me out	0.500	3.22 (1.335)	0.839
	SF2 Once I have come to a conclusion I am not likely to change my mind	0.787	3.23 (1.287)	
	SF3 I do not change my mind easily	0.802	3.34 (1.255)	
	SF4 My views are consistent over time	0.838	3.56 (1.171)	

Variance explained=72.4%
 Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy=0.899
 Bartlett's Test of Sphericity= (p=0.000; X²=2673.956; df=190)

The variance as explained by factors in Table 2 is 72.4 per cent, indicating that the measured variables within the constructs account for a substantial amount of the total variability. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy at 0.899 suggests that the dataset is suitable for factor analysis. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity at p-value 0.000 indicates that the correlations between the measured variables are significantly different from zero, supporting the factor analysis. However, the following subsections presents the analysis for idealised influence, routine seeking, cognitive rigidity and short-term focus.

The Idealised Influence

This construct measures employees' perception of their manager's positive influence and leadership qualities. Three measured variables (that is, IF1, IF2, IF3) are included in this construct. The factor loadings indicate the strength of the relationship between

each measured variable and the construct. For example, IF1, which assesses how good it feels to work with the manager, has a high factor loading of 0.967, suggesting a strong association with idealised influence. The mean values indicate that employees, on average, strongly agree with these statements (at mean values 4.21 to 4.23). whereas, the Cronbach's alpha of 0.950 indicates a high level of internal consistency reliability for the idealised influence construct.

The Routine Seeking and Emotional reactions

The constructs on employee tendency to resist change were combined as they have single shared variance that reflects employees' preference for stability, predictability, reaction to change and resistance to change. They were thus represented as routine seeking with seven measured variables (that is, RS1 to RS7). The factor loadings ranged from 0.590 to 0.802, indicating varying degrees of association with routine seeking. The mean values suggest that employees, on average, tend to prefer routine and resist change (at mean values varying from 2.24 to 3.19). The Cronbach's alpha of 0.900 suggests a high level of internal consistency reliability for the routine seeking construct.

The Cognitive Rigidity

This construct captures employees' tendency to resist change and view it negatively. Five measured variables (that is, CR1 to CR5) contribute to this construct. The factor loadings range from 0.682 to 0.786, indicating a moderate to strong association with Cognitive Rigidity. The mean values suggest that employees, on average, exhibit some resistance to change and discomfort with it (at mean values 2.36 to 2.82). The Cronbach's alpha of 0.907 indicates a high level of internal consistency reliability for the Cognitive Rigidity construct.

The Short-term Focus

This construct represents employees' tendency to prioritise immediate outcomes and exhibit inflexibility in changing their views. Four measured variables (that is, SF1 to SF4) are included in this construct. The factor loadings range from 0.500 to 0.838, indicating a moderate to strong association with Short-term Focus. The mean values suggest that employees, on average, exhibit a moderate level of short-term focus (at mean value 3.22 to 3.56). The Cronbach's alpha of 0.839 suggests a high level of internal consistency reliability for the Short-term Focus construct.

Having analysed the empirical results of the study covering individual tendencies to resist change, the next sub-section analyses the statistical measurements and item loading for the constructs.

Statistical measurements and item loading for the constructs

This section provides statistical measurements and item loadings for the construct using resistance to change scale reliability and construct validity. Results are based on the measurement models for scale reliability and construct validity.

Measurement Model: Scale Reliability and Construct Validity

Table 3 provides data measured for the construct validity in the measurement model. This was assessed by estimating the measures of convergent and discriminant validity and includes all measurement items and latent variables, the items' loadings, composite reliability, average variance extracted (AVE) and the maximum shared square variance (MSV). Included were the inter-correlations between the constructs. The following Table 3 presents results for the convergent and discriminant validity.

