U.PORTO
FEP FACULDADE DE ECONOMIA
UNIVERSIDADE DO PORTO

Bridging the Leadership Gap: A Comparison Between Leaders' Self-View and Followers' Perspectives

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Dissertation

Master in Economics and Business Administration

Supervised by
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2025

Acknowledgments

This dissertation was only possible thanks to the opportunity I was given. The development of the project was facilitated by the support of a number of people, to whom I would like to express my gratitude.

Firstly, to every person who participated, in the questionnaire and interviews, for their availability and honesty, as well as the company's HR department for the support.

Next, to Professor Manuel Graça, for clarifying questions that arose throughout the dissertation, as well as for his willingness to help.

Finally, to my family and friends for their emotional support and patience throughout this journey.

Resumo

Liderança é um conceito complexo de definir. Ao longo dos anos, a sua definição evoluiu de forma a abranger não só as características do líder, como também o processo de liderança, o qual inclui a relação entre líder e seguidor.

Esta dissertação tem como objetivo examinar como os líderes percebem o seu próprio estilo de gestão com base nas suas ações, em comparação com a forma como os seus seguidores o percebem, e identificar quaisquer lacunas existentes. Após uma análise teórica da evolução da liderança e das suas várias interpretações, foram comparadas criticamente diferentes perspetivas, para determinar se certos estilos de liderança são inerentemente melhores, se a eficácia depende da implementação ou se varia consoante o setor, os objetivos ou os tipos de seguidores. Seguir-se-á a recolha e análise de dados, utilizando um questionário exploratório e entrevistas semiestruturadas com os pares líder-seguidor. Com base nas respostas, será possível determinar se existe uma diferenciação entre a autoavaliação dos líderes e as perspetivas dos seguidores, como interpretar essa lacuna e como ela afeta o par de liderança.

Uma vez que a liderança é moldada pela relação entre os líderes e os respetivos seguidores, é essencial considerar a sua visão. No ambiente empresarial atual, em rápida mudança, diversificado e altamente desenvolvido, a adaptabilidade é crucial. Os seguidores já não procuram apenas orientação, mas também empoderamento por parte dos seus líderes.

Este estudo explora ainda mais se as autoavaliações dos líderes estão alinhadas com o seu desempenho real, enfatizando o papel dos seguidores na avaliação da eficácia da liderança. Ele também examina se as perceções sobre o mesmo líder variam entre diferentes seguidores, destacando a importância das perspetivas dos seguidores na determinação do que torna um líder bem-sucedido.

Palavras-Chave

Estilo de Liderança; Líder; Seguidores, Liderança Transformacional; Perspetivas; Followership, Teoria da Troca entre Líder-Membro

Abstract

Leadership is a complex concept to define. Through the years, its definition has evolved to encompass not only the leader's characteristics but also the leadership process, which includes the relationship between leader and follower.

This dissertation aims to examine how leaders perceive their own management style based on their actions, compared to how their followers perceive it, and to identify any existing gaps. Following a theoretical analysis of leadership's evolution and its various interpretations, the different perspectives will be critically compared to determine whether certain leadership styles are inherently better, whether effectiveness depends on implementation, or whether it varies by industry, goals, or follower types. This will be followed by data collection and analysis, using an exploratory questionnaire and semi-structured interviews with the leader-follower pairs. Based on the responses, it will be possible to determine if there is a gap between leaders' self-view and followers' perspectives, how to make sense of that gap and how it impacts the leadership pair.

Since leadership is shaped by the relationship between leaders and the respective followers, it is essential to consider their view. In today's rapidly changing, diverse, and highly developed business environment, adaptability is crucial. Followers no longer seek mere guidance but also empowerment from their leaders.

This study further explores whether leaders' self-assessments align with their actual performance, emphasizing followers' role in evaluating leadership effectiveness. It also examines whether perceptions of the same leader vary among different followers, highlighting the significance of follower perspectives in determining what makes a leader successful.

Keywords

Leadership Styles; Leader; Followers, Transformational Leadership; Perspectives; Followership, Leader-Member Exchange Theory

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1. Introduction

1.1 Scope and objectives of the study

Leadership, although difficult to define precisely, is widely applied across many fields. Evolving from a trait-based concept to a relationship one, leadership is still studied and newly redefined. However, rather than focusing on the leader, it is important to examine the followers and their role in this dynamic (Silva, 2016)

Research in this area has shown that a difference perception between leaders and followers regarding imposed leadership can reduce performance or pose a risk. For instance, Aarons et al. (2017) studied the discrepancy between perspectives, concluding that they contribute to a poor organizational culture. Similarly, Sehgal et al. (2021) leaders often rate themselves lower than their followers do, which is not as beneficial as if it was congruent.

This dissertation analyses the differences between leader's self-view and follower's perspectives of their leadership. The existing gap might justify the lack of leadership improvement, poor followership or affect the leader-follower relationship.

Conducted in collaboration with an international automotive company based in Spain, this study was applied to a manufacturer site of this company, in Aveiro, Portugal.

1.2 Relevance of the study

The findings could enhance leadership improvement through training, feedback mechanisms, coaching, or better communication, fostering alignment between perspectives, authenticity, and transparency. Utilizing contemporary theories and being applied in an organizational structure, this study provides current insights.

1.3 Thesis structure

Chapter 1 introduces the document, providing context for the project and describing its objective. Additionally, it's presented the relevance of the project and the present document's organization. On the second chapter, it's done the literature review on leadership. It includes Heroic Perspectives, such Traits and Behaviors, Situational Leadership and New

Leadership. Inside the last one are described Charismatic, Transformational and Authentic Leadership. To close Heroic Perspectives, a critic is made under Zombie Leadership. Following, there are Post-Heroic Perspectives as Followership, Distributed and Ethical Leadership, Gender in Leadership and Negative Leadership, which covers Destructive, Narcissistic and Toxic Leadership. At the end of this chapter are analyzed Critical Perspectives and Power Dynamics. Chapter 3 includes the description of the methods used to better understand the existing perceptions' gap. Therefore, it's explained how the questionnaire was created and distributed, followed by the development of the interviews and the sample description. The following chapter, 4, revolves around the questionnaire results, including the evaluation of the classification questions, with different charts, and a deeper analysis of the open-end questions. Chapter 5 aims to summarize the main points of each interview, divided into three cases, with a final overall comparison. In fact, this chapter includes several direct quotes from the interviews conducted for this study. Finally, Chapter 6 presents the conclusions of the work and describes the objectives achieved. It is here that the difficulties encountered throughout the project are presented.

2. Literature review on Leadership

Nowadays, in order to survive, an organization must be competitive and innovative. As described by Amagoh (2009), this requires effective leadership to motivate workers toward better results, greater creativity, and improved responsiveness to market variations.

Defining "effective leadership" is challenging without first defining leadership itself. Stogdill (1974) notes, "There are almost as many different definitions of leadership as there are people who have attempted to define the concept." Leadership is more than personal qualities; it is a process. Silva's 2016 study (p. 5) defines it as "the process of interactive influence that occurs when, in a given context, some people accept someone as their leader to achieve common goals."

Leaders exist because of followers, and followers, in turn, need leaders. Their relationship is symbiotic (Notgrass, 2014). Yet, there is the illusion whether the leader is more important than followers. Historically, leadership studies focused on leaders and their traits. More recently, there has been a crescent spotlight on the followers (Notgrass, 2014) with research exploring how leader-follower relationships form and develop (Kaminskas et al., 2011).

The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory emphasizes the connection between leaders and followers, built on mutual interactions, trust, and interdependence. Most studies in this field conclude that higher-quality relationships lead to better outcomes for both parties, the team, and the organization (Cogliser et al., 2009). High-quality LMX relationships promote emotional attachment, empowerment and innovation as the followers involved are more autonomous and risk takers (Zhao et al., 2025).

The definition of leadership has evolved through ongoing studies and the need to better understand and utilize this concept. Initially, leaders were viewed as individuals born with innate skills that enabled them to lead effectively. This heroic perspective paved ways to trait theory, which identified common qualities among exceptional leaders. Succeeding developments led to more structured approaches, including Transformational and Authentic Leadership theories, among others (Hunt et al., 2019).

The focus shifted from the heroic leader—the figure with exceptional qualities—to the collaborative relationship between the leader and members. This connection empowers those being led, emphasizing their commitment and motivation toward the organization's goals (Sobral et al., 2019). In this context, Followership, Distributive Leadership, Ethical

Leadership, Gender studies, and Negative Leadership can be included.

Many recent studies attempt to demonstrate an excess of positivism regarding the leadership models mentioned. The Critical Perspective of Leadership examines power differences and questions whether leadership can be taken to extremes or is unnecessary, serving only to empower the leader (Day, 2014).

Although leadership is a complex construct, it is possible to distinguish leadership styles based on behaviors, communication, vision, and decision-making patterns exhibited by leaders. These styles may differ from culture, organizational context, or personal beliefs and experiences (Ametefe et al., 2024). Each style has pros and cons, and no single approach fits all situations. Leaders can adapt different methods depending on circumstances without being confined to one category.

2.1 Heroic Perspectives

The initial studies on leadership focused on the leader and their capabilities. It was a single person task. Arising from a challenging event, the heroic leader would assume it with their distinctive traits. This leadership assents in the traditional hierarchy and, even after the developments in recent years regarding new styles and theories emerging, the heroic perspective still remains. In some studies, both heroic and post-heroic coexist (Drysdale et al., 2014).

Given the prevalence of this perspective, it makes sense to analyze its characteristics, limitations, and applicability.

2.1.1 Traits and Behaviors

The heroic leader was portrayed, normally, as a tough man, self-reliant and focused on the results. (Ryömä, 2020).

Between 1920 and 1940s, the Great Man Theory stated that the leader had innated traits who qualified them to perform even in the toughest situations. However, as those traits were found not only in leaders but as well in followers, it became inconclusive, needing to add more criteria (Oliveira, 2022).

Katz and Kahn, from Michigan University, during the 1950s, defined two types of leaders: task oriented and employee centered; the first focused on planning and controlling and the last on supporting and recognizing it was possible to attain goals via various paths. Both styles could be applied at the same time. Fleishman, from Ohio State University, defined the Initiating Structure asserting that no style was better than the other and a combination of both could be effective (Johns et al., 1989).

2.1.2 Situational Leadership

In 1975, House, R. J., & Mitchell, T. R. defined a new theory in order to further deepen the knowledge of leadership. Taking into account the situation where leadership emerges, this line of thought affirms that the leader is the person more qualified to be so, in a particular scenario. This analysis attempts to prove the efficiency of the Path-Goal

method, their finding, compared to trait analysis and situational approaches. According to this theory, there are four leadership types: Directive Leadership, Supportive Leadership, Participative Leadership and Achievement-Oriented Leadership. No leadership style is superior to another. The style applied should depend on the situation and task.

Empirical studies defied the previous research made and affirmed that the leadership would depend on the situation that it occurred, being a dynamic relationship (for example Vroom and Yetton, 1973 or Wren, 1979). The employee aspect was starting to be more valuated and led Hersey and Blanchard, in 1979, to define a model: Situational Leadership Theory. It analyzes and recommends the level of task behavior and relationship a leader should have in comparison to the follower's ability and maturity. For instance, as a group evolves in the tasks, the leader should start decreasing their autocracy and allow their subordinates to make decisions, providing only the necessary support (Johns et al., 1989).

2.1.3 New Leadership

The styles mentioned focus on the leader's traits and behaviors which guide them to success. Later, new studies were developed, considering the role of the followers and the context of leadership (Oliveira, 2022).

It is also important to mention that, according to the Situational Leadership Theory (SLT), there is no better leadership than the other. It depends on the characteristics of the leader, the followers and the context that they are in (Trevisol et al., 2019).

2.1.3.1 Charismatic Leadership

Charismatic leaders emerge not only through their personal qualities but also due to situational factors. These leaders possess great imagination and vision, inspiring followers to achieve greater accomplishments. In fact, vision is one of the most important characteristics that leaders must have to energize the followers and motivate them to attain the defined goal (Riggio, 2023). Their behaviors and traits motivate followers to enthusiastically pursue shared goals. Research shows this leadership style proves most effective when, beyond the leader's charismatic attributes like faith and vision for a better future, there is uncertainty or crisis that leaves employees demotivated and seeking improvement (Yan et al., 2025). According

to Latif (2018), such leaders thrive in transformational environments, focusing on potential success rather than possible failure while taking calculated risks to prove their trust in their vision.

This leadership approach cultivates collective impact by aligning all members with a shared vision they apply to their tasks, thereby strengthening group identity. Such homogeneity often fosters collaborative and altruistic behaviors (Seong et al., 2025).

Studies confirm Charismatic Leadership boosts engagement as followers internalize the leader's goals, prioritizing organizational objectives over personal interests (Wang et al., 2005). However, as situations stabilize over time, the leader's charisma may diminish, needing to assume other motivational methods (Yan et al., 2025). Its important to notice excessive follower devotion, which could enable unethical practices, or excessive optimism masking serious issues. Leaders might also engage in self-sacrifice to validate their vision (Latif, 2018).

2.1.3.2 Transformational Leadership

To comprehend transformational leadership, it's relevant to understand the theories that dominated the literature until the 1980's. These exchange-based theories introduced the concept of Transactional Leadership (Hargis et al., 2011).

In Transactional Leadership, leaders focus on setting work-related goals and rewards to enhance team member performance (Krasniqi et al., 2024). This approach is pragmatic as communication regarding expectations remains more open and clearer. Penalties may also be applied (Hossin et al., 2024).

Both leaders and followers try to achieve their own self-interests. Leaders can manipulate goals by aligning them more closely to the followers', adjusting rewards and penalties. Additionally, leaders may actively supervise followers or remain passive until an issue, problem, or question arises (Bass, 1999).

Since leaders can punish followers for misconduct or failure to meet targets, they perceive themselves as holding a position of power which they can take, for example, to decision making. Furthermore, followers only feel the need to achieve the goals they will have a reward for, and not exceed the expectations set. In a company, that could limit the idea process, productivity and innovation (Khan, 2017).

