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Strategies for Strengthening Leader–Follower Relationships for Improving Organizational Performance

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Walden University
2022

Abstract

Strategies for Strengthening Leader–Follower Relationships for Improving

Organizational Performance

by

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MS, Walden University, 2013

MEd, National Open University of Nigeria, 2013

HND, Institute of Management and Technology, Enugu, Nigeria, 2003

Doctoral Study Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Business Administration

Walden University

June 2022

Abstract

Poor-quality leader-follower relationships reduce organizational performance. Organizational leaders are concerned about poor performance as it can negatively impact sustainability. Grounded in the leader-member exchange theory, the purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore strategies leaders in oil-servicing organizations use to improve organizational performance. Data were collected from semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with 14 leaders from an oil-servicing organization and a review of company documents and the organizations' websites. Through thematic analysis, five themes emerged: Leadership styles, motivation, mentoring and coaching, communication methods, and follower engagement. A key recommendation is for business leaders to influence followers to improve organizational performance by understanding the followers' strengths, weaknesses, and behavioral patterns. The implications for positive social change include the potential to increase the number of employees hired from the region, build a stronger community, and allow the individuals a greater means to give back to and support their local community to sustain the economy. A sustainable economy contributes to a positive social change by adding value, dignity, and development to individuals, communities, organizations, and cultures.

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Dedication

I dedicate this project to God Almighty my source of inspiration, wisdom, knowledge, and understanding on whose wings only have I soared.

I also dedicate this work and give special thanks to my husband Augustine and my son Ifeanyi for being my best cheerleaders and supporters throughout the entire doctorate program.

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Section 1: Foundation of the Study

One of the factors that influences organizational performance is the leader–follower relationship (Men & Stacks, 2013; Shaikh et al., 2019). A high-quality leader–follower relationship may produce follower behaviors that enhance organizational performance, but low-quality leader–follower relationships may lower organizational performance (Breevaart et al., 2015). Organizational leaders need to develop the appropriate skills to planned strategies on how to inspire followers to enhance organizational performance (Christensen et al., 2017). The skills and competency of the leaders enable the followers to be more productive (Men & Stacks, 2013). Leaders who are understanding, dependable, honest, and concerned about the welfare of the followers tend to have a high-quality leader–follower relationships (Engelbrecht et al., 2017a).

Background of the Study

For an organization to be effective, the leader and followers must have a strong and positive relationship that allows the dyad relationship to influence the performance of the leader and follower (Morrison & Cooper-Thomas, 2015). Effective use of the workforce provides the leaders and followers room for a positive outcome (Rothmann et al., 2002). Effective and performing leaders who understand the strategies that help leaders to have a positive relationship with their employees end up having employees who contribute to organizational effectiveness through sharing of information and ideas (Niemeyer & Cavazotte, 2016). Employees experiencing leader–follower relationships act on the leader's influence and organization to meet the exact goals and objectives of the organization (Burns, 1978). However, the relationship between the set of people that

make up the workforce of an organization influences the strategies the leaders use to influence and strengthen the support they get from the followers, especially in a practical organizational environment (Parry, 1998). In this study, I examined the characteristics of the leader–follower relationship by looking into the strategies for strengthening leader–follower relationships, which can improve organizational performance.

Problem Statement

Poor-quality leader–follower relationships reduce organizational performance (Quade et al., 2020, p. 1159). About 79% of U.S. leaders reported that discontent followers can weaken productivity, whereas 86% agreed that followers with meaningful relationships increase performance (HBR Analytical Services, 2020, p. 1). The general business problem was that a poor-quality leader–follower relationships have a negative influence on organizational performance. The specific business problem was that some leaders in oil-servicing organizations lack strategies to strengthen a leader–follower relationship to improve organizational performance.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that leaders in oil-servicing organizations use to strengthen leader–follower relationships and improve organizational performance. The targeted population comprised 14 organizational leaders from an oil-servicing company located in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The selected leaders successfully implemented and developed strategies that strengthened leader–follower relationships to improve organizational performance. The implication for positive social change is that organizational leaders with high-quality leader–follower

relationships tend to have stronger organizational performance, which may allow the organization to increase the number of employees hired from the region, building a stronger community, and allowing the individuals a greater means to give back to and support their local community.

<div align="center">**Nature of Study**</div>

There are three research methodologies: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method (Saunders et al., 2019). The qualitative research method was used for this study. Qualitative research is an approach used to describe aspects of reality, focusing on the dynamics of social relations, whereas the quantitative method focuses on examining the characteristics of the relationships of variables (Queirós et al., 2017). A mixed research method is an approach that requires using both qualitative and quantitative methods in the same study (Saunders et al., 2019). The reason I used the qualitative method was that I sought to explore the experiences and views of respondents as related to the problem of the study. The quantitative approach was not suitable because my study was not measuring the relationship between variables. The mixed method could not be used for this study because the study was not multistage research, and I was not examining numbers but leader opinions and thoughts to conclude my research.

The research designs for a qualitative study include case study, phenomenology, ethnography, and narrative (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). I used the single case study design for this study. A case study design is used to analyze events and decisions by collecting data from various sources (Yin, 2018). The phenomenological study describes the fundamental nature of a lived personal experience; ethnography is used to interpret

the pattern of a group of people, cultures, habits, and communal differences; and the narrative study is an account of individual experiences through persona life stories (Yin, 2018). Phenomenology, ethnography, and narrative were not used for this study because phenomenology concentrates on individual experiences, ethnography emphasizes the shared experiences within a certain culture, and narrative focuses on the story of individual life (Renjith et al., 2021). I chose the case study design because my study dealt with the decisions of the participants within the context of the leader–follower relationship on organizational performance. This design helped to analyze a real-world problem and identify leadership behaviors (Joubert & Feldman, 2017; Renjith et al., 2021; Yin, 2018).

Research Question

What strategies do leaders in oil-servicing organizations use to develop and strengthen leader–follower relationships for improving organizational performance?

Interview Questions

1. What strategies do you use to develop and strengthen leader–follower relationships to improve organizational performance?

2. What were the major challenges you encountered while implementing the strategies to strengthen leader–follower relationships within your organization?

3. How did you address the key challenges to implementing the strategies to develop and strengthen leader–follower relationships in your organization?

4. What strategies do you as a leader use to assist your followers to develop and improve follower attitudes to work that will strengthen or lower the quality of

leader–follower relationships?

5.   What strategies do you use to communicate good or bad news to your followers?

6.   What strategies do you use to encourage and enable followers to increase productivity for improved organizational performance?

7.   What strategies do you use to identify a follower with a personal problem that reduces individual productivity?

8.   What strategies do you use to improve your direct reports' performance?

9.   What additional information would you want to share concerning the strategies that you use to develop and strengthen leader–follower relationships for improving organizational performance?

Conceptual Framework

The leader–member exchange (LMX) theory was the conceptual framework for this study. The LMX theory is an important theory that deals with the leader–follower relationship (Northouse, 2021). The LMX theory was developed from the works of Dansereau et al. (1975) for understanding and improving two-way relationships between leaders and their followers. The highlight of the LMX theory is on the leader establishing dependable, passionate, and respected relationships with some of their followers and not with other followers (Bauer & Erdogan, 2016). The LMX theory is concerned about the dyadic relationship between the leaders and followers and can be connected to the leading influence on employee retention, motivation, and the significance to organizational performance (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Leaders' relationships differ among

followers and followers equally view their leaders from different perspectives (Shyns & Day, 2010). The LMX theory entails an exclusive relationship, an agreement between the leader and individual follower, and valuing the leader–follower relationships for the leader to achieve the goal of the organization (Patnaik & Dubey, 2019). The LMX theory has therefore been used as a typical groundwork to study leader–follower relationships (Saleh et al., 2015).

Leadership characteristics, follower characteristics, and interpersonal relationships make up the LMX theory and can be used to evaluate followers' competence, positive activity, and locus of control (Dulebohn et al., 2012). LMX theory is focused on the relationship between the leaders and followers of an organization and is connected to the increase in productivity and organizational performance (Gerstner & Day, 1997). The LMX theory is associated with measuring the leader–follower relationship across the organization to determine the influence of the relationships in promoting organizational performance (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The LMX theory was used in this study as a guide to investigate and evaluate the reciprocating influence of the leader–follower on the general performance of the organization.

Operational Definitions

Follower: A follower is a subordinate who has less power, mandate, and control and is expected to follow the rules and act in agreement with the required standards of behavior (Kellerman, 2007).

Leader: A leader is a person who achieves targets and goals through motivating, directing, inspiring, and monitoring the actions of their subordinates into being loyal to

increase organizational performance (Alkahtani, 2016).

Leader–follower relationship: Leader–follower relationships are a bond between two or more people working together while alternating the roles and responsibilities of leadership and followership in an intricate way (Foster, 2010).

Leader–member exchange (LMX) theory: The LMX theory portrays how successful leadership relationships develop among leaders and followers to allow the leaders to influence the followers for an increase in organizational outcomes (Uhl-Bien, 2006).

Organization: An organization is a system that uses cooperative activities and planning to achieve a goal-focused process (Barnard, 1968).

Organizational performance: Organizational performance is the extent to which an organization attains its desired goals without straining the employee (Henri, 2004).

Assumptions, Limitations, and Delimitations

Assumptions

Assumptions are assertions and expectations based on the researcher's perception and opinion without the support of solid evidence to support the belief (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). The first assumption for this study was that using interviewing as an approach for data collection was the most appropriate means to get significant data to answer the research question. The second assumption was that the research participants would respond to the interview questions honestly and provide information reflecting their experiences about strategies to strengthen leader–follower relationships. Third, I assumed the participants could understand the interview questions and convey their

experiences effectively.

Limitations

Limitations are weaknesses, circumstances, or influences that cannot be controlled by the researcher that place constraints on the methodology and conclusions of the research (Holloway & Galvin, 2017). This study was limited to the study of a single group, which poses the limitation of external validity (Singh, 2014). Other limitations of this study include the sample size, which is small given that data for this qualitative case study were confined to only managers of an oil-servicing company in the southern part of Nigeria and the focus of this study was on the target population.

Delimitations

Delimitations are attributes that limit the scope of a research study such as the sample size, geographical location, or setting in which the study takes place (Ruzzene, 2012). Within the scope of this study were the views, opinions, and thoughts of managers from an oil-servicing company in the southern part of Nigeria. These delimiting factors were boundaries that represented the population that I chose for this study to explore the problem and answer the research question. Since the research entails a limited population, the findings of the study may be restricted.

Significance of the Study

This study may assist the leaders of organizations to understand the strategies that can be used to strengthen leader–follower relationships and improve organizational performance. The attitude and actions of the leader affect the attitudes and actions of the follower (Ruiz, et al., 2011). When the leaders focus on creating a high-quality leader–

follower relationship, the organization benefits by increasing employee efficiency and organizational performance (Gerstner & Day, 1997). This study may lead the leaders to understand that to strengthen a leader–follower relationship, the employees need to fully participate in achieving the goals by giving them room to contribute and by recognizing their efforts. A high-quality leader–follower relationship is achieved if the leaders understand the need to manage the followers through innovation, organizational learning, and productivity (Holmes et al., 2013).

Demonstrating a high-quality leader–follower relationship enables and improves the efficiency or performance of any organization (Ruvolo et al., 2004). Employees experiencing a high-quality leader–follower relationship act on the influence and management of the leader to fulfill the objectives of the organization (Burns, 1978). The result of this study may allow the leaders and followers to be aware of their social responsibilities and understand that trust, motivation, and appreciation help build a high-quality leader–follower relationship for improved organizational performance. The study may provide business leaders with approaches that may enable the followers to be motivated through job satisfaction, access to relevant resources, and experience to perform activities to improve organizational performance. The community could also benefit from the leaders if the community becomes part of the organization through the intake of employees who meet the demand of their customers and are active in their community. If more committed and experienced hands are employed, there will be increased customer satisfaction.

A Review of Professional and Academic Literature

This literature review was a review of previous research on the LMX, leader–follower relationship, and these relationships' influence on organization outcomes. The problem statement, purpose statement, and research question were developed and aligned with previous studies and the LMX theory. The purpose of this study was to explore the strategies that leaders in oil-servicing organizations use to sustain a high-quality leader–follower relationship to improve organizational performance.

I reviewed peer-reviewed journal articles and books published between 1964 and 2021. I searched through the Walden University library to discover appropriate and relevant databases about the topic of study. I searched Thoreau multi-database, Google Scholar, ERIC, JSTOR, Journal Storage, EBSCOhost Online, ABI/INFORM, ProQuest, Business Source Complete, SAGE, ResearchGate, Academia, and Emerald. Within these databases, I used the following key search terms: *LMX theory* and *organizational performance*, *leader–follower relationships* and *employee performance*, *follower performance* and *LMX*, *leadership* and *employee performance*, *leadership strategies*, *organizational performance*, *employee satisfaction*, and *LMX impact on organization performance*. The total number of sources used is 206;81% are published within the last 5 years and 95% are peer reviewed.

The analysis and synthesis of the literature include the following topics (a) the LMX theory, (b) the leader–follower relationship, (c) leader–follower relationship quality and outcome (follower performance, follower engagement, and job satisfaction), (d) the leadership strategies (e) organizational performance, and (f) leader–follower relationship

impact on organization performance. The conceptual framework for this study was the

LMX theory developed from the works of Dansereau et al. (1975). The theory and

alternative theories will be described in the following sections.

Leader–Member Exchange Theory

Dansereau et al. (1975) developed the LMX theory to reflect the variation in the

quality of the relationship between leaders and their followers. The social exchange

theory, which replaced the role theory, provided the foundation for the LMX theory.

Based on its foundation of replacing these theories, the LMX extends across the role-

taking phase, the role-making phase, and the role-routinization phase (Scandura & Graen,

1987). The LMX theory evolved through four stages: vertical dyad linkage, LMX,

leadership making, and team making (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

The three foundations that the LMX is established on are leader characteristics,

follower characteristics, and interpersonal relationships (Dulebohn et al., 2012). The

leader takes the leading role in establishing an LMX relationship, which might be

affected by supposed likeness, integration, self-promotion, assertiveness, and leader trust

(Dulebohn et al., 2012). Additionally, while the leaders assess the followers using factors

like agreeableness, competence, conscientiousness, locus of control, neuroticism,

extraversion, openness, and positive, and negative affectivity (Clarke, 2016; Dulebohn et

al., 2012; Inanc, 2018), the leaders are evaluated based on contingent reward behavior,

transformational leadership, supervisor's expectation of followers, agreeableness, and

extraversion (Bedi et al., 2016; Dulebohn et al., 2012). The leadership pattern develops

from the involvement of relationships and the reciprocated needs built as the followers

accomplish their designated roles and tasks (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). In other words, LMX involves the behavior of the leader and the followers' thoughts in response to a situation (Qi et al., 2019a). Trust, reciprocity, and clarity are responsible for employee resilience (Kakkar, 2019). Teams with lower LMX interactive exchanges outcomes promote higher team performance and social cohesion which in turn fosters an interconnective and productive working environment (Manata, 2020).

Because the LMX theory focuses on the dyadic relationship that is based on the leader and the follower, it has been used by researchers as a framework to understand the quality of leader–follower relationships (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Saleh et al., 2015). The LMX theory is also used by leaders to show that leaders develop different relationships depending on their followers, some being stronger, more passionate, and more considerate (Bauer & Erdogan, 2016; Wang et al., 2016). The theory thus represents a guide for leaders who want to establish and maintain a relationship with the dedicated and trustworthy followers (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

With the LMX theory, leaders differentiate between quality relationships with their followers (Martin et al., 2018). Leaders establish a low-quality or high-quality relationship among different followers (Martin et al., 2018). High-quality LMX is established when leaders value and support followers in the workplace (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Ross et al., 2017), which positively influences performance (Audenaert et al., 2017; Kim & Koo, 2017; Nguyen, 2020). LMX is a means to encourage the follower to accomplish exceptional performance (Hooi, 2016) and overcome complexity (Nguyen, 2020). LMX allows the followers to mold their attitude to work (Nguyen, 2020;

Supriyanto et al., 2021). When leaders promote high-quality LMX, they tend to view issues from multiple perspectives before reconciling contradictions (Han & Bai, 2020).

The benefits LMX can bring to an organization are overall organizational citizenship behavior, affective commitment, normative commitment, general job satisfaction, satisfaction with supervisor, satisfaction with pay, procedural justice, distributive justice, empowerment, perceptions of politics, role ambiguity, and role conflict (Dulebohn et al., 2012; Liang, et al., 2018; Supriyanto et al., 2020; Widodoa & Wiardib, 2019). LMX increases employee job satisfaction and performance results (Siddique et al., 2020), which are determining factors of increased follower performance (Widodoa & Wiardib, 2019). LMX theory can lead to a positive impact on the goals and objectives of an organization when fostering high-quality relationships (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) and establishing an encouraging atmosphere to access and share ideas (Weijden et al., 2015). High-quality LMX is linked with employee performance and engagement (He et al., 2021; Min-Seong & Dong-Woo, 2017; Reb et al., 2019) in addition to more innovation (Ruzgar, 2018). Thus, LMX can be used to improve overall organization performance (Hussain & Shahzad, 2018).

Alternative Theories to LMX

Many other leadership theories focus on the impact of the leaders' behavior on the followers (Northouse, 2021). Other leadership theories tend to balance the leader's skill and ability to affect subordinate satisfaction and performance. These theories can be used for exploring and understanding what it means to be a leader and how to be a leader for effective performance. The other theories discussed here are the style theories of

leadership, strength-based theory, transactional and transformational theories, and servant leadership theory.

The Style Theories of Leadership

The style theories of leadership stress the leaders' behavior and actions. The theories assume that the leader combines the task and relationship behaviors to achieve leaderships effectiveness (McCaffery, 2004; Northouse, 2021). Task-oriented behavior enables the follower to achieve the goal and objective of the organization, and relationship-oriented behavior allows the followers to feel calm and relaxed with themselves and others in all conditions will attaining success (McCaffery, 2004). For the style theory of leadership, no one style is effective for all conditions (Northouse, 2021). The style theory suggests that the leadership style depends on the circumstances surrounding the task, the nature of the task, the follower, and the organizational culture. The style engaged by a leader at a particular time affects the enthusiasm, productivity, and success of the followers and organizational performance.