Table 3: Convergent and discriminant validity

variables	Composite reliability	AVE	MSV	MaxR(H)	RS	IF	CR
RS	0.904	0.581	0.654	0.921	0.762		
IF	0.954	0.873	0.006	0.968	-0.027	0.935	
CR	0.913	0.679	0.654	0.933	0.809	-0.005	0.824
SF	0.830	0.553	0.433	0.847	0.658	0.079	

Composite reliability

This metric assesses the level internal consistency of a scale or construct. It measures the extent to which the items within a construct are consistently measuring the same underlying concept (Ab Hamid et al., 2017). Composite reliability values range from 0 to 1, where values closer to 1 indicate higher reliability, indicating that the construct is measuring the intended concept, consistently (Shrestha, 2021). In this study, the composite reliability of all constructs surpasses the threshold of 0.70, which is considered acceptable in terms of reliability (Alalwan et al., 2018). This suggests that the scales used to measure each construct are reliable and can be trusted to provide consistent results.

Average Variance Extracted (AVE) for convergent validity

The AVE is a metric used to assess the convergent validity of a scale or construct (Shrestha, 2021). It quantifies the amount of variance in the observed variables that can be attributed to the underlying latent construct. Higher AVE values indicate stronger

convergent validity, indicating that the observed variables are indeed measuring the intended construct (Shrestha, 2021). On the other hand, the Maximum Shared Variance (MSV), by contrast, is a measure of the discriminant validity of a scale or a construct. It represents the maximum correlation between a construct and any other construct in the model.

The result in Table 3 revealed that RS shows a high positive correlation with Cognitive Rigidity (CR) at 0.904, suggesting that employees who prefer routine also tend to exhibit cognitive rigidity. The AVE for RS is 0.581, indicating that 58.1 per cent of the variance in the measured variables within RS is explained by the construct itself, thus supporting convergent validity. The MSV for RS is 0.654, which indicates that the measured variables within RS share a considerable amount of variance. The Maximum R-squared (MaxR(H)) for RS is 0.921, indicating that the measured variables within RS can explain up to 92.1 per cent of the variance in the construct itself.

The following subsections analyse results for scale reliability and construct validity for idealised influence, cognitive rigidity and short-term focus.

Idealised influence (IF)

The IF in Table 3 shows a high positive correlation with RS at 0.762, indicating that employees who perceive their manager as having idealised influence are more likely to prefer routine. The AVE for IF is 0.873, suggesting that 87.3 per cent of the variance in the measured variables within IF is explained by the construct itself. The MSV for IF is 0.006, indicating that the measured variables within IF share a minimal amount of variance. The MaxR(H) for IF is 0.968, implying that the measured variables within IF can explain up to 96.8 per cent of the variance in the construct itself.

Cognitive rigidity

The CR in Table 3 indicates a high positive correlation with RS at 0.809 and a moderate negative correlation with IF at -0.027. This suggests that employees who exhibit cognitive rigidity are more likely to prefer routine and less likely to perceive their manager as having idealised influence. The AVE for CR is 0.679, indicating that 67.9% of the variance in the measured variables within CR is explained by the construct itself. The MSV for CR is 0.654, suggesting that the measured variables within CR share a considerable amount of variance. The MaxR(H) for CR is 0.933, meaning that the measured variables within CR can explain up to 93.3% of the variance in the construct itself.

Short-term focus

The SF in Table 3 shows a moderate positive correlation with RS at 0.658 and a moderate negative correlation with IF at -0.079. This suggests that employees who have a short-term focus are more likely to prefer routine and less likely to perceive their manager as having idealised influence. The AVE for SF is 0.553, indicating that 55.3% of the variance in the measured variables within SF is explained by the construct itself. The MSV for SF is 0.433, suggesting that the measured variables within SF share a moderate amount of variance. The MaxR(H) for SF is 0.847, implying that the measured variables within SF can explain up to 84.7% of the variance in the construct itself.

Having analysed the statistical measurements and item loading for constructs, the next section provides the analysis of constructs using the multiple fitness of the model.

Fitness of the Model

The following Table 4 provides the model fitness for measurement model (MM).

