

Reversing the Paradigm: Empirical Evidence of Followership in Shaping Transactional Leadership Style: The Mediating effect of Trust, Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)

Robina Akhtar^{1*}, Mohamad Nizam Nazarudin², Ghulam Muhammad Kundi³

¹Faculty of Psychology and Education, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Malaysia, <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9489-5225>

²Faculty of Psychology and Education, Universiti Malaysia Sabah, Malaysia, <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-5417-7731>

³College of Public Health and Health Informatics, Al-Bukayriyah, Qassim University, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

<https://orcid.org/0000-0003-3082-1611>

*¹alishba.daali@gmail.com

²mnizam@ums.edu.my

³g.muhammad@qu.edu.sa

ABSTRACT

The purpose of the current study was to investigate the role of followership on the transactional leadership style by changing the paradigm by integrating the effect of trust and leader-member exchange. The proposed hypotheses were tested in AMOS-SEM and SPSS. Quantitative method was used. Data was collected from 348 female PETs respondents from E&SD, KP Pakistan. The results indicated that followership has a positive and significant role upon all three dimensions of transactional leadership (contingent rewards, management by exception active and passive, whereas, trust and LMX has a significant mediating role between followers and transactional leaders. The study is carried out in context of the emerging economies so, results may not be generalized to other countries. This study empirically tested Khan et al., (2019) and Shamir (2007) "reversing the lens" perspective and extended the body of knowledge on social exchange theory.

Keywords

Followership, Trust, Leader-member Exchange, SET, Transactional Leadership, Female PETs.

Introduction

Research on the followership in shaping the leadership style is getting momentum across the management researchers in the last two decades in general and developing countries like Pakistan in particular. It opens new ways to study leadership and a leader's behavior from the follower's angle. Studies have been conducted to investigate the mediating effect of trust between followership dimensions and transformational leadership style, however, review of the literature points that still there is a dearth of research on the followership, leader-member exchange (LMX) and transactional leadership style. Likewise, previous studies used the trust in leadership as a mediator, however, leader-member exchange need to be tested to know the mediating role between followership and transactional leadership style. The originality of this study lies in how followers and their characteristics shape the transactional leadership style through the mediating effect of trust and leader-member exchange (LMX).

Kelley (2008) investigated the behavioral dimension of followership, and Meindl (1995) explored the relational aspect, while Sy (2010) examined the cognitive and DeRue and Ashford (2010) studies the constructionist aspect of the followership. All these studies discussed the followers' perspective concerning the leadership model. However, Shamir (2007) have excluded it from the leadership model, it is evident from his findings that leadership could not be analyzed without social phenomenon i.e. teamwork, cooperation, and coordination. In the last five decades, research on leadership mainly focused on the follower's motivation, and attitude as a behavioral product of the leader with leader-centric theory, and that captured the attention of researchers like Judge and Piccolo (2004). This was a major shift in leadership research. Yet, very limited studies could be found on the outcomes of leaders as a consequence behavior of the followers (Benson et al. 2016). Today, researchers like Carsten et al. (2018) are more inclined to investigate the leadership from the perspective of the followers that opened new vistas to identify leader and employee relation (Blair and Bligh,

2018). The relationship between followers and transactional leaders is based on negotiation and expectations, clarifying responsibilities, and receiving rewards on completion of tasks. Followers expect rewards from their leaders while transactional leaders identify the targets before their followers. Followers can play a significant role by supporting their transactional leaders to achieve targets. According to Kouzes and Posner (2011), follower's trust is a basic unit that holds organizations as a system, to reshape transactional leader's behavior, it is important to establish a trusting relationship between followers and leaders (Khan, Busari, Abdullah & Mughal, 2018). In addition to this relationship, leader-member exchange (LMX) plays a significant role in developing and establishing a relationship between followers and leaders. LMX helps both followers & leaders to have friendly social behavior which may lead to creativity, high morale of followers, and promote teamwork (Asgharian, Anvari, Ahmad, & Tehrani, (2015).

This research was conducted to study and examine the significant aspect of research on the leadership and to find the empirical evidence of followership in shaping the transactional leadership style, the mediating effect of the trust, and the leader-member exchange (LMX), the area of significance in leadership model which is presently ignored by the studies that how and to what extent the followership dimensions change the transactional behavior of the leadership, the level of followers' trust in leadership (TL) and leader-member exchange influence the projected relationship.

Theoretical Review and Hypothetical Development

This section gives an overview of the theoretical background based on which theoretical model was developed and hypotheses of the study were proposed.

Conceptualization and Role-based View of Leadership

Based on the work of Kelley (1992), researchers are following the notion that a follower can strengthen the leadership processes and their

performance. Kelley approach has two attributes i.e. active engagement (AE) and independent critical thinking (ICT). According to Kelley, the followers with high critical thinking give a positive criticism. They dare to disagree with the decision of the leader, and they avoid being a blind follower. Contrary to this view, Brumm and Drury (2013), Khan et al. (2019) have identified that followers who have high AE qualities could be active engagers and support to the leader.

