

University of Strathclyde

Department of Work, Employment, and Organisation

**An investigation of influential factors of leaders and followers trust
relationships in UK SMEs:
Studies in Assistive Technology industry and mental health sector**

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the
degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Rui Ma

2023

Declaration of Authenticity and Author's Rights

This thesis is the result of the author's original research. It has been composed by the author and has not been previously submitted for examination which has led to the award of a degree.

The copyright of this thesis belongs to the author under the terms of the United Kingdom Copyright Acts as qualified by University of Strathclyde Regulation 3.50. Due acknowledgement must always be made of the use of any material contained in, or derived from, this thesis.

Signed: *Rui Ma*

Date: *27/02/2023*

Abstract

This thesis combines four aspects, individual characteristics, leadership and followership, exchanges and interaction, and external factors, to illustrate what factors could influence the trust relationships between leaders and followers in small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) in Assistive Technology (AT) and mental health industries in the UK. The combination of these four aspects provides a comprehensive view to depict trust relationship influential factors between leaders and followers in the workplace. Furthermore, this thesis considers both leaders' and followers' opinions on building workplace trust relationships in order to describe trust on a dyadic level. Understanding dyadic trust in the workplace enables leaders and followers to recognise each other's different demands and antecedents for establishing trust relationships. This thesis also sheds light on how to build trust in virtual teams. With the advent of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19), the development of trust in virtual teams between leaders and followers could underpin effective leadership and assist successful online teamwork. Individual and focus group interviews were conducted with 22 SMEs, and 40 participants contributed valuable perspectives on building trust with their leader or followers.

The first contribution of this thesis is a conceptual framework which enhances comprehension regarding the various elements that may influence trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs. This research finds several influential factors in trust relationships, which are summarised into four aspects: individual characteristics, leadership/followership styles, exchanges and interactions, and external factors. The second contribution is that findings reveal that leaders and followers place different weight on trust relationship influential factors, which develops organisational trust theory on a dyadic level. In terms of individual characteristics, leaders claim that integrity is necessary for a trustworthy follower, whereas followers believe that benevolence and integrity are characteristics of a trustworthy leader. In terms of exchanges and interactions, leaders propose that team diversity could facilitate trust relationships, whereas followers suggest that friendship could increase their trust in their leaders. The different attitudes of leaders and followers toward developing workplace trust relationships suggest that studies of trust require perspectives from both parties in a trust relationship. Therefore, the findings theoretically develop the trust research field on a dyadic level, meanwhile, this thesis provide suggestions for leaders and followers to practically establish trust relationships in the workplace in SMEs.

Acknowledgement

I would express my gratitude and sincere appreciations to my supervisors Dr. Tony McCarthy and Prof. Ian Cunningham, for their patient guidance, valuable feedback, and constant encouragement. They supported and inspired me to complete this thesis, and I'm grateful for the opportunity to work with my supervisors.

I also would like to thank the department of Work, Employment, and Organisation, the Strathclyde Business School, and all my PhD colleagues for building a supportive and creative environment.

A huge thanks to all people and organisations who agreed to take part in this research. Without their valuable insights and supports, I cannot complete this research. I would also like to acknowledge Alasdair Mackay for his supports at the beginning of the data collection stage, which helps me build connections with some companies to conduct interviews.

Thanks to all my dearest friends, the friendship and company makes the long journey more enjoyable. Also, I would like to thank Vox Akuma, an Internet content creator, for his persistence, hard work, creativity, and amusing streams, which provide emotional support when I feel sad.

And finally, my deepest gratitude belongs to my parents who always believe in me and love me without any conditions. Without their emotional and financial supports, I would not be able to achieve this goal.

Rui Ma

Table of Contents

<i>Declaration of Authenticity and Author's Rights</i>	<i>i</i>
<i>Abstract</i>	<i>ii</i>
<i>Acknowledgement</i>	<i>iii</i>
<i>Table of Contents</i>	<i>iv</i>
<i>List of Tables</i>	<i>xi</i>
<i>List of Figures</i>	<i>xii</i>
Chapter 1 Introduction	1
1.1 Research background	2
1.1.1 Studies of trust influential factors between leaders and followers	2
1.1.2 Significance of studying trust in SMEs	5
1.2 Understanding the SME sector	6
1.2.1 Features of SMEs.....	6
1.2.2 Types of employment relations in SMEs.....	7
1.2.3 Study context: Assistive Technology industry and mental health sector	8
1.3 Gaps in the literature and the research purpose	10
1.4 Research approach	12
1.5 Thesis structure	13
Chapter 2 Literature Review: Leader-follower trust relationship influential aspects	15
2.1 Trust	16
2.1.1 Concept of trust	17
2.1.1.1 Nature of trust.....	17
2.1.1.2 Definition of trust	18
2.1.2 Trust-building mechanisms	21
2.1.2.1 Rational-based trust-building mechanisms	22
2.1.2.2 Relational-based trust-building mechanisms.....	23
2.1.3 Organisational trust	25
2.1.3.1 Definition of organisational trust.....	25
2.1.3.2 Antecedents of organisational trust	26
2.1.3.3 Limitations of investigation trust in a unidirectional manner.....	29
2.1.4 Studies of dyadic trust in the workplace	30

2.1.4.1 Definition and types of dyadic trust	30
2.1.4.2 Significance of investigating trust between leaders and followers on a dyadic level.....	33
2.2 Leader-follower relationship	35
2.2.1 Leadership	35
2.2.1.1 The influence of leadership styles on trust.....	35
2.2.1.2 Transformational leadership.....	37
2.2.1.3 Transactional leadership	39
2.2.2 Followership	40
2.2.2.1 Concept of followership.....	40
2.2.2.2 Styles of followership	41
2.2.3 Leader-follower relationship.....	43
2.2.3.1 Traditional role of leadership	44
2.2.3.2 Attention to followership	44
2.2.3.3 Development of leader-follower relationship	45
2.3 Exchanges and interactions	48
2.3.1 Exchanges and trust	48
2.3.1.1 Leader-member exchanges	48
2.3.1.2 Social exchanges	49
2.3.2 Interactions and long-term relationships	51
2.3.2.1 Reputation.....	51
2.3.2.2 Similarity or diversity.....	53
2.3.2.3 Friendship.....	55
2.4 Influence of external environment.....	58
2.4.1 External influential factors on intra-organisational trust.....	58
2.4.1.1 External influential factors on leader-follower trust relationships	58
2.4.1.2 The advent of COVID-19 and its corresponding influence on organisational trust	59
2.4.2 Building trust remotely.....	60
2.4.2.1 Comparisons between virtual trust relationships and physical trust relationships in organisations	60
2.4.2.2 Influential factors of building trust between leaders and follower in a virtual team	61
2.4.3 Significance of trust in companies during and after crisis	62
2.5 Conceptual framework.....	64
2.6 Reviewing research gaps and research questions.....	65
Chapter 3 Methodology	67
3.1 Philosophical stance.....	68
3.1.1 Research paradigm.....	69
3.1.2 Research paradigms in the trust research field	71
3.1.3 Justification for adopting a critical realist approach	73
3.2 Methodological choice	74

3.2.1 Measurement contents of organisational trust.....	75
3.2.2 Measurement content of this research	76
3.2.3 Research methods in trust research field	77
3.3 Data collection techniques	78
3.3.1 Structured interview	78
3.3.2 Validity and reliability	79
3.3.3 Focus group interviews.....	80
3.4 Research design	81
3.4.1 Interview framework.....	81
3.4.1.1 Four aspects adopted to explore participants opinions of building trust between leaders and followers in SMEs	81
3.4.1.2 Collecting opinions from both leaders and followers.....	82
3.4.2 Interview contents	82
3.4.2.1 Individual characteristics.....	82
3.4.2.2 Leadership styles and followership styles	83
3.4.2.3 Exchanges and interactions	85
3.4.2.4 External factors	85
3.4.3 Data saturation and focus group design	86
3.5 Sample and sampling	87
3.5.1 Introduction of research sites	87
3.5.1.1 Assistive Technology industry	88
3.5.1.2 Mental health sector	88
3.5.2 Selection of SMEs and interview participants	90
3.5.3 Focus group participants	91
3.6 Data collection process.....	92
3.6.1 The process of conducting interview	92
3.6.2 Ethical consideration	92
3.6.3 Active listening via Zoom.....	93
3.7 Data analysis techniques.....	94
3.7.1 Analysis process	94
3.7.2 Coding framework.....	96
3.7.3 Analysis of direct leader-follower relationships and other indirect leader-follower relationships	98
3.8 Challenges and limitations of the research method	99
3.8.1 Challenges and solutions	99

3.8.2 Methodological limitations of this research	99
Chapter 4 Findings	101
4.1 Demographic analysis	102
4.2 Section One: Influential factors of dyadic trust between leaders and followers	106
4.2.1 Characteristics-related trust relationship influential factors	106
4.2.1.1 Introduction and results	106
4.2.1.2 Key commonalities of leaders and followers' perspectives on characteristic-related trust relationship influential factors	108
4.2.1.3 Key differences of leaders and followers' perspectives on characteristic-related trust relationship influential factors	111
4.2.1.4 New characteristic-related themes explored during interviews	114
4.2.2 The influence of exchanges and interactions on leader-follower trust relationships	116
4.2.2.1 Introduction and results	117
4.2.2.2 Commonalities of leaders and followers' perspectives on exchange/interaction-related trust relationship influential factors	117
4.2.2.3 Differences of leaders and followers' perspectives on exchange/interaction-related trust relationship influential factors	121
4.2.3 Focus group evidence	124
4.2.3.1 Characteristic-related discussions	124
4.2.3.2 Exchanges and interactions	124
4.3 Section Two: Factors influencing trust relationships between leaders and followers .	126
4.3.1 What Leadership and followership styles influence leader-follower trust relationships ..	126
4.3.1.1 Introduction and result.....	126
4.3.1.2 Leaders' perspectives about followership styles and trust relationships.....	126
4.3.1.3 Followers' perspectives about leadership styles and trust relationships.....	128
4.3.1.4 A sense of humour between leader-follower relationships	130
4.3.1.5 Focus group evidence about leadership/followership styles on trust relationships in the workplace	131
4.3.2 External factors which influence leader-follower trust relationships	132
4.3.2.1 Introduction and results	132
4.3.2.2 Four external factors that influence leader-follower trust relationships.....	133
4.4 Section Three: Influence of working online and working remotely on trust relationships	136
4.4.1 Introduction and results	136
4.4.2 How the adaptation of technical software influenced leader-follower trust relationships	137
4.4.3 Influence of emergence working styles on leader-follower trust relationships	138
4.4.3.1 Negative impacts of new working styles on leader-follower trust relationships.....	138
4.4.3.2 Positive impacts of new working styles on leader-follower trust relationships.....	139
4.4.4 Techniques of building trust online	141
4.4.4.1 Differences of building virtual trust and physical trust in the workplace	141

4.4.4.2 Techniques for building trust online.....	142
4.4.5 Focus group evidence	144
4.5 Section Four: Findings of direct and in-direct leader-follower trust relationships	144
4.5.1 Comparison between leader-follower pairs with direct subordinate relationships	144
4.5.2 Comparison between pairs of direct subordinate participants and others	146
4.5.3 Which aspect is more important in leader-follower trust relationships than others.....	147
Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusion	149
5.1 Structure of this chapter and review of the research questions.....	149
5.2 The contribution of this research	151
5.2.1 Conceptual framework of building dyadic trust between leaders and followers	151
5.2.2 Theoretical contribution of this research.....	152
5.3 Different perspectives between leaders and followers towards trust relationships ...	154
5.3.1 Differences between leaders and followers regarding characteristic-related influential factors.....	154
5.3.1.1 Different choices and perspectives on trustworthiness as trust relationship influential factors....	154
5.3.1.2 Leaders and followers' different perspectives on the influence of ability on perceived trustworthiness	156
5.3.2 Influence of individual trust propensity on perceived trustworthiness of leaders or followers.....	157
5.3.3 Differences between leaders and followers regarding interactions and trust relationships	158
5.3.3.1 Different perspectives about the influence of friendship on leader-follower trust relationships ...	158
5.3.3.2 Different perspectives about the influence of team diversity on leader-follower trust relationships	159
5.4 Similar perspectives between leaders and followers and other influential factors regarding trust relationships.....	160
5.4.1 Characteristics-related factors that could positively affect trust relationships	161
5.4.1.1 The consensus among leaders and followers on the importance of integrity as a trust relationship influential factor.....	161
5.4.1.2 Influence of verbal and written communication skills on leader-follower trust relationships	162
5.4.2 Positive influence of reciprocal exchanges on trust relationships	162
5.4.3 Interactions that may negatively affect trust relationships in the workplace	163
5.5 Influence of leadership and followership styles in leader-follower trust relationships	164
5.5.1 Influence of followership styles on leader-follower trust relationships	164
5.5.2 Influence of different leadership styles on leader-follower trust relationships	165
5.5.2.1 Transformational leadership and transactional leadership.....	165

5.5.2.2 Empowering leadership style	166
5.5.3 A sense of humour and leader-follower trust relationships.....	167
5.6 Influence of external environment on leader-follower trust relationships	168
5.6.1 What external influential factors affect leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs	168
5.6.2 How COVID-19 affect leader-follower trust relationships.....	170
5.6.2.1 Characteristics that facilitate trust relationships during COVID-19.....	171
5.6.2.2 How leadership styles affect employees during work-from-home period	171
5.6.2.3 Reciprocal exchanges and interactions help trust relationships when working remotely during pandemic.....	172
5.7 Discussion of direct and in-direct leader-follower trust relationships	173
5.7.1 Trust is not always mutual.....	173
5.7.2 Possibilities of developing dyadic trust with leaders and followers having direct subordinate relationships	174
5.8 Which aspect is more important in leader-follower trust relationships	175
5.9 New themes added to the conceptual framework	176
5.9.1 New characteristic-related themes explored in this research	176
5.9.2 Empowering leadership style	178
5.10 Methodological contribution of this research.....	179
5.11 Practical implications of this research	180
5.11.1 Development of leader-follower relationship.....	180
5.11.2 Studies within SMEs	181
5.12 Limitations of this research and future research directions.....	182
5.12.1 Limitations of this research.....	182
5.12.2 Future research directions	183
5.13 Concluding and reflection on research questions.....	184
References.....	187
Appendices.....	230
Appendix A Frequency summary of interview items.....	230
Appendix B Interview questions for leaders.....	233
Appendix C Interview questions for staff	237
Appendix D Focus group questions	241
Appendix E Cover letter sent on LinkedIn and emails	243
Appendix F Consent form	245

<i>Appendix G Information sheet for participants.....</i>	<i>246</i>
<i>Appendix H Privacy notice.....</i>	<i>249</i>
<i>Appendix I Newfound themes.....</i>	<i>252</i>
<i>Appendix J Definition of SMEs.....</i>	<i>255</i>
<i>Appendix K Coding template.....</i>	<i>261</i>

List of Tables

Table 1 Definitions of trust in different disciplines	18
Table 2 Classification of trust-building mechanisms from different researchers.....	21
Table 3 Influential factors of trust summarized from related literature	26
Table 4 Constituents of research paradigms	69
Table 5 Summary of philosophical assumptions of positivism, interpretivism, pragmatism and critical realism	70
Table 6 Detailed information of four aspects of the interview	81
Table 7 Comparison between perspectives of leaders and followers.....	97
Table 8 Gender and position	103
Table 9 interview participants and their companies' sizes	103
Table 10 Participants' demographical information	104
Table 11 Participants' average scores of perceived trustworthiness classified by their positions	105
Table 12 Scores of perceived trustworthiness between leaders and followers with direct subordinate relationships.....	105
Table 13 Summary of leaders and followers' choices of characteristic-related trust relationship influential factors	107
Table 14 Leaders and followers' choices towards ability, benevolence, and integrity	111
Table 15 Individual trust propensity and choices towards ability, benevolence and integrity.....	111
Table 16 Summary of leaders and followers' perspectives towards themes related exchanges and interactions	117
Table 17 Results between leaders and followers with direct subordinate relationships.....	145
Table 18 Participants' average scores of perceived trustworthiness classified by their subordinate relationships	146
Table 19 Leaders and followers with direct subordinate relationships' choices towards ability, benevolence, integrity	147
Table 20 The most important trust relationship influential factor among all discussed themes	147

List of Figures

Figure 1 Constituents of trust (Huang & fox, 2006)	20
Figure 2 Frequency of trust influential factors mentioned in Table 3	27
Figure 3 Organisational trust theory, ABI model (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995)	28
Figure 4 Trust congruence (Tomlinson, Dineen & Lewicki, 2009)	31
Figure 5 Followership styles coordination (Kelley, 1992)	42
Figure 6 Conceptual framework of this research.....	64
Figure 7 Stages of coding process	96
Figure 8 Participants trust propensity and rating towards their leaders or followers' trustworthiness.....	106
Figure 9 Conceptual framework of this research with new factors found in findings	151

Chapter 1 Introduction

The purpose of this research is to generate a conceptual framework and enhance comprehension regarding the various elements that may influence trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs. By examining factors that influence trust from the perspectives of both leaders and followers, this research seeks to contribute to the development of organisational trust theory on a dyadic level. Understanding dyadic trust in the workplace enables leaders and followers to recognise each other's different demands and antecedents for establishing trust relationships (Fulmer & Ostroff, 2017). Additionally, it aims to offer practical suggestions to SME practitioners on how to foster trust between leaders and followers in the workplace.

Trust is significant in companies, Fukuyama (1995) proposed that high level of trust in companies could facilitate cooperation and reduce business costs. The value of trust in organisations has been emphasized in literature (Hughes & Saunders, 2021; Jawahar, Stone & Kluemper, 2019; Knoll & Gill, 2011; Ferris et al., 2009; Kramer & Cook, 2004; Willie, 2000). There are three main benefits of trust between leaders and followers in business noted in trust literature, firstly, trust between members of an organisation could lower transaction costs for businesses (Kramer & Cook, 2004; Kramer, 1999; Fukuyama, 1995); secondly, it could foster spontaneous sociability, which refers to employee cooperation and extracurricular behaviours (Willie, 2000; Tyler & Degoey, 1996); and thirdly, it could make it easier for leaders and followers in hierarchical relationships to voluntarily defer to one another and increase productivity (Park & Kim, 2012).

Leader-follower trust relationships in larger companies and it in SMEs are different (Schaefer et al., 2016; Grey & Garsten, 2001). Kalkan (2016) stated that in larger corporations, trust is fostered between employees and the entire organisation or organisational rules rather than specific leaders, since most front-line employees have limited access to senior leaders. In contrast to larger companies, there are fewer boundaries between leaders and followers in SMEs, and relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs are closer than they are in larger companies (Sullivan-Taylor & Branicki, 2011; Hamel, 2011). Due to the small size of SMEs, the owners and employees collaborate closely and have a relatively transparent relationship (Dattner & Dunn, 2010). Leader-follower trust relationships influential factors in SMEs may differ from factors in larger companies (Jawahar, Stone & Kluemper, 2019; Sullivan-Taylor & Branicki, 2011; Knoll & Gill, 2011), however, studies of trust in SMEs are scarce. In order to fill this gap, the subjects of this research are leaders and followers in SMEs, and this research aims to generate a framework about what factors could affect leader-follower trust relationships to improve leader-follower trust in SMEs. However, there are various types of SMEs, making it impossible to generate one framework to suit all types. This research selected Assistive Technology (AT) SMEs and mental health SMEs as main research subjects, and the rationale is explained in 1.2.

Researchers agreed that there are two groups, trustors and trustees, in a trust relationship (Calhoun et al., 2019; Nikolova, Möllering & Reihlen, 2015; Dietz, 2011; Dietz, Gillespie & Chao, 2010; Kramer, 2006; Newell & Swan, 2000), while trustors take actions or make decisions to trust another party by assessing their trustworthiness, and trustees are people who are trusted in the trust relationship (Kramer, 2006). In leader-follower trust relationships, leaders and followers are two groups involved in the trust relationship, and both of them could

be trustors and trustees (Hughes & Saunders, 2021; Korsgaard et al., 2015). The practical benefits of trust could be achieved when leaders and followers trust each other (Jawahar, Stone & Kluemper, 2019; De Jong & Dirks, 2012). For instance, with a high degree trust from followers to leaders comes the increase of followers' engagement at work (Leung et al., 2018; Favara Jr, 2009). When followers are trusted by leaders, they may have greater access to resources (either capital resources or financial resources), since leaders are the ones who allocate these resources (Jawahar, Stone & Kluemper, 2019; Allen et al., 2004).

However, several studies of leader-follower trust have concentrated on followers' trust in their leaders (Jawahar, Stone & Kluemper, 2019; Knoll & Gill, 2011; Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis & Winograd, 2000), whereas studies of leaders' trust in their followers are scarce (Fulmer & Ostroff, 2017). Hughes and Saunders (2021) and Nienaber et al. (2015) suggested studies of leader-follower trust relationships need to be investigated on a dyadic level rather than considering it in a unidirectional approach. Due to hierarchical differences, leaders and followers in a trust relationship may have different perspectives on others' trustworthiness (Park & Kim, 2012). Studying trust from one side or assuming both parties have the same perspective towards leader-follower trust relationships or trust influential factors is not comprehensive and systematic, which could cause theoretical deficiency and may limit the practical contributions of trust in business practice (Gillespie, Fulmer, & Lewicki, 2021; Hughes & Saunders, 2021; Savolainen, Ivakko, & Ikonen, 2017; Korsgaard et al., 2015; Nienaber et al., 2015). Accordingly, this research investigates trust relationships and trust influential factors between leaders and followers on a dyadic level by considering both parties' opinions, in order to develop dyadic trust.

This research combines four aspects (individual characteristics, leadership and followership styles, exchanges and interactions between leaders and followers, and external factors) to illustrate trust influential factors between leaders and followers in SMEs. A conceptual framework is developed that includes the four factors mentioned above, which enhances comprehension regarding the various elements that may influence trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs. As there have been few studies focusing on SMEs, a qualitative approach is suitable for this research to provide a more comprehensive understanding of trust in the SME context (Gerstenfeld & Roberts, 2017; Armstrong et al., 2014; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012; McEvily & Tortoriello, 2011). By interviewing both leaders and followers with the same questions, both parties' perspectives on leader-follower trust relationships are observed and learned in depth (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012).

This chapter introduces the research background and research subjects to illustrate the importance of trust between leaders and followers in selected SMEs. Then it articulates the gaps in the literature, research purposes, and research questions. Next, this chapter explains the research approach and how to conduct research in order to solve research questions. Finally, this chapter presents the structure of this thesis.

1.1 Research background

1.1.1 Studies of trust influential factors between leaders and followers

Trust between leaders and followers benefits organisational development, stabilises the workplace, and increases employee job satisfaction (Hasel & Grover, 2017; McKnight & Chervany, 2006). Several factors could influence trust relationships between leaders and followers, since trust is a complex, dynamic, and context-based concept (Myers et al., 2013). There are two dominant approaches to establish organisational trust: rational-based trust and relational-based trust (Moldjord & Iversen, 2015; Gebreeyesus & Mohnen, 2013). Rational-based trust could be established by evaluating trustee qualifications or through negotiated exchanges, whereas relational-based trust could be established by understanding trustees' goodwill, reciprocal behaviours, previous experience, or long-term interactions (Gebreeyesus & Mohnen, 2013; Kim, Shin & Lee, 2009). Accordingly, rational-based trust is considered to be a short-term trust that could be controlled and calculated (Warren, 2018); whereas relational-based trust is believed to be a long-term trust, and trust relationships built through a relational-based approach are more stable (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2015; Dietz & Den Hartog, 2006). Therefore, both individual characteristics, exchanges and interactions could affect the trust relationships between leaders and followers.

