'The perception of ego in leader-follower dynamics'

<u>DISSERTATION</u>

Master of Business Administration

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ABSTRACT

Leadership, and the multifaced phenomenon as to what constitutes "good leadership" continues to dominate industries and the literary arena (Feser, Mayol and Srinivasan, 2015). The topic of ego within a leadership context, however, is subject to varied and sparse commentary and predominantly resides within the context of psychological studies. Critically, little is discussed on the perception and impact of ego within a leadership setting and the effects this has on leader-follower dynamics.

The purpose of this dissertation therefore is to examine, in-depth, the perception of ego in leader-follower relations with the aim of determining what role and effect ego has on such dynamics. Accordingly, the author has conducted a comprehensive analysis of secondary data and drawn upon empirical evidence within the existing literature. Supplemental to this was the collection of primary data by way of qualitative based semi-structured interviews with seventeen participants from across five separate industries. To that extent, a mono-method inductive approach was opted to critically analyse the primary data set in order to explore participant perspectives and identify any patterns of commonalities or differences from across the industries. The findings from the primary data were then synthesised with the secondary data for the purposes of the author developing matters of relevance pertinent to the subject area and to address and fill the identified research gaps.

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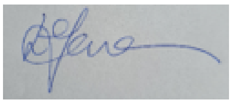
Signature	

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CHAPTER 1 - INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH TOPIC

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE DISSERTATION SUBJECT

Literature pertaining to the topic of ego within a leadership context is predominantly negative and correlates significantly with cynical connotations such as narcissism (McCollum, 2018), inflated egos (Whomsley, 2020), and autocratic behaviours (De Cremer, 2006), so ordinarily, when one thinks of the word ego, this can certainly ring true. Additionally, the literature strongly exhibits the negative side of the debate, evincing concepts such as the cost of emotional waste in organisations because of ego driven leaders (Jena and Pradham, 2018), risks of legal exposure because of narcissistic CEOs (McCollum, 2018), or how the false parameters of an ego-based environment can erode leader effectiveness (Witt, 2014). Evidently, there is much debate, and easily sourced content, to support the negative side of the argument. Conversely, any discussion on the positive side of the argument exists but is less prevalent and propels some thought in relation to the perception of ego, and to what extent therefore, negative connotations can be dispelled. Equally, explorations as to the role of the follower in influencing apparent ego-like behaviour remains significantly absent within existing literature but arguably, is a consequential enough factor to warrant serious consideration.

1.1.1. CHANGE THE LENS

Accordingly, part of this study seeks to illuminate a different angle, namely, a positive lens on the otherwise controversial topic in determining to what extent this might alter the status quo. Having observed the presence of apparent egos for many CEO/senior leaders within an organisational context, a pattern seems to have emerged whereby Malone (2004) suggests that a strong ego can actually be deemed as an essential component for success in navigating complex issues, or indeed, in leading organisations to success. Contrarily, it would seem that the automatic perspective of the employee however remains cynical whilst referring to bosses demonstrative of such characteristics as 'egotistical' (Fitzell, 1970). The intent of the author therefore is an exploration into the underlying causes propelling said characteristics that ordinarily underpin such negative connotation.

1.1.2. LEADER-FOLLOWER INTERDEPENDENCY

Critically, literature pertaining to the topic of leadership is monumental and continues to dominant literary discussions far and wide. Comparably though, literature on the topic of followership is somewhat limited. To that extent, the role of the follower in influencing (and perhaps mirroring) ego-like behaviour also appears untouched. Yet, leader-follower relations are just that: a two-way dynamic. Therefore, to what extent are leaders' ego-like characteristics influenced by ego-propelling followers? Accordingly, Kotter (1978) first broached the subject of power-oriented dynamics and the extent by which managerial success was, to some degree, reliant on these dynamics and the strong correlation of subordinate dependency. Move forward to 2006 and discussions of interdependency has developed as being a key component of effective leadership (Martin, 2006). To that extent, the author seeks to reverse the lens onto the follower to explore the extent to which followership is a key influence in leader-follower dynamics.

1.2 RESEARCH GAPS

The link between employee perception of ego and the lens on ego's positive traits

The topic of ego is predominantly affixed with negative connotations that usually dominate one's perception within such discussions, possibly arising because the literature exhibits ego with traits such as narcissism, fear, toxicity, deceit, etc. The research however also alludes to some positive concepts such as ego-strength, humility, self-awareness, adaptability, yet these do not appear to be illuminated to the same extent that negative connotations are, resulting in the perception of ego remaining predominantly averse. An apparent gap therefore exists by which to emphasise the positive correlations in an attempt to change the status quo.

The link between followers' influence on ego-driven behaviour and how this is perceived

The main focus between leader and follower relationships resides predominantly with the leader and the leader's role in the dynamics of this relationship. Furthermore, there is anecdotal evidence on the importance of the follower's role, but importantly the influence of the follower on leader behaviours is, by and large, disregarded. Accordingly, there appears to be a distinct gap to this effect within the literature that warrants consideration.

1.3 RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

According to Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill (2019), research objectives are premised upon a series of investigative questions by which to operationalize the research question(s). In other words, the process behind **how** you intend to answer the research question. Additionally, a distinct set of objectives, according to Kestemont (2015), is necessary for theory-development research and enhances the likelihood of the research aims being supplemented by the appropriate methodologies. Essentially, the objectives equate to the fundamental linchpin that supports and strengthens the structure of the research. Accordingly, the author has utilised two underpinning frameworks by which to support the objectives, namely John C. Maxwell's 'Five Levels of Leadership' theory and Daniel Goleman's 'Emotional' Intelligence model. These models were specifically selected owing to the direct correlation between the two dominant themes within the research, namely leadership and ego, and in that regard, the following objectives were devised for the purposes of gaining sufficient insight and perspective from the participating individuals: -

Objective 1:
To investigate Participants' understanding of leadership and leadership effectiveness.

Objective 2:
To investigate how Participants have been influenced by past experiences and to evaluate their ability to inspire and motivate others.

Objective 3:
To investigate if Participants' leadership abilities invoke controlling or collaborative traits.

Objective 4:
To examine Participants' comprehension of ego and how this influences their behaviour.

Objective 5:

To determine what impact emotional intelligence has on balancing ego.

1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The all-important research question:....*'The perception of ego in leader-follower dynamics"*

The author first became interested in this topic during the first module of the Master of Business Administration (MBA) curriculum, Enterprise Management. Notably, it is the discussions on the topic of entrepreneurial personalities that led the author to observe and witness the emergence of relative patterns within other modules, which finally determined the direction of the author's research topic. Furthermore, sustained interest in the topic was encouraged by the author's own senior leadership position within a medium-sized law firm, which provided the opportunity to observe the numerous personalities, traits and behaviours of individuals, particularly at leader level, in real time. Accordingly, the author's curiosity was piqued by the revelation of a new lens on the topic of ego within these dynamics, which eventually led to the urge to research and grasp the correlation between ego and leader/follower relations. Ultimately, the research's core purpose was to analyse, and when possible, evaluate the impact of ego on employees (followers) within a leadership context. In this regard, the author used the core research to identify key issues that warrant the basis for further study (discussed in the concluding chapter) and arrived at the following research questions: -

Question 1:
How does the use of different leadership styles impact employees' perception of leadership?

Question 2:
In what way do past experiences under different leaders influence employees' own leadership abilities?

Question 3:
In what way are employees the subject of their environment(s) – past or present?

Question 4:
What is the role of ego in leadership and how is this perceived by employees?

Question 5:
What impact does empathy and self-awareness have on balancing the ego?

The main research questions were supplemented by a set of sub-questions to explore the full extent of the objectives (see Appendix III)

1.5 JUSTIFICATION

The literary arena pertaining to the topic of leadership is vast, multifaceted, and continuous, yet the topic of ego within this domain is sparse in comparison, only infrequently addressing the topic with a negative connotation. Ego, as a standalone topic, predominantly resides within the social sciences of psychology (Freud, Erikson, Loevinger), however, there is clear evidence to suggest that the subject of ego within a business context significantly impacts the performance levels of organisations and its manpower in a number of ways, both positively and negatively, yet it is not studied or discussed from a standalone academia viewpoint. Certainly, articles and textbooks have alluded to the different characteristics and traits demonstrative from varying ego states, but the absence of any seminal or academia cognisance specific to the topic of ego and its impact within a business context is acutely prominent. Moreover, Gordon (2020) alludes to the correlation between leaders and employee health, and in particular consideration of the impact of Covid-19 to the macroenvironment and individuals' perspectives of mental health, work-life balance and general re-evaluation(s) of what is important in one's life, it stands to reason that there is a clear correlation between these facets and the topic of ego in a business context and as such, warrants in-depth academia consideration.

1.6 RESEARCH AIMS

Research aims is simply what you hope to achieve in the study. Accordingly, Saunders *et al.* (2019, p. 44) stipulate that *"A research aim is a brief statement of the purpose of the research project".* To that extent, the author's aim was to study existing literature pertaining to the core themes noted in Chapter 2 for the purposes of identifying relevant gaps and to gain a thorough understanding of (i) the participating individuals' perspectives on the topic of ego within a business context, and (ii) what impact this has on followers (employees). To date, these issues are predominantly absent from the literary arena. To that extent, the aims underpinning this research are (i) analyse the existing literature pertaining to the research' core themes to identify the correlation between leadership and ego and the perceptions thereof; (ii) identify and substantiate the gaps in the literature pertaining to the positive impact(s) of ego in a business context; and (iii) illuminating the lens on the follower role in influencing ego-like behaviour.

1.7 SCOPE OF THE RESEARCH AND METHODOLOGY

Analysis of the literature review (secondary data) revealed certain research gaps pertinent to the subject of ego within a leadership context, that ultimately premised the basis of the study's objectives. Accordingly, the author opted to utilise a qualitative mono-method by which to obtain reasonable insight into the perspectives of individuals in relation to the research with the intent of satisfying the research question(s) specific to this study. The small sample size, detailed in section 1.7.1, was utilised in conjunction with the secondary data collected in order to conduct a comprehensive and detailed analysis of the data by which to reach certain conclusions.

1.7.1 PRIMARY RESEARCH SAMPLE

The basis of this study formulated upon qualitative research involving semi-structured interviews with seventeen participating individuals from six separate industries. The majority of participants occupy a leadership position and are responsible for managing teams, whilst at the same time fulfilling a follower role in circumstances of their own reporting obligations to senior leadership teams and/or C-suite level within respective organisations. Given the basis of the core themes underpinning this study, these participants were selected as having sufficient and relevant knowledge on the topic(s) at hand by which to formulate and verbalise opinions and sentiments in relation thereto. The following table 1 provides the specifics in relation to each participant details including demographics, role, and industries.

Table 1: 'Participant details' (Source: Author, 2022).