Companies tend to adopt transactional leadership when they start to focus on short term goals and prefer optimization rather than innovation. As this approach is more goal-

oriented, it can redirect companies with a stricter vision or goal to accomplish it, doing the work that is required. However, Wegert (2024) argues in his paper that this use of leadership can limit the findings of new markets as it only focusses on the existing customer needs. In fact, innovative goals are restricted by budget, resources and skills. Furthermore, corporate-level decision making is higher in larger companies and impedes implementations of ideas.

However, transformational leaders motivate their subordinates to achieve challenging goals. The motivation and inspiration behind this leadership are what make the followers achieve better results. Besides that, leaders provide support and a continuous learning environment that facilitates team development (Bass et al., 2006).

Leaders should be able to guide followers beyond their immediate self-interests by making use of their charisma, setting an example, and providing clear direction (Bass, 1999).

One of the management tasks is to ensure the longevity of the organization. For that, the company must face tests of strength, competitive market and other circumstances that may arise and close the market gap or affect business. Beyond favorable market conditions, it's necessary to have a strategic vision of the leader and the cohesion of the team created. (Narimanova, 2021).

Transformational Leadership is particularly effective during crises, as it fosters innovation, promotes adaptability, and emphasizes collective mission. Consequently, it inspires followers to achieve higher outcomes and allows easier decentralization. These qualities can also have a bigger impact on market shaping (Wegert, 2024).

When an organization lacks organization and procedures, leaders should be idea generators, producing an environment in where the followers should be trained and mentored to achieve a wider vision and feel empowered to make decisions (Kesidou et al., 2018). There's a higher chance of success by transformational leaders, who enable risk taking and promote creativity. When there's uncertainty about the future of the company, the focus shifts to the market and creating new opportunities by implementing changes and taking risks in new approaches. Hence, Transformational Leadership is preferred (Wegert, 2024).

In a constantly changing environment, it's crucial to make sure that the company is able to face economic challenges and improve their results, along with a bigger focus on innovation. Transformational leaders thrive in uncertainty as they motivate their followers and challenge them, creating an innovative environment (Korejan et al., 2016). While transformational leaders take a proactive approach, transactional leaders react based on follower performance (Wegert, 2024).

According to the full range of leadership measured by the Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, it is implicit that every leader has Transformational and Transactional Leadership. However, leaders who demonstrate more transformational behaviors are generally perceived more favorably by their followers and achieve better outcomes. In the same way, transformational teams show greater empowerment and higher performance levels, with members caring about each other and inspiring one another (Bass, 1999).

Inspired by Transformational Leadership, other theories emerged. Maintaining a heroic view, these leaderships also incorporated some flaws. One of those emerging leaderships is Entrepreneurial Leadership (Chandranathan, 2024).

The research on Entrepreneurial Leadership has grown significantly since the early 1990s, driven by the need to adapt to market demands and mitigate risks (Leitch et al., 2017).

Separating the concepts of leader and entrepreneur, it is possible to find areas in the behavior spectrum which are relevant to both, such as vision, influence, planning and leadership of innovative people (Roomi et al., 2011)

For Renko et al, as explained in 2015 (p. 55), "Entrepreneurial Leadership entails influencing and directing the performance of group members toward the achievement of organizational goals that involve recognizing and exploiting entrepreneurial opportunities." In fact, entrepreneurial behaviors promote innovation and the capacity of adaptation to changing environments (Renko et al., 2015).

Entrepreneurial leaders often exhibit individual characteristics or behaviors, such as visionary thinking, problem-solving, decision-making, risk-taking, and strategic initiative (Fernald et al., 2005). As it involves discovery and exploitation of opportunities to create valor, the entrepreneurial leader must possess technical skills such as financial and market analysis (Kesidou et al., 2018).

Entrepreneurial leaders motivate the followers by engaging themselves in new opportunities, leading employees by example. They encourage followers to be innovative, construct their success and contribute to the company's (Renko et al., 2015). Driven by opportunity and market competitiveness, entrepreneurial leaders take advantage of strategic management to create, develop, and mobilize resources for long-term success (Kesidou et al., 2018).

2.1.3.3 Authentic Leadership

As written by Gardner et al. in 2011 (p. 1120), "truly authentic leaders must lead, but

they must do so in a way that honors their core values, beliefs, strengths—and weaknesses."

Authentic Leadership (AL) can incorporate Transformational Leadership and ethic. It should be based on the leader acting with integrity and in accordance with their values and beliefs to inspire followers and earn their trust. This environment fosters a culture of honesty and collaboration, accepting multiple and diverse ideas and opinions (Avolio et al., 2004).

These leaders focus on empowering people and valuing differences to nurture talent. Authentic leaders help develop their followers' psychological attributes, which reduces stress and motivates change. As they practice ethical and rational decision making, they inspire trust. Additionally, by their emotional awareness and transparency, they tend to control their emotions and build stronger work relationships (Brunetto et al., 2024).

By using AL, there's a bigger combination of the leader as a person and as the role in itself. The self-confident and self-aware leader must serve the followers for them to gain those qualities as well. In particular, self-awareness is vital for leaders to get to know themselves, their emotions, strengths and even limitations. This awareness helps them to control better their feelings, taking into account how they will affect the environment around them. In addition, relational transparency is associated with this leadership and translates the ability to push clear and open communication within the group. As a result, leader-follower relationships become more authentic, fostering genuine followership (Molina-López et al., 2024).

This leadership style cultivates positive emotions, trust, hope, and optimism through followers' personal identification with the leader, which enhances performance (Avolio et al., 2004).

However, AL can bring negative effects for managers whose personal values don't match the ones transmitted by the company or senior managers. Therefore, it can conduct them into personal and social issues, leading them into dilemmas which might affect their leadership and personal life (Alvesson et al., 2019).

2.1.4 Zombie Leadership

The Zombie Leadership (ZL) theory, as explained by Haslam et al. (2024), affirms that even though significant progress was made in the leadership field, outdated ideas remain alive and are holding back further development. Backed by the narrative that the leader has qualities which stand them from others and that society requires a hierarchy in order to

survive, leaders maintain a sense of superiority.

The ZL takes axioms and debates them. For instance, the notion that leadership revolves around leaders and their capability in the role can be refuted by studies who proved that lower members of a company or team consider themselves guided and motivated by the direct supervisors or colleagues than by high-ranking leaders. Additionally, giving the success of the operations and results exclusively to the leader will only inflate its ego and undermine the team effort (Haslam et al., 2024).

Another prevalent stereotype suggests exceptional leadership has to have a predetermined set of traits. The emphasis should be placed on the perspective of the evaluator: the follower. While there is generally consensus regarding exemplary leaders, the specific attributes that contribute to their distinction are often characterized differently. Some may prioritize intellectual capacity, whereas others may value openness more highly - despite both traits being universally acknowledged as essential for effective leadership (Haslam et al., 2024).

Moreover, leadership is not universally uniform and cannot be applied indiscriminately. A football team will require a leader significantly different from an accounting company. What motivates a person can demotivate the next, so it can be necessary flexibility in order to effectively engage diverse groups (Haslam et al., 2024).

This persistent reality, although creating a bigger separation between powerful and powerless people, can be originated in the lack of confidence of the followers who do not believe they have the capability to direct themselves or even others (Haslam et al., 2024).

2.2 Post-Heroic Perspectives

As the world evolves, so does the concept of leadership, restructuring itself to include not just one dimension, but rather all of its perceived complexity. Thus, there is a transformation from a unilateral concept to a comprehensive view of the interaction between leader and followers, including the impact of the latter on leadership (Benmira, 2021)

In contrast to Heroic Perspectives, the Post-Heroic focus on a less authoritarian and more collaborative leader. Leadership should emerge from the relationship born between leader and follower, being more distributed (Ryömä, 2020). Studies highlight characteristics often defined by society as more feminine as increasingly important. Therefore, it's relevant

to examine the role of gender in leadership as well as access how equality is perceived in higher positions (Khan et al., 2022).

2.2.1 Followership

Although the focus of the leader-follower relation traditionally emphasizes the leader, questions arise around why followers would set aside their own autonomy and goals to follow the leader's vision. Given that followers vastly outnumber leaders, their goals and values tend to be more diverse. However, as a group, there is benefit in maintaining coordination, thus there's a motivation to establish a leader-follower dynamic (Bastardoz et al., 2019).

Followership is defined by the capability to tail a leader or the goal they represent. Without followership, there is no leadership. This relation emphasis the equal importance of both concepts (Mazzei, 2022).

Emerging theories focused on followers and affirm that leaders are only as good as their followers' perception of them. A good leader needs to demonstrate the characteristics and values expected by them, meaning leadership is shaped not by the leader's self-assessment but as the followers' perception. For this reason, follower's actions or perceptions can affect and influence direct leadership just as the leader's response can also influence the followers' behavior, creating a dynamic relation (Oc et al., 2013).

From the followers' perspective, as shown by Patrícia Silva (2021), it's essential that leaders share similar values with them and not only the similarity between the leader's beliefs and actions. The positive correlation between the followers and leaders' similar values and finding them more authentic can create a dilemma for the leaders. They can be authentic by following their own principles but not be perceived like it. Therefore, changing their actions, being seen as more authentic, compromising themselves and their values.

Followers can be categorized by engagement and behavior: exemplary followers (supportive, responsible, and constructively critical), conformists (uncritical but compliant), alienated followers (skeptical and critical), passive followers (requiring constant supervision), and pragmatic followers (adaptable to situational demands) (Sunwoo et al., 2024)

Poor followership can be related to a follower's lack of coordination with the team or leader, producing a worse outcome. It can also manifest when followers fail to challenge exploitative leaders, thereby perpetuating unfavorable conditions for the group (Bastardoz et

al., 2019).

Nevertheless, it can be difficult for a person to become leader, if they lack autonomy, inability to attract followers, not enough motivation or when the costs outweigh the rewards. The followership styles should match the leadership styles; for instance, if the followers are less autonomous, they require a more dominant leader (Bastardoz et al., 2019).

Studies, such as Malakyan et al. (2024), highlight the interdependence of leadership and followership and the effectiveness depends on complementing each other.

With that being said, followers and leaders are situational roles where people fall and not inherent characteristics. Additionally, as a manager can be a follower of the company's guidance or have a higher leader, it is important to consider the possibility of having both roles (Baker, 2007).

In the described degree of complexity, followers and leaders should be studied in the nature of their relationship (Baker, 2007).

2.2.2 Distributed Leadership

Several approaches to leadership emphasize its collective nature, rather than the centrality of a single, heroic leader. The terms referring to collective leadership include distributed, shared and relational leadership, amongst others, viewing it as a relational process (Watson et al., 2007). Distributed leadership, in particular, has gained special prominence in this context.

This new concept gives employees a voice in decision-making processes, improving collective thinking. With the increasing complexity in organizations flexibility has also grown in the work structure (Sedrine et al., 2021). This perspective gained popularity as the focus shifted from the leader role and its actions to the interactions between leader and follower along with distribution of leadership activities across the organization, independently if they have leadership roles or not (Harris et al., 2008). As employees feel like that had a part on the decision, they report being more committed to company's goals (Watson et al., 2007). With this partnership, members of an organization can overcome issues and enhance individual's capabilities (Youngs, 2017).

In Gronn, 2002, leadership is attributed by others with Distributed Leadership manifesting as numerical or concertive action. The first implies that leadership is shared between

a couple, many or all of the team members. The second, concertive action, involves members acting not just individually but as a cohesive group working toward a common goal. Depending on the timing, it can be dissected into spontaneous collaboration, which is temporary and can be useful to merge knowledge applied in specific cases, such as projects; intuitive working relations, for long-term arrangements, where there were missing skills or overlapping of responsibilities. Due to mutual dependence, trust is required; and institutionalized practices, meaning formalized distributed leadership in the organization, leading to more flexibility and inclusivity, supported by high collaboration levels.

As studied by Sedrine et al., in 2021, distributed leadership can impact positively organizational commitment. Team autonomy, required for this management style, requires responsibility and coordination which motivates the individuals and validates their work. In fact, coordination has a crucial role and involves managing dependencies between individuals and tasks.

In some cases, distributed leadership can negatively impact the team's efficiency by affecting priorities, timescales or even targets (Harris, 2009).

2.2.3 Ethical Leadership

Organizations need to provide their workers with guidance regarding ethical and accepted conduct, as that definition may vary among peers. Ethical Leadership emerges through normative behaviors demonstrated in personal actions, relationships, communication and decision-making. An ethical leader can accommodate other leadership approaches (such as the reward or punishment of Transactional Leadership) to ensure their employees are held accountable for their ethical or unethical actions. These leaders tend to make fair decisions and encourage their followers to do as they (Kuenzi et al., 2020).

This leadership style is essential for corporate governance and sustainable practices. According to Ferhani, 2025, cognitive morality, to distinguish between right and wrong, integrity, consistency, between the preached and actions, and honesty are essential for this leader. With these virtues, the leader can provoke positive attitudes that match the organizational standards.

2.2.4 Gender in Leadership

Studies have compared the leadership styles and behaviors displayed by male and female leaders. Women were classified as more relationship type, connecting with the followers and being concerned regarding their well-being. Men were described as more goal-oriented, with tendency to practice higher levels of control (Gibson, 1995). Women are described as leaders from behind and democratic in their leadership style whilst men tend to lead from the front and apply an autocratic approach (de la Rey, 2005).

As research evolved from a heroic, masculine view to a post-heroic one, qualities perceived as more "feminine" including empathy, ease to form relationships and listen others became more valued. The tendency is to flatter the hierarchy of organizations and to improve connections while create adaptability in this global and diverse era, and, in that sense, a more interpersonal and communal leadership is needed, requiring women related traits. However, this wasn't enough to increase women's representation in leadership positions (Bastardoz et al., 2019; de la Rey, 2005; Rippin, 2007).