From the perspective of individual characteristics, Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) proposed ability, benevolence, and integrity (ABI model) could primarily explain one's trustworthiness, which is the most widely accepted organisational trust theory (Jawahar, Stone & Kluemper, 2019; Wiley, 2009). **Ability** indicates whether or not a trustee is capable of completing assigned tasks, **benevolence** refers to trustees' goodwill and intentions to help others other than ego-centric profit motives, and **integrity** shows whether or not a trustee is dependable and honest (Connelly, et al., 2018; Smollan, 2013). Additionally, an individual's propensity to trust may influence their perceptions of others' trustworthiness (Kim, Shin & Lee, 2009). Mayer and colleagues (1995) defined trust propensity as a trait-based and individual difference characteristic and found that trust propensity is most prominent in the early stages of the trust process (Jones & Shah, 2016, Colquitt et al., 2007).

Apart from the influence of individual characteristics, exchanges and interactions could affect leader-follower relationships as well (Blau, 2017; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2015). Negotiated exchanges, reciprocal exchanges, and long-term interactions are associated with leader-follower trust relationships in the workplace.

Negotiated exchange implies that both leaders and followers behave in a transactional manner, which indicates that both parties to the relationship are bound by contract or formal agreements (Mitchell, Cropanzano & Quisenberry, 2012). Negotiated exchanges may assist in the development of rational-based trust, however, the trust is deemed fragile (Lam, 2013). Reciprocal exchange indicates that individuals have the ability to choose whether or not to reciprocate in the future, so such exchanges could be unilateral (Molm, Collett & Schaefer, 2007). Experiment results show that actors who engage in reciprocal exchanges have a higher level of trust in their partner than actors who engage in negotiated exchanges (Molm, Takahashi & Peterson, 2003).

Long-term interactions between leaders and followers includes evaluation of reputation according to previous experiences, similarity of educational or ethnic culture, and workplace friendship. Social visibility and gossip could affect ones' **reputation** (Sparrowe et al., 2001). Social visibility is defined as an individual's position in a group and how that position is perceived by other members of the group (Sparrowe et al., 2001; Clifford, 1963).

Receiving useful and high-quality recommendations from others is one method for developing a reputation and increasing social visibility (De Meo et al., 2018). Gossip is evaluative talk between two or more people about a third party who is not present in the conversation (Kurland & Pelled, 2000). Positive gossip could help people obtain information and foster intimacy, while negative gossip could not only harm the reputation of the gossip object, the gossiper, and the working environment (Farley, 2011; Burt, 2001). Moreover, *similarity* and familiarity facilitate the trust relationships between leaders and followers (Nooteboom, 2002). Since a society's low diversity could make people feel close to their fellow citizens, they may identify with one another and prefer to trust them (Beugelsdijk & Klasing, 2016). Additionally, *workplace friendship* improves individual performance, builds trust among co-workers, increases employee happiness, and improves organisational cohesion (Akyüz, 2020; Bhardwaj et al., 2016; Milner, Russell, & Siemers, 2010). It is regarded as an important component of an organization's informal structure, as it facilitates trust relationships among colleagues (Berman, West & Richter, 2002).

In addition to individual characteristics, exchanges and interaction, due to hierarchical differences between leaders and followers, in the workplace leaders and followers may have different opinions towards trust relationship influential factors (Park & Kim, 2012). Therefore, leadership styles and followership styles affect leader-follower relationships as well. Several studies have shown that various leadership styles, such as authentic leadership (Men & Yue, 2019, Wang & Hsieh, 2013), servant leadership (Thelen, 2020; Thelen & Yue, 2021), transformational leadership (Braun et al., 2013), transactional leadership (Jensen et al., 2019), and empowering leadership (Wibowo & Hayati, 2019), could contribute to the development of trust between leaders and followers in the workplace.

However, followership has received insufficient attention in the workplace since it is usually studied as a complement to leadership studies rather than as an independent research field (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). Studies of the role of followership styles in leader-follower trust relationships was rare (Crossman & Crossman, 2011; Kelley, 2008). Ford and Harding (2018) and Bligh (2011) have recently recognised the power of followership and begun to study it from a follower-centred perspective. Proactive followership, which refers to active and critical thinking followers, are considered creative and trustworthy in the workplace (Guenter et al., 2017; Hoegl & Muethel, 2007), whereas passive followership, which refers to passive and uncritical followers, are less trustworthy (Latour & Rast, 2004).

Leader-follower trust relationships are influenced not only by interpersonal relationships and individual characteristics, but also by external influential factors (Lewicki, Tomlinson & Gillespie, 2006). Companies will respond to external changes to survive and grow, and interpersonal relationships will be affected inevitably by some external changes (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). With external pressures come employees' anxiety of job-security, doubt of the organisational goals, losing confidence in leaders, and companies' improper response will lead to dysfunctional management (Kleynhans et al., 2021; Kang, Gold & Kim, 2012).

According to Hardin (1993), the study of trust should include at least three elements: trustors (individuals who trust in others), trustees (individuals who are trusted), and a research context. Since trust issues are influenced

by regions, cultures, and industrial sectors (Wu et al., 2011, Carter & Jones-Evans, 2006), trust research should be context specific. It should be noted that research on trust in SMEs is limited (Schaefer et al., 2016). Because leaders and followers typically have a closer relationship in SMEs, and the management structure differs from that of large corporations (Ngah & Ibrahim, 2012), leader-follower trust relationship influential factors in SMEs may differ from factors in larger companies (Jawahar, Stone & Kluemper, 2019; Sullivan-Taylor & Branicki, 2011; Charles, Ojera & David, 2015; Knoll & Gill, 2011). Moreover, 33% of employees in UK SMEs experienced work-related stress and frequently changed jobs, with the majority of them citing a lack of trust from co-workers and insufficient job training (Process Bliss, 2019). Studies of leader-follower trust in SMEs need more attention. The next section introduces the significance of studying trust in SMEs.

1.1.2 Significance of studying trust in SMEs

Due to the hierarchical managerial structure and complex rule in larger companies, not only employees but also leaders must be restrained and monitored by organisations (Grey & Garsten, 2001). Therefore, trust is usually fostered between employees and the entire organisation rather than specific leaders (Kalkan, 2016; Canner, 2016). In contrast to larger companies, the majority of SMEs are classified as flat organisations or have no specific hierarchical distinction between leaders and followers (Shamir & Howell, 2018; Sullivan-Taylor & Branicki, 2011). In SMEs, employees are usually subjected to the same requirements as their leaders (George, 2016; Ingram, 2009), and there are fewer boundaries between leaders and followers in family-owned businesses or micro firms (with fewer than 10 employees) than in large-scale organisations (Hamel, 2011). Moreover, employees in SMEs are more accountable for the organisation than employees in larger corporations because they frequently need to participate in and support every position in the organisation, as well as be empowered by their leaders (Kashif & Zarkada, 2015; Sellitto, 2011).

Since the firms are small, leaders and employees collaborate closely and have a relatively transparent relationship, which facilitates the trust relationships (Canner, 2016; Dattner & Dunn, 2010). Additionally, the flat management style has a significant impact on communication styles between leaders and employees (George, 2016). As a result, leaders and followers' personalities are known to each other, making their behaviours predictable and facilitating trust relationships (ibid).

Building trust between leaders and followers in SMEs has several advantages, for instance, trust has the potential to reduce complexity and uncertainty, increase employee commitment to organisations, improve job satisfaction, and lower management costs (Gerstenfeld & Roberts, 2017; George, 2016; Kashif & Zarkada, 2015; Chen et al., 2011; De Cuyper et al., 2008). Additionally, trust relationships between leaders and followers can foster a healthy work environment (Hasel & Grover, 2017). Working in a stressful and negative work environment may increase employees' turnover rate, limit employees' talents, creativity, and passion, as a result, employees' productivity and innovative activities, as well as the organization's competitive advantages will be negatively affected (Delmas & Pekovic, 2018).

Due to different hierarchical distinction between SMEs and larger companies (Sullivan-Taylor & Branicki, 2011), the influential factors between leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs may differ from these in larger companies (Dowling et al., 2019; Lopez-Perez & Rodriguez-Ariza, 2013). More research on trust in SMEs is needed (Dowling et al., 2019). This research intends to fill this research gap.

There are various sectors of SMEs, and most SMEs could find their niche market and managerial strategies to maintain market competitiveness (Armstrong et al., 2014). One leader-follower trust relationship framework cannot be applied universally to all business sectors since each industry has unique features (ibid). To narrow down research and make contributions to the research field, the next section introduces and explains the rationale for this thesis' decision to focus on two specific SME sectors: Assistive Technology SMEs and mental health SMEs.

1.2 Understanding the SME sector

SMEs are vital economic components of the UK, providing million job opportunities by 2020 (BEIS, 2021a). The total employment in SMEs was 16.3 million (61% of total), with a turnover estimate of £2.3 trillion (52% of total) (ibid). At the start of 2021, the UK had 5.5 million small businesses (0-49 employees) and 35,600 medium-sized businesses (50-249 employees) (BEIS, 2021a) (See Appendix J for definitions of SMEs and related numerical data). There are several industries, types, and employment relationships in SMEs, therefore, it is impossible to generalise one leader-follower trust relationship framework to all business sectors. This section introduces features and types of employment relations in SMEs and elaborates on the rationale for the Assistive Technology (AT) industry and mental health sector being selected as research subjects.

1.2.1 Features of SMEs

Smaller businesses are more willing to take risks and become more innovative in order to remain competitive in the market than their larger counterparts (Floyd & McManus, 2005). As a result, SMEs play important roles in increasing the UK innovation and productivity (Savlovski & Robu, 2011). Furthermore, some scholars suggested SMEs tend to hire younger workers who are more creative and efficient in the workplace, which provides more job opportunities and choices for younger generations (Cavusgil & Knight, 2015; Johnson & Turner, 2000). Additionally, SMEs are flexible, which shows in their quick decision-making, adjustable production capacity, and flexible working hours (Moeuf et al, 2018). Some SMEs work online, which saves money on transportation and avoids potential delays (Palvia et al., 2018). As a result, they could easily adapt to consumer and market demands (Koopman, Mitchell & Thierer, 2014). SMEs are considered the backbone and a key feature of business in the UK economy because their development benefits economic growth and job creation (Savlovski & Robu, 2011; Lukács, 2005).

Rannie (1989) proposed four types of SMEs: dependent firm, dominated firm, isolated firm, and innovative firm. Though Rannie's typology was designed to analyse SMEs in the manufacturing sector, it is still applicable in the service and information sectors in the twenty-first century (Scase, 2003). **Dependent firms** operate in the market as subcontractors or service providers, and they rely on larger customers (Siu & Bao, 2008). They typically play a role in the supply chain for larger companies; for example, some engineering or electronic SMEs supply components to larger companies (Singh, 2011). With the development of the internet, dependent firms can now operate on a global scale rather than just on a national or local scale (Doole & Lowe, 2012). **Dominated firms** are businesses that compete against larger corporations by having lower operating costs. They are typically retailers or service providers (Sturgeon, 2002). They could keep their market position by lowering their prices (ibid). **Isolated firms** tend to enter localised, or specialist markets that larger companies find difficult to enter due to geographical or cost constraints (Malecki, 2010). Many firms in the leisure, hotel, and catering industries are independent (Nolan, 2002). **Innovative firms** are those that take risks and commit to developing new products and services (Dess & Lumpkin, 2005). This typology includes industries such as electronics, computer software, and biotechnology, which typically collaborate with larger corporations or government agencies (Shen, Zhou & Li, 2011; Dess & Lumpkin, 2005).

The types of firms influence the types/approaches of employment relations (Scase, 2003; Kinnie, 1999), and the influential factors of trust may differ in different organisational types/approaches of employment relationships (Hasel & Grover, 2017). The following section explains types of employment relations in SMEs.

1.2.2 Types of employment relations in SMEs

There are primarily three types/approaches of employment relations in SMEs: traditional employment relations, egalitarian employment relations, and employment relations in creative or professional SMEs (Goffee & Scase, 2015; Farndale et al., 2015; Lin et al., 2009).

In low-skilled industries that rely solely on the abilities of the proprietors, the employment relationship is a traditional one that includes self-employment, small employers, owner-controller, and owner-director (Goffee & Scase, 2015). **Self-employment** is common among small business owners who do not have formal employees and rely on public services or help from family members (Mudahogora-Murekezi, 2020; Patton, 2004). There are no formal employment relations in this type of business, instead, the owners and/or their partners use domestic resources for trading (Upchurch & Marinković, 2011). The owner of a **small employer** may have one or more employees in the firm, and owners work alongside their employees (Scase, 2004). Because it involves the exercise of proprietorial authority, this type of employee relationship is formal (ibid). **Owner-controllers** do not collaborate with their employees. As a result, owners prioritise organisational development over providing specific craft-based skills (Baker & Hart, 2007; Scase, 2003). To obtain workers' commitments, an appropriate reward system is required to establish a quality relationship (Markos & Sridevi, 2010). Owner-controllers use a transactional approach to managing firms in this employment relationship, and the firm is typically small (Nadin

& Cassell, 2007). *Owner-directors* manage and control their company through a formalised management structure, and their company is typically of medium size (Storey, 2002). Leaders are in charge of administrative tasks, while owner-directors are in charge of providing organisational visions (ibid). However, in low-skilled industries, delegation of power may be underdeveloped, and the owner must still supervise each employee to ensure product quality (Goffee & Scase, 2015).

Egalitarianism is the second pattern of employment relations. Unlike traditional employment relations, egalitarianism minimises differences between employers and employees and emphasises teamwork (Farndale et al., 2015). This pattern may be utilized to manage employees in both technological and low-skilled industries, and it aims to create a healthy working environment and quality leader-follower relationships (Fairholm, 2011). Egalitarian managers will not exploit staff profits, and some managers or owners may share year-end profits with employees (Gilbert et al., 2012).

The final pattern of employment is in creative or professional SMEs. The workflow in creative, professional, and high-tech small businesses is divided into small tasks (Lin et al., 2009). Individuals or teams are responsible for their assigned tasks, and work activities are organised to meet the needs of customers (ibid). Employees have the authority to manage their tasks in accordance with the needs of their customers, and teamwork is required for creative or professional SMEs to deliver a positive outcome (Ahmad, Halim & Zainal, 2010). Owners' managerial functions are weak due to the job expectations of creative, professional, and highly skilled employees, and owners usually avoid imposing hierarchical control structures (Child & Rodrigues, 2003). Therefore, creative or professional SMEs frequently have a relaxed working environment, and owners encourage creativity, challenges, and self-fulfilment (Carey & Naudin, 2006).

Comparing to other types of SMEs, innovative firms require employees to be more creative, which implies a relaxed working environment and authorization could be an ideal working atmosphere for these creative and highly skilled employees (Lin et al., 2009). Trust relationships between leaders and followers could foster a healthy work environment (Hasel & Grover, 2017), encourage employees' talents, creativity, and passion (Delmas & Pekovic, 2018; Carey & Naudin, 2006), develop organization's competitive advantages (Delmas & Pekovic, 2018). Trust is vital for innovative SMEs (Hasel & Grover, 2017).

In order to investigate what factors could foster trust relationships between leaders and followers in innovative SMEs and narrow down the research, this thesis selects the AT industry and the mental health sector as research subjects. The findings of this thesis intend to be generalised to develop leader-follower trust relationships in innovative SMEs, especially innovative SMEs in the health care industry. The following section introduces the details of the AT industry and the mental health sector.

1.2.3 Study context: Assistive Technology industry and mental health sector

These two industries aim to assist vulnerable groups live and enjoy quality social activities, as well as to increase social wellbeing (WHO, 2018a; WHO, 2018b; Parant et al., 2017). The failure of these SMEs will inevitably have an impact on the vulnerable groups that require assistance (Khaksar et al., 2021). Establishing and maintaining trust relationships between leaders and followers within organisations could stabilise service quality and reduce turnover rates, ensuring vulnerable groups could live a dignified and independent life (Urbini et al., 2020; Delmas & Pekovic, 2018; Park & Kim, 2012).

Assistive Technology (AT) refers to products or services that help people function and maintain their independence (WHO, 2018a). People with dyslexia, autism, dementia, or mobility limitations may be able to benefit from AT products, software, or services in order to improve their well-being and live a dignified and independent life (ibid). AT products used in the social health care and education sectors of society include hearing aids, wheelchairs, communication aids, spectacles, pill organisers, and memory aids (Parant et al., 2017). With an ageing population and an increase in noncommunicable diseases, it is expected that more than 2 billion people worldwide will require at least one assistive product by 2030 (WHO, 2018). AT products could improve people's quality of life at home, work, or in public places, as well as provide those in need with access to better education and employment opportunities (MacLachlan et al., 2018). Furthermore, using AT products could help caregivers and caregiving organisations save money on labour, health and social care, and other expenses (ibid). As a result, this industry is growing and attracting more attention than ever before (Khaksar et al., 2021).

More than the absence of mental disorders or disabilities, mental health reflects a state of total physical, mental, and social well-being (WHO, 2018b). People with good mental health can deal with mental stress, work productively, and contribute to their communities because of socioeconomic, biological, and environmental factors (ibid). Mental health restoration is critical for individuals, communities, and societies, and the mental health sector provides individuals and organisations with advice and treatments to maintain mental well-being (NHS, 2019).

Both industries require highly skilled professionals, and a healthy and relaxed working environment may allow professionals to help people in need and/or invent new products (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). A positive workplace relationship between leaders and followers could help to maintain a stable working environment, and trust is an important factor in this process (Mudahogora-Murekezi, 2020).

In situations of crisis or severe changes in the external environment, stable trust relationships between leaders and followers could increase organisational resilience and help organisations return to normal after a crisis (Revilla-Camacho, Cosso-Silva, & Vega-Vázquez, 2014). During this research, with the advent of coronavirus pandemic in 2019 (COVID-19), most small firms have experienced a difficult time (OECD, 2020b). The pandemic outbreak immediately altered the majority of businesses' management practises, had an impact on people's daily lives, and changed the dynamics between leaders and followers in relation to their surrounding environment (Lopez-Fresno, Savolainen & Miranda, 2021).

When people's relationships become more temporal and virtual, a paradoxical situation arises in which trust is more needed to facilitate cooperation while fewer cues are available to build trust on (Bijlsma & Koopman, 2003). When people are forced to work from home during COVID-19, it is critical to maintain a trust relationship during a difficult time to ensure organisational performance, work effectiveness, and a healthy virtual working environment (Dumitru, 2021; Ireland et al., 2002). Furthermore, the pandemic has also had a significant and lasting effect on the mental health of millions of people (Hummel et al., 2021). All businesses were subjected to restrictions, lockdowns, and uncertainty during the pandemic due to the rapidly changing nature of the COVID-19 outbreak (Gössling Scott & Hall, 2020). A healthy working environment is far more important for these two industries, as it ensures that employees could provide quality services to those in need (Andaleeb & Conway, 2006).

1.3 Gaps in the literature and the research purpose

Mayer and colleagues (1995) proposed that trustworthiness, which includes ability, benevolence, and integrity, is a necessary component for trust in interpersonal relationships. Although many factors could influence one's trustworthiness, these three antecedents (ABI: ability, benevolence, integrity) explained up to 80% of the decision to trust (Jawahar, Stone & Kluemper, 2019; Wiley, 2009). However, this conceptualization of trust is individual and unidirectional, which means it can only explain one party's trust in another party and cannot be used to explain and represent dyadic-level trust (Hughes & Saunders, 2021; Bozer & Jones, 2018).

Studies on trust have focused on the role of leadership, investigating on followers' trust in leaders, rather than treating trust on a dyadic level (Hughes & Saunders, 2021; Jawahar et al., 2019; Nienaber et al., 2015; Ellwood & Garcia-Lacalle, 2015). Sometimes interpersonal trust could be considered as dyadic trust, as scholars assume trust is mutual (Ellwood & Garcia-Lacalle, 2015; Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012). However, mutual trust is a special type of dyadic trust which indicates both parties share an equivalent level of trust in their relationship (Laequddin et al., 2010). There is some empirical evidence suggests trust may not be mutual in many contexts (Jawahar et al., 2019; Korsgaard, Brower & Lester, 2015; Knoll & Gill, 2011; Brower et al., 2009). A systematic review of coach-coachee interactions from Bozer and Jones (2018) suggested that studies of trust and engagement should consider perceptions from both sides, in order to analyse effective leadership mentoring relationships. The positive effects and beneficial outcomes of trust may be neutralized if one party trusts another party while the other party does not trust in return (Brower et al., 2009).

The role of followership may be more important, especially since followers account for at least 80% of the workforce (Crawford & Daniels, 2014). In leader-follower trust relationships, leaders and followers are two groups involved in the trust relationship, and both of them could be trustors and trustees (Hughes & Saunders, 2021; Korsgaard et al., 2015). However, studies of leader-follower trust have focused on followers' trust in their leaders (Jawahar, Stone & Kluemper, 2019; Knoll & Gill, 2011; Shockley-Zalabak, Ellis & Winograd, 2000), whereas studies of leaders' trust in their followers are scarce (Fulmer & Ostroff, 2017). Due to the asymmetric

nature of trust, trust is not always mutual, and investigating trust on a unidirectional level may result in theoretical deficiencies (Gillespie, Fulmer & Lewicki, 2021; Savolainen, Ivakko & Ikonen, 2017). ***There is a gap in the research field, and more attention should be paid to the study of dyadic trust between leaders and followers.***

There are several benefits of building dyadic trust in business. For instance, followers may be less likely to blame their leaders, even though their leaders deliver negative outcomes to followers when leaders show their trustworthiness and are trusted by their followers (Tomlinson & Mryer, 2009). Equally important, followers may tend to develop internal attributions regarding these negative outcomes and facilitate to increase organisational performance with their leaders (ibid).

Most AT and mental health workers are highly skilled and rarely rely on leaders (Ahmed, 2018). As a result, hierarchical leadership is becoming less important (Schaefer et al., 2016; Riggio, Chaleff & Lipman-Blumen, 2008). SMEs have different leadership styles than larger competitors as they have fewer employees, and the majority of SMEs, particularly micro-sized firms, lack clear management strategies (Grey & Garsten, 2001). The process of developing trust in SMEs may be different from that of larger corporations (Dowling et al., 2019). ***Since studies of trust relationships in AT and mental health industries are rare (Schaefer et al., 2016), and this is yet another gap in the research field.***

Learning how to build trust in business has several advantages for business practitioners, employees, and trust researchers. Business practitioners could build a quality relationship with workers and a trust culture in the workplace by understanding the different signals of trustworthiness indicated by leaders and followers (Gajda, 2020; Tomlinson & Mryer, 2009). Employees could be empowered by their leaders and approach personal development in their career by understanding the different signals of trustworthiness indicated by leaders and followers (Gajda, 2020). For trust researchers, being aware of the dyadic feature of trust and exploring antecedents or outcomes of dyadic trust can not only build a deep understanding of trust relationships, but also develop and enrich trust theory (Lussier, Grégoire, & Vachon, 2017).

Individual characteristics (Jones & Shah, 2016, Colquitt et al., 2007), leader-member exchanges (Gregg & Walczak, 2010), and leadership styles (Chaudhuri & Gangadharan, 2007) have been studied in order to facilitate leader-follower trust relationships. Interpersonal trust in organisations, however, is influenced not only by individual characteristics or exchanges, but also by externally influential factors (Lewicki, Tomlinson & Gillespie, 2006). Changes in the external environment may have an impact on trustors and trustees' attitudes toward one another (Stern & Coleman, 2015). Since changes in the external environment inevitably result in changes of leader-follower relationships, changes in companies may have a negative impact on organisational performance if the company lacks resilience or is unable to adapt to new changes (Lee et al., 2017).

This research aims to generate a conceptual framework and enhance comprehension regarding the various elements that may influence trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs. By examining factors that influence trust from the perspectives of both leaders and followers, this research seeks to contribute to the

development of organisational trust theory on a dyadic level. The thesis intends to address two research questions in order to fill the two research gaps mentioned in this section:

Research question one: What factors could facilitate leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs?

Research question two: What are the similarities and/or differences perspectives of leaders and followers with regard to influential factors on leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs?

1.4 Research approach

This research applies qualitative methods to investigate trust relationship influential factors in SMEs in order to achieve the research purpose and address research questions.