Name	Demographics		Assigned ID	Role	Industry sector	Company	Contact number	Email address	Interview dates	Consent
	G	Age bracket								
Redacted	F	45 - 54	R1 I3	VP of GBSG	Human Capital Management Software	Not disclosed	Redacted	Redacted	3rd August - 11.00 am	Consent received
Redacted	M	35 - 44	R1 I1	Executive & Customer Relations Lea	Gaming industry	Not disclosed	Redacted	Redacted	3rd August - 12.00 pm	Consent received
Redacted	M	35 - 44	R2 I1	Service Lead	Gaming industry	Not disclosed	Redacted	Redacted	3rd August - 1.00 pm	Consent received
Redacted	M	25 - 34	R3 I1	Content Coordinator	Gaming industry	Not disclosed	Redacted	Redacted	3rd August - 2.00 pm	Consent received
Redacted	M	35 - 44	R1 I2	Automation Engineer	IT	Not disclosed	Redacted	Redacted	3rd August - 3.00 pm	Consent received
Redacted	M	45 - 54	R2 I2	Head of IT	IT	Not disclosed	Redacted	Redacted	3rd August - 4.00 pm	Consent received
Redacted	M	25 - 34	R3 I2	QA Automation Engineer	IT	Not disclosed	Redacted	Redacted	3rd August - 5.00 pm	Consent received
Redacted	F	45 - 54	R2 I4	Partner	Legal	Not disclosed	Redacted	Redacted	4th July - 2.30 pm	Consent received
Redacted	F	35 - 44	R4 I4	Partner	Legal	Not disclosed	Redacted	Redacted	4th August - 3.30 pm	Consent received
Redacted	F	35 - 44	R1 I4	Legal Consultant	Legal	Not disclosed	Redacted	Redacted	4th August - 6.30 pm	Consent received
Redacted	F	35 - 44	R1 I6	Produrement Team Lead	Commercial	Not disclosed	Redacted	Redacted	4th August - 4.30 pm	Consent received
Redacted	F	45 - 54	R3 I3	Director, Human Experience	Human Capital Management Software	Not disclosed	Redacted	Redacted	4th August - 5.30 pm	Consent received
Redacted	M	45 - 54	R2 I5	Product Manager	FinTech	Not disclosed	Redacted	Redacted	5th August - 10.15 am	Consent received
Redacted	F	35 - 44	R1 I5	Senior Product Marketing Manager	FinTech	Not disclosed	Redacted	Redacted	5th August - 11.00 am	Consent received
Redacted	F	35 - 44	R2 I3	Senior Director, Engineering	Human Capital Management Software	Not disclosed	Redacted	Redacted	4th August - 11.00 am	Consent received
Redacted	F	25 - 34	R3 I5	Compliance executive	FinTech	Not disclosed	Redacted	Redacted	5th August - 1.00 pm	Consent received
Redacted	M	45 - 54	R4 I5	Financial Crime Manager	FinTech	Not disclosed	Redacted	Redacted	5th August - 2.00 pm	Consent received

1.8 OVEREVIEW AND STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION

Chapter 1 – Introduction to the research topic

This chapter presents the overarching research questions and the reason(s) underpinning the author's interest in exploring same. The chapter also provides an overview of the chronological structure to the research in relation to the research objectives, aims, research questions, scope and rationale.

Chapter 2 – Literature review

This chapter details the comprehensive critical analysis conducted by the author in relation to the core themes underpinning the research question after a detailed review and analysis of relevant academic literature.

Chapter 3 – Methodology

This chapter discusses the conceptual foundations of the research as well as the specific research design methods selected including the philosophies, theory development approaches, sampling, and data collection.

Chapter 4 – Researching findings and discussion

In this chapter, the author critically reflects upon and interprets the primary data findings that were underpinned by two theoretical frameworks: The Five Levels of Leadership, and the Emotional Intelligence Model, both of which were utilised to supplement the research question(s).

Chapter 5 – Conclusions and recommendations

Chapter 5 concludes the dissertation with a critical evaluation of the research gaps exposed by the primary and secondary material, as well as a concluding summary of the desired outcome of the research.

CHAPTER 2 - LITERATURE REVIEW

2. INTRODUCTION

This chapter assesses the existing literature pertaining to the main themes of this paper, namely, leadership, followership, emotional intelligence, and ego – being the core theme of the author's research. Many publications about leadership include an underlying concept of ego to some extent but is usually contextualized in a negative light. Common criticisms include oversized ego (Nahavandi and Corbett, 2018), fear and toxicity (Gargan, 2019), narcissism (McCollum, 2018), as well as a particular condition known as the hubris syndrome, which often translates as a manifestation of inflated egos (Whomsley, 2020; Hougaard and Carter 2018). The author's purpose in the literature review (LR) however is to examine the concept of ego within different leadership contexts to determine how the role of ego pertaining to leadership is influenced by different factors and ascertain to what extent this impacts on followership perception, positively or negatively, within the parameters of leader-follower relationships.

2.1. LEADERSHIP

2.1.1. HISTORY AND ORIGINS

The topic of leadership remains a complicated and multifaceted phenomenon (King, 1990) that has formed the basis of multiple studies over the years. For example, leadership behaviour (Lewin, Lippitt and White, 1939), patterns of leadership (Likert, 1961) and the correlation between leadership and decision making (Vroom and Yelton, 1973). The evolution of the topic itself has produced many a prominent author in today's times including Stephen Covey, Peter Drucker, Jim Collins, John C. Maxwell, Simon Sinek and Daniel Goleman, to name but a few. Early leadership frameworks, however, can be traced to the 19th century, wherein psychologist Kurt Lewin and colleagues developed a three-tier leadership model: autocratic, democratic, and laissez-faire. These traditional and well-known philosophies serve as the foundation for many of today's modernized leadership styles and emphasises the concept that one can **learn** to be a leader (Lippitt, 2021) rather than any inherent, hereditary, or *"gifts from*

God" aspect (Spector, 2016, p.250), as inferred by Thomas Carlyle's Great Man Theory. To that extent, the relevance and impact of leadership in today's hyper-accelerated, globalised world, is pervasive and continues to dominate debate owing to the intricacy of the topic.

2.1.2. MANAGEMENT VERSUS LEADERSHIP

Accordingly, one such debate relates to the aged notion of management versus leadership wherein the consensus is that managers originate from positions of hierarchical, authoritative, and controlled environments (Drucker, 2017) in comparison to leaders, who, on the other hand, affects, motivates, encourages, and inspires people in the achievement of organisational objectives (Kouzes and Posner, 1987). Accordingly, it is perhaps that the terms management and leadership are in effect synonymous on the basis that leadership is, by extension, an essential component of effective management (Petriglieri, 2020). Interestingly however, Kotter (2001) suggests that they are in fact two distinct, yet complementary, systems each with their own merits, i.e., managers providing a level of stability and coping mechanisms for complex matters, and leaders influencing, driving, and coping with change. However, for the purposes of this paper, the term(s) leader or leadership is adopted by the author in reference to a broad interrelation between management and leadership. To that extent, the author examines the varying characteristics of different leadership styles in the paragraphs that follow.

2.1.3. LEADERSHIP STYLES PERTAINING TO ERAS

The variance of leadership styles can, arguably, be classified according to the derivatives of different eras (King, 1990). The evolution of leadership therefore has perhaps taught us that leadership itself has not evolved, but rather, our understanding of it has and as such, each era has presented an opportunity to add to the learnings from the preceding one (King, 1990). However, according to Clark and Harrison (2018), the meandering and evolutionary field of leadership goes beyond period theories and thereby counters King's (1990) claims of integrative leadership eras. Nonetheless, the author, in the succeeding paragraphs, assesses some well-known leadership styles to derive from such eras.

2.1.3.1. Autocratic leadership

Autocratic (and/or authoritarian) leaders are known to implement clearly established rules and regulations, and instructions for what, when and how something should be done. As alluded to earlier, this leadership style derives from Lewin *et al.*'s 1939 model and stems from the behaviour era (Appendix I). It strongly emphasises a leader's level of command and authority, not to mention a complete disregard of employee subordination (Manzoni and Barsoux, 1998). To that extent, Caldwell and Anderson (2020) refer to authoritarian leaders' consideration of individuals as a 'means to an end', a commodity metric utilised in the attainment of goals in the promotion of leader self-interest. A command-and-control mindset for decision making is usually adopted by authoritarian leaders and done so without consultation or input from others.

Despite negatively perceived traits however, there are instances that embrace the regimented style and portray some level of efficacy within specific parameters. For example, authoritarianism is still embedded within some cultures, such as China, whereby Chien (2016) stipulates that some of its population still maintains a high level of dependency for the structure provided by authoritarianism. Equally, Wang, Xie and Xie (2021) allude to the correlation between authoritarianism and the cultural tradition of Confucianism yet, on the other hand, also suggest that this style of leadership is highly debated within Chinese culture. In Western cultures however, authoritarianism is deemed less favourable and renders this type of leadership less effective. Goleman (2013) for example suggests that focused leaders who embrace a triad of activities directed towards a focus on yourself, a focus on others and a focus on wider aspects can experience elevated levels of leadership by way of self-control or open awareness. Yet, the very notion of 'focusing on others' directly impedes upon an autocratic leader's ability (or willingness) to receive input from others, let alone cultivate a willingness to lessen control. Additionally, such stringent measures impede an autocratic leader's ability to grasp the impact to employee motivation (Manzoni and Barsoux, 1998) which in turn affects performance, and thereby churns the quintessential circle of leaders' low expectations met with demoralised subordinates and disconnect.

Accordingly, Clark and Harrison (2018) outline that the behaviour era offers empirical research that examines leadership from an action-oriented approach and although the advancement offered by the behaviour era is debatable, it is thought to have influenced the creation of succeeding models.

2.1.3.2. Situational leadership

In contrast to the one-dimensional aspect of authoritarianism, Paul Hersey and Ken Blanchard first devised a leadership model titled the *'Life cycle theory of leadership'* in 1969, which subsequently became known as Situational Leadership Theory (SLT) (Hersey and Blanchard, 1977). The model draws parallel views from the contingency era (Appendix I) and more particularly, Fiedler's contingency theory relating to trait and behavioural paradigms, created in 1964 in response to a concern about leadership effects in specific situations (Hernandez *et al.*, 2011; Vroom and Jago, 2007). According to Northouse (2013) however, Fiedler's model lacks inflexibility to the extent that leaders are naturally fixed in how they handle events and therefore, in order to change the outcome of a situation means to change the leader.

Conversely, Northouse (2013) suggests that SLT is not demonstrative of a static style, but rather the concept is premised on the notion that depending on the situation, leaders employ one of four leadership styles, S1, S2, S3, S4, emerging as a result of tasks to be completed according to follower readiness levels, R1, R2, R3, R4, reflecting the competences (task readiness) and commitment (psychological readiness) levels of employees (Figure 1), thereby is more flexible and adaptive per followers' requirements.

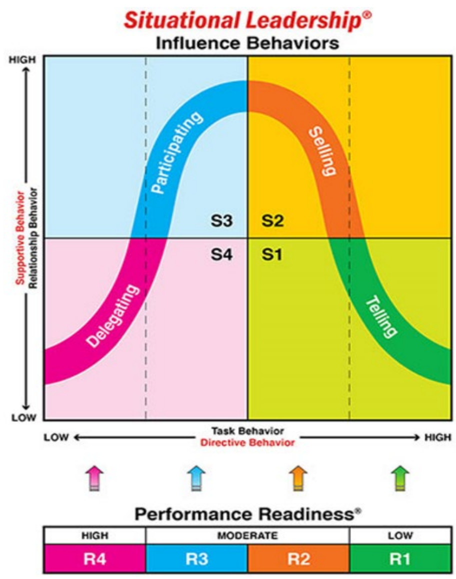


Figure 1. Situational Leadership model (Center for Leadership Studies, 2022).

A synopsis of the model therefore is that where follower maturity is strong, the model proposes minimal leader direction, in contrast to lower levels of follower maturity which suggests the leader provides more precise and controlled directives.

The underlining principle behind situational leadership suggests adaptability which, in today's times, certainly warrants this style of leadership (Wright, 2017). However, SLT does not come without its criticisms insofar as it, arguably, lacks sufficient research to support the model's assumptions (Ardichvili and Manderscheid, 2008). Furthermore, assumptions regarding the efficacy of follower readiness are also subject to criticism to the extent that leader rating and follower self-rating out to be congruent rather than a one-dimensional assessment (Thompson and Glasø, 2015). That being said, situational leadership remains a popular concept (Wright, 2017) by reason of its flexible and adaptable nature and frames the basis for more recent modernised versions. Accordingly, Lippitt (2021) argues the benefit of situational mindsets actually improving change readiness and highlights, in particular, the outcome of COVID-19 emphasising the requirement of leadership ability in coping with change. Ergo, surviving in the realms of the new normal necessitates situational awareness and expertise.