The ideal followers have high engagement and critical thinking (Kelley, 1992, 2008). They are more helpful to provide substitute solutions, question the decisions of the leader, and bring changes. On the contrary, according to Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) and Kelley (1992, 2008), the followers' low level of engagement makes the followers passive. Carsten et al. (2018) gave an idea of proactive followers, according to them, this type of followers believe that they must follow their leader, and must act as copartners presenting their innovative and novel ideas and opinions in pointing out the problems and suggesting the way-out to effectively accomplish the goals. Likewise, Collinson (2006) and Lord and Brown (2004) discussed in their studies the role-based view of the followers i.e. styles, role orientation, followers' identities, characteristics, and theories. They further investigate that how the behavior and identities of the follower shape the attitude, behavior, and effectiveness of the leader. Similarly, Shamir (2007) discussed the leader-centric approaches, according to him, the role-based approach of followership emphasizes on how followers could influence the leaders' attitude, behavior, and outcomes. Shamir used characteristics, behavior, and styles as predictors, and styles, behavior and characteristics as criterion or moderators. Shamir's stance signifies the followers being the active agents that might affect the behavior of the leader. This implies that followers can play a critical role in the organizational hierarchy.

Transactional Leader's Attitude, Behavior, and Outcomes

Transactional leadership is widely studied in the theories and research on leadership in recent years (Khan, Abdullah, Busari, Mubushar & Khan,

2019). Even though studies viewed it as an integral part of the followers' needs. However, Burns (1978) argued that the action of the followers largely depends on the personality and approach of the leadership.

There is an assumption that transactional leaders can influence the followers more in contrast to the transformational leaders (Maroosis, 2008). The effective communication of the vision and selfless performance are its main motivators. Crossman (2018) and Uhl-Bien et al. (2014) argued that transactional leaders specify the targets before their followers and promise to offer rewards and benefits upon the accomplishment of the defined targets. This is the main strength of the transactional leadership in a leader centric perspective. Therefore, reversing the paradigm of followership research, it is imperative to realize how the influence of the followership dimensions replicated in the outcome of transactional leadership.

Several studies have been undertaken to investigate the role of transactional leadership however, it is critical to assess all the three constructs collectively. Moreover, studies assert that each dimension influences the response of the followers differently. It is reported by Deinert et al. (2015) that there is a need to analyze transactional leadership as an individual construct. Therefore, this research was undertaken to study the influence of the followership upon the transactional leadership to get a deeper understanding of the phenomenon under study.

Succinctly, Khan et al. (2019) have claimed that the significance effect of the followership on the behavior of the leadership could be studied through the lens of SET. The leader and follower association with regard to transactional leadership style provides a significant ground for the award of the contingent rewards to the followers (Antonakis & House, 2013). Therefore, it is appropriate to say that the relationship between reward and trust is a very complicated phenomenon as both parties perceive and interpret it differently. Followers perceive it for bonus or reward, simply implies, how it is used? This greatly influences the intentions of followers and their trust on a leader (Bligh, 2017).

The transactional leadership style has a positive significant relationship with trust, followership, and leader-member exchange (Asencio, 2016). Whereas, according to Oreg (2006) lack of trust in leadership results in affective, cognitive, and behavioral resistance. This leads to increase anxiety, frustration, and anger among followers, and here resistance and question start. Neves and Caetano (2009) found it as a vital factor to transform the attitude and behavior of the transactional leaders.

LMX and Trust

Trust of followers on the leader in an organization is defined by the Academy of Management Review as one's "motivation to be susceptible" (Mayer, et al, 1995). According to McAllister (1995) trust is the name of "an individual's belief in, and his response to accept and act based on the words, actions and decisions made by a leader" (p. 25). Graen & Uhl-Bien (1995) examined trust and LMX in association with follower-leadership. According to them, follower-leader relationship depends on the quality of trust, if the quality of trust is high, then the relationship will be positive, stronger, and vice versa.

There are three kinds of trust i.e. calculus-based trust, knowledge-based trust, and identification-based trust. The calculus-based trust (CBT), identification-based trust (IBT), and knowledge-based trust (KBT) develop a sustainable relationship. Researchers have reported that LMX quality increases with the increase in the level of trust (Uhl-Bien et al. 2000). Further, the social exchange theory (SET) views the relationship between trust and LMX and argues that followers expect more rewards, better working relationships, a friendly attitude, and behavior from the supervisor besides greater assistance. Therefore, the rewards in response to contribution and efforts made by the follower strengthen or weaken the LMX. If leaders play down the sentiments of followers at this stage, then followers may start questioning and making reasons, that further develop resistance and agitational attitude among the followers, lead toward diminishing the subordinate's trust, commitment, and loyalty.

Hypotheses and Framework Development

Social exchange theory explained the positive role of managers and organizations in developing positive attitudes of followers. In the current study, researchers have reversed the paradigm/lens of social exchange theory. This study has investigated the social exchange theory from a follower's perspective. The self-interest concept of SET links the rewards and benefits with the performance and drives the followers to act or behave in a specific way. Blau (1964), Khan et al. (2019) and Gould-Williams & Davies (2005) have reported that fairness, trust, and justice enhances the relationship between follower and the leader. According to Stafford et al. (2014), SET helps both parties to have a good relationship. Northouse (2013) supported and added that if a high-quality relationship is based on trust, it removes communications barriers and allows the followers and leaders to accept the challenges and ongoing demands of the organizations. However, from followership perspective, the followers only control the transactional leader's behavior through theory perceptions and attitude (Khan et al., 2019).