Scholars in the trust research field primarily use quantitative methods to measure trust and prove or develop a theory or framework (Larson et al., 2018; Kourdi & Bibb, 2017; Dinç & Gastmans, 2013; Poon et al., 2006). The most commonly used tool for measuring trust is a scale known as the organisational trust inventory (OTI), and trustworthiness is used as an indicator to present trust (Kourdi & Bibb, 2017). Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman proposed the OTI in 1995, and this scale has been developed and expanded with new items to quantitatively measure trust (Poon et al., 2006; Tzafirir & Dola, 2004). Studies that employ the quantitative method typically use secondary data or a questionnaire survey to test hypotheses and develop existing theories, therefore, the quantitative method requires data from an abundance of sources to ensure the validity of inquiries (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). However, Kourdi and Bibb (2004) stated that trust is difficult to analyse quantitatively due to its dynamic nature, and quantitative methods typically develop or test a theory without adding new information to the research field (Saunders et al., 2009; Kourdi & Bibb, 2004).

In the context of this research, since the database of SMEs is generally small, there is insufficient data from SMEs to support quantitative research (Ardic, Mylenko & Saltane, 2012). Furthermore, this research aims to investigate and understand influential factors of leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs, which requires an in-depth understanding of opinions from both leaders and followers. Therefore, considering time and data access, a qualitative approach is more suitable to achieve the goal of this research.

The qualitative method is typically regarded as an exploratory process for theory generation (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003). Grounded theory, case study, interview, focus group, and observation are research techniques used in qualitative trust studies to in-depth understand and explore trust-related issues (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). By giving participants space and having in-depth conversations about a specific context and topic, the results could provide constructive creative suggestions and/or uncover new themes to research questions (Cropley & Cropley, 2015). To achieve the research goal, this research used two types of qualitative methods: individual interviews and focus group interviews. Individual interviews are applied to gain a comprehensive understanding of participants' perspectives on what factors may influence leader-follower trust

relationships at work, whereas focus group interviews are applied to discuss interview results and provide additional supporting evidence to the research findings.

Interviewing has become a prevalent method for researchers to understand social complexities and collect data in various research fields (Adams, 2010). For exploratory qualitative research, applying interviews as a data collection method allows researchers to learn about the world of others and gain a thorough understanding of a research topic in a limited amount of time (Adams, Khan & Raeside, 2014). Focus group interviews are widely used in qualitative research since they are a convenient and time-saving method for both researchers and participants (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013). In focus group interviews, several people are interviewed about a single topic in a flexible and exploratory discussion environment, which may uncover ideas and issues that were not previously noticed (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012).

All interviews of this research were conducted online due to the influence of COVID-19. This research applies structured interviews to collect data in order to gain insights from participants and adjust to online interviews. Firstly, structured interviews can assist both the author and participants in narrowing their focus, ensuring the quality of the conversations (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). Secondly, since an online interview may include unpredictable distractions such as interruptions from family members or email notifications, a structured interview could ensure adequate participation and is easy for participants to follow even if they are interrupted (*ibid*). Thirdly, this research had two parties, leaders and followers, structured interview could help see patterns, differences, and/or similarities in their answers (Rashidi et al., 2014; Segal et al., 2006), which makes it easier to analyse data and answer research questions.

The purpose of this research is to generate a conceptual framework and enhance comprehension regarding the various elements that may influence trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs. The conceptual framework combines trust-influential factors mentioned in the literature and proposed by interview participants to provide a comprehensive view of workplace trust relationships. By examining factors that influence trust from the perspectives of both leaders and followers, this research seeks to contribute to the development of organisational trust theory on a dyadic level. Furthermore, this research aims to offer practical suggestions to SME practitioners on how to foster trust between leaders and followers in the workplace.

1.5 Thesis structure

This thesis is comprised of five chapters. This Introduction Chapter has introduced the research background, research subjects, research gaps, research questions, and research approach of this thesis.

Chapter 2 is divided into six sections and reviews literature on building trust between leaders and followers in SMEs. At the end of each section, a relevant sub-question about this research is proposed. The **first section** discusses one of the key topics of this research, trust. Since trust is dynamic, context-based, and asymmetric in nature, trust research should consider a specific context, and the perspectives of two parties involved in a trust

relationship. It then introduces organisational trust and discusses the impact of individual characteristics on workplace trust relationships. The **second section** discusses the influence of leadership styles and followership styles on trust in the workplace. The **third section** analyses what interactions and exchanges could affect trust relationships in the workplace. The **fourth section** articulates how the external environment and what external factors could affect leader-follower trust relationships. It details the impact of COVID-19 on leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs, as the pandemic had a significant effect on small and medium-sized enterprises. This chapter is **concluded** by presenting a conceptual framework summarised from literature review and reviewing research gaps.

Chapter 3 details the methodology of this research. This chapter explains the choice of critical realism as the philosophical paradigm. A rationale is given for a qualitative approach according to the measurement content of trust, and it details data collection techniques and research designs of individual interviews and focus group. This chapter discusses the choice of sample and sampling skills, and it introduces the approach to data analysis. The challenges and limitations of the research design are discussed at the end of this chapter.

Chapter 4 provides results of the data analysis. The findings chapter is divided into four sections in order to present findings in a logical manner. The **first section** primarily presents findings from a dyadic level of leaders' and followers' perspectives on trust relationship influential factors. The similarities and differences in their perspectives on the same influential factor are summarised and supported by quotes from interviews. The **second section** presents findings from leaders' and followers' perspectives on leadership/followership styles, as well as some externally influencing factors. Since this research is conducted during the COVID-19 outbreak, all participants contributed valuable information to the discussion of COVID-19's impact on leader-follower trust relationships. As a result, the **third section** presents findings concerning COVID-19 and the establishment of remote trust in a virtual environment. The **fourth section** presents findings of participants who have direct subordinate relationships in the interview. All sections start with individual interview quotes, followed by evidence from focus groups.

Finally, Chapter 5 provides the discussion and conclusion of this research. It reviews the conceptual framework and research questions of this research first. The purpose of this chapter is to detail the key contributions of this thesis, and findings in Chapter 4 are discussed in relation to previous literature. The first contribution of this research is the development of a conceptual framework to explain what factors influence leaders and followers trust relationships in SMEs. the second contribution of this research is to develop organisational trust theory on a dyadic level, by examining both leaders and followers' perspectives on leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs. Aside from that, some methodological contribution, and practical implications for SMEs are articulated. Finally, this chapter concludes with limitations and potential future research directions for this research, as well as concluding on research questions.

Chapter 2 Literature Review: Leader-follower trust relationship influential aspects

The purpose of this research is to generate a conceptual framework and enhance comprehension regarding the various elements that may influence trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs. By examining factors that influence trust from the perspectives of both leaders and followers, this research seeks to contribute to the development of organisational trust theory on a dyadic level. Additionally, it aims to offer practical suggestions to SME practitioners on how to foster trust between leaders and followers in the workplace.

The key topic of this research is trust. Section 2.1 reviews the concept of trust, production mechanisms of trust, trust influential factors in the workplace, and dyadic trust. Moreover, since this research aims at investigating trust between leaders and followers, leadership styles and followership styles could affect leader-follower trust relationships (Martinez et al., 2012; Valcea et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2005). Section 2.2 reviews some leadership and followership styles and examines their influence on leader-follower trust relationships. Additionally, long-term relationships, including exchanges and interactions, could bind leaders and followers and improve trust relationships (GaoUrhahn, Biemann, & Jaros, 2016). Section 2.3 reviews some factors related to exchanges and interactions and discusses their impact on leader-follower trust relationships. Finally, changes in the external environment may inevitably lead to changes in internal relationships (Lee et al., 2017). Section 2.4 reviews the influence of external influential factors on leader-follower trust relationships in the workplace.

In this chapter, section 2.1 mainly reviews the key topic of this research, trust. Trust has the potential to simplify organisational practise processes and reduce management costs (Hughes & Saunders, 2021). Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) proposed ability, benevolence, and integrity are antecedents of trust in organisations. However, their conceptualization of trust was criticised as a unidirectional approach to investigating trust, which means it can only explain one party's trust in another party and cannot be used to explain and represent dyadic-level trust (Hughes & Saunders, 2021; Bozer & Jones, 2018).

Trust has been considered a viable proxy for dyadic trust over the last 30 years, as some researchers believe trust is mutual (Spadaro et al., 2020; Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012). Mutual trust, however, is a special type of dyadic trust in which both parties share an equal level of trust in their relationship (Korsgaard, Brower & Lester, 2015; Laeequddin et al., 2010). Each party in a dyadic trust relationship is both a trustor and a trustee at the same time, and both parties can trust and be trusted to achieve beneficial outcomes (Korsgaard, Brower & Lester, 2015). It is critical to investigate trust on a dyadic level rather than assuming trust is always mutual (Bozer & Jones, 2018). Therefore, since this research aims at investigating trust between leaders and followers, both perspectives of leaders and followers towards trust were included to comprehensively understand what factors could affect leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs.

To understand perspectives from both parties, leadership and followership styles are reviewed in section 2.2 in this chapter. Several studies have shown that various leadership styles, such as authentic leadership (Men & Yue, 2019; Wang & Hsieh, 2013), and discussions of the impact of transformational and transactional leadership styles on trust are popular (Purwanto et al., 2020; Kanaz, 2019; Asencio & Mujkic, 2016; Groves & LaRocca, 2011;

Ismail et al., 2010). Both transactional and transformational leadership appear to improve employees' perceptions of trust, as transactional leadership focuses on task completion and reward systems, whereas transformational leadership is more emotion-oriented and emphasises emotional awareness (Purwanto et al., 2020; Pradeep & Prabdu, 2011; Pieterse & Van Knippenberg, 2010). However, there is little work done in SMEs to identify leadership styles (Li et al., 2017; Leitch, McMullan & Harrison, 2009).

Followers who have less power and authority are considered the opposite party of leaders in organisations (Kellerman, 2008). Howell and Costley (2006) stated that leadership and followership roles are equally important in organisations. Previous studies focused more on trust in leaders and leadership, and studies of followership and the influence of followership on trust have received insufficient attention in the workplace, particularly in SMEs (Leung et al., 2018). A positive leader-follower relationship increases trust between leaders and followers (Martinez et al., 2012; Valcea et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2005), and workplace humour is proposed as a factor in the success of leader-follower relationships as it improves cohesion and interaction within organisations (Lampreli, Patsala, & Priporas, 2019). Organisational development requires collaborative efforts from leaders and followers, and the intertwined nature of leaders and followers should not be overlooked (Riggio, 2014).

To investigate what interactions and collaborations could facilitate leader-follower trust relationships, the influence of exchanges and interactions on leader-follower trust is reviewed in Section 2.3. Most reciprocal exchanges, such as mutual respect, emotional support, etc., could assist in the development of trust and the propensity for collaboration in the workplace (Pelaprat & Brown, 2012; Kadefors, 2004). In addition to these exchanges, long-term relationships and interactions, such as workplace friendship, individual reputation, diversity/similarity, etc., could function in leader-follower trust relationships (Loxbo, 2018; Akyüz, 2020; Bhardwaj et al., 2016; Washington, 2013; Kanagaretnam et al., 2010; Farley, 2011). All factors could positively and/or negatively affect leader-follower trust relationships in different research contexts (Akyüz, 2020; Jiang, Hughes, & Pulice-Farrow, 2014). This research aims at investigating what factors could facilitate leader-follower trust in SMEs.

Companies will respond to external changes to survive and grow, and interpersonal relationships will be affected inevitably by some external changes (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Section 2.4 reviews external influential factors of leader-follower trust relationships. This chapter reviews four aspects in order to provide a clear and comprehensive view of what factors could influence leader-follower trust relationships in the workplace. Section 2.5 presents a conceptual framework by combining the four aspects discovered in literature review. At the end of this chapter, Section 2.6 reviews the research gaps and research questions.

2.1 Trust

Overview

Clarifying and comprehending the concept of trust is critical for establishing field boundaries, defining research questions, developing an appropriate research framework, and implementing appropriate measurement for further investigation (Eagly & Chaiken, 2007). Trust is a valuable resource within organisations for fostering positive cooperation and maintaining competitive advantages (Park & Kim, 2012; Kramer & Cook, 2004; Alvarez, Barney & Bosse, 2003). Trust, however, is a complex, multidisciplinary, and dynamic concept, and there is still no consensus on conceptualizations and definitions of trust (PytlíkZillig & Kimbrough, 2016). Therefore, the first section discusses the nature and definition of trust, and it provided a specific angle that the author chose to define trust for this research. Second, since the purpose of this research is to investigate the factors that influence the trust relationships, the trust-building mechanisms are summarised. Third, it reviews organisational trust literature and discusses how individual characteristics may influence trust relationships between leaders and followers. Finally, as awareness of dyadic trust grows, the final section discusses dyadic trust research and the importance of investigating trust on a dyadic level between leaders and followers in the workplace. At the end of this section, a sub-question about the influence of individual characteristics on trust relationships is proposed.

2.1.1 Concept of trust

2.1.1.1 Nature of trust

Quality trust relationships between leaders and followers benefit organisational development (Hasel & Grover, 2017; Park & Kim, 2012). Understanding the nature of trust is the first step in exploring influential factors of the workplace trust relationships (Eagly & Chaiken, 2007; McKnight & Chervany, 2006).

Trust is **dynamic**, which means it is not stable and changes over time, and one party will generally only trust another party in a specific area (Delgado-Márquez, Hurtado-Torres, & Aragón-Correa, 2012). People's attitudes toward others will change as time and environment change (Myers et al., 2013). Due to the dynamic nature of trust, no form of trust could last eternally (McKnight & Chervany, 2006). Accordingly, trust relationships are difficult to establish but easily destroyed by external or internal factors (Bibb & Kourdi, 2004). Environmental influences, policies and regulations, and behavioural constraints are examples of external factors, whereas internal factors include personal trust propensity, psychological influences, capabilities, and willingness (Myers et al., 2013).

Trust is also **context-based**, as Hardin (1993) stated that trust should consist of three parties, which is A trusting B to do X. Hardin (1993) emphasised the importance of discussing trust in a specific situation and area. Without a specific context, studying trust is meaningless (McKnight & Chervany, 2001a), so trust researchers should narrow down the research scenario to avoid general discussion (Park & Kim, 2012). The external influential factor is defined by constraining context, and the trust dynamic could be relatively controlled (ibid).

Trust is **asymmetric**, which means that the trust relationship is one-way (A trusts B does not mean B trusts A), so the investigation of trust issues between two parties should be done separately (Gill et al., 2005). Previous

research has found that mutual trust is uncommon in relationships due to the dynamic nature of trust (Tomlinson, Dineen & Lewicki, 2009). In a relationship, mutual trust indicates that each party has the same level of trust in the other (Korsgaard, Brower & Lester, 2015). As a result, trust asymmetry is common in trust relationships, and studies of trust relationships should consider differences from both parties (Tomlinson, Dineen & Lewicki, 2009).

To summarise, the nature of trust is dynamic, context-based, and mostly asymmetric, making the building of trust relationships time-consuming, situation-specific, and non-mutual. To further clarify the research topic, comparisons of trust definitions in various research fields were provided, and the definition of trust for this research was proposed.

2.1.1.2 Definition of trust

Trust is a multidisciplinary concept, and researchers in social science disciplines such as economics, psychology, sociology, and management science construct trust from a variety of perspectives (Wang et al., 2014; Kramer, 1999). Though researchers attempted to deliver a unified concept of trust, there is no common perspective of trust due to different focuses in different research fields (Costa, Fulmer & Anderson, 2018; Sbaifi & Rowley, 2017).

Psychologists tend to view trust as an individual belief that is determined by individual personalities, and they believe that trust relationships will improve interpersonal interaction and social efficiency (Ford et al., 2014). *Sociologists and political scientists* tend to view trust as a collective asset of social interactions, a product of social institutions, and one of the mechanisms for simplifying complexity in communities (Fukuyama, 1995; Luhmann, 1979). The dominant view of *economists* on trust is that trust is a rational choice made by an “economic man” who is consistently rational, and trust is the result of rational calculation in a risky situation (Nienaber et al., 2015; Boersma, Buckley & Ghauri, 2003; Hosmer, 1995). Table 1 shows brief introductions to definitions from various disciplines and their major contributors.

TABLE 1 DEFINITIONS OF TRUST IN DIFFERENT DISCIPLINES

Psychology	Trust could improve interpersonal interactions and increase social efficiency.
Erikson (1950)	Trust is a healthy personality or a belief towards others benevolence.
Mellinger (1956)	Trust is trustors believe the intention and motivation of trustees have no harmful, and trust what trustees say.
Sabel (1993)	Mutual trust is people in a cooperation relationship believe each party will not apply others weakness to gain interests.
Sociology and political science	Trust is a collective asset of social interactions.

Luhmann (1979)	Trust is one of the mechanisms of simplifying complexity.
Zucker (1986)	Trust is production of social institution and cultural norms, and it is a social phenomenon built on law and ethics.
Fukuyama (1995)	Trust is an expectancy based on behavioural norm, honesty, and cooperation in communities, and it relies on group characteristics and common regulations.
Sztompka (1999)	Trust is a gamble on predicting others' future behaviour.
Economics	Trust is the consequences of rational calculate.
Gambetta (1988)	Trust is a rational decision based on an actor's evaluation of whether another actor or a group of actors will perform a specific action in a particular context.
Hawes, Mast & Swan (1989)	Trust is a positive expectancy of others' motivation under a risky situation.
Inkpen & Curral (1998)	Trust is reliance towards individuals, organizations, partners under a risky situation.

In management science, definition proposed by Mayer and his colleagues in 1995 was frequently accepted and applied (Calhoun et al., 2019; Nikolova, Möllering & Reihlen, 2015; Dietz, 2011). The following is the definition of trust from Mayer and his colleagues:

“The willingness of a party to be vulnerable to the action of another party based on the expectation that the other will perform a particular action important to the trustor, irrespective of the ability to monitor or control that other party.” (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995, p.712)

Though trust has multiple definitions, researchers agreed that people involved in a trust relationship can be divided into two groups: trustors and trustees (Calhoun et al., 2019; Nikolova, Möllering & Reihlen, 2015; Dietz, 2011; Dietz, Gillespie & Chao, 2010; Kramer, 2006; Newell & Swan, 2000). Trustors are people who take action or make decisions based on their trust in another party, whereas trustees are people who are trusted by another party, and both parties can be individuals, groups of people, or organisations (Kramer, 2006).

Mayer and his colleagues' (1995) definition of trust emphasised that trust entails risks and demonstrated that trustors are willing to take risks in a relationship. Nooteboom (2002) agreed that trust involves risks and incomplete information, which means if one party knows everything about the other, trust is unnecessary in their relationships or activities. Furthermore, since trustors only have a partial understanding of trustees' trustworthiness, trustors need decide whether or not to take risks in order to achieve a positive outcome (McEvily, Perrone & Zaheer, 2003). Similarly, Rousseau et al. (1998) stated that two common factors in the definition of trust are vulnerability and positive expectations.

“A psychological state comprising the intention to accept vulnerability based upon positive expectations of the intentions or behaviour of another.” (Rousseau et al., 1998, p.395)

Huang and Fox (2006) summarised three key trust factors: expectancy, belief, and risk-taking willingness, and Figure 1 shows the constituents of trust. According to Huang and Fox’s (2006) definition of trust, trust is a psychological status that consists of three aspects: expectancy indicates trustors expect specific service or action from trustees; belief in expectancy indicates trustors believe the assessment of trustee’s competence and willingness is correct; and willingness to take risks indicates trustors are willing to take risks even if trustees fail them. The definition of trust from Ermisch et al. (2009) also inspires discussion, they defined trust as a subjective assessment from one party to another party based on the expectancy of reliability towards a specific behaviour.

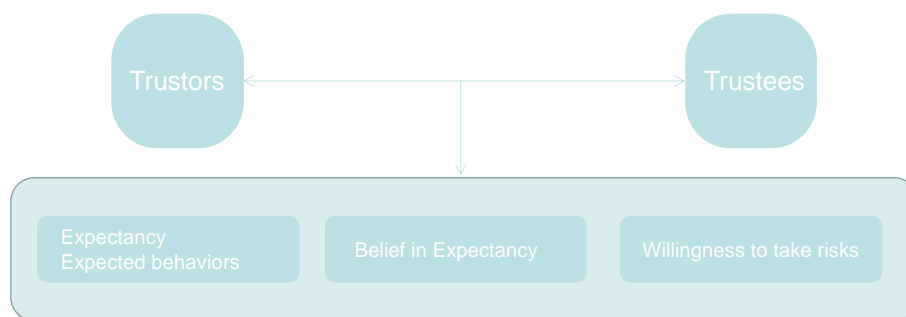


FIGURE 1 CONSTITUENTS OF TRUST (HUANG & FOX, 2006)

In summarising common trust factors from the above definitions, three key elements are frequently mentioned: two parties (trustors and trustees), belief in positive expectations and reciprocity, and willingness to take risks. These three factors could be divided into two types of trust: trust beliefs and trust decisions. Trust beliefs express one’s subjective and confident expectation of positive actions from others, or an assessment of another’s trustworthiness (Dietz & Hartog, 2006). Trust decisions, however, demonstrate one’s willingness or intention to make oneself vulnerable in a relationship (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995; Rousseau et al., 1998), which means trustors believe trustees are trustworthy and are willing to take risks with potentially negative consequences and accept negative outcomes in the future (Tomlinson & Mryer, 2009).

In contrast, McEvily and Tortoriello (2011) argued that trust action is a necessary constituent part of trust. As a result of trust decisions, trust action is associated with specific trust behaviours (Gillespie, 2004). However, Nootboom and Six (2003) argued that trust action cannot be considered a necessary factor in defining trust because trust action is only one possible outcome of trust decisions. Furthermore, one party may take a trust action based on a third party’s guarantee, and no trust decisions or beliefs from one party to another are required in this process (Nootboom & Six, 2003). To summarise the arguments presented in the preceding definitions of trust, trust is defined as a belief (confident and positive expectation of others), a decision (willingness or intention to be vulnerable in a relationship), or/and an action (risk-taking behaviour).

Mayer et al. (1995) defined trust from a psychological viewpoint, focusing on the trustor’s individual mind of positive expectations and willingness to be vulnerable in a trust relationship while ignoring the context (Amoako,

2018). Gambetta (1988) regarded trust as a rational decision from an economical perspective; however, the rational choice approach ignored the influence of individual personalities or moods on trust decisions (Baddeley, 2010). According to Zucker (1986), trust is a social phenomenon based on law that includes a set of expectations shared by all parties involved in an exchange. However, it could be argued that defining trust as a reliance on institutional safeguards and laws ignores the risks involved in trust relationships, trust is not always considered necessary under strict institutional safeguards (Nooteboom & Six, 2003).

In this research, the author considered all the above definitions and defined trust as ***“in a specific context, trust is a set of positive beliefs between two parties in an exchange relationship that people will not fail them though there are risks being exploited.”*** According to this definition, the author believes that trust development is based on a positive belief in the trustworthiness of trustees based on interactions in a specific context. Aside from the individual minds and exchanges of two parties, this definition also recognised that trust is risky and fraught with vulnerability.

The following section introduces trust-building mechanisms in order to understand how trust could be built and different approaches to build trust relationships.

2.1.2 Trust-building mechanisms

There are several approaches to building trust, and investigation into trust-building mechanisms could assist in understanding and exploring how to build trust (Liang, Wu, & Huang, 2019; Möllering & Sydow, 2019). According to previous research, there are two approaches to building trust: rational-based trust and relational-based trust (Moldjord & Iversen, 2015; Gebreyesus & Mohnen, 2013). Table 2 shows different researchers’ classifications of trust-building mechanisms.