2.1.3.3. Transformational leadership

The commencement of transformative leadership occurred during the charisma period within the 1970s transformational era (Appendix I) illuminating the focus on followers; more particularly, leader and follower dynamics. Accordingly, James MacGregor Burns (1978) posited an idea that the crux of elevating to higher levels of motivation and morale was achieved by leaders and followers essentially helping each other. According to Burns (1978), two concepts, (1) transforming leadership, relating to a change in organisations and peoples' lives (Morison, 2018) and, (2) transactional leadership, pertaining to leaders' traits, ability, and personality, was devised based on the differential characteristics and behaviours of managers and leaders but are, in fact, mutually exclusive concepts. Despite Burns' initiation of the concept, it was not until Bernard M. Bass's further development of the theory in 1985 and into the 1990s (Briggs *et al.*, 2014) did it come to be known as the more recognisable term that is today: transformational leadership. Indeed, Bass's (1985a) shift in focus towards followers emphasised charisma as a two-way process whereby a leader's ability to be transformational was affected by followers' personalities whereby followers with highly confident, egalitarian mindsets were less likely to subdue to the charms of transforming leaders than those who, say, imbue their leader's essence (Bass, 1985b).

Interestingly, Goodwin (2018) refers to the transformative leadership of Abraham Lincoln as far back as the 1800s, however, its popularity as a leadership style has, in more recent years, gained momentum in a multitude of sectors including healthcare (Lee, Gambling and Hogg, 2004), politics (Goodwin, 2009), retail (Briggs *et al.*, 2014) and mindfulness (Carlton, Barling and Trivisonno, 2018), but perhaps most discernible is its relevance in an ever growing technology sector to the extent that leaders of the digital era face constant challenges by way of remote leadership, communicative effectiveness and performance (Neufeld, Wan and Fang, 2010), not to mention the challenges of leading from a distance (Kaur Bagga, Gera and Haque, 2022) - all relevant factors posed by a challenging and dynamic tech environment. That being said, Santoso, Sulistyaningtyas and Pratama (2022) laud the dimensions of transformational leadership for its effectiveness in the strengthening of employee engagement despite the uncertainty of the macroenvironment during the Covid-19 pandemic. Popularity aside however, transformational leadership does not fare full favour. Critically, Yukl (1999) argues conceptual weaknesses in the form of ambiguity pertaining to a number of areas (e.g., ambiguous constructs, insufficient attention and narrowed focus towards processes and certain behaviours, heroic leadership bias) as potential drawbacks and areas for improvement. Equally, other criticisms form around ethical and moral values (O'Reilly and Chatman, 2020; Nye, 2008) and the dark and destructive potential of transformational leadership in the form of narcissistic personality disorder. Lastly, leader exhaustion, as a cost of extreme follower focus (Lin, Scott and Matta, 2019) is posed as another drawback to the otherwise, seemingly, popular style.

2.1.3.4. Servant leadership

Servant leadership (SL) is a phenomenon to garner more recent attention within the arena of leadership styles. However, there is evidence to suggest that this style has in fact, been around a lot longer than initially thought. Interestingly, Locke (2019) suggests that there is supporting research in identifying servant leadership with that of Christ and the Scriptures, more particularly, the exegesis of Matthew 20:25-28 whereby the argument for biblical servant leadership correlates Jesus as instructing to lead by service, rather than by the use of power and authority. However, Locke (2019) goes on to further outline that although the premise of SL seems to provide Christian practitioners an opportunity to emulate Christ in the workplace (e.g., by the traits of humility and grace), equating SL and Christianity in a corporate environment is vastly open for debate. To that extent, perhaps more recently then, Northouse (2019) outlines that the term servant leadership was coined by Robert Greenleaf who, in the 1970s, posed some scepticism regarding the focus of *leading first*. Instead, Greenleaf's perspective was channelled towards that of the individual (essentially followers). Notably, the philosophy seems to embody decentralised organisational structures insofar as SL encourages synergistic relationships between management and followers and a shift away from controlling environments and activities. The concept, in simple terms, therefore, is predicated on the notion that effective leaders seek to serve others rather than to gain power or control.

Yet, Pircher Verdorfer (2019) outlines that some dimensions of SL appear inherently paradoxical and contradicts the popular perception of leaders as powerful influencers. Additionally, the followers' views of alignment with an ideal leader model and personal identification mediates the positive relationship between perceived authentic servant leadership and respect for the leader (Pircher Verdorfer, 2019). Conversely, Liao *et al.* (2021) suggest that SL distinguishes itself from other leadership models by emphasising leader behaviours that prioritise and serve the needs of followers. Liao *et al.*, (2021) also allude to the literature strongly illuminating the beneficial outcomes of SL for followers, teams and organisations.

One of the most discernible features of SL however appears to relate to self-sacrifice, such to the extent that ego must take a back seat. According to Blanchard and Broadwell (2018), true servant leaders *serve* first and lead second. In that regard, there is a strong correlation of emotional intelligence in servant leadership to the extent that servant leaders must maintain a keen sense of self-awareness so as to avoid a creep in of egotistical self-centredness. Where that happens, leadership effectiveness becomes eroded to the extent that a leader's mindset can become focused and tied up in their own achievements and self-worth, often leading to a sense of false pride or fear and thereby resulting in controlling or 'do-nothing' bosses (Blanchard and Broadwell, 2018). Liao *et al.* (2021) further highlight the depletion aspects of servant leadership to the extent that leaders are responsible for more than just serving followers. They must establish structure, set objectives, provide feedback, and evaluate and reward followers, communicate vision and articulate organisational actions. As a result, the amount of time leaders spends engaging in any one form of leadership activity can vary from day to day, thus, a compromise in self-regulation can result in the ego-depletion traits of laissez-faire leaders. However, Kauppila *et al.* (2022) in citing Robert Greenleaf outlines that the tension of occupying a powerful position and not utilising it to exert control could be a compelling explanation for servant leaders acquiring the respect and adoration of their followers.

2.1.4. THE FIVE LEVELS OF LEADERSHIP THEORY

John C. Maxwell (2011), author of the book *'The 5 Levels of Leadership'*, suggests a theory that leaders' levels of influence progress with people in stages, starting at the bottom, level one, 'Position' and working up to level five, 'Pinnacle' (Figure 2). Leadership, according to Maxwell (2011), is a level of mastery that can be learned and developed. He proffers that for some, it comes naturally, intuitively, on instinct without any explanation as to why what they do works. For others however, leadership is a grappling task, often difficult in understanding the dynamics at play, with the outcome that sometimes people listen and respond and at other times they do not. Maxwell (2011) therefore defines leadership as dynamic and fluid patterns that change from person to person or moment to moment.

The concept of influence, a constant of Maxwell's theory, suggests that leadership is a process as opposed to a position one holds and that to progress through each leadership level is based on the ability to influence people. It is not however a straightforward linear process. Some leaders reach level one and stay there. Others reach level two and also stay there. Maxwell (2011) states that people who lead must start at the bottom, level one, and work their way up through the levels at each stage. To that extent, the paragraphs that follow consider each level in some detail.

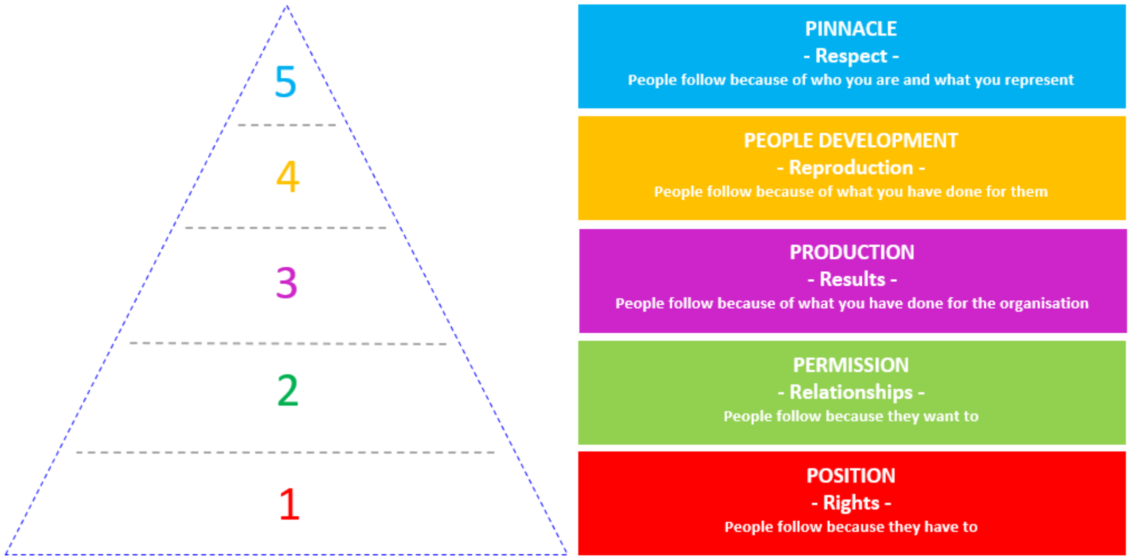


Figure 2. *Author's adaptation of John C. Maxwell's 'The 5 Levels of Leadership' (2011).*

Level 1 - Position

'Position' represents the entry level, the starting point and lowest leadership level (Maxwell, 2011). Influence is only attained by using the privileges associated with the job title. In essence, people follow because they are obligated to. Maxwell (2011) notes that positional leaders are bosses, not leaders, and have subordinates as opposed to team members, relying heavily on rules and regulations in the control of people. He further notes that anyone can be appointed a position, but that more is required: *"The position does not make the leader – the leader makes the position"* (Maxwell, 2011, p. 45) and is the only level that does not require ability or effort to achieve. However, there is nothing wrong with that per se. It serves as the ground level and the basis upon which influence should be developed. Positional leaders possess the position but lack the influence beyond the scope of their authority. The upside of level one leadership is that the invite to the leadership table is premised on potential and offers an opportunity for leaders to shape and define their leadership (Maxwell, 2011). He further notes that leadership ought to be based on values, which is a driving force of leaders' behaviour, and that leadership growth is premised on a clear understanding of one's ethical, relational and success values. The downsides to positional leadership however include the misleading nature of the position i.e., one's thought that they have 'made it' because they made rank. Maxwell (2011) however states leadership as action, not position. Politics, another downside, focuses on control rather than contribution, inciting posturing, rivalry, and silos. Also, perhaps most crucially, according to Maxwell (2011), is that leaders who lead with their position often devalue people; they prioritize their status over their work, the value they provide to their subordinates, and their contribution to the company.

Level 2 – Permission

'Permission' signifies the level of leadership that is based on relationships. According to Maxwell (2011), people at this level follow because they want to and when you like people and treat them as valued individuals, the development of influence begins. A positive environment, established on trust, emerges. The crux of level two leadership therefore is that of building strong relationships and to lead by listening: establishing relations between leaders and followers. In contrast to level one leaders, Maxwell (2011) suggests that developing relationships lays the groundwork for successfully leading people. Subordinates elevate as teammates who cooperate with their leader and one another when they feel liked, cared for, included, respected, and trusted. And that has the potential to alter the entire workplace. Relationships, therefore, in level two leadership, is key to success, in every aspect (home, work, play) and represents the followers' permission to be lead. The upsides of level two leadership include a focus of 'we' instead of 'me' (Maxwell, 2011) and an attitude of service; there is an interest for the team and the organisation to succeed, unlike positional leaders, whose primary focus is on serving oneself. Equally, the environment is rejuvenated, energised and positive, cultivating open channels of communication. Permission level leadership incites value and trust which serves to strengthen relations and loyalty. The downsides however are that permission level leadership can be considered too soft an approach for specific types of environments (for example, hyper-charged/high performance culture) and considering the premise that action supersedes affection dismiss it on the grounds of being weak. Maxwell (2011) suggests this is a mistake and posits that leadership is often too focused on either 'hard' aspects, being productivity based, or 'soft' aspects, meaning the relational side and because of people's ill willed hard focus, often get stuck at level one.