The below schematic diagram of parallel mediation model based the theory illustrates the relationship and influence of the predictor (followership) over the criterion variables (transactional leadership). It also highlights the role mediators (trust and leader-member exchange) between followership and transactional leadership.

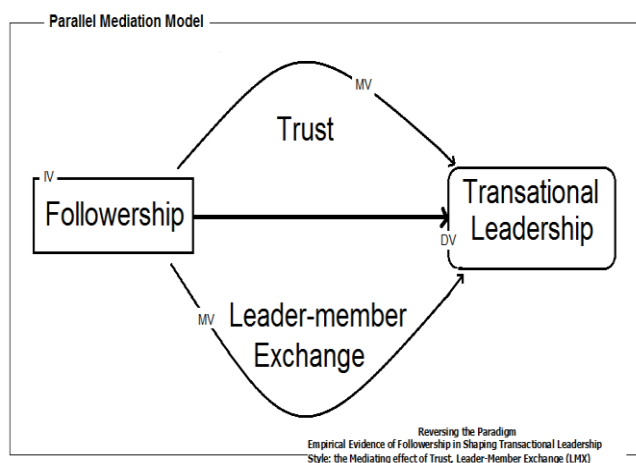


Figure 1. Schematic Diagram of Theoretical Framework

Followership, Trust, leader-member exchange and Transactional Leadership

The leaders and followers are the two major components of human created organizations, who play significant role in the success of otherwise failure of any organization including educational institutions. The intimate and better working relations between these two human factors of the organization yield varying results i.e. positive as well as negative. The relationship between followers and transactional leaders is based on expectations, negotiation, clarifying roles, and giving and receiving rewards and recognition on completion of tasks (Khan, Busari, Abdullah & Mughal, 2018). Leaders specify the roles and targets before followers and followers expect rewards and recognition from leaders (khan et al., 2019). In this exchange relationship, trust, and leader-member exchange (LMX) plays an important role between followers and leaders. Therefore, management and employees must develop a trust-based relationship (Khan et al., 2018). A follower plays a significant role in modifying the transactional leader's behavior. Active followers go beyond the expectations and produce high-quality work. According to Judge and Piccolo (2004), transactional leaders adopt consultative style which is based on follower's needs and desires. In this way, followers and leaders build confidence in each other and put efforts to reach the destination.

According to Busari, Khan Abdullah, and Mughal (2019), followers trust their leader on a condition that their benefits and interest should not be compromised. Trust is an important component in leader-member association. In social exchange, there is no prior agreement between two parties (Shamir et al., 2018). If leaders want their followers to act beyond expectations, they have to win the confidence of followers (Bligh, 2017). Therefore, it is concluded from the above discussion that trust and leader-member exchange are important elements in follower-leader relationship. In past studies, Khan et al. (2018) reported the positive and significant relationship between the active engagement of the follower along with their independent and critical thinking, besides the trust on the transactional leadership.

Likewise, Khan et al., (2019) also reported a positive and significant relationship between trust, leadership styles, and followership dimensions. Trust plays both mediating as well as moderating roles between follower-leader relationships (Busari et al., 2019). A study conducted by Shamir et al (2018) have found that followers have a critical role in reshaping the behavior of leadership. Earlier, Khan et al. (2019) used followers as predictor and trust as a mediator, in the same way, the current study has used followership as the predictor, trust as mediator and transactional leadership as criterion variables.

In addition, Khan et al. (2019) suggested to use leader-member exchange (LMX) as a mediator in future studies, this gap has been filled in the current study, and this study has contributed to the body of knowledge by adding LMX as a mediator in social exchange theory.

Based on the above discussion, and schematic diagram of the theoretical framework of the study, we propose the following hypotheses:

H_{1a}: There is a significant relationship between predictors, mediators, and criterion.

H_{1b}: Followership has a positive effect on trust.

H_{1c}: Followership has a positive effect on leader-member exchange.

H_{1d}: Trust has a positive effect on LMX.

H_{1e}: Followership has a positive effect on the transactional leadership style.

H_{1f}: Trust has a positive effect on the transactional leadership style

H_{1g}: LMX significantly influence the transactional leadership style.

H_{2a}: Trust mediates between followership and LMX

H_{2b}: LMX mediated between trust and transactional leadership style.

H_{2c}: Trust and LMX are the significant mediators of followership and transactional leadership style.

Methods

Quantitative methods are appropriate for testing theories and analyzing relationships among variables (Antonakis et al., 2013; Creswell and Creswell, 2013). This study aimed to find the mediating role of trust and leader-member

exchange on the relationship between predicting variable (followership) and the criterion variables (transactional leadership) based on social exchange theory. The study, therefore used quantitative, deductive, cross-sectional survey.

