

Department of Business and Management

Master's Degree in Management

Chair of Corporate Strategy

**A Systematic Literature Review on Transactional,  
Transformational, Servant and Laissez-faire Leadership**

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## INTRODUCTION

Research on leadership has evolved significantly over the years. From trait theory to contingency and situational models, the debate on leadership has become ever more prominent in the field of management research. Companies and organizations have also shifted their perspective regarding human resource management as the result of the recognition of the importance of human capital from the industrial age onwards. As a consequence, businesses no longer consider employees as having the sole purpose of delivering products and services, but rather as an essential component of their capacity to not only deliver high-quality outcomes but also to continuously expand and evolve (Farzad, 2006).

It is clear that organizational success extensively depends upon different factors, including the relationship between leaders and subordinates and the way in which such relationships are managed. To investigate and understand what makes an organization successful, academics and researchers have conducted numerous studies to establish theories on leadership (Cheng, 2003). The understanding of different leadership styles is of crucial importance, as it assists to discover critical abilities and characteristics needed by individuals to perform effective leadership. As noted by Burns (1978) and Bass (1990) leadership is one of the most observed phenomena in literature studies but is yet one of the least comprehended, as well as the most important element in determining whether an institution succeeds or fails. Leaders must inevitably take into consideration the way in which their management affects their subordinates and eventually the company as a whole, as they are the primary influence for employee mobilization towards commitment (Gardner, 1990). The study of the nature and means of effective leadership has been one of the most investigated topics in managerial research. The academic interest on the impact that different leadership styles have on the company and on employees has been growing exponentially over the last decades. Twentieth century early research on leadership focuses primarily on trait and behavioral theories, which place emphasis on the characteristics of leaders, such as values, motivation and abilities. The focus then evolved to the study of the relationship between leader behavior, task orientation and effectiveness in a given situational circumstance. During the last three decades or so, progress on leadership has developed considerably and research

on the topic has begun to adopt a more holistic view by taking into consideration different aspects and styles (Avolio et al., 2009).

Considering four of the most prominent leadership styles investigated in previous literature - namely transactional, transformational, servant and laissez-faire, this study conducts a systematic literature review<sup>1</sup> with the objective of understanding the application of different aspects of leadership in the organizational context.

By conducting a comprehensive evaluation of research papers published in top tier journals between 1985 and 2019, this thesis aims to inform readers and researchers on what areas of leadership and organizational research are relevant for future investigations.

In the first part, the historical evolution of the selected leadership styles is briefly discussed. Secondly, to explain the steps needed to conduct the systematization of the literature, the research design is presented, including the article selection process and descriptive statistics of the selected papers. Thirdly, the main thematic-macro areas which characterize the literature are presented and the main findings which emerge from the analysis, as well as the open issues addressed in previous literature are discussed.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper follows the methodological model for systematic literature reviews suggested by Tranfield et al. (2003).

# CHAPTER 1

## 1.1 HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP

In the past decades, the study of leadership and leadership styles has become ever more prominent in business research (Choudhary et al. 2012).

The conception of leadership dates back to Machiavelli in the sixteenth century (Smith et al. 1989). Nevertheless, it was only at the beginning of the last century that scholars started to adopt a systematic approach to the study of leadership. According to Max Weber (1946), there are three “ideal types” of authority: charismatic authority, reflecting personal characteristics; traditional authority, referring to compliance with rules and conduct as well as legal authority. Since Weber, the analysis of leadership has gained extensive attention in social studies, allowing the development of a variety of theoretical perspectives and definitions (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 1989).

Ever since the beginning of the current century, the study of leadership has become not only an important criteria in understanding different aspects of society, but an essential feature for the long-term success of organizations and corporations. Global recessions have led scholars to evolve and define new models as well as styles of leadership, which in turn has led for the discussion about leader-follower relations to have extensive importance in the corporate world (Choudhary et al. 2012).

In early management literature, leadership was analyzed by comparing hierarchical features of individuals covering power roles in politics and business. These traits included: i) physical aspects such as age, weight, physique, height, health and appearance; ii) ability factors such as fluency of speech, tone of voice and intelligence; and iii) personality features such as integrity, emotional control and self-confidence (Bass, 1990; Bryman, 1986).

Through the identification of these features, a leader could be distinguished from a follower (Hughes, 2005). Nevertheless, the hierarchical elements taken into account by trait theory were soon considered insufficient to clearly assess leaders (Aalateeg, 2017). In fact, during World War II, further research was developed to determine leadership effectiveness and scholars started taking into consideration behavioral aspects that could impact leadership. Under behavioral theory, a study conducted by the Iowa State University in the 1930s identified three types of leadership: i) autocratic leadership, where the leader centralizes authority and acquires power from control rewards systems, authority and coercions; ii) democratic leadership, characterized by the delegation of authority to others though shared

knowledge (Daft, 1999) and iii) laissez-faire leadership, which considers the absence of leadership (Bass, 1990). Following this path, the University of Michigan conducted an analysis by comparing the behavior of effective leaders with ineffective leaders. This led to the identification of two types of leadership behavior: employee-centered leaders and job-centered leaders. The first focused on individual needs of followers whilst in the second, goals are reached by facilitating the structure of tasks (Leftwich, 2001).

The study of the effectiveness of leadership started to take shape with the advent of contingency theories, with the objective of understanding how different scenarios could influence leadership effectiveness (Holda, 1995). Taking into account situational influences (Robbins, 1997), contingency theories argue that there is not a universal style of leadership, but instead it is dependent on the situation in which it is involved (Hughes, 2005). Following this idea, three models were developed during the second half of the twentieth century. The first was developed by Fried Fielder (1964), where effective group performance was compared with the leader's style of interacting with followers. By developing a personality measure, Fielder discovered that high-control and low-control tasks were more effectively conducted by task-oriented leaders, whilst moderate-control tasks were more effectively controlled by relationship-oriented leaders (Fiedler, 1964). Subsequently, the path-goal theory developed by House and Mitchell (1974) argue that "the motivation to engage in behavior was a function of the product of the person's perception and the probability that the behavior would lead to a goal as well as the perceived importance of the goal" (Chemers, 1997, p. 44). Thus, according to this theory, leaders can actively influence followers' perceptions of tasks and goals (Holda, 1995). Further, the leader-participation model developed by Vroom and Yetton (1973) had the objective of understanding the decision-making ability of leaders and the subordinates' acceptance rate of those decisions. Here, four types of situations were identified: i) autocratic, where the leader is solely in charge of making decisions ii) consultative, where inputs from subordinates are solicited and iii) group, where decision-making is achieved through knowledge-sharing between the leader and the subordinates (Robbins, 1997).

In the following sections, this paper analyzes how these theories have been categorized into transactional, transformational, servant and laissez-faire leadership.

## 1.2 THEORIES ON LEADERSHIP

### 1.2.1 TRANSACTIONAL LEADERSHIP

The idea of transactional leadership came from a study conducted by Max Weber in 1947 and later pointed out by Burns in 1978, who started to analyze the relationship between superiors and subordinates based on conditional rewards, that had the purpose to establish and reach goals and objectives.

According to Burns, transactional leadership occurs when "leaders approach followers with an eye towards exchanging" (Burns, 1978, p. 4). In other words, transactional leadership refers to situations where the relationship between individuals is mediated by exchange. This leads for leaders to be in a mutual dependence relationship with followers, where the contribution of both parties is recognized and rewarded. Thus, an effective transactional leader must continuously take into consideration the fulfilment of followers' expectations and is contingent to meeting and responding to the reactions and changing nature of such expectations (Kellerman, 1984). Furthermore, Burns (1978) argued that the needs of both parties are bonded through modal values. Lower-order transactions such as pay raises and benefits depend on the leader's control of resources that are desired by followers. Intuitively, if these rewards go beyond the control span of the leader, they will have less power to influence subordinates. On the other hand, higher-order transactions rely on nonconcrete rewards to maintain effective performance of followers (Yukl, 1981).

Later, Bass (1990) defined transactional leadership as a cost-benefit mechanism between leaders and subordinates involving positive or negative evaluation of subordinates' performance. The main characteristics of a transactional leader were first identified by Bass (1990) and encompass: i) contingent reward, promising rewards for good performance; ii) management by exception (active); actively watching deviations from rules and taking corrective actions, iii) management by exception (passive); intervening only if guidelines and standards are not met and iv) laissez-faire, abdication of decision-making responsibilities (Bass, 1990). Similarly, Bass (1990) identified five steps needed for the two parties to achieve mutual goals: i) clarification of the expectation of subordinates and objective of their performance; ii) leader to set expectations and explain such to subordinates; iii) explanation of the evaluation of performance; iv) leader to provide feedback on subordinate's performance and v) leader to set rewards based on achievement of objectives.

By conducting an empirical study on employees' effort under transactional and transformational leaders, Bass (1990) claims that organizations whose leader is transactional tend to be less effective than those with transformational leadership, in particular when the transactional management is characterized by passive management by exception. In other words, in transactional leadership organizations, followers are not motivated to perform effectively if the leader intervenes solely when goals are not met. Nevertheless, in situations where contingent rewards are well valued by followers, transactional leadership can work in an effective manner (Bass, 1990).

### 1.2.2 TRANSFORMATIONAL LEADERSHIP

Transformational leadership theory aims at giving a deeper understanding of the aspects of leadership taken into consideration in previous theories. In situational leadership, reward or punishment is based on the leader's behavior. In transactional leadership, conditional rewards are based only on subordinate's performance. The idea of transformational leadership was first pointed out by Burns (1978) and later extended to the organizational context by Bass (1990). It defines a leadership style where aspects such as the individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation and supportive behavior contribute to the development of followers (Van Dierendonck et al., 2014).

According to Burns (1978), transformational leadership can be identified in situations where leaders and followers interact in a manner upon which they "raise each other to higher levels of motivation and morality", with the key issue being shared values and goals (Bass, 1990, p. 20). In fact, the objective of the transformational leader is to motivate subordinates by considering the potential of each follower and of level of experience (Hautala, 2005). Oppositely to transactional leadership, where the leader is in charge of creating reward systems based on individual performance, in transformational leadership, the leader seeks to motivate subordinates to pursue the well-being of the organization by addressing group interests and collective growth (Bass and Avolio, 1994). In fact, Chemers cited that "true transformational leadership occurs when followers adopt institutional objectives as part of their own self-concept and pursue their own personal fulfilment by achieving collective purposes" (Chemers, 1997, p. 158). In his essay "From Transactional to Transformational Leadership: Learning to Share the Vision" Bass (1990) attempted to identify the primary characteristics of a transformational leader, which include: i) charisma, inspiring followers by providing a vision, instilling pride and gaining respect through trust; ii) inspiration,



communicating high expectations and expressing important goals in a simple way; iii) intellectual stimulation, promoting intelligence, problem-solving and rationality and iv) individualized consideration, treating followers on a personal level and individually (Bass, 1990). According to Bass (1990), a transformational leader “may be charismatic to their followers and thus inspire them; they may meet the emotional needs of each employee and/or they may intellectually stimulate them” (Bass, 1990, p. 21). In his studies, the author further investigated on transformational leadership by drawing a comparison with transactional leadership. Here, he discovered that the effectiveness of followers’ contribution to organizations’ objectives is greater in transformational leadership than in transactional leadership. He claims that relationships between subordinates and transactional leaders tend to be more positive than those of transactional leaders; similarly, transformational leaders provide a greater level of contribution to the organization than transactional leaders (Bass, 1990).

### 1.2.3 SERVANT LEADERSHIP

The idea of servant leadership was first investigated by Greenleaf in 1970 and defined an emerging style of leadership focused on the development of followers based on the leader’s ethical behavior. According to Greenleaf’s definition (1977) “The servant leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead” (p.123). In this way, the leader prioritizes the well-being and growth of followers, as opposed to only fulfilling their personal needs. Contrarily to other leadership theories, where the ultimate objective is to ensure the success of the organization, in servant leadership the leader aims at creating opportunities within the organization to help the personal growth of followers (Luthans and Avolio, 2003). In fact, according to Greenleaf’s definition, a servant leader is “*primus inter pares*” or “first among equals” and does not make use of his authority to achieve goals but rather persuades and convinces followers in achieving a common objective (Reinke, 2004). In servant leadership, a leader identifies and seeks the unique value of each individual as a fundamental aspect for building a learning organization, where followers are encouraged to contribute to the processes of participative thinking and decision making. In contrast to transformational leadership, where personal growth of followers is taken into account within organizational objectives, servant leadership focuses on the creation of conditions that stimulate followers’ well-being and ensure the realization of shared goals (Stone et al. 2004). Even though the

primary focus of servant leadership lies in contributing to followers' growth, it does not exclude performance expectations (Van Dierendonck et al., 2014). However, unlike performance-oriented leaders who "sacrifice people on the altar of profit and growth" (Sendjaya, 2015, p. 4), servant-leaders foster long-term sustainable performance by focusing on follower's autonomy in doing what is needed for the organization (Stone et. al, 2004).

The idea of servant leadership was later investigated by Spears (1995, 1996) who, by developing a theoretical model based on Greenleaf's interpretation, identified ten characteristics that are generally considered as essential tiers to the study of servant leadership (Van Dierendonck et al., 2014). According to Spears (1995,1996), servant leaders must rely on the following: i) listening to identify the will of the group; ii) empathy, emphasizing and recognizing others' unique capabilities; iii) healing, helping others to make whole; iv) awareness, to understand issues regarding ethics, power and values; v) persuasion, using influence rather than authority in decision-making processes; vi) conceptualization, thinking beyond day-to-day realities to conceptualize long-term objectives; vii) foresight, identifying likely outcomes of situations; viii) stewardship, serving and fulfilling the necessities of others; ix) commitment to the growth of people and x) building community, identifying traits to develop a sense of community among those who work within an organization. Several other authors, including Laub (1999), Russell and Stone (2002) and Patterson (2003) further developed variations to Spears' ten characteristics. Nevertheless, even though these characteristics for an effective servant leader give a wholesome understanding of servant leadership, they have never been empirically tested and accurately operationalized, leading to the hindering of empirical research on the topic.

#### 1.2.4 LAISSEZ-FAIRE LEADERSHIP

The concept of laissez-faire leadership was first defined by Lewin, Lippitt, and White in 1939 as a form of inactive leadership where the leader "avoids decision making and supervisory responsibility" (Hartog et al., 1997, p. 21). According to this theory, the decision-making process is left primarily to subordinates, who have complete control over the way in which their job is performed. On the other hand, the leader is responsible for providing the necessary tools to perform tasks but is not directly involved in decision-making processes. In Bass' view (1990), the laissez-faire leader allows the subordinate to perform agreed tasks and avoids interaction until problems arise or goals are not met. As opposed to transactional, transformational and servant leadership, laissez-faire leadership is considered as a leadership

style characterized by the absence of a leader. As a consequence, this type of leadership has been often assessed as ineffective, as it fails to provide subordinates with relevant information or feedback (Bass and Avolio, 1990). Nonetheless, the majority of empirical studies contend that laissez-faire leadership is often negatively associated with subordinates' attitudes and performance in comparison to other leadership styles. (Bass and Avolio, 1994; Judge and Piccolo, 2004). However, a recent study analyzing the positive effects of this type of leadership suggests that the non-involvement of laissez-faire leadership could be perceived as a strategic choice of a leader (Yang, 2015). On this basis, the argument is that performance may be correlated to the level of experience of subordinates (Caza, 2011), which could moderate the effect of laissez-faire leadership. In other words, the lack of active leadership would be more positive to self-motivated subordinates with a high level of experience and capability. Similarly, it would be more positive to subordinates with a high level of supervisory trust (Yang, 2015). Thus, the positive effects of laissez-faire leadership are low dependency, autonomy and high self-determination of subordinates.

## CHAPTER 2

### 2.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

This paper aims at analyzing the literature developed on the topic of leadership by conducting a systematic literature review on transactional, transformational, servant and laissez-faire leadership. According to Van Dilter et al.'s (2021) definition, systematic literature review studies have the objective of identifying relevant primary sources, extract the required data, analyze, and synthesize results to gain further and broader insight on the investigated topic. Reviews of existing literature are of crucial importance in social studies as they provide the tools for evidence-based decision-making processes, tackle knowledge gaps about particular phenomena, and identify synergies with existing literature (Tranfield et. al. 2003). Similarly, this paper aims at collecting and analyzing evidence from relevant research articles in order to answer the following question:

*How has leadership been interpreted from literature in the past decades?*

Further insights on the topic will be addressed by answering the following two sub-questions:

*What are the main topics relevant to transactional, transformational, servant and laissez-faire leadership?*

*What open issues arise for further research?*

### 2.2 DATA COLLECTION

The data collection for the scope of this research used SCOPUS as a database to collect relevant articles on transactional, transformational, servant and laissez-faire leadership. This platform was chosen among others as it allows to cover article affiliations, number of publications, references and bibliographic data as well as details on number of citations received in each published article. All these features positively contributed to the data collection process. Additionally, this paper utilized SCIMAGO rank list of top tier journals published within the subject areas of “Strategy and management” and “Organizational behavior and human research management” and considered the top fifty journals based on h-index for each category. After checking for overlapping items, ninety-five journals were identified.

The first step of the research consisted in searching for articles within the areas of business and management which included the word roots of transactional, transformational, servant or laissez-faire leadership in their abstract, title or keywords (leadership\* AND

transactional\* OR transformational\* OR servant\* OR laissez-faire\*). This search led to the identification of more than 800 articles. With the objective of imparting a study based on resonant evidence that has produced debates among scholars, articles which had ABS rating lower than 4 or 4\* were rejected, leading to a restricted sample of about one hundred and fifty articles. By reading and analyzing abstracts, further articles were excluded as they treated topics that were not pertinent to the research question investigated in this study. The final list consisted of one hundred and thirteen articles published between 1985 and 2019 in fourteen top tiers journals.