Strength-Based Theory

Strengths-based leadership theory is focused on the constant development of the strengths of the followers to establish competence, efficiency, and organizational performance through healthy and encouraging workplace cultures (Rath & Conchie, 2008). Despite the challenges faced by leaders, the leaders need to consider how they relate with the followers to be strong and established through engagement, inspiration, and understanding the individual follower strength (Crutchfield et al., 2018). The three principles of the strengths-based leadership theory are that effective leaders invest in their

followers' strengths, effective leaders build well-rounded teams out of followers who are not, and effective leaders understand the needs of followers (Rath & Conchie, 2008). The strengths-based leadership theory aims to improve organizational success through the individual top and constructive performance (Hodges & Clifton, 2004). The strength-based leadership theory encourages leaders to engage followers according to their potential and strength creating a solid and sustainable culture.

Transactional and Transformational Theories

Burns (1978) presented a leadership theory that focuses on the conduct of leaders as transactional or transformational. The transactional leadership theory uses the reward and punishment system on performance to supervise the roles and tasks of the followers. Transactional leaders are concerned about the task and outcome of the followers as regards the organizational culture (Bass, 1985). The transactional leader relationship with the follower is built on specified performance, descriptive tasks, exchanging contracts, and providing appreciation and rewards to achieve the anticipated outcome from the follower (Bass, 1985; Vito et al., 2014). Though the transactional leadership theory is the foundation of the leader–follower relationship, the theory does not encourage followers to contribute productively to the organizational performance and should not be used in situations where the followers' contributions are needed (Bass, 1985). In contrast, transformational leaders are related to employee performance, employee commitment, satisfaction, individual and group performance, organizational effectiveness, and employee-customer orientation (Budur & Demir, 2019). The transformational leadership theory links the leaders and followers considering the follower's interests, values,

motivations, and inspirations (Bass & Avolio, 1994; Tajeddini et al., 2017). Thus,

transformational theory supports the followers by acknowledging their values and

contributing to inspiring the follower's vision, whereas the transactional theory generates

relationship exchange by exchanging something in return for the task the follower is

expected to accomplish.

Servant Leadership Theory

Servant leaders are the most effective and result-oriented leaders as they are

committed to embracing teamwork, trust, understanding, empathy, and ethics while

working with others (Kauppila et al., 2021). The servant leadership theory enables the

leaders to focus on the needs and development of the followers while the followers

exchange by engagement, increased performance, and commitment (Hoch et al., 2018).

The servant-leader becomes a role model to the followers contributing to the growth,

development, and behavioral outcome of the follower (Greenleaf, 1977), inspiring the

followers to put up the servant-oriented attitude and behavior to work (Eva et al., 2019).

The servant-leader identifies the needs of the followers and tends to meet these needs to

motivate the followers to put in their best while viewing their leadership role as helpers to

the followers' growth. Thus, the servant leadership theory promotes positive change in

the organization (Kauppila et al., 2021).

Rationale for Framework

LMX has been used to describe how the quality of the leader–follower

relationship can influence the mindset and performances of the leaders and followers in

an organization, which can affect productivity, job satisfaction, and leader satisfaction

(Scandura & Graen, 1984). The LMX theory requires an exclusive relationship between the leader and followers to achieve the goal of the organization (Patnaik & Dubey, 2019). The LMX theory assumes that the quality of the leader–follower relationship is the key to understanding how leaders influence followers to be productive (Gerstner & Day, 1997). If the followers are productive the performance of the organization will improve. Exploratory foundations of LMX theory are important in many areas of organization, especially in performance; therefore, I chose the LMX theory for this study.

Leader–Follower Relationship

The leader–follower relationship is important for any organization to be successful (Salas-Vallina, 2020). If the relationship between the leader and follower is unpleasant, then the organizational value and culture might suffer. In contrast, empowered leaders and followers who have built a quality relationship could enable organizations to improve. Based on the LMX theory, leaders need to focus on developing and sustaining the leader–follower relationship as well as increasing followers' engagement and mindfulness (Bunjak & Černe, 2018) and decreasing turnover intention and subsequent costs of recruitment (Rabenu et al., 2019). In a successful quality relationship, the leaders and followers need to contribute to achieving the organizational goals (Nimani, 2020) by demonstrating acceptable and appropriate behaviors such as two-way communication, reinforcement, and decision-making (Qi et al., 2019b; Zaim et al., 2021). Leader integrity further supports and strengthens the leader–follower relationship, thereby increasing job satisfaction and follower motivation to freely voice their opinion (Engelbrecht et al., 2017b; Huang et al., 2021). High LMX increases the

positive moods of subordinates, improves creative performance, and stimulates intrinsic motivation for improvement (Xie et al., 2019). Leaders who encourage and allow a favorable knowledge-sharing environment also reduce corruption among the followers (Chatterjee et al., 2021).

Many researchers have examined leader–follower relationships and the factors that affect them. For instance, research has indicated that the quality of LMX is related to employee hostility, which can affect employee performance such as customer interactions (Medler-Liraz & Kark, 2011). Leader's communication style and individual concern toward subordinates' personal, social, and work life plays a significant role in shaping employee behaviors like taking extra roles (Muhammad & Muhammad, 2017). The leader–follower relationship is also strengthened by work structure, team dynamics, and frequent communication by leaders (Walthall & Dent, 2016). Further, followers' perceptions of their leaders' theoretical and practical skills, leader–follower personal characteristics, depth of relationship, and time are also factors that influence the follower's trust in their leaders (Norman et al., 2019). Establishing a high-quality LMX relationship depends on the social relationship between the followers at work, the type of social relationships, and the characteristic of these relationships (Regts et al., 2019). Therefore, leaders must consider the situation and conditions of their followers when developing high-quality LMX relationships (Regts et al., 2019). Additionally, if organizations provide role clarification to leaders, leaders can work on improving LMX relationships and reduce turnover intention (Kuvaas & Buch, 2019).

Unethical behaviors in leadership are one of the various problems being faced

within the organizational environment (Warren & Shaw, 2021). Some unethical behaviors practiced by leaders include absenteeism, indiscreet information sharing, disregard for the dignity of persons, abuses of power, displays of favoritism, prioritizing personal gain (Sam, 2021) overburdening followers, and chasing egocentric goals (Almeida et al., 2021). Additionally, there can be LMX discrimination as part of abusive supervision (Mackey et al., 2020). Other unethical leader behaviors that may affect organizational outcomes include one-way communication, control of power, insensitivity to others, an unrealistic assessment of the environment, manipulative communication, and pseudo-transformational behaviors (Blair et al., 2017). Building a quality LMX is disrupted by unethical behaviors. Whether positive or negative, leaders play a vital role in the leader–follower relationship to influence organizational performance. For employees, there is a need for satisfaction and investment in LMX to get a high-quality LMX; when both the employer and employee have low dyadic LMX disagreement, both parties are dissatisfied and not devoted to the relationship (Loignon et al., 2019).

The Leader in a Leader–Follower Relationship

The characteristics of the leader in the leader–follower relationships involve the practice of exchanging feelings and behaviors with the followers for the reciprocated benefit and the reciprocated exchange of influence. The leaders' influence upon followers can increase the followers' shortcomings or increase follower strength. Leaders who motivate followers are aware of where the followers stand out and where to either build additional skills or where to share power with employees who have stronger skills in areas others are not responsive to. Leaders who do not care about the emotions of their

employees end up making them hostile to customers and fellow employees leading to less productivity.

Having effective and capable leaders who motivate the follower constantly tends to have great productivity. The LMX theory explains the effect of the leader on the follower and the organization. A leader directs, controls, and supervises followers to handle tasks, assignments, and jobs by focusing on laid down rules, procedures, and guidelines that bring about the success of the organization. A competent and skilled leader guides the organization and directs the followers to conduct themselves into influencing the performance of an organizational (Kindarto et al., 2020; Nam & Park, 2019; Ullah et al., 2021). Leaders can influence the design, establishment, and sustenance of the organizational culture and can lead to the destruction of the organization (Roque et al., 2020). Leaders practicing good behaviors provide support and encouragement for the follower to live and practice the core values, of the organization to bring out the best performance (Cissna & Schockman, 2020). Leaders are linked to the building of quality relationships with their followers (Lee et al., 2019) and organizational success through leader trust and knowledge sharing (Bhatti et al., 2021). This implies that the honest and principled leader could successfully inspire and encourage the follower (Ko et al., 2018) to be more productive (Magombo-Bwanali, 2019). The strategies that leaders can use to succeed are respect, responsibility, fairness, honesty, courage, and kindness (Littman & Littman, 2017).

Extremely knowledgeable and professional leaders successfully supervise follower performance through guidance based on the leaders' specific areas of expertise

(Byun et al., 2017). Having effective and capable leaders who motivate the follower

constantly tends to have organizations with greater efficiency. Leaders who are

committed to supporting a positive work environment develop strong ties (Weijden et al.,

2015), and leaders who strategically sustain high-quality leader–follower relationships

(Pucher et al., 2017) tend to promote greater follower commitment and achieve improved

organizational performance. The leader significantly influences the followers by

exhibiting the following: willpower, honesty, innovation, open-mindedness, principled,

compassion, coordination, and motivation to the followers which aid improved

organizational performance (Anninos, 2018).

Leaders who support their workers and help them to deal with work pressures

build strong, resilient employees who impact positively on organizational performance. A

leader influences the followers' performance and mindsets by promoting a moral

environment that encourages cognizance and personal development (Liu et al., 2018).

Self-actualized leaders influence follower performance by encouraging feedback and

self-examination (Lyubovnikova et al., 2017). Leaders who model follower behaviors,

respect others and make decisions based on organizational values and ethics enhance

organizational performance (Hensel & Visser, 2018). Through coaching and mentoring

leaders can also build confidence and perform followers (Woo, 2017), and through

communication inspire and motivate the followers to aim toward improved organizational

performance (Jiang et al., 2018). In addition, communicating and exchanging information

with subordinates in a positive relational atmosphere is part of the leader's responsibility.

A leader who has confidence in his or her ability to carry out necessary leadership

behaviors, such as delegating, making decisions, and motivating others is more likely to be successful in the sense of competence and effective communication.

The key features of leader success are as follows: (a) establishing objectives and goals, (b) being authentic and accountable, (c) encouraging independence and being open, (d) establishing a high-quality leader–follower relationship, (e) accepting and respecting other's opinions, and (f) support and encourage follower development (Ali & Anwar, 2021b; Laub, 2018). Leaders are charged with the responsibilities of driving the performance of each follower working with them and working around difficult situations. Therefore, the leader should understand the situation of things at a particular point and take advantage of the opportunity to support the followers to work hard to improve the performance of the organization. Leaders are developed by the quality of the leader–follower relationship which enables followers to remain committed to the organization and willingly support others to improve organizational performance (Polizzi et al., 2019). Leaders are developed through engaging, motivating, and inspiring the followers to achieve improved organizational performance. A constructive way to know a developed and successful leader is by leader assessment this will be discussed in the next paragraph.

Leader assessment permits the leader to understand their ability, skills, and areas that need growth. Leader assessment allows the leader to understand the follower's experiences, proficiency, temperament, genuineness, and approach to improve performance (Bellack, 2018). The leaders' attitudes and behaviors that are adopted by the employees lead to sustainable and improved organizational performance (Matzler et al., 2013). The leaders' characteristics that enable improved performance are persistence,

honesty, respect, courtesy, and the ability to communicate effectively (Eich, 2017). The

leader's state of mind, engagement, commitment, and attitude to work positively

influences employee engagement which in turn promotes positive organizational

outcomes (Gutermann et al., 2017). A fervent leader is someone who can inspire,

encourage, manage, and organize the followers to perform while adjusting to changes

within and outside the organization (Hasib et al., 2020).

Passionate leaders are fully engaged and committed to achieving their goals while

helping others achieve theirs. These leaders elevate the followers to impact positively on

productivity and ensure employee commitment to the success of the organization.

Likewise, an overbearing leader negatively influences followers' job satisfaction and

performance (Siddique et al., 2020). The leaders are responsible to build environments

that inspire members to achieve specific organizational goals that ensure improved

organizational performance (Nguyen et al., 2020). Leaders that are committed and

motivated by the success of the followers stimulate the followers to evaluate their

performances to improve organizational performance (Haider et al., 2019). Leaders who

are concerned about supporting a high-quality relationship with their followers improve

the performance of the organization (Aggarwal et al., 2020; van Dam et al., 2021)

through a competitive system. Leaders should understand that supposed competitive

systems might only be beneficial if they develop a good leader–follower relationship.

The Follower in a Leader–Follower Relationship

Followers are the mainstay of an organization (Rodriguez & Walters, 2017).

Followers value their leaders when they display a high level of self-confidence in the

knowledge, skills, and abilities associated with leading others. The value followers have for their leaders, in turn, increases the quality of the leader–follower relationship. Norman et al. (2019) discovered that in the follower's opinions, leaders' skills and ability, leader–follower personal characteristics, depth of relationship, and time are the key factors that influence the follower's trust in their leaders. The followers are influenced by their leaders to be self-confident, hopeful, and strengthened to work for improved organizational performance (Chen et al., 2017). For followers to trust and collaborate to achieve organizational goals, they must be confident, positive, compassionate, and tolerant (Salas-Vallina, 2020). Shen (2019) maintained that the follower's actions, behavior, and relationship with their leader support and influence the quality of the LMX relationship which leads to improved organizational performance. Indeed, leaders need the support of their followers to be productive.

When followers are supported by their leader, they tend to be more productive, this productivity is increased with the quality of the relationship between the leader and the follower. A follower who experiences a high-quality leader–follower relationship tends to push forward the leader's work plan even in a complex situation to be productive (Hasib et al., 2020). The followers are important in leadership because they are the support needed for the leader to perform and are often considered the future leaders (Suda, 2013).

The factors that increase follower productivity for improved organizational performance, include matching the followers with the appropriate leaders (Atatsi et al., 2020; Li et al., 2019), the follower's trust is influenced by the leaders' knowledge and

competence, personalities, depth of relationship, and sequential relations (Norman et al., 2019), followers understanding of the leader (Jyoti & Bhau, 2015; Ruzgar, 2018), abiding by the rules of the leader (Chen et al., 2017) and open communication which enables the follower to value the leader especially when the leader aligns their words with their actions (Gatling et al., 2017). Followers who have passionate supportive leaders are particularly noticeable to influencers of overall productivity and ensure commitment to the success of the organization. Leaders who help the followers to deal with work pressures build strong followers who trust the leaders and are committed to improving the organizational performance. The follower is influenced by the leader's actions to put more effort into work to increase the effective promotion of organizational performance.

Leader–Follower Relationship Quality and Follower Outcome

The quality of the leader–follower relationship influences the employee's reaction to job-role and the well-being of the employee. Organizational leaders who maintain their position and develop a high-quality relationship with their followers can contribute to the growth and development of the organization. This relationship can influence the actions and behaviors of the employee towards performing tasks that are not part of their prescribed job description.

Burns (1978) suggested that employees experiencing a high-quality leader–follower relationship act on the influence and management of the leader to fulfill the objectives of the organization. Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) opined that leader should develop high-quality LMX relationships with the employees, instead of having discriminated relationships among the followers as portrayed in the vertical dyad linkage

method. Balancing the social and professional aspects of the leader–follower relationship depends on consistency, stability, and individual differences (Schyns & Day, 2010). Several researchers have examined the factors that influence follower behavior and concluded that a high-quality leader–follower relationship influences employee engagement, responsibilities, opinions, values, morals, and standards (Hu et al., 2018) and enhances follower engagement and commitment to the organization and in turn increase organizational performance (Min-Seong & Dong-Woo, 2017). In addition, the leader–follower relationship is influenced by the follower's commitment, trust, respect, and loyalty, the leader's perception of the follower during and after an interview (Munshi & Haque, 2017).

Followers are motivated and encouraged to build high-quality LMX relationships with their leaders because the members of this relationship enjoy positive features such as trust, liking, and a favorable position towards each other. A high-quality leader–follower relationship reinforces the organizational culture by building trust as well as sharing information, resources, rewards, loyalty, and openness (Chernyak-Hai & Rabenu, 2018). The follower and team performance improve with an increase in the quality of leader–follower relationships (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). High-quality leader–follower relationships boost trust, respect, commitment, and loyalty, which leads to improved follower work performance and productivity (Radstaak & Hennes, 2017) and tend to make the followers eager and enthusiastic to reciprocate with the leader because they value the relationship (Lee et al., 2019). The ability of a leader to efficiently complete an assigned task is a defining factor of the quality of the leader–follower relationship (Byun

et al., 2017). To build a high-quality leader–follower relationship, leaders will need to involve the followers' decision-making process (Yoerger, et al., 2015). Further, followers who are involved in the decision-making process end up being good leaders.

A high-quality leader–follower relationship is built when leaders allow followers to lead another follower in the same team (Hoch, et al., 2018). According to Qi et al. (2019a), researchers view high-quality LMX in two ways: first as when followers are supported psychologically, passionately, and materially by the leaders, and secondly when the followers integrate organizational membership and role status into their traits. Qi et al. (2019b), believed that a high-quality leader–follower relationship helps to sustain meaningful connections between the follower and the organization thereby improving organizational performance. Tarim, (2018) proved that the quality of LMX affects follower commitment and performance. High-quality leader–follower relationships enhance high productivity and employee commitment to the organization and in turn increase organizational performance (Fan & Han, 2018). Specifically, followers who have exceptional relationships with their leaders employ positive changes to the way they impact their job (task, relational, and cognitive crafting) for increased organizational performance (Yang, 2020).

Several researchers that investigated the factors that influenced follower behavior, concluded that a high-quality leader–follower relationship influences follower engagement, responsibilities, opinions, values, morals, and standards (Hu et al., 2018) and commitment to the organization and in turn increase organizational performance (Min-Seong & Dong-Woo, 2017). The characteristics of the high-quality leader–follower

relationship are that the followers experience preferences from the leader, quality access to the leader, amplified communique, and high-performance feedback (Northouse, 2021). Jyoti and Bhau (2015) opined that the LMX quality is characterized by the level of trust, interaction, support, and rewards, this strengthens the leader–follower relationship through leader–follower understanding and a good working relationship that stimulates the follower's capability to work proficiently and eventually increases job performance.