Participants

Due to rapid managerial and technological changes, the education sector is also passing through transformation. Today's organizations are more complicated and twisting in terms of responsiveness and use of digital technologies in teaching-learning process inter alia the management of the educational institutions. The diverse culture of the education sector attracts the researchers and academicians to conduct studies. Previous studies were based on leadership (Imtiaz et al., 2015) and one study was conducted in the telecom sector (Khan et al., 2019) has used followership dimensions as a predictor and transformational leadership behavior as criterion variables. Based on the above-mentioned reason, it is evident that no study has been conducted to explain the importance of followers in shaping the behavior of transactional leadership in the elementary and secondary education. The population of the study was female teachers of the health and physical education from Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province Pakistan. A total of 400 questionnaires were distributed and 348 completed questionnaires were used in the analysis through convenient random sampling. The population of study was 3661 female PETs Using Krejcie and Morgan (1970) table, sample size was determined as 348. Questionnaires was composed in google forms, due to COVID19, there were movement restrictions, therefore, researcher was unable to administer the questionnaire personally as was initially planned. Then, the strategy was reviewed and changed to mailed survey, finally, the questionnaires were sent to sample respondents through email as well as WhatsApp group of the Physical Education Teachers Officers Association. Though initial response was not much encouraging, however, reminder and use of official channel have increased the response rate.

Results of respondent's personal information revealed that the majority of the respondents were

female physical education teachers i.e. 184 (52.87%), followed by male counterparts i.e. 164 (47.12%). Regarding education, majority of the respondents participated in the survey were diploma holders i.e. 200 (57.47%), followed by those respondents holding bachelor degrees 105 (30.17%), 36 (10.34%) were having master degrees, while only 7 (2.011%) respondents were having doctoral degrees in elementary and education sector. Further analysis of the results indicated that majority of respondents belong to the age group of 20-30 years, i.e. 128 (36.78%) followed by 41-50 years of age group, i.e. 90 (25.86%), 75 respondents belong to 31-40 years of age group (21.55%) and only 55 respondents belong to 51-60 years of age group (15.80%). Concerning experience, most of the participants were having 1-5 years of experience (44.82%), followed by a group having 6-10 years of experience, i.e. 64 (18.39%), 60 respondents were having 11-15 years of experience i.e. (17.24%), while only 39 respondents were having experience of 16-20 years, (11.20%), and 29 respondents were having more than 20 years of experience i.e. (8.33%). Respondents were also asked about their income. 123 respondents had income range between 20-30 thousand PKR i.e. (35.34%), while 77 respondents had income range between 31-40 thousand PKR, i.e. (22.12%), 67 participants were having income between 41-50 thousand PK, i.e. (19.25%), 50 teacher's income was in the range of 51-60 thousand PKR, i.e. (14.36%), only 31 (8.90%) had income more than 60 thousand PKR.

Measures

Bass and Avolio (2003) multifactor leadership questionnaire (MLQ) were used by Khan et al. (2019) on a five-point Likert scale. 1=strongly disagree to 5= strongly agree. Similarly, the trust instrument was developed by Gillespie (2003). It has five items and it was measured on a five-point Likert scale. Trust scale was also used and validated by Khan et al. (2018; 2019). In the same way, the instrument for followership was originally developed by Kelley (1992) but for the current study, it was adopted from Khan et al. (2019).

Data Analysis

The design of the study and schematic diagram suggested the correlation, regression, and

mediation analysis. AMOS software is the first-generation software in structural equation modeling, and it is the most appropriate software for analyzing the complex model, therefore, SPSS and AMOS-SEM were employed to analyze the data. At the first stage, researchers have developed the measurement model for the purpose to know the internal consistency of scales through reliability analysis, and convergent and discriminant validity of the instrument. In the second stage, the structural model was developed to test hypotheses, and bootstrapping was run.

Results

To test the hypotheses of the study, a structural model was run in AMOS-SEM. Hair et al., (2017) gave the below criteria of indices for model fitness.

Table-1: Evaluating the Model Fit

Fit Measures			
Test	Value	Test	Value
GFI	>.90	CFI	>.90
RMSEA	<.08	NFI	>.90
RFI	>.90	IFI	>.90
TLI	>.90	ChiSq/df	<.50

The below given figure-2 explains the results for the structural model for four latent variables and their constructs. All the indices shown in the figure-2 fully meet the standard criteria of Hair et al (2017) given in above table-1.

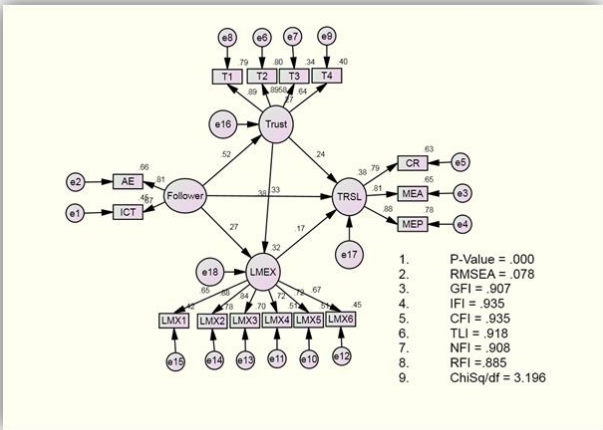


Figure-2: Structural Model

Measurement Model

Hair et al. (2017) provided threshold values for assessing the measurement model. Factor loadings >0.50, average variance extracted >0.50, composite reliability>0.70, Cronbach alpha >0.70.