## 2.3 DATA ANALYSIS

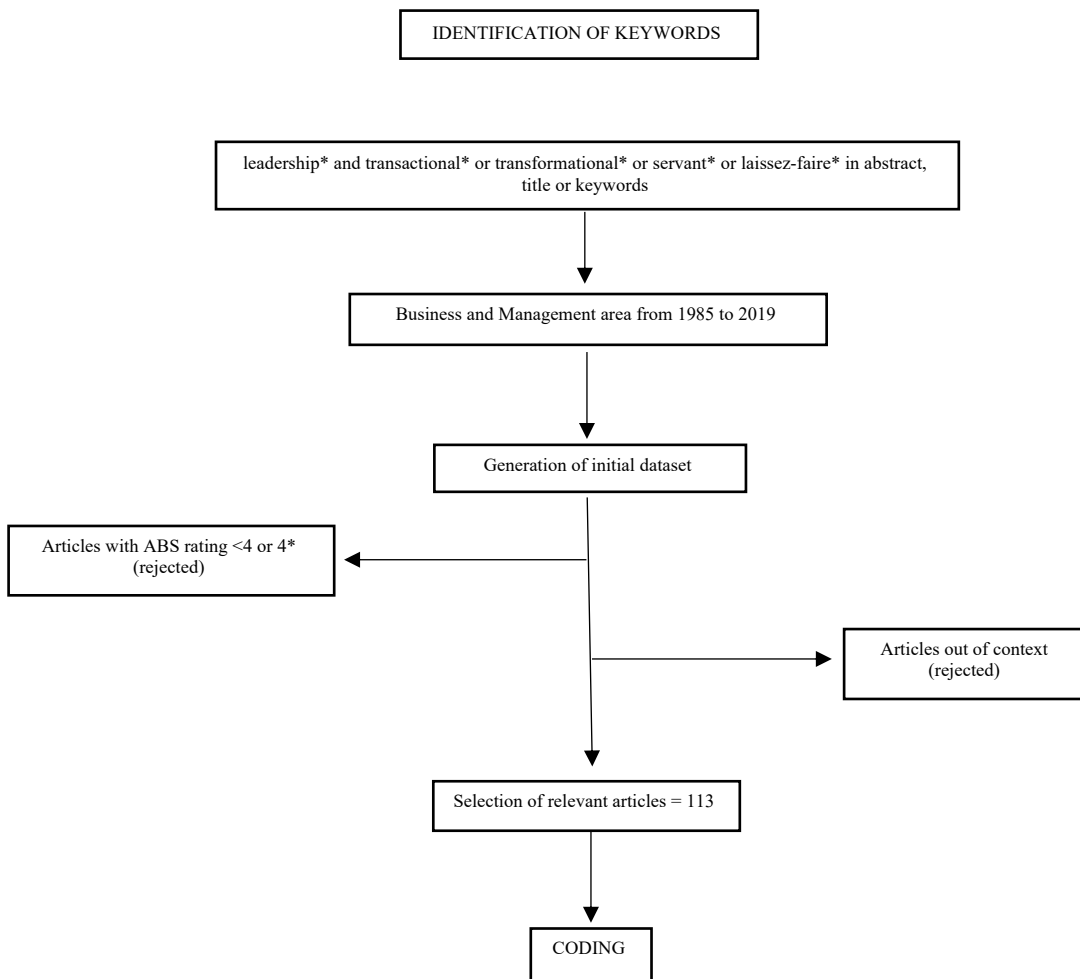
In-depth understanding of the publications led to the identification of research areas that are representative of the sample literature. The areas of research were identified by the analysis of a) main keywords found in the abstract, b) research questions, c) methods, d) variables used to measure leadership and e) main findings and contributions. Several rounds of coding identified seven macro-themes, which cluster and give a representation of the leadership areas investigated in the selected literature:

1. Perception and performance: articles which investigate on topics related on the way in which followers perceive different leadership styles and how these impacts their job performance.
2. Behavior and traits: articles discussing about leader traits and behaviors, the relationship between age and legacy beliefs and the role of moral reasoning in different leadership styles.
3. Organizational identification: articles that highlight the impact of leadership styles on followers' perception of organizational identity.
4. Contingent rewards: articles debating on reward mechanisms adopted under transactional and transformational leadership.
5. Leadership trust: articles interpreting how followers' level of trust in the leader differs in transactional, transformational, servant and laissez-faire leadership.
6. Influence strategies: articles about influence tactics adopted by leaders and followers in different leadership styles.

7. Leadership feedback: articles about the way in which leaders give feedback to subordinates and how subordinates perceive feedback under transformational and transactional leadership.

Figure 1 illustrates the steps taken for the data analysis and data collection processes.

Figure 1: Data collection process and analysis



## CHAPTER 3

### 3.1 DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF THE LITERATURE

In the following sections descriptive statistics of the relative findings are presented.

#### 3.1.1 PUBLICATION OVERVIEW

The first classification of coding analysis identified the distribution of journals that primarily hosted the discussion on leadership and how it has evolved since 1985. The information is shown in Figures 2 and 3, respectively. The top tier journals that predominately sponsored this discussion within the article sample were Leadership Quarterly and Journal of Organizational Behavior. From the results it emerged that there is no evident pattern for the way in which transactional, transformational, servant and laissez-faire leadership have been evaluated over the years. In fact, as depicted in Figure 3, the year in which this debate has received most attention was in 2004 (6%). In general, the results show that the majority of publications were in the first years of the current century.

*Figure 2: Distribution of journals hosting the debate on transformational, transactional, servant and laissez-faire leadership.*

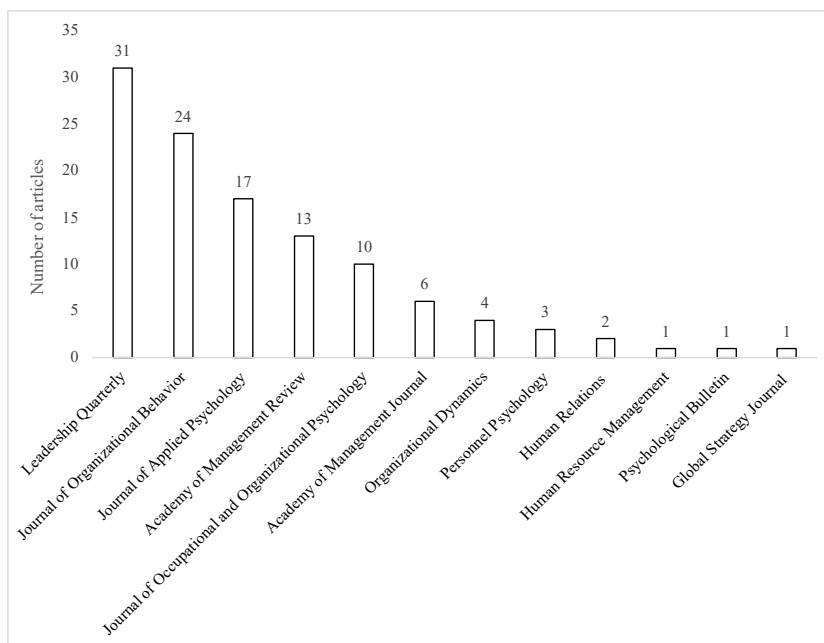
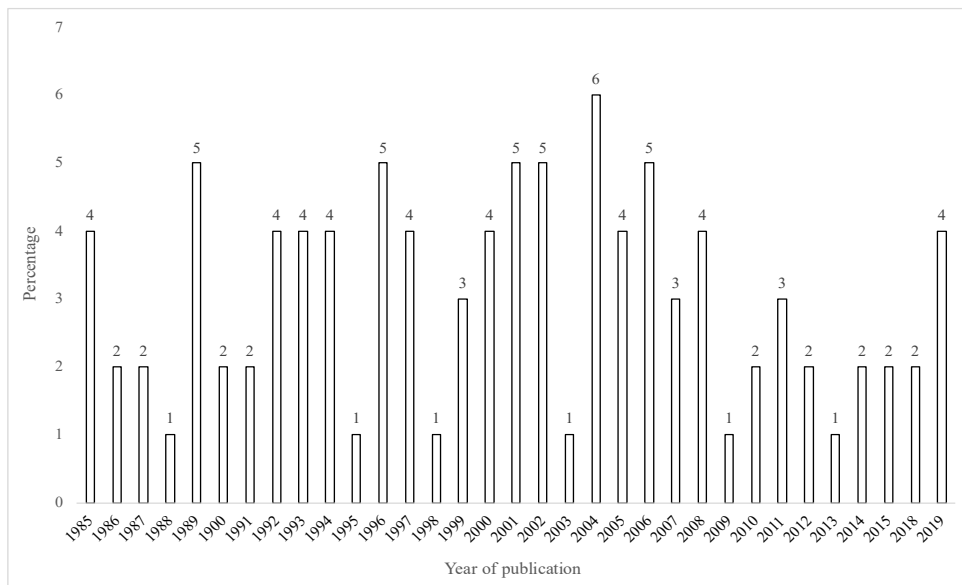


Figure 3: Number of publications on transformational, transactional, servant and laissez-faire leadership, from 1985 to 2019.



### 3.1.2 GEOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

The second classification identified the geographical setting and areas of the reviewed literature. For the first category, it was found that the majority of studies were single country (53%), while only 5% were multiple-country studies; the remaining ones did not have any specified geographical setting. For the second category, ten geographical regions have been identified, namely USA, Germany, Netherlands, Asian countries (specifically China, Taiwan and Singapore), Greece, France, UK, Australia, Canada and Switzerland. As depicted in Figure 5, 41% of the articles were not specific to any geographical area and the majority of research articles with a specified country belonged to USA (32%). 5% focus on Germany and Netherlands, while 4% and 3% belong to Asia and UK respectively. Only a minority focus on Greece (2%) and the rest reflect multiple-country studies with more than one country analyzed.



Figure 4: Geographical setting of the reviewed literature.

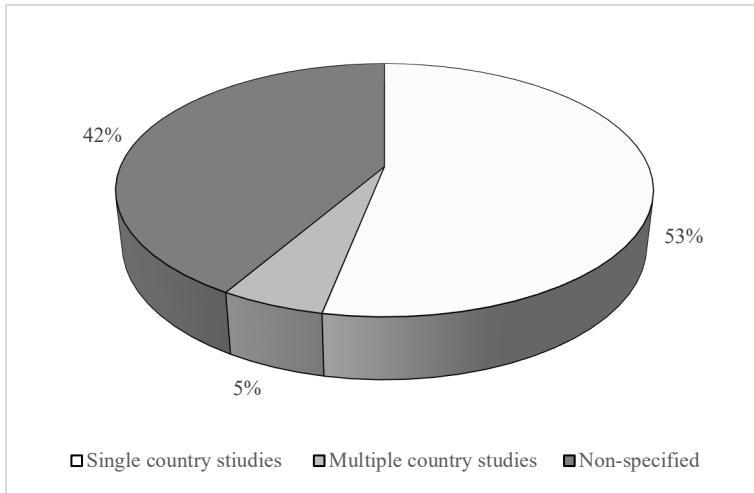
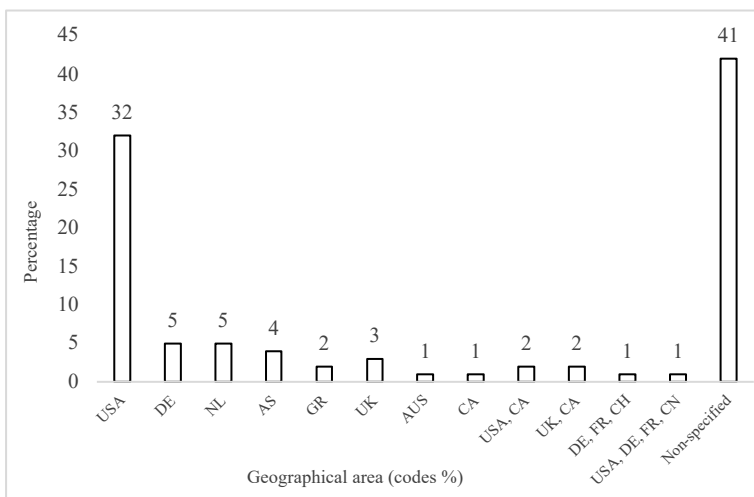


Figure 5: Geographical area of the reviewed literature.



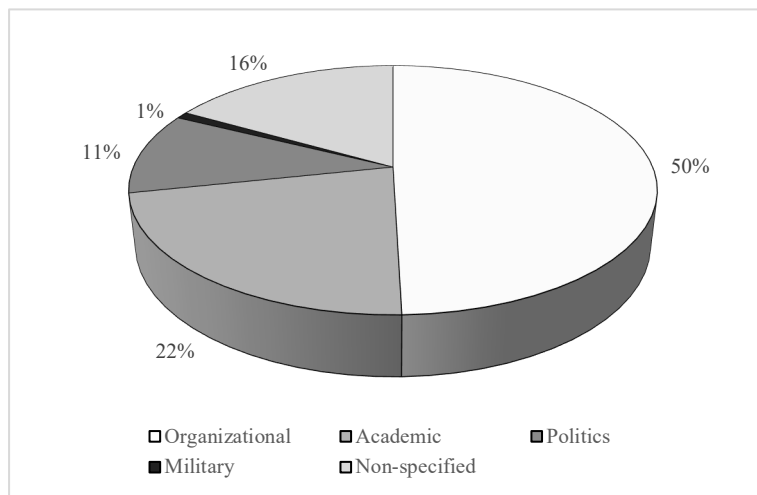
### 3.1.3 RESEARCH SETTING

The third classification consisted in grouping the articles based on their research setting, which has been divided into five categories: Organizational<sup>2</sup>, Academic, Politics, Military and non-specified in the research article. The results in Figure 6 indicate that the majority of studies (50%) were conducted in organizational settings. The “Academic” setting comprehends articles which sample consists of individuals from universities, colleges, laboratories, schools and different scientific departments and amounts to 22% of the total. 11% of researches were conducted in “Political” settings, which refer to articles investigating

<sup>2</sup> “Organizational” category refers to those setting related to organizations such as corporate boards, private and public companies, listed companies and non-profit organizations.

leadership in the political field, such as government agencies. The smallest percentage was represented by articles with “Military” as setting, and comprehends articles conducted within military organizations and armed forces. In conclusion, 16% of articles did not mention any specific setting and were thus classified as “Non specified”.

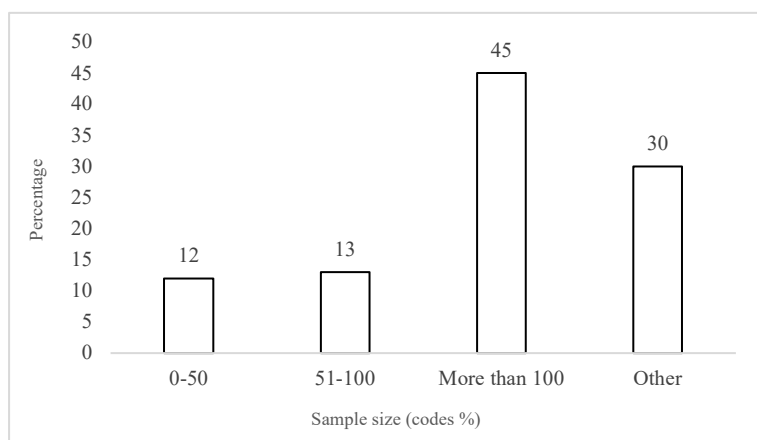
Figure 6: Setting of the reviewed literature.



### 3.1.4 SAMPLE SIZE

This classification revealed the sample size of the articles analyzed. As shown in Figure 7, the majority of the articles (45%) had a sample size larger than 100. 30% fall in others category where sample size was not specified, 13% used a sample size between 51 and 100 and the minority had a sample size lower than 50.

Figure 7: Sample size in the reviewed literature.



### 3.1.5 OBJECTIVE, METHOD AND DATA ANALYSIS

This section identifies the articles' objective and methodological orientations. The analysis in Figure 8 shows that 60% of the reviewed articles employ the empirical study methodology, whereas 20% were conceptual studies, 17% were literature reviews and the remaining articles fall into the others category. When analyzing the objective section, extra effort was performed to identify the methodological approaches utilized in the literature. This category involved identifying the research methods used as shown in Figure 9. 36% of the papers used quantitative methods and 19% used qualitative methods, 20% were conceptual papers and 13% employed both quantitative and qualitative methods. 12% fall into the other category (i.e., case studies).

Further analysis revealed that the majority of articles were cross-sectional studies (35%), while the minority were longitudinal studies (30%) and the remaining 35% reflected those papers which did not fall into neither of the above categories, as shown in Figure 10.

Figure 8: Objectives of the reviewed literature.

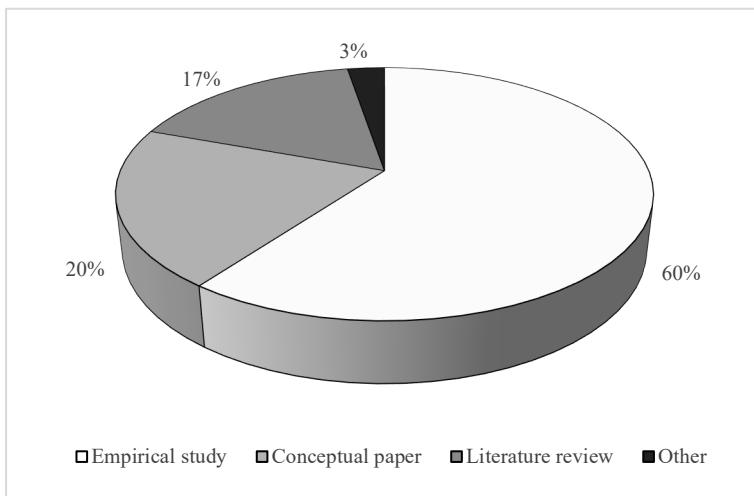


Figure 9: Method of research of the reviewed literature.