Level 3 – Production

Importantly, Maxwell (2011) emphasizes that one of the risks leaders face in achieving level two is complacency, in the belief that by providing a pleasant workplace, that somehow that is sufficient. However, level three leaders get things done. Production level leadership therefore is results oriented. Maxwell (2011) outlines that there is a sense of elevation in level three whereby influence, confidence and credibility accelerate, and that followers follow because of what the leader has done for the organisation. Maxwell (2011, p. 95) implies therefore that production qualifies and distinguishes leaders from those who merely hold leadership positions. Level three leaders are self-motivated and productive, which can positively impact an organisation's bottom line. The upside of production level leadership is that many positive things occur including momentum, increased morale, productivity and profit, objectives are achieved and turnover declines. The downsides however imply that by being productive, you are being a leader when in reality, you are not. Team success (not personal productivity) defines production level leadership, measured by the accomplishments of the entire group (Maxwell, 2011). Equally, the burden of responsibility for results weighs heavy on level three leaders. The quantifiable measures of productivity, growth, and profitability as well as responsibility for team success requires a high level of commitment from production leaders.

Level 4 – People Development

Level four leadership is about reproduction. Building upon the previous levels of position, relationships and productivity, level four leaders change the lives of the people they lead by investing in and empowering their followers to become leaders in their own right (Maxwell, 2011). He further outlines the essence of people development as a dedication of time, energy, money, and thought towards developing others as leaders. Level four leaders consider everyone and strive to assess their ability to grow and lead, regardless of title, position, age, or experience (Maxwell, 2011). Level four leaders consider everyone as a contender for advancement. Because bringing out the best in a person is often a catalyst for bringing out the best in the team, this approach of finding and developing people reinforces the positives of the organisation. The development of one individual for leadership and success creates the groundwork for the development of others for success. This level of investment strengthens relationships and loyalty and increases performance, and people follow because of what you have done for them (Maxwell, 2011). The upsides to level four leadership are that is sets leaders apart; ensures sustainable growth; empowers others to fulfil leadership responsibilities; empowers the leader to lead bigger; and provides personal fulfilment. The downsides however are far weighing and contend with issues such as the negative effects of self-centredness; insecurity, affecting levels of ego, control, and trust; short-sightedness and lack of commitment.

Level 5 – The Pinnacle

The pinnacle of leadership, according to Maxwell (2011), is that of level five – developing leaders to the extent where they are willing and able to develop other leaders. Maxwell states however that this level is the most difficult to achieve, requiring not only skill, intention, and effort but also extreme talent, and cites only a few to ever make it to this level including Nelson Mandela, Mother Teresa, Coach John Wooden and Jack Welch. Maxwell (2011) states only three upsides to the pinnacle level, with each carrying significant weight and impact, and they are that pinnacle leaders create level five organisations; creates a legacy within the organisation; and extends the platform for learning. Although reaching the pinnacle assumes that one has made it and can decelerate, Maxwell (2011) notes that there are downsides to contend with in the sense that reaching this level can foster feelings of believing one's own press, insofar as leaders who become absorbed with their power and position. Equally, reaching the pinnacle expands the level of opportunities which can distract and make leaders lose focus on the organisation. Maxwell (2011) indicates that leaders who make it to the pinnacle must remain focused on the vision and purpose and continue to lead at the highest level.

2.2. FOLLOWERSHIP

2.2.1. INTRODUCTION

Followership, according to Goffee and Jones (2016), is the other side of the coin to leadership. The importance, yet underestimated value, of followership is simple "*…a leader without followers is simply a man taking a walk*" (Boehner cited in Casas and Wilkerson, 2017, pp 794). The role of the followers therefore, although considered complementary to leaders, ought to be considered of equal importance in the accomplishment of organisational performance (Kelley, 1992).

2.2.2. TYPES OF FOLLOWERS

A number of typologies exist outlining the different types of followers but perhaps the more well-known ones are those by Robert Kelley (1992) and Barbara Kellerman (2008) which the author utilises to draw parallels.

Table 2: 'A typology of descriptive followership behaviours' (Crossman and Crossman, 2011).

Author/s	Zaleznik, 1965	Kelly, 1992	Steger et al., 1982	Potter and Rosenbach, 2006	Kellerman, 2008
Follower types	Withdrawn Masochistic Compulsive Impulsive	Alienated Passive Conformists Pragmatists Exemplary	Apathetic Bureaucrat Game player Donkey Kamikaze Deviant Artist Achiever Superfollower	Subordinate Politician Contributor Partner	Isolates Bystanders Participants Activists Diehards

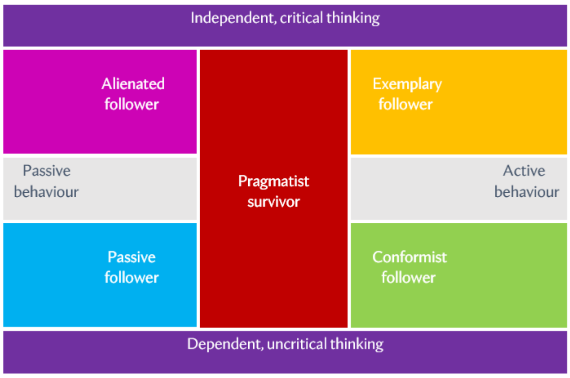
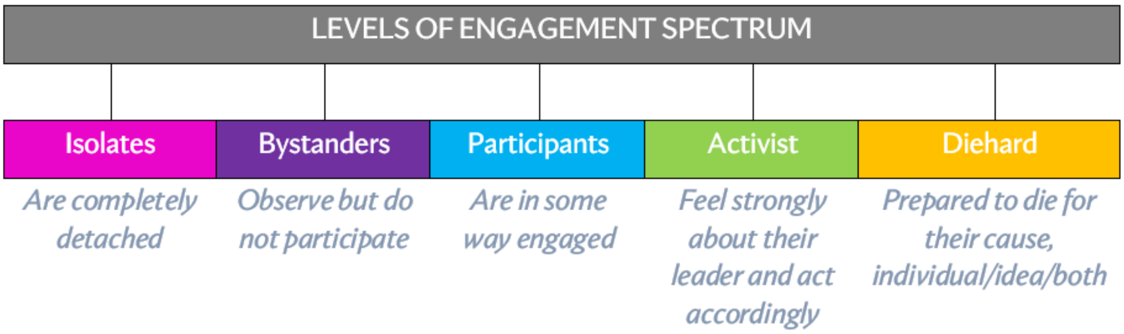


Figure 3. 'Author's adaptation of Kelley's (1992) five followership model.

Kelley's (1992) model posits that followers ought to display a level of critical thinking and active behaviour toward achieving organisational goals and classifies each style (Figure 3) based on a continuum of independent, critical thinking versus dependent, uncritical thinking.

Exemplary followers, according to Kelley (1992), are critical and active in their thinking and behaviour, exhibiting courage, independent thinking, and are demonstrative of leadership abilities by their readiness to challenge upwards whilst at the same time remaining focused on the requirements of the organisation. Peterson, Peterson and Rook (2007) emphasise the importance of exemplary followership on organisational citizenship behaviour, supplementing Kelley (1992) sentiments that 80% of organisational success is owing to follower contribution. By comparison, Kellerman (2007), in a HBR article titled '*What every leader needs to know about followers'* compares Kelley's exemplary followers to that of 'diehard' followers within the Kellerman typology (Table 3) but highlights the possible dangers of exemplary/die hard followers ousting their leaders by any means necessary. Interestingly, Offerman (2004) emphasises the plausibility of followership turning toxic by reason of leader susceptibility, illuminated by the powerful influence of followers that Kellerman (2007) demonstrates is not one sided.

Table 3: 'Author's adaptation of Kellerman's typology' (2008)



Kelley's conformists symbolise the 'yes man' mind-set, which Kellerman (2007) observes as those fine with simply taking orders while actively participating within their groups. This band of followers gladly cooperate but avoid challenging instructions, according to the characteristics of dependent, uncritical thinking. In that regard, Crossman and Crossman (2011) suggest a directive leadership style might suit this level of follower, but Offerman (2004) alludes to the dangers of conforming followers, exhibited in the case of Enron, where unscrupulous followers seemed content and willing to conform and engage in serious, unethical behaviour.

Kelley classifies passive followers as dependent, uncritical thinkers who rely on their leaders to make decisions, and whilst reluctant to voice personal reservations (Crossman and Crossman, 2011), are loyal and supportive towards their leader. Micromanaged or toxic cultures may develop this type of follower, who Kelley refers to as sheep, as they are mindlessly happy to obey leader instructions. Almeida, Ramalho and Esteves (2021) however highlight the enablement of passive followers as contributing to destructive leadership.

Kellerman (2007) draws similarities between Kelley's alienated followers to that of bystanders, which reflect followers who selectively engage in specific activities whilst begrudgingly participating and displaying low levels of engagement. This type of follower is a powerful thinker who disengages on purpose, expressing levels of pessimism and bitterness in their position.

Crossman and Crossman (2011) emphasise the 'troublemaker' aspect of alienated followers who Kelley (1992) suggests do not interact well with their leaders.

The pragmatist follower possesses characteristics from all four extremes and can flip between them depending on the situation. This can be a useful tool for leaders in getting an 'on the ground' overview of playing fields within an organisation but otherwise pragmatists tolerate (and contribute to) destructive leader behaviour (Almeida *et al.*, 2021).

In comparison to the vastly documented subject of leadership, less emphasis, unfortunately, is given to the topic of followership. Indeed, Goffee and Jones (2016) allude to the paucity of dedicated research on the topic, which perhaps arises for a number of reasons. This perhaps arises because followers, in aspiring to be leaders, are simply concerned with honing their leadership skills rather than with being good followers. It could be that leaders merely consider 'subordinates' as auxiliary (Lippitt, 2021) and as a result do not warrant discussion. It could be that some leaders deny their subordinate autonomy and as a result, many followers are lacking in confidence to take the lead. Whatever the reason, Offerman (2004) refers to the importance of followers for many organisations as CEOs of significantly sized firms do not know what is happening at every level and that is where the benefit of followership arises. Therefore, in understanding the influencing capabilities of followers, the top executives can themselves improve their leadership skills.

2.3. EGO

2.3.1. INTRODUCTION

Erik H. Erikson, a prominent 20th century psychoanalyst whose work was, to some extent, influenced by the founder of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud, and his theory of psychosexual development. Freud hypothesised that humans have an unconscious in which sexual and aggressive urges compete for dominance with the defences against them. Erikson's work however de-emphasised the sexual component, channelling his focus on ego psychology based on the eight stages of his personal development framework which *"was conceived as the sequential reorganization of ego and character structures"* (Erikson Institute, 2022). The foundation of Erikson's psychosocial developmental theory (Appendix II) pertains to characteristics of human behaviour and the successes or failures of numerous phases throughout one's life, leading up to the final stage of ego-integrity against despair (Lineros and Fincher, 2014). The viewpoint of ego in this context therefore is retrospective and perhaps more suited to further avenues of longitudinal studies of leaders and their reflective views on leadership.

Notably, of other significance is Freud's extension of the unconscious and his development of a structural model of the mind in 1923 (Weiner, 2017) which, according to Freud, was viewed as the psychological system of internal control activity that determines a person's behavioural features and patterns in various contexts (Jiang, 2022). To that extent, Freud hypothesised that the three main interactive elements to affect an individual's behaviour are: -

(1) ***The id***, the most fundamental component of the personality model, embodying the primal instincts required to fulfil unconscious biological urges. Guided by the principle of self-centredness, the id's traits are irrational, antisocial, destructive, and impulsive (Jiang, 2022).
(2) ***The ego***, representing the mental component that symbolises consciousness, containing the psychological rationality inherent within most people. Acting as an intermediary between the id and the external environment, the ego regulates the demands and impulses of the id and decides whether they can be satisfied or not.
(3) ***The superego*** represents a higher level of ego, a moral compass, if you will, focused on morality, rules and discipline and performs the checks and balances for the ego to be guided by the conscience and social ideals (Jiang, 2022).