Table 4: Model fitness indices for the MM

Fit Indices	Fit values	Criteria
χ^2 / df (p-value)	2.008(<.001)	<5
IFI	0.944	>.9
TLI	0.931	>.9
CFI	0.944	>.9
RMSEA	0.077	<.08

Thus, Table 4 provides the overall fit of the model as assessed by multiple fit criteria. These criteria evaluate how well the observed data align with the proposed model as presented in the following Figure 2.

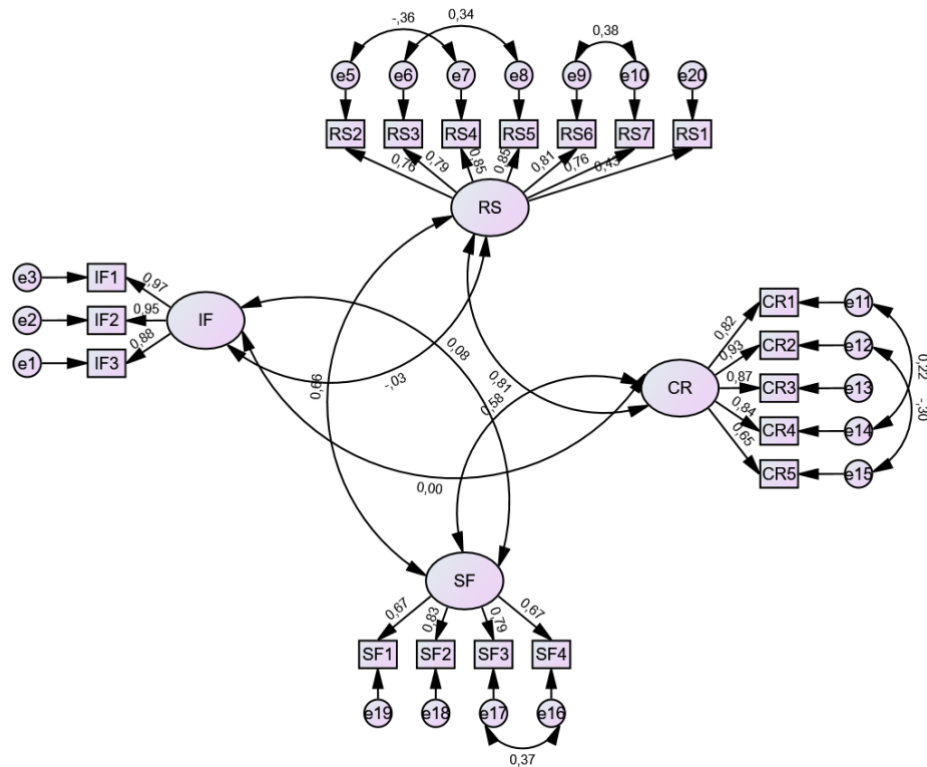


Figure 2: Model fitness

Note: Chi-square = 281,081 df = 140, $p < .001$, $\chi^2 / df = 2.008$, CFI = 0.944, IFI = 0.944, TLI=0.931, RMSEA = 0.077

The χ^2 / df ratio of 2.008 is calculated by dividing the chi-square value by the degrees of freedom. Hence, the p-value is less than 0.001, indicating that the model's chi-square value is statistically significant. The ratio of 2.008 falls below the recommended threshold of 5, which suggests a good fit between the proposed model and the observed data.

The Incremental Fit Indices such as the Incremental Fit Index (IFI), Tucker-Lewis Index (TLI) and Comparative Fit Index (CFI) assess the relative improvement in fit by comparing the proposed model to a baseline model with no relationships. The IFI value of 0.944 indicates that the proposed model fits the data well, as it exceeds the threshold of 0.9. A higher IFI suggests a better fit between the model and the data. The TLI value of 0.931 also exceeds the threshold of 0.9, indicating a good fit between the model and the data. A higher TLI indicates a better fit. Similarly, the CFI value of 0.944 exceeds the recommended threshold of 0.9, indicating a good fit. A higher CFI suggests a better fit between the model and the data.