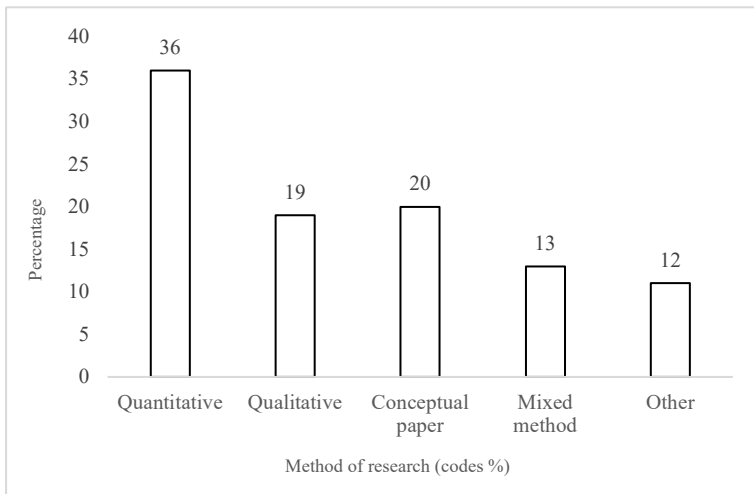
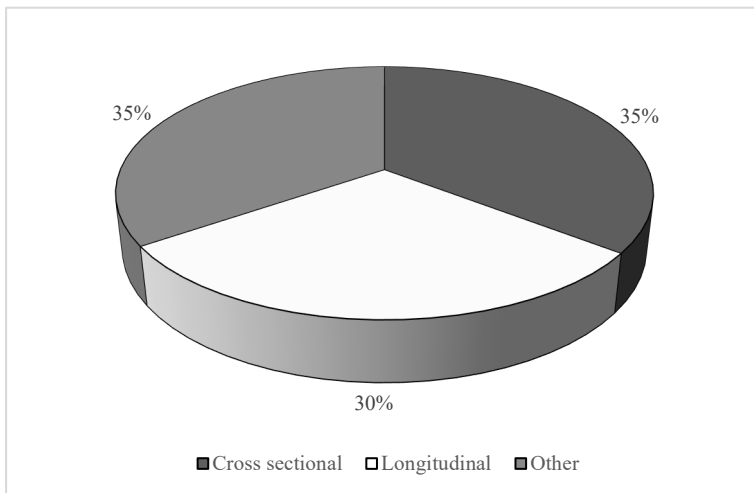


Figure 10: Data analysis of the reviewed literature.



### 3.1.7 THEORETICAL APPROACHES

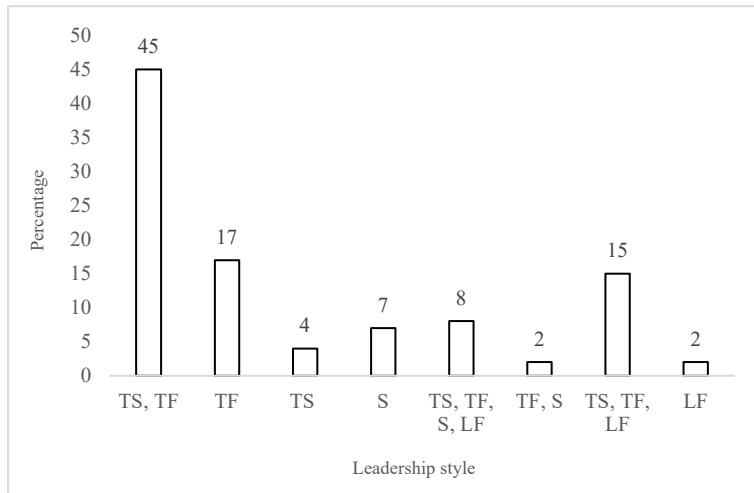
This last section classifies the articles based on the evaluated leadership styles. The results are presented in Figure 11 and unsurprisingly show that the majority (45%) of the analyzed papers evaluated both transactional and transformational leadership. In fact, in the past decades, numerous studies been conducted on transactional-transformational leadership theories and the relationship between these two leadership styles has become a prominent debate among scholars (Judge and Piccolo, 2004).

The second most analyzed leadership style is on transformational leadership (17%), while 15% evaluated transactional, transformational and laissez-faire leadership styles all together. 8% of articles evaluated all four leadership styles and 7% of articles evaluated

servant. Additionally, only a minority (4%) of studies evaluated transactional leadership and laissez-faire leadership (2%).

Figure 11: Leadership styles evaluated.

TS: Transactional, TF: Transformational, S: Servant, LF: Laissez-faire.



### 3.1.7 COMBINED RESULTS

Table 1 reports the main findings by considering the split between transactional, transformational, servant and laissez-faire leadership in regard to statistical categories presented in the above section, as well as the results from the main themes found in literature in relation to the four leadership styles, which will be analyzed in more detail in the following sections. The total analyzed articles is one hundred and thirteen but considering that several articles discuss more than one of the leadership styles, the percentages presented in the graph below are calculated on a greater number of the total of the articles.

Table 1: Combined descriptive statistics on thematic-macro areas, empirical setting, geographical information, setting, sample size, research objective and method and data analysis.

	Total		Transactional		Transformational		Servant		Laissez-faire	
	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%	#	%
<b>Theme</b>										
Perception and performance	77	34%	28	34%	31	32%	9	47%	9	32%
Behavior and traits	71	31%	28	34%	31	32%	5	26%	7	25%
Organizational identification	44	19%	15	18%	22	22%	3	16%	4	14%
Contingent rewards	27	12%	11	13%	11	11%	0	0%	5	18%
Leadership trust	30	13%	11	13%	13	13%	1	5%	5	18%
Influence strategies	20	9%	7	9%	10	10%	1	5%	2	7%
Leadership feedback	8	4%	3	4%	3	3%	1	5%	1	4%
<b>Empirical setting</b>										
Single country study	122	54%	43	52%	54	55%	8	42%	17	61%
Multiple country study	9	4%	3	4%	6	6%	0	0%	0	0%
Non-specified	96	42%	36	44%	38	39%	11	58%	11	39%
<b>Geographical area</b>										
Usa	75	33%	26	32%	34	35%	5	26%	10	36%
Germany	16	7%	5	6%	7	7%	2	11%	2	7%
Netherlands	12	5%	4	5%	4	4%	1	5%	3	11%
Asia	18	8%	6	7%	7	7%	2	11%	3	11%
Greece	4	2%	1	1%	2	2%	0	0%	1	4%
France	2	1%	1	1%	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%
Uk	7	3%	2	2%	5	5%	0	0%	0	0%
Australia	2	1%	1	1%	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%
Canada	5	2%	4	5%	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%
Non-specified	86	38%	32	39%	36	37%	9	47%	9	32%
<b>Research setting</b>										
Organizational	117	52%	44	54%	50	51%	8	42%	15	54%
Academic	46	20%	15	18%	20	20%	6	32%	5	18%
Politics	21	9%	8	10%	10	10%	2	11%	1	4%
Military	2	1%	1	1%	1	1%	0	0%	0	0%
Non-specified	41	18%	14	17%	17	17%	3	16%	7	25%
<b>Sample size</b>										
0-50	29	13%	10	12%	10	10%	3	16%	6	21%
51-100	25	11%	10	12%	12	12%	2	11%	1	4%
More than 100	108	48%	37	45%	48	49%	8	42%	15	54%
Other	65	29%	25	30%	28	29%	6	32%	6	21%
<b>Research objective</b>										
Empirical	129	57%	44	54%	55	56%	13	68%	17	61%
Conceptual Paper	53	23%	19	23%	23	23%	4	21%	7	25%
Literature Review	39	17%	16	20%	17	17%	2	11%	4	14%
Case Study	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%	0	0%
Other	6	3%	3	4%	3	3%	0	0%	0	0%
<b>Research method</b>										
Quantitative	80	35%	30	37%	37	38%	5	26%	8	29%
Qualitative	48	21%	16	20%	21	21%	4	21%	7	25%
Conceptual Paper	46	20%	18	22%	18	18%	5	26%	5	18%
Mixed	32	14%	9	11%	12	12%	4	21%	7	25%
Other	21	9%	9	11%	10	10%	1	5%	1	4%
<b>Data analysis</b>										
Cross-sectional study	83	37%	26	32%	36	37%	8	42%	13	46%
Longitudinal study	67	30%	28	34%	31	32%	2	11%	6	21%
Other	77	34%	28	34%	31	32%	9	47%	9	32%
<b>Total</b>	<b>227</b>		<b>82</b>		<b>98</b>		<b>19</b>		<b>28</b>	

Note: The reported percentages are calculated by dividing each row item and the total number of items in each category.

# CHAPTER 4

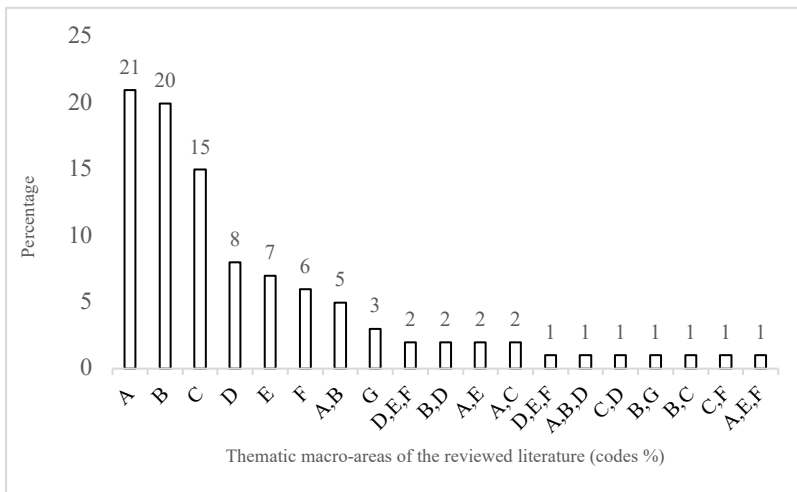
## 4.1 MAIN THEMES IN THE LITERATURE

By carrying out a systematic literature review on the topics of transactional, transformational, servant and laissez-faire leadership, this section aims at answering the question of how the discussion on these topics has evolved in the past decades. Through a coding analysis, the articles in the selected sample have been categorized according to main themes covered, leading to the creation of seven categories reflecting the primary topics analyzed.

A summary the distribution of the main topics is shown by the data displayed in Figure 12. To simplify the presentation of results, codes have been assigned to each category: code A to leadership perception and performance code B to leadership behavior and traits, code C to organizational identification, code D to the topic of contingent rewards, code E to leadership trust, code F to papers debating of influence strategies and code G to leadership feedback. In the following sections, an analysis on how the debate on each of these macro-themes has evolved is provided, with the aim of identifying possible relationships between the analyzed leadership styles and discovering open issues.

Figure 12: Distribution of thematic macro-areas

Category A: Perception and performance, B: Behavior and traits, C: Organizational identification, D: Contingent rewards; E: Leadership trust; F: Influence strategies; G: Leadership feedback.



#### 4.1.1 PERCEPTION AND PERFORMANCE

A conclusion can be drawn from previous studies on leadership clearly indicates that adopting different styles impacts organizational innovation, adaptation and performance. Full-range theories have been developed to explain how leaders foster commitment and outstanding performance by looking beyond leadership and concentrating on social and economic interactions (Bass, 1999). This section analyzes different views on the effect of leadership perception and job performance as well as effectiveness. Specifically, leadership perception in terms of emotional exhaustion, work commitment, mentoring functions, idea generation processes, information inquiry and combinative aspects of different leadership styles. The combined results presented in the previous section show that perception and performance is the predominant topic among all. In addition, this topic is discussed mainly in transactional and transformational leadership and least in servant and laissez-faire leadership.

Since different leadership philosophies have varying effects on personnel and organizational performance, leadership styles have an impact on the organization's culture and efficiency (Nahavandi, 2002). Leadership is the practice of socially encouraging followers to actively participate in achieving the corporate goal; organizational commitment and work satisfaction can both be directly influenced by a leader's style (Judge and Piccolo, 2004). According to the findings from multiple analyses, there is ample evidence that the complete range of characteristics of leadership can accurately predict performance, whether it is assessed subjectively or objectively (Judge and Piccolo, 2004; Lowe et al., 1996). Nevertheless, the topic of perception of leadership and its effect on job performance have been further challenged in recent decades, leading to the exploration of several leadership aspects that contribute significantly to the assessment of its effectiveness.

From the analysis, it emerged that many researches have been conducted on the effect that different leadership styles have on followers' performance. The majority of studies assessed transformational leadership as being the most effective in terms of leadership perception, job commitment and satisfaction; however, other studies demonstrated that servant leadership is also positively related to outcomes such as efficacy, job and organizational performance.

In support of the first argument, Cole and Bedeian (2007) examined how teams' perception of different leadership choice affected the relationship between emotional exhaustion and work commitment. Regression analyses on the relationship between these two variables showed that transformational leadership has a beneficial effect on work



commitment when followers' level of work exhaustion was low. This could be justified by the way in which transformational leadership is typically perceived by followers as well as how transformational action is judged to be relevant or important when emotional exhaustion is high. When followers are emotionally exhausted but perceive their leader as effective, they are more likely to be assured that transformational behaviors can be addressed when they are no longer emotionally exhausted. Alternatively, if a leader is perceived as inefficient, followers may have less confidence in their ability to engage in transformational behaviors and may even blame the leaders' ineffectiveness as the cause of their emotional exhaustion. Moreover, in situations where laissez-faire leadership was perceived as ineffective, work commitment and exhaustion were low; on the other hand, when followers held a general consensus about laissez-faire leadership, work commitment and emotional exhaustion were higher (Cole, Bedeian, 2007). This finding may lead to assume that within-group homogeneity of members' perception of ineffective leadership is an indication of a supportive shared social environment. In contrast, emotionally exhausted followers in organizations with strong consensus regarding transformational leadership had higher work commitment than members in organizations with low consensus about transformational leadership. Similarly, emotionally worn-out individuals in organizations with strong laissez-faire leadership consensus reported having lower work commitment scores compared to individuals working in organizations with low consensus.

Other studies revealed that transformational behavior of a leader leads to greater mentoring functions received by subordinates than transactional behaviors. Laissez-faire behavior, on the other hand, decreases the amount of mentoring functions received by subordinates, which eventually hinders performance. Specifically, mentoring relates to those actions by which a leader supports, inspires, motivates and develops his/hers subordinates. This includes a number of functions, including support for career development and psychological support (Sosik and Godshalk, 2000). According to majority of studies, transformational leadership often results in a greater level of trust of followers (Breevaart and Zacher 2019, Epitropaki and Martin, 2005; Jung and Avolio, 2000). Thus, the way in which transformational leaders exert their behavioral influence allows subordinates to view them as a trustworthy representation of success and accomplishment. Additionally, Bass and Avolio (1994) suggest that transformational behavior implies the coaching of subordinates, taking into consideration their personal needs and develop their strengths as well as listening attentively to their concerns. This could be a fair justification to the greater level that

transformational leadership has in mentoring followers while reducing the level of job-related stress outcomes (Sosik and Godshalk, 2000).

In the same light, a three-wave study involving members of seventy-two work teams discovered that followers “perceive a laissez-faire formal leader as engaging in less modeling of effective leadership, and as a result engage in less informal leadership” (Wellman et al., 2018, p.385). Furthermore, teams with lower member motivation to lead than higher ones are more negatively related with informal leadership than teams with higher member motivation to lead (Wellman et al., 2018). Thus, based on these findings, it can be assumed that work commitment is greater under transformational leadership than in laissez-faire and transactional leadership.

Another prominent aspect investigated in leadership literature in terms of job effectiveness is the way in which followers employ idea generation processes under different leadership styles. In particular, transformational and transactional leadership have been considered as two of the most important variables affecting employees’ creative processes and ability to generate ideas within the organization (Podsakoff et al., 1990). While some research has demonstrated that transformational leadership has a beneficial impact on idea creation processes or creative behaviors (i.e., Howell and Avolio, 1993; Jung et al., 2003), other research indicates that it has little, or even a detrimental effect (e.g., Basu and Green, 1997; Jaussi and Dionne, 2003; Krause, 2004). Similar findings apply to transactional leadership, with some studies indicating a negative correlation with organization-focused idea production or associated creative activities (i.e., Nederveen Pieterse et al., 2010) and others indicating a favorable association (i.e., Jung, 2001). A recent study demonstrates that leaders with a clear organizational identification positively impact subordinates’ idea generation processes. According to the study’s definition, organizational identification is the way in which individuals “perceive oneness with an organization and the experience of the organization's successes and failures as one's own” (Mael and Ashforth, 1992, p. 103). This study discovers that the effectiveness of transactional leadership on idea-generation processes is only significant with the presence of leader organizational identification, which is in turn mediated by follower commitment. On the other hand, the effectiveness of leadership under a condition of transformational leadership is not impacted by leader organizational identification. However, follower commitment to the ideation processes has a positive effect on how many organization-focused ideas employees generate (Deichmann and Stan, 2015). More insights on followers’ organizational identification will be provided in the next sections.

Several studies researching leadership perception mention the importance of information inquiry as an integral aspect of leader-follower interactions. For their own benefit as well as the benefit of the company, managers serve as a primary source of knowledge for their followers; in order to gain insights about their work and themselves, subordinates seek knowledge from leaders (Ashford, 1986; Morrison, 1993). Followers' perception of leaders' effectiveness has a crucial role in the information-seeking processes. The thesis supported by Connelly and Ruark (2010) stating that transformational leaders exert power without having negative consequences on followers' outcomes in a better way compared to transactional leaders is consistent with the findings reported by Madzar (2001). The study concluded the way in which followers' information-seeking differs under transactional and transformational leadership. The author discovers that followers under transformational leadership tend to be more proactive than followers under transactional leadership and thus seek for information from their leader more frequently and more efficiently. In addition, the frequency of seeking technical and referent information from a transactional leader is greater than the frequency of seeking performance and social feedback, whereas subordinates will seek more performance feedback, as opposed to outcome performance feedback from transformational then from transactional leaders (Madzar, 2001). These findings are consistent with the nature of transactional and transformational leadership and with the previously mentioned findings on leader emotional displays and follower outcomes.