Much of Freud's psychoanalysis theories are the subject of follower endorsement leading to subsets of further study (Miyawaki, 2012; Stea, 2012; Vaillant, 1995; Shapiro, 1965; Hartmann, 1939), but he also faces criticism, most noticeably from literary critic, Frederick Crews, cited in (Fancher, 2018; Gross, 2017; Sabin, 1994). Irrespective of perceived Freudian or anti-Freudian views however, his theory on personality certainly formulates much debate in relation to how underlying constructs can influence a person's behaviour. To that extent, the author has explored the literature in relation to ego from a psychological and organisational aspect and addresses some well-known traits, positive and negative, often perceived to have an effect within a leadership domain.

2.3.2. EGO IN BUSINESS – THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE UGLY

In an interview with Dan Schwabel (2016), author of the book *'Ego is the Enemy',* Ryan Holiday addresses the trait of ego within a business context. Debating the negative side of argument, he dismisses any form of ego as having any beneficial influence within the parameters of business and argues vehemently to it as a liability. He infers to an epidemic of inflated egos as a consequence of a self-serving social media era as a barrier to self-learning. One may debate however that the role of emotions and ego influencing how people think and behave actually long predates the social media age Fitzell (1970). Additionally, Schwabel (2016) alludes to the concepts of emotional intelligence by which humility, as a contrast to hubris, could be perceived as a guiding principle. However, Holiday infers to humility as a remedy to ego, as if somehow implying that they cannot be interlinked (Schwabel, 2016). Yet, evidence of its co-existence and influential impact on leaders is exhibited by Riccucci and Morse (2010), but there are many sides to supplement the debate of ego in a negative capacity, including its impact within the workplace, which Gargan (2019) examines, emphasizing fear as a damaging component to organisations as a result of management toxicity.

Conversely, the concept of ego strength appears as a facet in some articles, illuminating a positive lens in how ego features in leadership. For example, Riccucci and Morse (2010) discuss the leadership skills of Bill Gibson successfully leading across boundaries and infer to how ego strength is evident as a characteristic of social entrepreneurs, highlighted from the connection of humility deriving as a concept of ego strength. Equally, in a Harvard Business Review (2001) article titled *'Breakthrough Ideas for Today's Business Agenda'*, there is emphasis that ego makes a leader and that to understand the success of leaders, study their ego. How this relates to the topic of ego in the context of this research study is in relation to the characteristic of ego strength, which is derived as a measure from the eight stages of development (Markstrom and Marshall, 2007).

Holiday proffers other arguments for the debate in regard to realism and self-honesty acting as barriers to ego and hubris (Schwabel, 2016). Interestingly, another author on the topic of ego, CY Wakeman, in her book 'No Ego: How Leaders can cut the cost of workplace drama, end entitlement, and drive big results' conceptualizes the idea of reality-based leadership (RBL) as a counterbalance for leaders in bypassing their egos. Jena and Pradhan (2018) in their review of this book discuss the concepts of ego and reality and reflect on the positive effects of RBL in leadership effectiveness. However, Witt (2014) suggests that a healthy balance of ego can actually stimulate leadership effectiveness. The concepts of ego and realism is somewhat paradoxical, however, (Malone, 2004) in the sense that leaders, on the one hand, display elements of egotism by maintaining belief in oneself, whereas, on the other hand, they need to remember that they do not know everything and must be open to learning and feedback.

In reverting back to the topic of ego in leadership and management, it could be suggested that a leader's quiet ego (i.e., humility) leads teams in an empathetic, emotionally intelligent manner inspiring their teams through transformational change by dispensing the heroic cape and revealing a level of vulnerability (Beer, 2020). Whereas, in contrast, managers who direct and control with a side of ego can often do so in a manner that can be construed as self-serving or narcissistic (albeit can still project a heroic demeanour to some subordinates) but are often constrained by narcissistic deficiencies in self-identity (Sosik, Chun and Zhu, 2014). This leads back to Erikson's eight stage development theory whereby he refers to the ego's positive or negative side affecting levels of competency, i.e., where a stage is managed well, a sense of competence (or ego strength) emerges, whereas, if a stage is handled poorly, a sense of inadequacy emerges.

2.4. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE

2.4.1. INTRODUCTION

According to Caruso, Bhalerao and Karve (2016), emotional intelligence (EQ/EI), was a concept first coined by Peter Salovey and John Mayer in 1990, before being popularised by Daniel Goleman in the mid-1990s (Singhai and Agrawal, 2021). Goleman's benchmark work suggested that EQ was the ability to regulate one's own emotions, in addition to understanding and regulating the emotions of others and proposes a cluster of five critical skills (Figure 4) that he suggests are demonstrative of high EQ competence. Those competencies are:

(i) self-awareness
(ii) self-regulation
(iii) empathy
(iv) motivation
(v) social skills.

2.4.2. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE MODEL

EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE	
Self-awareness	Relates to the **ability to perceive feelings as they occur**. An ability to monitor feelings as they arise aids in the understanding of oneself and our psyche. A failure to understand one's embedded emotions could result in impulsive and reactive outbursts.
Self-regulation	Mastering self-awareness allows one to then **regulate feelings specific to the context** i.e., calming oneself when experiencing negative emotions, and recovering quickly from setbacks. People who are unable to manage their emotions invest a lot of wasted energy combating reactive emotional responses.
Motivation	The ability to recognise and regulate emotions leads to the ability to **motivate oneself to perform tasks and achieve goals.** A key element of motivation in this context relates to the ability to defer self-gratification and impulses in order to be productive and effective.
Empathy	Empathy, the fundamental skill in **understanding what others want or need** and an essential component for leaders in managing successful teams or businesses. Empathetic leaders position themselves in the shoes of others, listen, develop teams, challenge difficult behaviour and provide constructive feedback.
Social skills	Social skills, relating to the culmination of all the prior components is the ability to manager others' emotions which is key to **fostering successful and lasting relationships**.

Figure 4: Author's own composition of Daniel Goleman's EQ framework

Accordingly, it is evident that the EQ model is premised on the ability to build trust and rapport with people. However, according to Goleman (1998) this has led to some common misconceptions insofar as the model implies that feelings are given free rein, but Goleman asserts that feelings are 'managed' so that they are communicated appropriately and effectively in allowing people to collaborate smoothly toward common goals. For example, in strategic moments, an EQ leader may need to confront someone with a challenging but critical reality that, in the absence of a strong sense of EQ, could typically be avoided. Furthermore, when it comes to EQ, men and women are not superior to each other; it is not gender specific. Finally, it is not inherited or formed solely during childhood years but rather, can be learned and developed over time. Accordingly, the interactive essence of emotional intelligence does not only apply to personal contexts, i.e., love or familial relations. The component of building 'lasting successful relationships' applies to all areas of life, including the professional environment (Salovey and Grewal, 2005).

2.4.3. EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE IN THE WORKPLACE

EQ, therefore, provides an opportunity to humanise the workplace (Goleman, 1998). When you think about it, the majority of people spend anywhere between seven to ten hours daily working together and/or within organisations. In that regard, good teams, and indeed performance levels is often dependent on harmonious working environments and strong leadership (Goleman, 2017). Accordingly, EQ is now a yardstick of success for CEOs, particularly at the top of the leadership pyramid. According to Covey (1992), research suggests that EQ is more significant than IQ in most professions and several times more critical in leadership roles. Conversely, and perhaps interestingly, Mayer, Salovey and Caruso (2004) highlight the diverse and critical opinions within the field challenging the scientific and objectives measures of the construct. Despite this however, and although a relatively recent phenomenon, its popularity remains within the leadership domain and rarely nowadays is the topic of leadership viewed in the absence of emotional intelligence as a discussion point.

Accordingly, in synthesising the aforementioned topic of leadership styles with emotional intelligence, the author provides a brief synopsis of Goleman's six-leadership styles before concluding by drawing parallels with Kurt Lewin's traditional leadership styles, and Burns' transformational and transactional model.

According to Goleman (2000), application of emotional intelligence in conjunction with a combined use of all six leadership styles, depending on the situation, will result in an optimum and planned leadership method.

- **Commanding** (also directive/coercive), similar to the *traditional* autocratic boss - makes all the decisions; close and intent monitoring; teams directed what to do and when. Ought to be used sparsely, usually in crisis or extreme conflict situations when quick decisions are required.
- **Coaching,** (similar to delegative), focused on team development and input, creates strong commitment, engagement, and loyalty amongst team members. Difficult to achieve by reason of time required to coach but effects are beneficial.
- **Democratic** (also participative)**,** forms part of several leadership frameworks. Key focus on empowerment, innovation, and value, enables participation in decision making, strong employee engagement.
- **Affiliative**, highly supportive, focused on team recognition and team building, creating personal connections, harmony, and trust within the team environment. Leader should avoid however becoming too friendly with team so as to avoid being taken advantage of.
- **Pacesetting**, focused on results, expects team excellence. Different to commanding insofar as pacesetting leader leads by example, rather than commanding.
- **Authoritative** (not to be confused with autocratic), similar to visionary leaders, focused on inspiring and motivating people to pursue a long-term vision.

In drawing parallel with Kurt Lewin's model, the first point to note is the age of the model (i.e., 1930s). Time, and leadership, has significantly moved on since then. Perhaps also important to note is that laissez-faire emphasis is on the leader taking a step back and letting the team lead. According to Goleman (2000) however, there is no practical requirement for a leadership style that requires one to cease leading Autocratic leadership, according to Goleman (2000) is simply antiquated and unfit for the modern environment, and repeatedly shown to be detrimental to team engagement and productivity. The democratic style, according to Goleman, is the only one to qualify for the six-leadership model. Additionally, Goleman (2000) notes that transformational leadership is an effective style (albeit slightly aged) by reason of participation, vision, transformational and emotional intelligence. Furthermore, he notes that transactional leadership, originating from bureaucracy, builds on repetition and target focus, which can at times be useful. Although Burns' transformational and transactional model are good styles, Goleman (2000) argues that they lack variety, and in today's times, switching between transformational and transactional leadership in fast and complex environments is disruptive, and argues that there are minimal situations that require a switch between the two.

In conclusion, Goleman (2000) argues the benefit of the six-leadership model by reason of its modernness and flexibility and the ability to opt for different styles and combinations. It could perhaps be argued that it is a modern version of Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership insofar as adopting a suitable style to the relevant context. Critically, one major drawback of Goleman's six-leadership model is the risk of depletion in adopting multiple styles at different times. To that extent, depletion within leadership often occurs as a drawback of self-regulating factors, a key component of EQ, which can lead to egotistical behaviours surfacing.

CHAPTER 3 – METHODOLOGY; RESEARCH DESIGN AND PROCESS

3. INTRODUCTION

Methodology is a fundamental component to the structure of the research process as it correlates how the research addresses the underlying problem statement and objectives and provides a mechanism by which to address (and answer) the research question (Taylor and Bogdan cited in Heath and Tynan, 2010). More simply put, methodology, according to Saunders *et al.* (2019) is the philosophy of how research should be conducted.

Research is a systematic and purposeful method of acquiring information to find things out (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Essentially, the research process involves the accumulation, investigation, and translation of data. The purpose of qualitative research more specifically, per the basis of this research, is to comprehend the social world as seen through the eyes of certain individuals to capture the essence of their perspectives based on knowledge and experiences, in their understanding of the given topic.

3.1. METHODOLOGY AND STRUCTURE

The main reason behind the research was to seek insight on participants' level of cognizance and perspectives in relation to the topic of ego within a leader-follower domain. This was conducted through an exploratory basis by adopting a cross-sectional, qualitative based study using a non-probabilistic voluntary response sampling technique. A critical aspect of the research involved the fundamental discussion on ego, and what impact, if any, it has within the parameters of leader-follower dynamics. The aspect of subjectivity while discovering and documenting data intricacies therefore was a critical element of the research.