Other authors, like Anderson et al. (2011), concluded in their studies that there's no relevant difference between female and male leadership styles. Instead, the differences are more related to industry and culture. They tried to justify the similarities by explaining that women could have developed masculine behaviors associated to have the access to the same opportunities. Moreover, it's possible to find bigger differences within genders than between the groups (Hoyt, 2010)

Followership theory highlights that leaders succeed when they meet the follower's expectations. As a result, a female leader showing traditionally male behaviors can suffer backlash, which will affect her leadership and the way she´s perceived. The same applies to men, however in lower scale. (Bayazit et al., 2024)

To create an effective leadership, as explained by Crystal Hoyt in 2010, it's necessary to blend feminine and masculine traits, like empathy, intelligence, emotional intelligence, trustworthiness and others, forming an androgynous approach.

Beatty et al., in 2017, argued that hypermasculine expectations from society and peers could be the root of hegemonic leadership in an oppressive form. Liberating the genderism of leadership approaches can help the concept to become more inclusive and, therefore, help men and women to become better leaders, without the weight of rigid gender norms.

2.2.5 Negative Leadership

Existing literature has focused on the positive side of leadership. However, when misapplied, it can result in leader's inefficiency, affecting organizational performance (Toor et al., 2009). Various forms of negative leadership can be distinguished and their impact can help to understand the importance of constructive leadership.

Destructive Leadership

The study of leadership traditionally contemplated the positive effects of leadership and its role in employees' motivation. Bad leadership was seen as the absence of leadership. Destructive Leadership covers a range of leaders' definitions and types, which can have negative effect on subordinates. Abusive supervision tends to leave the employees less motivated and committed, with increased distressed (Einarsen et al., 2007).

This leadership can also be triggered when leaders think their status or identity can be challenged by followers' unwillingness to comply. To regain control, leaders may resort to abusive supervision. Similarly, the behavior of followers can also be affected by leadership; if the leader's behavior becomes destructive, followers may reject their leadership by engaging in deviant behavior (Güntner et al., 2021).

Narcissistic Leadership

To understand Narcissistic Leadership, an initial definition of narcissism is necessary. Narcissism can be described as an exaggerated form of self-love, fueled by ego and a lack of empathy. Narcissistic people tend to seem to feel superior and require admiration from others (Rosenthal et al., 2006).

This type of leader has a less positive connotation given their arrogance and manipulation tendencies, often resulting in decreased motivation and innovation. Similarly, it encourages workplace bullying, leading to higher dissatisfaction and turnover rates (Faeq, 2025)

As portraited by Leary et al.'s study in 2018, narcissistic characteristics were more common and stronger in men than women. However, women in higher positions, who demonstrated narcissistic behaviors, were judge more harshly and were worse perceived than their male counterparts.

Narcissistic leaders may prevail in environments that require their charisma or sense of greatness but are rejected when trust is needed and in stable situations. Followers may

deliberately choose this leadership if they are narcissistic themselves, persuaded by the leader's charisma or intimidated by it (Rosenthal et al., 2006).

Toxic Leadership

Toxic leaders are considered arrogant, egoist, unethical and only act accordingly to their own interests. They can significantly harm their subordinates as they don't care about their well-being. They may act corruptly by supporting and rewarding followers who follow their ideas and respect them, and harming those who oppose their ideals (Köse et al., 2024)

Their toxic agenda can be masked as a noble vision and affect negatively, not only their team, but all the organization. Even though toxic leaders tend to believe their behavior is socially accepted, it's proved to improve employee burnout, anxiety, emotional exhaustion and other psychological stresses (Wolor et al., 2022).

This leadership tends to improve employees' disengagement and turnover. If employees feel that the company will favor the toxic leader, they will not feel able to express the injustices they have suffered, leading to an oppressive work environment. Organizations can mitigate these issues by altering their recruitment processes to not admit toxic leaders and provide training to prevent toxic behaviors. Additionally, establishing anonymous whistleblower programs can empower employees to report concerns without fear of retaliation (Ashfaq et al., 2025).

2.3 Critical Perspectives

Critical Leadership defends that the exercise of leadership depends on the exercise of power, authority and influence. It criticizes the prevalence of mainstream perspectives and ignorance of followers' resistance or disapproval emphasizing the cultural setting as crucial in the leadership implementation (Collinson et al., 2015).

This view deepens the understanding of leadership by examining power and ideologies which perpetuate inequalities and social injustice. It's needed to recognize the cultural aspect of leadership beyond the political one shedding light on gender studies, ethnic and cultural backgrounds and lack of equity (Palmer et al., 2025)

Critical Leadership also disapproves other perspectives who trust in their leaders to make the best decisions. Higher-ranking leaders hold the power of more and more issues

which they end up knowing less, being unaware of the consequences of their own decisions and limited to the view of their subordinates (Collinson et al., 2015).

An additional focus is directed to followership: disengagement and resistance are seen as negatively; this perspective counter argues that it can be used as a feedback tool and as a response to Destructive Leadership (Collinson et al., 2015). The term followership, not only is widely less researched compared to leadership, as well is normally used in a pejorative way, asserting leader superiority (Nordberg et al., 2020).

Employees may adopt corporate personas, masking their true selves in response to organizational control. Created purposefully or for cultural reasons, this personality can, for example, undermine Authentic Leadership when a leader's professional identity conflicts with their personal one - or pressure followers to conform, suppressing their perceived reality to align with leaders' expectations (Nordberg et al., 2020).

2.3.1 Power Dynamics

As the power is concentrated in a few individuals, leaders have significant influence, and their decisions affect not only their followers as the environment surrounding them. As they control key decisions, they can pursue their own vision and take advantage of existing power imbalance. Leaders can use motivation to get through their subordinates but also manipulation. As stated in Collinson et al.'s paper (2015), "even the possession of a small amount of power increases people's willingness to engage in corrupt practices". Critical leadership highlights that more than studying the leader and their Destructive Leadership is relevant to analyze the power dynamics and organizational context including politics, discrimination and social justice.

Leaders possess a great amount of power, which can compel followers to conform. However, followers hold power as leadership depends on them. Resistance inevitably arises in response to the exercise of power. In fact, followers can affect power and, consequently, leadership, openly, for example through strikes, or subtly such as withholding information, silence or disengagement. Moreover, excessive or improper use of power—including disregarding followers' perspectives—can provoke resistance (Collinson, 2020)

3. Methodology

This study is implemented in an international group dedicated to the design, development and manufacture of metal automotive components. With great attention to sustainability and innovation, this company focuses on the client. Its goal is to be the most recognized company in their field. The company has a manufacturer site in Aveiro, Portugal, where the workers will be asked to perform the questionnaire and, after, participate in interviews.

The Aveiro site employs, in June of 2025, 557 workers. The absenteeism, in 2024, was approximately 7,37% and the employee turnover 8,82%. Both values are relatively low which is a good satisfaction indicator. However, when the data is separated for temporary work, the number of workers is 88 and the employee turnover increases to 70%. However, in this case, it is directly related to the ending of contracts, which might not be renewed.

This study aims to determine if there are gaps between the leaders' self-view and followers' perspective towards the leadership imposed. The methodology used for this is twofold.

Firstly, to gather information regarding the expectations concerning implementation of leadership, all company's workers were given the opportunity to answer a questionnaire, which was different to leaders and followers. The questionnaire could be answered in ten minutes and included different characteristics and situations which could be helpful in figuring out the leadership applied. This helped to determine the type of leadership applied and preferred, overall perception of the leadership effectiveness and, overall, employee satisfaction.

Second, thirty-minute semi-structured interviews were conducted with leaders and their followers (separated), where both answered similar questions regarding applied leadership, told stories, by their point of view, of their daily life and how they felt, among others. In this stage, it was crucial to understand if the leaders' perceived outcomes align with their intended results.

3.1 Questionnaire

The questionnaire was created in Microsoft Forms as it is widely used and user-friendly. Two versions were developed, one in English and another in Portuguese, as the

majority of the population of the study only speaks their native language. During translation, accuracy and precision were maintained, while ensuring the fluency of the text.

The first section had questions to classify the individuals by gender, age, academic qualifications completed and number of years in the current position (Appendix A). These responses enable a deeper analysis considering different factors and grouping participants accordingly, such as gender to determine its impact.

Next, in question number 7, participants were directed to different versions of the questionnaire based on having or not a leadership role. Leaders were required to complete both the leader and follower sections, as their responses reflect hierarchical relationships and their impact. The second part consisted of classification statements and open-ended questions.

The classification statements have a 1 to 5 rating scale where 1 means "Strong Disagree" and 5 "Totally Agree". This rating scale can be easily understood and filled, being one of the most applied formats. The meaning of each number is clear to the respondent of the questionnaire (Dawes, 2008). After, the statements were formed based on key characteristics mentioned above, in the various leadership styles. For example, the statement "I give team rewards or consequences as a result of performance" aligns with transaction leadership. Additional considerations included gender, consistency, relationship perception, and a final question explicitly classifying the leader. The gender questions, marked as L20 (for leadership) and F20 (in the followers' section), are the only ones which are constructed in an opposite way for better understanding. The other questions have direct correlation.

Regarding the open-ended questions, these were designed to enable more complex responses which are usually more variable and personal. They include qualities, flaws and perceived impact. Leaders were asked what they consider to be the biggest difficulty they face, to potentially understand whether there may be any challenges in their relationship with the followers. Followers, in return, were asked about their expectations regarding leadership, providing content for earlier ratings in the questionnaire. An optional comments field concluded the questionnaire. The questionnaire, questions and their corresponding chart codes are detailed in Appendix A.

In order to promote participation, a first email was sent to all the workers of the plant to disclose the context and purpose of the survey and kindly request their answers. After, a second one was sent to try and get more answers, in case the first one was ignored or lost. It included a poster (Appendix B) which helped summarizing the information and looked

visually more appealing. Additionally, and due to the lack of adherence, the poster and questionnaires were printed and given by the Human Resources team to the workers who went to their office. Even though the responses were collected via writing, the anonymity was preserved as they were deposited in a mailbox.

3.2 Semi-Structured Interviews

When it comes to the interviews, the process was slightly different. Even though they were still based on this document's theorical findings, the questionnaire responses led to more direct points where it was possible to find scattering of perspectives. The interviews were conducted in Portuguese, being the common language between participants, enabling direct discourse comparison.

The interviewees were selected by the Human Resources department, considering the need for diversity in gender and teams, while choosing individuals who were both available and willing to participate in the study. The selection included three leaders and two of their subordinates each. Leaders were interviewed first, followed by both of the followers in order to facilitate information organization and alignment.

Regarding anonymity, all names were hidden, as well as the gender (as there was only one female leader and two male ones) maintaining privacy and creating an environment of trust. For the interviewees they were not referred as him or her; they are indicated as "them", using neutral pronouns, in order to not reveal their gender and, therefore, identity. Additionally, the leaders were classified with an "L" followed by one random number, related to their case (for example "L2"). Followers, in return, had an "F" followed by the same number as the leader then either 1 or 2, since there were two followers for each leader (such as "F21" being the first follower of L2).

The interviews were recorded with the interviewees' consent, not only to assist transcriptions but also to enable greater focus on the conversation rather than note-taking, only highlighting the most relevant points and quotes. Key points were taken and organized in a table structure to better classify similarities and differences between interviewees, ensuring all the relevant issues were addressed. Not only that but all interviews followed the same structure, enabling direct and fair comparison. The tables were added as appendix (Appendix C, D and E).

After brief introduction, including name, age, position and years in the mentioned position, the conversation was guided by the process of storytelling, letting the interview flow and having the opportunity to gather additional information by the situations mentioned. Adopting a semi-structed interview, it was possible to not limit answers and understand subliminal notes and further elaborate on difficult issues or quicky mentioned ones (Ghauri et al., 2020). It helped the fluency of discourse, as it was possible to go back to the key topics to better qualify the research question, by understanding or going beyond on the interviewee responses.

4. Questionnaire Results

In order to better understand the analysis, the questionnaire results were divided into two parts: classification questions with numerical results and open-ended questions with qualitative responses.

4.1 Classification Questions Results

The questionnaire was created in Microsoft Forms and the answers were exported to Excel to facilitate subsequent analysis. Power Query, a Microsoft tool for formatting tables and editing data, was used to clean and format the information to match the data type. The data was divided accordingly to the information that was needed in the different charts and examinations.

The questionnaire totalized 72 responses, including 52 men and 20 women. The majority (65%) work in office, while 29% are on the factory floor. Age was divided into different ranges for a better analysis, as shown in table 1, below:

Table 1- Age ranges of questionnaire's participants

Age Range	Number of employees	%
18 - 24	4	6%
25 - 34	17	24%
35 - 44	17	24%
45 - 54	28	39%
55 - 64	6	8%

Roughly 47% of the inquiries held a Bachelor's degree while 39% had completed Secondary school.

The number of years in their current position ranged from 1 month to 30 years, with an average of approximately 11 years. Out of the 72 answers, 55 reported being in their position for 5 or more years. This can be a good indicator of employee retention, even though some of them were not promoted for many years. This also aligns with the low turnover rates.

From the answers, 29 participants were identified as leaders and 43 as followers.

Figure 1 evaluates the presence of men and women in leadership roles, revealing that male presence in leadership positions at Aveiro site represents more than 90% of the total.

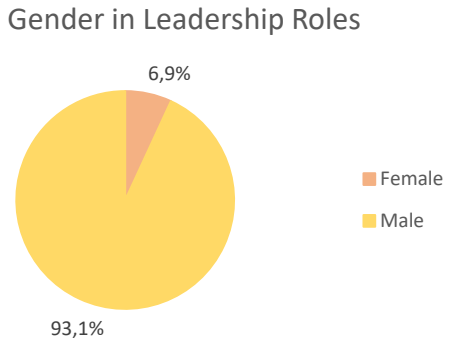


Figure 1- Percentage of each gender in leadership roles

Next, it was possible to compare the quantitative answers in the questionnaire. First, between leaders and followers, as shown in figure 2.