The Root Mean Square Error of Approximation (RMSEA) evaluates the fit of the model by considering both the discrepancy between the model and the observed data and the complexity of the model. A lower RMSEA indicates a better fit. The RMSEA value of 0.077 falls below the cutoff value of 0.08, suggesting a good fit between the model and the observed data. Overall, the fit indices indicate that the proposed model fits the data well. The χ^2 / df ratio is within the acceptable range, and the IFI, TLI, CFI, and RMSEA values all support a good fit. These results suggest that the model adequately represents the relationships among the variables and provides a suitable explanation for the observed data.

Hypothesis Testing: Structural Equation Model

The proposed model, which has demonstrated satisfactory composite reliability (Stephen et al., 2018), as well as convergent and discriminant validity, were subjected to structural equation modelling (SEM). In this analysis, the MM was transformed into a path model that illustrates the relationships between the latent variables. SEM is a statistical technique used to examine complex relationships between observed and unobserved variables (Hair et al., 2019). It combines both factor and regression analysis to assess the underlying structures and relationships in the data. In this study, SEM was employed to test the hypothesised relationships among the latent variables. This approach was chosen because it allows for the simultaneous evaluation of multiple independent and dependent relationships, considering the measurement estimates of the constructs (Hair et al., 2019).

The resulting SEM, which includes standardised estimates of the relationships, as presented in Figure 3.