TABLE 2 CLASSIFICATION OF TRUST-BUILDING MECHANISMS FROM DIFFERENT RESEARCHERS

Scholars	Rational-based trust	Relational-based trust
Luhmann (1979)	System trust	Personal trust
Zucker (1986)	Institutional-based trust	Process-based trust; Characteristic-based trust
Lewicki & Bunker (1996)	Calculus-based trust; Knowledge-based trust	Identification-based trust
McAllister (1995)	Cognitive-based trust	Affective-based trust
Kramer et al. (1996)	Return-based trust; Complementary trust; Moralised trust; Suggestive trust	

Rousseau et al. (1998)	Deterrence-based trust; Calculus-based trust; Institutional-based trust	Relational-based trust
Arztz & Gil (2007)	Policy-based trust	Reputation-based trust

Trust is initially built based on individual trust propensity and rational assessment of another party's trustworthiness (Lewicki & Bunker, 1996; Kim, Shin & Lee, 2009). Trustees' trustworthiness may be guaranteed by a third party at this stage, or it may be completely evaluated by trustors (ibid). With constant interactions, relational issues have an impact on the development of trust relationships between two parties, since both parties will make future trust decisions (either to maintain or terminate the relationship) by evaluating each other based on previous experiences and exchanges (Gebreyesus & Mohnen, 2013). The rational-based trust-building mechanisms listed in Table 2 is firstly discussed in detail in the following section.

2.1.2.1 Rational-based trust-building mechanisms

Rational-based trust mechanisms assume that trust could be calculated and controlled, which is mostly discussed at the sociological level and implies that trust relationships are important and functional in social interactions (Warren, 2018). Furthermore, economists claimed that Economic Man is rational, and that trust-building is associated with cost savings and efficiencies (Williamson, 1993). Therefore, trust is regarded as a component of a profitable business strategy (Urban, Sultan & Qualls, 2000). There are three types of rational trust: deterrence-based trust, calculus-based trust, and institutional-based trust.

Deterrence-based trust demonstrates that trustors believe trustees will perform as promised because there are sanctions from other parties for the breach of trust, and the penalty outweighs potential benefits if trustees attempt to behave negatively (Ring & Van de Ven, 1992). However, Rousseau et al. (1998) argued that if trustees follow a detailed contract that is easily controlled and supervised, trust is unnecessary in this activity and only limited cooperation occurs. Positive outcomes are predictable under this highly structured and monitored regulation, while negative intentions will be punished (Hough, Jackson & Bradford, 2010). As a result, deterrence-based trust cannot be considered genuine trust since it reduced the risky part of a trust relationship with strict sanctions for any potential negative outcomes, or it can only be considered low trust (Rousseau et al., 1998).

Calculus-based trust is defined as a market-driven, transactional, and economic calculation (Dietz & Hartog, 2006). Two parties in a calculus-based trust relationship constantly assess the benefits and costs of maintaining the relationship (Scandura & Pellegrini, 2008). If one of them believes that the cost of maintaining the relationship outweighs the benefits, their trust relationships will fail (ibid). In this sense, while trustees may recognise that trusting trustees entails risks and may result in short-term profit losses, their trust relationship

may still be maintained as long as trustors' broader interests are not negatively affected and future benefits exceed losses (Rousseau et al., 1998).

According to Zucker (1986), **institution-based trust** is associated with societal institutions and intermediary mechanisms. Institution-based trust could be generated by applying an intermediary mechanism, such as insurance or laws, or it could be created by acquiring a professional credential, membership, or third-party certification from professional associations (Thierer et al., 2015; Bachmann & Inkpen, 2011; Artz & Gil, 2007). In this situation, institution-based trust indicates that, in addition to trustors and trustees, there is a third party in a trust relationship who can provide additional assurance to people (Pavlou, Tan, & Gefen, 2003; Berg, Dickhaut & McCabe, 1995). Both institution-based trust and deterrence-based trust involve a third-party guarantee, however, deterrence-based trust emphasises the penalties and punishments for trust behaviour breaches, whereas institution-based trust emphasises the benefits of a structured system and policies in the trust relationship (Banalieva, Eddleston & Zellweger, 2015).

Desmet, De Cremer and van Dijk (2011) and Gambetta (2000) argued that rational-based trust cannot be considered genuine trust since both trustors and trustees have enough information about each other or there is a third party in the relationship to avoid any potential negative outcomes (Desmet, De Cremer & van Dijk, 2011; Gambetta, 2000). According to Skinner et al (2014), the reason that trust relationships are valuable and difficult to establish is that trust involves risk-taking. When one party decides to trust another, the trustors choose to be vulnerable and accept the consequences of possible betrayal (Thorgren & Wincent, 2011). Trust can only exist when trustors have limited access to information and a different knowledge base than trustees (Smollan, 2013).

However, Goeschl and Jarke (2014) claimed that unconditional blind trust would have negative effects, and each trust activity contains information about the trustees. Although some information is guaranteed or recommended by a third party, trustors still have the authority to decide what information they could trust in their trust relationships (Chang, Cheung & Tang, 2013). Rational-based trust remains a source of trust building, however, it is considered as short-term trust (Warren, 2018). Compared to rational-based trust, relational-based trust is believed to be a long-term trust (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2015; Dietz & Den Hartog, 2006), the following section discusses in detail the relational-based trust-building mechanisms mentioned in Table 2.

2.1.2.2 Relational-based trust-building mechanisms

Zucker (1986) proposed that **process-based trust** is built through repeated and stable interaction and reciprocal exchanges, which is a learning and involvement process for trustors in a relationship. The initial interaction may be purely random (e.g., purchasing a product from an unknown brand), but as the contacts develop, the initial random behaviours may transform into trusted exchanges with reduced or increased uncertainty (Zucker, 1986). Furthermore, as a relational mechanism, process-based trust demonstrates trust is linked to prior exchanges,

and experiences of prior exchanges could be gained directly from the outcomes of exchanges or indirectly through warranties of trust or commitment, etc (Chang & Cheung, 2005; Cases, 2002).

Reciprocal trust, as a process-based trust approach, implies that in a relationship, both parties can be trustors and trustees, emphasising trust as a bidirectional behaviour (Kutsyuruba & Walker, 2015). Reciprocal trust describes the process by which one party's actions can affect the other party's trust or trusting behaviour (Korsgaard Brower, & Lester, 2015). The reason trust is reciprocal is that trustworthy people believe they have an obligation to behave in accordance with the expectations of others, as they may believe they are bound by the trust placed in them and act accordingly (Skinner, Dietz & Weibel, 2014). The awareness of partners' evaluations (perceived trust) influences actors' behaviour as well, which means that if one feels trusted by others or is perceived as a trustworthy person by others, s/he will act accordingly (Yakovleva, Reilly & Werko, 2010). According to Malhotra (2004), if one party engages in exploitation in order to protect themselves from being exploited by another party or focuses solely on personal interests, the other party will not trust in return.

Characteristic-based trust (also known as **identification-based trust**) emerges from social similarity, which includes trustors and trustees having similar backgrounds, ages, genders, or ethnicities (Tyler, 2003). Parties in characteristic-based trust know and have positive expectations of one another because they typically share common values and have a collective identity (Lewicki & Wiethoff, 2000). In other words, in a characteristic-based relationship, trustors have cultural preferences and regard trustees as in-group members (Borum, 2010). Characteristic-based relationships in the workplace promote teamwork and understanding of organisational goals (Pesämaa et al., 2013).

According to Artz and Gil (2007), there are two types of **reputation-based trust**. The first type of reputation-based trust is determined by leader-follower understanding and ongoing interaction, and it is a subjective expectancy from trustors to trustees towards a specific situation that will change based on the outcomes of the previous interaction (Artz & Gil, 2007). The other type of reputation-based trust refers to other' assessments, in which trustors evaluate trustees' trustworthiness based on recommendations or observations from third-party interactions (ibid).

In trust studies, relational trust is considered genuine trust (Dietz & Den Hartog, 2006). Both parties face risks and uncertainty in the relationship, which means trustors should accept the consequences of potential betrayals from trustees, while trustees should accept the consequences of trustors' terminated cooperation (Evans & Krueger, 2016). Furthermore, some researchers agreed that relational-based trust is more dynamic and subjective than rational-based trust, therefore, relational-based trust better reflects the nature of trust (Korsgaard Brower, & Lester, 2015; Chang, Cheung & Tang, 2013; Sharp, 2010). As a result, relational-based trust is cited as the primary reason for developing interpersonal trust, whereas rational-based trust serves as a supplement to trust relationships (Bachmann & Inkpen, 2011). Rational-based trust-building mechanisms play a role in the initial interaction, whereas relational-based trust-building mechanisms promote and facilitate the development of trust relationships (Liu & Tang, 2018; Fang et al., 2014).

In contrast to rational-based trust, Meier et al. (2016) suggested that relational-based trust, particularly process-based trust-building mechanisms, are crucial for establishing trust in interpersonal relationships. Though transactional behaviours or institutional guarantees could help to build trust, interactions and exchanges between two parties have a greater impact and are more efficient in building and maintaining trust over time (Meier et al., 2016). Since both rational and relational approaches could generate trust between two parties, this research considered the functions of both trust-building mechanisms (including transactional behaviours and interactions etc.) in the trust relationships in order to investigate trust-influential factors.

Following an introduction to the concept of trust and trust-building mechanisms, the following section discusses trust in the management research field. The definition of organisational trust as well as studies of vertical trust between leaders and followers was highlighted.

2.1.3 Organisational trust

Trust relationships are comprised of three components: the trustor, the trustee, and the specific context, trust studies in businesses differ from trust studies in society or other contexts (Hardin, 1993). Individuals' attitudes and behaviours in an organisational context could be influenced by their interactions with colleagues, leaders, groups, and the company as a whole (Park & Kim, 2012). The next section discusses the definition of organisational trust.

2.1.3.1 Definition of organisational trust

According to Eisenberger and colleagues (2002), trust is a critical issue within organisations, and it is based on leader-follower support between employees and employers. Inter-organisational trust and intra-organisational trust are two types of organisational trust. Inter-organisational trust includes interpersonal trust and system trust (Fang et al., 2008; Luhmann, 1979). Inter-organisational trust develops between two or more organisations or groups, and studies of inter-organisational trust usually focus on promoting supplier cooperation or improving customer satisfaction (Morgan & Hunt, 1994).

While intra-organisational trust occurs within a company, intra-organisational trust studies include system trust between individuals and the company, vertical trust between leaders and followers, and horizontal trust between co-workers (McKnight & Chervany, 2001b; Farh et al., 1998; Costigan & Berman, 1998). Inter-organisational trust is a macro concept that examines collective trust among different groups, whereas intra-organisational trust is a micro concept that examines trust interpersonally (Dietz & Den Hartog, 2006). This research focuses on interpersonal trust between leaders and followers in companies.

2.1.3.2 Antecedents of organisational trust

There are several studies that investigate antecedents of organisational trust, Table 3 summarises influential factors of trust from relevant literature. Figure 2 summarises the frequency of trust influential factors mentioned in Table 3

TABLE 3 INFLUENTIAL FACTORS OF TRUST SUMMARIZED FROM RELATED LITERATURE

Luhmann (1979)	Historical experience, Degree of familiarity
Cook & Wall (1980)	Trust intention, Ability
Dasgupta (1988)	Reliability, Abide commitment
Bulter (1991)	Validity, Ability, Consistency, Caution, Justice, Honest, Openness, Commitment, Tolerance
Morgan & Hunt (1994)	Common value, Communication, No speculate behaviours
Mayer et al (1995)	Ability, Benevolence, Integrity
Andaleed & Anwar (1996)	Professional abilities, Marketing intentions, Degree of popularity, Related knowledge, Trust propensity
Korczynski (1996)	Social relations, Common trusted third-party, Distribution and process justice
Doney & Cannon (1997)	Scale, Reputation, Marketing orientation, Professional ability, Degree of popularity, Purchasing experience, Familiarity
Holland & Lockett (1997)	Previous experience, Attitudes, Personality, Cultural background, Working characteristics
Schoenbachler & Gordon (2002)	Reputation, Integrity, Purchasing experience, Perception of risks
Dyer & Chu (2003)	Reliability, Justice, Benevolence
Delgado-Ballester (2005)	Satisfactory, Degree of involvement
Gill et al. (2005)	Propensity of trust, Perceived characteristics
Colquitt et al. (2007)	Trust propensity, Ability, Benevolence, Integrity
Gulati & Sytch (2008)	Historical interactions, Organisational similarity, Ability
Lau & Liden (2008)	Experience, Consistency, Ability
Hsiao et al. (2010)	Ability, Third-party Guarantee, Recommendations
Maurer (2010)	Professional knowledge
Filieri et al. (2015)	Source credibility, Information quality, Website quality, Customer satisfaction, Experience

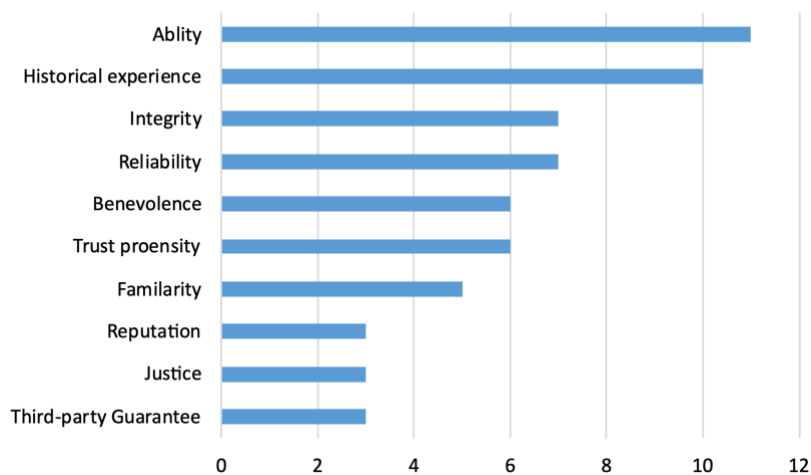


FIGURE 2 FREQUENCY OF TRUST INFLUENTIAL FACTORS MENTIONED IN TABLE 3

Mayer, Davis, and Schoorman (1995) proposed the most widely accepted organisational trust theory (Jawahar, Stone & Kluemper, 2019; Wiley, 2009). They began by distinguishing between trust's consequences and antecedents, which provides a novel angle for researchers to investigate how to build trust and articulate how trust can be established and predicted (Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012). They investigated the antecedents of organisational trust and proposed that ability, benevolence, and integrity (ABI model)¹ could primarily explain one's trustworthiness (Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995).

Integrity, as a necessary characteristic for people to assess the trustworthiness of others, reflects whether people are honest with others and whether people are responsible enough to perform duties (Trevino, Hartman & Brown, 2000). This quality is necessary to demonstrate one's reliability to others in society and other institutions (Connelly et al., 2018). However, in organisations, integrity is not the only indicator of building trust with others in a relationship (ibid). **Ability** is important in the workplace since it allows people to assess the trustworthiness of others and determine whether or not the trustee is capable of completing assigned tasks (Robert, Denis & Hung, 2009). Employees could gain trust from their peers and supervisors by developing professional skills and obtaining qualified certificates, whereas leaders could gain trust from their employees by developing professional knowledge and management abilities (Smollan, 2013). Furthermore, **benevolence** is another influential factor in the trust relationship in companies. People in organisations live in small communities, and they need to work together to achieve system goals by developing social relationships and communicating with one another (Hoy & Tarter, 2004; Williamson, 1995). Benevolence indicates whether a person is willing to help and encourage others despite any ego-centric profit motives (McAllister, 1995).

Additionally, an individual's propensity to trust may influence their perceptions of others' trustworthiness (Kim, Shin & Lee, 2009). Mayer and colleagues (1995) defined trust propensity as a trait-based and individual difference characteristic and found that trust propensity is the most prominent trust influential factor in the early stage of the trust process (Jones & Shah, 2016; Colquitt, Scott & LePine, 2007). In other words, trust

¹ Mayer and his colleagues noted ability, integrity and benevolence is a reflection of intelligence, character (reliability, honesty) and goodwill (favourable intentions towards the listener) from Aristotle's *Rhetoric* of a speakers' ethos (Greek root for ethics).

propensity influences a trustor's perception of a trustee with whom they are unfamiliar or have only recently interacted (Alarcon et al., 2018). People who trust others and believe that others will respond positively to their positive behaviours are more likely to trust others, whereas those who are sceptical of strangers and will take time to trust others in any situation are less likely to trust others (Colquitt, Scott & LePine, 2007).

However, Heyns and Rothmann (2015) and Mayer and Gavin (2005) claimed that trust propensity has little influence on trust decisions or beliefs at work when leaders and followers have already interacted. Even if a person has a higher intention to trust others, that intention could only be activated in impersonal situations and will not influence his/her willingness to trust in a specific context (Mayer & Gavin, 2005). Similarly, Gill et al. (2005) demonstrated that trust propensity influences trustors' behaviours when the trust referent's information is ambiguous or absent, but not when the trust referent's information is clear. Therefore, whether the trustor's intention to trust is generally low or high, trust propensity has no direct influence on an established or specific relationship where the trustees are known (Heyns & Rothmann, 2015).

In contrast, Searle et al. (2011) proposed that trust propensity is a significant influential factor in trust relationships. They investigated whether trust propensity could predict and influence followers' trust in their leaders or organisations regardless of interaction length. Colquitt et al. (2007) agreed that trust propensity has an independent influence on trust relationships and proposed that trust propensity could predict trustors' behaviour outcomes without taking trustees' trustworthiness into consideration (ability, benevolence, and integrity). However, the research on how trust propensity affects trust has not yet produced any conclusive results (Jessup et al., 2019; Alarcon et al., 2018). Mayer and his colleagues' (1995) influential factors of interpersonal trust are depicted in Figure 3.

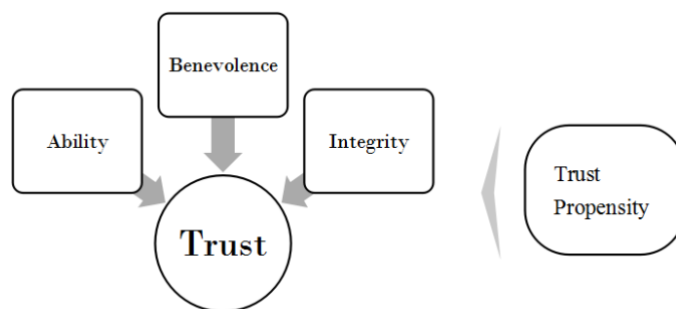


FIGURE 3 ORGANISATIONAL TRUST THEORY, ABI MODEL (MAYER, DAVIS & SCHOORMAN, 1995)

Mayer and his colleagues' ABI model has been accepted and tested by a large number of researchers from various countries and industries, and it has contributed to organisational behaviour theory and leadership theory (Jessup et al., 2019; Klein et al., 2019; Heyns & Rothmann, 2015; Tan & Lim, 2009; Robert, Denis & Hung, 2009; Colquitt, Scott & LePine, 2007). It investigated the origins of trust in interpersonal relationships within organisations by highlighting the significance of ability, benevolence, and integrity in the workplace (Colquitt, Scott & LePine, 2007). According to this theory, no matter what people's positions in companies are, these three characteristics will influence their assessment of others' trustworthiness (Cook & Beckman, 2006). However, since the ABI model is unidirectional, it cannot be used at the dyadic level (Hughes & Saunders, 2021; Ikonen,

2013; Schoorman, Mayer & Davis, 2007). Therefore, the ABI model has limitations in investigating trust antecedents at the dyadic level, and how to build dyadic trust relationships and develop the model require further investigation (Mayer & Davis, 2007).

Korsgaard et al. (2014) stated trust is not always mutual, implying that trust relationships are not unidirectional, and studies of leader-follower trust relationships require perspectives from both leaders and followers. The section that follows reviews limitations of investigating trust in a unidirectional approach.

2.1.3.3 Limitations of investigation trust in a unidirectional manner

Interpersonal trust has been considered a viable proxy for dyadic trust over the last 30 years, as some researchers believe trust is mutual (Spadaro et al., 2020; Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012; Lewicki, Tomlinson & Gillespie, 2006). Mutual trust, however, is a special type of dyadic trust in which both parties share an equal level of trust in their relationship (Laequddin et al., 2010). Korsgaard, Brower and Lester (2014) have found that trust may not be mutual in most contexts, and that the positive effects and beneficial outcomes of trust may be neutralised if one party trusts another, but the other party does not trust in return (Brower et al., 2009).

Previous research has identified trustees' trustworthiness and trustors' propensity to trust as antecedents of trust between entities (individuals, groups, or organisations) (Winnie, 2014; Bicchieri, Xiao & Muldoon, 2011). Knoll and Gill (2011), however, argue that trust has a dynamic nature and that it will be improved or decreased during interactions between two parties. In a quality relationship, interactions between two parties increase trust, even if individual trustworthiness and trust propensity do not change (Park & Kim, 2012; Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012).

Furthermore, in trust relationships, trustors and trustees may have different requirements of each other, and influential trust factors differ between trustors and trustees (Jones & Shah, 2016). For example, studies have found that the contributions of ability, benevolence, and integrity to the trust relationships vary depending on the stage of the relationship (Mayer, Davis, & Schoorman, 1995), context (Serva & Fuller, 2004), or job types (Colquitt, Scott & LePine, 2007).

Most studies in the field of trust research concentrate on followers' trust in leaders rather than leaders' trust in followers (Hasel & Grover, 2017; Den Hartog, 2018; Bjugstad et al., 2006; McKnight & Chervany, 2006; Uhl-Bien, 2006). However, due to an asymmetry of power or/and information in the workplace between leaders and followers, leaders and followers may have different considerations before trusting each other (Snizek & Van Swol, 2001). As a result, trust is not always equally strong for both parties in a relationship, and investigating trust in a unidirectional manner may lead to theoretical deficiency and limit its practical contributions in business practises (Gillespie, Fulmer & Lewicki, 2021; Nienaber, Hofeditz & Searle, 2014). Therefore, trust studies between leaders and followers should consider both parties' perspectives in order to provide a comprehensive

picture of leader-follower trust relationships. The following section introduces the definition and types of dyadic trust in order to understand and investigate dyadic trust between leaders and followers.

2.1.4 Studies of dyadic trust in the workplace

2.1.4.1 Definition and types of dyadic trust

Dyadic trust is a bidirectional pattern of trust between two parties that can be influenced by individual characteristics, relational, and contextual factors (Nienaber et al., 2015; Korsgaard, Brower & Lester, 2015; Kozlowski & Klein, 2000). Each party in a dyadic trust relationship is both a trustor and a trustee at the same time, and both parties can trust and be trusted to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes (Korsgaard, Brower & Lester, 2015).

The development of dyadic trust suggested that trust would evolve through mutually satisfying interactions, and that confidence in the relationship would increase as positive outcomes continued (Scanzoni, 1979). Similarly, Mayer's (1995) model proposed that a bidirectional process is similar to a feedback loop, indicating that positive outcomes will reinforce trust, thereby incrementally strengthening and maintaining the trust relationship between two parties. If negative outcomes occur, trustees' ability, benevolence, and integrity will be re-evaluated, resulting in a lower level of trust (Tomlinson & Mryer, 2009).

Dyadic trust is not simply mutual trust, it is a bidirectional pattern of trust that takes both parties in a trust relationship into consideration. (Nienaber et al., 2015). **Trust congruence** is a bidirectional *indicator* of how much two people trust each other, and it ranges from completely incongruent (asymmetric, meaning one side has high trust in the other side while the other side has low or moderate trust in return) to completely congruent (symmetric, meaning both sides in a relationship share a similar level of trust in each other, either low, moderate, or high) (Tomlinson, Dineen & Lewicki, 2009).

Figure 4 proposed by Tomlinson et al. (2009) depicts trust congruence based on a combination of different levels of trust (it should be noted that, while the figure depicts trust with levels of low, moderate, and high, the actual level of trust of each party is continuous).

High	(1) High incongruence	(2) Moderate incongruence	(3) Congruence: High trust
Moderate	(4) Moderate incongruence	(5) Congruence: Moderate trust	(6) Moderate incongruence
Low	(7) Congruence: Low trust	(8) Moderate incongruence	(9) High incongruence
A's trust in B B's trust in A	Low	Moderate	High

Note: Shaded cells represent high trust congruence; unshaded cells represent lower trust congruence (i.e. greater asymmetry)

FIGURE 4 TRUST CONGRUENCE (TOMLINSON, DINEEN & LEWICKI, 2009)

Mutual trust is a type of congruent trust. The feature of mutual trust is that each party in a relationship has the same level of trust, which ranges from mutually high to mutually low (Bliese, Chan & Ployhart, 2007). Mutual trust studies typically focus on the causes and consequences of mutual trust levels rather than determining the degree of trust each party shares in the relationship (Kim, Wang & Chen, 2018). However, most trust studies reduce mutual trust to interpersonal trust, and trust was evaluated by only one party (Hughes & Saunders, 2021; Jawahar, Stone & Kluemper, 2019; Nienaber et al., 2015; Luo, 2002; Powell & Heriot, 2000). These studies assumed that trust is always mutual in relationships (Korsgaard, Brower & Lester, 2015).