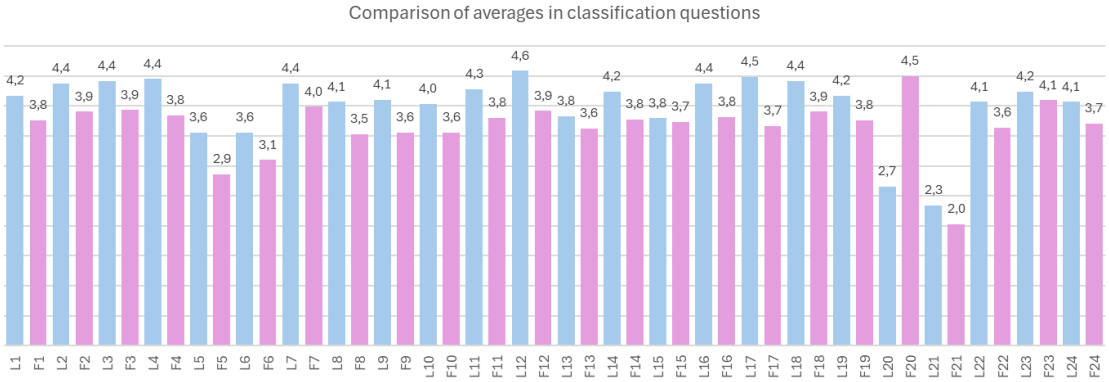


Figure 2 - Comparison of averages between leader and follower in quantitative questions

As expected, none of the answers were equal between leaders and followers. However, for question 15, responses were similar: their averages only differed in 0,06. Question 20 has the highest difference, with a gap of 1,84 between leader and follower. This question is directly related to gender in leadership but as earlier stated, in this case it was applied inversely, justifying the difference: leaders do not consider their gender to influence their perception of leadership and followers almost entirely agree that the gender of the leader is irrelevant. Still, the expected difference could have been greater. It should also be noted that

the only "5 - Totally Agree" rating is associated with a female leader, while the other leader rated it a 4. With that being said, the female average is 4,5 compared to the male average of 2.5. Even though the inequal sample size limits conclusions, this supports existing literature indicating a permanent discrepancy between male and female leaders.

Questions 17, 5, 12 and 4 also stood out, with absolute differences of 0.82; 0,69; 0,67 and 0,60 respectively - being the leader the higher value in all the above. Question 17 mentions fairness and consistency, characteristics which can impact follower's view on leader and affect the relationship formed. As this had a high difference it was considered as one of the characteristics to be analyzed further during the interviews. The 5th question denotes individual rewards where the difference between perceptions can be connected to the value given to each reward (compliments, monetary incentives or promotions). As mentioned in followership, not all followers think the same and, therefore, rewards may not be equally perceived and valued. Question 12 relates to the fostering a "culture of openness, honesty and trust", values directly connected to an Authentic Leader. These differences may be a result of an environment who doesn't accept criticism or a weak leader-follower connection, undermining trust. Question 4 focuses on efficiency and goals, where differences may arise from unclear leader communication, not mentioning the objectives to the team, even though they are focused on them. Followers can assume that the leader prioritizes larger concerns, reducing the value of the question.

It´s also important to notice that the responses for relationship quality with the leader (question 23) and affirming to be or have a good leader (question 24), showed high value and similarity. Leaders tend to provide greater ratings relative to followers, with most scores at 4 or above in questions which mention qualities related to them.

Another relevant analysis compares followers who are purely followers versus mid-rank leaders, examining whether leadership experience alters perspectives due to greater access to information and a different company view. Figure 3 displays the answers of the followers who are only followers and the figure 4 has the values of the leaders for followers' questions.

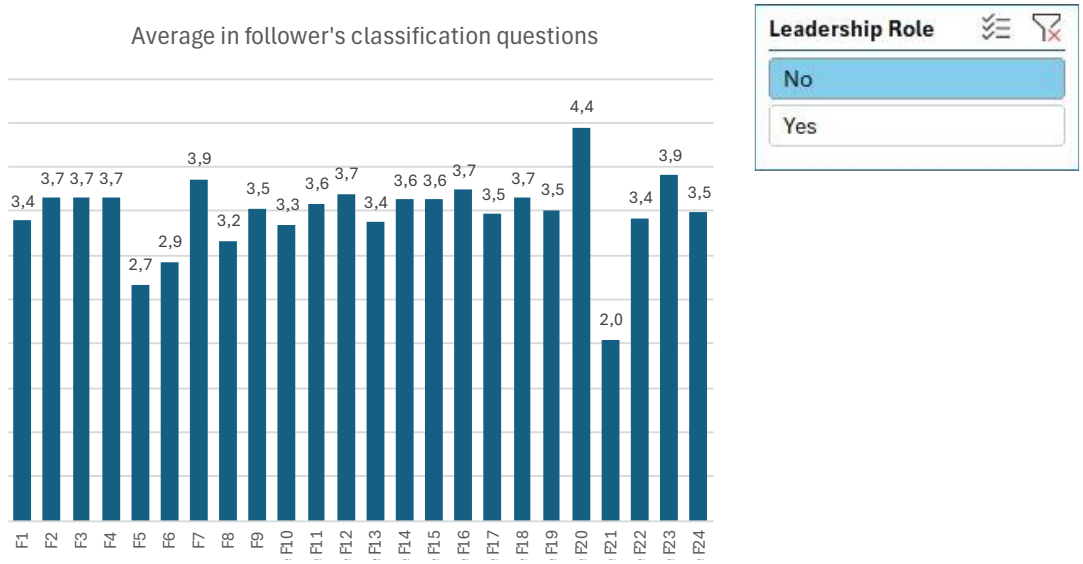


Figure 3 - Average of classification of followers who are only followers for followers' questions

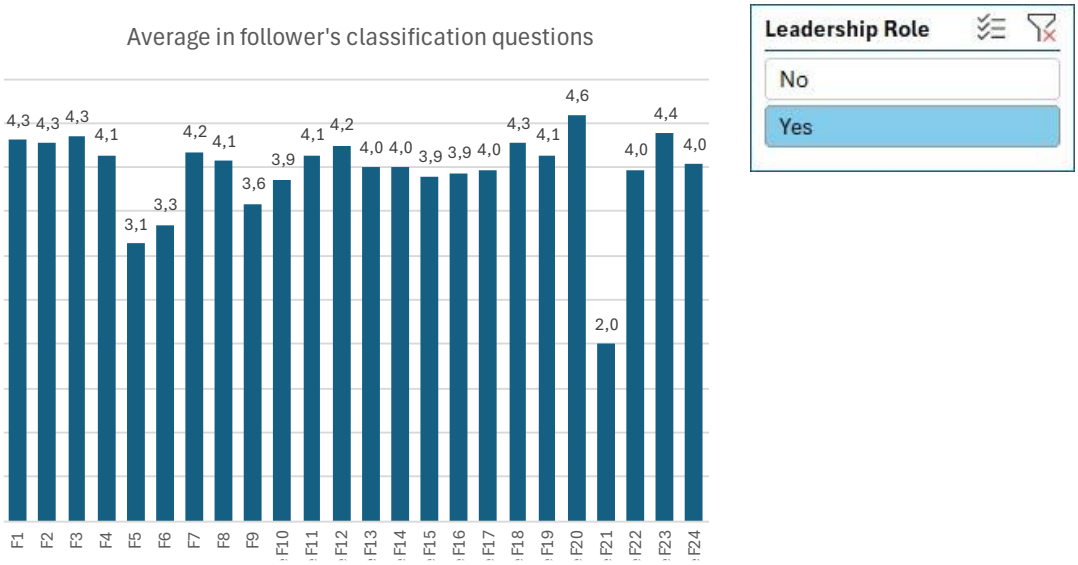


Figure 4 - Average of classification of leaders for followers' questions

In this example, the largest discrepancy resides in question 1: mid-rank leaders agree that the vision communicated is challenging and appealing while the followers are almost neutral. This suggests either loss of information between ranks or that the leaders fail to communicate the shared vision with their team.

Overall, leaders' ratings were higher, implying that higher leadership is better perceived than lower, potentially to (in normal circumstances) higher experience or educational knowledge. Even though this paper disregards the leadership hierarchy, it raises the

hypothesis that assuming a leadership role may change follower's perspective.

Another review made of the answers was focused on genre difference. Analyzing the follower's answers based on the genre, it was possible to obtain the following charts: figure 5 shows male leaders' answers, while figure 6 displays female leaders' responses.

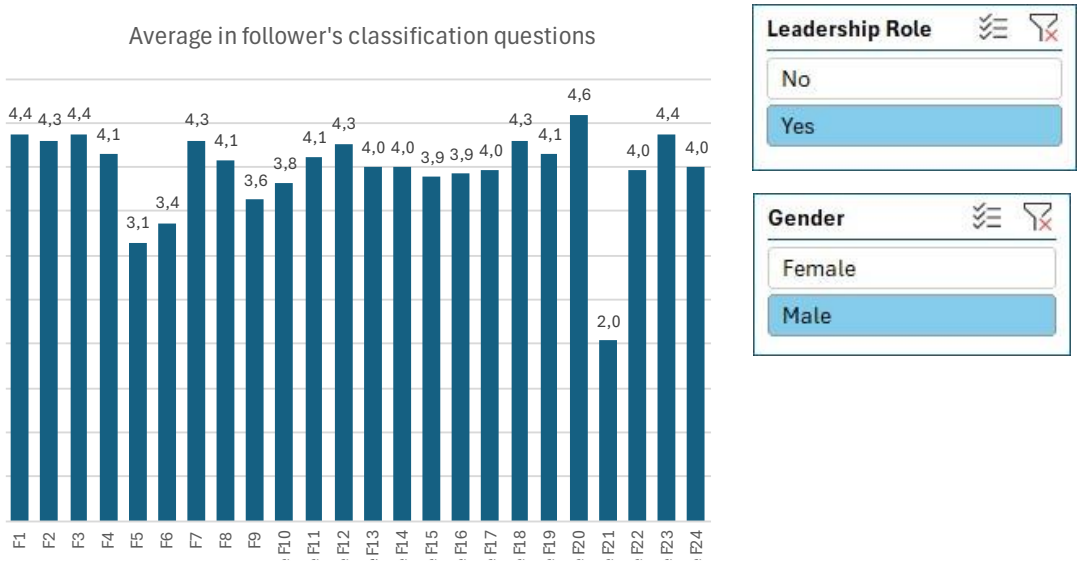


Figure 5 - Average of male leader's classification in followers' questions

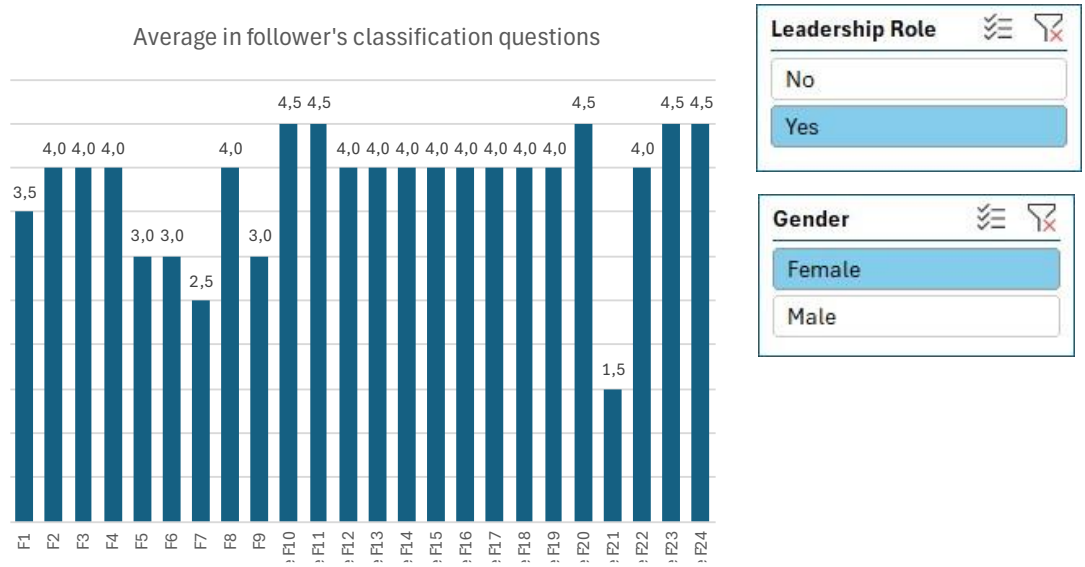


Figure 6 - Average of female leader's classification in followers' questions

A notable difference of 1,8 appears in question 7 which concerns expressing their opinion and participating in decision-making. This raises an important question: even though women get promoted and higher positions, do they still face more limitations and less recognition?

Additionally, the effect that age range had on followers' answers was analyzed. Respondents aged 55-64 not only consider a better relationship with their leader in F23 (4,67) but also rated it more positively in F24 (4,50). This group felt less controlled by their leadership. In contrast, the range between 25 and 34 viewed both their relationship (3.82) and overall leadership (3.35) less favorably, while reporting the highest level of control (average 2.29).

4.2 Open-End Questions Results

Open-ended questions about leadership were also analyzed. The answers were filtered and rearranged individually in order to correct spelling errors and be inserted into larger groups by similarity. For example, to the question "What would make your leader a better leader?", there were the answers: "Communication", "Better communication" and "More openness to talk" which were all categorized as communication.

Regarding the first open question, the qualities of a good leader described by the leader include empathy, with 5 mentions and trust and communication mentioned 3 times. For the followers, the answers matched, having honestly written 9 times - where 6 were by mid-rank leaders -, followed by empathy (8), communication (7) and trust (5). These results highlight the importance of human-centric qualities like empathy and relationship-based traits such as trust and communication, consistent with followership and authentic leadership theories.

The second is connected to the qualities who would improve leadership. Leaders highlighted being more present, having higher decision-making power and better their communication and listening capabilities, along with delegation. Followers most frequently mentioned communication (12 times) and 6 said they had already a good leader. Following, it was the presence. Therefore, responses align. In fact, communication is a recurring issue as, in order to develop a relationship, it's necessary to take part as both speaker and listener. Communication can be affected by lack of openness, trust or honesty, feeling oppressed and others. Therefore, it should be clear, objective and transparent to be effective. The presence is also mentioned, and it can derive from the leader being absent or having excessive workload. One of the leaders stated, "time for my team", indicating it's not the lack of willingness but of time (or time management).