High-quality LMX is portrayed by reciprocated responsibility, reverence, and commitment (Medler-Liraz & Kark, 2011). Audenaert et al. (2019) maintained that employees are more likely to create and execute new ideas that will improve organizational performance if they experience high-quality leader–follower relationships. Terpstra-Tong et al. (2020) suggested that leaders who consider the joint and specific alignments and dispositions of their followers tend to build high-quality leader–follower relationships with the followers. The followers in a high-quality leader–follower relationship are involved in the change process of the organization more than those in a low-quality relationship (van Dam et al., 2021). A high-quality leader–follower relationship is linked to employee engagement (Gupta & Sharma, 2018) and decreases resistance in the relationship while increasing a positive attitude to work (Salas-Vallina, 2020).

LMX suggests that a follower that experiences a low-quality leader–follower relationship needs a change of leader to perform better (Northouse, 2021). Low-quality LMX is linked to employee antagonism and intimidation which negatively influences employee performance but can be decreased by high-quality leader–follower

relationships resulting in improved organizational performance (Medler-Liraz & Kark, 2011). Jawahar and Schreurs (2018) argued that leader tenor affects the quality of the relationship, and a low-quality leader–follower relationship weakens employee efficacy and encourages production abnormality and ineffective job performance. Leaders who tend to neglect the capacities, performances, views and values of the followers establish low-quality leader–follower relationships with the followers (Terpstra-Tong et al., 2020).

Through low-quality LMX, leaders impair followers' values and roots in the organization (Siddique et al., 2020). The quality of the leader–follower relationship can make a follower relevant to the extent of being creative and innovative. The work-related attitudes and behaviors of followers depend on the level of the leader–follower relationship quality. de Oliveira et al. (2020) disclosed that the quality of LMX is an important construct that connects the employees' detachment and views to take part in actions that is against the objectives, goals, and aims of the organization. When employees tend to hinder or disrupt the attainment of a desired organizational objective or goal the end is counterproductive activities. These behaviors come in various forms and actions including lateness, stealing, cheating, sexual harassment, intimidation, truancy, substance abuse, or workplace aggression (Low et al., 2021; Miao & Zhou, 2020). de Oliveira, et al. suggested that organizations should focus on selecting leaders who are committed to building quality LMX and develop career management systems and alternative career paths to motivate the followers, these actions will minimize counterproductive work behaviors among the followers.

A conducive work environment promotes high-quality leader–follower leader-

follower relationships and frustrates the negative influence of an authoritarian leader on followers' job satisfaction and performance (Siddique et al., 2020). Job satisfaction, work engagement, and the employee's positive emotional attachment to the organization are influenced by the workforce including the follower relationship with the leader (Ampofo, 2020). In sum, a positive connection between the leader and the follower is expected to improve positive attitudes of engagement, job satisfaction, and affective organizational commitment, as reducing the friction in the leader–follower relationship will increase their quality of life and positive perceptions at work.

Researchers who explored the quality of the leader–follower relationship have linked the quality of the leader-follower relationship to follower outcome. Gutermann et al. (2017) conducted a quantitative study that used the LMX and crossover theory to investigate how highly engaged leaders have better leader–follower relationships which in turn enhanced employee engagement. Gutermann et al. revealed that employee engagement is influenced by high-quality leader–follower relationships and is linked positively to employee performance and negatively to turnover intentions. The researchers concluded that a high-quality leader–follower relationship is influenced by leaders' work commitment and promotes organizational engagement structure. The leader's mood at work influences the leader–follower relationships and employee engagement is related positively to performance and reduced turnover both leading to improved organizational performance (Gutermann et al., 2017). The researchers confirmed that work engagement is transferrable from the leader to the follower showing the importance of positive leaders' attitude and state of mind on the followers' attitude

and commitment which promotes positive organizational outcomes.

Jyoti and Bhau's (2015) quantitative investigation on the role of LMX and relational identification between transformational leadership and job performance relationship suggested that leaders who train and re-train followers improve the skills of the followers and frequent assessment of the followers through interactions gives the leader an understanding of the followers' working ability and behavior. The researchers revealed that LMX acts as the link to the direction and strength of the leader–follower relationship. Jyoti and Bhau discovered that the LMX focuses on the level of trust, interaction, support, and rewards, which determines the quality of the leader-follower relationship. The quality of the leader–follower relationship makes the follower work more efficiently because the leader and follower understand themselves and helps them have good working relationships as leaders can influence the follower's ability to work efficiently and ultimately increase job performance.

Kakkar (2019) in a quantitative study investigated whether leader–subordinate exchange (LMX) quality influences subordinate resilience. The researcher used the regulatory focus theory to assume that high-quality LMX leaders induce a positive evaluation of situations which is the key to promoting concerns with advancement and growth of the employee and focusing on employees who in turn increase employee motivation and resilience. Kakkar used the LMX theory to propose that trust, reciprocity, and clarity play a vital role in cultivating employee resilience. The major finding of the study is that LMX is positively related to employee resilience and that promoting regulatory focus reconciles the relationship between LMX and employee resilience.

Kakkar maintained that leader behavior and relations with the employee can promote resilience in employees and the organizations should train leaders on the need to confront challenges and difficulty using approaches that motivate employees and promotes resilience.

Reb et al. (2019) in their research applied the quantitative research method to examine the relation between leader mindfulness and employee performance through the lenses of organizational justice and leader-member relations. The researchers used the triadic leader-employee-peer data and dyadic leader–employee data to support their assumption that LMX quality serves as a mediator linking leader awareness to employee performance in terms of in-role and extra-role performance. Reb et al. found that from the followers' view, the more the leaders are aware, the higher the LMX relationship quality and that mindful leaders have better performing followers. Therefore, mindful leaders usually have high-quality leader–follower relationships which in turn decreases follower stress level, and increase interpersonal justice perceptions (Reb et al., 2019). Furthermore, Reb et al. maintained that being a watchful leader positively influences the attention and self-regulatory basis of establishing a high-quality leader–follower relationship.

Munshi and Haque (2017) investigated the agreement between the leader's perspective of LMX and the subordinate's perspective of LMX analyzing critically the research on LMX-agreement and assessing this relationship based on the experiences of the participants. The researchers focused on the quality of the LMX relationship of the leaders and the followers. Munshi and Haque explained that the LMX relationship is

exceptional and is concerned with the dyadic relationships of leader-member which are the vital components of the organization. Munshi and Haque described that the LMX relationship is influenced by followers' commitment, trust, respect, and loyalty, the leaders' impression about the followers' competency, and leaders' behavior during interviews. The researchers discovered that LMX discrepancy can shoot from transformations in the leader and subordinate understanding of LMX and the variances in their perceptions of their behavior and that of others. Therefore, Munshi and Haque suggested that when the leaders and followers understand the LMX theory, the organizational performance is improved because the quality of the relationship is improved.

Johnson et al. (2017) explored the consequences of regulatory fit for leader–follower relationship quality and commitment. The researchers predicted that regulations would enhance leader–follower relationship quality and commitment within leader–follower relationships and they found out that promotion fit, prevention fit, and the interaction between them forecast the quality of the LMX relationship and follower commitment to the leader and that leaders and followers who were distinguished by regulatory misfit were less likely to form high-quality and committed relationships. Johnson et al. concluded that a quality LMX relationship is achieved when supervisors and subordinates who share similar promotion and prevention foci are paired into the same team.

Armstrong and Qi (2020) used the organizational citizenship behaviors construct to investigate the influence of leader–follower cognitive style similarity on followers'

organizational citizenship behaviors. The researchers revealed that the similarity of leader/follower cognitive style is predicted followers who are willing and happy to go beyond formal job requirements and are ready to cope with change and unpredictable conditions of the organizations. Armstrong and Qi suggested that organizations will benefit if they consider issues of similarity of cognitive styles in their attempts to develop effective leader–follower relationships leading to increased organizational citizenship behaviors and connected signs of progress in both the follower and organizational success. Furthermore, organizations should understand that the follower character aspect is known to influence individual attitudes, values, and social interaction which are important factors for employee and organizational success.

In a similar study, Parent-Rocheleau et al. (2020) used the quantitative method to examine how similarity and dissimilarity of positive psychological capital between leaders and followers predict followers' outcomes. Parent-Rocheleau et al. used the polynomial regression analyses to carry out an analysis on leader-follower dyads. The researchers disclosed that the effects of dissimilarity are irregular, such that the lowest levels of LMX and organizational citizenship behaviors are observed when the psychological capital of leaders is high, and the psychological capital of followers is low. When the similarity is balanced it leads to high LMX despite whether the leader and follower share a similar high or low level of positive psychological capital. Parent-Rocheleau et al. concluded that if leaders have a higher level of psychological capital, it is harmful to the quality of the leader–follower relationship.

Salas-Vallina (2020) examined how leaders and followers can interact positively

under difficult and restricted environments using the theory of constructive dissensus

building on social exchange and social identity theories, as the framework for the study.

The researcher described the constructive dissensus as a link to a mutual understanding

leading to a situation of affectionate and approachable interactions that provide the

support for the leader–follower relationship. Salas-Vallina also reviewed the relationship

between constructive conflict and happiness at work using the affective events theory and

examined the mediating role of organizational ethics and virtue. The researcher in result

of the research disclosed a direct effect of constructive conflict on employees' happiness

at work and that a limited mediation effect of organizational quality of doing what is right

was found in the relationship between constructive conflict and happiness at work. Salas-

Vallina opined that organizational context and positive attitude will guide the leader and

followers on how to improve each other's quality of life at work as long as they reflect on

their relationship in a constructive way.

Epitropaki et al. (2020) reviewed the leader and follower transgressions and

relationship repair strategies and the outcome. The researchers found out that higher

quality LMX relationships encourage higher follower's job satisfaction and subjective

well-being through more follower's forgiveness and subsequent follower's relational

efforts through constructive communication. Epitropaki et al. also discovered that the

impact of apologies on forgiveness and following trust depended on leaders' purposes

and the gravity of the outcome in breach of trust. Furthermore, Epitropaki et al. revealed

that a clear and consistent theoretical framework for examining leader–follower

transgressions is lacking. Therefore, misbehavior and misconduct among leaders and

followers should be expected and accorded great importance for a better outcome and increased individual and organizational outcomes. Epitropaki et al. agreed that leaders who use the relationship repair strategies are likely to have a transformative effect on the leader–follower relationship through redefining relationship rules and limits.

Parent-Rocheleau and Tremblay (2020) focusing on the cross-over model investigated the moderating role of the LMX and the effect of leader energy level on the subordinates. In this quantitative study, Parent-Rocheleau and Tremblay found that followers profit more when supervised by active leaders but lose energy with a less active leader. The researchers maintained that the loss and gain of energy are dependent on the quality of the LMX as perceived by the followers and that on-energetic leaders may negatively influence the energy level of the followers thereby influencing the performance of the follower and affecting the outcome of the organization. In another study, Parent-Rocheleau et al. (2020) focusing on the optimism literature and the expectancy-value theory examined the impacts of optimism similarity and dissimilarity between supervisors and subordinates on subordinates' outcomes. The researchers discovered that although similarity tends to deter role conflict, highly optimistic supervisors are likely to initiate role conflict for less optimistic subordinates, thereby reducing their enthusiasm at work and subsequent job performance. Parent-Rocheleau et al. supported that leaders should understand that positive supervisors' behavior may lead to unfavorable outcomes for cautious subordinates and that, in specific cases, uncertain similarity may be better than dissimilarity.

Leaders who are engaged with their employees tend to identify when there is an

issue or problem with the performance of the employee. Taking a moment to review and understand the factors that motivate the employees to perform better increases the team's energy positively, influencing the team to become resources that find solutions to both the team and individual struggles. Leaders could be aware of the effect of employee willpower through engagement with employees and it will help the leaders understand the reason employees are unable to exert the same level of self-control on succeeding often unconnected tasks. Understanding this will help the leaders build a stronger relationship with their followers.

When followers focus more on the outcome aspects that relate to their needs, morals, and goals in view gains from the leader-follower relationship it helps the follower to increase their motivational intensity that results when there is a match between the manners in which they pursue a goal of the organization. The follower who is motivated by the actions of the leader tends to trust the leader leading to a high-quality relationship. Intentional leaders are extremely conscious and responsive of what the follower is sensing and feeling at any moment, without judging, this awareness helps in building a high-quality LMX relationship with a positive outcome.

Job Satisfaction

Organizational leaders should ensure that the employees have a conducive work environment to enable job satisfaction. Job satisfaction is the positive emotional fulfillment a follower derives from the job (Ampofo, 2020) and the positive emotion of a follower's behavior to work activities Riyadi (2020). These positive feelings can be achieved through high-quality LMX which, in turn, will have a positive impact on how

committed and beneficial the employees are leading to enhanced organizational performance. Indeed, as Juevesa et al. (2020) stated job satisfaction is significant to organizational performance. Followers develop job satisfaction when the leaders are inspiring, respectful, valuable, and providing details of the task to the followers (Jantz, 2017).

The leader–follower relationship influences job satisfaction and job performance. Job satisfaction is determined by the constant use of penalties and reward systems (Ramli, 2020). Leader–follower relationships that allow a punishment and reward system strengthen practices and work procedures that are beneficial to employees and the organization. For example, a reward system that encourages training of employees and leaders tends to increase employee job satisfaction, capacity, and performance because they feel the attention and sincerity of the organization through competent leaders and managers. While job satisfaction is one of the factors that influences job performance (Sani & Maharani Ekowati, 2019), it is also related to how strongly the follower recognizes the goals of the organization (Koo et al., 2020). Follower job satisfaction is the requirement for improved efficiency, receptiveness, excellence, and acknowledgment (Ali & Anwar, 2021a). The significant issues preventing job satisfaction in followers are follower choice profession, job impact, teamwork, and the degree to which a job is motivating and exciting (Riyadi, 2020). When followers are satisfied, they are more likely to become strengthened, developed, and obtain special skills relevant to the job leading to improved organizational performance.

Previous studies have linked the quality leader–follower relationship to follower

job satisfaction. Andersen et al. (2020) reviewed the literature on the social and economic LMX by providing a wide-ranging review of the research to date applying a two-dimensional approach to LMX, while also adding to interpretation and suggestions for how the LMX and social exchange theory can advance and improve further by establishing the link between them. The researchers revealed that social LMX demonstrates a positive relationship to a set of fortunate followers and that there is a strong relationship between social LMX and affective commitment; satisfaction with work-family balance, employee knowledge donating, and employee resilience; and moderate negative associations with turnover intention. Liao et al. (2017) in quantitative research investigated the relationship between LMX, job satisfaction, life satisfaction, and psychological capital for employee relationship management. The sample of the study were employees of financial and electronics manufacturing industries in Taiwan, and they were then analyzed using a structuring equation model with SPSS 12.0 and LISREL 8.8. The researchers found out that high-quality LMX increases psychological capital and psychological capital enhances both job satisfaction and life satisfaction, and psychological capital serves as a full mediator for both job satisfaction and life satisfaction.

In another research, Stewart, and Wiener (2021) examines the quality of the LMX and the mediating influence of subordinate's job embeddedness on job satisfaction. The researchers used the LMX model that considered the four-gender dominant leadership style facets, female–effect and loyalty (communal), and male contribution and professional respect for the study. Stewart and Wiener used the quantitative cross-

sectional survey method for the study with the sample from employed participants who were predominantly females working in female-dominant industries. The researchers found that Job embeddedness mediated the relationship between all four facets of LMX and job satisfaction and that supervisor gender did not moderate the relationships of the four LMX facets and job embeddedness. On the other hand, Naveed (2019) used the quantitative method to examine the association between LMX, job satisfaction, and organizational commitment and the moderating role of trust on LMX and employee outcomes (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, and turnover intentions). The data was collected from employees of private banks in Karachi, Pakistan using questionnaires from older studies. Naveed revealed from the study that LMX is positively and significantly related to job satisfaction and organizational commitment but negatively linked with turnover intentions.

However, Almuqati (2021) focused on followers' perceptions of LMX applied the descriptive, quantitative method to investigate the possible effects of LMX and job satisfaction. The researcher based the study on a large sample of employees in Saudi Arabia using the survey-based questionnaire method. Almuqati in the study revealed that considering job satisfaction as a strong variable that would clarify the role of both leaders and followers in private sectors shows that the leader–follower relationship among the private sectors is high-quality. The researcher concluded that a high-quality LMX is a productive tactic to improve the performance of individuals, groups, and the organization. Zhou et al. (2021) in a quantitative study used the social learning and social exchange theory to explore the effects of despotic leadership on employee job satisfaction using

self-efficacy as a mediating variable and LMX as a moderated variable. In this study, the researchers showed that despotic leadership affects employee job satisfaction both directly and indirectly through self-efficacy and LMX. In a similar study, Zhou et al. (2021) used the questionnaire survey analysis approach to collect data from the employees of small- and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) located in Guangdong Province, China. The results of the study confirmed the relationships between despotic leadership, LMX, self-efficacy, and job satisfaction as despotic leadership has a direct negative impact on job satisfaction, while self-efficacy acts as a mediating role between despotic leadership and job satisfaction. Likewise, the LMX is moderating in the relationship between despotic leadership and self-efficacy. The researchers concluded that the despotic leader will harm the majority of employees in the organization, and it will be difficult for employees to achieve ideal job satisfaction under such a leader, and will damage employees' job satisfaction through the reduction of their self-efficacy.

In contrast, Saragih, et al. (2021) in a qualitative study investigated the impact of overqualification perception and job satisfaction on working intentions for employees of the ministry of defense. The data for the study were collected from colonels and lieutenant colonels working at the Ministry of Defense of the Republic of Indonesia. The researchers used the equity theory and the theory of relative deprivation as the framework for the study. The major findings of the study are that employees that view themselves as overqualified for a position are not always satisfied with their job, these view of overqualification leads to employee intention to leave, employee satisfaction does not positively influence employee intention to leave, and perceptions of overqualification had

no significant direct effect and positively significant towards the intention to move employees through job satisfaction.

Follower Work Engagement

Some leaders use the LMX theory to become more engaged with their followers increasing individual follower engagement and improving overarching organizational outcomes. Engaging followers with this method can encourage them to work harder and become more passionate about their role in the organization (Crosina & Pratt, 2019). Putra et al. (2017) argued that an engaged employee gives rise to improved organizational performance. Likewise, an employee who lacks purpose reduces the quality of service and organizational performance (Meng et al., 2017). Crosina and Pratt (2019) asserted that an engaged employee fights to improve organizational performance, and, ultimately, follower engagement has a significant outcome on organizational performance (Juevesa et al., 2020). High-quality leader–follower relationships enhance and predict follower work engagement (Rashid et al., 2018). Organizational leaders who implement the practical justice system tend to have more passionate, resourceful, happy, and diligently engaged followers (Ramli, 2020). Followers who are in a high-quality leader–follower relationship are often emotionally empowered and extremely engaged at work, and the leaders sustain a high-quality leader–follower relationship by increasing follower engagement (Aggarwal et al., 2020). Leaders' investment in increasing the followers' engagement, reduced turnover intention, which, in turn, increases productivity. Follower engagement is a medium for improved performance of the organizations (Tensay & Singh, 2020).