However, due to the dynamic nature of trust, an equivalent level of trust cannot be easily attained, and dyadic trust can change over time and be influenced by a variety of factors (Tomlinson & Mryer, 2009). Furthermore, empirical evidence suggests that mutual trust is uncommon, implying that mutual trust may not be a reliable proxy for interpersonal or dyadic trust (Bstieler, Hemmert & Barczak, 2017). Each party may not consistently share the same level of trust, and incongruent trust is more common in trust relationships (Tomlinson, Dineen & Lewicki, 2009).

There are various levels of incongruent trust, as opposed to congruent trust (Serva, Fuller & Mayer, 2005). Incongruent trust is classified into two types: reciprocal trust and asymmetric trust. **Reciprocal trust** denotes the process by which one party's actions can affect the other party's trust or trusting behaviours, and the level of trust between two parties does not have to be equal (Korsgaard, Brower & Lester, 2015). People believe they have an obligation to behave in accordance with the expectations of others, and they believe they should help those who help them (Roy, Singhal & Srivastava, 2017; Gouldner, 1960; Deutsch, 1958). Perceived trust

influences actor behaviours as well, which means that if an actor believes he or she is trusted by others or is perceived as trustworthy by others, he or she will act accordingly (Yakovleva, Reilly & Werko, 2010).

Studies of reciprocal trust concentrate on personal trust in dyadic relationships where each partner serves as both a trustee and a trustor (Ma, Schaubroeck & LeBlanc, 2019). The reciprocal approach to studying dyadic trust concentrates on the impact of interactions (cooperative activities, negotiation process, etc.) on trusting behaviours (Mishra & Mishra, 1994). Though the reciprocal approach to dyadic trust is on an individual level, it differs from traditional unidirectional trust studies (Serva, Fuller & Mayer, 2005). Reciprocal trust is bidirectional, and it is viewed as a process involving interactions and cooperation between both parties in the relationship rather than a static phenomenon (Yakovleva, Reilly & Werko, 2010). Trust, however, is not always returned (Dass & Kumar, 2011). According to Pillutla et al. (2003), trustors will not trust trustees unless they can benefit from them. Similarly, Malhotra (2004) stated if one party engages in exploitative behaviour in order to protect themselves from being exploited by another party or focuses solely on personal interests, the other party will not trust in return.

Asymmetric trust varies in direction and degree, which means that in a relationship, two parties have different levels of trust in each other (Tomlinson, Dineen & Lewicki, 2009). When people in a relationship have different characteristics, positions, values, or backgrounds that are relevant to the production of trust, trust becomes asymmetric (Johnsen & Ford, 2008). For example, Stoel and Muhanna (2012) and Graebner (2009) have discovered that power asymmetry can lead to trust asymmetry in organisations. As a result, asymmetry trust is critical when investigating two parties with different roles, such as leaders and followers (Korsgaard, Brower & Lester, 2015).

According to research on trust asymmetry, it is disruptive in trust relationships (Liu, 2018). Tomlinson et al. (2009) and Call and Korsgaard (2013) proposed an asymmetric trust relationship is unstable and leads to negative emotions or behaviours such as disappointment and anger in people who do not feel trusted in the relationship. Even low levels of mutual trust can benefit a relationship since people in mutual trust relationships prefer to share information and their behaviours are more predictable (Tomlinson, Dineen & Lewicki, 2009).

Though trust asymmetry has received the least attention due to its disruptive outcomes, it is important to note when studying trust in a dyadic relationship (Korsgaard, Brower & Lester, 2015). Without considering the effect of trust asymmetry or assuming trust is always mutual, the benefits of trust on dyadic outcomes may be diminished (Graebner, Lumineau & Fudge Kamal, 2020). For example, if trust is measured on a 5-point scale, the average level of trust between two people is 3. This result could indicate a high level of mutual trust or a high level of asymmetric trust (the rate for each party is between 1 and 5) (Yagoda & Gillan, 2012). The outcomes of each phenomenon are significantly different, as a moderate level of mutual trust may result in positive effects, whereas in the second situation, the outcome may experience failure of trustors' or trustees' expectations (Farrukh, Kalimuthuan & Farrukh, 2019; Tomlinson, Dineen & Lewicki, 2009).

To sum up, there are two types of dyadic trust based on the trust levels of the two parties in a relationship: congruent trust and incongruent trust (Tomlinson, Dineen & Lewicki, 2009). Mutual trust is a form of congruent trust, whereas asymmetric trust and reciprocal trust are forms of incongruent trust (*ibid*). It is critical to investigate trust on a dyadic level rather than assuming trust is always mutual, in order to thoroughly understand their trust relationships (Bozer & Jones, 2018). The following section discusses the practical and theoretical significance of dyadic trust in organisations.

2.1.4.2 Significance of investigating trust between leaders and followers on a dyadic level

Leaders and followers have role differentiation and power discrepancies, which may result in various levels of trust and impact their interactions (Gelens et al., 2013; Cook, Hardin & Levi, 2005). In organisations, leaders and followers have different primary concerns when it comes to leader-follower behaviours (Werbel & Henriques, 2009). Leaders are responsible for developing and establishing company goals, whereas most followers are concerned with individual development or the distribution of rewards and resources (*ibid*).

Werbel and Henriques (2009) proposed leaders and followers have different concerns when assessing each other's trustworthiness. Leaders rely on followers' receptivity and availability, while followers perceive availability and competence as indicators of leaders' trustworthiness (Werbel & Henriques, 2009). As a result, their findings imply that leaders and followers have different trustworthiness requirements, which may result in different levels of trust.

There are several practical advantages to developing dyadic trust in business. For example, when leaders trust and are trusted by their followers, followers are less likely to blame their leaders, even if their leaders deliver negative outcomes to their followers (Tomlinson & Mryer, 2009). Followers also develop internal attributions for these negative outcomes and remain motivated to improve organisational performance alongside their leaders (*ibid*). Moreover, business practitioners could build a quality relationship with workers and a trust culture in the workplace by understanding the different signals of trustworthiness indicated by leaders and followers (Gajda, 2020). Employees could also be empowered by their leaders and approach personal development in their career by understanding the different signals of trustworthiness indicated by leaders and followers (*ibid*).

Being aware of the dyadic feature of trust and exploring antecedents or outcomes of dyadic trust can not only build a deep understanding of trust relationships, but also develop and enrich trust theory (Lussier, Grégoire, & Vachon, 2017). Since most studies in the field of trust research focus on followers' trust in leaders rather than leaders' trust in followers (Den Hartog, 2018; Hasel & Grover, 2017; Den Hartog, 2018; Bjugstad et al., 2006), this research aims to fill a research gap by investigating trust relationship influential factors from both leaders' and followers' perspectives.

To sum up, trust is a dynamic, context-based, and mostly asymmetric concept, and trust has the potential to simplify organisational practise processes and reduce management costs. In organisations, a person's ability, benevolence, and integrity will affect how trustworthy they are perceived by others. Although many factors could influence one's trustworthiness, these three antecedents (ABI: ability, benevolence, integrity) explained up to 80% of the decision to trust (Jawahar, Stone & Kluemper, 2019; Wiley, 2009). However, this conceptualization of trust is individual and unidirectional, which means it can only explain one party's trust in another party and cannot be used to explain and represent dyadic-level trust (Hughes & Saunders, 2021; Bozer & Jones, 2018). This research aims to investigate trust between leaders and followers on a dyadic level in order to comprehend what characteristics-related factors could affect leader-follower trust relationships. In addition to the two main questions mentioned in the introduction, the first sub-question is:

Sub-question one: What individual characteristics will facilitate trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs?

Focusing on dyadic leader-follower relationships, leadership styles may influence trust building in organisations as well. Yu and Cui (2019) proposed empowering behaviours can be interpreted as leaders' trust in their employees. Furthermore, research indicates that followers' behaviours could influence leadership styles (Keskes, 2014; Giltinane, 2013), and followership styles could influence trust relationships as well (Shahzadi et al., 2017; Hernandez, Long & Sitkin, 2014). According to Yin and colleagues (2017), proactive followers could gain more trust from their leaders and are more willing to communicate with and trust their leaders at work. The following chapter defines leadership and followership and discusses leader-follower relationships in depth.

2.2 Leader-follower relationship

Overview

This research aims to investigate the trust relationship between leaders and followers. Understanding why followers follow their leaders and how leaders can earn respect and trust from their followers is important. Trustors and trustees are leaders and followers in this research field, and both parties may be trustors and trustees in organisations. This chapter first introduces transformational leadership and transactional leadership in order to assess the advantages and disadvantages of these leadership styles. Second, it defines followership and explain why people follow their leaders. Third, it explains the traditional role of leadership and the power of followership, as well as the development of the leader-follower relationship. At the end of this section, a sub-question about the influence of leadership/followership styles on trust relationships is proposed.

2.2.1 Leadership

2.2.1.1 The influence of leadership styles on trust

Leadership is defined as the ability of leaders to motivate and influence followers to achieve specific goals and visions (Amanchukwu, Stanley & Oloolube, 2015; Giltinane, 2013). Effective leadership could motivate and influence followers to work in the right direction, build trust with colleagues, and facilitate organisational development (Leicht, de Moura & Crisp, 2014).

Several studies have shown that various leadership styles, such as authentic leadership (Men & Yue, 2019; Wang & Hsieh, 2013), servant leadership (Thelen & Yue, 2021; Thelen, 2020), transformational leadership (Braun et al., 2013), transactional leadership (Jensen et al., 2019), and empowering leadership (Wibowo & Hayati, 2019), could contribute to the development of trust between leaders and followers in the workplace.

For authentic leadership, to generate trust among followers, leaders are suggested to share transparent communication, develop accountability, and generate substantial information (Men & Yue, 2019; Men, 2014). Hsieh and Wang (2015) demonstrated that authentic leader behaviour has a positive influence on employee behaviour, encouraging employees to express their concerns and build bonds with followers. For servant leadership, leaders tend to develop and help others with altruistic behaviours, which facilitates leader-follower relationships and contributes to trust building (Thelen, 2020). For empowering leadership, leaders would empower followers and leave them to complete tasks independently without much supervision or control, and empowering leaders has a positive influence on followers' learning behaviours and leader-follower trust (Wibowo & Hayati, 2019).

Although various leadership styles could contribute to leader-follower trust relationships, discussions of the impact of transformational and transactional leadership styles on trust are popular (Purwanto et al., 2020; Kanaz, 2019; Asencio & Mujkic, 2016; Groves & LaRocca, 2011; Ismail et al., 2010). Bass and Avolio (1994) proposed the transformational leadership model, which described the advantages of empowering followers to complete shared projects. Transformational leaders communicate with their followers on an emotional level, and transformational leaders receive higher levels of satisfaction from their followers (Braun et al., 2013; Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Transformational leadership is frequently discussed with transactional leadership (Jensen et al., 2019; Franco & Matos, 2015; Sakiru et al., 2013; Arham, Boucher & Muenjohn, 2013). Transactional leadership is fundamentally based on rewards and punishment (Bass et al., 2003).

Both transactional and transformational leadership appear to improve employees' perceptions of trust (Purwanto et al., 2020; Nanjundeswaraswamy, & Swamy, 2015). Transformational leadership influences trust through procedural fairness and the development of emotional connections, whereas transactional leadership influences trust through distributive fairness and the commitment of leaders (Chiang & Wang, 2012). Other leadership styles may also influence trust perception, and most leaders apply a hybrid leadership style in practice (Mekpor & Dartey-Baah, 2017; Arham, Boucher & Muenjohn, 2013). According to Daibes (2016) and Gottfridsson (2013), if an organization's goal is task-oriented, leadership appears to care more about the choice of direction rather than individual emotions; if an organization's goal is socio-emotional, leadership appears to motivate and empower employees.

There is little work done in SMEs to identify leadership styles (Li et al., 2017; Leitch, McMullan & Harrison, 2009). SMEs now play a significant role in economic development in most countries, and some of them have global positions, therefore, it is critical to understand how leaders face challenges and manage teams in a SME context (Avolio et al., 2003). Since managerial responsibilities and structures in SMEs differ from those in larger corporates, leadership development in SMEs should be redefined (Lindgren, 2012; Stewart, 2009). The working environment of SMEs is more casual than that of corporations, and leadership development tends to be informal and practical (Li et al., 2017; Nguyen & Umemoto, 2009).

In a qualitative study of Portuguese SMEs, Franco and Matos (2015) discovered that transformational leadership is the most beneficial leadership style in the SME context, as transformational leadership explicitly facilitates followers' intrinsic motivation, which is useful in developing organisational performance in SMEs. When individuals feel supported and achieve their personal development goals, trust between transformer leaders and employees grows (Dewettinck & Van Ameijde, 2011). However, Ensley and colleagues (2006) proposed that transformational leadership is appropriate for companies in a dynamic environment, whereas transformational leadership is not appropriate for management in a context with little dynamism.

Employees are extrinsically motivated by committed rewards or promotion under transactional leadership, as a result, they are willing to work beyond their responsibilities (Franco & Matos, 2015). Employees will trust their leaders if they keep their promises and are fair to all employees (Bligh, 2017). Furthermore, when compared to

transformational leadership, transactional leadership is more closely associated with employee satisfaction and extra efforts (Obiwuru et al., 2011).

Summing up, both transactional leadership style and transformational leadership style could contribute to leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs, and the discussion and investigation about the effectiveness of transactional and transformational leadership are popular in SMEs studies (Bligh, 2017; Franco & Matos, 2015; Ruslan, Rosli & Hussin, 2013; Leitch, McMullan & Harrison, 2009). Although other leadership styles may contribute to leader-follower trust relationships (Men & Yue, 2019, Wang & Hsieh, 2013), this research chose the two most common ones, transformational leadership style and transactional leadership style, to discuss their impact on leader-follower trust relationships. The following section firstly introduces and evaluates transformational leadership.

2.2.1.2 Transformational leadership

Transformational leadership was first discussed by James MacGregor Burns (1978, 1998), and it is a popular concept in the field of leadership research (Lee, 2014). Bass and Avolio (Bass, 1985; Bass & Avolio, 1990) developed a formal concept of transformational leadership based on his definition. Transformational leadership occurs when leaders motivate employees' interests and employees are willing to regard organisational mission as their own mission and group interests as their personal interests, according to Bass and Avolio (1990). In this case, transformational leadership can be considered as an approach of increasing employee commitment in organisations (Yukl, 1998). The advantages of implementing transformational leadership include increased follower performance and commitment to organisations (Amanchukwu, Stanley & Ololube, 2015; Braun et al., 2013).

Transformational leaders are viewed as proactive individuals who make efforts to develop not only the organisation but also the group and individuals, achieving both high levels of performance and high moral and ethical standards (Franco & Matos, 2015). As a result, transformational leaders transform followers' values to support organisational goals by cultivating a climate of trust between leaders and followers (Bass, 1985). Avolio and colleagues (1991) identified four primary transformational leadership behaviours: idealised influence (or charismatic influence), inspirational motivation, intellectual stimulation, and individualised consideration.

Idealised influence

Idealised influence, also known as charismatic influence, indicates that transformational leaders are admired and respected by their followers due to their strong personal charisma (Avolio & Bass, 2001; Kelly, 1998). Consequently, followers have a high level of trust in such leaders and would rather devote themselves to work (Jung & Avolio, 2000; Bass & Avolio, 1990). Idealised leadership influence also includes integrity in the form of ethical and moral behaviour (Tracey & Hinkin, 1998).

Inspirational motivation

Transformational leaders inspire and motivate their followers by providing meaningful, challenging, and achievable work (Bass et al., 2003). Organizations will foster team spirit by understanding and valuing each team member, and relationships between followers and leaders will be fostered through constant and interactive communication (Burns, 1998). Leaders will understand their followers' expectations and demonstrate their commitment through this team building process, allowing them to share common goals and a shared vision (Stone, Russell & Patterson, 2004).

Intellectual stimulation

Transformational leaders foster problem-awareness abilities of their followers and stimulate their followers to solve problems innovatively, creatively by proposing questions, assumptions, and approaches to change the current situation to a new way (Avolio & Bass, 2001). Followers are allowed to make mistakes, and they will not be criticised publicly (Burns, 1998). Transformational leaders engage each follower in the problem-solving process by soliciting their followers' ideas and creative solutions to problems (Bass & Avolio, 1990).

Individualised Consideration

Individualised consideration, according to Bass (1985), is defined as leaders who provide socio-emotional support to followers and develop followers to their highest potential and empowerment. In other words, transformational leaders pay attention to each individual in order for him or her to develop, and leaders may assist followers in self-actualization through coaching and counselling, as well as maintaining frequent contact with their followers (Stone, Russell & Patterson, 2004).

As transformational leaders focus on motivating and engaging followers in organisations, it is considered as more efficient way to manage people (Pieterse & Van Knippenberg, 2010). However, transformational leadership is not always effective, as Odumeru and Ogbonna (2013) stated that, in task-oriented industries, such like manufacturing industry, transactional leaders are more effective. Since transactional leadership is based on reward exchanges and work completion, the conduct process is much easier to monitor and supervise (Pradeep & Prabdu, 2011).

Transformational leadership is usually discussed with transactional leadership. Transformational leadership focuses on engagement, and it has been suggested to enhance organisational innovation through intellectual stimulation and by encouraging openness among organisational members (Vera & Crossan, 2004). Transformational leaders engage their employees into decision-making process and other management stages, and they would like to empower employees in the workplace (Avolio & Bass, 2001). Whereas transactional leadership focuses on the exchange of rewards and benefits for followers when they fulfil the leaders' requests (Bass & Avolio, 1990). During transactional process, followers' needs can be noticed, and both leaders and followers benefit from exchanges (Daft, 2002). Therefore, transactional leadership places a greater emphasis on task completion and relies on regulation or punishment to maintain fair and effective exchanges (Simola, Barling & Turner, 2010). The following section introduces and elaborates transactional leadership.

2.2.1.3 Transactional leadership

Transactional leadership is the other major leadership style identified by the literature, and it is more often leads to mission accomplishments than other leadership styles (Bozer & Jones, 2018; Amanchukwu, Stanley & Ololube, 2015; Keskes, 2014; Bass & Bass 2008; Bass & Avolio 2004). Burns (1978) described transactional leaders as people who aims to “get things done”, and the foundation of transactions is typically based on satisfying both leaders and followers self-interests and economic exchanges. Transactional leaders aim to create clear structures and roles to achieve organisational goals, and they perform works with followers through understanding of tasks and mutual agreements of expected rewards (Moriano et al. 2014; Bass & Avolio, 1997). As a result, followers who demonstrate good performance will be rewarded, while followers who fail will be penalised (Bass et al., 2003).

Transactional leadership has two dimensions: contingent reward, management-by-exception (Judge & Piccolo, 2004). A contingent reward system is a motivational system that describes and clarifies leaders’ expectations and establishes corresponding rewards for followers who meet these expectations (Zaech & Baldegger, 2017). The second dimension of transactional leadership is management-by-exception, which means that leaders will intervene and correct followers’ behaviours when things are not expected (Willis, Clarke & O’Connor, 2017). Management-by-exception is classified into two types: active and passive. The primary distinction between active and passive management-by-exception is the timing of the leader’s intervention (Howell & Avolio, 1993). Active leaders supervise and monitor their followers’ behaviour and correct them before serious problems arise, whereas passive leaders wait until their followers cause problems (Northouse, 2004).

Different from transformational leaders who care employees’ emotional situations, transactional leaders prioritise performances and outcomes (Giltinane, 2013). Transformational leaders engage followers not only to achieve organisational goals, but also encourage and empower them to be leaders themselves (Bass, 1985). Whereas transactional leaders exchange contracted awards with followers to expect positive outcomes and desired behaviours, and they rarely empower followers in the workplace (ibid). According to behaviourists’ ‘rational person’ assumption, employees are largely motivated by money and simple rewards (Tavanti, 2008). Employees will behave as expected when they receive contracted rewards (ibid). However, in practice, ignorance of employees’ emotional factors and social values could result in increase of turn-over rate or issues of mental health (Nadeak et al., 2019).

Bjugstad et al. (2006) did an empirical study and argued that transactional leadership does not influence employees trust in their leaders, as transactions are according to mutual agreements of rules and regulations. There are few risks in their relationships as long as leaders keep their commitments and followers complete their tasks (Bjugstad et al., 2006). While Dai et al. (2013) found that transactional leadership could either positively or negatively influence the trust relationship between followers and leaders. Wherein, distributive justice plays a significant role in trust relationships and transactional leadership (Dai et al., 2013; Krafft,

Engelbrecht & Theron, 2004; Elenkov, 2002), and transactional leadership is positively related to job security and followers' creativity in the workplace (Ma & Jiang, 2018).

To sum up, transactional leadership focuses on task completion and reward systems, whereas transformational leadership is more emotion-oriented and emphasises emotional awareness. Both transactional and transformational leadership have advantages and disadvantages, in certain contexts, both leadership styles could contribute to organisational trust (Dartey-Baah, 2015). In this research, the author selects transactional leadership and transformational leadership as two popular examples to investigate which leadership style could gain trust from leaders. In the meantime, the author will also investigate if there are other leadership styles could facilitate trust relationships. After the introduction of leadership styles, the following section defines followership styles.

2.2.2 Followership

2.2.2.1 Concept of followership

Followers who have less power and authority are considered as the opposite party of leaders in organisations (Kellerman, 2008). Since 1980s, the term "follower" is deemed synonym of "subordinates" (Hersey & Blanchard, 1982), and followers can also be identified as collaborators, participants, team members or partners (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Therefore, the term "follower" is frequently defined in relation to hierarchy.

There is no explicit concept or definition of followership yet, and followership is usually studied as a complementary factor in leadership studies (Uhl-Bien et al., 2014). The definition of followership is influenced by the definition of leadership, it is considered as the opposite of leadership in a leadership-followership continuum, or a noun which indicates a group of people influenced by leaders' activities, or roles in follower-leader relationships (Crossman & Crossman, 2011).

To differentiate leadership from followership, Kelley (1988) stated that leaders are those who desire to lead, have visions to set organisational goals, and are able to achieve consensus with diverse groups or individuals. While followers are individuals who desire to work in a team to achieve a common goal, have the ability to balance personal and cooperative goals, and could collaborate with others (Kelley, 1988). Likewise, Bjugstad et al. (2006) defined followership as a group of people who could effectively support a leader in order to maximise organisational performance.

A hierarchical approach to defining followership is common, however, Agho (2009) argued that followership is an inevitable process for leadership, implying that an effective leader should first learn how to be an effective follower. Howell and Costley (2006) stated leadership and followership roles are equally important in organisations. As a result, followers cannot be regarded as passive recipients of leaders' requirements and commands (Stech, 2008).

The concepts of followership and leadership are closely related, and the majority of their contents are considered interchangeable (Blanchard et al., 2009). The greatest significant distinctions between leadership and followership are hierarchical levels and the proportion of time spent leading (ibid). Accordingly, Crossman and Crossman (2011) defined followership as a relational role capable of influencing and being influenced by leaders in order to facilitate the achievement of organisational goals, which includes both hierarchical and relational influential factors.

Followers who are able to facilitate leaders to achieve organisational goals are considered as effective followers, and, effective followers are self-managing, committed to organisational principles, capable of carrying out assigned tasks, and positive and credible (Riggio, 2014; Schindler, 2014). Additionally, effective followership can also assist in the growth of leadership by suggesting ideas for how to manage businesses and providing appropriate feedback on leaders' behaviour (ibid). Furthermore, because most leaders are also followers in some larger companies, they must understand how to act effectively in both leadership and followership roles (Blanchard et al., 2009). Therefore, Yung and Tsai (2013) proposed that followership and leadership can be influenced interactively, and studies of followership could provide a new perspective on understanding followers' behaviours while also facilitating leadership research. There are different styles of leadership, similarly, there are various of followership as well (Chaleff, 2009). The following section discusses different types of followership.