Another question that has been raised in previous studies investigating leadership perception involves the way in which transformational and transactional behaviors are combined. According to Casimir (2001), understanding combined aspects of different leadership styles allows to investigate the way in which leadership behaviors are exerted and their impact on follower's perceptions. By "combined aspects" the authors refer to those leadership behaviors that can be exerted in different ways by altering the ordering and temporal spacing (Casimir, 2001). The author analyses the effects of these combined aspects of leadership styles on subordinates' perception under transformational and transactional behavior. Transactional leadership is assessed as task-oriented, since it includes behaviors such as the establishment of well-defined patterns, objectives, tasks and relationships. On the other hand, transformational leadership is regarded as socioemotional leadership, since it includes behaviors such as providing encouragement and support as well as keeping two-way communication with subordinates (Casimir, 2001). It was found that other research further affirms this construct (Bass and Bass, 2008; Fleishman, 1953) by claiming that initiating

structure and transactional leadership focus on task-oriented attributes whereas transformational leadership involves relational-orientated attributes.

The findings suggest interesting insight on how leadership styles are combined and their influence on perception. By combining aspects of transformational (i.e., support) and transactional leadership (i.e., pressure), it was discovered that subordinates prefer their leader to provide support (i.e., concern for welfare and appreciation of efforts) before providing pressure (i.e., pressure to work harder) despise receiving pressure on its own. Intuitively, subordinates preferred the idea of receiving instructions over pressure. What these findings may suggest is that both transactional and transformational leaders should generally portray behaviors of support together with pressure or instruction but should provide the former before the latter.

When it comes to servant leadership, although research has been evolving over the decades, a concise assessment of its effect on job performance is still lacking (Liden et al. 2015). Nevertheless, in response to social demands for higher standards of ethical behavior in organizations, as well as the growing need for employee engagement, creativity, and sharing among coworkers, servant leadership has become a popular style because it upholds integrity, focuses on helping others and prioritizes bringing out the best in followers. (Liden et al. 2015). Although many previous studies have found transformational leadership being the most effective style in terms of job performance, the changing nature of business environments and the new challenges faced by leadership has led scholars to develop new theories on different styles (Van Dierendonck et al., 2014). The increasing dependence on people in a knowledge-based economy is one particularly significant trend in this regard, making consideration of employee demands crucial for long-term success (O'Leary et al., 2002). Consequently, academics have recently studied servant leadership, a form of leadership that is specifically focused on the needs of employees. Despite the identification of the overlap in characteristics of transformational and servant leadership, Van Dierendonck et al. (2014) argue that few studies investigate the differences between these two leadership styles. This thesis identified three studies that analyze how transformational and servant leadership are related to organizational commitment and work engagement, taking into account environmental uncertainty as a moderating factor. The first study focuses on the differentiated influence of transformational and servant leadership on organizational commitment through need satisfaction and effectiveness. It discovers that leaders who show transformational behaviors are perceived as more effective. However, followers perceive servant-displaying leaders as more adept in meeting their demands. Importantly,

organizational commitment is well-predicted by evaluations of both leadership effectiveness and need fulfilment. The authors discovered major effects on leadership effectiveness and need satisfaction due to the environmental influence, but without unveiling interaction effects. This finding suggests that environmental factors do affect peoples' perceptions, but these effects are similar for servant and transformational leadership. In the second study, the authors replicated the design of the first study but compared servant and transformational to not only one another but also other leadership styles. According to the findings, both servant and transformational leadership had a greater overall impact on job engagement, psychological need fulfilment, and perceived leadership effectiveness than laissez-faire leadership. In contrast to the first study, the authors discovered a substantial relationship between leadership manipulation and organizational uncertainty. However, this interaction effect was not seen for need satisfaction: it was only noticed in evaluations of leadership effectiveness. In the last study, the effectiveness of leadership and the relationship between servant and transformational leadership in relation to psychological need satisfaction was examined using structural equation modeling. Work engagement and organizational commitment were associated to psychological need fulfillment and leadership effectiveness, leading to the conclusion that transformational leadership is primarily related to perceived leadership effectiveness, whereas servant is related primary to need satisfaction (Van Dierendonck et al., 2014).

In a similar way, a model based on nine servant leadership dimensions based on the servant leadership paradigm introduced by Greenleaf (1970), demonstrates that servant leadership is positively related to outcomes such as job engagement, self-efficacy, job performance and organizational performance as assessed by return on investment. Here it was found that in contrast to both transformational and transactional, servant leadership is uniquely able to explain community citizenship and in-role performance on the individual level (Laiden et al., 2008). These findings point out an important feature of the servant leadership paradigm. The basic idea behind the social exchange theory in servant leadership is that people are driven to reciprocate with contributions up to only a certain point when they get valued rewards from an exchange partner. Since leaders are frequently seen as the "personification of the organization" (Bauer et al., 2006), employees could be encouraged to reciprocate by demonstrating a stronger commitment to the organization, resulting in an enhanced job performance (Laiden et al., 2008).

#### 4.1.2 BEHAVIOR AND TRAITS

Another important aspect that has been concluded in previous studies involves leadership behavior and individual characteristics, which have an extensive impact on the way in which the leader exerts power on subordinates. As many researchers have noted, personality is one of the most fundamental aspects to take into consideration when studying leadership (Bass, 1990; Hogan et al., 1994; Yukl and Van Fleet, 1992).

In this section, it is discovered how leadership has been analyzed in literature by posing particular attention to the topics of leadership traits and behaviors, the relationship between age and legacy beliefs and the role of moral reasoning in different leadership styles. The statistical analysis revealed that behavior and traits is the second-most discussed topic in literature. Similarly to perception and performance, this topic is primarily discussed in transactional and transformational leadership, and less discussed in servant and laissez-faire.

The behavior of individuals within an organization depends extensively on a set of conditions and interactions such as personal characteristics and the conditions of the overall organizational system (Burke and Litwin, 1992). However, since the assessment of such variables can often result in being difficult, researches have drawn analysis on the manifestation and effect of differences of individuals within organizations (Church and Wacławski, 1998). Despite the debates raised on the topic of utilizing personality measures to rate organizational outcomes, the analysis reveals that several studies demonstrate that there could be a correlation between performance-related outcomes and personality of individuals. For instance, a study conducted by Barrick and Mount (1993) explored the link between different dimensions of personality – i.e., extraversion, openness, conscientiousness etc.- and indices of job performance. Similarly, Chartrand et al. (1993) demonstrated that the same personality dimensions can be related to problem solving skills and decision-making processes.

Firstly, from the coding analysis it emerged that one of the most debated topics within the realm of leader behavior is the one of characteristics within transformational and transactional leadership. Overall, the majority of the analyzed studies contended that transformational leadership is widely associated to relational-oriented behavior, whereas transactional leadership is generally associated to task-oriented behaviors. Moreover, the analysis revealed that transactional and transformational leaders tend to hold very different personal characteristics. The formers, in fact, are often associated to the figures of managers and implementors who hold characteristics such as introversion and idea-driven personalities

and implement behavior based on the exchange of rewards, such as self-perseveration, incentive appeals and contingent rewards. The latter, on the other hand, are regarded as inventors and motivators who are characterized by people-driven and organizational-focused personalities, which lead for them to efficiently mobilize resources to reach organizational goals, especially in situations of crisis. Moreover, transformational leaders often implement behaviors associated with idealized influence, inspirational motivation (charisma), intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration.

In this light, the research conducted by Van Eron and Burke (1992) demonstrates that divergent leadership orientations are linked to variables in managers' personality preferences. These behaviors can lead to highly unique patterns of communication with subordinates. Other researches even claim that personality traits in leaders may actually lead to the development of either transformational or transactional leadership styles and that these behavioral differences may reflect different levels of maturity in terms of personal development and goal achievement (Kuhnert and Lewis, 1987; Kuhnert and Russell, 1990). An interesting analysis on the topic has been carried out by Church and Waclawski (1998), who utilized the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) to investigate on the impact executive's personality on subordinates. This indicator assumes that individuals' personalities differ upon four dimensions: extraversion-introversion, sensing-intuition, thinking-feeling and judging-perceiving. Moreover, the authors drew upon the Kirton Adaptation Inventory (KAI) framework, according to which individuals are classified by a single dimension on whether that prefer generating innovative methods and solutions or utilize reliable methods and solutions for problem-solving (Church and Waclawski, 1998). The findings can be considered as consistent with the characteristics of transformational and transactional leadership that have been analyzed in this thesis up to now. In fact, the authors discover that transformational leaders are found to hold characteristics that relate to invention and motivation, whereas transactional leaders have shown to be more managers and implementors. The former has been assessed as being people-driven and focused on organizational change, are likely to foster long-term vision and to mobilize subordinates and resources to reach organizational objectives. Managers and implementors (i.e., transactional leaders), on the other hand, are characterized by introversion and idea-driven personalities and are more likely to have formulated, concrete strategies to achieve goals (Church and Waclawski, 1998). Interestingly enough, however, the research demonstrated that both transactional and transformational leaders appeared to be focused on organizational change rather than stability. Additionally, it discovered that transformational leaders exerted greater

direction on subordinates compared to transactional leaders. This could be justified by the fact that as transformational leaders hold a long-range vision and engage in innovation, they also have a greater necessity to ensure that roles, tasks and responsibilities are clear and therefore tend to exert direction more effectively. Similarly, transformational leaders tend to have a greater influence on their followers than transactional leaders, as discussed in the previous sections.

Similarly, House and Podsakoff (1994) argued that transformational leaders should foster inspirational communication, external representation and high expectations from subordinates. Transformational behaviors therefore involve personalized influence and empowerment factors, confidence in subordinates' capacities and participative negotiation, where interpersonal relationships often focus on specific change agents acting as facilitators between leaders and subordinates (i.e., key managers). The decision-making process under this leadership style is generally collective and participative.

Transformational leaders also challenge the external environment to find flaws in the current status quo, yet provide an appealing vision to subordinates that may seem radically different from the current status (Conger and Kanungo, 1994). In this sense, transformational behaviors are seen as visionary phenomenon or may emerge in situations of crisis where change is required (Mumford and Van Doorn 2001). Transactional leadership, on the other hand, is characterized by a behavior based on exchange of rewards for support (Bass, 1997), thus implying a recognition of exchange-processes between the leader and the subordinates, where interpersonal leader-follower relationships are mediated via contracts and daily transactions. This style involves behaviors such as self-perseveration, incentive appeals and contingent rewards, leading to top-down decision-making processes.

Other studies have investigated on how leadership traits impact leadership effectiveness. Many claim that traits such as extraversion, openness to experience and intelligence are highly positive correlated to leadership effectiveness (Ackerman and Heggstad, 1997; Judge et al., 2002 and Judge et al. 2007). For instance, considering the "full range of leadership" model (Bass, 1985 1999; Bass and Avolio, 1994), researchers have demonstrated that extraversion, openness to experience and agreeableness were the strongest correlate of transformational leadership, as well as behaviors such as idealized influence, inspirational motivation (charisma), intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. On the other hand, conscientiousness had strong positive correlations with transactional leadership and behaviors such as contingent reward, active management by exception active.



Similarly, laissez-faire leadership had strong correlations to neuroticism and a weak relation with openness to experience, conscientiousness and agreeableness (Bono and Judge, 2004).

Secondly, the coding analysis revealed that some articles contented that the leader behaviors have greater impact on leadership effectiveness than leader traits. Within the trait paradigm, authors discovered that leader traits predict affective and relational criteria more than performance related criteria. Within the behavior paradigm, researches discover that leadership was most effective under transformational leadership (Derue et al., 2011). The trait paradigm considers aspects such as demographics, task competence and interpersonal attributes. The behavior paradigm categorizes leadership behavior as task-oriented (i.e., transactional), relational-oriented (i.e., transformational) and passive (i.e., laissez-faire). In addition, in support of Cole and Bedeian (2007) and Sosik and Godshalk (2000) arguments, other researches discover that laissez-faire leadership was the worst predictor of effective behavior under both traits and behavior paradigms (Derue et al., 2011).

Thirdly, those articles investigating on the relationship between age and legacy in transformational, transactional and laissez-faire leadership behaviors have been analyzed. Evidence shows that transformational and transactional behaviors are better maintained by high legacy leaders as opposed to low-legacy leaders and that younger leaders better portray aspects of active management (i.e., transformational leadership) (Kanfer and Ackerman, 2004). However, as ages advances, leaders tend to lessen the importance of motivation, charisma and intellectual stimulation, adopting a more laissez-faire behavior. Thus, older leaders with low legacy are less prone to adopt aspects of effective leadership. Contrarily, older leaders with high legacy tend to keep aspects of active and effective management, as they find a purpose in their vision for the future. Additionally, drawing back to the subdimensions of the “full range of leadership” model (Bass, 1985 1999; Bass and Avolio, 1994), evidence demonstrates that charisma, as opposed to intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration, is the trait that transformational leaders tend to hold more as ages advances. Likewise, it might be simpler for transactional leaders to forego active management-by-exception behaviors rather than contingent reward (Zacher et al., 2011).

Lastly, the study analyzed articles related to the role of moral reasoning. The term, within the spectrum of organizational leadership, was first coined by Kohlberg (1976) and argues that individuals develop moral reasoning in three stages: the first stage (preconventional) is dominated by self-interest and obedience to authority to avoid punishment; the second stage (conventional) implies a shared understanding of societal norms in decision-making processes; in the third and last stage (postconventional), moral

decisions occur based on universal moral principles. Turner et al. (2002) support the argument by stating that leaders in the pre-conventional stage of moral reasoning hold less transactional behavior than leaders in the post-conventional stage. This is reasonable, as transformational leadership generally fosters integration, support and inspirations, as opposed to enforced authority. Gilligan (1982) further analyzed the topic of moral reasoning by developing the concept of ethic of care. Under this perspective, individuals build authentic relationships reflecting the concern with understanding and responding to the necessities of others. Thus, as opposed to Kohlberg's (1976) ethic of justice view, which focuses on competing rights, ethic of care focuses on fulfilling competing responsibilities simultaneously. This characteristic of interconnection can be found in both transformational leadership and ethic of care construct, as opposed to ethic of justice -and transactional leadership, where separation and autonomy are fundamental. Drawing back to the pillars of transformational leadership found in the "full range leadership" model, namely individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation and charisma (Bass, 1985 1999; Bass and Avolio, 1994), it was noticed that all of these can be implicitly discovered in ethic of care. Thus, as suggested by Simola et al. (2010), leaders that utilize behaviors traceable to ethic of care (authenticity, mutual support, shared values) can be considered as more transformational than those utilizing ethic of justice. Oppositely, leaders who have a tendency to utilize behaviors traceable to ethic of justice (i.e., competing rights, separation and autonomy) tend to be more transactional.

#### 4.1.3 ORGANIZATIONAL IDENTIFICATION

The category "Organizational identification" encompasses the articles that highlight the impact of leadership styles on followers' perception of organizational identity. It is the third most discussed topic within the sample articles and mostly discussed in transformational leadership.

Organizational identification is seen as a mean to foster coherence and as a crucial component of organizational success as organizations become complex and boundaryless (Arthur and Rousseau, 1996). Looking at organizational identification from the employees' point of view, studies have discovered that followers who have strong organizational identification are more likely to reach organizational objectives efficiently (Smidts et al., 2001). However, the evolving nature of the employment relationships and difficult economic conditions pose a challenge to organizational identification (Tekleab et al., 2005). In a

business environment characterized by turbulent climates due to layoffs and downsizing, loss of job security and lack of promotional opportunities, employees are less likely to trust that leaders are upholding their duties and responsibilities (Epitropaki, 2012). This, in turn, results in employees experiencing a psychological contract breach, which is “the cognition that one’s organization has failed to meet one or more obligations within one’s psychological contract in a manner commensurate with one’s contributions”. (Morrison, Robinson, 1997, p.230). Studies have therefore concluded that perceived organizational membership highly depends on the way in which employees perceive their relationship with the organization and thus, with the leadership employed within it as leaders in charge of establishing and upholding the working conditions that encourage the attainment of organizational goals (Liden et al., 2002).

From the analysis of different articles, it emerged that individuals engaged in transactional leadership foster goal performance, whereas transformational leadership foster organizational vision, leading to greater levels of organizational identification. This is because transformational leaders tend to emphasize the perception of the organization's attractiveness through empowerment, trust building, inspiration, and the articulation of an appealing future vision, giving members confidence that they work for a company that envisions their personal needs (Epitropaki, 2012). In this regard, a number of studies show a strong relationship between organizational performance and various aspects of transformational leadership which illustrate the degree to which supervisors exhibit transformational leadership is related to how satisfied their subordinates are with their management (i.e., Hater and Bass, 1988; Koh et al., 1995). This leads to the conclusion that transformational leadership is more positively related to organizational identification and commitment than other leadership styles. Studies discovered, in fact, that regardless of the commitment metric utilized, higher degrees of transformative leadership are likewise positively correlated with subordinates’ organizational commitment and positive perception of leadership (Koh et al., 1995). Experimental evidence shows that transformational leadership can affect how subordinates view managers’ leadership styles, how committed they are to the company and even some financial performance metrics (Barling et al., 1996). Similarly, it was found that organizational identification is higher in transformational leadership than in transactional leadership. In fact, transactional leadership revolves around aspects such as individual goals and rewards, resulting the in the encouragement of followers to foster self-interest and benefits. Although they initially foster a sense of trust, they are unlikely to foster a stronger sense of kinship between the individual and the collective of the organization. Transformational leaders, on the other hand, are more likely to enhance the

perception of the organization's attractiveness through empowerment, trust building, inspiration, and the articulation of an appealing future vision, giving members confidence that they work for a company that is deserving of being associated with (Epitropaki and Martin, 2005).