Several studies have linked LMX to employee engagement. Kim and Koo (2017) in their study examined how the quality of LMX helps hotels to achieve desirable outcomes, such as innovative behavior and job performance. The model was developed based on the LMX theory and considers the relationship between the quality of LMX, employee engagement, innovative behavior, and job performance. The sample for the study was based on the survey of employees of hotels in South Korea and the data were analyzed using frequency, reliability, confirmatory factor, correlation, and structural equation modeling analyses. Kim and Koo found out that LMX significantly influenced job engagement and innovative behavior but did not significantly affect organization engagement. Job engagement significantly affected organization engagement and innovative behavior but did not significantly influence job performance. Organizational engagement significantly influenced job performance but did not significantly affect innovative behavior. Job performance was significantly influenced by innovative behavior. He et al., (2021) in a quantitative study explored how the interactive effects of high-performance human resource (HR) practices and LMX on employee engagement and creativity in hospitality. The study was based on a survey of the employees of hotel companies in China. The researchers discovered that high-performance HR practices had a significant influence on employee engagement and creativity through psychological empowerment and that the effect of high-performance HR practices on employee engagement was strengthened by LMX.

Tensay and Singh (2020), in a qualitative study, used the ability, motivation, and opportunity model and the social exchange theory as a framework to examine the effect

of HRM Systems on employee engagement and perceived organizational performance and examining the mediating effect of employee engagement on the HRM-Performance research. Using a sample of a federal employee in government organizations operating in Ethiopia, the researchers acknowledged that organizations that offer fair recruitment and selection procedures, allow the employees' opportunity to train and develop their abilities and skills through a complete performance evaluation system, unbiased compensation, and reward system and allow employees to involve in the process of decision making as well as autonomous in their work, the employees become more engaged and become productive. Tensay and Singh found that a positive relationship between HRM and employee engagement encourages employees to be engaged in their role because they feel they are well treated, valued, and trusted and concluded that HRM is a strong predictor of employee engagement while that employee engagement is a strong predictor of performance of organizations.

Sugandini et al. (2018) in a quantitative study tested and analyzed employee engagement in entrepreneurship management in SMEs cases. The primary data was collected using a questionnaire and interview with the manager in the Province of DIY, Indonesia. The researchers confirmed that employee engagement is affected by the experiences employee got from work satisfaction and rewards which improved organizational commitment and LMX while LMX improves organizational commitment. Vila-Vázquez et al. (2020) explored how the quality of LMX from the perspective of the followers, was connected to individual creativity through engagement and how this relationship was moderated by job complexity in the context of high-tech and knowledge-

based SMEs. The test was conducted on a sample of emergent high-tech and knowledge-based SMEs in Spain. The researchers found that the quality of the relationship between leader and follower supports job engagement while engagement, in turn, increases individual creativity.

Follower Performance

Several factors can affect follower productivity and performance. The leaders of organizations are expected to understand these factors to increase follower performance. A productive follower is behind every organizational success (Muzakki et al., 2019). Performance is a phase when an individual attains success in assigned work in an organization (Eliyana et al., 2019). Follower performance management aligns and develops the follower workforce for better organizational results. Follower performance is the follower's conduct and success in the allocated task (Riyadi, 2020). The performance of a follower is the outcome of the effort put into work with a certain period concerning ethics, goals, objectives, or principles; it is also a factor that can positively or negatively influence organizational performance (Muzakki et al., 2019). Follower performance influences organizational performance (Rodriguez & Walters, 2017).

To achieve the occurrence of follower performance, the leaders need to set goals and standards that will be used for evaluation (Rodriguez & Walters, 2017). According to Selvarajan et al., (2018) the main aim of follower performance evaluation is to motivate the follower to influence organizational performance by improving individual performance. Zeb et al. (2019) affirmed that LMX is a key influence on follower performance. Chatterjee et al. (2021) discovered that cooperative energy at work and

understandings and explanations using the LMX theory reinforce team performance. High-performing followers are indicators of a high-performing organization (Hasib et al., 2020; Nguyen et al., 2020) and are vital to achieving the goals of the organization (Nguyen et al., 2020). Various actions influence the performance of an organization while the followers are influenced by the valued cultures of the organization (Nguyen et al., 2020). Organizational structure, culture, and motivation influence follower performance. Work environment and management support have a strong influence on followers' performance, while a response to change and intrinsic motivation directly affect follower performance (Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2019). A poorly organized organizational structure and culture could mean that there will be low output, less entrustment of work, no encouragement provided, and consolidated decisions.

To contribute to organizational performance, the followers should be allowed to contribute to and be involved in decision-making (Beltrán-Martín & Bou-Llusar, 2018). Organizations with high follower performance excel in achieving high productivity and operational efficiency, as well as profitability and effectiveness with the added effect of improved organizational performance. Again, bored, and undervalued followers are less efficient and productive. Juevesa et al. (2020) discovered that job satisfaction positively improved followers' performance. Furthermore, Chatterjee et al. (2021) maintained that inventive ideas inspire follower performance, but knowledge hoarding frustrates follower resourcefulness which negatively affects organizational performance. Knowledge hiding is a common issue among organizational followers. It encourages poor performance and tends to cut off the relationship between the followers. Follower performance is

reinforced by the work techniques, behavioral relationships between followers, and the regularity of communication by the leaders (Walthall & Dent, 2016).

Šehić–Kršlak et al. (2021) in a quantitative study determined the effects of leadership in general and LMX leadership on organizational performance (job satisfaction, organizational commitment, mutual trust at work, satisfaction with organizational communication). The authors analyzed the data collected from the leaders in Bosnia and Herzegovina and revealed that there is a significant positive relationship between LMX and organizational commitment and that commitment to the values of the organization and mutual trust is expressed through information exchange and open communication. Furthermore, employees that enjoy a high-quality exchange with their leaders are employees that are more committed to the values and goals of the organization, and salaries motivate employees to increase their commitment to work, and greater commitment to work has a positive effect on employees' productivity hence positively affecting the success of the company. van Dam et al. (2021) using the quantitative method explored how employees' reactions to a planned organizational change can be influenced by their supervisor. The researchers used the LMX and appraisal theory as the groundwork for the study to argue that employees who have a high-quality exchange relationship with their supervising manager would be provided with more change information and opportunities for participation in the change, and, in turn, would have more positive affective perceptions of the change in terms of the trust, cynicism, uncertainty, and control, and subsequently be more open to the change. Using the Multi-group analysis on the data collected from employees of two health insurance

companies that were involved in a merger the researchers revealed that middle managers can enable change through the LMX relationship with their subordinates and that employees in a high-quality LMX relationship had received more change information and participation opportunities than those in a low-quality exchange relationship.

Diamantidis and Chatzoglou (2019) in a quantitative explored the factors affecting employee performance by integrating the relations between firm/environment-related factors, job-related factors, and employee-related factors into an analytical EP assessment model using an empirical approach. The researchers used the structural equation modeling approach to analyze the data, the result of the study indicated that job environment and management support have the strongest impacts (direct and indirect) on job performance, while adaptability and intrinsic motivation directly affect job performance. In a similar study, Nguyen et al., (2020) in a quantitative study investigated and analyzed the variables of HR management that influence employee performance. The researchers maintained that employee work performance is very vital for an organization to achieve its goals, so various activities must be carried out by the organization to improve it. The result of the study shows that work motivation, leadership, work environment, organizational culture, work achievement assessment, competence, and compensation affect employee performance.

Roberts and David (2020) using the qualitative method investigated how boss phubbing, supervisory trust, job satisfaction, and performance impact employee outcomes using the reciprocated social exchange theory, expectancy violations theory, and social presence theory. The researchers collected the data from Amazon's Mechanical Turk

(MTurk) of working adults in the US. The results reveal that supervisors that are distracted by their smartphones are linked to lower supervisory trust, as well as lower employee job satisfaction and performance. Contrary to other researchers, Insan and Masmarulan (2021) in quantitative research investigated the effect of the LMX and organizational culture on employee performance. The researchers explored employee performance by explaining and evaluating variables that can affect work engagement, among others: members of the leadership and organizational culture. The researchers found that LMX had no significant effect on unlocking employee motivation and increasing productivity, LMX had no significant effect on how workers achieve their success and execute their required tasks, organizational culture had a significant effect on employee positive behavior that leads to positive results and on employee performance and that work management had no significant effect on employee performance.

Follower Motivation

Organizational motivation tends to be the greatest research topic as it relates to organizational performance. Organizational motivation tends to be the greatest research topic as it relates to organizational performance (Thokozani, 2017). Understanding organizational motivation means knowing the difference between intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation comes within the person. Reward, compensation, incentive, and recognition are different ways to motivate followers (Ali & Anwar, 2021a). The follower is said to be driven by the task or the job they do. Extrinsic motivation is the result of external things done to kindle and stimulate others to increase productivity. The recognition of unfulfilled needs leads to motivation which enables

followers to accomplish personal or organizational goals (Ali & Anwar, 2021a). The most effective way of motivation is to balance the motivating factors to integrate both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation with more preference for inner motivation. Motivation is the key to improved organizational performance (Osabiya, 2015; Thokozani, 2017), but because there is no standard way of motivation it seems difficult to motivate followers (Thokozani, 2017). The reward system and policies are used to motivate the followers to increase their involvement, determination, and performance (Ali & Anwar, 2021a).

Leaders need to understand the motivational factors of each follower and implement them to improve performance (Osabiya, 2015; Rockmann & Ballinger, 2017; Thokozani, 2017) because follower motivation increases commitment which positively influences productivity (Al-Madi et al., 2017; Hanaysha & Majid, 2018). The motivational factors that influence productivity in a follower are clear communication, goal identification, teamwork, work based on agreement, overtime, leading by example, love/sense of belonging, high-quality leader–follower relationship, and supply of resources (Osabiya, 2015). Motivation adds value to follower performance and boosts their determination and creativity towards high-quality work performance (Kuranchie-Mensah & Amponsah-Tawiah, 2016). Rožman et al. (2017) observed that older followers are motivated by the working environment and terms and conditions of employment while the younger followers by financial rewards.

Motivating the follower encourages the follower to overcome complexity, stimulates high-quality leader–follower relationships, improves follower engagement, and stimulates followers' keenness to be more productive (Hirschi & Valero, 2017).

Leaders who motivate followers are aware of where the followers stand out and where to either build additional skills or where to share power with followers who have stronger skills in areas others are not responsive to. To sustain follower motivation and performance, the leader ought to encourage knowledge-sharing which is also a way to guarantee follower commitment (Dwivedula et al., 2017). The leaders' influence upon followers can increase the followers' shortcomings or increase follower strength. The key to organizational performance is increased motivation, commitment, and engagement of the followers (Ali & Anwar, 2021a). The follower might like all activities connected to the job but is not motivated to perform the duties (Ha et al., 2020). Leaders being appreciative of the followers' contribution increase follower confidence which improves organizational performance. The application of motivation improves job satisfaction and organizational performance (Riyadi, 2020).

Older researchers have linked LMX and motivation to employee performance. Rožman et al. (2017) investigated the variance in the motivation of the different age groups in an organization. To determine their findings, they used theoretical concepts and research to design the instrument used for the study and quantitative methods to gather data. The study was limited to employees in Slovenia. The researchers used the arithmetic means and medians for answers and Kolmogorov-Smirnov and Shapiro-Wilk tests to verify the normality of the data distribution. The researchers resolved that all categories of employees are motivated and satisfied in the workplace, but different ways. The research found that older employees were not motivated by monetary incentives but by internal working conditions while the younger employees are motivated by financial

rewards. Huang et al. (2021) in a qualitative study used the LMX theory to explore the impact of individual drivers and combinations of drivers on safety climate through Bayesian Network simulations to predict practices that most effectively improve safety climate in the trucking industry. The researchers in this study used survey data were collected from truck drivers in a large U.S. trucking company to identify the key drivers of safety climate from the perspective of LMX. The result of the study showed that the effects of LMX on organization and group-level safety climate were conditionally dependent on four influencers including psychological ownership, supervisory integrity, situation awareness, and safety communication. In addition, enhancing leaders' ability to engage in high-quality exchanges (e.g., caring about employees), developing training to encourage employees/leaders to deliver on promises, and providing employees with more autonomy to enhance their ownership may have the most potential to improve trucking safety climate.

Curtis et al. (2009) in quantitative research did concentrate on differences between tipped and non-tipped employees in the hospitality industry with differentiation on gender. The study focused on the front house motivation. The hourly paid staff were used as the non-tipped respondents while the tipped are those who depend on tips as their main source of income. The study used a suitability sampling procedure where the 104 hourly tipped and non-tipped employees were chosen from a single branded, national restaurant chain located in the city of Orlando, Florida. Curtis et al. noted that lack of employee motivation may cause organizational problems in turnover, retention, morale, and poor productivity and that varied systems, procedures, and policies might be

deployed to positively impact employee and organizational performance factors. The researchers concluded that employee motivational factors included work security, commendation for a job well done, good working conditions, promotion or career development, and appreciation for a job well done, and alignment of personal values with organizational values. In a similar study, Osabiya (2015) used the qualitative method of research to provide insight into the theories of motivation and to uncover the opinions of theorists on motivation. The researcher explored the elements that influenced the worker's motivation and the matching factors on the workers' performance and final output. The study identified the following ten elements as critical factors to affect motivation; teamwork, work based on contract, supervision based on leadership by example, provision of equipment, impact on productivity, communication, love, and belongingness, opportunity to undertake a challenging task, identification with goal and overtime. From the study, the researcher revealed that there is a clear difference between suitably motivated workers and those who are not. This implies that well-motivated workers strive to ensure they work and perform exceptionally in all assigned functions.

Contrary to other studies, López-Ibort et al. (2020) in their study used the LMX theory as the basis to explore the relationship between the quality of the supervisor–nurse interpersonal relationship and organizational commitment and to establish if the correlation could be moderated by empowerment, perceived organizational support, and leader–leader exchange. The findings of the study show that there was a positive connection between the quality of the LMX and commitment and that LMX has a moderating effect on this relationship. But, the controlling effects of empowerment,

supposed organizational support, and LMX on the supervisor–nurse interpersonal relationship and the nurse's organizational commitment are influenced by sex and/or hospital size.

Emotional and inner enablement is a major effect of high-quality LMX. This is possible by the encouraging processes used by the leader to increase the capacity of the follower to energetically control their own life and align it with workplace activity. The LMX theory is rooted in an exchange process that balances the employee commitment process to work and family. LMX relationship that allows punishment and reward strengthen practices and work procedures that are beneficial to followers and the organization. A reward system that encourages training of followers and leaders tends to increase followers' job satisfaction, capacity, and performance because they feel the attention and sincerity of the organization through competent leaders.

The Leadership Strategies to Sustain High-quality Leader–Follower Relationship

Leadership straegy is establishing and articulating the vision, goals, and objectives with an attainable action plan (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Levy-Gazenfrantz, 2015). The styles and strategies used by leaders enable the followers to feel deep pleasure, satisfaction, and respect for the work they do (Choi et al., 2017). Paring leaders and followers according to their advancement, objectivity, motivation, aspirations, values, and inclination into the same team and regulation of dealing with details or procedure help in sustaining the high-quality leader–follower relationship (Johnson et al., 2017).

The leaders who engage and encourage followers by implementing strategies that

improve organizational performance are significantly rewarded (Oppong et al., 2017). If these strategies are not implemented, the followers will not adapt to the goals and objectives of the organization (Kivilä et al., 2017). The culture, ethics, goals, objectives, characteristics, and proficiency of an organization reflects in the conduct of the leader which influences the achievement of the organizational goals (Engelbrecht et al., 2017a). Leaders must understand that their conduct can mare or guide the reputation of the organization (Martens & Carvalho, 2017). Therefore, the leaders must be determined to accomplish the organizational goals through constant implementation of strategies that will enable the followers to be engaged towards improved performance (Keeys & Huemann, 2017). Leaders with good communication skills may boost follower confidence because they feel they are appreciated (Silvius et al., 2017).

An ideal organizational vision promotes a healthy working environment and encourages the follower to work towards achieving set goals (Hamstra et al., 2014). Responsible leaders involve all stakeholders and encourage follower participation in decision-making (Voegtlin, 2016). Implementing the performance improvement strategies aids follower performance (Engelbrecht et al., 2017b). Implementing strategies that encourage leaders to be confident and show desirable actions that lead to successful outcomes influences follower resourcefulness and efficiency (Politis, 2015). To keep dedicated and loyal followers, organizational leaders must reconsider the strategies they use to successfully engage and motivate trusted followers (Khedhaouria et al., 2017).

Several researchers have investigated the strategies leaders implement to improve organizational performance. Pey et al. (2021) explored the potential impact of

followership on educational leadership, particularly in school settings. The researchers used the qualitative method to review the teachers' followership styles in literature from 1997 to 2018 in school settings about the Kelley Followership Model. Pey et al revealed that most of the teachers are categorized as exemplary followers. These categories of teachers developed high scores in independent critical thinking skills and are actively engaged in school activities equipping the schools to improve and sustain their performance. Meanwhile, these leaders established good followership strengthening leader–follower relationships which authoritatively shapes the expansion of realistic strategies that help to promote effective leadership. Winklera (2020) discussed the practices at the leader and organizational levels that align with Millennial workplace desires and promote organizational commitment. The researcher concluded that the leaders taking on a coach and/or mentorship role, the organization and leaders supporting individual growth, development, and internal advancement, and the organization highlighting and living by its purpose and mission to positively impact society will improve organizational performance.