2.2.2.2 Styles of followership

There are several typologies of followership styles, for instance, Chaleff (2009) classified followers as implementer, partner, resource, and individualist; Kellerman (2008) classified followers as isolates, bystanders, participants, activists, and diehard. A systematic review from Khan, Busati and Abdullah (2019) illustrated that Chaleff's model focuses on workplace followers in large companies, while Kellerman's model is theoretical and philosophical, aiming to explain followership in a political context rather than an organisational context. Therefore, Kelley's followership categorization from 1992 is the most widely used in followership studies (Khan, Busari & Abdullah, 2019; Essa & Alattari, 2019; Leung et al., 2018; Uhl-Bien et al, 2014; Bligh, 2011).

Kelley's followership model was framed according to two dimensions: independent critical thinking and active engagement (Kelley, 1992). The first dimension, independent critical thinking, refers to followers who could provide constructive suggestions and do not follow blindly (ibid). Followers who have independent critical thinking ability is productive, creative and enthusiastic to propose valuable suggestions for leaders and organisations in difficult situations (Leung et al., 2018; Kelley, 2008). The second dimension, active engagement, refers to followers who are willing to participant in daily management activities (Kelley, 1992). Followers who actively participant in decision making and take the initiative to work on programmes are beneficial to the development of organisation and team (Uhl-Bien et al, 2014; Bligh, 2011). Figure 5 depicts five types of organisational followership based on these two dimensions (Kelley, 1992).

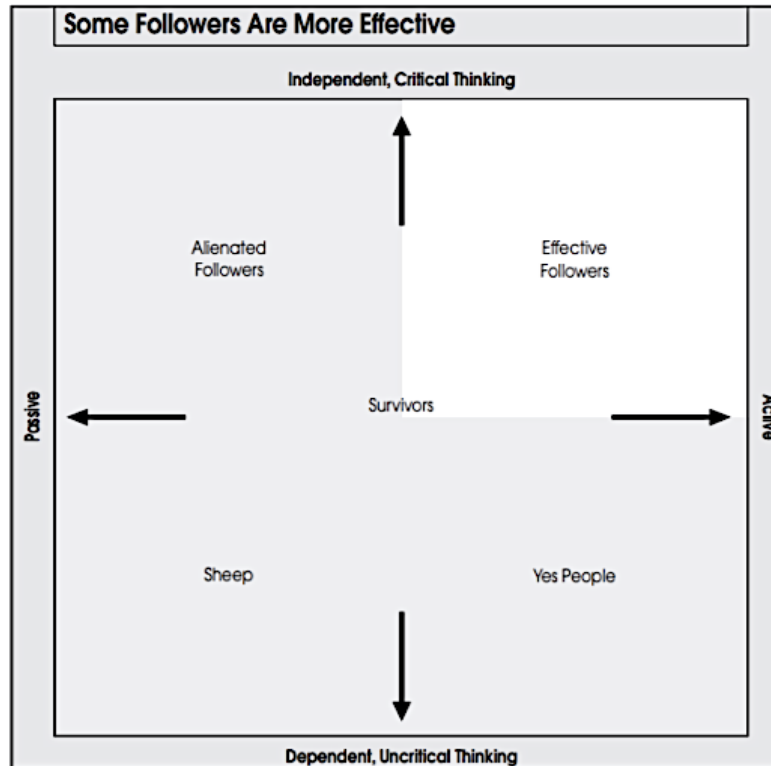


FIGURE 5 FOLLOWERSHIP STYLES COORDINATION (KELLEY, 1992)

Proactive followers, also known as star followers or effective followers, are active, independent, and have critical thinking abilities. These followers can usually fully engage in companies and are willing to consider the interests of the organisations (Benson, Hardy & Eys, 2016). Moreover, they are creative and trustworthy, and leaders tend to trust them (Guenter et al., 2017; Hoegl & Muethel, 2007). Furthermore, they are viewed as independent and responsible team members who can usually contribute significantly to improving organisational performance (Kelley, 1992).

Alienated followers are capable of critical thinking, but they rely more on leaders and are frequently cynical, sceptical, and unsatisfied with leaders' actions or decisions (Riggio, Chaleff & Lipman-Blumen, 2008). Kelley (2008) discovered that these followers are first star followers, however, when they have a negative experience, such as not being trusted or being treated unfairly, they become enraged and begin to battle others (Harms, Bai & Han, 2016). Their negative attitudes can sometimes create a resentful atmosphere in organisations (ibid).

Passive followers or sheep followers are passive and uncritical, lacking responsibility, which means passive followers are not innovative and just finish what they are asked to do (Latour & Rast, 2004). **Yes people**, or conformist followers are also uncritical, but they are more involved than their sheep counterparts (Strong & Williams, 2014). Conformist followers are willing to engage in organisations, however, they still need specific directions from leaders, and usually don't have questions of leaders' requirements (ibid).

The last style of followers is **pragmatic followers**, also called survivors, they are capable followers and often think twice before actions to avoid conflicts and dangerous decisions (Hurwitz, 2018; Kelley, 1992). In addition, pragmatic followers prioritise their own interests over organisational goals (Essa & Alattari, 2019). Though they

are capable of completing tasks, they will not take the initiative to do extra work, and when the organisation confronts difficulties, they will try to leave rather than help the organisation (*ibid*).

Different types of followers, depending on their tasks and job positions in the workplace, could all contribute to organisations in different situations (Breevaart et al., 2014; Bjugstad et al., 2006). For example, in the healthcare and manufacturing industries, followers with greater active engagement and independent critical thinking have higher job satisfaction, higher job performance, and a lower propensity for burnout (Leung et al., 2018; Favara Jr, 2009). While in higher educational institutions, proactive or alienated or pragmatic followership are not related to job performances, but passive followers are high performers in this context (Oyetunji, 2013). Though there are no studies investigated suitable followership styles in different industries, previous results implied different followership styles have its own attributes which could contribute to organisations in certain contexts (Leung et al., 2018; Oyetunji, 2013).

In this research, the author selected proactive followership (i.e., people with great active engagement and independent critical thinking) and passive followership (i.e., people with passive engagement and dependent uncritical thinking) as two extreme examples to investigate which followership style could gain trust from leaders. Since these two types of followership are in completely opposite positions of each other according to the two dimensions proposed by Kelley in 1992, which is more suitable and easier for this research to present in the framework. Meanwhile, the author investigated whether there are other behaviours that could facilitate trust relationships with some open-ended questions, in order to explore as many effective followership styles or behaviours as possible on influencing the trust relationships.

Current research has emphasised the importance of a positive leader-follower relationship, which requires the efforts of both parties in order to achieve successful collective actions (Van Vugt, 2006). Since even if leaders are passionate and committed to stimulating collective action, collaboration between leaders and followers is difficult to practise if leaders do not notice followers' characteristics (Ellis et al., 2018; Chaleff, 2009; Goethals & Sorenson, 2007). In order to create effective leadership and followership and a high-quality leader-follower relationship, it is crucial to conduct research on the relationship between leaders and followers, fully utilise the active parts of followers, and inspire the passive ones (Chaleff, 2009, 2016).

A high-quality leader-follower relationship can enhance followers' job satisfaction and reduce prejudice and discrimination issues (Wang et al., 2005). Furthermore, a positive leader-follower relationship is likely to foster mutual respect and trust among leaders and followers (Ellis et al., 2018). Therefore, followers will be comfortable and fully engaged in the workplace with their knowledge and abilities, while leaders will have the opportunity to consider other important issues (Ruiz, Ruiz & Martnez, 2011). As a result, a positive leader-follower relationship promotes effective leadership and followership. The following section discusses the leader-follower relationship in depth.

2.2.3 Leader-follower relationship

2.2.3.1 Traditional role of leadership

Traditionally, it has been assumed that followers should be supervised and managed from a leader-centred perspective, and that leaders play a top-leading role in organisations (Bormann, 2017). Leaders should manage followers to create collective efforts on a common goal in order to improve organisational performance (Dirks & Skarlicki, 2004).

Traditional leadership theories are based on psychological research and emphasise that leaders have the power to lead their followers and that the relationship between leader and follower is unidirectional (Bolden et al., 2003). The great man theory of leadership was proposed based on this perspective (Bennis, 2003; Bass, 1990; Burns, 1978). During the nineteenth century, heroes and military leaders were viewed as successful leaders based on historical factors, and the qualities of great leaders are male qualities (Goethals et al., 2004). At that stage, people believed that good leaders are born naturally and cannot be duplicated or made (ibid).

However, the great man theory was criticised with the development of leadership learning. Bolden et al. (2003) argued that at the time, ordinary people had no rights or fewer opportunities to practise leadership behaviours. Similarly, Spector (2016) asserted that if these great leaders were born in different places or did not have royal social status, they would have no chance of achieving leadership positions. Management scholars have criticised hierarchical and bureaucratic management styles, which could lead to employee demoralisation and a decrease in organisational effectiveness (Child, 2015; Diefenbach, 2009; Kelley, 1992; Peters & Waterman, 1982).

Kelley (1992) proposed most people could be both leaders and followers in organisations, followers are collaborators more than subordinates in organisational efforts. Followers should be considered as an independent component of organisations, and the power of followership has the potential to facilitate organisational success (Colquitt et al., 2019). Cox et al. (2010) agreed successful and effective leadership inevitably depends on actions of followers who can choose to support, or sabotage working process. Positive leader-follower relationship could improve organisational performance (Cox et al., 2010). Follower influence and followership studies have grown in popularity (Avolio & Reichard, 2008), and the following section discusses followership.

2.2.3.2 Attention to followership

Followership has received insufficient attention in the workplace, particularly in SMEs (Leung et al., 2018). Agho (2009) stated the reason why followership has received less attention from scholars is that both leaders and management researchers assume individuals instinctively know how to follow and organisational success is attributed to leaders. However, Leung et al. (2018) proposed that followers may have a greater influence on organisational success, and it is unwise to overlook individuals' potential for learning how to follow effectively.

In organisations, an active follower role can shape interactions between leaders and followers (Uhl-Bien & Pillai, 2007; Bjugstad et al., 2006). Followers play an important role in leadership since their actions increase the power

of leaders and influence their behaviours (Howell & Shamir, 2005). Bennis (2003) stated followers have significant power, and each follower is a potential leader in organisations. Therefore, leadership development should include followers and place more emphasis on followership efforts (Hackman & Wageman, 2007).

Follower-centred approaches emphasise the significance of inter-follower processes, which show how followers interact with both leaders and other followers in the workplace (Pillai, 2013; Mayo & Pastor, 2009; Pastor, Mayo & Shamir, 2007). Offermann and Scuderi (2007) stated followers could co-manage organisations with leaders, and followers have the right to vote an ineffective leader out of office. In this situation, followers play an active role in organisations, activating the bottom-up supervisory system and influencing leaders' behaviours and leadership styles (Kark & Van Dijk, 2007). Furthermore, followership could assist in the resolution of government corruption, corporate abuses of power, and other extreme societal issues (Kelley, 2008).

Most scholars have recently recognised the power of followership and started to investigate followership from a follower-centred perspective (Leung et al., 2018; Ford & Harding, 2018; Pillai, 2013; Bligh, 2011; Crossman & Crossman, 2011; Hackman & Wageman, 2007). However, Riggio (2014) suggested that researchers should avoid overemphasising the importance of followership. Organisational development requires collaborative efforts from leaders and followers, and the intertwined nature of leaders and followers should not be overlooked (Riggio, 2014). Studies of the leader-follower relationship at the dyadic level may assist in gaining a comprehensive view of organisational development (Hinojosa et al., 2014). The next section introduces the development of leader-follower relationship.

2.2.3.3 Development of leader-follower relationship

Leaders and followers coexist in a dialectic relationship in which they both influence and are influenced by one another (Groon, 2009). In this dynamic process, leadership style is the structure that can shape followership styles, whereas followership is a process that can help leaders adopt a suitable leadership style (Hamstra et al., 2014). As a result, collective actions by both leaders and followers could foster a comfortable and appropriate relationship in organisations (Maak, 2007).

Malakyan (2014) stated that studies of leader-follower relationship need to aware the combination and dynamics of actions of leaders and followers as leadership and followership have evolved. There are several paradigms for learning the leader-follower relationship, and the two dominant approaches are trade approach and the relational approach (Malakyan, 2014; Uhl-Bien, 2006).

Leadership and followership occur when the functions of leaders and followers are exchangeable, according to the **leader-follower trade approach** (Malakyan, 2014). Accordingly, leaders and followers could develop their interpersonal perspectives, cultivate interpersonal relationships, and maximise mutual effectiveness by exchanging functions (ibid). Chaleff (2012) agreed that when one person acts as both a leader and a follower, the organisation performs better and provides more value.

The **relational approach** emphasises the dynamics of relationships between leaders, followers, and organisations, and it recognises that relationships between leaders and followers are constantly changing (Uhl-Bien, 2006). Relationships between leaders and followers are formed as a result of personal subjective influence and individual perceptions of the behaviours of others (*ibid*). The relationship results from social interactions between leaders and followers (Rai & Prakash, 2012). The relational approach emphasises construction based on specific context rather than personal characteristics, behaviours, or exchanges, implying that the leader-follower relationship is dynamic as the external environment changes (Avolio, 2007).

Two approaches offer distinct perspectives on investigating and developing leader-follower relationships. The leader-follower trade approach emphasises exchanges between two parties, whereas the relational approach emphasises interactions as important in developing and improving relationships (Ikonen, 2013). Both approaches have limitations and advantages, the leader-follower trade approach emphasises the exchange of functions between leaders and followers, but it ignores external context and whether leaders or followers are willing to take on others' responsibilities (Tyssen, Wald & Spieth, 2014). Whereas, though the relational approach considers context, interactions, and the dynamic nature of the leader-follower relationship, it blurs individual traits and attitudes during the relationship-building process (Hernandez et al., 2011).

A positive leader-follower relationship increases mutual respect and trust between leaders and followers (Martinez et al., 2012; Valcea et al., 2011; Wang et al., 2005). Mutual trust relationships are ideal in organisations, as they can improve organisational performance at the lowest possible cost while also achieving leaders' organisational visions and followers' personal desires (Hobday, 2000). Leaders can increase followers' trust through consistent behaviour in both public and private interactions in a positive leader-follower relationship, and they are willing to delegate some power to their followers (Zhu, Avolio & Walumbwa, 2009). Similarly, followers would take initiative to do extra work, since leaders empower followers, and followers expect to build trust with the leader further (Pieterse et al., 2010).

With the development of leader-follower relationships, workplace humour is proposed as a factor in the success of leader-follower relationships, as it improves cohesion and interaction within organisations (Lampreli, Patsala & Priporas, 2019). Humour is defined as an intentional act in which a person attempts to amuse another person or a group of people by sharing certain stories or events (Cooper, 2005). Workplace humour as a management tool or a leadership feature has been investigated to mediate conflict, facilitate problem solving, and develop leader-follower relationships (Lampreli, Patsala & Priporas, 2019; Collinson, 2002). From the perspective of followers, their sense of humour may help them communicate with leaders more effectively, particularly when attempting to express disapproval (Murata, 2014).

However, humour could be tricky to use in the workplace. When used appropriately, workplace humour could create a positive atmosphere, mediate conflicts and embarrassment, strengthen bonds among members of organisations, and facilitate trust (Evans et al., 2019; Ünal, 2014; Martin, 2001). In some contexts, when humour becomes sexist or aggressive, the targeted person may be offended, and aggressive humour may make the

working environment hostile (Lyttle, 2007). As a result, both leaders and followers should be mindful of using humour when addressing workplace issues (Lampreli, Patsala & Priporas, 2019).

To sum up, leadership could be described as a leader's ability, whereas followership is defined as a role that assists leaders in achieving organisational goals. Leaders' primary goal is to integrate followers and achieve common goals, and followers could help, hinder, or even sabotage leaders' visions. In terms of trust relationships, both transactional and transformational leadership could help organisations build trust by establishing transactional rules or cultivating a positive working environment. Kelly (2008) explained why followers will follow their leaders from the perspective of followership, highlighting the interaction and interdependence relationship between leaders and followers. In order to comprehend what leadership styles and followership styles could affect leader-follower trust relationships, the second sub-question of this research is:

***Sub-question two:** What leadership/followership styles will facilitate trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs?*

A positive leader-follower relationship is highly likely to foster mutual trust (Bligh, 2017). There are two dominant approaches to develop a positive leader-follower relationship, leader-follower trade approach which emphasises exchanges, and relational approach which emphasises interactions (Tyssen, Wald & Spieth, 2014; Hernandez et al., 2011). Therefore, both exchanges and interactions may reflect the development of a dyadic leader-follower relationships. The following section discusses trust, exchanges, and interactions.

2.3 Exchanges and interactions

Overview

Long-term relationships between leaders and followers may bind followers more tightly to organisations through loyalty and a sense of inclusion (GaoUrhahn, Biemann & Jaros, 2016). The first section introduces and explains how exchanges promote trust in the workplace. Both negotiated and reciprocal exchanges could improve workplace trust between leaders and followers, which covers and brings more influential factors to leader-follower trust relationship (Mitchell, Cropanzano & Quisenberry, 2012; Kang & Stewart, 2007). The second section discusses how interactions influence workplace trust relationships. Reputation, similarity/diversity, and friendship between leaders and followers are factors that can explain the process of establishing trust over the long term from the perspective of interactions. At the end of this section, a sub-question about the influence of exchanges and interactions on trust relationships is proposed.

2.3.1 Exchanges and trust

2.3.1.1 Leader-member exchanges

LMX is derived from the vertical dyad link model (VDL), which explains how leaders use different leadership styles to manage different followers in a company based on compliance with the leader's expectations (Hogg, 2003; Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

To economise resources (such like time or energy), it is unlikely for leaders to maintain the same level of relationship with all their followers (Martin et al., 2016). Consequently, leaders tend to cultivate various quality dyadic relationships with different team members (Cropanzano, Dasborough & Weiss, 2017). Members who are close to leaders, or "in-group," have high-quality LMX relationships with their leaders (Badshah, 2012). As a result, they are more likely to receive valuable resources (information, money, promotion opportunities, trust, and confidence), but they are also expected to return commitment and efforts to leaders (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). People who have a lower-quality relationship with their leaders are referred to as "out-group" members when compared to in-group members (Estel et al., 2019). These members of the out-group may face resource constraints and be ignored by their leaders (ibid).

Therefore, high-quality relationships and low-quality relationships have varying effects on different types of trust and trust relationships (Gregg & Walczak, 2010). Liu and colleagues (2014) examined that calculated-based trust would only occur at low-quality LMX relations, and with the increase of LMX quality calculated-based trust may dissipate. Economic calculations, according to Scandura and Pellegrini (2008), present low quality exchange relationships because calculated-based trust relationships lack concern, loyalty, and commitment.

A high-quality relationship promotes the development of interpersonal trust and relationships that extend beyond the formal employment contract (Scandura & Pellegrini, 2008; Uhl-Bien, Graen, & Scandura, 2000). Followers in high-quality LMX relationships with leaders may gain more resources and opportunities, however, they should commit more to the organisation (Xu et al., 2019). As a result, leaders' expectations could sometimes stress followers in a high-quality LMX relationship, and followers may begin to re-evaluate the relationship's benefits and costs (Harris & Kacmar, 2006). Followers might question whether their leaders are taking advantage of their commitments and loyalty, leading to a decrease in trust (Fulmer & Gelfand, 2012).

LMX demonstrated how trust could be built in a dyadic approach through constant exchanges, and how high-quality LMX relationships could make both leaders and followers' behaviours predictable (Brower, Schoorman & Tan, 2000). Several experimental studies have found that high-quality exchange relationships are predictors of trust and job satisfaction (Cropanzano, Dasborough & Weiss, 2017; Martin et al., 2016; Cogliser et al., 2009; Scandura & Pellegrini, 2008; Rothstein & Stolle, 2008; Kang & Stewart, 2007; Brower, Schoorman & Tan, 2000). From the perspective of leaders, followers' trust implies that they will be willingly managed, and with the latter, they will be able to achieve their organisational vision and improve organisational performance (Rothstein & Stolle, 2008). Being trusted by leaders implies that followers may be empowered or delegated by leaders, and followers could achieve self-fulfillments (ibid).

Therefore, LMX theory explained how close and high-quality relationship between leaders and followers could foster trust in the workplace (Martin et al., 2016). However, LMX focuses on the influence and outcomes of leaders' behavioural differentiations on leader-follower relationships, which ignores the reciprocity in leader-follower relationships (Tekleab & Chiaburu, 2011; Vidyarthi et al., 2010). In order to provide a comprehensive view to understand leader-follower trust relationships, this research adopted social exchange theory in the framework to cover more factors that could affect trust relationships between leaders and followers in the workplace. The section that follows introduces social exchange theory and its impact on the trust relationships.

2.3.1.2 Social exchanges

According to the social exchange theory, when someone provides something in the first place, they assume that someone else will provide the same goods or equivalent products in return (Flynn, 2005). People will mentally calculate the exchange of benefits and attempt to balance and stabilise the exchange relationship without violating any explicit or implicit norms (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). Therefore, the nature of social exchange is to establish close relationships through equal value exchanges (Blau, 2017; Halbesleben & Wheeler, 2015).

Negotiated exchange and **reciprocal exchange** are the two types of exchanges (Molm, Schaefer & Collett, 2009). The main distinctions between two types of exchanges are (1) whether actions between two parties are based on individual or joint behaviour, and (2) whether actors in exchanges are aware of the terms or the time to reciprocate to their partners (ibid).

Negotiated exchange implies that both leaders and followers behave in a transactional manner, which indicates that both parties to the relationship are bound by contracts or formal agreements (Mitchell, Cropanzano & Quisenberry, 2012). Binding agreements are made jointly by two parties and can guarantee that both parties benefit from exchanges (Molm, Peterson & Takahashi, 1999). The exchanges are bilateral because both parties agree to a formal agreement or contract (Poppo & Zenger, 2002). Most economic exchanges, as well as broad social exchanges, are contingent on negotiated exchanges (Molm, 2003). Negotiated exchanges may assist in the development of rational-based trust; however, the trust is deemed fragile (Lam, 2013).

Reciprocal exchange indicates that individuals have the ability to choose whether or not to reciprocate in the future, so such exchanges could be unilateral (Molm, Collett & Schaefer, 2007). One party initiates an exchange by doing something beneficial for the other without knowing whether, when, or to what extent the other will reciprocate in the future (Uhl-Bien & Maslyn, 2003). Individual choices are made through reciprocal exchanges, and actors can receive benefits from others without being obligated to give anything in return (Cook et al., 2013). Reciprocal exchanges facilitate trust relationships in such uncertain circumstances (ibid). Reciprocal exchanges may also assist in the establishment of relational-based trust, which is more resilient than trust generated through negotiated exchanges (Koay et al., 2020). Experiment results show that actors who engage in reciprocal exchanges have a higher level of trust in their partner than actors who engage in negotiated exchanges (Molm, Takahashi & Peterson, 2003).

Most reciprocal exchanges, such as **mutual respect**, **emotional support**, etc, cannot be measured (Savage & Bergstrand, 2013). People who show respect or emotional support expect a similar level of respect and emotional support in return for their actions, which are usually not for profit or benefit (Pelaprat & Brown, 2012). When an individual in a relationship feels that there is not a balance in the giving of support, it could lead to conflicts and distress (Savage & Bergstrand, 2013).

Mutual respect fosters a positive working environment and organisational culture, reducing the likelihood of conflicts between leaders and followers (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). Respect is regarded as a foundation for trust, and trust is established when there is already some respect in a relationship (ibid). Mutual trust is likely to be built in relationships as interactions and reciprocal exchanges deepen (Molm, Schaefer & Collett, 2007). Kadefors (2004) proposed that being emotionally respectful and considerate to others could assist in the development of trust and the propensity for collaboration in the workplace.