From the coding, it emerged that other studies contended the notion that aspects of transformational and transactional leadership can, however, be employed simultaneously. The Wofford and Goodwin model (1994) suggests that despite the basic differences between the cognitive structures and processes of a transformational leader and a transactional leader, the transformational leader is nonetheless capable of engaging in transactional actions when necessary and vice versa. Thus, despite the differences in cognition structures of the two leadership styles, both transactional and transformational cognitive structures and processes can exist simultaneously. Similarly, transactional leaders are engaged in behaviors associated with directiveness and exchange such as role clarification, job assignment and contingent rewards. However, transactional leaders can engage in some aspects associated with transformational behaviors, whereas transactional leaders do not include components associated with transformational behaviors. Transactional executives frequently engage in more strategy thinking when faced with a dilemma involving the organization's goal because they lack the scripts necessary to direct transformational behavior. Responding to criticism on vision realization and motivating others to realize the goal are two examples of such circumstances. A transactional leader may eventually write these behaviors into organizational scripts, transforming their actions into transformative ones (Wofford and Goodwin, 1994). A more recent study conducted by Epitropaki (2012) discovers that followers' fulfilling needs, feeling important, and feeling a sense of belonging are likely to be impacted by how leaders influence their team members' perceptions of organizational membership under both transformational and transactional leadership.

Other alternative model to transformational, transactional have been extensively popular in recent decades. The idea of strategic leadership in the spectrum of effectiveness of job performance, for example, has evolved as an alternative construct to the more common understanding of leadership. Strategic leadership theory has expanded from the theory created by Hambrick and Mason (1984) to a study of both the symbolic and social construction of top executives as well as the instrumental ways in which the prevailing coalition influences organizational outcomes (Hambrick, 2007). As opposed to leadership, which focuses on the study of individuals at all levels of the organization, strategic leadership refers to the study of only individuals at the top of the company (Vera and Crossan, 2004). In the article "Strategic

leadership and organizational learning” (2004) Vera and Crossan expand Wofford and Goodwin’s model (1994) by implementing an analysis on the impact of transformational versus transactional leadership on organizational learning. Building upon the concept that there is a gap in literature in regard to the correlation between strategic leadership and organizational learning, the authors convey a contingent view on leadership by stating that “at certain times organizational learning processes thrive under transactional leadership, and at other times they benefit more from transformational leadership” (Vera and Crossan, 2004, p. 226).

Thus, in times when the firm needs to change the institutional learning processes, a leader is most likely to make use of behaviors associated to transformational leadership. In times of stability, on the other hand, organizational learning processes serve as a mean to reinforce current learning processes and thus leaders are more likely to adopt transactional leadership behaviors. In contrast to the traditional view of transactional versus transformational leadership, Vera and Crossan (2004) argue that “there is evidence that leaders may possess both transactional and transformational behaviors” (p.227). Therefore, even though highly transformational leaders favor open cultures, organic structures, flexible procedures, and adaptable system qualities that help execute change and challenge institutionalized learning, while highly transactional leaders favor closed cultures, mechanistic structures, rigid systems, and protocols that support the development and improvement of institutionalized learning, the use of one leadership style does not exclude the other (Vera and Crossan, 2004).

Although the analysis was not able to provide outstanding evidence for servant leadership, it discovers that, from the sample articles, transformational leadership is assessed as the leadership style having most positives effects on employees’ organizational identification. Nonetheless, many articles contented that aspects of transformational and transactional leadership can indeed be employed to foster effective organizational identification and commitment when combined to aspects of transformational leadership.

#### 4.1.4 CONTINGENT REWARDS

The fourth most discussed topics within leadership in the sample is reflected by the debate on contingent rewards. By definition, contingent rewards are associated to transactions, exchanges and punishments and are often employed in task-oriented leadership practices. According to Bass (1985, 1990), leadership that is dependent on rewards or is

exchange-based is the basis for effective leadership. On the other hand, however, transformational leadership offered an improvement, encouraging exceptional leadership and performance above and beyond expectations. The transformational/charismatic leadership, and its comparison to transactional/contingent reward leadership, has been an important area for leadership researchers (Bass, 1990; House and Podsakoff, 1994; Yukl, 1989).

The coding revealed that the notion of contingent rewards was mostly associated to transactional and transformational leadership and never associated to servant leadership.

Though the “full range of leadership” model, Bass and Avolio (Bass, 1985, 1999; Bass and Avolio, 1994) identified three high-order leadership dimensions -transformational, transactional and laissez-faire, as well as five lower-order aspects -charisma, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration for transformational leadership and contingent reward and management-by exception for transactional leadership. Similarly, House (1996) proposes that transactional leadership is exerted when leaders make use of contingent rewards in order to induce subordinate performance supporting Bass’ (1985) argument that contingent rewards have always been considered an important aspect of transactional leadership.

Many of the studies in the sample attempted to understand if contingent rewards could be considered as measure for effective leadership and contrasting opinions emerged. Early theoretical and empirical research (Bass, 1990; Hollander, 1985; Podsakoff and Schriesheim, 1985; Williams and Podsakoff, 1988; Yukl, 1989) supported the idea that contingent reward leadership can be positively associated with followers’ job performance, satisfaction and commitment. Nevertheless, other theories supported the notion that transformational leadership could perhaps be more strongly related to job performance, satisfaction and commitment than transactional leadership (Bass, 1985, 1990; Burns, 1978; Hater and Bass, 1988; House and Podsakoff, 1994; Kuhnert and Lewis, 1987; Podsakoff et al., 1990; Yukl, 1989).

Other researches (i.e., House, 1996) further suggests that there could be an interplay between aspects of transformational leadership and contingent rewards. Analysis supporting this argument (i.e., Judge and Piccolo, 2004) suggested that the association of transformational and transactional leadership is moderated by augmentation, which implies that transformational leadership will predict job performance after controlling for transactional leadership. More recently, Schriesheim et al. (2006) tested the validity of House’s argument by carrying out an analysis to understand how leader made use of contingent rewards to enhance job satisfaction and performance. However, the research did not lead to any association supporting the argument that aspects of transactional leadership

can be associated to transformational leadership. Similarly, Vecchio et al. (2008) conducted hierarchical regression analysis to test the validity of the argument suggesting the relation between contingent reward to aspects of transformational leadership in enhancing follower performance but no support was found for the proposed interaction.

In contrast, meta-analytics researches have demonstrated that the contingent rewards aspect of transactional leadership is highly associated to transformational leadership (Judge and Piccolo, 2004). Breevaart et Zacher (2019) conducted an analysis on the influence of transformational leadership and contingent rewards as opposed to transformational leadership and management by exception on followers' daily work engagement. Here, the authors discover that followers were more engaged on days when their leader exhibited greater transformational leadership and offered contingent compensation, whereas when transactional leadership was applied, no positive impact on work efficiency was noticed. Moreover, a more positive workplace climate was facilitated by transformational leadership and contingent compensation, which granted followers to have more autonomy and support. On the other hand, transactional leadership resulted in a less favourable work environment, as followers were given less autonomy to perform tasks.

#### 4.1.5 LEADERSHIP TRUST

The way in which managers, employees, and leaders are perceived has a significant impact on the culture and workplace environment. Existing literature on leadership consolidated and emphasized the importance of leadership in motivating follower's and mobilizing resources for the fulfilment of a company's objectives. The challenging aspect of human conduct is that people's perceptions are not necessarily the same and the high disparity between leaders' and followers' perception of a given organizational context often results in the difficulty in accomplishing organizational objectives (Otara, 2011). It has been discussed that an effective leader is one who can influence followers to accomplish the organization's goals. Different leadership philosophies have varying effects on personnel and organizational performance and leadership style had an impact on the organization's culture and efficiency (Nahavandi, 2002). This section discusses how followers' trust in the leader differs in transactional, transformational, servant and laissez-faire leadership.

From the analysis, overall, it emerges that transformational leadership is often positively associated to the level of trust that followers give to their leaders.

In this light, Jung and Avolio (2000) reflected on transformational and transactional leadership by conducting an experimental research to assert the causal effects of transformational and transactional leadership on followers' performance by considering the mediating role of trust of the leader. The authors hypothesized that the level of trust in the leader is higher in transformational leadership as such leadership is most often employed in situations of transformation of existing conditions, which lead to high levels of uncertainty, anxiety and frustration (Kotter, 1996). In turn, transformational leaders work to gain the trust of their followers by exhibiting concern for their needs, upholding commitments and showcasing their perseverance to achieve organizational goals (Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1996). In contrast, employees' level of trust is lower transactional leadership, as transactional leaders often tend to exert motivation through reinforcement (Bass, 1985). Moreover, it emerged that the trust in the transactional leader can be viewed as "conditional", as it depends i) on a contractual agreement and ii) on recognition for performance and adequate rewards, enabling them to build followers trust by solely showing consistent behavior in respecting the agreements made (Shamir, 1990).

The notion that transformational leadership has greater positive effects on followers' level of trust has been further tested in other researches. For example, by conducting an analysis on the weekly use of transformational and laissez-faire leadership, Breevaart and Zacher (2019) contend that that changes in transformational and laissez-faire leadership interact to predict changes in leader trust. In comparing transformational and laissez-faire leadership, it was found that trust in the leader was higher in the weeks where leaders displayed more transformational leadership than on average. In contrast, levels of trust decreased during the weeks when leaders exhibited comparatively less transformational leadership and more laissez-faire behavior. Building upon the construct that effective leaders are the ones that earn trust of followers (Bennis and Nanus, 1985), similar researches argue that in the weeks where followers have more or less trust in their leader, followers will judge the leader to be more or less effective. Therefore, it emerged that regardless of how much laissez-faire leadership was used, trust in the leader was higher in the weeks where leaders displayed more transformational leadership than on average. In contrast, trust in the leader decreased during the weeks when they exhibited leadership styles that were less transformational and more laissez-faire than usual.

The analysis of literature revealed that not many studies present a comparative analysis between servant and laissez-faire leadership and other leadership styles in the spectrum of leadership perception, hindering the comparative analysis in terms of trust in the



leader between the four leadership styles. However, a research conducted on the correlation of servant leadership and organizational trust demonstrates that employee perceptions of servant leadership resulted in greater levels of trust in the leader in comparison to non-servant leadership environments, leading to a positive correlation between employee perceptions of organizational servant leadership and organizational identification (Joseph and Winston, 2005). This may be related to the nature of servant leadership, which, according to Greenleaf (1977), is in itself a product of organizational identification and trust. Therefore, servant leadership inevitably raises perceptions of a leader's trustworthiness, which is inversely correlated with leader trust and organizational identification (Zolin, 2002).

In the same light, it could be discussed that followers' job performance is improved by servant leaders' support and encouragement in the forms of empowerment, prioritizing meeting followers' needs as well as working to maximize their potential. Moreover, studies demonstrate that servant leadership can encourage group-level outcomes, since the servant leader's approach of empowering the group and offering assistance helps to increase the level of mutual trust. Thus, when followers believe that the leader can be trusted and is there to help the team, team members respond not only by performing well as a team but also by engaging in discretionary team behaviors (Liden et al. 2015).

#### 4.1.6 INFLUENCE STRATEGIES

Influence has long been regarded as a crucial component of leadership and for some, it is the main social process via which a leader exercises leadership (Mullaney, 2013). Several studies within this analysis have suggested that the study of personality traits of leaders can be a good indicator of the way in which influence is exerted on followers. While in past research influence tactics strategies were linked solely to organizational goals (Yukl and Falbe, 1990) and the nature of the target (peer, subordinate or leader) (Yukl and Falbe, 1991), current-century literature reveals that the way in which leaders exert influence also depends on personality and behavioral traits.

Overall, the analysis revealed that different influence tactics were associated with different leadership styles. Specifically, transactional leadership employs rationality, friendly behavior and upward appeal; transformational leadership engages in inspirational appeal, ingratiation, personal appeal, friendly behavior and rationality (as per transactional leadership) and laissez-faire leadership involves exchange, coalition, legitimizing, and pressure.

Cable and Judge (2003) find that transformational leaders who strive to inspire a future vision are more likely to be successful if they engage their followers through consultation or make an effort to appeal to their values by offering an exciting opportunity. Individuals who perceive their leader as transformational will engage in influence tactics such as inspirational appeal, ingratiation, and personal appeal. In contrast, laissez-faire leaders are more likely to be the target of influence attempts that aim to gain personal advantage in exchange for attention to a request that needs to be fulfilled. Thus, individuals who perceive their leader as laissez-faire will be most likely to employ legitimization and exchange tactics which emphasize exchange, coalition, legitimizing, and pressure (Cable and Judge, 2003).

It was found that the notion of soft and hard influence tactics employed by leaders adopting different leadership style has been prominent among scholars. Epitropaki and Martin (2013) discovered that when there is a low degree of exchange between leaders and followers as well as low perceived organizational identification, employees are more likely to view the organizational environment and resource constrained and the leadership style determines the types of strategies used to influence followers. Similar to Bass' (1985) construct, the authors argue that transactional leadership is more limited than transformational leadership in that the manager-employee exchange is circumscribed by the terms of the employment agreement (Epitropaki and Martin, 2013). Transactional leaders are expected to make sure that employees understand the tasks they have to carry out and their responsibilities, reward them when performance standards are met, and employ in corrective behavior when necessary (Bass, 1985). Thus, under a transactional leader, employees are more likely to believe that their manager is only providing them with what they are already entitled to. As a result, they will be less inclined to feel any sort of indebtedness towards the leader and will engage in upward influence tactics such as rationality, friendly behavior (soft tactics) and upward appeal (hard tactics) to persuade the leader to grant them additional rewards to those implied in the agreement. Similarly, Farmer et al., (1997) discovered that "soft" influence tactics such as integration were related to control and self-motoring.

In transformational leadership, on the other hand, employees rather feel motivated by the leader, who has the objective of inspiring them to go beyond what is required by the employment contract by providing guidance (Bass, 1985). Under this condition, Epitropaki and Martin (2013) suggested that in order to gain respect and trust of the leader, employees are more likely to apply rational and soft tactics, as per transactional leadership, but are less likely to use hard tactics, which would violate reciprocity and might harm the employee's relationship with his or her transformational manager in terms of nurturing and mentoring.

Thus, a conclusion can be drawn that employees' perception of leadership widely depends on what the leader expects the employee to perform. While friendly behavior and rationality are aspects present in both transformational and transactional leadership, hard tactics such as upward appeal and assertiveness are implemented solely under transactional leadership, as the leader-member relationship is mediated by a contractual agreement.

An important aspect to consider when looking at how followers perceive different leadership styles involves the way in which leaders portray their emotions and how followers respond to these emotions. According to a research on effects of emotion valence as moderated by leadership style, followers under transformational and transactional leaders may perceive and react to emotional displays of leaders differently because some emotions may be seen as more in line with the means by which these leaders elicit influence (i.e., contingent reward vs. charisma) (Connelly and Ruark, 2010). Additionally, follower perceptions of leader emotions are influenced by knowledge of the leader's unique style, preferences, and conduct as well as knowledge of the situation in which an emotional display is made. As mentioned in the previous paragraphs, transactional and transformational leadership exerts influence in different ways; in transactional leadership, the leader aims to provide a stable, risk-averse environment by setting goals and expectations and identifies contingencies such as rewards or punishments for when followers succeed or fail in meeting objectives (Avolio, 1999; Bass, 1985, Burns, 1978). Therefore, when a transactional leader display positive emotion, followers are prone to assume that things are going well and that their performance is meeting the leader's expectations and will thus consider the leader as being effective. In contrast, when the leader exerts negative emotions by providing critical feedback, followers will most likely feel threatened and will therefore perceive the leader as being ineffective (Connelly and Ruark, 2010). In transformational leadership, on the other hand, leaders exert their influence on followers by emphasizing shared visions and objectives by offering their followers inspirational motivation and intellectual stimulation, and take into account their particular demands (Avolio, 1999; Bass, 1985, 1990; Burns, 1978). Because of these traits, followers will feel a sense of identification and trust, as previously mentioned by the analysis of Jung and Avolio (2000). Thus, as per transactional leadership, transformational leader will be perceived as effective when he or she displays positive emotions. However, intellectual stimulation exerted by the transformational leader may result in short term stress, ambiguity, and conflict, which may lead for followers to be less satisfied with the leader, despite his or her positive emotions (Connelly and Ruark, 2010).

By conducting an aggregation analysis between satisfaction with the leader and leadership effectiveness, Connelly and Ruark (2010) discover that transformational leaders can exert a higher range of emotions without having negative consequences on follower perceptions of leadership effectiveness. This finding can be related to Jung and Avolio's (2000) claim that levels of trust in the leader are higher in transformational leadership compared to transactional leadership. On the other hand, negative emotional displays from a transactional leader lead for followers to perceive the leader as being ineffective. This may lead to the assumption that followers associate transformational qualities to transactional leaders when they display negative emotions and transformational leadership is attributed to leaders who display positive attitudes, which reinforces the statement that transformational leadership is perceived as being more effective than other types of leadership.

#### 4.1.7 LEADERSHIP FEEDBACK

Feedback represents the least discussed topic in the reviewed literature. It encompasses those articles discussing about the way in which leaders give feedback to subordinates and how subordinates perceive the feedbacks mostly under transformational and transactional leadership. This constitutes a substantial research gap within the sample, as the analysis identified only two articles debating on the topic of feedback under servant and laissez-faire leadership.