It is concluded that values presented in table-1 fully meet the standard threshold criteria thus, it establishes the convergent validity and reliability of the instrument of the study. Furthermore, the discriminant validity of the instrument was also checked by Fornell-Larcker criterion and the discriminant validity was established as could be seen in the following table-2.

Table-2: Measurement Model

Variables	Attributes	CFA Loadings	CR	AVE	F-Larcker	Cronbach Alpha
Follower ship	AE	0.81	0.8	0.7		
	ICT	0.87	28	07	0.840	0.703
TRSL	CR	0.79				
	MEA	0.81	0.8	0.6	0.827	0.866
Trust	MEP	0.88	67	85		
	T1	0.89				
	T2	0.89	0.8	0.5		
	T3	0.58	44	83	0.763	0.827
LMX	T4	0.64				
	LMX1	0.65				
	LMX2	0.88				
	LMX3	0.84	0.8	0.5		
	LMX4	0.72	85	65	0.751	0.882
	LMX5	0.72				
	LMX6	0.67				

Note: F-Larcker, Fornell-Larcker criterion for discriminant validity, TRSL, Transactional Leadership Style, T, trust, LMX, leader-member exchange

Bivariate correlation was used to test H1_a. Table-3 shows mean and the standard deviation of the variables used in the study. The highest mean was scored by the trust M=4.08, S.D=0.672, followed by LMX M= 4.037, S.D=0.673. Followership and transactional leadership styles mean score was low M= 3.93, S.D=0.605, M=3.715, S.D=0.668. Trust and LMX exhibit their important role in follower-leader relationship. The relationship among all the variables used in this study is found positive and significant. This implies that when followers have high active engagement and high independent critical thinking, then, their association with transactional leaders will be positive, similarly, trust and LMX have a positive and significant relationship with followership and transactional leadership style. It means that a high level of trust and LMX result in the high-quality relationship between followers and leaders as could be observed from the results given in the table 3. Therefore, our proposed H1_a is substantiated and accepted.

Table-3: Mean, Standard Deviation & Correlation

	Mean	S.D	Follower	Trust	LMX	TRSL
Followers	3.93	0.605	1			
Trust	4.08	0.672	.425**	1		
LMX	4.037	0.673	.403**	.533**	1	
TRSL	3.715	0.668	.418**	.506**	.423**	1

Notes: LMX, Leader-member exchange, TRSL, Transactional Leadership Style, Follower, Followership**. Intercorrelation at 0.01 level of significance (2-tailed).

Direct & Indirect (Mediation analysis) effect hypotheses testing

The structural model was developed for hypotheses the testing in AMOS-SEM (see Figure 2). Table-4 shows the results of the direct and indirect effects. The value of R² in the model was 0.38 (38%) show the predicting power of the independent variable i.e. followership on the criterion variables i.e. transactional leadership. It was found that H_{1b} followership has positive effect upon trust ($\beta=0.722$, $t=7.348$, $p<0.01$), for H_{1c}, ($\beta=0.335$, $t=3.747$, $p<0.01$) for H_{1d}, ($\beta=0.330$, $t=5.565$, $p<0.01$). Likewise, for H_{1e}, ($\beta=0.404$, $t=4.312$, $p<0.01$), in the same way for H_{1f} ($\beta=0.206$, $t=3.460$, $p<0.01$) and for H_{1g}, ($\beta=0.169$, $t=2.609$, $p<0.01$) respectively. The beta (β) coefficient also called the standardized regression coefficient shows a unique contribution of predictors towards an outcome. For example, for H_{1b} beta (β) =0.722 means that a one-unit increase in predictor variable 72.2% increase is possible in the criterion variable.

For H_{1c}, a one-unit increase in followership can increase by 33.5% in LMX. Similarly, for (β_{1d}) =0.330 indicates that 1-unit change in trust 33% change is possible in LMX. For, (β_{1e})=0.404 explain the one-unit change in followership could bring a 40.4% change in transactional leadership style, and for (β_{1f} , β_{1g})=0.206, 0.169, indicated that one-unit change in trust and LMX 20.6% and 16.9% change is possible in transactional leadership style. However, followership exhibits the highest beta (β) values while the lowest beta (β) value is shown by LMX.