Saunders *et al.*'s (2019) research onion "the onion" was utilized as the primary guiding framework for the qualitative methodology. The concept of the onion comprises three layers that define the various research methodologies: outer, inner, and central. The onion's foundation is to unwrap the layers (starting with the outer layer and progressing sequentially) revealing the various approaches required to work through a series of assumptions and decisions, before deciding on the most suitable methodology pertinent to the process (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). The structure of the onion (see Figure 5) is such that the center layer entails the accumulation and investigation of data; the middle layers relate to the choice of methods, strategies, techniques, and time horizons; and the outer layer(s) are pertinent to the philosophies and approaches to the theory development.

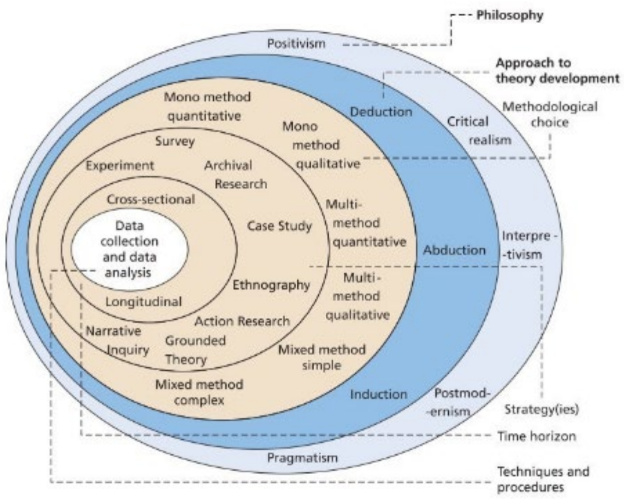


Figure 5. The research onion' (Saunders et al., 2019).

The author opted for Saunders *et al.*'s (2019) research onion as the most suitable methodology by which to conceptualize the study technique, instrument, and sample selection in the fulfilment of the research objectives and was selected as the preferred method after a critical evaluation of alternative methodologies and their respective strengths and limitations.

3.2. RESEARCH PHILOSOPHY, APPROACH AND DESIGN

3.2.1. PHILOSOPHY

"The single most important component of a study is the research question. It is the keystone of the entire enterprise"(Marks *et al.* cited in Bordage and Dawson, 2003, p.378). Importantly however, supplemental to this is the alignment of the research question with the relevant philosophy, the outer most layer of the onion (FIGURE X), which, according to Saunders *et al.* (2019) must not be formed based on personal assumptions. According to Blumberg, Cooper, and Schindler (2011), a well-structured methodological framework is fundamental to the success of the research as it provides the essential instruments required by researchers to address the research issue at hand. Critically however, the underpinning assumptions that shape one's understanding of the research question(s), the techniques used, and subsequently interpreted findings ought to

be premised on ontological (subjective/objective realities), epistemological (human knowledge) or axiological (influence of values) considerations (Saunders *et al.*, 2019; Quinlan, 2011).

3.2.2. PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS

3.2.2.1. Ontological, Epistemological, Axiological

Quinlan (2011) asserts that the philosophical framework opted by a researcher is often underpinned by one's own epistemological and ontological assumptions. To that extent, the following paragraphs detail the philosophical assumptions pertinent to this research study.

Accordingly, ontology, as alluded to earlier, refers to assumptions regarding the nature of reality (Saunders *et al.,* 2019) which Bryman (2011) broadly categorizes as objective (i.e., embracing realism) or subjective (i.e., social constructionism). Additionally, according to Saunders *et al.* (2019), ontological assumptions, in a business context, shape the way one sees and studies research objects, such as organizational events or individuals' working lives. Interestingly, Reiter (2013) alludes to ontology within a leadership context as relating to personal experiences based on reality and fact, which Souba (2011), in his explanation of ontology, suggests is the essence of leadership. Critically however, such context contradicts the basis for individuals' perceptive interpretations of reality, a focal point of the author's methodology, to the extent that Bryman and Bell (2015) note that leadership is usually based on data collected through semi-structured interviews and/or qualitative document analysis. Axiology by comparison, according to Saunders *et al.* (2019), relates to the role of the researcher's values and ethics within a research study, which the author argues contradicts the earlier notion of avoiding personal assumption. Nonetheless, the basis for rejecting ontological or axiological philosophical approaches is premised on the concept of epistemology which is based on the assumptions regarding what constitutes as acceptable knowledge within a field or discipline (Saunders *et al.*, 2019; Bryman and Bell, 2015), including the premise that knowledge, deriving from opinions, constitutes as legitimate knowledge. Accordingly, the author accepts the parameters of epistemology as the guiding philosophical context of the research.

3.2.2.2. Interpretivist and Positivism

In academic research, the philosophical branches of ontology, epistemology and axiology are further categorised under the umbrella of four philosophical stances (Saunders *et al.*, 2019), namely: positivism, pragmatism, realism and interpretivism.

Positivism, according to Saunders *et al.* (2019), relates to a philosophical viewpoint favoured by natural scientists that entails working with observable social reality, offering unambiguous and precise knowledge. Bryman (2011) illuminates the veracity of information from physical reality through scientific technique and an empirical alignment, insofar as reality is unaltered by social actors.

Pragmatism contends that theories are only significant when they enable action, and endeavours to reconcile objectivism and subjectivism, facts and values, precise and disciplined information, and various contextualised experiences which, Saunders *et al.* (2019) suggest is accomplished through analysis of theories, concepts, ideas, hypotheses, and research findings, not in an abstract manner, but in the context of the roles they play as instruments of action and thought and the practical implications within particular contexts. The nature of pragmatism therefore values reality as the practical results of concepts, and knowledge as the ability to carry out actions successfully (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

Realism is categorised by Saunders *et al.* (2019) with a double meaning: *direct realism*, the more extreme of the two, literally meaning "what you see is what you get" (p. 147) and the accurate portrayal of the world through what one experiences. *Critical realism,* on the other hand, relates to explaining what is seen and the experience of factuality in relation to reality's underlying structures.

Interpretivism

Converse to the above philosophies is that of interpretivism which according to Saunders *et al.* (2019) emerged as a subjective critique of positivism, emphasizing that humans are distinct from physical phenomena insofar as they generate meaning. The essence of interpretivism is that individuals and their social surroundings cannot be studied in the same way that physical facts can and therefore, the research of social sciences must be distinct from natural sciences. According to Collis and Hussey (2014), a subjectivist or interpretivist theory postulates that there is no single response to the subjects under consideration because individuals maintain a unique sense of reality that exists within many realities. An epistemological interpretivist approach however, according to Andrews (2012), asserts that social constructs are also accepted within an objective reality, based on how knowledge is constructed and understood. Interestingly however, Bryman and Bell (2015) allude to the different philosophical variables pertaining to the interpretivist approach.

3.2.2.3. Selected philosophical approach(es)

In consideration of the above, the relevant approach opted by the author was that of interpretivist epistemology. Critical application of interpretivism and analysis of individuals within relevant contexts provides valuable insight into perceived versions of reality. Therefore, despite the critical challenges faced by interpretivism within a qualitative domain, its distinctive approach supports the basis of the author's research insofar as it provides context to the research through the eyes of the participants within the various sectors (Table 1), resulting in a profound understanding of the individuals' experiences (Greef, 2015). Yin (2011) suggests that the research correlates empirical data from participant interviews with theoretical concepts extrapolated from the LR, thereby supporting the notion that interpretivist philosophy was an appropriate approach to underpin the research from the participants' perspectives.

3.2.2.4. Rejected philosophical approach(es)

The rejected approaches were that of positivism, pragmatism and realism, based on the core of each philosophy outlined earlier and their fundamental detachment from participants' perspectives of reality, a focal point pertaining to the research topic.

3.2.3. APPROACHES TO THEORY DEVELOPMENT

The extent to which research is concerned with theory testing or theory development raises an essential question about research design (Saunders *et al.*, 2019) and portrays two opposing techniques behind the reasoning as deductive or inductive. In that regard, the second most outer layer of the onion (FIGURE 5) reflects the approaches to theory development.

3.2.3.1. Inductive research

Inductive reasoning is a bottom-up technique that focuses on observation, patterns, hypotheses, and theory conclusions (Hayes and Plumb, 2007). Inductive research is open-ended and exploratory in nature, allowing inferences to be made thematically from primary data, and is well suited to investigating a new area of study in order to build new understandings (Bryman, 2011). According to Saunders *et al.* (2019), inductive researchers are sceptical of deductive reasoning due to its inflexibility and incapacity to yield alternate results. However, Ketokivi and Mantere (2010) suggest that the epistemological dilemma of inductive research is that there is always a logical gap between an inductive argument's premise and its results.

3.2.3.2. Deductive research

Deductive theory, on the other hand, accepts evidence between concepts as true and acts under the assumption that the conclusion is also true (Ketokivi and Mantere, 2010). Accordingly, by addressing an existing concept and examining its assumptions through the development of a suitable research plan, it concentrates on concepts that need to be reduced and expanded into something researchable, so that a known hypothesis can be challenged empirically. A quantitative approach and pre-existing causal links between both variables and concepts are typically associated with a deductive method (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

3.3. RESEARCH DESIGN

The next stages within the process i.e., the middle layers of the onion, relate to research design and the methodological strategies and choices used in underpinning the data collection (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

3.3.1. *Qualitative and quantitative research designs*

The first methodological decision a researcher must decide upon is whether to use a qualitative, quantitative, or mixed method study design. Bryman and Bell (2015) outline the primary data methods are that of qualitative and quantitative and the selection of which is usually determined by the researcher's ontological or epistemological considerations (Saunders *et al.*, 2019).

The focus of quantitative data is premised on numerical data analysis to either (i) test theory, using a deductive approach, or (ii) develop theory, using an inductive approach (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). Bryman and Bell (2015) contend that quantitative methods are quick and efficient than their qualitative counterpart and can reduce bias from the research process. Behaviours, attitudes, and views are also other examples of quantifiable variables within a quantitative method. Quantitative research methods usually utilize large data sets and sample sizes so as to verify its conclusion's reliability and validity and can be useful in, for example, comparative analyses of major social issues between countries (Bonell, 2004), thereby making quantitative methods best suited to **describing** the occurrences within a particular context.

By contrast, qualitative research is generally more effective in investigating **why** something has occurred. This context therefore is concerned with the significance of people's lives, representing the ideas and perspectives of groups or individuals. A qualitative paradigm investigates subjective data, usually the perceptions of individuals involved, in order to gain insight and knowledge pertaining to such perspectives. Saunders *et al.*, (2019) also suggest that qualitative research is often considered naturalistic as researchers must operate within a natural setting, or research context, in order to develop confidence, involvement, access to meanings, and in-depth comprehension. To that extent, the natural, free-flowing and exploratory basis of qualitative research can sometimes facilitate a deeply intense and interpersonal process (Butcher, 2022).

3.3.2. *Descriptive and exploratory research*

Once the design method has been selected, the researcher must determine whether the design is intended as exploratory or explanatory.

Accordingly, Saunders *et al.* (2019) highlight two types of study designs: descriptive and exploratory, resulting in different roles depending on the methodology used. Descriptive writing often explains **how** things are connected, and representative the natural eventualities of an individual, event or situation as it arises. Descriptive research however, although based on direct data, is unable to define why such occurrences occur; a vulnerable implication of the quantitative process as highlighted by (Woiceshyn and Daellenbach, 2018, pp. 188 and 189). Conversely, exploratory studies, are particularly important within the framework of qualitative research since the approach is posited within the parameters of open-ended and explorative settings, permitting the creative attainment of insight and perspectives (Corley, Bansal and Yu, 2021). Thus, the aim of exploratory research is to investigate specific areas within the research, albeit the design does not seek to infer definitive conclusions. Rather, exploratory research structures allow for the potential of alternative insight to emerge, to which researchers, according to Pratt, Kaplan and Whittington (2020) must be able to must be able to fine-tune and refine questions throughout data collection.