Overall, it was found that followers under transformational leadership will most likely receive feedback related to their organizational vision, whereas followers under transactional leadership will receive feedback related to their performance. Nevertheless, not many insightful information emerged from the analysis in regard to the way in which feedback mechanisms differ in terms of leadership styles. The analysis discovered that followers accessed more transformational cognitions when they received positive performance feedback than when they received negative performance feedback. In a similar way, they accessed more transactional cognitions when they received negative performance feedback than when they had positive performance feedback. Furthermore, it emerged that transformational leaders adopted more transactional cognition when the feedback about follower's performance was negative, while they adopted less transactional cognitions when the feedback was positive (Goodwin et al. 2000). Thus, these finding may lead to assume that the sort of input a leader receives regarding the performance of subordinates does not affect his/hers ability to access the cognition that is most closely matched with their behavioral

style. In other words, regardless of the kind of feedback they receive, transformational leaders access transformational cognitions, while transactional leaders only access transactional ones. It is important to note, however, that although these findings suggest insightful information on the relationship between transactional and transformational leadership in terms of cognitions, they do not account for the examination of the constructs among environmental stimuli and other areas of cognitive processing.

The model brought upon by Antonakis and House (2014) further challenges the full range of factors identified in Bass' (1985) leadership analysis. The authors argue that in order to provide effective performance feedback, leaders must scan the internal and external environment, chart strategic and task objectives as opposed to only considering the motivational and quid-pro quo leader behaviors that comprise the full-range leadership characteristics found in transformational, transactional, and laissez faire leadership. Moreover, the effectiveness of leadership largely depends on the effectiveness in employing resources and adapting to external environments in addition to having a transformative and transactional influence. That is to say, effective organizational leadership requires more than merely exerting influence on a personal level. It also requires the development and application of solutions to task-oriented challenges (Mumford et al., 2001). Thus, while keeping an eye on team performance and the environment, leaders must, among other things, define strategic and tactical goals (Morgeson et al., 2009).

## DISCUSSION AND OPEN ISSUES

The main contribution of the current paper was to provide additional information to understand how transactional, transformational, servant and laissez-faire leadership have been debated over the decades, as well as attempting to establish a ground for future research. By performing a systematization of the academic literature investigating on these topics, this thesis aimed at providing an overall understanding of the four selected leadership styles and identify the research gaps found in literature. One hundred and thirteen articles were found to be the most relevant to the topics investigated in this study. Fourteen top-tier journals in the business and management sectors graded 4 or 4\* were considered. The systematization analysis of the articles included in the sample led to the identification of seven thematic macro-areas, which aggregate all of the main issues raised. The results have been analyzed through descriptive statistics and elaborated findings. The principal discoveries concern not only the primary subjects of the cited publications but also the investigation of the most significant theories, contexts, and methodologies used by academics.

One of the most outstanding result that emerged from the analysis is that previous studies have been polarized towards primarily three factors: in terms of leadership styles, the findings reflect primarily transactional and transformational leadership; in terms of themes identified, perception and performance were the most common. Even though this constitutes an interesting finding in terms of the direction that scholars have adopted when studying leadership, it also represents a clear limitation to this thesis. The reasons behind this could be numerous. For example, as many of articles suggested, transactional and transformational leadership are mostly analyzed in conjunction. This is because, often, transformational leadership tends to add to the effects of transactional leadership and vice-versa (Bass, 1997), allowing perhaps a rather simpler comparative analysis between the two with respect to the other cited leadership styles. Similarly, several researches contented that subordinates' perception are important because they are the main factor regulating performance (Hackman & Lawler, 1971; Peterson, 1985). This could be a plausible explanation to the reason that the topics of perception and performance were found to be the most discussed in previous leadership; in order to drive subordinate's action toward a desired performance or outcome, their perception of leadership must be understood. Nevertheless, future research may be required to develop a more in-depth understanding of this topic.

The findings on leadership perception and impact on performance provided interesting insights on the way that managers, employees, and leaders are perceived and the impact this

has on corporate culture and workplace environment. The findings generally revealed that transformational leadership had the most positive impact on perception and follower performance. From the analysis, it emerged that transformational leadership, as opposed to other leadership styles, is positively related to the levels of work exhaustions of followers. Moreover, other studies revealed that transformational behavior of the leader leads for greater mentoring function received by subordinates than transactional or laissez-faire behaviors (Bass and Avolio, 1994; Sosik and Godshalk, 2000; Wellman et al., 2018). Similarly, transformational leaders exert power without having negative consequences on followers' outcomes in a better way compared to transactional and laissez-faire leaders (Casimir, 2001). In general, articles supporting this thesis argued that transformational leadership positively impacts idea generation processes, subordinates' positive perception of leadership, perception that followers can trust their leader, follower overall satisfaction with leadership and proactivity in information-seeking processes.

Nevertheless, other studies demonstrated that servant leadership can also be positively related to follower outcomes such as job engagement, self-efficacy, job performance and organizational performance. In this regard, possible future research could be addressed on the topic of followers' consensus about transformational and servant leadership. As some authors have argued, the way in which followers perceive their leader as transformational could determine if a leader is actually transformational in itself (Cole and Bedeian, 2007). This could be further tested by verifying whether the perception and consensus about transformational leaders' behavior is in any way related to followers' performance and outcomes. In addition, several researches explored the role of combined aspects of transactional and transformational leadership (i.e., Casimir, 2001; Bass and Bass, 2008; Fleishman, 1953). Nevertheless, any empirical evidence was found supporting the notion that factors related to transactional (i.e., pressure) and transformational leadership (i.e., support) could be utilized in a combined matter to improve performance. Similarly, the analysis did not identify any research in this field conjunctively examining the effect of all the four leadership styles taken into consideration in this paper.

The analysis of literature investigating on leadership behavior and traits revealed that the behavior of individuals within an organization is highly dependent on different conditions and interactions such as personal characteristics and the conditions of the overall organizational system. The coding analysis revealed that one of the most debated topics within the realm of leader behavior is the one of characteristics within transformational and transactional leadership. In this regard, it was discovered that overall, the majority of research

argued that transactional leadership is often connected with task-oriented behaviors, whereas transformational leadership has been largely associated with relational-oriented conduct. Additionally, the investigation showed that transactional and transformational leaders often exhibit quite distinct personality traits and behavioral patterns: transactional leaders exhibit traits like introversion and hold idea-driven personalities, are frequently compared to managers and implementors and engage in behavior based on the exchange of benefits like self-perseverance, incentive appeals, and contingent rewards. Transformational leaders, on the other hand, are seen as innovators and motivators and are known for having people-driven and organizational-focused personalities, which enable them to effectively mobilize resources to achieve organizational goals and often implement behaviors associated with idealized influence, inspirational motivation (charisma), intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. In the spectrum of moral reasoning, authors discovered that traits such as authenticity, mutual support, shared values are most often associated with transformational leadership, while competing rights, separation and autonomy are often linked to transactional leadership. Moreover, studies contended that leaders that are younger in age tend to adopt transactional and transformational behaviors, while older-aged leaders tend to lessen the importance of aspects such as motivation, charisma and intellectual stimulation, adopting a more laissez-faire leadership behavior (Zacher et al., 2011; Kanfer and Ackerman, 2004). One of the primary open topics within the behavior and traits realm lies in the debate of whether personality variables are an efficient way to measure leadership effectiveness. In a similar way, it was noticed that there is an overall lack of evidence of whether personal traits and behavior can contribute to the development of a certain leadership style. Additionally, most studies lack an explanation of which traits and behaviors, within a specific leadership style, are more relevant than others are assessing effectiveness. What also emerged is a general lack of attention to the situational factors (i.e., task structure, external environment contingencies, organizational flexibility, etc.) that could moderate the validity of personality and behaviors in predicting leadership. All of these topics could be a ground for future research.

In regard to organizational identification, it emerged that individuals who engage in transactional leadership foster goal performance, whereas transformational leadership foster organizational vision, leading to greater levels of organizational identification. This is so that members can feel confident that they work for an organization that considers their individual needs. Transformational leaders frequently emphasize the perception of the organization's attractiveness through empowerment, trust building, inspiration, and the articulation of an



appealing future vision (Epitropaki 2012). Nevertheless, other articles contended that aspects of transformational and transactional leadership linked to organizational identification can, however, be employed simultaneously (Wofford and Goodwin, 1994; Vera and Crossan, 2004; Epitropaki 2012). Concerning the open issues on the topic of organizational identification, it was discovered that the majority of studies examined organizational identification as a group phenomenon, neglecting, in some ways, the individual relationship of subordinates with the organization. Similarly, most studies do not account for the evolving nature of leader-employment relationship in assessing organizational identification but mostly focus on correlation of variables, without considering causality. Moreover, very few articles in the sample consider organizational identification within servant leadership, which constitutes a substantial limitation of this study. In addition, none of the studies address the issue of organizational disidentification, being the separateness of individuals from the organization. Although organizational identification and disidentification have been treated in literature as very similar constructs, one cannot disregard the possibility of their antecedents and outcomes being different (Epitropaki, 2012).

The majority of the analyzed studies emphasized the notion that contingent rewards are mostly associated to transactional leadership practices and behaviors. Other studies, however, further suggests that there could be an interplay between aspects of contingent rewards and transformational leadership or other leadership styles other than transactional (i.e., transformational) (House, 1996; Judge and Piccolo, 2004). Overall, a lack of empirical evidence on the positive effect of contingent rewards was found. This, however, could be given by the small number of articles that fall in this category within the sample and by analyzing additional studies on the topic, more insights could emerge. Nevertheless, overall inconsistency of findings on whether contingent rewards can be a positive predictor of effectiveness in other leadership styles other than transactional. Some studies, in fact, support the idea that there could be an interplay between contingent rewards and transformational leadership (House, 1996), while others do not find any support for this argument (Schriesheim et al., 2006). This leads to a need for further theoretical development to address how contingent rewards can positively affect performance as moderators in both transactional leadership and other leadership styles investigated.

The notion that transformational leadership has greater positive effects on followers' level of trust in their leader has been largely dominant in the analysis. Some authors argue that this is given by the fact that transformational leadership is mostly implemented in situations of transformation of existing conditions, which lead to high levels of uncertainty

and frustration (Kotter, 1996). As a consequence, transformational leaders need to obtain the trust of their followers by exhibiting concern for their needs, upholding commitments and showcasing their perseverance to achieve organizational goals (Kirkpatrick and Locke, 1996). Similarly, other researchers discovered that trust in the leader was higher in the weeks where leaders displayed more transformational leadership than on average, while levels of trust decreased during the weeks when leaders exhibited more laissez-faire behavior (Breevaart and Zacher, 2019). On the other hand, numerous studies contended that the levels of trust, in the leader were also high in servant-leadership environments, leading to the notion that servant leadership raises perceptions of a leader's trustworthiness, which is inversely correlated with leader trust and organizational identification (Zolin, 2002; Joseph and Winston, 2005; Liden et al. 2015). Even though extensive research has been conducted on how different leadership styles affect subordinates' level of trust, further analysis could be addressed to better understand leader-subordinate dynamics. For example, building upon the concept that transformational leadership impacts organizational identification through followers' trust (Podsakoff et al., 1990) rather than thinking of a leader's style in a general sense, it could be beneficial to look at the exchange relationship between a leader and a particular subordinate, to test whether results are consistent with such thesis. Similarly, the majority of studies in the sample took into consideration the role of "trust" as a single construct; research could benefit from a deeper understanding of the different dimensions of trust, such as faith or confidence in leader's abilities (Cook and Wall, 1980) in order to assess the validity of the notion that trusts levels are higher under transformational leadership.

For what concerns influence tactics, it was found that that different influence tactics were associated with different leadership styles. In fact, transactional leadership is often associated with rationality, friendly behavior and upward appeal; transformational leadership engages in inspirational appeal, ingratiation, personal appeal, friendly behavior and rationality (as per transactional leadership) and laissez-faire leadership involves exchange, coalition, legitimizing, and pressure (Cable and Judge, 2003). Once again, no relevant information related to influence tactics under servant leadership was noticed, hindering the holistic view of the results presented in this analysis. Moreover, it was found that most studies used personality traits for the assessment of influence strategies under different leadership styles, which raises concerns about self-reporting bias. Taking into consideration other explanatory variables other than the ones utilized in the studies would provide a broader understanding of the reasons behind the adoption of certain influence tactics in different leadership styles. Furthermore, none of the articles examined whether upward influence

tactics were indeed successful in the specific context or leadership style. Undoubtedly, a greater number of articles investigating on the topic of influence tactics could have generated more grounded conclusions.

Lastly, all of the papers discussing about the way in which leaders give feedback were analyzed. It was discovered that followers under transformational leadership will most likely receive feedback related to their organizational vision, whereas followers under transactional leadership will receive feedback related to their performance. Nevertheless, not many insightful information emerged from the analysis in regard to the way in which feedback mechanisms differ in terms of leadership style. In this light, several open issues regarding feedback mechanisms were identified: firstly, further research should be addressed on the investigation on the way in which feedback mechanisms differ in terms of different leadership styles in general; secondly, as most studies on feedback within the sample accounted for cross-sectional studies, a lack of field data from multiple points-in-time was found, hindering the longitudinal validity of the results; thirdly, a suggestion for future research is to develop a more in depth understanding of the mediating feedback mechanisms that affect follower performance and satisfaction under different leadership styles.

In conclusion, although this paper brought upon interesting insights on how the topic of leadership has been investigated over the decades, it certainly holds several limitations. Firstly, the sample of the study encompasses only one hundred and thirteen articles and most certainly, larger number of articles would have improved the accuracy of the results; secondly, many of the papers rejected during the selection process could have provided additional insights in support of some of the discussed topics; thirdly, further thematic macro-areas could be developed in order to investigate on other topics debated in literature (i.e., the impact of different leadership styles on innovation, gender and environmental issues) and lastly, as this research only considers transactional, transformational, servant and laissez-faire leadership, a further analysis could be conducted by including other leadership styles.

Table 2 presents a summary of the main leadership styles evaluated, major results, open issues and exemplary articles in each thematic macro-area identified in the study.

Table 2: Summary of main leadership styles, major results, open issues and exemplary references.

Thematic macro areas	Perception and performance	Behavior and traits	Organizational identification	Contingent rewards	Leadership trust	Influence strategies	Leadership feedback
Main leadership style evaluated	Mostly transformational or transactional and transactional combined. Less often laissez-faire and servant.	Mostly transformational or transactional and transactional combined. Less often laissez-faire and servant.	Mostly transformational or transactional and transactional combined. Less often laissez-faire and servant.	Transactional and transformational or both, less laissez-faire and no servant leadership.	Mostly transformational and transactional. Few laissez-faire and rarely servant.	Mostly transformational and transactional. Few laissez-faire and rarely servant.	Very few articles in general but mostly about transformational and transactional leadership. Rarely laissez-faire and servant.
Major results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transformational leadership has the most positive impact on leadership perception and follower performance.</li> <li>Transformational behavior of the leader leads for greater mentoring function received by subordinates than transactional or laissez-faire behaviors.</li> <li>Transformational leadership has a greater positive effect on work commitment in comparison to laissez-faire and transactional leadership.</li> <li>Followers under transformational leadership tend to be more proactive than followers under transactional leadership.</li> <li>Followers perceive servant-leading leaders as more adept in meeting their demands than transactional leaders, resulting in greater organizational identification and job performance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transformational leadership is often associated to relational-oriented behavior, while transactional leadership to task-oriented behavior.</li> <li>Introversive, idea-driven personalities, self-persuasion and incentive appeals are traits often associated to transactional leadership.</li> <li>Invention, people-driven and organizational-focused personalities, idealized in fluence, charisma, intellectual stimulation and individualized consideration are traits often associated with transformational leadership.</li> <li>Leadership is most effective under leaders that hold transformational traits.</li> <li>Laissez-faire leadership is the worst predictor of effective leadership.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transformational leadership fosters organizational vision, leading to greater levels of organizational identification.</li> <li>Transformational leadership is more positively related to organizational identification and commitment than transactional and laissez-faire leadership.</li> <li>Factors affecting the organization's attractiveness such as empowerment, trust building, inspiration, and the articulation of an appealing future vision are mostly used in transformational leadership.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The notion of contingent rewards was mostly associated to transactional leadership.</li> <li>There could be an interplay between aspects of contingent rewards and transformational leadership or leadership styles other than transactional.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transformational leadership has greatest positive effects on followers' level of trust in their leader.</li> <li>Levels of trust in the leader are lowest in laissez-faire leadership.</li> <li>Levels of trust in the leader are high also in servant leadership.</li> <li>Followers' perceptions of servant leadership result in greater levels of trust in the leader in comparison to non-friendly behavior, upward appeal.</li> <li>Soft tactics are used in both transactional and transformational, hard tactics are used only in transactional leadership.</li> <li>Laissez-faire leadership involves exchange, coalition, legitimizing, and pressure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Different influence tactics are associated with different leadership styles.</li> <li>Transformational leadership engages in inspirational appeal, ingratiation, personal appeal, friendly behavior and rationality.</li> <li>Under transactional leadership, followers engage in influence tactics related to rationality, friendly behavior, upward appeal.</li> <li>Soft tactics are used in both transactional and transformational, hard tactics are used only in transactional leadership.</li> <li>Laissez-faire leadership involves exchange, coalition, legitimizing, and pressure.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigation on the way in which feedback mechanisms differ in terms of different leadership styles.</li> <li>Lack of field data from multiple points-in-time.</li> <li>Understanding of the mediating feedback mechanisms that affect follower performance and satisfaction under different leadership styles.</li> <li>Lack of evidence for servant leadership.</li> </ul>
Open issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Further testing of the way in which the perception and consensus about leaders' transformation behavior affects followers' performance and outcomes.</li> <li>Lack of empirical evidence on the effect of combinative aspects of transactional and transformational leadership on subordinates' perception.</li> <li>Lack of knowledge on the effect of perception and performance of transactional, transformational, laissez-faire and servant leadership conjunctively.</li> <li>Lack of a concrete and empirical assessment of the effect of servant leadership on leadership perception and job performance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Debate on whether utilizing personality measure is an efficient mean to measure leadership effectiveness.</li> <li>Understanding whether certain personal traits and behavior may lead to the development of certain leadership style.</li> <li>Most studies do not explain which traits and behaviors are more relevant than others in assessing leadership effectiveness and why.</li> <li>There is little attention to the situational factors that may moderate the validity of personality in predicting leadership.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most studies do not account for the evolving nature of leader-employment relationship in assessing organizational identification.</li> <li>Most studies focus on correlations and lack causality.</li> <li>Most studies focus on in-group organizational identification.</li> <li>None of the studies address the issue of organizational disidentification.</li> <li>None of the studies investigate on organizational identification in servant leadership with empirical evidence.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Lack of substantial empirical evidence to demonstrate that contingent rewards have a positive effect on subordinates' performance.</li> <li>Some studies claim that contingent rewards can be used effectively also in transformational leadership but do not explain how.</li> <li>Some studies claim that contingent rewards can be used effectively also in transformational leadership but do not explain how.</li> <li>Overall inconsistency of findings on whether contingent rewards can be a positive predictor of effectiveness in other leadership styles other than transactional.</li> <li>Need for further theoretical development to address the positive moderator effect of contingent reward on satisfaction and performance.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Exploration of the differs aspects of trust (i.e., faith, confidence in leader's abilities, etc.) could lead to a more holistic comprehension of the topic.</li> <li>Most studies consider trust in relation to leader's style in a general sense, without looking at the exchange relationship between a leader and a particular subordinate.</li> <li>All of the studies consider subordinates as passive recipients of leadership, neglecting the active interaction between leaders and followers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Most studies use personality traits for the assessment of influence strategies under different leadership styles. Other variables could be useful to assess the validity of the arguments.</li> <li>Future research may be useful to confirm the studies of the relationships between leadership style and influence tactics.</li> <li>Limited number of explanatory variables used to assess influence strategies in different leadership styles (i.e., soft and hard tactics).</li> <li>Examination of the extent to which influence tactics are successful within a specific context/leadership style.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigation on the way in which feedback mechanisms differ in terms of different leadership styles.</li> <li>Lack of field data from multiple points-in-time.</li> <li>Understanding of the mediating feedback mechanisms that affect follower performance and satisfaction under different leadership styles.</li> <li>Lack of evidence for servant leadership.</li> </ul>
Exemplary references	Podsakoff et al. (1990); Connelly and Runk (2010); Casimir (2001).	Church and Wacziarg (1998); Bass, (1999); Judge et al. (2002).	Koh et al. (1995); Epitropaki (2012).	House (1996); Schriesheim et al. (2006).	Zacher, (2019); Podsakoff et al. (1990); Joseph and Winston Martin (2013);	Farmer et al. (1997); Cable and Judge (2003); Epitropaki and Martm (2013);	Antonakis and House (2014); Mumford et al., (2001).