Table-4: Direct & Indirect Effects Hypotheses Testing

Direct	B	S.E	t	Indirect	β	LBC	UBC
FLS→Trust	0.72	0.09	7.34	FLS→Trust→LMX	0.23	0.12	0.33
FLS→LMX	0.33	0.09	3.74	Trust→LMX→TRSL	0.05	0.01	0.13

Trust→LMX	0.33	0.05	5.56	FLS→Trust→ LMX→TRSL	0.2 4	0.13	0.27
FLS→TRSL	0.40	0.09	4.31				
Trust→TRSL	0.20	0.06	3.46				
LMX→TRSL	0.16	0.06	2.60				

Notes: LMX, Leader-member exchange, TRSL, Transactional Leadership Style (FLS) Level of significance for all value was 0.00

Discussions

This study was aimed to determine the influence of followership through trust and leader-member exchange on the transactional leadership style. All factor loadings of the scale met the minimum threshold value recommended by Hair et al., (2017). Likewise, the AVE, CR, Fornell-Larcker for convergent and discriminant validity were all above the standard values. This establishes the internal consistency, reliability, and validity of our scales. The significance of the leader and follower could be easily recognized in the current organizational landscape. Yet, the relationship between the leader and follower is required to be ensured to keep the resistance at minimum (Uhl-Bien, 2011: 75-108). It implies that the leader should have to show willingness to lead, while, on other hand, follower reciprocate the same behavior i.e. willingness to obey and follow. However, till now, this willingness lacks in both parties to guarantee symbiosis. The way a leader leads and the path the follower follows, plays instrumental role in the leader-follower relationship. This necessitates the development of synergistic relationship between leader and the follower.

The results point that followership and its dimensions positively and significantly predict transactional leadership behavior. This confirms Shamir (2007) and Khan et al., (2019) “reversing the lens” perception about followership. It implies that followership has a significant role in shaping the behavior of leadership. Based on the results, this study highlights that followership has a powerful influence on trust followed by transactional leadership, though the role of LMX is not much significant. It is hereby noted that due to non-charismatic leadership behavior, though, it is not the behavioral trait however, it is related to the response of followers. The transactional

leaders specify the targets before followers and link them with rewards. This boosts the level of motivation among employees thereby they perform their best to their potentials, hence, result in greater contribution and enhanced performance. The findings of the study are consistent with Khan et al (2018), according to them, trust is a significant mediator between the followers and the transactional leadership. In the present study, trust partially mediated the relationship between followership dimensions (active engagement and independent critical thinking) and transactional leadership (contingent rewards, management by exception active and passive).

Additionally, the current study used LMX as a mediator (leader-member exchange) to investigate the importance of the LMX between the followership and the transactional leadership. The findings revealed that LMX plays a significant role in the follower-leader relationship. LMX partially mediated the follower-leader relationship. The results of this mediation suggest that the strong and intimate bond of relationship between the follower-leader result into better understanding and sound working relationship among the follower-leader thus, the task assigned to a follower by the leader bear sweet fruits. Similarly, if promised rewards are not materialized on time, it might affect the follower’s level of trust, thereby the level of commitment and job satisfaction also decreases. Lack of interest in work, buck-passing and political play occurs and thus lead to decreased performance of the individual as well as the corporate level in the organization.

This study reversed the lens using social exchange theory to investigate the empirical evidence of followership in shaping the transactional leadership style. The study concludes that followers with high active engagement and independent critical thinking play an active role in shaping transactional leaders’ behavior. In the early studies, researcher have thoroughly explored and investigated the impact of followers upon the transformational leadership style with the mediating impact of trust, they reported that followers significantly transform the transformational leader’s behavior through mediating role of trust (Khan et al., 2019).

Conclusion

It is concluded that followership can change a leader's behavior. Trust play an important role in this exchanged relationship (Shamir et al., 2018). It is also concluded that followers do not only engage themselves for rewards but can provide feedback to leaders. The current study pointed out the grey areas through a review of the previous studies on social exchange theory and found the by ignoring of followers' dimension. Finally, it is concluded that the followership role is participative and active not passive (Grant et al., 2011; Khan et al., 2019; Busari et al., 2019; Gupta et al., 2020; Scandura et al., 2008).

Theoretical Contributions

Previous studies on Social exchange theory gave much attention to leaders and limited attention was paid to followership and its dimensions. Findings of the current research supported the notion of Shamir (2007) and Khan et al. (2019) that the follower's role is active, participative, and not passive. Followers support their leaders by establishing a strong relationship with them and help them achieve their targets on time. A strong theoretical contribution of the study is that followers are not passive, and they are not at receiving end always, rather they play their active role by participating in organizations affairs, thus, leaders took the breath of relaxation, pay attention to more significant aspects of management the organization to materialize maximum of the organizational objectives.

Practical Contributions

In many organizations, much emphasis is given to leadership by ignoring the follower's perspective. This study highlighted the positive and active role of followers. They are considered as active, participative, and not passive. Elementary and secondary education must pay attention to their followers and their development so, that they may be able to make a better relationship with their leadership (Carsten et al., 2018). Organizations by focusing on followers might get positive support from their followers for their leadership and helps in creating a supportive and friendly culture in the organizations.

Limitations and Future Directions

This study has collected data from secondary and elementary education, future studies may use different samples from other sectors such as higher education institutions, pharmaceutical industries, sugar, SMEs, and other manufacturing industries. In the same way, data may be collected from services industries such as banking and insurance. The current study has added trust and LMX as mediators but still, there is space for adding more mediators such as cynical behavior, stress, anxiety, and burnout.

Acknowledgement

The study gratefully acknowledge the financial support of Universiti Malaysia Sabah.