Additionally, a respectful working environment may reduce stress for both leaders and followers, as well as encourage employees to share ideas and collaborate within groups (Wong, 2020). Moreover, mutual respect contributes to employee engagement and commitment, and employees reported that respect from their leaders has a greater positive impact than personal development, sharing the company vision, or recognition (Ghosh et al., 2019; Markos & Sridevi, 2010). When co-workers respect one another, negative workplace gossip, bullying, harassment, or arguing may be reduced, and the respectful atmosphere could facilitate quality leader-follower relationships, build organisational trust, and establish a healthy working environment (Ellwardt, Wittek & Wielers, 2012; Bruno, 2007).

Emotional support could improve followers' sense of belonging in organisations and bring leaders and followers together to create collaborative efforts for organisations (Weber, Johnson & Corrigan, 2004). Unlike social support, which emphasises the process of maintaining complex social networks, emotional support focuses on individual behaviours (Weber & Patterson, 1996). Empathy is regarded as a key characteristic for people who could provide emotional support, implying that people understand other people's situations and are willing to care about them (Kock et al., 2019; Farh et al., 2010). Wright (2002) pointed that emotional support is negatively related to perceiving stress, and it could elicit better workplace outcomes. Delivering emotional support at work has been found to reduce work stress and improve trust relationships in the workplace (Lysaght & Larmour-Trode, 2008).

Furthermore, showing respect and providing emotional support to others (whether to leaders, employees, or colleagues) makes people feel valued for their abilities, qualities, accomplishments, and decisions (Carruth & Field, 2016). Feeling valued at work correlates with higher levels of engagement, improved physical and mental health, and personal performance development (Garg, 2014). As a result, leaders and followers could develop strong relationships and create a pleasant working environment (ibid).

Aside from negotiated and reciprocal exchanges, the rationales for social exchanges vary depending on the situation or culture (Lawler, Thye & Yoon, 2008). Individualist cultures and collectivist cultures could be roughly divided based on different cultures and individual identity (Oyserman, Coon & Kemmelmeier, 2002). Individualists will try to stabilise the exchange relationship by exchanging equivalent values, whereas collectivists will not calculate much about what they received because they share the same goals or have the same identifications (e.g., some NGO members gathered not for profit but for mutual support due to common interests) (Triandis, 1996). It means that in individualist cultures, exchange relationships will be built on implicit or explicit balanced exchange norms (Conway & Briner, 2005). In collectivist cultures, communal relationships are more focused on team goals than individual profits (ibid).

Therefore, social exchange is easier to establish in collectivist cultures than in individualist cultures (Cook et al., 2013). In businesses, leaders could try to cultivate a collectivist spirit and build trust and close relationships with followers by setting communal meaningful goals or gathering people who share the same identifications (Bolden et al., 2013). Employees who have a high level of trust in their leader may interpret his or her actions favourably, making them more willing to accept vulnerability to management (Wong, Spence Laschinger & Cummings, 2010).

In addition to social exchanges, long-term relationships in the workplace, such as reputation, similarity/diversity, and friendship function in trust relationships. The next section discusses influence of these three factors on trust.

2.3.2 Interactions and long-term relationships

2.3.2.1 Reputation

Individual reputation could send credible signals to others, facilitating initial interactions even among strangers (Kanagaretnam et al., 2010). Consequently, two engaged parties with good reputations are more likely to cooperate and gradually build trust (Xiao & Benbasat, 2003). There are two types of reputation cues: social visibility, which can be improved through cooperative behaviour in public, and gossip, which includes both negative and positive gossip (Wu, Balliet & Van Lange, 2016). Negative gossip has a negative impact on working relationships, which could lead to a hostile work environment and workplace anxiety; whereas positive gossip includes daily greetings and/or coffee chat, which might alleviate stress caused by competing work (Ellwardt, Wittek & Wielers, 2012). Both negative and positive gossip may have an impact on one's reputation.

Social visibility is defined as an individual's position in a group and how that position is perceived by other members of the group (Sparrowe et al., 2001; Clifford, 1963). The position is built up over time as a result of one's positive or negative behaviours, and it can be attained through personal competencies (Avey et al., 2011). Cooperation in public places can increase social visibility, whereas praising or criticising could reduce social visibility (Brighenti et al., 2010). In the workplace, social visibility could be demonstrated through evaluations from former supervisors or followers, as well as through other people's actions in the group (DeRue & Ashford, 2010). People with high social visibility are more likely to cooperate in organisations (Veil, Buehner & Palenchar, 2011). Receiving useful and high-quality recommendations from others is one method for developing a reputation and increasing social visibility (De Meo et al., 2018).

Gossip is evaluative talk between two or more people about a third party who is not present in the conversation (Kurland & Pelled, 2000). Gossip may have a significant negative or positive impact on one's reputation, and the power of gossip is immense (Farley, 2011). Burt (2001) proposed gossip could be dangerous, it may not only harm the gossip object, but it may also harm the gossipers. According to Grosser et al. (2012), gossip serves six functions: gathering information, gaining influence, relieving stress, fostering intimacy, providing intellectual stimulation, and enhancing organisational norms.

Gossip is timely and considered an inexpensive way to gather information, which could help people **gather information** from informal communication (Ferrari, 2015). The advantage of gathering information through informal communication is that lower-level employees would have access to more information than the official channel, which is normally restricted to senior management (Mishra, Boynton & Mishra, 2014). The disadvantage is obvious, however, unofficial gossip undermines management authority and may have a long-term impact on organisational stability (Grosser, Kidwell & Labianca, 2012).

Gossip can affect one's status in organisations, as people who can always get latest information in organisations are deemed well-connected with others (Ellwardt, Labianca & Wittek, 2012). Consequently, people can **gain influence** from gossiping on other people or organisational news (ibid). After verifying the source of information, gossip recipients will regard gossipers as more powerful than others (Gibson, Hardy III & Buckley, 2014). As a result, gossip can be used as a strategy to enhance one's status at work (Ferrari, 2015).

People who work in stressful environments, such as nurses or customer service representatives, may use gossiping as an emotional outlet (Littlejohn, 2012). Furthermore, the exchange of gossip between two employees is a method of fostering closer relationships (Grosser, Kidwell & Labianca, 2012). As a result, self-disclosure or communication with peers could **relieve stress**, and transmission between two people could **foster intimacy** (Thoth et al., 2014).

Gossip is important for people who work in monotonous jobs since informal communication with peers can prevent boredom if one is performing repetitive tasks (Reeves & Read, 2009). Goldmark (2020) found gossip could **provide intellectual stimulation** especially for factory workers who can do 12-hour shifts. The final function of gossip is to **enhance organisational norms** in groups/teams. At the group level, gossip could be a powerful tool for maintaining conformity and controlling individuals (Grosser, Kidwell & Labianca, 2012).

To sum up, initial interactions and long-term trust relationships are influenced by reputation. Other people in groups can evaluate or observe one's reputation through social visibility and gossip (Wu, Balliet & Va Lange, 2016). People prefer to establish trust relationships with people who have a good reputation in their groups (Kietzmann et al., 2011). Aside from reputation, a group's similarity or diversity would explain trust relationships in organisations as well. The following section discusses how similarity and diversity affect trust.

2.3.2.2 Similarity or diversity

With the globalisation and development of SMEs, it is common for SMEs to have a diverse team in terms of gender, age, ethnicity, or religion (Carter et al., 2013; Putnam, 2007). Leaders, according to identity theory, tend to hire people who are similar to themselves (Leisink & Steijn, 2008). Similarity or familiarity is regarded as a factor that could facilitate trust relationships in the workplace, whereas high diversity is regarded as an impediment to interpersonal trust building (Zhao et al., 2012). However, a diverse workforce in organisations could bring creativity and different approaches to problem solving, which could improve organisational performance (Williams & Foti, 2011). In addition, a diverse team in a company could promote international cooperation (ibid). Therefore, in a globalised context, a diverse working environment is unavoidable, even in SMEs (Beugelsdijk & Klasing, 2016; Carter et al., 2013). The studies and debates about how similarity or diversity influence trust relationships in organisations have grown in popularity (Amah & Oyetunde, 2019; Loxbo, 2018; Beugelsdijk & Klasing, 2016; Öberg, Oskarsson & Svensson, 2011; Stolle, Soroka & Johnston, 2008; Golesorkhi, 2006), and the following discussion reviews the literature on the influence of similarity and diversity on trust relationships.

Through repeated interactions, each other's behaviours become more predictable as their familiarity grows, and their trust level grows over time (Loxbo, 2018; Washington, 2013). Long-term and repeated interactions may foster relational-based trust, and trust between two parties will be reinforced and strengthened gradually (Xiao & Benbasat, 2003; Molm, Takahashi & Peterson, 2000). Familiarity could be derived from repeated interactions that foster trust in a specific person or group of people, but it could also be derived from perceived similarity

(such as the same ethnicity, educational background, or gender) and feelings of shared destiny among people (Bodenhausen, Kang & Peery, 2012).

Several academics have observed that similarity can foster trust in society and in any group (Hayashi & Kryssanov, 2013; Hooghe, 2007; Delhey & Newton, 2005; Alesina & La Ferrara, 2002). Being in a similar position or having similar backgrounds to other people may help the person gain more trust (Öberg, Oskarsson & Svensson, 2011). People are easily influenced by their direct surroundings, and when they enter a new environment, they are more likely to contact and trust people they know or who are similar to them (Reina, 2009). In the workplace, managers also tend to hire employees who have the similar identity to them (Leisink & Steijn, 2008). Not only will managers trust the new recruiter based on their initial understanding of his/her background, but the new recruiter will also be quickly accepted and supported by the team (ibid).

However, as globalisation progresses, it is unavoidable to meet people from various backgrounds (Öberg, Oskarsson & Svensson, 2011). The global economy and increased migrant labour place strain on organisational management, and diversity creates internal tensions and reduces interpersonal trust in the workplace (Bews & Rossouw, 2002). The high diversity of the workplace, in particular, threatens identification-based trust, which is built through collaborative networks and cooperation based on social similarity (Beugelsdijk & Klasing, 2016). Furthermore, high diversity is associated with slow economic growth, low institutional quality, and a higher prevalence of civil wars (Besley & Reynal-Querol, 2014; Baldwin & Huber, 2010; Easterly & Levine, 1997). The main reason for negative outcomes from diversity is that a diverse environment reduces social cohesion (Freitag & Bühlmann, 2009).

As previously discussed, similarity and familiarity facilitate leader-follower trust relationships (Nooteboom, 2002). Since a society's low diversity could make people feel close to their fellow citizens, they may identify with one another and prefer to trust them (Beugelsdijk & Klasing, 2016). Constant interaction with other ethnic groups is one strategy for reducing the negative impact of diversity on trust (Putnam, 2007). People tend to associate and socialise with people who are similar to themselves (Delhey & Newton, 2005), so people who interact with others on a regular basis are less influenced by their ethnicity, religion, or other factors (Stolle, Soroka & Johnston, 2008).

Therefore, Uslaner (2006) argued that, while people tend to trust others who are similar to them, the main reason for the decrease in trust is a lack of contact with others. Dincer (2011) agreed and experimentally tested the relationship between ethnic diversity and trust, and the relationship between ethnic fractionalization and trust is U-shaped. The U-shaped relationship between diversity and trust implies that it is difficult to create a diverse society, however, by increasing contact frequency among different ethnic groups, it is possible to increase tolerance and trust for diversity in any group (Dincer, 2011). Sturgis et al. (2011) discovered that ethnic diversity has no effect on generalised trust but has a significant impact on strategic trust. Furthermore, the impact of diversity on strategic trust is minor when compared to the impact of individuals' social connections on trust (Sturgis et al., 2011). As a result, negative effects of diversity on trust could be ignored.

Aside from maintaining interaction among different ethnic groups, public interventions could directly integrate different ethnicities, build trust, and promote long-term economic development (Spigel & Harrison, 2018). Beugelsdijk and Klasing (2016) proposed that international migration and ethnic diversity are not harmful to trust, that social issues arise when different ethnic groups are unable to integrate well, and that governmental or policy intervention could help to alleviate problems caused by diversity.

There are two distinct benefits to having a diverse team over the long term as opposed to maintaining a similar team. First, diversity reduces ethnocentrism by eroding the boundaries between in-group and out-group, and it also helps out-groups build social capital (Estel et al., 2019). Second, while people in a diverse environment initially compete for resources and public goods, a diverse team is more resilient and creative after bridging gaps between in-group and out-group (Sturgis et al., 2011).

2.3.2.3 Friendship

Workplace friendship improves individual performance, builds trust among co-workers, increases employee happiness, and improves organisational cohesion (Akyüz, 2020; Bhardwaj et al., 2016; Milner, Russell & Siemers, 2010). Friendship is defined as an informal interaction between individuals that typically involves emotional relationships and emotional support (Berman, West & Richter, 2002). Workplace friendship is dependent on the individual's need for socialisation, as people spend about a quarter of their week with their co-workers (Kanbur, 2015; Lee & Ok, 2011).

Workplace friendship has two features. First, friendships are voluntary, although people typically cannot choose the people they work with, they can choose which of those people to befriend (Sias et al., 2004). Second, friendships are based on individual characteristics and are not influenced solely by others' organisational roles (ibid). Therefore, though there are compulsory and systematic rules or workflows in the workplace, the focal point of the workplace is on voluntary relationships among individuals (Kanbur, 2015). Workplace friendship is a personal and subjective relationship in which people respond to each other based on their own willingness rather than others' positions or roles in organisations (Tse & Dasborough, 2008; Sias & Cahill, 1998).

On an organisational level, workplace friendship is related to team cohesion and has an impact on critical outcomes such as job satisfaction (Morrison, 2004). Furthermore, workplace friendship promotes knowledge sharing at the organisational level, reduces turnover, and improves organisational performance (Sias & Shin, 2019; Sias et al., 2004).

On an interpersonal level, workplace friendship studies focused on relationships between co-workers, and results showed that friendship between co-workers could increase interpersonal trust (Akyüz, 2020). Friendship at work could be both beneficial and dangerous, since friends not only solve problems, but also create them (Rawlins, 1992). Friendship, especially in the workplace, could lead to conflicts of interest, favouritism of certain people, and romantic relationships (Berman, West & Richter, 2002). While workplace friendship has a positive

impact on communication among co-workers and affects work-related attitudes and behaviours (Ong, 2013). Furthermore, workplace friendship is regarded as an important component of an organization's informal structure, as it facilitates trust relationships among co-workers (ibid). Therefore, workplace relationships are regarded as a necessary condition for co-worker trust relationships (Berman, West & Richter, 2002).

However, studies on the impact of friendship on leader-follower trust in the workplace are scarce. According to Jiang, Hughes and Pulice-Farrow (2014), having supervisors as friends on Facebook or other online social media sites provides employees with career development opportunities. However, the risk of being friends with leaders on social media is distinct, which may cause employees to feel insecure about their jobs, as employees may believe they are being watched by their supervisor (Jiang, Hughes & Pulice-Farrow, 2014). Having supervisors as Facebook friends may limit employees' online freedom, and employees may feel compelled to be more disciplined after work (ibid). However, Jiang et al. (2014) only consider the condition of friendships between leaders and followers on social media. Few studies have examined the benefits and drawbacks of friendship between leaders and followers, and more research is needed to determine whether friendship has a positive effect on trust between leaders and followers.

To summarise, leader-follower trust relationships is gradually reinforced, and exchanges and long-term interaction between leaders and followers may facilitate the process and long-term relationships. According to LMX theory, in-group members are more likely to develop trust with their leaders in the workplace (Martin et al., 2016). However, LMX focuses on leaders' behavioural differentiations rather than reciprocity in leader-follower relationships, and it ignores the development of trust relationships among out-group followers (Tekleab & Chiaburu, 2011; Vidyarthi et al., 2010). According to social exchange theory, negotiated exchange promotes cognitive trust, whereas reciprocal exchange promotes affective trust (Poppo, Zhou & Lee, 2016). Both types of exchanges explore dyadic levels of trust relationships. From the perspective of interactions, workplace reputation, similarity/diversity, and friendship have positive effects on leader-follower trust relationships (Wu, Balliet & Van Lange, 2016). However, there is still debate about whether these factors have a positive influence on the leader-follower relationship, as previous research has focused on co-worker trust (e.g., Estel et al., 2019; Jawahar, Stone & Kluemper, 2019; Martin et al., 2016). As a result, the influential factors of trust in the relational field require additional investigation, and the third sub-question of this research is:

Sub-question three: Which types of exchanges or interactions could influence trust relationships between leaders and followers?

Interpersonal trust in organisations is influenced by externally influential factors as well as interpersonal relationships and individual characteristics (Lewicki, Tomlinson & Gillespie, 2006). External changes will inevitably cause internal changes, and the consequences of the external changes will be contingent on organisational resilience or the ability to adapt to new changes (Lee et al., 2017). The following section discusses

leader-follower trust relationships with the influence of external factors in order to fully comprehend trust relationship influential factors.

2.4 Influence of external environment

Overview

External environment changes may influence trustors' and trustees' attitudes toward each other (Stern & Coleman, 2015). Financial crisis, political issues, or market development, for example, could all have an impact on intra-organisational trust (Khvatova et al., 2016). Since changes in the external environment will inevitably cause internal changes, changes in the external environment may have a negative impact on organisational performance if the company lacks resilience or is unable to adapt to new changes (Lee et al., 2017). As a result, most external changes are regarded as detrimental to organisational trust (ibid). This section first introduces external influential factors (such as financial and political issues, as well as the advent of COVID-19) and their impact on leader-follower trust relationships. Due to COVID-19 outbreak, most businesses were forced to work online. Therefore, the second part compares differences between online and physical trust relationships, and then discusses influential factors of building trust between leaders and followers in a virtual environment. Finally, it discusses the importance of leader-follower trust relationships for SMEs during and after a crisis. At the end of this section, a sub-question about the influence of external environment on trust relationships is proposed.

2.4.1 External influential factors on intra-organisational trust

2.4.1.1 External influential factors on leader-follower trust relationships

Companies will respond to external changes to survive and grow, and interpersonal relationships will be affected inevitably by some external changes (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). Some external factors such as financial difficulties, new governmental policy, changes of regulations, and severe weather conditions may threaten companies, which could cause profit declining, market share decreasing or scarcity of resources (Gajda, 2020; de Vries, Ramo & Korotov, 2009). With external pressures come employees' anxiety of job-security, doubt of the organisational goals, losing confidence in leaders, and companies' improper response will lead to dysfunctional management (Kleynhans et al., 2021; Kang, Gold & Kim, 2012).

External changes are thought to have a negative impact on organisational trust, even though leaders may change organisational structure or policy to accommodate external changes (Yukl, 2012; De Vries, Ramo & Korotove, 2009). The main reason that most external changes have negative effects on organisational trust is not all employees are rational people, and they may not immediately understand and internalize the new rules and regulations as leaders expect (Kim, Hornung & Rousseau, 2011). De Vries and colleagues (2006) stated that, at this stage, leaders need to be more supportive to maintain organisational trust, and try to foster a shared mindset to help employees fit changes of external environment.

Some researchers suggested that under changes and threats of external environment, there are some strategies to achieve success adaptation to changes (De Vries, 2006; Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003; Palmer & Dunford, 2002; Beer & Nohria, 2000). Leaders need to recognize the external pressure and notice employees' needs, and leaders need to provide supports to their followers and solve problems together (De Vries, 2006). Additionally, Amado and Ambrose (2001) suggested that building an innovative-driven culture and an action-reflection process could help companies obtain renewable ability to adapt future stress or changes from external environment.

Trust between leaders and followers plays a significant role in adaptation to external changes, and it encourages collective efforts from leaders and followers (Yukl, 2012). Leaders believe followers can adapt to changes with proactive acts, and followers agree with decisions and institutionalized changes from leaders (Kavanagh & Ashkanasy, 2006). However, previous research focused more on providing detailed suggestions on strategy level for leaders (Kauppi, 2013), and few studies has focused on the changes of leaders or followers' personal behaviours towards external pressures. Though De Vries (2006) suggested leaders need to be more supportive towards the changes of external pressure, there is still no investigation of how leaders or employees exactly act towards the pressure, especially in SMEs. As trust among organisational members could help to build a harmonious working environment (Wang & Sun, 2010), maintaining trust during the influence of external pressure could help companies go through tough time.

2.4.1.2 The advent of COVID-19 and its corresponding influence on organisational trust

At the end of 2019, there was a global emergency caused by coronavirus disease which affected the global economy and organisational working styles (Nicola et al., 2020). Under this special circumstance, SMEs were strongly affected due to their weak competitiveness in the marketplace and the policy of lockdown of most non-essential services (OECD, 2020a).

With the increasing confirmed positive cases and mortality rate, almost all activities (shows, sports events, festival activities) and public places (museum, public library, sports stadium) started to suspend and being closed in 2020 (Gov. UK, 2020). In order to amid coronavirus outbreak, people were suggested to start to work from home (ibid). From the results of the UK's official statistics on August 2021, 71% SME employers reported the main obstacle to growth for SMEs in 2020 is the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, and 56% SME employers reported a fall of turnover compared with 12 months ago (BEIS, 2021b).

In order to deal with the global public health crisis, some relevant regulations were implemented, such as working from home, isolating infected people from others, and self-quarantine (OECD, 2020a). These strategies had a negative impact on organisational trust relationships and organisational leadership (Chen & Sriphon, 2021). Working-from-home policies immediately altered organisational management style, and leaders who began to control and monitor employees more closely to ensure work efficiency made employees feel uncomfortable and had negative feelings about their leaders (Nicola et al., 2020). The transition to a transactional leadership style weakened and affected trust relationships between leaders and followers (ibid).

Furthermore, information from leaders is arguably the most trustworthy information for employees (Legood, Thomas & Sacramento, 2016). If employees do not receive clear and direct guidance from their leaders to navigate workplace difficulties, or if leaders are not open to employees, the increase in employee concerns and uncertainties will damage leader-follower trust relationships (Skiba & Wildman, 2019; Men & Bowen, 2017). According to Chen and Sriphon (2021), rather than closely monitoring employees, leaders should share information and communicate with followers to maintain trust. Similarly, Men et al. (2022) agreed that good communication skills of leaders could help to facilitate and maintain trust during turbulent times like the COVID-19 pandemic.

Moreover, during a pandemic, empathy, support, and interactions may contribute to leader-follower trust relationships (Chen & Sriphon, 2021; Charoensukmongkol & Phungsoonthorn, 2020). Workers who received high levels of support from leaders were less affected by potential uncertainties, and emotional support from leaders could lead to employee well-being (Lucia-Casademunt, Cuéllar-Molina & Garca-Cabrera, 2018). During difficult times, trust in organisations was important, which could help maintain team morale, commitment, and the creation of a productive and secure working environment (Bajaj, Sinha & Tiwari, 2013). In addition, positive leader-follower relationships contribute to the achievement of organisational goals and the improvement of organisational performance (Iqbal et al., 2018).

This research shed light on what external factors could influence organisational trust between leaders and followers and discuss how to build trust under external changes and threats. Different from traditional external changes mentioned above, COVID-19 restrictions affect most companies around the world, and people are forced to work from home and to accept a new working style (Kaushik & Guleria, 2020). The next section discusses trust relationship issues in a virtual environment and how to build trust remotely by reviewing studies and cases of international companies.

2.4.2 Building trust remotely

2.4.2.1 Comparisons between virtual trust relationships and physical trust relationships in organisations

When compared to traditional working environments, remote working environment and virtual teams require new approaches to communication and management via technology, online supervision processes, and virtual systems (Hambley, O'Neill & Kline, 2013). Furthermore, when compared to face-to-face communication, technology-mediated communications convey less personal information to the person on the other end of the screen, such as body language and emotional state (Zhang & Fjermestad, 2006). Physical distance, time differences, and cultural differences may all be barriers to developing quality employment relationships in a virtual team (Kiely, Butler & Finnegan, 2022).