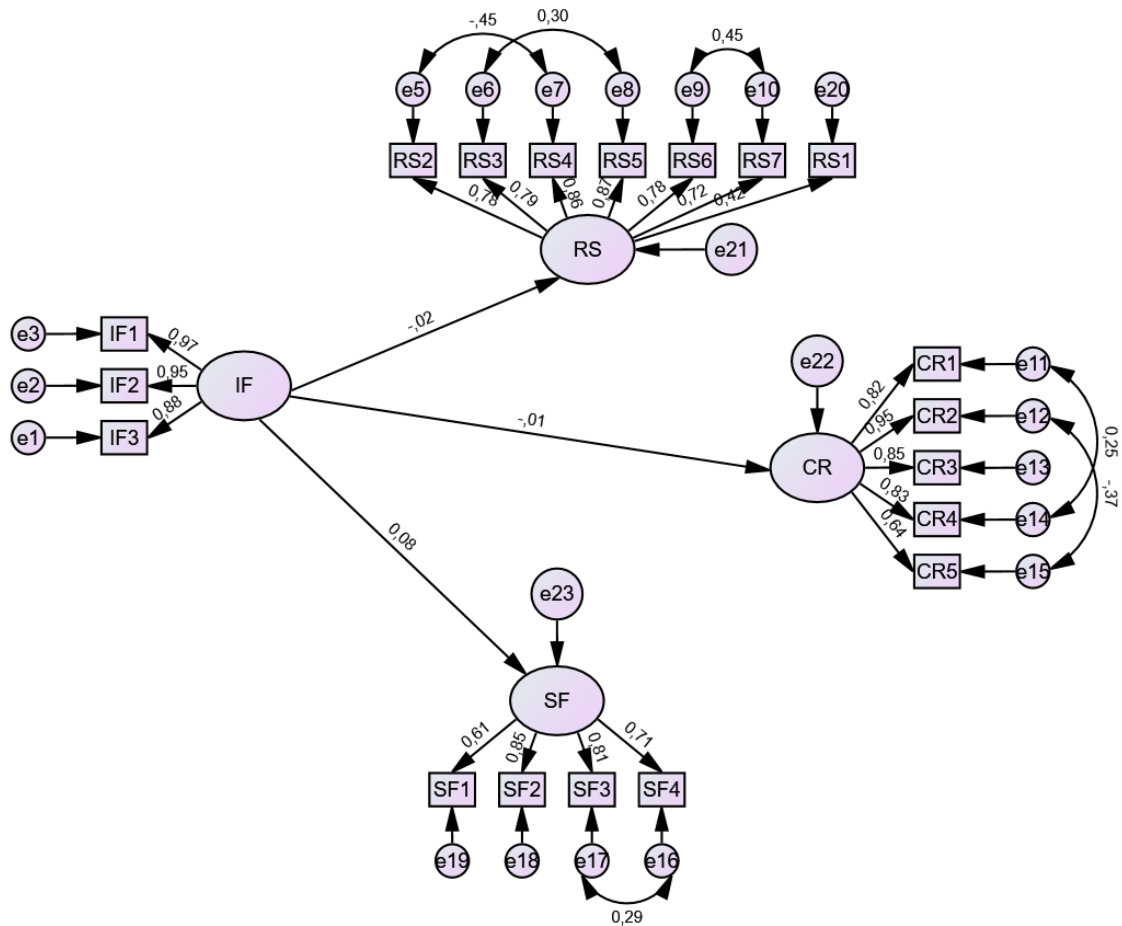


Figure 3: Path analysis

Having described the SEM technique for examining complex statistical relationships, the following Table 5 presents the path regression analysis of the SEM model.

Table 5: Path Regression Estimates of the measurement model

Hypotheses	Dependent variable (DV)	Independent Variable (IV)	Standardised coefficient β	S.E.	Critical Ratio. (CR)	P	Decision
H1	Routine seeking	<- Idealised influence	-0.016	0.089	-0.193	0.847	Not supported
H2	Cognitive rigidity	<- Idealised influence	-0.009	0.086	-1.112	0.910	Not supported
H3	Short term focus	<- Idealised influence	0.078	0.074	-0.921	0.357	Not supported

Idealised Influence and Routine Seeking

The standardised coefficient β of -0.016 suggests a negative relationship between idealised influence (the independent variable) and routine seeking (the dependent variable). However, this coefficient is small in magnitude. The standard error (S.E.) of 0.089 indicates the precision of the estimated coefficient. While the critical ratio (CR) of -0.193 is calculated by dividing the standardised coefficient by the standard error. It is below the threshold value of 1.96, indicating that the coefficient is not statistically significant. The p-value of 0.847 is higher than the conventional significance level of 0.05, further supporting the lack of statistical significance. The decision is that H1 is not supported, meaning there is insufficient evidence to conclude that there is a relationship between Idealised Influence and Routine Seeking.

Idealised Influence and Cognitive Rigidity

The standardised coefficient β of -0.009 in Table 5 suggests a negative relationship between idealised influence (the independent variable) and cognitive rigidity (the dependent variable). This coefficient is also small in magnitude. However, the standard error (S.E.) of 0.086 indicates the precision of the estimated coefficient. The critical ratio (CR) of -1.112 is below the threshold value of

1.96, indicating that the coefficient is not statistically significant. The p-value of 0.910 is higher than 0.05, providing further evidence that the relationship is not statistically significant. The decision is that H2 is not supported, indicating a lack of evidence for a relationship between idealised influence and cognitive rigidity.

Idealised Influence and Short-term Focus

The standardised coefficient β of 0.078 suggests a positive relationship between idealised influence (the independent variable) and short-term focus (the dependent variable). This coefficient is of moderate magnitude. The standard error (S.E.) of 0.074 indicates the precision of the estimated coefficient. However, the critical ratio (CR) of -0.921 is below the threshold value of 1.96, indicating that the coefficient is not statistically significant. The p-value of 0.357 is higher than 0.05, further supporting the lack of statistical significance. The decision is that H3 is not supported, suggesting that there is insufficient evidence to conclude a relationship between idealised influence and short-term focus.

Discussion

This study examines the relationship between idealised influence as a dimension of transformational leadership and employee resistance to change. It has several significant outcomes. Firstly, as a result of the analysis, respondents believed that leaders who possessed the idealised influence would be able to recognise their followers' talents and, as a result, feel heard and involved in any change process which helps to curb employee resistance to change. It has been confirmed by several related studies that leaders who possess idealised influence along with other transformational leadership style attributes contribute substantial benefits to an organisation (Guillory, 2023; Fei, 2022).