## CONCLUSION

This study draws upon a systematic literature review to examine the topic of leadership within transactional, transformational, servant and laissez-faire leadership. By conducting a systematization of existing literature, thematic macro-areas were identified which cluster and are representative of the content of the studies. The results indicated that the majority of the studies drew upon the relationship between transactional and transformational leadership, while none of them addressed the macro-areas considering all of the four leadership styles taken into consideration in this study. With respect to the main subjects of the study, it was found that most focus on leadership perception and performance, behavior and traits and organizational identification whereas research on the topics of contingent rewards, leadership trust, influence strategies and leadership feedback mechanisms is lagging behind. The findings provide ground for future studies on leadership, encouraging researches to further analyze the relationship between transactional, transformational, servant and laissez-faire leadership and develop more understanding of the different areas that characterize these leadership styles.

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## APPENDIX

Table 3: Coding and categorization for systematic review.

Geographical setting	Single- country study	
	Multiple-country study	
	Non-specified	
Geographical area	USA	
	Germany	
	Netherlands	
	Asia	
	Greece	
	France	
	UK	
	Australia	
	Canada	
	Switzerland	
	Non-specified	
	Setting	Organizational
		Academic
Political		
Military		
Non-specified		
Other		
Sample size	0-50	
	51-100	
	More than 100	
	Other	
Objective	Empirical study	
	Conceptual paper	
	Literature review	
	Other	
Research method	Quantitative	
	Qualitative	
	Conceptual paper	
	Mixed methods	
	Other	
Research design	Cross-sectional	
	Longitudinal	
	Other	



Table 2 continued

Leadership style evaluated	Transformational
	Transactional
	Servant
	Laissez-faire
Thematic macro-area	Perception and performance (code A)
	Behavior and traits (code B)
	Organizational identification (code C)
	Contingent rewards (code D)
	Leadership trust (code E)
	Influence strategies (code F)
	Leadership feedback (code G)

Table 4: Coding and categorization of the reviewed literature.

Empirical setting	Geographical setting	Research setting	Sample size	Research objective	Research method	Data analysis	Leadership style evaluated	Thematic macro-area
Single	DE	Org	0-50	Emp	Qual	Other	TS, TF, S, LF	A,B
Non-spec	Non-spec	Non-spec	Other	Emp	Conc	Other	S	A
Non-spec	Non-spec	Org	Other	Conc	Conc	Other	TS, TF	B
Non-spec	Non-spec	Acad	Other	Emp	Other	Other	S	B
Non-spec	Non-spec	Org	Other	Emp	Other	Other	TS, TF	F
Non-spec	Non-spec	Acad	Other	Emp	Other	Other	TS	B
Non-spec	Non-spec	Politics	>100	Conc	Conc	Cross-s	TS, TF	C
Non-spec	Non-spec	Org	Other	Lit rev	Qual	Other	TS	B
Non-spec	Non-spec	Org	Other	Emp	Other	Other	TS, TF	D,E,F
Non-spec	Non-spec	Acad	Other	Conc	Conc	Other	TS, TF	G
Single	US	Acad	>100	Lit rev	Qual	Cross-s	TS, TF, LF	G
Non-spec	Non-spec	Org	Other	Conc	Conc	Other	TS, TF	B
Non-spec	Non-spec	Org	Other	Emp	Conc	Other	TS, TF	C,D
Non-spec	Non-spec	Non-spec	Other	Emp	Conc	Other	LF	D
Single	US	Org	>100	Emp	Quant	Cross-s	TF	A,E
Single	US	Org	0-50	Emp	Mixed	Cross-s	LF	E
Non-spec	Non-spec	Org	Other	Lit rev	Qual	Other	TS, TF	C
Non-spec	Non-spec	Org	Other	Conc	Conc	Other	TS, TF	C
Non-spec	Non-spec	Org	Other	Conc	Conc	Other	TS, TF	B
Single	US	Acad	>100	Conc	Conc	Cross-s	TS, TF, S, LF	F
Single	US	Org	>100	Emp	Qual	Long	TS, TF	A
Single	US	Acad	>100	Emp	Mixed	Cross-s	S	A
Non-spec	Non-spec	Org	Other	Emp	Conc	Other	TS	B
Non-spec	Non-spec	Org	Other	Emp	Conc	Other	TS, TF, LF	D
Non-spec	Non-spec	Non-spec	Other	Lit rev	Qual	Long	TS, TF	B
Single	US	Org	51-100	Conc	Conc	Long	TS, TF	A
Multiple	US, CA	Org	>100	Emp	Quant	Cross-s	TS, TF	A,B

Table 4 continued

Empirical setting	Geographical setting	Research setting	Sample size	Research objective	Research method	Data analysis	Leadership style evaluated	Thematic macro-area
Single	US	Org	>100	Emp	Quant	Cross-s	TS, TF, LF	B
Single	US	Acad	>100	Conc	Conc	Cross-s	TS, TF	B
Single	US	Non-spec	51-100	Lit rev	Qual	Cross-s	TS, TF	C
Single	US	Non-spec	0-50	Conc	Conc	Cross-s	TS, TF, LF	B
Non-spec	Non-spec	Org	Other	Conc	Conc	Other	TF	B
Non-spec	Non-spec	Non-spec	51-100	Lit rev	Qual	Cross-s	TS, TF	A
Single	US	Org	Other	Emp	Quant	Long	TF	B
Single	AS	Acad	>100	Emp	Quant	Cross-s	TF	C
Non-spec	Non-spec	Non-spec	>100	Lit rev	Qual	Cross-s	TS, TF	A
Non-spec	Non-spec	Non-spec	>100	Lit rev	Qual	Cross-s	TS, TF, LF	A
Non-spec	Non-spec	Org	Other	Emp	Conc	Other	S	C
Single	DE	Org	0-50	Emp	Quant	Cross-s	TF	C
Non-spec	Non-spec	Non-spec	Other	Conc	Conc	Other	TS, TF	E
Single	US	Acad	>100	Emp	Qual	Cross-s	TF	E
Multiple	US, CA	Org	>100	Emp	Quant	Long	TF	A
Non-spec	Non-spec	Non-spec	>100	Conc	Conc	Other	TS, TF	C
Single	US	Org	>100	Emp	Mixed	Cross-s	TS, TF, LF	F
Non-spec	Non-spec	Non-spec	>100	Conc	Conc	Other	TS, TF	C
Non-spec	Non-spec	Non-spec	0-50	Conc	Conc	Other	TS, TF, LF	B
Single	US	Org	>100	Emp	Quant	Long	TS, TF	B
Multiple	FR	Org	>100	Lit rev	Qual	Long	TS, TF	E
Non-spec	Non-spec	Non-spec	Other	Conc	Conc	Other	TF	F
Single	US	Non-spec	Other	Lit rev	Qual	Other	TF	A
Single	US	Acad	51-100	Emp	Quant	Cross-s	TF	C
Single	US	Acad	>100	Emp	Quant	Long	TS, TF	A,F,E
Single	US	Acad	>100	Emp	Quant	Long	TS, TF	E
Non-spec	Non-spec	Acad	>100	Emp	Qual	Cross-s	TS, TF, LF	A,B
Single	US	Politics	Other	Other	Other	Long	TS, TF	B
Single	NL	Org	>100	Emp	Mixed	Cross-s	TS, TF	A
Single	NL	Org	>100	Emp	Mixed	Long	TS, TF, LF	C
Single	US	Org	51-100	Emp	Quant	Cross-s	TS, TF	A
Single	US	Politics	Other	Other	Other	Long	TS, TF	A,B
Non-spec	Non-spec	Org	>100	Emp	Qual	Other	TS, TF, S, LF	A
Single	US	Politics	>100	Other	Qual	Cross-s	TS, TF	A
Single	US	Org	0-50	Emp	Qual	Cross-s	TS, TF, S, LF	A,E
Single	AUS	Politics	0-50	Conc	Conc	Long	TS, TF	E
Multiple	CA, UK	Politics	51-100	Conc	Conc	Cross-s	TF	B,C
Non-spec	Non-spec	Non-spec	>100	Lit rev	Qual	Long	TS, TF, S, LF	B
Single	AS	Org	51-100	Emp	Qual	Long	TF	C
Single	US	Acad	>100	Emp	Qual	Cross-s	TF	A
Single	US	Org	>100	Emp	Mixed	Long	TF	F
Single	US	Org	51-100	Lit rev	Qual	Cross-s	TS, TF	D
Single	US	Org	51-100	Lit rev	Qual	Cross-s	TS, TF	B
Single	DE	Org	>100	Emp	Quant	Long	TS, TF	A
Single	US	Politics	0-50	Lit rev	Qual	Long	TS, TF	A,B
Non-spec	Non-spec	Org	Other	Emp	Conc	Other	TS, TF, S, LF	B

Table 4 continued

Empirical setting	Geographical setting	Research setting	Sample size	Research objective	Research method	Data analysis	Leadership style evaluated	Thematic macro-area
Non-spec	Non-spec	Org	Other	Conc	Conc	Other	TS, TF, S, LF	C
Single	US	Org	>100	Conc	Conc	Cross-s	TS, TF, S, LF	C
Single	UK	Org	>100	Emp	Quant	Cross-s	TS, TF	C
Single	AS	Org	51-100	Emp	Quant	Cross-s	TF, S	A
Multiple	CA, UK	Politics	>100	Conc	Conc	Cross-s	TF	C
Single	GR	Org	51-100	Emp	Quant	Cross-s	TS, TF, LF	A,C
Non-spec	Non-spec	Org	>100	Emp	Qual	Other	TF	B,C
Single	US	Org	>100	Emp	Quant	Long	TS, TF, LF	B,D
Non-spec	Non-spec	Org	>100	Emp	Qual	Other	TF	D
Single	US	Military	>100	Emp	Quant	Long	TS, TF	A,B
Non-spec	Non-spec	Org	0-50	Lit rev	Qual	Long	TS, TF	B
Non-spec	Non-spec	Org	51-100	Emp	Conc	Other	TS, TF	C
Single	US	Acad	>100	Emp	Quant	Cross-s	TS, TF, LF	D
Single	US	Acad	>100	Emp	Quant	Cross-s	TS, TF, LF	A
Non-spec	Non-spec	Politics	51-100	Emp	Qual	Other	S	A
Non-spec	Non-spec	Politics	Other	Conc	Conc	Other	TS, TF, LF	A,B
Non-spec	Non-spec	Acad	Other	Emp	Conc	Other	TS, TF	A
Single	US	Politics	>100	Emp	Quant	Cross-s	S	G
Single	NL	Politics	>100	Emp	Quant	Long	TS, TF	A
Single	UK	Acad	>100	Emp	Quant	Long	TS, TF	F
Single	CA	Acad	>100	Emp	Mixed	Long	TF	B
Non-spec	Non-spec	Non-spec	Other	Conc	Conc	Other	TS, TF, S, LF	E
Single	DE	Non-spec	0-50	Lit rev	Qual	Long	TS, TF, LF	B
Single	DE	Acad	>100	Emp	Mixed	Cross-s	TF, S	B
Single	GR	Org	>100	Emp	Quant	Long	TS, TF	C
Single	UK	Org	>100	Emp	Quant	Long	TS, TF	C,F
Multiple	DE, FR, CH	Acad	>100	Emp	Mixed	Long	TS, TF	G
Single	NL	Acad	>100	Lit rev	Qual	Long	S	A
Non-spec	Non-spec	Acad	0-50	Emp	Quant	Cross-s	S	A
Single	DE	Org	0-50	Emp	Qual	Cross-s	TS, TF	A,E
Single	AS	Org	51-100	Emp	Quant	Long	TS	A
Single	AS	Org	51-100	Emp	Quant	Long	TS	A
Single	NL	Org	>100	Emp	Mixed	Long	TS, TF, LF	A,D,E
Single	NL	Org	>100	Emp	Mixed	Long	TS, TF, LF	E
Non-spec	Non-spec	Non-spec	Other	Lit rev	Qual	Other	TF	F
Single	US	Org	0-50	Emp	Qual	Long	TS, TF	D
Non-spec	Non-spec	Acad	>100	Emp	Qual	Cross-s	TS, TF	A,B,D
Non-spec	Non-spec	Acad	Other	Emp	Other	Other	TS, TF	D
Non-spec	Non-spec	Org	Other	Emp	Conc	Other	TS, TF	D
Non-spec	Non-spec	Non-spec	Other	Lit rev	Qual	Other	TS, TF	B

# SUMMARY

## INTRODUCTION

Research on leadership has evolved significantly over the years. From trait theory to contingency and situational models, the debate on leadership has become ever more prominent in the field of management research. Many studies on the topic have concluded that organizational success is also depended in the relationship between leaders and subordinates and the way in which such relationships are managed. The study of different leadership styles is of crucial importance, as it assists to discover critical abilities and characteristics needed by individuals to perform effective leadership. Similarly, the academic interest on the impact that different leadership styles have on the company and on employees has been growing exponentially over the last decades. Twentieth century early research on leadership focuses primarily on trait and behavioral theories, which place emphasis on the characteristics of leaders, such as values, motivation and abilities. The focus then evolved to the study of the relationship between leader behavior, task orientation and effectiveness in a given situational circumstance. During the last three decades or so, focused studies on leadership issues have begun to gain ground and research on the topic has begun to adopt a more holistic view of leadership by taking into consideration different aspects and styles (Avolio et al., 2009).

This thesis considers four of the most prominent leadership styles investigated in previous literature -namely transactional, transformational, servant and laissez-faire and conducts a systematic literature review based on the model suggested by Tranfield et al. (2003) with the objective of understanding the application of different aspects of leadership in the organizational context.

## HISTORICAL DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP

The conception and discussion of leadership as a process dates back to Machiavelli in the sixteenth century (Smith et al. 1989) but it was only at the beginning of the last century that scholars started to adopt a systematic approach to the study of leadership. Max Weber (1946) identified three “ideal types” of authority: charismatic, reflecting personal characteristics; traditional, referring to compliance with rules and conduct as well as legal authority. Since Weber, the analysis of leadership has gained extensive attention in social studies, which gave way to the development of a variety of theoretical perspectives and

definitions (Bass, 1990; Yukl, 2002). Hierarchical features such as physical aspects, ability factors, personality features were utilized as primary variables to measure leadership in early management literature (Bass, 1990; Bryman, 1986). Nevertheless, these were soon assessed as insufficient to determine effective leadership. Further research was developed to determine leadership effectiveness and scholars started taking into consideration behavioral aspects that could impact leadership. For example, the Iowa State University in the 1930s identified three types of leadership: i) autocratic leadership, where the leader centralizes authority and acquires power from control rewards systems, position and coercions; ii) democratic leadership, characterized by the delegation of authority to others through shared knowledge (Daft, 1999) and iii) laissez-faire leadership, which considers the absence of leadership (Bass, 1990). Similarly, the University of Michigan conducted an analysis by comparing the behavior of effective leaders with ineffective leaders, leading to the identification of two types of leadership behavior: employee-centered leaders and job-centered leaders. Following the contingency theory construct stating that there is no universally applicable style of leadership, different models were developed during the second half of the century. These included: i) the model developed by Fried Fielder in 1964, which discovered that high-control and low-control tasks were more effectively conducted by task-oriented leaders, whilst moderate-control tasks were more effectively controlled by relationship-oriented leaders; ii) path-goal theory developed by House and Mitchell (1974) arguing that “the motivation to engage in behavior was a function of the product of the person’s perception and the probability that the behavior would lead to a goal as well as the perceived importance of the goal” (Chemers, 1997, p. 44) and iii) the leader-participation model developed by Vroom and Yetton (1973) with the objective of understanding the decision-making ability of leaders and the subordinate’s acceptance rate of those decisions.