Mete, et al. (2021) conducted research that investigated how hotel employees' career satisfaction and innovative work behavior are shaped under the framework of their perceptions of LMX based on the notion that the quality of the LMX relationship has a significant impact on employee behaviors. Data were collected by applying a questionnaire survey method from employees in 7 hotel enterprises operating in Ankara. Mete et al. discovered that leaders can encourage employees' career satisfaction by supplying the necessary assistance, mutual influence, confidence, appreciation, and

speaking competently with their employees. Secondly, LMX has a positive influence on the innovative work behaviors displayed by the employees and those leader interactions with the members of the workforce can influence the performance of the organizations. When employees feel comfortable conveying their views, behaving authentically without fear of reprisal, and contributing to work-related decisions, they likely also feel empowered (Randel et al., 2018)

Organizational Performance

Organizational structure and culture motivate and influence follower performance; a poorly organized organizational structure and culture mean that there will be low output, less assignment of work, no encouragement provided, and consolidated decisions. Organizations with high follower performance excel in achieving high productivity and operational efficiency, as well as profitability and effectiveness with the added effect of improved organizational performance (Beltrán-Martín & Bou-Llusar, 2018; Diamantidis & Chatzoglou, 2019; Nguyen et al., 2020). Organizational performance depends on individual follower performance (Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020) but bored and undervalued followers are less efficient and productive.

According to Njoroge and Kwasira (2015), organizational performance is determined by task-related activities, exclusive rights to activities, and follower attitude toward work. The signs of a successful organization are in the value, strategy, efficiency, and profitability of the organization (Abdullah & Othman, 2019). To improve organizational performance, the leaders must appreciate followers' actions, motivate followers, and protect and strengthen financial management (Hanić & Jevtić, 2020).

Hussain and Shahzad (2018) opined that organizational performance increases when high-quality LMX is perceived by followers. For improved organizational performance, followers must implement the values and norms of the organization (Nguyen, et al., 2020). Tensay and Singh (2020) acknowledged that organizations that establish clear selection criteria give the followers the chance to develop their skills and services through a complete performance appraisal system, balanced reward system, including the followers in decision making, allows the follower to become more involved and productive. Using information technology for storing, retrieving, and sending information in organizations can improve organizational performance (Widjaja et al., 2020). Nguyen et al., (2020) opined that having a strong organizational culture is vital for followers to carry out organizational activities that lead to the improvement in organizational performance.

Organizational practices can improve organizational performance through incentives, training, selective employment, job security, and delegation & self-supervised teams (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021). HR management (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021; Para-González et al., 2018), knowledge, creativity, and organizational climate for innovation (Shanker et al., 2017) are stimulants to organizational performance. Aligning follower training, assessment, career opportunities with organizational strategies is an indispensable aspect that influences organizational performance (Anwar & Abdullah, 2021). To improve performance, the leader must establish suitable plans and schedules to complete more tasks within a shorter period (Zafarullah & Pertti, 2017).

The Influence of Leader–Follower Relationship on Organization Performance

Some actions influence the established norms and expectations in the leader–follower relationship when building a strong and quality relationship between leaders and followers. These actions tend to encourage the trust established by individuals causing performance improvement. When trust is broken it is hard to influence the follower even when the leader is active. The energy limit between the leader and follower remains positive and helpful when the relationship is free from misconduct. The leaders are liable to establish the conditions that motivate and encourage the followers to improve the performance of the organization (Nguyen et al., 2020). Positively active leaders tend to negatively impact cautious followers' productivity.

According to Lee and Ha□Brookshire (2018), the follower's voluntary commitment within an organization improves organizational performance through appreciating and respecting the role of followers. These unusual commitments from the follower happen when the leaders make sure followers are satisfied and engaged in their jobs by focusing on positive strategies to ensure improved follower productivity (Van Elst & Meurs, 2016). Diamantidis and Chatzoglou (2019) maintained that leaders who vigorously support their followers' job-related actions permit them to improve through the influence of both organizational climate and job environment which improves the general organizational performance. For the growth and survival of the organization, follower engagement and development are important while job satisfaction increases individual and organizational performance (Marnewick, 2017).

The vital factors to improved organizational performance are creating a balance

between the needs of followers, the demands and capabilities of the company's

organization, and quality HR (Paais & Pattiruhu, 2020). These factors are also required to

build a high-quality leader-follower relationship. The leaders who establish a high-quality

relationship and have respect for their followers experience increased follower

performance both in terms of technical ability, ability conceptual, responsibility,

initiative, and interpersonal relationship skills which promotes high follower performance

and expects improved organizational performance (Nguyen et al., 2020). Tensay and

Singh (2020) asserted that a high- leader–follower relationship encourages followers to

be engaged in their roles and aimed to improve organizational performance. Access and

support for follower training activities, and motivation to innovate and carry out risky

initiatives improve organizational performance (Soares & Perin, 2020).

Heriyadi et al. (2020) maintained that a high-quality leader–follower relationship,

work-life balance, and job satisfaction, can improve all the positive and productive

follower actions and behaviors that are not part of their formal job description. If the

followers experience work-life balance and job satisfaction, then there will be improved

organizational performance. Adil and Qaiser (2020) argued that a high-quality leader–

follower relationship increases work-related stress therefore, the quality must be managed

to aid improved follower productivity and performance. Perhaps the followers are

stressed at work, the organizations might experience a setback in performance. Followers

who experience high-quality leader–follower relationships and work related-feedback

tend to accept challenging tasks which aid them to improve organizational performance

(Xie et al., 2020). To increase workplace outcomes, the managers should enhance the

quality of the LMX relationship and that LMX notional improvement might be achieved by unavoidable attention to its role in shaping workplace outcomes such as communication satisfaction and turnover intention.

The leader–follower relationship is limited to a formal or professional relationship where the leader pushes the followers to contribute by creating cultures that will establish a high-quality leader–follower relationship to improve organizational performance (Insan & Masmarulan, 2021). The leader–follower relationship enables followers with more well-matched role-taking, adapted role making, and effective routinizing with an employer by making himself more committed with the organization (Leach, 2005) to improve organizational performance. Organizations that want to experience improved performance must train their leaders to establish a high-quality leader–follower relationship (Xie et al., 2020). The leaders establish high-quality leader–follower relationships by training workers with skills, increasing follower competence, and providing opportunities for followers to help solve the complexity by increasing follower engagement and organizational performance (Insan & Masmarulan, 2021). The leader–follower relationship encourages the leader and followers to consider consensual problems which improve follower and organizational performance (Xie et al., 2020).

Jawahar and Schreurs (2018) in their quantitative study used the theoretical approach to explain the relationship between LMX quality and counterproductive performance, and the conditions under which this relationship is pronounced. The researchers argued that high-quality LMX relationships will strengthen professional self-efficacy lowering the probability of counterproductive performance, whereas low-quality

LMX relationships will undermine professional self-efficacy and the resulting feelings of dissatisfaction will support counterproductive performance. Collecting data from a sample of high-tech professionals to test the hypotheses Jawahar and Schreurs found out that work-related self-efficacy carried the effect of LMX quality on counterproductive performance, but only for workers who have longer supervisor-subordinate relationship tenure. Lapointe et al. (2020) in qualitative research evaluated the impact of a self-related attribute in LMX relationships and how they are related to work outcomes. The research was based on the social exchange theory. The researchers suggested that LMX is based on a social exchange mechanism and expects improved work performance through increased organizational commitment. The researchers found out that the quality of the relationship between employees and supervisors strengthens the relationship between LMX social comparison and commitment and is a driving force for work outcomes. Again, the relational self-concept contributes to shaping individuals' attitudes toward the organization in response to LMX social comparison, showing that employee performance may be more influenced by contextual factors than job attitudes.

Siddique et al. (2020) used the mixed-method statistical approach to test the hypothesis for linking authoritarian leadership to employee organizational embeddedness, LMX, and performance in a high-power distance culture: a mediation-moderated analysis. Siddique, et al. discovered that authoritarian leadership exercises a negative impact on subordinates' job satisfaction and performance through poor quality LMX and weak employee the quality of being firmly and deeply ingrained in the organization. The researchers concluded that a good work environment cultivates high-quality LMX

relationships and employee firmness to the organization which prevents the impact of the

negative effect of authoritarian leadership on subordinates' job satisfaction and

performance. Based on the social exchange theory, Shen (2019) investigated cognitive

LMX differences between supervisors and subordinates. Shen used the quantitative

method to explore the influence of organizational identification on organizational

citizenship behavior directed toward organizations and toward individuals, the

moderating effects of turnover intention, and the differences in the moderating effects of

supervisors' ratings of LMX quality and subordinates' ratings of LMX quality in the

process. In the study, the researcher revealed that the leader relationship with the

subordinates had no significant effect on organizational identification and organizational

citizenship behavior relationship, but the subordinate LMX strengthens the LMX

relationship positively. Shen concluded that organizations that improve the way

subordinates identify with the organizational strategies motivate them to perform more

action behaviors toward the organization and fellow employees while subordinates'

behavior and actions can be influenced by the quality of the LMX leading to being more

productivity.

In another quantitative investigation, Anand et al. (2018) represented

characteristic i-deals as distinguishing resources that form LMX relationships in

workgroups. Using the data from the sample of software engineers and their managers

from India, the researchers explored LMX as the connections in ideals-outcome

relationships within the context of a workgroup, and thus extend LMX theory to the

context of a new employment relationship where employees increasingly demand person-

specific work arrangements. The researchers used the cross-level moderated mediation analyses on multi-source data obtained from the respondents. The finding of the research is that LMX acts as an intermediary between employees' i-deals and their effects on job performance and citizenship behaviors. Rashid et al., (2018) applied the quantitative methodology to establish the impact of leader and member exchange (LMX) on organizational commitment at the individual level. The Social exchange theory and LMX were used as the conceptual framework for the study. The researchers collected the data used for the research from the faculty members working in higher educational institutes in two cities in Pakistan. Rashid et al. used the four-factor model of the study (LMX, affective commitment, normative commitment, and employee voice behavior) in the researchers found that high-quality LMX leads to the improved affective and normative commitment of employees, have a positive influence on the affective and normative commitment of employees and that LMX predicts an individual's affective and normative commitment. The researchers concluded that for an effective running of an organization and improved performance, the authorities should encourage positive supervisor-subordinate relationships and managers should pay more attention to the quality of the LMX.

Manata (2020) explored the extent to which task and social cohesion mediate the effects of LMX differentiation on team performance using the quantitative method. The result of the study revealed that teams with lower LMX differentiation promote higher team performance and social cohesion. and that supervisors who develop more reasonable and impartial relationships across subordinates are better able to promote task

coordination and unity, which in turn fosters a cohesive and productive working environment. Manata in this study indicated that a leader, who engages in different types of exchange patterns with the employee, forms different quality exchange relationships to stimulate higher team performance.

Followers who experience a high-quality relationship with their leaders tend to have a positive attitude towards their duties and are easily motivated to input more into the organization resulting in high follower performance and job satisfaction. This is because they have access to the leader and receive more support than those in a poor-quality relationship. Ultimately, the followers are expected to exhibit high performance after experiencing a close relationship with the leader. Greater expectations await the follower who is experiencing a high-quality leader–follower relationship and they are expected to exhibit good characters in the workplace. Therefore, the end is expected to be improved organizational performance. Followers that perceived low-quality relationships from the leader create unnecessary pressure and anxiety leading to followers forming personal space which the person does not wish to be invaded.

Transition

In Section 1, I highlighted followers' perceptions of their leaders' behaviors as well as how low and high-quality leader–follower relationships could affect organizational performance. I emphasized several factors that could influence how to sustain positive leader-employee relationships to increase organizational performance. The research I conducted was on the strategies for strengthening leader–follower relationships for improving organizational performance.

The LMX theory is the suggested means to measure the leader–follower relationship across the organization to determine the influence of the relationships in promoting organizational performance (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). The LMX focuses on how the quality of the leader–follower relationship improved the leader, follower, and organizational performances (Northouse, 2021), and is important to organizational performance (Uhl-Bien, 2006). The LMX concept which is a two-way process is based on the right to equality and mutual respect between the leader and follower, the leader–follower leader–follower and leader–follower are used reciprocally without making any difference (Uhl-Bien et al., 2020). The leaders' awareness of the LMX concepts establishes quality leader–follower relationships through ethics, motivations, and job satisfaction causing a huge turnaround of the leader on the follower and the organization. However, some leaders in oil-servicing organizations lack strategies to strengthen a high-quality leader–follower relationship to improve organizational performance.

To explore the strategies for strengthening leader–follower relationships for improving organizational performance, a qualitative case study that involved interviewing participants and collecting and analyzing data was necessary. The LMX theory was used as the conceptual framework for the study, while the main question that captures the basic goals and was used to guide the direction of the study was what strategies do leaders in oil-servicing organizations use to develop and sustain high-quality leader–follower relationships for improving organizational performance? This question was used to develop specific questions used for data collection and analysis. I developed nine interview questions related to the purpose statement and the research questions

which were answered by the 14 managers of a leading oil-servicing company in Nigeria. This study was significant because it explores effective leadership strategies that influence leader-member relationships for improved organizational performance.

Section 2 included a description of the research design and approach I exploited to understand the strategies for strengthening leader–follower relationships for improving organizational performance. Section 2 also included the description of my role as the researcher in a qualitative single-unit case study, population and sampling, ethical research principles, data collection, and analysis techniques and concludes with a transition to Section 3. Section 3 included, a presentation of the findings, recommendations for action and further research, and reflections of my experience within the doctoral study process and concluded with a summary of my doctoral study and the results achieved.

Section 2: The Project

The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore strategies for strengthening leader–follower relationships that can improve organizational performance. In Section 1, I identified the general and specific business problems, the purpose, nature, and significance of the study, and a literature review of the current business problem offering a research question specific to the business problem. Section 2 covers the purpose of this qualitative case study, the role of the researcher, the participants, the method and design of the study, the ethical aspect of the study, the data collection and analysis, the assurance of reliability and validity, and the credibility of the findings of the study. The section ends with a transition.

Purpose Statement

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that leaders in oil-servicing organizations use to strengthen leader–follower relationships and improve organizational performance. The targeted population comprised 14 organizational leaders from an oil-servicing company located in Port Harcourt, Nigeria. The selected leaders successfully implemented and developed strategies that strengthened leader–follower relationships to improve organizational performance. The implication for positive social change is that organizational leaders with high-quality leader–follower relationships tend to have stronger organizational performance, which may allow the organization to increase the number of employees hired from the region, building a stronger community and allowing the individuals a greater means to give back to and support their local community.

Role of the Researcher

The role of a researcher in qualitative studies is to collect, organize, and interpret the data acquired (Abildgaard et al., 2016; McCusker & Gunaydin, 2015) and to deliver detailed and thoroughly evaluated findings of research using interview protocols (Yin, 2018). Using the interview protocol to collect data from participants' reactions allows the researcher to understand the view and experience of the participant (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). Using the interview protocol as a guide, I collected data that helped me understand the strategies organizational managers used to strengthen leader–follower relationships. To display consistency, the researcher should extract research themes from the participants (Gehman et al., 2018). The researcher must retrieve the thoughts and feelings of the participants while protecting the data of the participants (Sutton & Austin, 2015). My role was to protect the confidentiality and welfare of the participants since I was the data collector for this study.

My role was also to monitor and reduce my biases. To validate the credibility of the research, the researcher should endeavor to mitigate biases (Baker, 2016). The personal value of the researcher can change the methods of evaluations in qualitative studies (Dean, 2017). The researcher as an observer must understand the difficulty of inappropriate interpretation of the countering view of the participants (Gubrium, & Holstein, 2002). To mitigate personal bias the researcher needs to expose any bias (Harvey, 2015). I used the interview protocol and offered questions that aligned with the research question and the method of analysis to prevent personal bias. Further, credibility, dependability, conformity, transferability, and authenticity are the

characteristics of a trustworthy researcher (Elo et al., 2014). I worked to build trust so that participants responded honestly.

Participants

Selecting participants for qualitative research is a decision that involves choosing those who understand the phenomenon of the study (Kuper et al., 2008; Palinkas et al., 2015). I selected the participants based on the research questions and the theoretical concept of the study. The researcher should identify suitable organizations with participants that are willing to share their views on the phenomenon of study (Yin, 2018). I sought managers who have worked for 5 years and above whose careers in management and leadership had the potential to yield insight into strategies that strengthen leader–follower relationships for improved organization performance. I selected managers from an oil-servicing organization based in Port Harcourt city Nigeria to participate in the study. The selected managers were knowledgeable and willing to share their experiences to benefit the study.

To gain access to the participants, I obtained approval from the Walden University Institutional Review Board (IRB; approval no. xxxxxx). Then I visited the organization's HR department to explain my intentions and gave the HR manager the letter of cooperation for approval to reach the appropriate participants who fit the eligibility criteria of my study. I distributed the invitation letters and informed consent forms from Walden IRB to the chosen participants. The informed consent includes the purpose of the study, privacy of research individuals, possible risks and benefits, and withdrawal rights, making it a vital part of the ethical research (Naci & Ioannidis, 2013)

as well as explaining why the research is important for the business community (Nel et al., 2015). I asked all participants who agreed to participate to sign the consent form to confirm their participation after which I arranged for an interview.

I allowed the participants to know they can choose not to reply to questions they are not comfortable with. It is important to inform participants that they have the right not to respond to uncomfortable questions (Hennink et al., 2015). It is also important to use a medium that will allow the participants to trust and be comfortable with the researcher while sharing their views (Kornbluh, 2015). This allows the participants the opportunity to give reliable information (Guillemin et al., 2016). Further, I allowed the participants to choose a suitable place, date, and time for the interview (see Yin, 2018). Additionally, to support the credibility of the results, the researcher should use member checking (Elo et al., 2014; Marshall & Rossman, 2016). I returned the results to the participants to check for bias and accuracy of their responses and make corrections where necessary. This action helped validate the correct interpretation of the data.

Research Method and Design

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that organizational leaders use to strengthen leader–follower relationships. The subsections include a summary and explanation of my reasons for selecting the research method and design for this study.

Research Method

Before undergoing a study, researchers need to select a method that supports their research purpose from the three research methods: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed

methods (Yin, 2018). I selected the qualitative methodology as the research method for this study. Researchers use qualitative methods to acquire openly and understand from the experience the context of a particular topic (Rosenthal, 2016). The qualitative method is used to suggest perceptions that challenge assumed theories' interpretation and expose new theoretical directions (Bansal et al., 2018). Qualitative researchers use open-ended questions and field notes to draw both participant comments and contextual data to contribute to rich, thick data (Levitt et al., 2018).