This study identified the significant relationships between idealised influence and change alleviation. Besides the role played by leaders who possessed the attribute of idealised influence, it was further discovered that it contributes to the building of trust and collaborative environment for the employees in the acceptance and commitment to changes introduced. In support of the argument, Nakamura (2023) indicates that leaders have a positive influence in preparing future leaders and facilitate change management implementations.

Leaders and managers can curb resistance to change amongst staff in the organisation. This is supported by Al-Ghazi (2019) who alludes that transformational leadership attributes have an effective impact on employee resistance to change. They prepare employees to cope with change implementations. This indicates a strong relationship between idealised influence and employee resistance to change (Al-Ghazi, 2019). Transformational leaders would seek to improve lives of their employees and encourage them to make better decisions. These leaders would also help build confidence and encourage individuals to make decisions, individually. This study has explored the mediating role of idealised influence as an attribute of transformational leadership style and how it enhances change management implementation and curbing resistance to change through the aspect of job performance effectiveness and commitment to change (Stephen et al., 2018; Malka, Soto, Inzlicht & Lelkes, 2014). This has been achieved through the hypotheses that idealised influence reduces routine seeking, emotional reaction and cognitive rigidity by exhibiting the appropriate transformational behaviours.

Another key outcome of this study is that workplace flexibility in implementing change management is a significant aspect among the employees towards their leaders. This flexibility helps employees with better organisation in both personal and social lives. As a result, more effective workers with a creative mind-set cooperate better with the leaders (Keifer, 2021). The results are coherent with assertions by Rice and Reed (2021) that employees who displayed greater job flexibility are more likely to respond when leaders encourage creativity and involvement of staff. Furthermore, this study has explored the mediating role of idealised influence. Idealised influence appeared to be significant in curbing employee resistance to change. Results from the study affirms the stated hypotheses (that is, hypothesis 1 to 4) in that the idealised influence has a significant relationship with employee resistance to change and can reduce employee resistance to change by curbing behaviours in relation to routine seeking, emotional reaction, short term focus and cognitive rigidity.

Conclusions

The majority of the variables for leadership and resistance to change management practices have significant relationships with effective organisational management. This implies the need for efficient leadership skill acquisition for the smooth implementation and operation of change management in organisations.

Implications

The study aligns with existing scholarly investigations in diverse ways. Leaders by means of their idealised influence have a significant impact on employees' resistance to change. Hence, more researchers could explore other individual dimensions of transformational leadership and their specific effects on employee resistance to change (BK Joo & Nam, 2019). This study has provided new aspects on the effective significance of transformational leadership from previous research. The effectiveness of idealised influence as a dimension of transformational leadership has also been tested. Rasul, Rogger and Williams (2021) indicates that clarity of responsibility plays a vital role in shaping the values among employees. This study provides an understanding of how to curb employee resistance to change through the core leadership dimension.

This study has many practical implications. Firstly, managers and leaders in organisations could support their subordinates or employees in change management acceptance and commitment to change implementations. Secondly, recognising the mediating role of idealised influence as a specific dimension of transformational leadership and its positive contributions, reduces employee resistance to change. According to Mutha and Srivastava (2023), targeted leadership development programmes should be focused on developing leaders' knowledge, skills and attitude to enhance the guidance of employees towards organisational goals, and most importantly, to render care and compassion to every employee in that organisation. Lastly, hiring professional staff in training the leaders to possess idealised influence as a leadership attribute is essential.

Limitations

The usefulness of the results is constrained by the limited sample size. However, the respondents were geographically dispersed within the eThekweni Region in KwaZulu-Natal and represented a wide range of automobile dealership organisations.

Future research

Based on the study results, further research should be focused on other transformational leadership dimensions. Future study should explore the significance of these leadership dimensions in curbing employee resistance to change in other sectors of the economy in South Africa as a whole.

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