This thesis considers how these theories have been categorized into transactional, transformational, servant and laissez-faire leadership.

## THEORIES ON LEADERSHIP

The idea of transactional leadership came from a study conducted by Max Weber in 1947 and later pointed out by Burns in 1978, who started to analyze the relationship between superiors and subordinates based on conditional rewards, that had the purpose to establish and reach tasks and goals. Transactional leadership refers to situations involving the exchange between individuals. This leads for leaders to be in a mutual dependence

relationship with followers, where the contribution of both parties is recognized and rewarded. Later, Bass (1990) defined transactional leadership as a cost-benefit mechanism between leaders and subordinates involving positive or negative evaluation of subordinates' performance. The author also identified the main characteristics and actions of a transactional leader. This first include: i) contingent reward; ii) active and passive management by exception and iii) laissez-faire, abdication of decision-making responsibilities. The second include: i) clarification of the expectation of subordinates and objective of their performance; ii) setting expectations; iii) evaluation of performance; iv) feedback on subordinate's performance and v) setting rewards based on achievement of objectives.

Transformational leadership was developed with the objective of giving a deeper understanding of the aspects of leadership taken into consideration in previous theories. The idea of transformational leadership was first pointed out by Burns (1978) and later extended to the organizational context by Bass (1990) and defines a leadership style where the primary focus lies on the development of followers through individualized consideration, intellectual stimulation and supportive behavior (Van Dierendonck, 2014). Opposingly to transactional leadership, where the leader is in charge of creating reward systems based on individual performance, in transformational leadership, the leader seeks to motivate subordinates to pursue the well-being of the organization by addressing group interests and collective growth (Bass and Avolio, 1994). The main characteristics of a transformational leader identified by Bass (1990) include: i) charisma ii) inspiration, communicating high expectations and expressing important goals in a simple way; iii) intellectual stimulation, and iv) individualized consideration.

The idea of servant leadership was first investigated by Greenleaf in 1970 and defined an emerging style of leadership focused on the development of followers based on the leader's ethical behavior. In this instance, the leader is seen as "primus inter pares" or "first among equals" and does not make use of his authority to achieve goals but rather persuades and convinces followers in achieving a common objective (Reinke, 2004). Similarly, he/she identifies and seeks the unique value of each individual as a fundamental aspect for building a learning organization, where followers are encouraged to contribute to the processes of participative thinking and decision making. Some of the features that characterize this type of leaders include: i) identification of the will of the group ii) empathy iii) helping others to make whole; iv) awareness; vi) conceptualization, vii) long-term foresight, viii) stewardship; ix) commitment to the growth of people and x) building community.

The concept of laissez-faire leadership was first defined by Lewin, Lippitt, and White in 1939 as a form of inactive leadership where the leader “avoids decision making and supervisory responsibility” (Hartog et al., 1997, p. 21). In this way, subordinates have complete control in the way in which their job is performed and the leader is responsible for only providing the necessary tools to perform tasks but is not directly involved in decision-making processes. Because of this, this type of leadership has been often considered as ineffective, as it fails to provide subordinates with relevant information or feedback (Bass and Avolio, 1990).

## RESEARCH DESIGN, DATA COLLECTION, DATA ANALYSIS

This paper aimed at analyzing the literature developed on the topic of leadership by conducting a systematic literature review on transactional, transformational, servant and laissez-faire leadership. By analyzing existing literature of these topics, the following research question has been addressed:

*How has leadership been interpreted from literature in the past decades?*

Further insights on the topic have been discussed by answering the following two research sub-questions:

*What are the main topics relevant to transactional, transformational, servant and laissez-faire leadership?*

*What open issues arise for further research?*

The data collection drew upon SCOPUS as a database to collect relevant articles on transactional, transformational, servant and laissez-faire leadership. This platform was chosen among others as it allows to cover article affiliations, number of publications, references and bibliographic data as well as details on number of citations received in each published article. Moreover, SCIMAGO rank list of top tier journals was utilized. It considered the articles published within the subject areas of “Strategy and management” and “Organizational behavior and human resource management” and the top fifty journals based on h-index for each category, leading to the identification of ninety-five journals. The first step of the research, which led to the identification of over 800 articles, consisted in searching for articles which included the word roots of transactional, transformational, servant or laissez-faire leadership in their abstract, title or keywords (leadership\* AND transactional\* OR transformational\* OR servant\* OR laissez-faire\*). In order to restrict the sample imparting a study based on resonant evidence that has produced debates among scholars, articles which

had ABS rating lower than 4 or 4\* were rejected. Further articles were excluded as they treated topics that were not pertinent to the research question investigated in this study. The final list consisted of one hundred and thirteen articles published between 1985 and 2019 in fourteen top tiers journals. Several rounds of coding led to the identification seven macro-themes, which cluster and give a representation of the leadership areas investigated in the selected literature. These include: i) perception and performance, ii) behavior and traits, iii) organizational identification, iv) contingent rewards, v) leadership trust, vi) influence strategies, vii) leadership feedback.

The following sections analyze the descriptive statistics of the sample articles and the relative findings on the identified thematic macro-areas.

## DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF THE LITERATURE

The systematization analysis of the articles included in the sample led to the identification of seven thematic macro-areas, which clustered all of the main issues raised. The results have been analyzed through descriptive statistics and elaborated findings. The principal discoveries concern not only the primary subjects of the cited publications but also the investigation of the most significant theories, contexts, and methodologies used by academics.

It was discovered that the top tier journals that predominately sponsored the discussion on leadership within the sample were *Leadership Quarterly* and *Journal of Organizational Behavior* and the majority of publications were single-country studies as well as specific to the geographical areas of the United States.

The research settings of the analyzed papers showed that the majority (50%) of them concerned organizational settings, which encompass all of those settings connected to organizations and organizational structures, followed by academic setting (22%) such as universities, colleges, laboratories, schools and different scientific departments. The remaining articles investigated the topic of leadership within the political and military setting.

Moreover, the classification revealed that most articles (45%) utilized a sample size larger than 100, whereas only a minority (12%) had a sample size lower than 50. It was found that the majority of publications were classified as empirical studies (60%) followed by conceptual papers (20%) and literature reviews (17%). Of these, most were found to be quantitative (36%) and cross-sectional (35%) studies.



In terms of leadership styles evaluated, it emerged that the majority (45%) of the articles investigated on the relationship between transactional and transformational leadership, whereas only a minority (8%) of studies investigated on the full range of leadership styles simultaneously, which represented a clear limitation to this thesis.

Regarding the main themes investigated by literature, it was discovered that the majority of the analyzed articles discussed leadership perception and performance (22%), followed by behavior and traits (20%), organizational identification (15%), contingent rewards (8%), leadership trust (7%) and influence strategies (6%), while only a minority investigated on the topic of feedback (3%). Furthermore, all the seven topics were primarily discussed under transformational and transactional leadership.

## MAIN THEMES IN LITERATURE

A conclusion can be drawn from previous studies on leadership clearly indicates that adopting different styles impacts organizational innovation, adaptation and performance. The results from the statistical analysis indicate that perception and performance is the predominant topic among all and discussed mainly in transactional and transformational leadership and least in servant and laissez-faire leadership. It emerged that the majority of studies assessed transformational leadership as being the most effective in terms of leadership perception, job commitment and satisfaction; however, other studies demonstrated that servant leadership is also positively related to outcomes such as job engagement, self-efficacy, job performance and organizational performance. Some studies (i.e., Sosik and Godshalk, 2000; Breevart and Zacher 2019, Epitropaki and Martin, 2005; Jung and Avolio, 2000) revealed that transformational behavior of a leader leads to greater mentoring functions received by subordinates than transactional and laissez-faire behavior. Similarly, some studies contended that transformational and transactional leadership are two of the most important variables affecting employees' creative processes and ability to generate ideas within the organization (Podsakoff et al., 1990; (i.e., Howell and Avolio, 1993; Jung et al., 2003). Others, however, contended that there is no positive correlation between the two leadership styles and idea generation processes (e.g., Basu and Green, 1997; Jaussi and Dionne, 2003; Krause, 2004). Furthermore, research (i.e., Connelly and Ruark, 2010; Mazdar, 2001) discovered that followers under transformational leadership tend to be more proactive than followers under transactional leadership and thus seek for information from their leader more frequently and more efficiently. Studies considering servant leadership

indicate that leaders who show transformational behaviors are perceived as more effective, but followers perceive servant-displaying leaders as more adept in meeting their demands (Van Dierendonck et al., 2014) and are uniquely able to explain community citizenship and in-role performance on the individual level (Laiden et al., 2008).

Another important aspect that has been concluded in previous studies involves leadership behavior and individual characteristics. The statistical analysis revealed that behavior and traits is the second-most discussed topic in literature. Similarly to perception and performance, this topic is primarily discussed in transactional and transformational leadership, and less discussed in servant and laissez-faire. Overall, the majority of the analyzed studies contended that transformational leadership is widely associated to relational-oriented behavior, whereas transactional leadership is generally associated to task-oriented behaviors. Moreover, transactional leaders are often associated to the figures of managers and implementors who hold characteristics such as introversion and idea-driven personalities and implement behavior based on the exchange of rewards, such as self-perseveration, incentive appeals and contingent rewards. Transformational leaders, on the other hand, are regarded as inventors and motivators who are characterized by people-driven and organizational-focused personalities, which lead for them to efficiently mobilize resources to reach organizational goals, especially in situations of crisis. Transformational leaders often implement behaviors associated with idealized influence, inspirational motivation (charisma), intellectual stimulation, and individualized consideration. (Van Eron and Burke, 1992; Church and Waclawski, 1998; House and Podsakoff, 1994; Bass, 1985 1999; Bass and Avolio, 1994). Similarly, laissez-faire leadership had strong correlations to neuroticism and a weak relation with openness to experience, conscientiousness and agreeableness (Bono and Judge, 2004).

The analysis on organizational identification revealed that individuals engaged in transactional leadership foster goal performance, whereas transformational leadership foster organizational vision, leading to greater levels of organizational identification. This is because transformational leaders tend to emphasize the perception of the organization's attractiveness through empowerment, trust building, inspiration, and the articulation of an appealing future vision, giving members confidence that they work for a company that envisions their personal needs after and Bass, 1988; Koh et al., 1995; Barling et al., 1996; Epitropaki and Martin, 2005). Other studies contended the notion that aspects of transformational and transactional leadership can, however, be employed simultaneously (Wofford and Goodwin, 1994; Epitropaki (2012).

Regarding contingent rewards, it was found that the notion of contingent rewards was mostly associated to transactional and transformational leadership and never associated to servant leadership. Many of the studies in the sample attempted to understand if contingent rewards could be considered as a measure for effective leadership and contrasting opinions emerged. Some supported the idea that that contingent reward leadership can be positively associated with followers' job performance, satisfaction and commitment (Bass, 1990; Hallander, 1985; Podssoff and Todor, 1985; Podsakoff and Schriesheim, 1985; Williams and Podsakoff, 1988; Yukl, 1989), while other stated that transformational leadership could perhaps be more strongly related to job performance, satisfaction and commitment than transactional leadership (Avolio and Bass 1988; Bass, 1985, 1990; Burns, 1978; Hater and Bass, 1988; House 1977; House and Podsakoff, 1994; Kuhnert and Lewis, 1987; Podsakoff et al., 1990; Yukl, 1989). Other researches (i.e., House, 1996) further suggested that there could be an interplay between aspects of transformational leadership and contingent rewards.

It was also discovered that transformational leadership is often positively associated to the level of trust that followers give to their leaders. Some authors argue that this is because transformational leadership is mostly implemented in situations of transformation of existing conditions, which lead to high levels of uncertainty and frustration (Kotter, 1996). Several studies also contended that the levels of trust in the leader were also high in servant-leadership environments, leading to the notion that servant leadership raises perceptions of a leader's trustworthiness (Zolin, 2002; Joseph and Winston, 2005; Liden et al. 2015).

Different influence tactics were associated with different leadership styles; transactional leadership was often associated with rationality, friendly behavior and upward appeal; transformational leadership engages in inspirational appeal, ingratiation, personal appeal, friendly behavior and rationality (as per transactional leadership) and laissez-faire leadership involves exchange, coalition, legitimizing, and pressure (Cable and Judge, 2003).

Lastly, the analysis revealed that that followers under transformational leadership will most likely receive feedback related to their organizational vision, whereas followers under transactional leadership will receive feedback related to their performance. Nevertheless, not many insightful information emerged from the analysis in regard to the way in which feedback mechanisms differ in terms of leadership style.

## DISCUSSION AND OPEN ISSUES

The main contribution of the current paper was to provide additional information to understand how transactional, transformational, servant and laissez-faire leadership have been debated over the decades, as well as attempting to establish ground for future research. By performing a systematization of the academic literature one hundred and thirteen articles were analyzed and fourteen top-tier journals in the business and management sectors graded 4 or 4\* were considered. The systematization analysis of the articles included in the sample led to the identification of seven thematic macro-areas, which clustered all of the main issues raised. The results have been analyzed through descriptive statistics and elaborated findings. One of the most outstanding result that emerged from the analysis is that previous studies have been polarized towards primarily transactional and transformational leadership and perception and performance.

It was found that transformational leadership and, in some instances, also servant leadership had the most positive impact on perception and follower performance. Possible future research could be conducted to understand followers' consensus about transformational and servant leadership by verifying whether the perception and consensus about transformational leaders' behavior is in any way related to followers' performance and outcomes. In addition, several researches explored the role of combined aspects of transactional and transformational leadership (i.e., Casimir, 2001; Bass and Bass, 2008; Fleishman, 1953). Furthermore, empirical evidence could be portrayed in support of the notion that factors related to transactional (i.e., pressure) and transformational leadership (i.e., support) could be utilized in a combined matter to improve performance. Similarly, there is a need to examine the effect of all the four leadership styles taken into consideration in this paper all together.

One of the primary open topics within the behavior and traits realm lies in the debate of whether personality variables are an efficient way to measure leadership effectiveness. It was suggested that there is an overall lack of evidence of whether personal traits and behavior can contribute to the development of a certain leadership style. Additionally, most studies lack an explanation of which traits and behaviors, within a specific leadership style, are more relevant than others are assessing effectiveness. What also emerged is a general lack of attention to the situational factors (i.e., task structure, external environment contingencies, organizational flexibility, etc.) that could moderate the validity of personality and behaviors in predicting leadership. All of these topics could be a ground for future research.

For what concerns organizational identification, it was discovered that the majority of studies examined organizational identification as a group phenomenon, neglecting, in some ways, the individual relationship of subordinates with the organization. Similarly, most studies do not account for the evolving nature of leader-employment relationship in assessing organizational identification but mostly focus on correlation of variables, without considering causality. Moreover, very few articles in the sample consider organizational identification within servant leadership, which constitutes a substantial limitation of this study and none of the studies address the the issue of organizational disidentification, being the separateness of individuals from the organization.

The majority of the analyzed studies emphasized the notion that contingent rewards are mostly associated to transactional leadership practices and behaviors but a lack empirical evidence of on the positive effect of contingent rewards was found. Similarly, further research is needed to assess whether contingent rewards can be a positive predictor of effectiveness in other leadership styles other than transactional.

Even though extensive research has been conducted on how different leadership styles affect subordinates' level of trust, further analysis could be addressed to better understand leader-subordinate dynamics. For example, it could be beneficial to look at the exchange relationship between a leader and a particular subordinate, to test whether results are consistent with the notion that the levels of trust under transformational leadership are higher as its impact on organizational identification is greater than in other leadership styles. Similarly, research could benefit from a deeper understanding of the different dimensions of trust, such as faith or confidence in leader's abilities (Cook and Wall, 1980) in order to assess the validity of the notion that trusts levels are higher under transformational leadership.

The analysis on influence tactics showed that different influence tactics were associated with different leadership styles, but no evidence was found in regard to influence tactics under servant leadership. Moreover, most studies used personality traits for the assessment of influence strategies under different leadership styles; taking into consideration other explanatory variables other than the ones utilized in the studies would provide a broader understanding of the reasons behind the adoption of certain influence tactics in different leadership styles. Furthermore, none of the articles examined whether upward influence tactics were indeed successful in the specific context or leadership style.

Several open issues regarding feedback mechanisms were identified: firstly, further research should be addressed on the investigation on the way in which feedback mechanisms differ in terms of different leadership styles in general; secondly, as most studies on feedback

within the sample accounted for cross-sectional studies, a lack of field data from multiple points-in-time was found, hindering the longitudinal validity of the results; thirdly, a suggestion for future research is to develop a more in depth understanding of the mediating feedback mechanisms that affect follower performance and satisfaction under different leadership styles.

## CONCLUSION

This study draws upon a systematic literature review to examine the topic of leadership within transactional, transformational, servant and laissez-faire leadership. By conducting a systematization of existing literature, thematic macro-areas were identified which cluster and are representative of the content of the studies. The results indicated that the majority of the studies drew upon the relationship between transactional and transformational leadership, while none of them addressed the macro-areas considering all of the four leadership styles taken into consideration in this study. With respect to the main subjects of the study, it was found that most focus on leadership perception and performance, behavior and traits and organizational identification whereas research on the topics of contingent rewards, leadership trust, influence strategies and leadership feedback mechanisms is lagging behind. The findings provide ground for future studies on leadership, encouraging researches to further analyze the relationship between transactional, transformational, servant and laissez-faire leadership and develop more understanding of the different areas that characterize these leadership styles.