In contrast, the quantitative research method is used to test the hypothesis by analytically collecting numerical data to answer the research questions (Hesse-Biber, 2016). Quantitative research uses numerical, measurable data to prove or invalidate a hypothesis (Rahi, 2017). The mixed research method combines quantitative and qualitative data to support several research questions or aid consistency (Mason, 2018; Saunders et al., 2019). A mixed research method integrates quantitative and qualitative analysis by combining the power of numbers and stories (Pluye & Hong, 2014). The research did not test hypotheses nor measure and analyze variables to get results, therefore the quantitative method was not a fit method for the study. I also did not choose the mixed method for this study because there are no quantitative aspects to be measured in the study. The qualitative method was most appropriate for my study to explore leadership strategies for improving leader–follower relationships. The qualitative method is appropriate when a researcher wants to explore a precisely real-world context (Yin, 2018).

Research Design

There are five qualitative approaches, which consist of the case study, ethnography, narrative, and phenomenology (Johnson & Christensen, 2014). A case study design was the best methodology to explore the strategies organizational leaders use to strengthen leader–follower relationships. The qualitative single case study design is used to characterize the essential test of a considerable theory and to explore a phenomenon surrounded by real-life issues, and the multiple case study follows a reproduction, not a sampling (Yin, 2018). The case study design demonstrates the fundamental relationship between the involvement and outcome of an organization rather than the experience of the participants (Fusch et al., 2017).

Narrative research centers on asking questions about the life experiences of an individual and discussing the meaning of the experience with the individual (Byrne, 2017). My study was not focused on the life experience of an individual; therefore, the narrative design was not appropriate for my study. The phenomenological research design is used in a qualitative study to understand the unity of lived experiences of a particular group of people to arrive at a description of the nature of the situation (Flynn & Korcuska, 2018), but my study was not focused on the experiences of leaders. The ethnography design is used to observe real-life environmental interactions and struggles (Mason, 2018). I did not use the ethnography design because my study was not focused on leaders' daily struggles and interactions.

Data saturation is achieved when enough information to support the study has been gathered and no further information can be gotten from the data and still can be

applied to other similar circumstances (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Researchers continue to gather data until data saturation (Braun & Clarke, 2019). To achieve data saturation in qualitative research, the researcher should use random sampling of various participants using questions related to the research topic (Tran et al., 2017). It is important that the researcher selects the right group of participants and uses structured interview questions to collect information from multiple participants as are the method to reach data saturation (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Again, an appropriate and adequate sample size enables data saturation (Morse, 2015). I intended to attain saturation by interviewing 14 organizational leaders from an oil-servicing company, which made a proper sample to help replicate the collection process.

Population and Sampling

Population

The target population for this study consisted of managers who have successfully implemented strategies that have strengthened leader–follower relationships. The aim of the study limits the population to the part of the study (Yin, 2018). It is recommended that qualitative studies require a minimum sample size of at least 12 to reach data saturation (Fugard & Potts, 2015) in a homogeneous population (Boddy, 2016). Therefore, I chose 14 managers who have successfully implemented strategies to improve leader–follower relationships. The criteria used for selection of the participants included those who (a) worked as managers for 5 years and above, (b) had careers in management and leadership that can yield insight into strategies that strengthened leader–follower relationships, (c) were not less than 30 years of age, and (d) were a strategic decision-

maker such as the procurement manager, drill manger, and the base manager in the organization.

Sampling

Sampling in qualitative research is a group of people, groups, environments, and situations that will participate in the research (Flick, 2018) and produce quality and rich data (Hennink et al., 2017). The qualitative sampling method is linked to data saturation (Malterud, et al., 2016). According to Saunders et al. (2019), there are two sampling techniques that qualitative researchers employ, probability and non-probability sampling. The probability sampling technique involves random selection while the non-probability sampling allows convenience or non-random selection allowing easy data collection (Elfil & Negida, 2017). Probability sampling is applied to quantitative research with sampling questions (Etikan & Bala, 2017). I did not use the probability technique as my study is not quantitative.

The types of non-probability sampling techniques are quota sampling, purposive sampling, volunteer sampling, and random sampling (Saunders et al., 2019). The quota sampling technique allows the researcher to select participants based on the attributes and qualities of the population for relational representation (Etikan & Bala, 2017). The quota sampling method was not used as there were no special attributes set to allow for participation. Volunteer sampling allows self-select participants to become while the random sampling technique involves identifying the target population and selecting the number of participants from the population (Mattalia et al., 2020). I did not use volunteers nor did I have the intention to randomly pick participants, therefore the

volunteer and random sampling techniques were not used.

Purposive sampling allows the researcher to select participants based on the researcher's knowledge and judgment (Basri et al., 2020) and on a specific objective that is linked to responding to the research questions (Etikan & Bala, 2017). I used the purposive sampling technique because I have targeted participants in the selected oil-servicing organization with features that are related to the scope of the study.

Data Saturation

Data saturation is used to estimate sample size in a qualitative study, it also points out when the researcher experiences repetition of information in data collection (Guest, et al., 2020). To achieve data saturation, the researcher will have to plan for a sample that meets the criteria of the research (Hennink, et al., 2017) and repetition reasoning (Yin, 2018). Saunders, et al. (2019) opined that research goals and consistency is achieved when the research participants meet eligible criteria. Flynn and Korcuska (2018) maintained that researchers can reach data saturation by applying the interview method of data collection. The aim of data saturation in research is to produce a reliable, valid, and reasonable result from the data collected (Palinkas et al., 2015).

Data saturation in qualitative research focuses on improving rigor, validity, quality, and credibility (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Hennink et al., 2017). I ensured data saturation was reached by watching out for the appearance and lessening of new themes and codes from the selected participants. The two types of data saturation are thematic saturation and theoretical saturation (Guest et al., 2020; Saunders et al., 2019). According to Fusch and Ness (2015), the thematic saturation happens when there is no

appearance of new codes or themes while the theoretical deals with no emerging of new parts of the focus theory in the analysis process. The thematic saturation, member checking, and semi-structured interviews were used to address my research question.

Ethical Research

Ethical principles are used by scholars to ensure adherence to accuracy, transparency, protection of participants, and acknowledgment of academic property (Levitt, et al., 2018). To ensure the researcher conducts ethical research, there is a need for the IRB to review and approve the research and the informed consent form (Perrault & Keating, 2018). The values that guide the researcher during the research include (a) respect for persons, (b) independence, (c) protection of defenseless and weak people, (d) beneficence, and (e) justice, where respect forms the basis for the other four (Resnik, 2018; Wester, 2011). Researchers should consider the mentioned values to conduct ethical research. Shaw and Satalkar (2018) maintained that honesty, transparency, and objectivity in research exceed wrongdoing or unlawful conduct. I made sure I treated the participants in a way that will not violate the ethical research guideline. The researcher needs to protect the human participants, ensuring that the participants are free to decide to partake in the study (Arifin, 2018).

An informed consent form was used to instruct and educate the participants about the risk, benefits, and reasons for the research allowing the participant to make a voluntary decision to participate in the research. The participants are informed through the form about the process and steps for the interview and the withdrawal process (Kidney & McDonald, 2014). Therefore, I included the informed consent form to let the

participants know that they were embarking on a voluntary decision which has its risk and benefits, and the contact of the researcher and chair for further queries, I also ensured that the participants sign the consent part of the form showing that they understood the risk and benefits of participating in the research and that they could withdraw at any time and that I will destroy the data of the participants that withdraw.

I used a password-protected computer and encrypted cloud-based backup to store the data collected for the study and I stored the hard copies of the forms and interview protocol in a well-protected place for five years after which I will destroy them to maintain confidentiality. I made sure the data were not used outside the study and that the names and organization of the participants were not included in the documents. Finally, Walden University IRB approval number for this study was included in my document.

Data Collection Instruments

I served as the primary data collection instrument to have better insight and personal access to the data of the research study. The role of the researcher as the primary data collector is essential for quality qualitative research (Mason, 2018; Yin, 2018). A qualitative researcher must use a research question to establish a proper data collection instrument (Creswell & Poth, 2016). An interview is an important instrument for data collection in a case study (Ridder, 2017), and in survey research (Saunders et al., 2019). The researcher uses a semi-structured interview with already set interview questions and probing questions to clear the interview questions during the conversation (Bernard, 2018; Goad & Jones, 2017; Yin, 2018) to get in-depth information (Saunders et al., 2019; Yin, 2018). Ufua, et al., (2020) used the semi-structured interview to examine the

application of leadership styles to address operational complexities in private

organizations in Nigeria. Dunn and Moore (2020) explored explore and describe the

learning experienced by second-year undergraduate students serving as peer mentors to

first-year students within a leadership-themed living-learning community with data

collected from a semi-structured interview. Likewise, I used the semi-structured

interviews and assessed the organizational documents to explore the strategies that

leaders in oil-servicing organizations used to strengthen a high-quality leader–follower

relationship to improve organizational performance. The researcher uses a pre-planned

interview protocol that includes the introduction, purpose, confidentiality process,

permission to record, and pattern of notetaking to gain the confidence of participants

(Durdella, 2019). I used an interview protocol (Appendix A) to guide the interview

process.

To improve the validity and reliability of the research, I used member checking

and methodological triangulation across different cases, cross-checking the extra notes,

and audio recordings. Methodological triangulation involves gathering information using

diverse options (Denzin, 1973). Triangulation is used in a qualitative study to test the

constancy of the data (Fusch et al., 2018) and member checking allows the researcher to

summarize and understand the responses of the participant, which enables the researcher

to interpret each response correctly (Thomas, 2017). According to Mayer (2015),

collecting data from three sources enables triangulation to improve the validity and

reliability of research. The data I used for triangulation includes interviews, observations,

and relevant organizational documents such as the leader and follower performance

management documents, and the organizational website.

Data Collection Technique

Data collection is an ordered-planned activity used to gather evidence and information from experienced participants to help answer the research questions (Creswell & Poth, 2016). The main data collection technique for this study is the semi-structured interview that was conducted face-to-face between the participants. The semi-structured interview is used when the researcher is required to ask probing questions while seeking to understand the opinion of the participant on leadership policies (Yin, 2018) and leadership management skills when there is a need to develop more themes (Flick, 2018). The semi-structured interview can be daunting and thought-provoking for a researcher who is new to qualitative study despite the reason for choosing this method for data collection (DeJonckheere & Vaughn, 2019). The semi-structured interview is very time-consuming, labor-intensive, and requires interviewer cleverness and skills (Newcomer et al., 2015) but the interviews are conducted only once, with a group or individual, using a planned interview question (Jamshed, 2014).

According to Newcomer et al. (2015), it is important that the researcher considers and respects the time of the participants and works towards at most one hour, so both the researcher and the participants do not get tired. I made sure that my interviews happen at a suitable time for the participants and in a quiet place free of distraction and comfortable for the participant. I drafted the questions in such a way that they will last no longer than 1 hour. The researcher should take note of comments and observations to read as interpretation and aids in the understanding of the phenomenon described by the

participants' conduct in response to the questions (Yin, 2018). I reminded the participants of the informed consent process, the interview format, the recording and note-taking, and their right to withdraw at any point before the consent forms are signed.

The audio recording interviews, allow the researchers to transcribe data that is secured, accurate, permanent, and transferable (DeFelice & Janesick, 2015). I transcribed the audio recording and notes and asked the participants to analyze the interview transcript for any inconsistencies. I performed member checking of the transcribed audio recording. Member checking is sharing the outcome of research with the participant and allowing the participants to check for errors in interpretation to ensure the credibility of the research (Candela, 2019). The researcher's summary and understanding of participant replies enable an accurate interpretation of each response (Thomas, 2017). Researchers use triangulation to support the validity and established answers to a research phenomenon from various perspectives (Flick, 2018; Fusch & Ness, 2015). I used methodological triangulation to increase the credibility of the study.

I searched the website of the organization to understand its objectives, goals, and values of the organization. I asked the participants for documents that were relevant to the study which they are willing to share. Finally, I evaluated past studies on the strategies leaders used to improve leader–follower relationships for improved organizational performance to compare my results.

Data Organization Technique

The qualitative data is made up of piles of words and observations (Johnson, et al., 2010) which can be organized and reduced into important lumps by coding regarding

their relationship (Yin, 2018). The principle for which the data of a qualitative study is organized is important (Yin, 2018). Arranging the data from the interview protocol, interview questions, field notes, and results are steps to an organization of data (Johnson, et al., 2010). After the collection of data, I stored the collected data in a password-protected laptop to secure them. I used cloud back up and external disk for data backup and a USB stick for the audio files and coding. All hard copies of relevant documents were stored on a shelf and will be destroyed after five years as instructed by the IRB regulations. Phillips and Lu (2018) described the NVivo qualitative software as a tool that can be used to import, organize, and text code data files. I used NVivo to transcribe the audio files into mp3 format, code, and groupings.

Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process of providing value and understanding of the collected data (Yin, 2018). Yin (2016) identified the following process for data analysis, compiling the data, categorizing the data, rearranging based on the theme, translating the data, and describing the emergent theme. I followed the listed order to develop the themes from the collected data. Using thematic analysis allows the researcher to label, organize, and interpret the theme developed from the collected data. Researchers use thematic analysis to label, organize, and interpret themes across a data set (Yin, 2018). Therefore, I used thematic analysis to label, organize, and interpret themes across a data set. The developed themes from the research cover all components of the whole data and offer answers to the research questions (Nowell, et al., 2017).

The thematic analysis aids the researcher to discover hidden relevant themes

within the data (Yin, 2016). To discover these themes while maintaining rigor and validity, the researcher needs to apply the following guiding principles; open-mindedness, probing to understand better, and allowing the themes to unfold thoughtfully (Sundler, et al., 2019). Using the thematic analysis, the researcher understands the value and the significance of everyday occurrences with clarity on the topic analyzed (Sundler, et al., 2019). For coding, grouping, and theme identification I used the NVivo software version 12 Pro to interpret the data accurately. Data analysis software is used to improve the coding process and theme identification in research (Swygart-Hobaugh, 2019; Yin, 2016) and produce spreadsheets while forming graphic representations of the data (Lune & Berg, 2016). The identified themes were used to compare the results of previous studies and how it relates to the literature review and conceptual framework while the grouping of the themes aided with the presentation of findings, recommendations for future studies, and conclusion of the study.

Reliability and Validity

A researcher needs to identify the reliability criteria and the validity of the findings of the research (Bryman & Bell, 2015). The reliability of a study shows that it replicates previous research methods and designs and reaches comparable results (Saunders et al., 2019). Qualitative research must establish credibility, transferability, confirmability, and dependability (Hanson, et al., 2017). In this qualitative single case study, I classified the research as credible, dependable, and transferable, thereby verifying this doctoral study as trustworthy. Confirmability in research shows that the study is trustworthy and is based on the perspective of the participants and not influenced

by the researcher Dye, et al., 2000).

Reliability

I used multiple sources to ensure the study is reliable and addressed the dependability of the study by member checking the data collected during the interview and data saturation. Member checking and data saturation are used to improve the dependability of the findings of a study (Chang, 2014). Member checking is used to verify the interpreted data to assess the trust and confirm the worthiness of the study (Birt, et al., 2016). I sent a copy of the interpreted information to the participants for review and clarification to ensure dependability. I ensured the validity of the data using triangulation from multiple sources. Triangulation is used to clear perspectives and thoughts presented during data analysis to ensure validity (Carter et al., 2014; Leung, 2015).

Validity

Validity is the measure of the relevance of the method, design, instruments, and information gather in a study (Leung, 2015). Guba and Lincoln (1989) recommended four requirements to validate qualitative research they include credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. The validity of research shows that the findings from the data collected are accurate (Shin, 2017). The findings of a study are credible when the participants confirm its authenticity (Trochim, 2006). Validity is reached when the researcher uses numerous questions to explore indications of threat to validity (Teusner, 2016). The validity of a study is threatened if data saturation is not reached (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Therefore, to ensure validity, I made sure the participants went through the

transcripts and the results to allow corrections of the information. I also ensured that while collecting data, I reached the point where no additional information is obtained.

Credibility. Credibility is attained when obtained data are thick, rich, and sufficient to support the study using member checking, peer interviewing, observations, and evidence of the sequence of data collection (Stewart et al., 2017) and ensuring that the findings of the study are based on the participants' perspectives (Marshall & Rossman, 2016). In other words, participants of a study are in a better position to decide if the findings of a study are credible (Munn et al. (2014). In addition, researchers maintain credibility by using triangulation by using multiple sources for data collection (Varpio et al., 2017). I ensured member checking and triangulation to improve the credibility of my study.

Transferability. Transferability is the extent to which the findings of the study can be used in another context (Connelly, 2016; Gill, et al., 2018) with little or no discrepancy (Gill, et al., 2018). The setting of the study is revealed to the reader if the researcher provides a full account of the research procedure and the participants (Korstjens & Moser, 2018). The interview protocol is a tool used to gather critical information about the study from the participants (Jacob & Furgerson, 2012). I gave well-detailed information about the research procedure and used the interview protocol (see Appendix A) to provide an in-depth framework of my study to enable the determination of the transferability of the findings of the study.

Confirmability. Confirmability is achieved when the participants can confirm the generated themes as their views and feelings (Connelly, 2016; Marshall & Rossman,

2016). Confirmability is maintained when the researcher concentrates on the collected data, interprets the perspective of the participants without prejudice (Korstjens & Moser, 2018), and discusses the gathered information with professionals to avoid bias (Amankwaa, 2016). I used the interview protocol (see Appendix A) as a guide to prob all the participants using the same question to capture all angles for better data analysis. I also maintained detailed field notes and discuss the themes with other professionals to maintain confirmability.

Transition

Section 2 included an explanation of the project proposal components which includes the purpose statement, the role of the researcher, participants, research method and design, population and sampling, ethical research, data collection techniques, data analysis, and the methods of reliability and validity using the selected data analysis tools. Section 3 addressed the presentation of the findings, the application to professional practice, the implication for social change, a recommendation for action, a recommendation for further study, reflections, and the conclusion.

Section 3: Application to Professional Practice and Implications for Change

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that leaders in oil-servicing organizations use to strengthen leader–follower relationships to improve organizational performance. The targeted population was initially 15 managers who had successfully implemented these strategies, but one out of the 15 managers went on vacation at the time I was given to proceed for the interview. I complied with all IRB protocols to ensure ethical standards for social science data collection were maintained. I used the interview protocol (see Appendix A) as a guide for the interview. The participants answered eight open-ended questions (see Appendix B). Five themes emerged through my analysis of the data: (a) leadership styles, (b) motivation, (c), mentoring and coaching, (d) communication method, and I follower engagement. These themes are identified by the study as the strategies to strengthen leader–follower relationships to improve organizational performance.