When asked how leadership can affect their team, leaders listed teamwork (6), motivation (5), guidance (3), autonomy (3) and healthy environment (3), emphasizing their capability to unite and guide the team, improving their motivation. However, followers affirmed that they do not get affected by their leadership, with 11 answers (9 men). Then 9 added motivation and 8 wrote autonomy. With 8 blank responses, some may have misunderstood the question or felt unaffected by their current leadership. Motivation, closely tied to leadership, often suffers when leadership is poorly perceived. Autonomy can be important, especially for specialized workers who only need guidance but don't want to feel micromanaged. Adding that leaders went for "Autonomy" and followers to "Motivation", meaning that leaders may tend to want more power or be unable to exercise it given the limitations imposed by the higher hierarchy.

For the biggest challenge in leadership question, managing people (10 mentions), motivation (4) and communication (4) were most cited. "Managing people" included answers as "fakeness of people", "dealing with different people's personalities simultaneously" or even "people's mentality, increasingly lacking in principles" - all related to human capabilities and relationships. In fact, as referred above, leadership can be defined as the relation between leader and follower, which becomes unique to each pair. Leaders will find different personalities and must create a relationship with every follower in order to build stronger leadership. That does include accepting the traits and trying to bring out the best of each other, adapting in case it's necessary. Motivation and communication, as mentioned multiple times above, are common topics related to leadership, motivation as driving force and communication as a pilar of the relationship formed.

To further illustrate that followers, need tailored approaches, while 2 followers stated that the quality they more appreciate in a leader is their calmness, another one reported feeling "stresses by calm and patience" in the leadership effect question. The same applies to patience. While there's a leader who affirms that "more patience" would make them a better leader, the person mentioned above gets stressed with it. Therefore, if the leader developed that quality, which is appreciated by other followers, it wouldn't be well perceived by all. This further exhibits the importance of, as a leader stated, "get to know the followers" and create an individual relationship where the leadership is formed and adapted to that employee.

Though the anonymous survey prevents connecting the leader and follower pair, some of the answers perfectly align. While a leader, to become a better leader stated that they "need to hear others' opinions even when disagree with them", a follower said that the quality

they appreciate the most is when a leader "respects opinions which are different from theirs".

5. Interviews Results

In regard to the interviews, the results were separated by cases, specifying the interviewees. Additionally, a global comparison was added, to highlight the main key points.

5.1 Case 1 – L1, F11 and F12

The first leader presented themselves with 48 years and had held their position for the past 10 years. Leader 1 (L1) began by asserting that people are different and, therefore, the way they "[…] talk to one cannot be the same as another". This approach demonstrates how followership is utilized as a way to create better connections and prevent misunderstandings. However, they, occasionally, reprehend employees while laughing, concluding with "[…] but I hope they (team) know I'm serious".

During the interview, the relationship with the followers became increasingly apparent. While the leader recognizes the value of teamwork and mutual support among team members, they also noted that personalities differences can prevent unity. This relates to the leader's observation that some employees lack willingness to work. In such cases, the leader says: "Honestly, what do I do in that case? I try to avoid it, that's all. I try to help wherever I can, and I don't insist, as I know it will be exhausting [...] Because I know it's not worth it." When questioned about potential low motivation among employees, the leader dismissed the idea, characterizing these individuals as unwilling to work and essentially a lost cause. This attitude risks misinterpreting and neglecting underlying motivational issues.

The leader claimed "I try to treat them all the same. It's true that our job is a bit like that, trying to be consistent. That doesn't mean we always are, we're only human." Considering that the leader also confirms they have better relationships with some of the employees, having personal connections, it can be complicated to separate the corporate and personal side while maintaining impartiality, not benefiting employees based on the closeness, which the leader confirmed tries to do.

Regarding conflict between coworkers, the leader approach is to separate both parties and wait until the situation calms down. They acknowledged the situation can escalate as other employees tend to get involved and gossip. This passive strategy risks allowing minor issues to grow through neglect, eventually forcing intervention. In cases of perceived

injustice—such as when employees had to compensate for lost work hours after being sent home during a blackout—the leader responded dismissively with, "[…] more seven, less seven (hours)," despite recognizing employee frustration. Such responses may negatively impact workforce morale and perceptions of leadership, as the followers feel their concerns are not heard.

The leader affirms "If I think I was in the wrong, I will also go to the person and say, "I'm sorry, I shouldn't have said that"". This shows maturity, self-awareness and empathy towards others' feelings. The leader admits disliking conflict, which helps maintain more relaxed regarding their relationships.

They emphasize aligning with company goals while maintaining an empathetic approach, including getting to know their team members. Accordingly to what was previously mentioned, the leader adapts to the heterogeneity of the team and, therefore, it's normal to need to get to know them in order to adjust their leadership to the case. However, if someone threatens team stability, the leader admits not letting the person stay in the team, even while displaying good technical skills. This comment is aligned with their predisposition to ignore conflicts as they have the power to limit the impact.

As far as leadership goes, it can also be taken an authentic point of view as the leader mentions "I can be a little empathetic, I can put myself in their shoes a little, because I've been in their position too". Yet, the leader expresses feeling constrained in honesty saying "we (leaders) can't speak, but they can say whatever they want" when saying that feels constrain in the honesty displayed as fears being reported for xenophobia as "everything is […] xenophobia". This is a serious statement and that should be addressed in the company. There could be seminars to promote a diverse and inclusive work environment. People should also be safe to come to the leaders or Human Resources in case they feel discriminated, and these issues should not be seen as a trend.

For improvements, the leader encourages using internal tools, sharing success stories. They recognize team dedication in internal evaluations career progression plan (PPC), offering opportunities to motivated employees. The situation mentioned was the exchange of consumables, which is appreciated in the evaluation and, when an employee wants to do it, they get them the necessary training. This rewards motivated workers with responsibility and monetary compensation.

Finally, the leader admits that they can be seen as strict because they complain when the goals are not achieved, or people are too comfortable.

The first follower of L1 (F11), aged 56, supports the leader being an intermediate to the team. This position was attained one year ago but they have been under this leadership in the past decade. From the outset, F11 admitted having connected with Leader 1, adapting to their style and having a generally positive opinion. In their words, "a certain intimacy that, even on the outside, […] (we) have a more intimate, more committed relationship". However, the interview revealed several critical observations.

First, regarding coherence, noted "There are situations where maybe... they (L1) say it because they have to, but doing it afterwards isn't quite the same.". F11 then added "They (L1) said, "Well, we're not all the same here"" referring to L1's interactions with an employee with whom they had a personal relationship. This statement not only contradicts leader's earlier remarks but also suggests lack of professionalism raising ethical concerns. Still in the same topic, F11 confirmed that the team recognized the behavior demonstrated and preference, negatively affecting an overall positive perception of the leadership.

Second, on communication, F11 said "Sometimes communication or feedback goes down well, sometimes not so well... Sometimes there are certain situations that are a little more delicate. Often people either don't understand or sometimes want to understand things differently [...] And sometimes that creates a little friction." Effective communication requires mutual effort, and the interview suggests F11 believes the team complicates the process. For instance, later, they added "When they (L1) have to say, "that's how it is," not everyone always accepts that "that's how it is."" And, completed with "the message they convey to the group during the meeting makes it easy for people to act because the message is clear." In this scenario, it might be needed that the leader creates a different approach when communicating. Even though it seems that the communication is done clearly, if not correctly heard, it will not be effective. L1 might need to, for instance, add a visual element to better clarify any remaining questions.

Regarding confrontations, this follower stated that "I believe that (L1) act in the best way […] ignore it a little and let time pass." This conveys with earlier L1's mentions, despite their preference (accordingly to F11) for "straightforwardness" and "honesty", as seen in the remark "[…] (L1 says) do not talk behind my back". Therefore, to figure this issue, it's necessary to understand why L1 avoids addressing such situations and the impact it has.

On leadership style, F11 announced "it is a way of being a leader as if they (L1) were we, employees". This indicates the display of Authentic Leadership, where followers see themselves reflected in the leader's actions.

About the leader, F11 added "[…] they become colder, sometimes responds a little more harshly, and sometimes, perhaps, in a way that can hurt the person a little more", completing with "Since they're already so overwhelmed, they lash out. And then they lose their sense of perspective a little." Later, F11 affirmed that the leader doesn't recognize what was done and ignores it. Critically, this contradicts L1's claim of apologizing when wrong, reinforcing a key point of this dissertation. These inconsistencies in perspectives risk damaging the leader-follower relationship. Additionally, it creates a toxic environment where people are afraid of L1 or feel disrespected by the leader without L1's recognition.

The second and last follower, F12, is 24 years old and works at this company for 4 years, all under the same leader, L1. This follower initiated the interview, referring to the leadership applied, stating "[…] that's fine with me. I get along well with them (L1). I have no complaints". Regarding communication, F12 noted "[…] we sometimes even joke around" but understands the distinction between humor and serious matters. This indicates a strong relationship, though the follower focuses on work and avoids forming friendships. As previously mentioned, the development of corporate personas to protect personal life can impact authenticity, a point attributed to L1's leadership. This statement also validates the effectiveness of the leader communication. Even while laughing, this follower can understand the real tone of the conversation, therefore concluding that the leader transmits correctly the discourse. However, it can be an issue of some followers' interpretation.

F12 perceived honesty and coherence from L1. The followership theory suggests not all followers are or require the same and this case reinforces the theory, where two direct followers of the same leader recognized different behaviors and have different perspectives of the leader. In this case, the difference in opinion could be translated from the time difference under the leadership.

This follower confirmed that the first leader is a good person, decisive and straightforward, but noted "[…] when is more stressed, becomes more strict". They also confirmed that, to improve the motivation "If I tell them (L1) that I like working on the machine, they try to put me there". F12 even explored a situation where they felt supported by L1 to further pursue a personal interest by being given the opportunity to exchange shifts when needed. These examples deepen the connection that both follower and leader have, as the information matches and was explained with contentment.

However, certain affirmations made during the interview raised concerns. For example, F12 remarked "If we try, say, to please them (L1), it's a point in our favor", which might

reflect toxic leadership where, if the workers follow their ideas, the leader will benefit them. An example of the situation was the exchange of consumables, which matches the described by the leader. However, this idea can aggravate if the leader uses this eagerness to please of the followers for personal interests.

Additionally, F12 noted unawareness of any conflicts or injustice. Similar to F11, F12 affirmed "I know they (L1) realize they get stressed. But the way they talk, we (team) already know that we can't joke around too much or talk too much, because that just makes things worse!", confirming the tension felt in those moments. Additionally said that in stressful situations, "it seems like they (L1) get very upset about everything" and, referring to the team opinion as "from what we sometimes say, when it comes to them stressing out a lot, many people don't like it". From the mentioned, it seems like, in situations where things get out of the L1's control, the environment created is negative and can lead to fear of it becoming worse. Additionally, it's not liked by the team in general. This further supports the hypothesis that for F12, L1 might exhibit signs of toxic leadership. As portraited by F11, F12 agree that "[…] then the next day it's as if nothing happened" indicating L1 tendency to ignore rather than admitting wrongdoing. As described in the first part of this document, toxic leaders can believe their behavior is socially accepted which would justify the lack of self-awareness even if the leader sees themselves as an apologetic person.

Concluding, the initial interviews revealed alignment between leader and followers regarding motivational methods and leadership characteristics, though from differing perspectives. All parties agreed on other issues which might impact leadership, particularly L1's pattern of ignoring problems. The first leader was aware of the LMX theory and tried to apply followership concepts, however with some flaws. As followers are different, it's relevant to adapt, as a leader, to every relationship formed. However, for F11, this leader developed a strong relationship with one of the followers and the difference in treatment became too visible, fostering perceptions of injustice. Though both L1 and F11 described the leader as authentic, there were misinterpretations regarding L1's coherence between followers. This perception also impacts leadership and connections.

The authenticity can be questioned as the leader admitted that wasn't as honest as wanted even though both followers agreed in the leader's honesty. Besides, the followers focus on different aspects: F11 highlighted the difference in treatment between followers while F12 mentioned the strictness and the heavy environment created in stressful situations. In fact, F11 also agreed with these comments, adding that L1 can be hurtful when

overwhelmed. The leader confirmed they can make mistakes but has the habit of apologizing, which both followers agreed to disagree. This is a display of Toxic Leadership as L1 isn't aware of the hurting that does or chooses to ignore, and favoritism toward like-minded individuals, as F12 observed.

5.2 Case 2 – L2, F21 and F22

The second leader (L2), are 48 years, being 23 of experience in a leadership role. Started the interview by stating "I will never feel like I am ready" when discussing leadership, recognizing having made "[…] a lot of mistakes". However, the company-provided training helped them grow in the position and gain confidence.

Initially, L2 shared "My leadership style is a collaborative style", exalting that "All the personal relationships I build with the team are important to me, they are very strong". In fact, the LMX theory can be applied, as this leader seems to focus on the connections developed. However, since the theory considers the relationship mutual, it would be relevant to confirm whether team members perceive the bond as equally strong. The leader confirms that prioritizes the environment created for the team and their connection when states that "[…] colleagues who were, for example, highly qualified, technically excellent, but unable to integrate into the team. In fact, that was probably one of my biggest challenges as a leader, having to let go of one of my employees". Another relevant statement is "I have the best team ever", adding after "We treat everyone equally" reflecting their focus on maintaining a healthy, fair environment: "What matters to me is that the team stays healthy. I don't impose too much rigidity, I don't impose too much stress, I don't impose too much pressure".

Still on the team and collaboration topic, they mentioned "in my team, we have a hierarchy. There is a colleague whom I trust more", a dynamic known by the team.

L2 admitted "Here, our industry has difficulty retaining talent. In being attractive to new candidates. So here it is not a question of salary that can motivate them, it is above all the team spirit […]" which also can explain why they tend to give preference to the team spirit rather than technical skills. When asked about motivation, L2 responded, "They really feel the need for new challenges" and "They expect more sponsorship, for them to be given resources, skills, freedom, autonomy, responsibility, and that I give them". According to Hersey and Blanchard's Situational Leadership Theory, the leader's delegative approach suits

the team as the followers seem to be highly competent and committed.