Declaration of Interest

The authors declared there is no clash of interest

Ethical Considerations

No human specimen/ tissue is used. Permission was obtained before administering the questionnaires for data collection.

References

- [1] Akhtar, R. Nizam, M. Nazarudin, Kundi, G.M. (2021). Empirical Evidence on the Mediating Role of Job Satisfaction, Commitment, Trust in Leadership, Intention to Leave between Leadership Styles, Performance Appraisal, and Physical Education Teacher's Performance. *Psychology and Education*, 58(4), 729-738.
- [2] Akhtar, R., & Nazarudin. M. N. (2020). Synthesizing the literature of leadership, job satisfaction, & trust in leadership. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism, & Leisure*, 9(2), 1-16.
- [3] Albejaidi, F., Kundi, G.M., & Mughal, Y.H. (2020). Decision making, leadership styles, & leadership effectiveness: An AMOS-SEM approach. *African Journal of Hospitality, Tourism, & Leisure*, 9(1), 1-15.
- [4] Antonakis, J., & House, R.J. (2013). The full-range leadership theory: The way forward, Transformational and

- Charismatic Leadership: The Road Ahead 10th Anniversary Edition, *Monographs in Leadership and Management*, 5: Emerald Group Publishing, Pp. 3-33. Blunkett, D. (1998, July 24). Cash for competence. Times Educational Supplement, p. 15.
- [5] Asencio H. (2016). Leadership, Trust, and organizational performance in the public sector. *Transylvanian Review of Administrative Sciences*. 12(Si).
- [6] Asgharian, R., Anvari, R., Ahmad, U. N. U. B., & Tehrani, A. M. (2015). The Mediating Effect of Job Satisfaction on the Relationship between Workplace Friendships and Turnover Intention in Iran Hotel Industry. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(6 S2): 304.
- [7] Bass, B.M., Avolio, B.J., Jung, D.I., & Berson, Y. (2003). Predicting unit performance by assessing transformational and transactional leadership. *Journal of Applied Psychology*. 88(2): 207-218.
- [8] Benson, A.J., Hardy, J., & Eys, M. (2016). Contextualizing leaders' interpretations of proactive followership. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*. 37(7): 949-966.
- [9] Blair, B.A., & Bligh, M.C. (2018). Looking for leadership in all the wrong places: The impact of culture on proactive followership and follower dissent. *Journal of Social Issues*. 74(1): 129-143.
- [10] Blau, P.M. (1964). *Exchange and Power in Social Life*. Wiley: New York, NY.
- [11] Bligh, M.C. (2017). Leadership and trust, in: Marques, J. and Dhiman, S. (Eds), *Leadership Today*, Springer Texts in Business and Economics, Springer, Cham.
- [12] Brumm, C.A., & Drury, S. (2013). Leadership that empowers how strategic planning relates to followership. *Engineering Management Journal*. 25(4): 17-32.
- [13] Burns, J.M. (1978). *Leadership*. Harper and Row Publishers: New York, NY.
- [14] Busari, A.H., Khan, S.N., Abdullah, S.M., & Mughal, Y.H (2019). Transformational leadership style, followership, and factors of employees' reactions towards organizational change. *Journal of Asia Business Studies*. Special Issue. DOI 10.1108/JABS-03-2018-0083
- [15] Carsten, M.K., Uhl-Bien, M., & Huang, L. (2018). Leader perceptions and motivation as outcomes of followership role orientation and behavior. *Leadership*. 14(6): 731-756.
- [16] Collinson, D. (2006). Rethinking followership: A post-structuralist analysis of follower identities. *The Leadership Quarterly*. 17(2): 179-189.
- [17] Creswell, J.W., & Creswell, J.D. (2013). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*. Sage Publications: Thousand Oaks.
- [18] Crossman, J.E. (2018). Followership: A spiritual perspective and the implications for organizational practice, in: Dhiman, S., Roberts, G., and Crossman, J. (Eds), *The Palgrave Handbook of Workplace Spirituality and Fulfillment*, Palgrave Macmillan: Cham.
- [19] Deinert, A., Homan, A.C., Boer, D., Voelpel, S.C., & Gutermann, D. (2015). Transformational leadership sub-dimensions and their link to leaders' personality and performance. *The Leadership Quarterly*. 26(6): 1095-1120.
- [20] DeRue, D.S., & Ashford, S.J. (2010). Who will lead and who will follow? A social process of leadership identity construction in organizations. *Academy of Management Review*. 35(4): 627-647.
- [21] Gillespie, N. (2003). Measuring trust in working relationships: The behavioral trust inventory. Academy of Management Conference, Seattle, WA.
- [22] Gould-Williams, J., & Davies, F. (2005). Using social exchange theory to predict the effects of HRM practice on employee outcomes: An analysis of public sector workers. *Public Management Review*. 7(1): 1-24.
- [23] Graen, G.B., & Uhl-Bien, M. (1995). Relationship-based approach to leadership: Development of leader-member exchange (LMX) theory of leadership over 25 years: applying a multi-