Presentation of the Findings

In this study, I explored the strategies that leaders in oil-servicing organizations use to strengthen leader–follower relationships to improve organizational performance, which the research question directly addressed. I conducted semistructured interviews and reviewed relevant organizational documents (e.g., the website of the organization, the leadership training records, the leadership policy records, and the financial yearbook, historical and operations documents of the organization). After reaching data saturation, I imported the audio-recording into Nvivo for transcribing, and I reviewed the transcripts to determine the clarity of information. Then I contacted participants to get clarifications

and corrections on areas that were not clear during the initial interviews. After corrections

on the transcripts, I sent the transcript to the participants for review. Upon participants'

agreement on a true reflection of their views, I imported the data into Nvivo 12 for

analysis and coding. I used codes to identify each participant (001, 002, 003, etc.) and the

documents (D1: website, D2: leadership training records, D3: leadership policy records,

D4: financial yearbook, and D5: historical and operational documents). Table 1

represents the demographic characteristics of the participants.

Table 1

Demographics for Participants

Demographic	Participants ($n = 14$)	Survey sample (%)
Gender		
Male	12	85.71
Female	2	14.29
Prefer not to answer.	0	0
Age		
35 – 44	5	35.71
45 – 54	4	28.57
55 – 64	2	14.29
65 and above	0	0
Prefer not to answer	3	21.43
Experience		
0-5 years	1	7.14
6-10 years	6	42.86
10 years and above	7	50.00

Keywords and Phrases

After analyzing the data, a list of keywords and phrases was generated from the

participants' responses, notes, and company documents. Table 2 represents the

percentages of the keywords and phrases that made up a theme. Table 3 shows the

frequency of each keyword or phrase as used by all the participants. Five themes emerged

through analysis of the data: (a) leadership styles, (b) motivation, (c), mentoring and

coaching (d) communication method, and (e) follower engagement.

Table 2

Summary of Theme Percentages

	Theme	Percentage (keywords)
Theme 1	Leadership style	29
Theme 2	Motivation	22
Theme 3	Mentoring and coaching	19
Theme 4	Communication method	16
Theme 5	Follower engagement	13

Table 3

Keyword Frequency

Keyword/Phrase	Frequency
Leadership by example	267
Team building	252
Management by objective	243
Review performances	220
Training	198
Clear and honest communication	180
Open door policy	174
Redundancy	174
Mentor-mentee and coaching	123
Building trust	120
Identifying strengths and weaknesses	116
Don't blanket all issues	109
Difficult human nature	103
Social-cultural differences	92
Motivation	89

Feedback	87
Conducive work environment	87
Protect follower interest	81
Support and encouragement	80
Constructive criticism	78
Decision making	65
Self-control	64
Face-to-face	52
Verbal warning	52
Close door talk	52
Admit mistakes	47
Empathy	46
Follow-up	41
Work pressure	38
Team purpose	37
Give room for corrections	32

Theme 1: Leadership Styles

Leadership style was the first theme that emerged from the data analysis. The theme was made up of 29% of the keywords and phrases used by the participants. Leadership style factors are the supporting elements that can influence follower performances (Sabastian, 2021). Every leader has a particular pattern they use to impact and inspire the followers to achieve the goals of an organization (Mardiani & Baekhunah, 2021). Although all participants commented on the importance of leadership style, Participants 002, 009, 011, and 013 made points on the importance to develop and strengthen leader–follower relationships for improving organizational performance. Participant 002 shared,

> One thing is to first try not to be harsh, we make our team environment a fish environment where we can have fun while working, sometimes people have their problems so I put it into considerations and allow a conducive environment that can help us work well. it is not always the stick way but sometimes we apply the carrot that motivations be used. We don't forget to manage by the organizational objective bringing together the goals and priorities of the organization through which leaders influence the followers to increase outputs.

Participant 009 stated, "the aim of everything that we do in our organization is to try to always improve on performance and ensure that while we are improving on performance, we ensure that the personnel is satisfied through leader directions and control." For Participant 011,

to be an effective leader with a good leader–follower relationship, managers need

to earn and keep their direct reports' trust through encouragement and building

confidence in them. I try to make them understand that in every challenge there is

an opportunity. I let them know that there is going to be pressure and that they

will learn on the job. I try my best to give incentives, you might not achieve it all

but there will be a show of being the best in speed, safety, and other things. I give

out jobs within the capability and competency of the individual, and above all, I

encourage you to succeed.

Similarly, Participant 012 remarked,

I walk the talk. I try to lead by example. Communicating and engaging with the

team is essential to improving follower attitude knowing fully well that leadership

is a process in which an individual influences the behavior and attitudes of other

people. Leading by example helps other people see what lies ahead and act swiftly

to counter any challenges along the way. If a group is led by a person with poor

leadership skills, the group will experience frequent conflicts as each person

wants to do things their way thereby lowering the behavioral attitude of the

followers. Again, let them know that no one is perfect by admitting to mistakes

when it occurs.

Participant 013 drew attention to the leadership style used to improve the leader–

follower relationship:

We tend to use the set objectives to delegate duties strategically, we allow the

employees to feel free to contribute to the decision-making process not letting

anyone's contribution look rejected, listen deeply to their contribution and

corrections and giving them clear and specific objectives.

Participant 014 shared a different view, stating,

My approach is basically to strengthen the strengths so that we can get more

benefits from our strengths. I give an example. Maybe somebody is very good at

facilitating things and is not good at equipment use but maybe they need the same

person for matching maintenance. So, you can either send the person on training

to strengthen the strength or develop the weak part. That's where I get that way.

That's the part that's changed some parts of my approach to it. So, I strengthen

the strengths and maximize the benefits. We won't ignore the weaknesses, but we

spend more time strengthening the strength of this individual.

Participant 005 stated that

with the organization, we find ourselves and the system that we operate I try to be

easy on myself using all involved systemin this all involved system is when we

have an objective, we let everybody know the objectives and it turns to be a

personal object. when every objective is meant to be understood, there is every

opportunity for everybody to be committed to his or her job. the first thing is all

involved, we discuss it, is it achievable, is it something, if there is going to be a

hindrance, we speak it out this gives us answers on the best way to achieve it.

A review of D3: leadership policy records showed that management by objective

and leading by example are accepted leadership styles in the organization, but it

encourages leaders to adopt other leadership styles and practice them in situations in

which they can be used. All participants also reported that the policy of the organization supports leadership by example and management by objective. They also accepted using other leadership styles to get things done. However, D1 emphasized the dangers of imitating leadership styles that might not work for the individual, stressing that leading is about genuinely using your physical leadership strengths to inspire and motivate others. The D5: historical and operational document stated that leaders have an outstanding influence on organizational performance through the special skills accorded through training. These skills help the leaders to influence the followers using established visions and objectives. Leaders are expected to delegate tasks efficiently aiming at guiding followers to produce the desired success according to the organizational goal. The organization equips the leader with the skills they need to accomplish a particular goal or objective; therefore, the leaders are expected to direct, guide, and inspire the follower into achieving their objectives too.

Theme 2: Motivation

Motivation is the second theme to emerge from the data analysis comprising 22% of the keywords and phrases used by the participants. Motivation increases the passion and urge of the follower to work with the zeal to achieve a goal (Mardiani & Baekhunah, 2021). All the participants recognized the benefit of leading by example, team building, and open-door policy as the motivational factors that developed and strengthened leader–follower relationships for improving organizational performance. Participants 001, 004, 007, 010, 011, and 013 viewed motivation as a necessary and critical factor that can influence the follower to contribute to productivity and exhibit satisfaction at work.

Motivation allows the followers to understand their responsibilities and the task that they are expected to perform. Followers' motivation is sustained when leaders create room for followers to achieve their goals (Rogelberg, 2016). Participant 001 remarked,

> Do you see; the idea of always pointing out and giving clues and words of encouragement, the small words with good incentives and good judgment on the part of a leader goes a long way to motivate the follower. Demonstrate interest in every individual, this shows them I care inspiring them into action. Another thing I do to motivate them is to allow everyone to openly communicate their vision and objectives this allows everyone to work towards helping each other achieve the objectives. If a follower sets an objective that is not smart, we put heads together to get achievable objectives. We work together to push ourselves. If they succeed, I succeed too.

Participant 004 stated,

> to improve productivity is managing by objective and managing your time well. Make good use of human resources and focus on on-the-job training and personal growth. Improve workplace conditions, offer support and set realistic goals, include and practice positive reinforcement and ensure employees feel happy by positive motivation.

Participant 007 commented,

> sometimes you send the followers on training, sometimes just allowing them to showcase their strengths so that everybody appreciates it. It's more like what you call positive reinforcement. Everybody likes what you are doing. They appreciate

it, so just to develop means to positively reinforce the strengths, one needs is also

leader recognition, recognition by management, and recognition by team

members. So, the strategy is using all motivational factors to reinforce positive

attitudes for positive trends.

Participant 011 noted,

I have clarity on what is expected of them constantly engaging with them to build

trust between myself and them getting to know their families, getting to know

how they are doing, giving them constant updates about how they are developing

the company. If any gaps need to be closed, I try to see how I can help them in

getting those gaps covered. It might be through training. It might be true

mentorship. It might even be true ensuring that they go for the right jobs to give

them what they need to build their competence, gain experience and that seems to

have them be motivated to want to do better. So that's how I do it. I bet other

managers do it in different ways.

Participant 013 remarked,

recognizing exceptional individuals builds trust between you and the followers

and helps improve their ability to work and give their all because it stands as an

act of motivation. Creating development opportunities for the followers, booking

them for different types of training and establishing clear objectives and goals of

the days' plan and measure success at the end of each task is a motivation strategy

I use.

Theme 3: Mentoring and Coaching

The third theme mentoring and coaching emerged from the data analysis having 19% of the keywords and phrases used by the participants. Followers can achieve success through constant coaching (King et al., 2021). Coaching, mentoring, and support system is used by leaders to be successful in their job (Stambaugh & Mitchell, 2018). Participant 002 reported,

coaching and mentoring programs are used to improve staff to learn new skills or boost the skills they already have. Performance coaching allows the follower to do the task by themself with little guidance from the leader not taking the work and doing it, my policy is to allow them to do the task and bring feedback to me. I get to know the follower is coached when they can do the task so well and complete it without help, I don't at some point collect the task to complete or allocate to another but I follow up and guide you to completion. So, you do your work, while I can help you to show you how to do it, and where to get information. This helps to build the follower's confidence and competency and encourages peer-to-peer learning.

In support of Participants 002, 003, 006, and 014 confirmed that effective mentoring and coaching practices build that confidence in followers allowing them to build the appropriate problem-solving skills. Participant 005 also remarked,

the organization has set up mentor-mentee and coaching programs so the followers can give progress feedback to their mentors while the mentor inspires and supports the follower to provide significant results. When coaches and

mentors give positive feedback, the followers feel they are valued by the organization and tend to impact positively to improve productivity.

Additionally, Participants 007, 010, and 012 concluded that the mentoring and coaching program allows the followers to strengthen their strengths and develop their weaknesses through training. Only the coaches know where the weaknesses lie and know the best ways to help develop these areas. The bond between the mentors and mentees increases with a positive follower progress report. Participants 002 and 012 agreed that the leaders have different coaching and mentoring styles making the followers attain career success at a different pace. These participants agreed that mentoring and coaching followers help in establishing a strong leader–follower relationship and that a mentorship and coaching program allows the coaches and mentors to identify followers that are facing problems and tend to solve the problems before it escalates.

From the relevant documents I analyzed, D2, D3, and D5 covered the mentoring and coaching aspects of the organization. It listed out that the mentor-mentee program of the organization was set up to enable everyone to get a mentor outside of his team and a coach who is a team member, this allows the individual to focus on their growth and contributes more to the teamwork which makes the team more effective. It is a self-development pattern for the mentor and boosts the organizational skill development program. Coaching and mentoring are used to help the staff of the organization to acquire innovative abilities and develop existing skills. In all, it is the culture of the organization to build trust, relation, guidance, and expand capabilities through mentoring and coaching.

Theme 4: Communication Method

Communication method emerged as the fourth theme in the data analysis and made up of 16% of the keywords and phrases used by the participants. All participants have agreed that communication method is important in all conversations. For effective communication, whether good or bad the atmosphere must be conducive, not tense, and the information must be conveyed to aid understanding. The organization treats information as critical, so they communicate verbally, written, and through email.

Participants 007 and 009 noted that an effective leader should not just talk because he is leading the team but should give a listening ear to other peoples' views of the situation. The saying goes we have two ears and one mouth, therefore, listen more than you speak. In addition, Participant 011 noted,

first is we try not to be antagonistic, delivering bad news is tough. It's even harder when you don't agree with the message or decision you're communicating. The different categories but whether the news is bad or good you will have to be real, don't say it when the person is under pressure, many people have the impulse to try to spin bad news into a positive, get to the point, be clear, and allow your follower forward-looking assurances. With me, clarity is just what communication needs.

Participant 005 responded that "every case is unique whatever is needed to be communicated must be communicated in honesty."

Participants 001, 012, 013, and 014 mentioned that using appropriate words and tone to communicate removes misunderstanding and demotivates the followers.

Therefore, they opined that the leader should communicate goals, objectives, and expectations properly if they need a productive follower. If any information is passed, give room for feedback. Participant 001 said, "only followers that effectively complete their tasks can be productive and individual productivity creates room for collective improvement for the organization only clear communication will lead to effective task completion." Participant 007 added, "constructive feedback and criticism is a strong communication method, arguing that praise can be done publicly while criticism should be done privately behind a closed door." The review of documents D2 and D3 shows that the accepted method for communication is verbal, written, phone calls, emails, and open meetings.

Theme 5: Follower Engagement

The last theme that emerged from the data analysis is follower engagement. Follower engagement was made up of 13% of the keywords and phrases used by the participants. Follower engagement is the opposite of job stress which encourages the follower to find meaning in work, company culture, and policies and motivates the follower to increase productivity (Riyanto, et al., 2021). The leader–follower relationship improves the work engagement of the followers in strength, commitment, concentration (Rabenu et al., 2019). Constant appreciation encourages follower engagement and dedication to improve organizational productivity (Truss et al., 2013). All participants reported that engaging followers have helped the organization build trust, culture, communication style, and leadership style. These factors have helped improve organizational performance. Participant 008 commented,

My company values followers that show determination and self-confidence and this gives me insight on how to get my team to work accordingly by motivating them to be determined to deliver every task successfully and on time. I allow my followers to balance their work-life and family life this makes them concentrate at work". In his opinion, participant 005 added "treating followers justly and fair positively affect their confidence at work. I try building follower trust through team-building activities and it helps my team succeed. I motivate my followers individually and collectively and it has been a good engagement strategy for me.

Participant 001 noted,

paying attention to your followers and their request goes a long way to keep them focused, I practice the open-door policy which allows everyone to come and lay their complaint or concern which I look into or escalate to my boss. This strategy increases follower trust and makes them know they are valued.

Participant 009 had this to say,

I work to understand my followers' strengths and weaknesses this helps me allocate a task to the right person, it increases their trust knowing fully well I have their interest at heart. I also do recognition which encourages them to be loyal and satisfied with their job. Motivation makes them engaged.

Participant 011 reported

I make sure my followers are booked for training on time, I believe they will be more engaged when they are motivated through development. The organization makes a plan for several pieces of training a follower should take to develop their

skills and competency because competency counts and motivates the individual to put their best.

To support this Participant 014 noted that

One way my organization motivates and engages followers is through approved training and courses. I also allow the followers to air their views, I will rather say my followers have a voice and we constructively exchange information in the team.

Documents D2 and D3 recommended that leaders should support recognition and reward schemes, giving a listening ear to complaints, teamwork, quarterly performance appraisal, constructive feedback, team member training courses to improve the knowledge, skills, and abilities of followers. These activities according to D3 creates value, build trust, source of inspiration, and motivation for the individual. On-the-job training is one of the tools leaders use to develop and motivate followers to put in their best (Ahmad et al., 2014).

In summary, the participants opined that every leader has a unique style that works for them. Every leader has a particular pattern they use to impact and inspire the followers to achieve the goals of an organization (Mardiani & Baekhunah, 2021). Leadership strategies are dynamic, leaders should fine-tune their strategies to suit everyone. Leaders ought to act outside their normal temperament to naturally work with any set of human beings. Adjust always to bring out the best in your followers. Using the management by objective approach leaders should set up actions and plans that will enable the followers to achieve the set objectives. The leadership approach is establishing

and articulating the vision, goals, and objectives with an attainable action plan (Shapira-Lishchinsky & Levy-Gazenfrantz, 2015). The leaders should encourage the followers to be part of the decision-making as it allows the followers to put in their best since the idea is theirs. Followers should be encouraged to be part of the decision process to increase follower engagement (Raj & Zaid, 2014).

The leader needs to operate an open-door policy to allow constant engagement, feedback, and communication between the leader and the followers. It is also important for a leader to see the followers as family, build trust and confidence, create a conducive environment, use acceptable communication methods, and set clear objectives to create a binding bond with the followers. Leaders should identify and understand the individual weaknesses and strengths of the followers and introduce incentives that will motivate the followers. Further, they should build, encourage, and guide followers to success. The styles and strategies used by leaders enable the followers to feel deep pleasure, satisfaction, and respect for the work they do (Choi et al., 2017). Leaders are therefore encouraged to engage followers in activities that will encourage them to work on new tasks to enable them to develop their competencies which will lead to improving the performance of the organization. The leaders who engage and encourage followers by implementing strategies that improve organizational performance are significantly rewarded (Oppong et al., 2017). The findings of this doctoral study support the literature found in the literature review and conceptual frameworks on effective business practices that identified the strategies for strengthening leader–follower relationships for improving organizational performance.

Applications to Professional Practice

The findings presented the strategies that leaders in oil-servicing organizations use to strengthen a high-quality leader–follower relationship to improve organizational performance. This study can be beneficial to organizational leaders especially those in oil-servicing organizations. Organizational leaders who can include these strategies in varying leadership situations can strengthen a high-quality leader–follower relationship that can improve organizational performance. Likewise, organizational leaders who can adapt these strategies will remain relevant in their practice. Businesses evolve and expand in the demand to strengthen leader–follower relationships for improving organizational productivity (Sturm et al., 2016).