During the interview, the leader stated "I feel that they respect me for being a leader, and I even follow their example of humility. But in reality, I think I do it so that they feel equal to me and vice versa, meaning that if they have something to say to me, they say it" reveling an authentic leadership approach. Nevertheless, reveled lacking honesty when said "I can't always tell the truth because it might be in my interest, that's just how it is. But I always prefer transparent communication; they know what they can expect from me, just as I know what I can expect from them". If noticed by followers, the dishonesty could undermine the authentic part of the leadership as it would break the trust and identification to the leader. This could damage team relationships, making it harder for the leader to be heard and followed. It gets worse when the leader claims "The value of trust is deeply rooted in our team", suggesting that dishonesty, could jeopardize the team's vision and call the leadership in question.

Regarding presence, this leader clarified "I don't have any space reserved for myself as a leader. I am very present with my team, we are there, working side by side". This could be a strategy of L2 to maintain team cohesion, strengthen connections and even display an authentic, relatable side.

This leader revealed "I can also see the differences between a good leader and a bad leader" and, when discussing their company's leadership trainings, added, "But essentially, for those who don't have this, I'm not going to say aptitude, because some have it, others don't have it so much, others have to develop it, others have to force it…". This hints at Heroic Leadership, implying that certain innate traits are necessary for effective leadership.

L2 characterizes themselves as benevolent ("The team knows that if they make a mistake, it's normal that they are prone to making mistakes, and I'm not there to point fingers. I'm there to help ensure that the mistake isn't made again."), emphatic ("It's the ability to have some empathy [...] we can tell if you're happier or not on that particular day.") and "quite stubborn". However, noticed as well "They (team) can say "They (L2) are more distant"", which promptly clarified that is temporary, and reinforcing the trust that have in the team and that the goals are being achieved. Admits as well that cares more about studies done on their own (for example to discover their own leadership type) over people's perceptions. This is an important question that this study should consider: the leader having the same perception as follower but deciding not to care, which can be harmful to the leadership if the leader is induced in a negative leadership or has toxic traits.

Finally, regarding conflicts, the L2's approach is described as "I try to offer another point of view, but I realize that a point of view may not always be the solution. We have to offer that point of view and then also understand the other side". This can be a good strategy as the leader shows interest in understanding where the employee is coming from, in order to provide a better outcome.

The first L2 follower, F21, are 43 years and have been subordinate to L2 for the past 8 years. During the interview, there was a clear alignment to the leader's answers. For instance, when asked how they stay motivated, F21 responded "In the field of technology, learning new things and implementing them […] ultimately, that is what keeps us focused and motivated in this role". Additionally, this follower stated "(L2) Recognizes, has the ability to recognize when the work is done" which indicates alignment of perceptions and L2's knowledge of their followers.

The values of the leader highlighted by F21 included empathy ("Tries to figure out when something seems wrong. We are human beings."), and "[…] equality, proactivity, trying to develop new things". Added later collaboration, helpfulness and consistency, noting "(L2) Is very consistent in what they say". Through the interview, F21 cited diverse qualities of the leader and how these would contribute to a better work environment, appearing motivated and seeing the leader as a role model. This reflects a transformational leadership style, evident in the focus on the leader, motivation and the creation of a learning environment, as F21 affirmed "(L2) Asks me what my training needs are [...] to promote enriched learning". F21 also considers L2 as honest, stating that L2 "doesn't have two versions". This conflicts with L2's confession regarding omitting the truth. Although, since the follower are unaware, it doesn't impact the perception they have of their leader. Had the follower known, they would be more resented or hurt as the trust would potentially be broken.

Regarding conflicts, F21 response mirrored L2's as they affirmed "As soon as they (L2) realizes that there is a potential conflict, they are very decisive: discreetly calls people aside, gathers them together, explains their (L2) point of view regarding the conflict, asks whether what happened is really what happened from our side, and never imposes a solution before hearing both sides", completing with "They (L2) didn't panic, didn't impose themselves". This calm and understanding way to approach conflicts and negative situations can help understand why "At least until today, they (L2) have managed to keep everyone here happy".

Finally, the interview with the second follower, F22 (age 43, with 20 years under L2),

proceeded differently from the previous one. When describing their leader, F22 stated "L2 has two sides to them. On the technical and professional side, they are excellent. I have learned a lot from them and continue to learn a lot every day, and I think they are excellent at their job. As a leader, I think there are some gaps, which I think they are aware of, and which they have never sought to address 100%". Since this interview had the focus on the perception of leadership implemented, that was the side highlighted.

Regarding team collaboration, this member isn't as included in the team as others, justifying by "[…] being a more introverted person and being much more focused on work". However, indicates "I don't think they (L2) can motivate the whole team. But L2 isn't making any effort to reach out to the whole team" contradicting L2's earlier statements. And if L2 is protective of an healthy environment, the demotivation of some followers can be an issue. F22 added "I think that in everyday life, there are some small differences. I don't mean to say that they are necessarily L2's fault; it could also be due to the other members of the team. You can notice some differences in treatment". This sentence, connected to the lack of effort to reach every member, can reflect an incongruence with the explanation of the leader which mentioned that treated everyone in the same way and raises questions about the criteria for differentiation.

Later in the interview, F22 explained: "[…] not having that conflict management profile—it gives me the impression that they avoid these conflicts a little and therefore distances themself from people who may be more confrontational or who may be less motivated". This response doesn't match the one given by F21 which explained the leader's resolution of conflict's approach exactly as L2. However, F22 gave a concrete example when mentioned "We had some colleagues who have since left, and I am well aware that they (L2), with some of these colleagues, did not make an effort to resolve conflicts that existed between them", further contradicting both L2 and F21. In this case, it's clear that there is a difference between perceptions, not only leader and follower but as well between followers, proving the importance of followership dynamics. In this case, it's important for the leader to try to understand F22's necessities, in order to improve their motivation or develop their team integration.

In regard to the presence (or absence), this follower revealed "I think they used to be a more present leader. In fact, I've already had the opportunity to tell them this at the annual evaluation meetings we have". This case, however, completes the leader's perception. The leader expected that some followers noticed their (L2) absence. And, as mentioned, F22 felt

that they could be open and reveal to the leader what they thought about them, having the transparent communication mentioned above. Regarding communication, F22 stated "L2 is a natural communicator" and that the values transmitted are their own. And added "I think L2 are a very proactive person [...] They always want the best". It's possible to find another contradiction as the leader stated that doesn't pressure the team too much. However, even though F22 described L2 as a good listener in personal life matters, completed with "regarding listening, perhaps not all team members". This comes as no surprise as L2 had already mentioned an hierarchy in the team, suggesting F22 may be at a lower level.

F22 praised L2's communication skills but identified areas for improvement: "[…] coffee breaks, lunches. I'm also talking about lunches outside the office. It's natural to communicate more, whether on a personal or corporate level. If I'm not there, I may not know things that they (team) know, both about their personal lives and on a corporate level". This is a clear sign of miscommunication, potentially leading to a perception of dishonesty. Clearer meeting structures could ensure everyone stays informed, regardless of participation in informal gatherings. This issue may also influence F22's view of Distributed Leadership.

Later, F22 remarked "I think L2 are an honest person... I think that, at the corporate level, it may be necessary to conceal some information or even (I won't lie) try to dissuade people from thinking in a certain way" which could be interpretated as a mention to L2's actions or broader company culture. However, this follower noticed the omission of truths better than F21, even if both consider the leader honest.

The interview concluded with conflict management concerns. F22 stated, "I don't see a way to resolve it, and maybe that's why I say that, in terms of conflict management, they are not a good example. Because whether we like it or not, it ends up being a conflict... because we feel undervalued. And L2 have always been someone who avoided that topic". Repeated mentions of not being able to solve conflicts, avoiding and not addressing demotivation, reveals clear misalignment between L2 and F22, as well as among followers. L2 might need to adapt the leadership in order to meet the needs of all the followers or risk losing team's cohesion. While the leader perceives followers as motivated and capable, followership differences—particularly in motivation levels—must be considered, possibly linking back to the leader's absence.

F22 stated "L2 are someone who can be tempestuous at times. Suddenly, they get upset because they had a bad experience at work. They lose their temper, and start talking loudly, both within the team and outside the team. This happens rarely, but when it does,

they can sometimes be unfair in the way they communicate and to the people they communicate with". Not only does it contradict both of the members above interviewed but can impact the healthy environment that L2 aims to create. However, the same follower notices that "[…] despite differences, L2 manages to get the team on their side, not only through their influence, but also through the people they have around them. But I think that, in this aspect, they are someone who can win people over with the way they communicate".

F22's interview reveals transformational leadership traits, as they acknowledge that L2 unites the team through communication and motivates them toward better results. However, it's possible to denote some Toxic Leadership traits, such as imposing personal values, disengaging with followers which are more confrontational and displaying unfair behavior and shouting when angry.

In this second case, it's possible to confirm the connection between L2 and F21. Even though the leadership style might not be exactly the same, the perceptions were similar in different situations such as conflict management or motivation skills. This also supports F21 opinion "I like my team. I like my leader. I identify with the values within the department" which can be potentialized by a good relationship with the leader (and team). This can be connected to similar perspectives which strengthen that same connection. However, F22 expressed different opinions regarding various topics. F22 felt excluded from the team, and noted L2's absence, as well as lack of conflict management skills, claiming L2 ignored situations and people—directly contradicting both L2 and F21. The difference of perspectives between L2 and F22 affect their relationship: it can be noted by the difference in F21's and F22's discourse. F22 difference can also be explained by bad followership. This case also highlights the importance of followership and consideration of followers' disparities in behaviors and personalities.

5.3 Case 3 – L3, F31 and F32

The third and final leader, L3, has 50 years and has been in the position for 7 years, being in a leadership position for 25 years. From the beginning, there's a highlight in teamwork ("The most important thing for a leader should be teamwork."). However, recognizes that, at the beginning, they were micromanaging but, with time, trainings and coaching, admits the following: "I started delegating much more and realized that I had to trust people".

This shows great improvement, capacity to learn and be aware of own weaknesses.

In fact, trust is a value mentioned multiple times. For instance, L3 said that tells the followers "Trusting you, you are always moving forward. One day, if you lie to me, maybe that person in my business unit will be gone, can go to another business unit". This is an example of the LMX theory being applied as if the trust is broken, the quality of connection will decrease and, therefore, the leader feels the leadership will not be efficient.

This leader instilled in their workers that "in my business unit, ever since I started, I said that there were no farms there". With "farms", the leader meant different areas that are formed by tasks. When there's cooperation, the efficiency of all will raise and the leader makes sure that all the "farms" are together as one. Therefore, they continued "When we lost, we all lost... When we have a problem, we all have to help".

L3 believes that, when the topic is motivation and new ideas, it's important "knowing that their boss believes in them" and, therefore, this leader acts by believing in their followers and giving opportunities to develop. One example was accompanying an audit of one of the followers just to see them in action and provide constructive feedback at the end. This way, the followers feel more autonomous and still can improve by directly performing a new task. "It's like I say, appreciation is more in the words than in anything else". These comments reinforce the transformational view of the leader, which motivates the followers, allows de-centralization and keeps them engaged while focusing on their development.

Ethically speaking, "from time to time, we have to be ethically correct, even if we may not agree with the situation. I have to be ethically correct and try to explain it in a way that the teams understand the injustice or unfairness of the situation". L3 affirms that their procedure includes the steps: "first, I explain to them (followers) why the company made this decision. I try to give them some examples of why the company did so. Then I follow up with them throughout the year to see if they understand or if they still have questions. I am someone who likes to clarify the situation". As explained, the leader might feel their actions being conditioned by the need to follow these rules which might impact their leader-ship. However, through communication, tries to solve the issue and the act of confirming during the year shows the human side of the leader. In fact, they also say "another thing I also value highly is communication" which goes hand in hand with LMX theory and the building of the relationship between leader and follower.

During crisis, the leader seemed relaxed while expressing "I have my team at my disposal, meaning that whenever there is a crisis, I can find someone to resolve it". This

statement shows that the leader is aware of their power and influence, while can also be interpretated as narcissistic. The leader also admitted "I try to be consistent with what I do and with my principles", which demonstrates authenticity to show themself to the followers and share their values. If the error is from the employee, they can rest assured as the leader confirms "the culture I promote in my business unit is: if I damage something, I don't have to be afraid to tell my boss that I did it. In other words, it is reported, we will see how best to prevent it from happening again, the issue is resolved, and everything is fine." This shows benevolence and promotes a learning environment where people don't feel afraid to leave the box and try something new. It's innovative and confirms the transformational aspect of the L3's leadership.

T31, the first follower of L3 is 33 years and 7 under this leadership. Even though considers "the issue of motivation must come from the person's own professionalism", is aware that "they (L3) always try to motivate people, always tries to bring out the good in situations. Always with the company's goals at the forefront". In fact, the positivism demonstrated is crucial to perpetuate a good environment.

As displayed in the previous interview, F31 agrees that "They (L3) are very focused on the team. Among everyone, they are a leader who cares not only about the company's goals but also about the well-being of the team. They try to be fair and impartial whenever possible. Sometimes there are situations that are more complicated to manage, but they always try to be human and stay close to people". This quote can be divided into multiple points. First, the team player side, which proves that the follower understands the effort of the leader to promote teamwork. Then, the company's goals are mentioned, for a second time, which indicates that the leader doesn't try to promote their own agenda. The focus on the well-being of the team is also relevant to emphasize as it will affect motivation directly and absence. After, there's a mention regarding L3's human skills and the recognition of the leader's effort when in a difficult situation. Being fair and impartial doesn't favor one employee over another. These are some of the traits which were also considered, by the initial trait theory of leadership.

In fact, this follower had similar remarks as the leader like "and if one fails, the others fail", "An error occurs. Whoever makes the error usually takes responsibility and says, "I did this, and I did it because of this, this, and this." And what we try to do is find a way to prevent the error from happening again". In fact, this also proves the resemblance between leader and follower's points of view which might also strengthen their relationship: "We (F31 and

L3) get along out of here".