3.3.3. Researcher's selected methodology

Accordingly, the author has opted for an exploratory inductive process on the basis of an open-ended, free flowing nature provided by a qualitative process, thereby allowing sufficient flexibility within an interview process to permit any emergent eventualities that may occur. In that regard, the study's qualitative technique enriches the data by allowing participants to divulge their own thought processes and opinions. The objective therefore is to learn how people view the research topic and investigate its possible impact within a leader-follower domain.

Critically however, as qualitative research can be vast with an array of contending considerations, it can, according to Yin (2011), it can be difficult to arrive at a succinct strategy. To that extent, the author opted for a single data collection technique (mono-method) deemed as the most suitable to support the qualitative study. Semi-structured interviews were used to investigate individuals' perceptions the research topic. As a result, the qualitative design is supported by the interpretivist and inductive methodologies discussed in the preceding sections, as well as an exploratory approach.

A synopsis of the semi-structured interview process is outlined as follows: -

(1) Interviews with seventeen individuals from five distinct sectors

(2) Interviews were conducted on MSTeams and recorded and took between 30-45 minutes each

(3) Individuals selected for the study were a range of employees from across five separate industries, each holding various leader, supervisory and follower positions

(4) Interviews were conducted by asking a set of twenty-one questions devised pertaining to the intended research objectives in order to gain individuals' perspective

3.4. DATA COLLECTION

Data collection, according to Zhao and Yin (2021), differs depending on the research field, but is considered the most critical step in scientific research, the quality of which often determining the success or failure of such. Accordingly, data collection within the field of social humanities for example includes multiple methods for selecting, picking, and collecting written information and is focused on methodological issues and the use of interviews in qualitative social science research. Two key elements to the data collection process therefore are that of primary data collection and secondary data collection.

3.4.1. Primary data collection

Primary data collection refers to data generated by the researcher directly by way of interviews, surveys or experiments specifically designed to assist the researcher in understanding and addressing the research topic. The primary method conducted by the author was that of semi-structured interviews, by remote MSTeams video conference and audio recorded, allowing both the author and interviewees flexibility in terms of time and convenience. The method of recording the interviews was agreed in advance with the participants so as to accommodate the author in collecting valuable and accurate information that could be utilised in subsequent analysis. Interviews was the preferred method selected by the author as it provided an effective platform for the attainment of significant insight and viewpoint from the individual participants in relation to the research issue. Saunders *et al.* (2019) refer to the use of qualitative based interviews as an effective method by which to gain insight in regard to peoples' views and beliefs, actions and behaviours

3.4.2. Secondary data collection

Secondary data collection refers to the attainment of data from sources outside that of the primary data collection, used to enable the research to answer (or partially answer) the research question (Saunders *et al.*, 2019). For example, the extrapolation of data from relevant articles and journals within the context of a literature review is considered a core source of secondary data collection. In that regard, a critical review of existing literature pertaining to the core themes of the research topic, namely leadership, followership, emotional intelligence and ego, was conducted by the author. This included in-depth review(s) and critical analysis of academic textbooks and peer-reviewed journal articles, predominantly sourced from NCI library and South Dublin County Council library, in addition to some online sources considered for context only, over a prolonged period of time for the purposes of gaining a thorough understanding of the research topic.

3.4.3. Population sample and analysis of data

A population sample refers to the extrapolation of data from a small subgroup of people utilized by way of a guiding principle within the qualitative research process. According to Saunders *et al.* (2019), this process is known as *sampling* and provides the researcher with a more detailed and accurate set of data insight. Accordingly, the author's sampling selection comprised of seventeen semi-structured interviews with participating individuals working within various organisations from across five different industries, namely; legal, gaming, IT, human capital management and the FinTech industry (Table X). Establishing a variety of opinions and perspectives from individuals relative to the research was critical to the study. The individuals were all employees in organizations, each with some leadership position. Furthermore, and importantly, each leader in this context also held a follower role in terms of a direct report line to a high level or C-suite executive within their respective sectors.

3.5. ETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS

A critical part of the research process involves an ethical review process that the author partook with the National College of Ireland during the Research Proposal stage. This included outlining the steps involved and the intended direction of the research so that due diligence and a duty of care was afforded to all voluntary participants. Of particular consideration to the author was the position of identifying the appropriate class of human participants to partake in the study (research category A) and ensuring that the critical elements of consent and anonymity were discussed and agreed with participating individuals in advance of the interview(s) process.

3.6. RESEARCH LIMITATIONS

Lastly, in consideration of the small sample size of 17 interviews conducted by the author, it is reasonable and expectant for certain limitations to occur: impacting (to some degree) the direction of the study. Such limitations included a level of bias and subjectivity throughout the interview process and despite careful compilation of the interview questions and the author's attempt to remain monotonous and neutral during the interview process, it is reasonable to assume that the answers derived were not wholly authentic. Further limitations were noted during the interview process whereby it emerged that a set of questions pertaining to objective three could have been asked differently. This was discovered after the first day of interviews and as a result, the questions had to be altered somewhat. Therefore, approximately one-third of the group (7 participants) were asked two to three different the questions pertaining to objective three in comparison to the remainder of the group who were asked the alternative questions, thereby implicating the authenticity of answers pertaining to that block of questions. Finally, the most significant limitation encountered by the author, ironically, related to the vastness of the literature review, pertinent to the topic of leadership. So vast is the topic that the author found it challenging to decide what to leave out in the literature review and a significant amount of time was spent back and forth in deciding the angle to take in relation to the theme of leadership.

CHAPTER 4 – RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4. INTRODUCTION

The literature, as discussed in Chapter 2, reveals the extent of interplay between the themed topics of leadership, followership, ego, and emotional intelligence and addresses the correlating dynamics between them. A core aspect to this study was the author's intent of obtaining compelling insights into the perspectives of the individuals selected to participate in the study, and indeed to expand one's own knowledge on the research topic, achieved through the application of an inductive method. The research objectives, as outlined in Chapter 1, permitted the author to present the participants with the overarching research question ***'The perception of ego in leader-follower dynamics'*** in the form of a series of questions conducted by qualitative based interviews (Appendix III). The objectives and questions were premised on two underpinning frameworks: 'The 5 levels of leadership' and the 'Emotional Intelligence' model. Accordingly, the paragraphs that follow detail the findings from the interviews and draws relevant parallels pertinent to the data sets, revealing the participants' knowledge, opinions and viewpoints afforded to the research topic, in conjunction with their skills and experiences to date within their industries.

4.1. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

4.1.1. Objective 1 findings – leadership/leadership effectiveness

The purpose behind this block of questions was to get a sense of participants' knowledge and cognisance within the areas of leadership and leadership effectiveness. Participant demographics varies in terms of age, experience, and roles but the majority of participants fulfil a leadership or supervisory position to some extent and are responsible for managing or leading teams. Therefore, the author was interested in gaining insight into the participants' views on (i) what they thought constituted "good" leadership, (ii) leadership styles, and (iii) the impact of adopting different leadership styles:

4.1.1.1. Participants' perceptions as to what constitutes "good" leadership

In asking the participants *'what does good leadership look like to you?'* (Appendix III), the main trends to emerge were that 'good' leaders ought to portray collaborative, inclusive, empowering traits, are concerned with bringing their teams along the journey, instils positivity, leads from the front, are supportive and shares the vision. The dominant trend to emerge however related to that of communication, suggesting that the most important component of a leader's skill set relates to the ability of being able to communicate effectively with their people, and that by doing so, positive dynamics occur in terms of employee engagement and/or loyalty, and whereby employees are equipped to perform their best work owing to the tools and resources provided by the foundations of good leadership. Conversely, only one referred to leadership in a traditional hierarchical sense as *"managing a team of individuals below you"* (R3-I2), which seems in stark contrast to the main consensus of the group. Interestingly, Einola and Alvesson (2021) outline the dangers of *good* leadership backfiring owing to the ideology of 'heroisms' nowadays associated with the concept of good leadership.

4.1.1.2. Leadership styles

The way in which people lead can often represent one's character or personality. To that extent, the author sought insight from the participant group in relation to what leadership styles they found most useful and why. Unsurprisingly however, the common trend related to a preference for someone who leads with an element of empathy and understanding. However, the author acknowledges the limitations of this question insofar as it is probably fair to assume that it is unlikely anyone will reveal that they like to be led by (or to lead with) an autocratic style – albeit not an impossible scenario, with portions of some cultures still opting for the comfort seemingly afforded by the structure of authoritarian leadership (Wang, Xie, Xie, 2021). Nonetheless, perhaps the findings in the next paragraph reveals a deeper analysis of the groups thoughts on leadership styles and the impact of adopting different styles can have.

4.1.1.3. Impact of adopting different leadership styles

The extent by which adopting different leadership styles is beneficial is extensively exhibited within the literature and demonstrated by concepts such as Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership, Burns' transformational/transactional theories, to Daniel Goleman's sentiments of combining all six styles of his leadership model. It seems strikingly important therefore for leaders to recognise when to switch hats. The author, in addressing this question with the participants, sought to gain a deeper understanding of participants' knowledge of different leadership styles as well as their perspectives on the merits of switching hats, per se. Interestingly, knowledge of emotional intelligence was demonstrated by some participants at this juncture insofar as discussions about leaders with a strong sense of EQ will be aware of the fast and changing dynamics of the current macroenvironment and will understand the need for different styles *"…is the emotional intelligence because you can't use the same model all the time"* (R4-I4). This question revealed a good understanding by the group of the varying styles and the necessity to switch hats occasionally. Interestingly, not one participant ruled out the use of a sterner authoritative (not to be confused with autocratic!) approach when required, so long as it was done in the right way. Participant R2-I3 emphasised the need to understand people's preferences when working with them, which might include applying an authoritarian style. The essence however, as she suggests, is *"…understand the people that we are leading."* and being able to recognise that and apply accordingly.

4.1.2. Objectives 2 and 3 findings – influence/traits

The questions behind objectives two and three sought to gain an understanding from participants as to how past influences, good or bad, have shaped the direction of their own leadership abilities and to what extent they are the subject of those environments insofar as impacting their own ability to influence. Interestingly, Maxwell (2011) notes that level one leadership is an opportunity for leaders to shape their leadership abilities and develop their influencing skills. Importantly however, he notes that this is established on trust and generally within a positive environment. But, in a real-world context, what happens in the absence of a positive environment?

4.1.2.1. Impact of past experiences on participant leadership abilities

In exploring this with the participants, there was consistency amongst the answers when asked about someone from their past (or present) who inspired them and in what way this has influenced their own leadership styles, to the extent that the majority of the group spoke about someone, or a number of people, who had a positive influence on them in some way and by which they then applied within their own context *"…that was one huge thing I've picked up from leaders and that I brought on myself to help other people as well"* (R1-I2). Perhaps more impactful however are the experiences that leave a lasting impression or those that serve as a reminder of what not to do *"…the thing that really drives me is that memory of how I was made to feel through very poor, incredibly poor leadership and thinking ..I never want anyone who belongs to me to feel that way"* (R1-I3). Past experiences therefore can have a profound impact on one's life and alter the lens of our general outlook, thereby consciously or sub-consciously shaping how we approach things. Similarly in leadership, past experiences, good or bad, can shape the direction of how one leads, either through acceptance or conformity of 'that is just how things are done' and such to the extent that you then embody that stance. Often though, an experience can compel you to shape a different future by reflecting and learning from bad experiences and instil a strong sense of core values in forming the foundations of your leadership skills.