There is a link between the conceptual framework, the literature review, and the findings of this study. The findings of the study show that understanding the leader–follower relationship allows organizational leaders the opportunity to exploit the strength of their followers to improve organizational performance. The link within the conceptual framework is that the leader–follower relationship focuses on the relationship between the leaders and followers of an organization and is connected to improving organizational performance (Gerstner & Day, 1997). Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) opined that the LMX theory is associated with measuring the leader–follower relationship across the organization to determine the influence of the relationships in promoting organizational performance. Also, the review of the literature recommends that leaders must be determined to accomplish the organizational goals through constant implementation of strategies that will enable the followers to be engaged towards improved performance

(Keeys & Huemann, 2017). A high-quality leader–follower relationship is characterized by a true alliance between the leaders and the followers by the collaboration that helps organizational leaders to achieve organizational objectives by linking job performance to increase the value of the followers to improve organizational performance. To keep dedicated and loyal followers, organizational leaders must reconsider the strategies they use to successfully engage and motivate trusted followers (Khedhaouria et al., 2017). Leaders with good communication skills boost follower confidence because they feel they are appreciated (Silvius et al., 2017). Leader strategy includes the skills and steps the leader uses to influence the followers collectively and individually to improve desired performance.

The findings identified five strategies to strengthen the leader–follower relationship for improved organizational performance namely, (a) adopting a unique leadership style, (b) follower motivation, (c) effective communication (d) mentoring and coaching, and (e) follower engagement practices. Each strategy will be explained according to its applicability within the professional practice. The participants for this study observed the relevance of leadership style as a factor that aids the strengthening of the leader–follower relationship for improved organizational performance. The leadership style factors are the supporting elements that can influence follower performances (Sabastian, 2021). The participants reported that the leaders' adopted style is linked to the followers' productivity. Every leader has a particular pattern they use to impact and inspire the followers to achieve the goals of an organization (Mardiani & Baekhunah, 2021). In the agreement, the participants commented that leaders should adopt a unique

leadership style that works for them.

Follower motivation was identified as a necessary and critical factor that can influence the follower to contribute to productivity and exhibit satisfaction at work. Motivation allows the followers to understand their responsibilities and the task that they are expected to perform. Motivating the follower encourages the follower to overcome complexity, stimulates high-quality leader–follower relationships, improves follower engagement, and stimulates followers' keenness to be more productive (Hirschi & Valero, 2017). The participants identified leadership by example, management by objectives, recognition, incentives, team building, training, empathy, ready to coach and mentor followers, engaging followers according to competencies, involvement in decision making, clear communication, measuring performances, and protecting follower interest as means to motivate followers. The motivational factors that influence productivity in a follower are clear communication, goal identification, teamwork, work based on agreement, overtime, leading by example, love/sense of belonging, high-quality leader–follower relationship, and supply of resources (Osabiya, 2015). The reward system and policies are used to motivate the followers to increase their involvement, determination, and performance (Ali & Anwar, 2021a). The participants agreed that coaching and mentoring programs are learning processes used to improve and boost staff's old skills and learn new skills. Mentoring and coaching are two powerful interventions that organizations can implement when attempting to improve their outcomes in human performance (Viera, 2021). Mentoring and coaching is a life-long learning process that aids human behavioral change, development, and growth.

Performance coaching allows the follower to do the task by themself with little guidance from the leader and helps build follower confidence and feedback process. Through coaching and mentoring leaders can also build confidence and perform followers (Woo, 2017). Mentoring and coaching is a life-long learning process that aids human behavioral change, development, and growth (Garvey, et al., 2021).

The participants noted that effective communication strengthens the leader–follower relationships for improved performance. Muhammad and Muhammad (2017) noted that the leader's communication style plays a very significant role in shaping employee behaviors. The leader–follower relationship relates to task performance which is strengthened by work structure, team dynamics, and frequent communication by leaders (Walthall & Dent, 2016).   Whether the information to be passed to the follower is good or bad the atmosphere must be conducive, non-tensed, and the information must be conveyed to aid understanding. Leaders through communication inspire and motivate their followers to aim toward improved organizational performance (Jiang et al., 2018). The participants identified follower engagement as another strategy that can strengthen a high-quality leader–follower relationship for improved organizational performance. The participants claimed that engaging followers has helped the organization build trust, culture, communication style, and leadership style and influenced the followers into engaging in activities that improve the performance of the organization. The leader–follower relationship is influenced by the follower's commitment, trust, respect, and loyalty, and the leader's perception of the follower (Munshi & Haque, 2017) and boosts follower engagement and commitment to the organization and in turn increase

organizational performance (Min-Seong & Dong-Woo, 2017). The level of trust, interaction, support, and rewards are the characteristics that strengthen the leader–follower relationship through understanding and a good working relationship that stimulates the follower engagement and capability to work proficiently to improve job performance (Jyoti & Bhau, 2015).

A high-quality leader–follower relationship is created in a conducive work environment where leaders lead by example, encourage and support team building, manage followers by objective, operate an open-door policy, practice motivation, protect follower interest, and allow constructive criticism and feedback. The findings of this doctoral study incorporated business practices that combine leadership style, follower motivation, effective communicating, mentoring, coaching, and follower engagement. Organizational leaders may strengthen high-quality leader-employee relationships that improve organizational performance using these practices. The result of this study suggests a leader who has confidence in or her ability to carry out necessary leadership behaviors, such as leadership by example, team building, management by objective, review performances, training, clear and honest communication, open-door policy, and motivating others may likely be successful in strengthening high-quality the leader–follower relationship for improved organizational performance.

Implications for Social Change

Understanding the strategies to strengthen the leader–follower relationship for improved organizational performance is paramount for positive social change. Organizational leaders that implement a high-quality leader–follower relationship may

have stronger organizational performance. Stronger organizational performance may allow the organization to increase the number of employees hired from the region building a stronger community and allowing the individuals a greater means to give back to and support their local community sustaining the economy. A high-quality leader–follower relationship may allow individuals to create, develop, and build their community by refining the well-being of personnel in an organization. This may in turn bring a positive social change in the organization and community which contributes to the value, dignity, and development of individuals, communities, organizations, and cultures. The findings, conclusions, and recommendations from this doctoral study provided organizational leaders with an understanding of how to positively increase followers' involvement and contribution to improve organizational performance and to satisfy the needs of their families, and the community.

Recommendations for Action

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that leaders in oil-servicing organizations use to strengthen a high-quality leader–follower relationship to improve organizational performance. While I have explored this research with a focus on leaders working with the oil-servicing company, leaders from various work environments could benefit from the study findings. My recommendations extend to the private and social sectors, as well as community-based members, especially the current and future organizational leaders who are interested in understanding the strategies that organizational leaders use to strengthen a high-quality leader–follower relationship to improve organizational performance.

The first recommendation is that organizational leaders must develop a high-quality leader–follower relationship with their followers to improve organizational performance. Leaders must adapt and recognize the unique leadership style that works for them. The objective of every leader must be to increase organizational performance, and this can be achieved through follower development, leadership by example, encouraging and motivating the followers to be more productive using the incentive and reward system, involving the followers in decision making, and encouraging followers to complete a task on their own. The leaders are expected to be resourceful, observant, and appreciative of every follower, and assist followers to realize their objectives and goals. Leaders must create ideas from the objectives of the organization, manage followers by objective, fervently own set objectives and persistently drive followers to improve organizational performance. Current and future organizational leaders are required to perform empower and support followers with working tools to ensure improved organizational performance and inculcate a plan of action to develop a culture that strengthens the leader–follower relationship to enable them to challenge problems affecting followers to increase their performance.

The second recommendation is for organizational leaders to create a conducive work environment that will promote workplace safety, growth, and goal achievement encouraging followers to participate actively in work activities that will improve organizational performance. The followers participating fully in work activities will improve follower engagement and create an environment interested in the improvement of organizational performance. Organizational leaders must manage and support

followers through task performance and provide engaging feedback reports on task progress and any possible barriers affecting follower performance. Mentorship and coaching programs should be encouraged to allow the followers to learn and relearn while on the job. Inculcating the mentoring and coaching program allows the followers to reinforce their strengths and develop their weaknesses. Organizational leaders must understand that engaging followers helps organizations build trust, culture, communication style, and leadership style that improves organizational performance.

The call for action is for organizational leaders to endeavor to understand the strength, weaknesses, and behavioral patterns of the followers this will help them adopt the best leadership style that can influence the followers to improve organizational performance. Applying these recommendations should contribute to leader experience, leadership skills, and leadership style that will improve leadership knowledge. This research and its findings will be shared with the organizational leaders of other sectors, the state civil service commission, other professionals, and researchers through training and conferences. I plan to submit this work to leadership and business journals. I will send the summary of the findings of this study to the 14 participants through email.

Recommendations for Further Research

I used a qualitative single case study to explore the strategies that leaders in oil-servicing organizations use to strengthen a high-quality leader–follower relationship to improve organizational performance. One limitation of the study is the use of a single case study which limits the external validity of the study. According to Singh (2014), a single case study poses the limitation of external validity, which is often a major source

of criticism within case study research. Another limitation of this study includes the sample size, which is small given that data for this qualitative case study is confined to only managers of an oil-servicing company in the southern part of Nigeria. Therefore, future researchers can expand the study to different geographical locations, several business sectors, and a more diverse and larger population to explore whether other organizations use the same strategies to strengthen the leader–follower relationship for improved organizational performance and add to the knowledge of the existing literature. I propose three recommendations for future research.

The first recommendation for future research is to conduct the research using the quantitative method. The quantitative method will allow the future researcher to make conclusions from the deductive point of view. The core idea being explored by the present research study was to uncover the experiences and views of the participants within the context of the leader–follower relationship on organizational performance. Therefore, empirical research could test a hypothesis of the impact of project success using hard or soft leadership styles. Further, expanded research could test the hypotheses of the five themes identified in this study to determine which would significantly strengthen the leader–follower relationship for improved organizational performance.

Secondly, future researchers could integrate the followers' views on strategies to strengthen the leader–follower relationship for improved organizational performance to have a broader scope of contribution in the study. Thirdly, future researchers could consider comparing leadership strategies across different organizational cultures. Different organizational cultures may influence the strategies for strengthening the

leader–follower relationship for improved organizational performance.

Reflections

I started the DBA program journey with lots of expectations, my expectations were brought to a stop when I had to drop out due to a health issue of a family member. I was able to come back after 3 years filled with expectations as I had worked as a project manager for 2 years. After my first residency, I became more excited about the journey. I began to think about my dissertation topic and the faculty members that were at the residency elaborated more on what is expected and how to carry on with the study. I immediately joined the second residency which also was virtual where I was able to establish the reason for this study with earnest anticipation of the result and findings.

The coursework provided the foundation and foothold for the expedition. I would like to share my personal experiences, struggles, and happy moments during the dissertation process hoping that it will be the bridge to all gaps to others through the insights I will provide. I have come a long way having completed the dissertation through thick and thin. The dissertation stages were challenging, whenever I feel I am getting unfocused I move back to read my goal: My career goal is to become a professional project manager. "That being committed to motivating and helping other project manages to become effective leaders". My goal kept me motivated and committed with diligence. My commitment to attain my set goal and the support of my faculty members have made me enjoy all stages of the dissertation from start to finish.

This research has added immeasurably to my academic knowledge I also learned valuable skills and lessons that will be beneficial to my professional career. One of the

most interesting lessons learned through the dissertation particularly was the reasoning required to analyze a situation. During the research, I noted that it is important that I provide clear and thorough analysis to the reader, and how to dispute points in a modest, rational, and comprehensible way. So, I concluded that clear and thorough analysis can provide solutions to problems while disputing points logically. This is a good problem-solving skill I acquired, which will be used in my professional and academic life. My perspective of the ethics, methodologies, ways of conducting research, and my role as a researcher expanded and therefore makes me understand the usefulness of ethics, methodologies, and roles in offering competent and quick solutions to future professional problems.

The 14 participants in this qualitative single case study were experienced and knowledgeable about the topic and highlighted the value and implication of strengthening high-quality leader–follower relationships for increased organizational performance. The findings from this doctoral study enhanced my knowledge about the strategies for strengthening high-quality leader–follower relationships. Understanding the strategies to strengthen high-quality leader–follower relationships for improved organizational performance can provide me with a competitive advantage in my current leadership role and future business endeavors. Finally, I am fulfilled and pleased to have accomplished my goal which is academic achievement and the opportunity to improve in organizational leadership.

Conclusion

The purpose of this qualitative single case study was to explore the strategies that

leaders in oil-servicing organizations use to strengthen a high-quality leader–follower relationship to improve organizational performance. The LMX theory was the conceptual framework used for this research study. The research method and design determined the research scope, the data collection approach, and the analysis technique. For the data collection, I interviewed 14 organizational leaders of an oil-servicing organization and reviewed the organization's website, leadership training records, leadership policy records, financial yearbook, and historical and operational documents. I triangulated the data to validate the evidence obtained from the different sources and conducted member checking, and I used the interview protocol (Appendix A) to give credibility to this research. For data analysis, I used the Nvivo version 12 pro software, and five themes emerged through analysis of the data: (a) leadership styles (b) motivation, (c), mentoring and coaching (d) communication method, and (e) follower engagement.

This study's findings align with current literature and the LMX theory. The findings revealed that organizational leaders employ these themes as strategies to strengthen leader–follower relationships for improved organizational performance. All participants agreed that every leader has an exceptional leadership style and strategies that strengthen leader–follower relationships and that leadership strategies are dynamic. The leaders need to improve the strategies that strengthen leader–follower relationships by simply modifying strategies to suit everyone, encouraging organizational performance, and expanding individual career opportunities. The call for action is for organizational leaders to understand the strength, weaknesses, and behavioral patterns of the followers to adopt the best behavioral patterns that the leader can use to influence the

followers to improve organizational performance. This allows the organizational leaders to positively influence social change within the social sector through the mutual alliance to enhance the organization and communities. Finally, with strengthened leader–follower relationships, the organizational performance will improve and sustain the economy of the communities.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

Date of Interview _____

Interviewee Code Number: _____

Interview Protocol
Specific Business Problem   The specific business problem is that some organizational mid-level managers lack the strategies to sustain positive leader–follower relationship to improve organizational performance.
Research Question and Research Goal   What strategies do leaders in oil-servicing organizations use to develop and sustain high-quality leader–follower relationships for improving organizational performance? My goal with this project is to establish the strategies for strengthening leader–follower relationships for improving organizational performance.
Participant Criteria   Participants for this study are: (a) the business leaders should have worked as managers for five years and above,   (b) the business leaders whose careers in management and leadership have the potential to yield insight into strategies that strengthened leader–follower relationships   (c) the business manager should not be less than thirty years of age, and   (d) the manager should also be a strategic decision-maker such as the procurement manager, drill manger, and the base manager in the organization and meet the criteria for the scope of the study.

What I will do	**What I will say**
I will welcome the interviewee, introduce myself, and describe the reason for the meeting.	Good morning, sir/Ma. I identified you as a leader with experience and ever willing to share your experience with me. As I explained earlier to you while we scheduled this meeting, I am Onyinyechi Odiaka, the assistant. Director of the electrical department of the Enugu State Ministry of works and I am currently running my doctoral degree with Walden University, I am working on my final research which focuses on establishing the strategies for strengthening leader–follower relationships for improving organizational performance. The study does not aim at evaluating your leadership strategies but to learn more about the strategies that are aiming to improve the sustainable relationships between leaders and followers and the strategies that are not.
• Follow up with probing questions.	1. Interview question What strategies do you use to develop and strengthen high-quality leader–follower relationships to improve organizational performance?

• More probes for in-depth answers • Watch out for body movement, facial expressions, eye contact, and inconsistencies.	2. Interview question What were the major challenges you encountered while implementing the strategies to strengthen a high-quality leader–follower relationship within your organization?
	3. Interview question How did you address the key challenges to implementing the strategies to develop and strengthen high-quality leader–follower relationships in your organization?
	4. Interview question What strategies do you as a leader use to assist your followers to develop and improve follower attitudes to work that will strengthen or lower the quality leader–follower relationships?
	5. Interview question What strategies do you use to communicate good or bad news to your followers?
	6. Interview question What strategies do you use to encourage and enable followers to increase productivity for improved organizational performance??
	7. Interview question What strategies do you use to identify a follower with a personal problem that reduces individual productivity?
	8. Interview question What strategies do you use to improve your direct reports' performance??
	9. Interview question What additional information would you want to share concerning the strategies that you use to develop and strengthen a high-quality leader–follower relationship for improving organizational performance?
Wrap up interview appreciate the participant	Great! Thank you. I hope that you enjoyed this interview and I want to assure you that your contribution will help leaders of organizations across the nation to understand the strategies for strengthening leader–follower relationships for improving organizational performance. Your time is very much appreciated.
Schedule follow-up member checking interview	Would you want to share your contact information with me to reach you after the study is completed? This is because the summary of interview data will be returned to you to check for accuracy and resonance, your answers, and your experiences. I will also be informing you if there will be a need for a second interview to clarify and discuss updates.

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1. What strategies do you use to develop and strengthen high-quality leader–follower relationships to improve organizational performance?

2. What were the major challenges you encountered while implementing the strategies to strengthen a high-quality leader–follower relationship within your organization?

3. How did you address the key challenges to implementing the strategies to develop and strengthen high-quality leader–follower relationships in your organization?

4. What strategies do you as a leader use to assist your followers to develop and improve follower attitudes to work that will strengthen or lower the quality leader–follower relationships?

5. What strategies do you use to communicate good or bad news to your followers?

6. What strategies do you use to encourage and enable followers to increase productivity for improved organizational performance?

7. What strategies do you use to identify a follower with a personal problem that reduces individual productivity?

8. What strategies do you use to improve your direct reports' performance?

9. What additional information would you want to share concerning the strategies that you use to develop and strengthen a high-quality leader–follower relationship for improving organizational performance?

Appendix C: Demographic Survey

Please fill in the blanks spaces and place an X to the phrase that best matches your response.

Participant Code _____

Email Address _____

Date _____

Gender

    A. Male ☐

    B. Female ☐

    C. Prefer not to answer ☐

Age

    A. 35-44 ☐

    B. 45-54 ☐

    C. 55-64 ☐

    D. 65 or above ☐

    E. Prefer not to answer ☐

Experience as a manager

    A. 0-5 years ☐

    B. 6-10 years ☐

    C. 10 years and above ☐