In regard to communication, F31 say "L3 are someone who tries their best to be transparent with everyone". Not only this confirms the leader's affirmation, but F31 continued "They (L3) are always concerned with trying to explain things to everyone. Largely because, perhaps, these people do not feel as comfortable as I to question things". The human component of L3 is exhalated once again, as this leader recognizes that people are different, more shy or could have a different communication style, and makes sure that all of them are on the same page. Additionally, builds a bridge of trust as even if L3 is higher in hierarchy, people can be comfortable admitting they do not understand and talking with them. This communication is also used during issues as F31 described: "They (L3) usually talk to the team, understand what is happening with the problem, and tries to figure out if the team can solve it on its own and how long it will take". Therefore, by building this communication, not only is the team more open to discuss mistakes but also can add the leader to the discussion to have an additional point of view.

The second follower, F32, with 48 years, has accompanied L3 during the 7 years. Commencing the discourse by praising teamwork, F32 affirmed "I think teamwork is good, it's valued, L3 are always talking about it". After mentioning the "farms" as L3, F32 proceeded with "we (team) are a business unit, we are all equal, here we are all needed". In fact, teamwork and equality seem to be structuring values in the team, well transmitted by L3.

This follower also confirmed the existence of daily meetings and clear communication from the leader, stating "you can talk to them about anything". This supports the openness in communication and the authentic aspect of the leadership where the leader is available and seems to be one of the workers, like further told by F32 "I think I am very similar to my supervisor".

F32 feels the presence of the leader, stating "They are very present, and I think everyone has more or less the same perception of them as well" and gave the example "I'm going to do an audit, they're coming with me and doing the audit with me." This is the example given by the leader before, further exalting the connection between this pair and how it fortifies the relationship and, consequently, the leadership applied and followership, taking F32 to state "I dare say that they (L3) are the best supervisor here at Aveiro".

Before, the leader affirmed to let the team make mistakes and be honest about it in order to promptly resolve the issue. Now, F32 states "L3 as coordinator, one of their strengths is that they don't put, for example, productivity above everything else. They think

a lot about people" and added that has "[…] a perception of them as being very benevolent". With these statements, this second follower proves the environment felt between the lowest level. And the exaltation of the human part, once again, is relevant to this study as it is deeply rooted in relationships. By understanding the followers, L3 will fortify not only the connections, but also motivate the workers more. However, for this follower "if we have a good work environment, I think that's almost enough to motivate you". Taking aside the point where L3 seems to correctly motivate this follower, it also connects with the idea de not all followers will be driven by the same as F31 focused on intrinsic motivation, which might be interpretated, for instance, as challenging the worker so they feel their work has an impact.

F32 considers the leader honest, believing they are not omitting anything, sincere, coherent, transparent and strict when needed and in a good way. Nevertheless, explained a situation where they felt injustice created by the leader when they explained to L3 that a colleague was being incorrect and the leader couldn't solve the issue as stated "I know they (L3) trusted me and trusted the other person. And it just wasn't fair". As L3 described that applies trust as a value, it's normal that, until given reason not to, they trust in their followers. Additionally, both workers were treated as equal, another value preserved by the leader. However in these cases, this could impact the team environment as the issue, by F32 interview, was only solved when the other worker left the company and was proved that F32 was right all along. Even with that, F32 mentioned not being mad about it and that it helped in their relationship.

Concluding, this was the best set of interviews. The similarity of perspectives not only between leader and followers, but between followers, seems to have a great impact in the relationships and environment created. This led to better teamwork which, as described by these participants, resulted in success stories and great key performance indicator values. This proves the relational nature of leadership.

5.3 Global Case Comparison

From various interviews, it is evident that every leader-follower relationship is unique and should be carefully nurtured. The findings indicate that followers have diverse preferences and needs. For instance, F11 expressed satisfaction with a monetary bonus for a new idea while followers F31 and F32, under the same rewarding system, didn't consider it

as valuable. L2 also stated that financial incentives are not the most effective way to motivate employees. This suggests the need for a flexible reward system offering multiple fair options, allowing employees to choose based on their preferences when eligible.

Regarding genre disparities, a male leader expressed that feels his team is lacking female representation, stating "I think that any area, if we're talking about gender, should always have some balance; it's always healthy". One of the female participants shared that women would gossip more and create rumors, being more petty. Another stated "Women, in general, enjoy talking more. Men do not" while affirming women tend to be more empathetic and create personal bonds while male colleagues are more objective. These responses perpetuate the aforementioned ideology that feminine traits are more relational. Others denied any gender-based differences in leadership perception. The overall dismissal of gender as a leadership factor could be seen as positive, though employees may have discriminatory thoughts and actions without even noticing, especially if these values are intrinsic to social values.

The third case demonstrated the strongest alignment between leader and follower perceptions, correlating with better leadership evaluation. This suggests that the better the leader and follower perceptions align, the better the relationship will be and, therefore, the leadership and followership. Even if the follower's perception of the leader is negative, if the leader is aware, it can adapt and strengthen the connection. Situations like the omission of the true by the leader, originally not perceived by the follower, where the dealignment seems positive, can lead to a break in trust, which would affect their relationship and, consequently, the leadership effectiveness. Conversely, the first case showed widespread disagreement among employees, leading to poorer leadership perception due to inconsistencies and diminished trustworthiness of the leadership, as well as an occasionally toxic environment.

6. Conclusion

This dissertation was developed with the central objective of analyzing the comparison between leader's and follower's perspectives, identifying existing gaps and examining their impact on leadership.

Before investigating the study's question, a literature review was conducted to explore fundamental concepts necessary for leadership analysis. The historical evolution of the leadership was dissected, and the theories were highlighted to deepen further research.

Initially, a brief questionnaire was designed with the main goal of analyzing agreement in various situations, while understanding key differences between leader qualities and follower perceptions and needs. Classification questions revealed a difference between leaders and followers' views on consistency and environment created, which correlate to Authentic Leadership. Since Authentic Leadership depends on the way the follower perceives the leader's honesty, these results can translate an impact to this leadership style. The reward system and efficiency focus were also highlighted, connecting directly to Transactional Leadership. The leader-follower relationship received high ratings, serving as a strong indicator for this company's leadership effectiveness.

Further analysis made it clear that vision might be diluted between hierarchical levels. After, female leaders reported feeling 40% less heard during decision making comparing to male colleagues, reinforcing theorical findings that women still face workplace discrimination.

Open-ended questions revealed alignment between leaders and followers' perceptions on qualities of effective leadership and areas of improvement. In fact, the highest mentioned responses included human characteristics and relational traits, such as communication, which enhance LMX theory and the importance of developing unique leader-follower relationships. Leaders identified autonomy and teamwork as key factors influencing team performance, relating to power dynamics and work environment enhancement, while followers prioritized motivation. For biggest challenge in leadership, leaders cited managing people, which is directly related to the relationship between the pair leader-follower. Strengthening this connection is essential for more effective leadership.

The interviews were insightful as they led to several conclusions. There were three cases, and each one involved one leader and two of their followers.

L1 stated that they are trying to adapt to each follower and treat everyone equally,

following an Authentic Leadership style. However, through examples, it was possible to understand the leader's dismissiveness and avoidance to conflict. When in the wrong, L1 admitted apologizing. F11, that have an intimate relationship with L1, called into question L1's coherence and member preference, which directly contradicted earlier L1's statements. Hurtful comments from the leader were also noted, potentially damaging both relationships and the team environment. F11 confirmed L1's predisposition to ignore conflict while acknowledging the leader's authentic approach, stating they relate to L1. F12, in turn, agrees that L1 is honest and coherent, and states feeling empowered by them to develop new skills. Nevertheless, this follower highlighted L1's Toxic Leadership traits, as feeling pressed to please L1, and the leader's creation of a tense environment after arguments. Both followers were aligned when affirmed that the leader rarely apologize, which further validates the hypothesis that the leader can mischief themselves into believing their actions are socially accepted. While the followers had differing perspectives—such as their corporate connections—their shared observations revealed Negative Leadership traits affecting relationships. As both followers agree on the leader's honesty, even when the leader affirms not being as honest as wanted, could affect how the followers perceive their authenticity. In this case, the leader should attend leadership and anger management trainings, in order to improve their leadership and better control their emotions, enhancing the team environment.

The second leader, L2, exalted trainings provided by the company, which could improve general leadership skills. L2 described having a Collaborative Leadership style, treating everyone equally. L2 uses Authentic Leadership via their modesty, however recognizing limitations in their honesty. This leader outlined a conflict resolution strategy, focused on open dialogue to explain their perspective while understanding the team's viewpoint. F21 mirrored L2's responses regarding motivation and conflict management. However, a disagreement occurred when there was a mention to the leader's honesty, which F21 believes they are. Transformational Leadership could be concluded by F21's opinion of the leader and motivation. In contrast, F22 held a different point of view than the previous follower. Followership was displayed by the difference of perspectives between followers, where F22 revealed that L2 don't try to motivate all the team and avoids conflict. Furthermore, LMX theory is supported by the difference of relationships which affect directly how the followers perceive the leadership applied. While F21 are close to the leader and more aligned, being more positive during the conversation, F22 felt more excluded from the team and focused on negative aspects. F22 stated that the leader distances themselves from conflicts and conflicting members. This

is a display of Toxic Leadership traits as the leader benefits team members who act according to what L2 expect from the team and create a bad environment when mad. To improve, L2 should adapt their leadership to the team and make use of their strong communication skills, which are widely appreciated by the team. Additionally, L2 can implement team buildings in order to unify the team and boost collaboration. However, there could be an exhibition of bad followership on F22's end, which should be understood in order to reason their motives.

The third case involved L3, who emphasized teamwork and trust as foundational to their leadership, aligning with LMX theory. The leader explains situations where they motivate the team, by recognition, and solve conflicts with conversation and understanding of both parties. F31 highlighted the leader's focus on the team and its unity, transparency, clear communication, and fairness. F32 further verified prior remarks of L3's human traits, stating that they find the leader honest and benevolent. The situations presented were similar between participants, regarding errors and development initiatives, suggesting strong alignment within the team. L3's leadership has Authentic, Transformational and Distributed traits, gathering an overall positive opinion of both followers. In fact, the third leadership, which had the biggest similarity in leader-follower perception, had high leader-follower relationships. Given this success story, the company could take advantage of it and create, for example, a space for leaders like L3 to share their growth and how they apply successful leadership, so it can positively influence others.

From the interviews, in a global understanding, it was possible to conclude that every relationship between leader and follower is unique and should be adapted to both parties. As not all followers have the same personal goals, the leader should communicate with them and discover the best way to motivate their workers, with a tailored approach, in order to effectively manage the team and achieve company's goals. The gap between perceptions can be attributed to insufficient communication, dishonesty or poor relationships between leaders and followers.

In fact, incongruences between leaders' and followers' perspectives can lead to poor organizational culture as the leaders fail to improve their leadership or impose it into their followers (Aarons et al., 2017). However, job satisfaction is boosted by the similarity of perspectives (Černe et al., 2014). Therefore, the implementation of a leadership style depends on how it's received by followers, highlighting the importance of this study in discovering improvement areas and further developing leadership as a relationship which should be nurtured between both leader and follower.

This dissertation contributes to existing leadership studies as proves that the followers have direct influence over leadership and not only should the alignment of personalities be considered, but expectations and perspectives. Since each individual's viewpoint is shaped by their experiences and values, effective leadership requires adaptation to these diverse perspectives to maximize its impact.

6.1 – Limitations of the study

This study enabled a better knowledge of leadership styles as well as the relationships who form it and their impact. It revealed that different followers may perceive the same leader distinctly, which is understandable as leadership is a didactic relationship. However, greater disparities between leaders' and followers' perceptions correlate with poorer leadership effectiveness.

The questionnaire's analysis was constrained by limited responses. In regard to women in leadership and educational level, the conclusions were limited due to insufficient information to draw any substantiated findings.

Time constraints prevented interviewing additional employees to gather more perspectives, contemplate hierarchy dynamics or explore other realities, such as remote work, which could have complemented this dissertation.

6.2 – Suggestions for further studies

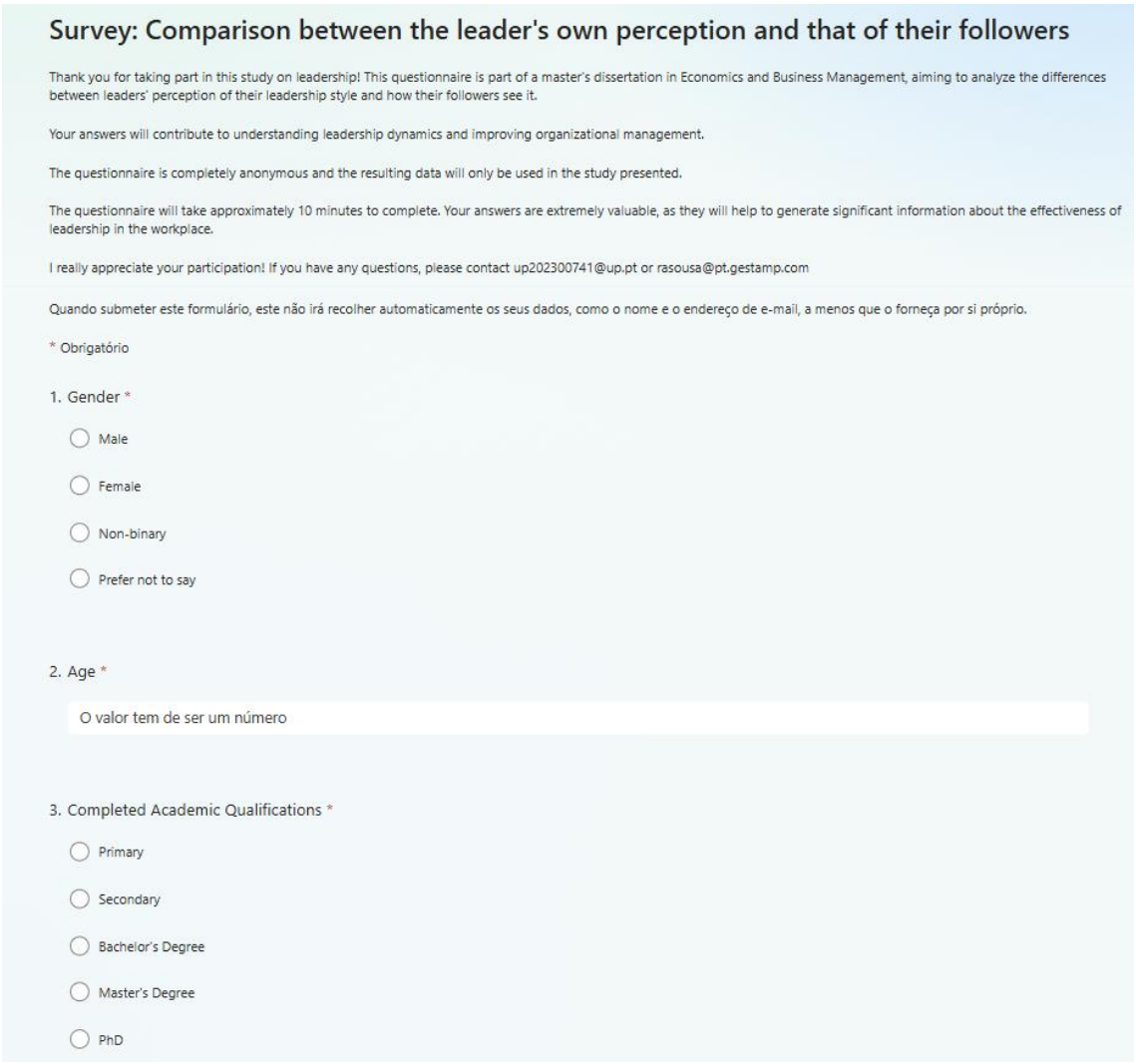
Reflecting on the limitations presented above, future investigations into the differences between leaders' and followers' perspectives might explore alternative working models, such as remote work, since communication could be affected, consequently influencing relationships and leadership dynamics.