- level multi-domain perspective. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 6(2), 219-247.
- [24] Grant, A.M., Gino, F., & Hofmann, D.A. (2011). Reversing the extraverted leadership advantage: The role of employee pro-activity. *Academy of Management Journal*, 54(3), 528-550.
- [25] Gupta, M., Bhal, K.T., & Ansari, M.A. (2020). Relational age and leader-member exchange: The mediating role of perceived trust. *Journal of Indian Business Research*. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JIBR-05-2018-0144>
- [26] Hair, J.; Hollingsworth, C.L.; Randolph, A.B., & Chong, A.Y.L. (2017). An updated and expanded assessment of PLS-SEM in information systems research. *Industrial Management Data System*, 117, 442–458.
- [27] Imtiaz, S.Y., Khan, M.A., & Shakir, M. (2015). Telecom sector of Pakistan: Potential, challenges, and business opportunities. *Telematics and Informatics*, 32(2), 254-258.
- [28] Judge, T.A., & Piccolo, R.F. (2004). Transformational and transactional leadership: A meta-analytic test of their relative validity. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89(5), 755-768.
- [29] Kelley, R. (2008). Rethinking followership, in: Riggio, R., Chaleff, I., and Lipman-Blumen, J. (Eds), *The Art of Followership*. Doubleday: New York, NY, Pp, 5-16.
- [30] Kelley, R.E. (1992). *The Power of Followership*. Doubleday: New York, NY.
- [31] Khan, S., Abdullah, S Busari, A.H., Mubushar, M., & Khan I. U (2019). Reversing the lens: The role of followership dimensions in shaping transformational leadership behavior, the mediating role of trust in leadership. *Leadership and Organizational Development Journal*, 41(1), 1-18.
- [32] Khan, S., Busari, A., Abdullah, S., & Mughal, Y. (2018). Followership moderation between the relationship of transactional leadership style and employees' reactions towards organizational change. *Polish Journal of Management Studies*, 17(1), 131-143.
- [33] Kouzes J.M., & Posner B.Z. (2011). *Credibility: How leaders gain and lose it, why people demand it?* Vol. 244, John Wiley & Sons. Accessed: <https://epdf.pub/credibility-how-leaders-gain-and-lose-it-why-people-demand-it.html>
- [34] Krejcie, R. V., and Morgan, D. W. 1970. Determining Sample Size for Research Activities. *Educational and Psychological Measurement*, 30, 607–610.
- [35] Lord, R. G., & Brown, D.J. (2004). *Leadership Processes and Follower Self-Identity*. Erlbaum: Mahwah, NJ.
- [36] Maroosis, J. (2008). Leadership: A partnership in reciprocal following, in: Riggio, R.E., Chaleff, I. & Lipman-Blumen, J. (Eds), *The Art of Followership: How Great Followers Create Great Leaders and Organizations*, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco, CA, pp. 17-24.
- [37] Mayer, R. C., Davis, J. H., & Schoorman, F. D. (1995). An integrative model of organizational trust. *Academy of Management Review*, 20, 709-734.
- [38] McAllister, D. J. (1995). Affective and cognition-based trust as foundations for interpersonal cooperation in organizations. *Academy of Management Journal*, 38, 24-59.
- [39] Neves, P. & Caetano, A. (2009). Commitment to change: Contributions to trust in the supervisor and work outcomes. *Group and Organization Management*, 34(6), 623-644.
- [40] Northouse, P. (2013). *Leadership, Theory and Practice*. 6th Ed., Sage Publications: London.
- [41] Oreg, S. (2006). Personality, context, and resistance to organizational change. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 15(1).
- [42] Scandura, Terri, & Pellegrini, Ekin (2008). Trust and Leader-Member Exchange: A Closer Look at Relational Vulnerability. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies* - J Leader Organ Stud. 15. 101-110. [10.1177/1548051808320986](https://doi.org/10.1177/1548051808320986).

- [43] Shamir, B. (2007). From passive recipients to active co-producers: followers' roles in the leadership process, Follower-centered perspectives on leadership: A tribute to the memory of James R. Meindl, pp, 9-39.
- [44] Shamir, B., Arthur, M., & House, R. (2018). The rhetoric of charismatic leadership: A theoretical extension, a case study, and implications for research, in Katz, I., Eilam-Shamir, G., Kark, R., & Berson, Y. (Eds), *Leadership now: Reflections on the Legacy of Boas Shamir. Monographs in Leadership and Management*. 9, Emerald Publishing, pp. 31-49, available at: <https://doi.org/10.1108/S1479-357120180000009016>
- [45] Stafford, L., David, P., & McPherson, S. (2014). Sanctity of marriage and marital quality. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 31(1): 54-70.
- [46] Sy, T. (2010). What do you think of followers? Examining the content, structure, and consequences of implicit followership theories. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 113(2), 73-84.
- [47] Uhl-Bien M. (2011). Relational Leadership Theory: Exploring the Social Processes of Leadership and Organizing. In: Werhane P., Painter-Morland M. (Eds) *Leadership, Gender, and Organization. Issues in Business Ethics*, 27, 75-108. Springer, Dordrecht.
- [48] Uhl-Bien, M., Riggio, R.E., Lowe, K.B., & Carsten, M.K. (2014). Followership theory: A review and research agenda. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 25(1), 83-104.