4.1.2.2. Collaborative or controlling environments

Of equal importance from past experiences is the potential of carrying forward habits or traits, good or bad, into future working environments, thereby influencing the dynamics at play amongst colleagues. The basis behind the set of questions for objective three was to uncover participants' preferences of working in teams or individually and to get a sense of the type of working environment they exhibit by the use of goals and deadlines. The data revealed a somewhat split consensus in that the majority of participants prefer working in teams generally and discussed the many merits of collaborative based environments *"..bounce ideas off people, to learn from people .… you do learn a lot more"* (R3-I5), but also that occasionally they like to work alone, depending on the type of activity required. Some participants noted a preference for working independently because it is easier to be accountable for oneself *"…prefer to work on my* *own ..then I'm accountable for what I do"*(R2-I1). Interestingly, one participant suggested that he prefers working *"on an effective team"* but also likes to work alone because the more hands involved, the messier things get *"And no matter how much you try and train people on how to do it right, everyone will always get it wrong"* (R1-I1). It might be interesting to note that this participant exudes a preference for working in extremely intense and stressful environments and responds well to authoritative style, heavy handed direction. Something of particular interest noted by the author was the referral by participants to the enjoyment aspect of succeeding as a team, that acts as a great motivator. Interestingly, all participants, whether working on a team or individually considered the use of goals and deadlines as important and effective tools but the main consensus was, that they had to be meaningful and achievable and used by organisations as a means of investing in individuals, helping them develop *"Otherwise they become meaningless ...and they become a stick to beat people with or they become demotivating for people."*(R1-I4). In that regard, Maxwell (2011) emphasises the importance of people development in level four leadership whereby investment strengthens relationships and performance and influences followers because of what you have done for them. Therefore, the primary data take away is the use of goals in a meaningful way, to develop people, rather than just for organisational sake.

4.1.3. Objectives 4 and 5 findings – ego and emotional intelligence

The final two block of questions put to the participants served to uncover how participants would respond to questions about ego, how they handle conflict, and how they might be perceived in the eyes of others, and to what extend they would admit their own shortcomings. The data revealed some interesting insights.

4.1.3.1. The battle of ego and emotional intelligence

Findings from the primary data pertaining to emotional intelligence revealed a good understanding of the concept generally with the main idea revealed by participants was that it related to understanding others and where they're coming from (e.g., the other sides' perspective) and how your emotions might impact dynamics. In asking participants to describe someone who appears egotistical, the dominant trait that most referred to was someone who is self-centred. Other trends included selfish, not caring what others think of them, having an overly positive image of oneself, etc. etc. Unsurprisingly, and as suggested throughout the secondary data (Chapter 2), the negative connotations are consistent. Interestingly however, despite this, when asking the participants if there was a place for egotistical leaders in a workplace, the findings *were* surprising. The majority of participants suggested that there was in fact a place for ego, with one commenting *"..I do think ego can help."* (R2-I3), but that one shouldn't lead from ego and that it plays a bigger part for men than it does women. Another suggested *"Of course there is"* (R2-I4) and that "*..there always will be, it encourages similar personalities and whether they fall for the 'fakeness' of it or not is another question*". The main drawing from the ego question therefore was that the perception of ego is still perceived in a negative capacity, and this correlates consistently with the second data. When asked if 'egotistical' had a sense of awareness about them, the main consensus was that they probably do and that it probably excels some people but that generally, despite this level of self-awareness, they likely otherwise aren't emotionally intelligent *"I wouldn't say they're highly emotionally intelligent, but they be aware of that, what they're doing"* (R1-I4).

In concluding the ego element, when asked to reveal the biggest misconceptions about themselves, it was very interesting to note that the majority of the male participants struggled with the concept of not being taken seriously, which leads me to wonder whether this is a common concern for men's egos. Equally, a common trend of misconceptions revealed for the female participants was being perceived as weak, either by reason of being *"too nice"* (R1-I4) or *"very emotional"* (R2-I3).

CHAPTER 5 – CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5. OVERVIEW

In reviewing the existing literature and in cognisance of the limitations therein, the author sought to explore the perception of ego with the context of leader and follower dynamics. The core aims of the research was to explore the participating individuals' perspectives on the topic of ego within a business context and uncover what impact, if any, this has on leader-followers dynamics, in addition to addressing the research gaps as identified within the literature. Additionally, the underpinning frameworks was utilised by the author in facilitating the collection of data required to address the overarching research question.

The data collection therefore underpins the gaps identified in the literature as outlined in Chapter 1 and serves as the basis for future recommendations of further study. In that regard, the following areas recommended for future examination:-

1. Due to the literature's portrayal of negative ego traits, the topic is usually consumed with negative connotations that typically dominate perceptions to that extent. However, the research also makes reference to some favourable characteristics pertaining to the role of ego such as concepts like ego-strength, humility, or the quiet ego. However, these concepts are not in any way explored to the same extent as negative connotations are, leaving the perception of ego predominantly unchanged. Therefore, this is an area recommended for further, in-depth study.

2. The leader's role in the context of leader and follower relationships remains the primary focus within the literature. Moreover, the limited evidence illuminating the importance of the follower's role remains largely ignored. As a result, this presents a significant deficit in the literature that needs to be filled. Accordingly, the recommendation of further study is to reverse the lens onto the follower to explore the extent by which followership is a key influencer in leader-follower dynamics and the extent by which followers influence leaders levels of ego.

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APPENDICES

Appendix I

'Evolutionary stages of leadership theory' (Source: King, 1990)

Table 1: Evolutionary Stages of Leadership Theory

Personality Era

Great Man Period

Great Man Theory (Bowden, 1927; Carlyle, 1841; Galton, 1869)

Trait Period

Trait Theory (Bingham, 1927)

Influence Era

Power Relations Period

Five Bases of Power Approach (French, 1956; French and Raven, 1959)

Persuasion Period

Leader Dominance Approach (Schenk, 1928)

Behaviour Era

Early Behaviour Period

Reinforced Change Theory (Bass, 1960)

Ohio State Studies (Fleishman, Harris, and Burtt, 1955)

Michigan State Studies (Likert, 1961)

Late Behaviour Period

Managerial Grid Model (Blake and Mouton, 1964)

Four-Factor Theory (Bowers and Seashore, 1966)

Action Theory of Leadership (Argyris, 1976)

Theory X and Y (McGregor, 1960, 1966)

Operant Period (Sims, 1977; Ashour and Johns, 1983)

Situation Era

Environment Period

Environment Approach (Hook, 1943)

Open-Systems Model (Katz and Kahn, 1978)

Social Status Period

Role Attainment Theory (Stogdill, 1959)

Leader Role Theory (Homans, 1959)

Sociotechnical Period

Sociotechnical Systems (Trist and Bamforth, 1951)

Contingency Era

Contingency Theory (Fiedler, 1964)

Path-Goal Theory (Evans, 1970; House, 1971)

Situational Theory (Hersey and Blanchard, 1969; 1977)

Multiple Linkage Model (Yukl, 1971; 1989)

Normative Theory (Vroom and Yetton, 1973; Vroom and Jago, 1988)

Transactional Era

Exchange Period

Vertical Dyad Linkage/Leader Member Exchange Theory (Dansereau, Graen, and Haga, 1975)

Reciprocal Influence Approach (Greene, 1975)

Emergent Leadership (Hollander, 1958)

Role Development Period

Social Exchange Theory (Hollander, 1979; Jacobs, 1970)

Role Making Model (Graen and Cashman, 1975)

Anti-Leadership Era

Ambiguity Period

Attribution Approach (Pfeffer, 1977)

Substitute Period

Leadership Substitute Theory (Kerr and Jermier, 1978)

Culture Era

McKinsey 7-S Framework (Pascale and Athos, 1981)

Theory Z (Ouch and Jaeger, 1978)

In Search of Excellence Approach (Peters and Waterman, 1982)

Schein (1985)

Self-Leadership (Manz and Sims, 1987)

Transformational Era

Charisma Period

Charismatic Theory (House, 1977)

Transforming Leadership Theory (Burns, 1978)

Self-Fulfilling Prophecy Period

SFP Leader Theory (Field, 1989; Eden, 1984)

Performance Beyond Expectations Approach (Bass, 1985)

Appendix II

'Erikson's eight stages of psychosocial development' (Source: Komedara et al., 2022)

Erikson's Stage Theory in its Final Version			
Age	*Conflict*	*Resolution or "Virtue"*	*Culmination in old age*
Infancy (0-1 year)	Basic trust vs. mistrust	Hope	Appreciation of interdependence and relatedness
Early childhood (1-3 years)	Autonomy vs. shame	Will	Acceptance of the cycle of life, from integration to disintegration
Play age (3-6 years)	Initiative vs. guilt	Purpose	Humor; empathy; resilience
School age (6-12 years)	Industry vs. Inferiority	Competence	Humility; acceptance of the course of one's life and unfulfilled hopes
Adolescence (12-19 years)	Identity vs. Confusion	Fidelity	Sense of complexity of life; merging of sensory, logical and aesthetic perception
Early adulthood (20-25 years)	Intimacy vs. Isolation	Love	Sense of the complexity of relationships; value of tenderness and loving freely
Adulthood (26-64 years)	Generativity vs. stagnation	Care	Caritas, caring for others, and agape, empathy and concern
Old age (65-death)	Integrity vs. Despair	Wisdom	Existential identity; a sense of integrity strong enough to withstand physical disintegration

Appendix III

'Interview questions' (Source: Author, 2022)

Objective 1: To investigate Participants' understanding of leadership and leadership effectiveness.
Objective 2: To investigate how Participants have been influenced and to evaluate their ability to inspire and motivate others.
Objective 3: To investigate if Participants' leadership abilities invoke controlling or collaborative traits.
Objective 4: To examine Participants' comprehension of ego and how this influences their behavior.
Objective 5: To determine what impact emotional intelligence has on balancing ego.

Objective 1: Leadership/leadership effectiveness
(Q 1.1) What is your understanding of leadership, and what does good leadership look like to you?
(Q 1.2) What leadership style do you find most useful and why?
(Q 1.3) Based on your experience to date, how would you describe leadership effectiveness?
(Q 1.4) In your opinion, in what ways can adopting different leadership styles contribute to effective leadership?

Objective 2: Influence
(Q 2.1) Tell me about someone who has inspired you most throughout your career, and to what extent that person has influenced your leadership style or abilities.
(Q 2.2) In describing that person (*or another person with whom you've work*ed), what part of their leadership style appealed to you (*or did not appeal to you*) and why?
(Q 2.3) Give me an example of a time when you led by example. What did you do and how did others react?
(Q 2.4) Give me an example of a time when you had to "pitch" an idea to a group of colleagues? What method did you use, and what were the outcomes?

Objective 3: Traits
(Q 3.1) Do you prefer working on your own or in a team? Why?
(Q 3.2) ***If team:*** Tell me about one of your favourite experiences leading a team and what was your contribution.
If Individual: Tell me about one of your favourite experiences leading a project and what was your contribution.
(Q 3.3) How do you perceive the of use goal setting as a leadership method?
(Q 3.4) How do you perceive the use of deadlines or project schedules to monitor progress?
(Q 3.5) What difficult decision have you had as a leader and how did you overcome it?

Objective 4: Ego
(Q 4.1) How do you handle conflict/disagreement within a team (or amongst colleagues) and what measures do you use to overcome that?
(Q 4.2) Give me an example of a time when you felt challenged in your position. Why did you feel this way and how did you overcome it?
(Q 4.3) Tell me about a time when you came up with a creative solution to a challenging task. What was the result?
(Q 4.4) Tell me about a time when something big went wrong at work. What was your role? What was the outcome?
(Q 4.5) Tell me about a time when you disagreed with a manager or colleague about a decision. How did you handle it?

Objective 5: - Emotional intelligence and ego (Deliberate jumbled order of questions)
(Q 5.1) What is your understanding of emotional intelligence.
(Q 5.2) Give an example of when you had to work with someone who was difficult to get along with. How did you handle interactions with that person?
(Q 5.3) What is the biggest misconception your colleagues (or former colleagues) would say about you and why would they think that?
(Q 5.4) In your own words, what is your definition of egotism - or someone who appears egotistical?
(Q 5.5) In your own opinion, do you think there is a place for apparent 'egotistical' leaders/managers in a workplace - why/why not?
(Q 5.6) Do you think 'egotistical' leaders are self-aware?