The questionnaire and interviews can be extended across various industries, to clarify if that's a factor that impacts this study's findings. Additionally, increasing participant number, would enable researchers to assess whether leaders in higher rankings are different perceived than those in lower rankings. By taking hierarchy into account, it could lead to more complex research.

Another approach would be considering different geographic regions. In fact, given that certain values are characteristic of an area or country, adding diverse geographic options

would enrich the research.

Appendix A – Questionnaire questions and coding



Survey: Comparison between the leader's own perception and that of their followers

Thank you for taking part in this study on leadership! This questionnaire is part of a master's dissertation in Economics and Business Management, aiming to analyze the differences between leaders' perception of their leadership style and how their followers see it.

Your answers will contribute to understanding leadership dynamics and improving organizational management.

The questionnaire is completely anonymous and the resulting data will only be used in the study presented.

The questionnaire will take approximately 10 minutes to complete. Your answers are extremely valuable, as they will help to generate significant information about the effectiveness of leadership in the workplace.

I really appreciate your participation! If you have any questions, please contact up202300741@up.pt or rasousa@pt.gestamp.com

Quando submeter este formulário, este não irá recolher automaticamente os seus dados, como o nome e o endereço de e-mail, a menos que o forneça por si próprio.

* Obrigatório

1. Gender *

- ◯ Male
- ◯ Female
- ◯ Non-binary
- ◯ Prefer not to say

2. Age *

O valor tem de ser um número

3. Completed Academic Qualifications *

- ◯ Primary
- ◯ Secondary
- ◯ Bachelor's Degree
- ◯ Master's Degree
- ◯ PhD

4. Workplace *

- ◯ Factory floor
- ◯ Office
- ◯ Remote
- ◯ Hybrid

5. Work area *

Introduza a sua resposta

6. Number of years in current position *

O valor tem de ser um número

7. Do you have a leadership role? *

- ◯ Yes
- ◯ No

Seguinte

QUESTIONS			
LEADER		FOLLOWER	
L1	I communicate an appealing and challenging vision of the future to team members	F1	The leader communicates an appealing and challenging vision of the future to team members
L2	I motivate the team by my example and support their own self development	F2	The leader motivates team members by example and supports development in relation to the person
L3	I motivate my followers to go beyond what is expected	F3	I feel motivated to go beyond expectations
L4	I am focused on efficiency and goals	F4	My leader is focused on efficiency and goals
L5	I give individual rewards or consequences as a result of performance	F5	Individual rewards or consequences are given as a result of performance
L6	I give team rewards or consequences as a result of performance	F6	Rewards or consequences are given to the team as a result of performance
L7	I allow my followers to express their opinions and contribute to decision-making	F7	I feel empowered to express my opinion and contribute to decision-making
L8	Leadership responsibilities are shared within the team	F8	Leadership responsibilities are shared within the team
L9	There is a high degree of interdependence between the tasks carried out by team members	F9	There is a high degree of interdependence between the tasks carried out by team members
L10	I effectively coordinate the interdependencies within the team	F10	The leader effectively coordinates the interdependencies within the team
L11	I act consistently with my personal values and beliefs	F11	The leader acts in a way that is consistent with their personal values and beliefs
L12	I promote a culture of openness, honesty and trust	F12	The leader promotes a culture of openness, honesty and trust
L13	My followers identify with the principles I convey	F13	I identify myself with my leader's principles
L14	I have an entrepreneurial approach while in charge of the team	F14	My leader has an entrepreneurial approach while in charge of the team
L15	As a leader, I practice empowerment, allowing my followers to take risks and make mistakes	F15	My leader practices empowerment, allowing me to take risks and make mistakes
L16	I respect and communicate ethical standards to my team	F16	Ethical standards are clearly communicated and respected by the leader
L17	I make decisions guided by fairness, integrity and consistency	F17	The leader makes decisions guided by justice, integrity and consistency
L18	As a leader, I promote a work environment that values new ideas and innovation	F18	The leader fosters a work environment that values new ideas and innovation
L19	I prioritize adaptability and learning over rigid processes	F19	The leader prioritizes adaptability and learning over rigid processes
L20	My team's perception of my leadership is influenced by my gender	F20	It doesn't matter to me what gender my leader is
L21	I control my team too much	F21	I feel too controlled by my direct manager
L22	I consider myself to be consistent between what I say and what I do	F22	I consider my leader to be consistent between what he/she says and what he/she does
L23	I have a good relationship with my followers	F23	I have a good relationship with my leader
L24	I consider myself a good leader	F24	I consider my leader to be a good leader
-	Number of years in a management position	-	Number of years under the current manager
-	What quality do I possess that makes me a good leader?	-	What quality do you value most in a leader?
-	What would make you a better leader?	-	What would make your leader a better leader?
-	How does your leadership affect your team?	-	How is your performance affected by your manager?
-	What is your biggest difficulty/challenge as a leader?		

Appendix B – Poster to promote participation in questionnaire



Appendix C – Case 1 fully filled interview guide

Topics	L1	F11	F12
Age (years)	48	56	24
Time in the position	10 years	1 year (10 led by L1)	4 years
Transmitted Values	Clear vision of goals but with focus on empathy	Honesty, straightforwardness	Honesty
Leadership Style	Followership "I cannot speak to one the same way I talk to another" Authentic "I was already in their place"	Authentic "a way of being leader like she is us, employees" Toxic Leadership	"If we try to please Carla, it's a point in our favor" – Toxic Leadership
Motivation	By learning new things or machine distribution	Intrinsic: "I like to do what I do and feel really well!"	Moves them to the machine they prefer
Communication of vision/goals	Daily meetings. "I say things and laugh…but I hope they know I'm serious" 1-1 corrections	Clear even though says that communication can arrive well or not	Good, especially as they get along
Collaboration	Mentions teamwork as important but affected by personalities	People unite for common goal Team incentives	People are more welcome than in other shifts
Personal Development	Gives training and rewards when see desire to grow	Machine rotation when she believes in the person	Supported non-related training by letting change shifts and motivates new learnings
New Idea Recognition	Promotes company's platform to suggest	Hears and through platform there's a	Accepts but can be hard to apply

	improvements and get rewards	team reward	because of the company
Defining Qualities	Empathy "I do not have a problem if I have to apologize" Can be strict, authority	Emphatic, communicative, straightforward, open, spontaneous	Good person, honesty, straightforward, decided
Leader-Follower Relationship	Admits that they're closer to some people but says "I try to treat them all in the same way", notices when mistaken and adjusts to heterogeneity	"more intimate, more compromising" but separates corporate and private	"I get along with L1"
Honesty	Afraid to be as much as they wanted	Yes	Yes, from both parts
Coherence	Assumes necessity to be, but can be flawed "we're human"	Not always "they say because they need to but doing, after, it's not quite the same"	Yes
Team Opinion	Empathic but rigorous and can complain	Positive, except when they treated one colleague better L1 said "we're not all the same in here"	People don't like when they gets stressed but, in general, positive opinion
Conflicts	Resolves in the moment or ignore when feeling it's not worth it "I try to avoid it […] I don't insist as I know	"Ignores a little bit and let the time pass"	No conflicts

	it'll be exhausting."		
Crises	Try to talk or ignore situation	Ignoring	Stressed and does not recognize "trying to not talk much, can get worse"
Ethical Dilemmas / Injustice	Communication and let the decision to the employee affected. Dismissive in injustice: "more seven, less seven" Mentions organizational sensibility "everything is […] xenophobia"	Created injustice by treating an employee better by closeness – other team members noticed	No injustices

Appendix D – Case 2 fully filled interview guide

Topics	L2	F21	F22
Age (years)	48	43	43
Time in the position	23 years	8 years	20 years
Transmitted Values	Teamwork	Equality, proactivity	"are more of their own values" - proactivity, goal oriented
Leadership Style	"My leadership style is a collaborative style" Authentic - "I think I do it so they feel equal to me"	Transformational	Transformational Toxic Leadership
Motivation	Through new challenges and recognition for their work	"And ultimately, that (learning new things and implementing them) is what keeps us focused and motivated in this role" and a good delegation of work	"I don't think they (L2) can motivate the whole team. But they aren't making any effort to reach out to the whole team." Has the team by the communication
Communication of vision/goals	"communication with them was always very transparent"	"And our director, who is usually the one who initiates this communication of needs, these initiatives..."	"(L2) is a natural communicator" but could do it more times
Collaboration	"The team is always united in this way"	"There is a lot of collaboration"	"As for listening, perhaps not all team

			members"
Personal Development	"They expect more sponsorship, for them to be given resources, skills, freedom, autonomy, responsibility, and that I give them"	"ask me what my training needs are… to promote enriched learning"	F22 isn't interested in sharing personal goals
New Idea Recognition	If the idea isn't opposed to an internal rule or procedure, supports	"has a leadership style that accepts us presenting some ideas"	Tries to implement that way of thinking
Defining Qualities	Good listener, present, emphatic, stubborn and self-aware	Emphaty – "You try to find out when something seems wrong. We are human beings", communicative, "a friendly person who values equality"	Technically excellent, absence – "absent from the office and absent from the team", sometimes tempestuous, good listener
Leader-Follower Relationship	"We have a very open relationship"	"I like who leads me", having a relationship outside of work	Good relationship, with openness from both ends but affected for lack of attention
Honesty	"I can't always tell the truth because it may be in my interest to do so"	Yes, "doesn't have two versions"	Yes but "even (I won't lie) trying to dissuade people from thinking a certain way"
Coherence	-	"is very consistent in what he says"	"there is some differentiation in

			treatment"
Team Opinion	"A cheerful, good-humored person, capable of forgiving. Able to delegate and trust the team...I know I am quite stubborn", "less present"	Positive opinion	The team should feel more supported and think that the leader is more communicative
Conflicts	Hears and understands sides. Try to explain their point of view	Hears both parts and explains their point of view, don't impose solution	"in terms of conflict management, they are not a good example"
Crises	Defining priorities and a plan of action. Keeps calm	Doesn't panic or exercise their authority, supports members	"They lose their temper and start shouting" but gives necessary support
Ethical Dilemmas / Injustice	Try to give another point of view after hearing the follower	Leader limited, makes the person feel better	"Sometimes they (L2) can be unfair in the way they communicate" No resolution when they don't have enough power

Appendix E – Case 3 fully filled interview guide

Topics	L3	F31	F32
Age (years)	50	33	48
Time in the position	7 years	4 years	7 years
Transmitted Values	Teamwork, honesty,	Teamwork, transparency	Safety, teamwork
Leadership Style	Transformational, Authentic, LMX theory, Distributed	"Always with the company's objectives at the forefront" Transformational, Distributed	Transformational, Authentic, Distributed
Motivation	By valuing the followers and giving responsibility	Professionalism of the person but leader tries	Given by a good environment in the team
Communication of vision/goals	"I really value communication" Daily meetings, actual status	"They are always concerned with trying to explain things to everyone"	Open and clear communication, daily meetings
Collaboration	"In my business unit, ever since I started, I said that there were no "farms" there"	Yes, "And if one fails, the others fail"	"Teamwork is good, it is valued… L3 is always talking about it"
Personal Development	Considers important, gives new opportunities and coaching	Yes, supports	By coaching, bets on the person
New Idea	Yes, promotes this	Supports and	"All ideas are meant

Recognition	ideology	encourages No appreciation	to be discussed" No appreciation
Defining Qualities	Honesty, loyalty, mutual support, friend of your friend	Fair, impartial, empathy, human, persistent, presence	Empathy, transparency, honesty, strict, benevolent, serious
Leader-Follower Relationship	Based on trust	Good relationship, having contact and activities outside company	"I think I am very similar to my supervisor", Good relation
Honesty	Yes	Yes	Believes L3 doesn't omit nothing
Coherence	"I try to be consistent with what I do and with my principles"	Yes	Yes
Team Opinion	Positive, had a great evaluation	Respect, people like the team	Very present, positive opinion, team has trust and respect
Conflicts	Explains the decision and tries to understand if it was understood to resolve the issue	Mistakes are taken as work related and treated as such	"They (L3) will try to understand your opinion. They will tell you what you did and then will tell you what they think you should do"
Crises	"I have my team at my disposal, meaning that whenever there is a crisis, I can find someone to resolve it" -	Tries to understand the issue and, if needed, contacts the responsible persons who are	"They think a lot about people"

	delegates	needed to support	
Ethical Dilemmas / Injustice	"Even though I may not agree with the situation, I have to be ethically correct and try to explain it in a way that the teams understand the injustice"	Unfair situations which aren't at the leader's control	Fair

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