Researchers have different opinions towards the remote working style and trust relationships. Charalampous et al. (2019) and Perry et al. (2018) argued working in a relatively enclosed working environment and the lack of

proper working spaces at home influence working efficiency and organisational performances. Additionally, the lack of interactions among colleagues negatively affects interpersonal trust relationships in the workplace (Perry, Rubino & Hunter, 2018). Conversely, Allen et al. (2015) and Grant et al. (2013) pointed that remote working style provides flexibility to employees and empowers them in the workplace, which facilitates work-life balance, improves working satisfactions, and develop employment relationship. Working in a relax environment and having authority to arrange personal working schedule could facilitate trust relationships at work (Grant, Wallace & Spurgeon, 2013). Also, remote working style provides a wilder platform for organisations to develop international markets (Grant & Clarke, 2020; Eurofound, 2020).

Building trust online is relatively slower than building trust offline at work, due to the physical distance (Zhang & Fjermestad, 2006; Corritore, Kracher & Wiedenbeck, 2003). People have fewer real perceptions on another person via screen, as they cannot view others full body language and appearance (Dery & Hafermalz, 2016). Moreover, virtual trust needs rational and relational mechanisms as physical trust, but relational-based trust is hard to achieve in a virtual environment (Grant, Wallace & Spurgeon, 2013). The main reason is, under a virtual working environment, people have limited access to each other and lack opportunities to know each other via daily greetings or casual chat (Politis, 2014).

In addition, the higher level of supervision a position need, the harder to practice remote working (Milasi et al., 2020). The failure of virtual management and lose control of what employees are working on lead to decrease of working efficiency (Kniffin et al., 2021). In order to overcome challenges increased by virtual working environment, remote workers need to develop and promote trust between leaders and followers to mitigate potential risks (Tramontano, Grant & Clarke, 2021; Grant, Wallace & Spurgeon, 2013). Effective leadership, according to Zhang and Fjermestad (2006), could facilitate trust building through virtual teams, and relevant abilities such as communication skills, environmental awareness, and influence power of a leader could clarify organisational goals, reduce conflicts, and solve problems. The following section discusses some influential factors of online trust building that have been mentioned in how to build a virtual team literature.

2.4.2.2 Influential factors of building trust between leaders and follower in a virtual team

Traditional literature rarely includes discussion of building trust online within companies, as most companies only apply online techniques for inter-organisational cooperation and temporary contact (Corritore, Kracher & Wiedenbeck, 2003). With emergence of internet and development of international companies, Fana et al. (2020) started to investigate e-leadership, virtual team management and remote working practices in a virtual working environment.

Studies of international joint ventures showed trust among companies initially determined by previous history and reputation, and further negotiations and commitments facilitate cooperative behaviours (Boersma, Buckley & Ghauri, 2003). Politis (2014) proposed affective interactions and virtual communication skills are essential for leaders to build a trust relationship with their employees online.

Moreover, research on trust in an online working environment found that people who communicate frequently in a virtual team are more involved in the team and are more likely to connect team members (Zhang & Fjermestad, 2006; Sudweeks & Simoff, 2005). Hambley et al. (2007) also emphasised the importance of communication, whether through text or video, and stated that interactions and communication are essential for building online working relationships. Aside from communication skills, Owens and Khazanchi (2018) discovered that online presentation (avatar appearance) and the ability to respond immediately help to build trust in virtual working teams. Other factors including empathy (Guinalú & Jordán, 2016), depth of relationships (Norman et al., 2019), team-building organisational activities (Lukić & Vračar, 2018), and rewards system (Lukić & Vračar, 2018) could facilitate a successful virtual team.

For the past two years, caused by COVID-19 and the working-from-home policy in most countries, most people are forced to work from home or join new companies during the restrictions (Tramontano, Grant & Clarke, 2021). Employees have to build or maintain interpersonal relationship with their leaders and colleagues online, and companies need to increase digital resilience in order to survive the hard time (ibid). Though employees are still working with their familiar colleagues, changes of working style and working environment affect individual attitudes and behaviours (Eurofound, 2020). Therefore, more or less trust relationships in companies are affected by new working styles in a virtual environment.

Studies of building trust online can not only help companies develop and maintain trust relationships under current circumstances, but also make contributions to companies' management in the post-COVID period and benefit international companies' development (Grant & Clarke, 2020). Literature about online trust building between leaders and followers within companies is limited, how to build interpersonal trust in a virtual working environment and management of virtual teams need further investigation.

2.4.3 Significance of trust in companies during and after crisis

In situations of crisis, such like the 2008 global economic crisis and COVID-19 pandemic, building positive relationships between leaders and followers, between employees, between customers and employees, are valuable for an organization to bounce back to normal after the crisis (Revilla-Camacho, Cossío-Silva & Vega-Vázquez, 2014). In order to build a positive relationship, trust is a significant requirement for business success, as in a long-term, trust is considered as a basic element to maintain relationship (Delgado & Munuera, 2002). Moreover, Gunay and Kazazoglu (2016) agreed trust plays a key role in the extent to which it fosters long-term relationships and could help to increase cooperation and collaboration between parties (Bouncken & Kraus, 2013; Chin et al., 2012).

Loss of trust will counterbalance positive management initiatives in companies (Revilla-Camacho et al., 2014; Sullivan-Taylor & Branicki, 2011). Revilla-Camacho and colleagues (2014) stated though business increased transparency and customer service during financial crisis, the loss of trust will still make the organization in a weak position in market competitiveness. Agreed by Sullivan-Taylor and Branicki (2011), losing trust in

relationships will not only affect operational management, but also decrease opportunities of cooperation with partners, though all employees are professional, and the policy of organization is clear.

Trust building among employees and teamwork are essential for businesses to recover from disruptions of economy and facilitate the efficiency of risk management in organizations (Revilla-Camacho, Cossío-Silva & Vega-Vázquez, 2014). Moreover, proactive collaboration and communication, and employees' professionalism are core competitive advantages and the essence of human resources, which could improve organisational performance and increase business resilience (Freeman, 2004). At the interpersonal level, rising of trust level between employees could develop supply dependencies; at the inter-organisational level, trust building could also increase cooperation and positive behaviours (Ireland et al., 2002). Therefore, trust among employees can develop organization competitiveness and have strong influence on economic resilience (Pal, Torstensson & Mattila, 2014).

When relationships between people become more temporal and virtual, a paradoxical situation is trust is more needed to facilitate cooperation, while at the same time fewer cues are present to build trust on in such circumstances (Bijlsma & Koopman, 2003). When people are forced to work from home during COVID-19, trust is needed more than before, and it is essential to maintain a trust relationship in a hardship time to ensure organisational performance, maintain working effectiveness and stable a health virtual working environment (Ireland et al., 2002). Therefore, this research aims at investigating what external factors (including the advent of COVID-19) affect trust relationships and provide more visions on leader-follower trust relationships in a virtual working environment, and the fourth sub-question of this research is:

Sub-question four: What external factors influence trust relationships in the workplace?

After the reviewing of literature, it found that four main aspects could influence trust relationships between leaders and followers in the workplace, including individual characteristics (ability, benevolence, integrity, etc.), leadership/followership styles, exchanges and interactions between leaders and followers, and the external environment. Jawahar et al. (2019) stated ability, benevolence, integrity explained up to 80% of the decision to trust. However, Nooteboom (2021) criticised the ABI model, claiming that character traits could be influenced, developed, or changed by other people, the external environment, or relationships. Moreover, several scholars confirmed that leadership styles and followership styles have a significant impact on the trustworthiness of leaders or followers (Leung et al., 2018; Franco & Matos, 2015; Lee, 2014; Breevaart et al., 2014; Pieterse & Van Knippenberg, 2010). The influence of individual characteristics on trust relationships is not decisive (Isaeva, Gruenewald & Saunders, 2020). In order to understand whether any aspect is more important than others and what the drivers are, this research added an additional research question as the final sub-question:

Sub-question five: What is the most important aspect in determining leader-follower trust relationships from within individual characteristics, leadership/followership styles, exchanges

and interactions, and external factors? What are the drivers or determinants that make this aspect so important?

2.5 Conceptual framework

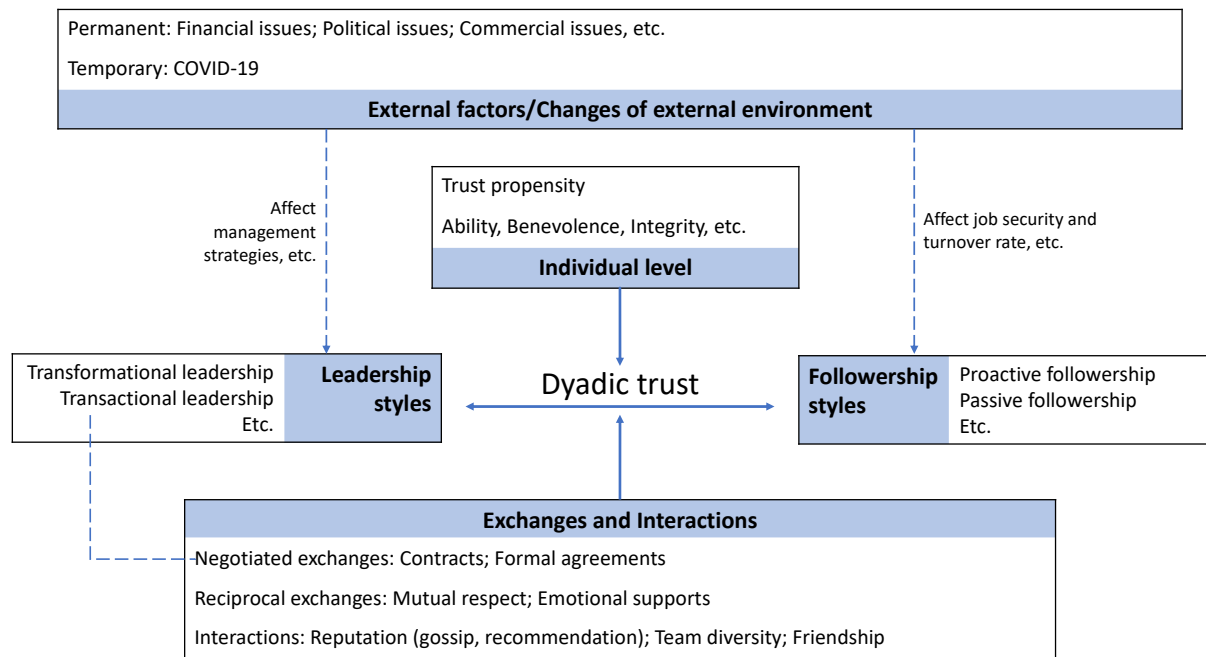


FIGURE 6 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THIS RESEARCH

The purpose of this research is to generate a conceptual framework and enhance comprehension regarding the various elements that may influence trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs. There are four aspects (individual characteristics, leadership/followership styles, exchanges and interactions, external factors) that were discovered in the literature review, however, most studies of trust in the literature review were conducted with large companies, such as hospitals, banks, big international corporations etc. (Spadaro et al., 2020; Nienaber, Hofeditz & Searle, 2014; Ruslan, Rosli & Hussin, 2013; Wong et al., 2010).

It should be noted that research on trust in SMEs is limited (Schaefer et al., 2016). The conceptual framework (Figure 6 above) is summarised from previous literature review, and further investigation into SMEs is needed to develop the conceptual framework. Leaders and followers typically have a closer relationship in SMEs, and the management structure differs from that of large corporations (Ngah & Ibrahim, 2012). Therefore, the process of developing trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs may differ from the process of developing trust relationships between leaders and followers in larger corporations (Dowling et al., 2019; Lopez-Perez & Rodriguez-Ariza, 2013). More research on trust in SMEs is needed (Dowling et al., 2019).

2.6 Reviewing research gaps and research questions

Based on a literature review, there are two main gaps in the research field. **Firstly**, studies of trust in SMEs between leaders and followers are scarce (Schaefer et al., 2016). SMEs have fewer employees than larger competitors, their leadership styles differ, and the majority of SMEs, particularly micro-sized firms, lack clear management strategies (Grey & Garsten, 2001). The conceptual framework (Figure 6, p.64) summarised from previous literature is more suitable for big companies. Since the process of building trust in SMEs may differ from that of larger corporations, this represents a clear gap in the research field. In order to fill the gap and understand leader-follower trust relationships in SME contexts, the first research question is as follows:

Research question one: What factors could facilitate leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs?

From the conceptual framework above (Figure 6, p.64), there are four aspects (individual characteristics, leadership/followership styles, exchanges and interactions, and external factors) discovered in previous literature that could affect leader-follower trust relationships in the workplace. Individual factors, leadership styles, followership styles, and exchanges and interactions are found to have a **direct** influence on dyadic trust between leaders and followers (Ghosh et al., 2019; Filieri et al., 2015; Dartey-Baah, 2015). External factors are found to have **indirect** influence on leader-follower trust relationships through influencing leadership styles and followership styles (Kauppi, 2013). In order to examine whether these aspects have an influence on leader-follower trust relationships **in SME contexts**, there are four sub-questions regarding these four aspects:

Sub-question one: What individual characteristics will facilitate trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs?

Sub-question two: What leadership/followership styles will facilitate trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs?

Sub-question three: Which types of exchanges or interactions could influence trust relationships between leaders and followers?

Sub-question four: What external factors influence trust relationships in the workplace?

The integrated answers to these four sub-questions facilitate answering the main research question one and help generate a new conceptual framework to enhance comprehension regarding the various elements that may influence trust relationships between leaders and followers **in SME contexts**.

Secondly, most research has focused on trust from followers to leaders, with little attention paid to what factors influence trust from leaders to followers (Hughes & Saunders, 2021; Jawahar, Stone & Kluemper, 2019; Bozer & Jones, 2018). Trust is not always mutual due to its asymmetrical nature, and investigating trust on a unidirectional level may limit the practical contribution in business practises (Gillespie, Fulmer & Lewicki, 2021). More attention should be paid to the study of dyadic trust between leaders and followers, this presents another

gap in the research field. In order to further the theoretical development of organisational trust at the dyadic level and discover different weights of trust-influencing factors, the second research question is as follows:

Research question two: What are the similarities and/or differences between perspectives of leaders and followers with regard to influential factors on leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs?

Despite examining the similarities and/or differences of leaders and followers' perspectives towards leader-follower trust relationships, this research intends to examine whether any aspect is more important than others and what the drivers are. This research added the final sub-question, sub-question five:

Sub-question five: What is the most important aspect in determining leader-follower trust relationships from within individual characteristics, leadership/followership styles, exchanges and interactions, and external factors? What are the drivers or determinants that make this aspect so important?

Chapter 3 Methodology

After reviewing literature, there were some gaps in the trust research field, firstly research of trust in SMEs is scarce (Dowling et al., 2019; Schaefer et al., 2016), and secondly trust studies on a dyadic level need more attention (Hughes & Saunders, 2021; Jawahar, Stone & Kluemper, 2019; Bozer & Jones, 2018). In order to fill the gaps, this research applies a critical realist view to seek out mechanisms through inference from collected data (Stutchbury, 2022; Hu, 2018), and generates a conceptual framework to enhance comprehension regarding the various factors that may influence trust relationships between leaders and followers on a dyadic level.

In order to conduct research in an under-researched area (trust relationships in SMEs) and explore as many trust influential factors as possible, a qualitative method is applied in this research. Qualitative methods within trust research field are important for investigating trust relationships and developing trust theory, and it could maximize our understanding of the rich and complex nature of trust and interrelations (Saunders, Lyon & Möllering, 2015). Additionally, critical realism suggests that in-depth and intensive qualitative research is best placed to make causal conclusions, and qualitative method might be more suitable for generating mechanisms and uncovering underlying causes for social science researchers (Fryer, 2022; Danermark et al., 2001).

The research subjects are SMEs in the UK, since SMEs are vital economic components of the UK and play important roles in increasing UK innovation and productivity (BEIS, 2021a; Savlovski & Robu, 2011). There are several types of SMEs, and the types of firms influence the types of employment relations (Scase, 2003; Kinnie, 1999). There are primarily three types of employment relations in SMEs: traditional employment relations, egalitarian employment relations, and employment relations in creative or professional SMEs (Goffee & Scase, 2015; Farndale et al., 2015; Lin et al., 2009). The influential factors of trust may differ in different organisational types/approaches of employment relationships (Hasel & Grover, 2017).

This research intends to investigate trust relationships in innovative SMEs, since trust could encourage employees' talents, creativity, and passion (Delmas & Pekovic, 2018; Carey & Naudin, 2006), develop organization's competitive advantages (Delmas & Pekovic, 2018). Trust plays a key role in the extent to which it fosters long-term relationships and could help to increase cooperation and collaboration, which helps SMEs maintain market competitiveness and develop organisational performance (Bouncken & Kraus, 2013; Chin et al., 2012). Trust is vital for innovative SMEs (Hasel & Grover, 2017).

In order to investigate what factors could foster trust relationships between leaders and followers in innovative SMEs and narrow down the research, this research selects the Assistive Technology (AT) industry and the mental health sector as research subjects. These two industries aim to assist vulnerable groups live and enjoy quality social activities, as well as to increase social wellbeing (WHO, 2018a; WHO, 2018b; Parant et al., 2017). AT refers to products or services that help people function and maintain their independence (WHO, 2018a). More than the absence of mental disorders or disabilities, mental health reflects a state of total physical, mental, and social well-being (WHO, 2018b). Both industries require highly skilled professionals, maintaining trust in these

organisations could help to build a healthy and relaxed working environment and may allow professionals to help people in need and/or invent new products (Mudahogora-Murekezi, 2020; Maslach & Leiter, 2016).

In the context of this research, the database of SMEs is generally small (Ardic, Mylenko & Saltane, 2012), and research of trust in SMEs is scarce (Dowling et al., 2019; Schaefer et al., 2016). Under a critical realist view, a qualitative approach is more suitable for this research. To fulfill research gaps and answer research questions, this research used two types of qualitative methods: individual interviews and focus group interviews. Individual interviews were conducted to gain a comprehensive understanding of participants' perspectives on what factors may influence leader-follower trust relationships at work, whereas focus group interviews were conducted to discuss interview results and provide additional supporting evidence to the research findings.

This chapter starts by explaining the choice of critical realism as the philosophical paradigm. Following a rationale for the qualitative approach according to the measurement content of trust, and 3.3 and 3.4 detail data collection techniques and research designs for individual interviews and focus groups. Then 3.5 discusses the choice of sample and sampling skills, 3.6 describes the data collection process, and 3.7 introduces the approach to data analysis. The challenges and limitations of the research design are discussed at the end of this chapter.

3.1 Philosophical stance

Research methodology plays a significant role in social science research, a lack of consideration of the philosophical nature of research may influence research process and the quality of results (Adams, Khan & Raeside, 2014). Research philosophy as a system of a researcher's thought provide a foundation to reliable and quality knowledge, and it also inspire researchers to be creative and to know research limitations (Loseke, 2012). In order to produce satisfactory outcomes from research, philosophy is primarily concerned and inevitably discussed, since researchers' individual perspectives towards understanding knowledge and interpreting reality of the world determine their choices of research design, methods, data analysis and interpretation etc. (Gaver, 2012; Loseke, 2012). As a consequence, philosophical stance and assumptions could support researchers to find the proper strategies, techniques and methods to conduct research (Easterby-Smith et al., 2004).

Understanding various research approaches contribute to a clearer research design process, help researchers to expect which research design is more proper, allow researchers to identify unknown research designs, and support researchers to develop a research identity (Adams, Khan & Raeside, 2014). Therefore, initially the philosophical stance was clarified to establish a foundation of how to conduct the research, by introducing different research paradigms in trust-studying research field. After the discussion of philosophical stance of the research, research methods, data collection strategy, research designs, and analysis approaches are introduced in sequence.

3.1.1 Research paradigm

Research paradigm is a lens for researchers to view the world and a guidance to conduct research, which guides the investigation under certain belief system or world view (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012; Krauss, 2005). Paradigms as frameworks include an agreed set of theories and methods, and it could be identified as the philosophical stance which theories and practices operate (Schwandt, 2001). The investigation of a research topic involves philosophical choices in the background, and paradigms suggest frameworks to clarify each choice (Easterby-Smith, Lyles & Tsang, 2008). The following Table 4 shows the philosophical assumptions constituents of a research paradigm (Easterby-Smith, Thorpe & Jackson, 2012; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012).

TABLE 4 CONSTITUENTS OF RESEARCH PARADIGMS

Ontology	The nature of reality or being.
Epistemology	Beliefs and assumptions about the nature of knowledge.
Methodology	General strategies that outline how to conduct research.
Methods	Specific techniques of conducting research and collecting data.

Ontology is defined as “the science or study of being”, which explains the nature of reality (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). Ontological positions reflect researchers’ views of the truth, and it is associated with the consideration of what reality is (Blaikie & Priest, 2017). The debates about ontology concentrate on whether social entities could be perceived objectively or subjectively (Adams, Khan & Raeside, 2014). People who believe the truth is objective claim that the world is external and cannot be affected by the social world, while people who believe the truth is subjective state that the actions of social activities could create social phenomena (Wilson, 2010). Objective ontology aims at discovering what is there, which consider causality, and fundamental laws (Bryman, 2016). Subjective ontology aims at understanding human being’s interpretations and perceptions, and views the world is constructed, established, and consistently changeable (ibid).

Epistemological assumptions help researchers to form research questions, suitable methods, and the knowledge they contribute to social science (Tsoukas & Chia, 2011). Individual background, education, personal experiences could affect one’s attitudes towards how to gain knowledge (Easterby-Smith et al., 2004). Epistemology in business research negotiates the sources of knowledge, and it discusses possibilities and limitations of knowledge in the field of study (Loseke, 2012). In research philosophy, there are mainly four categories of knowledge sources related to business research, which is intuitive knowledge, authoritarian knowledge, logical knowledge and empirical knowledge (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). Wherein, intuitive knowledge contingent on personal intuition, faith, and beliefs etc.; authoritarian knowledge obtains information from books, research papers etc.; logical knowledge is new knowledge which is derived and created from the application of logical processes; empirical knowledge relies on objective facts and cases which have been built and tested (ibid).

Methodological assumptions decide the process of conducting research according to researchers' own experience, and it is a combination of techniques or tools (Mackenzie & Knipe, 2006). As a result, methodology aims at examining the logic and rationale of why particular methods are applied, rather than explaining specific research methods or tools (Easterby-Smith et al., 2004). Three main approaches, inductive, deductive and abductive, illustrate research process and potential results. Inductive approach helps to develop or creative theories, which starts with specific observations to broader generalization (Loseke, 2012). As an exploratory approach, induction asserts the truth by supportive cases (ibid). Deductive approach starts with literature and then empirical investigation, which aims at hypothesis testing (Bryman, 2016). Consequently, deductive research flows from more general to specific situations (ibid). However, inductive and deductive approaches are criticized with several issues, wherein inductive approach is criticized by the lack of empirical data and limitations of generalization, and deductive approach is criticized by the rationale of proposed hypothesis and selected theories (Lipscomb, 2012). Abductive approach as a pragmatic approach starts with unexpected facts which cannot be explained by existing theories, and the research aims at explaining it and finding causes (Tavory & Timmermans, 2014). The criticised issues of abductive approach are the prediction of causes and explanations may not be the only reason caused by incomplete observation of unexpected facts (ibid).

Research methods are specific tools of collecting and processing data (Morgan, 2007). Selected methods represent researchers' personal choice of epistemology, and methods are commonly related to the selected epistemology (Blaikie & Priest, 2017). Techniques, methods, and tools applied in studies will impact research results, some examples of methods are statistical testing, survey, secondary data analysis, case study, observation, interviews, action research (ibid).

A suitable research paradigm is the foundation for researchers to conduct research systematically and logically (Creswell & Clark, 2017). The purpose of this research is to generate a conceptual framework and enhance comprehension regarding the various elements that may influence trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs. By examining factors that influence trust from the perspectives of both leaders and followers, this research seeks to contribute to the development of organisational trust theory on a dyadic level. Therefore, the key topic and research area is organisational trust. Chesbrough and Bogers (2014) stated that being open to different paradigms is important to be innovative and provide practical results, and it is important to know how others in this research field to conduct research. In organisational trust research field, according to a systematic review from Isaeva et al. (2015), paradigms that most scholars chose to conduct research are positivism, interpretivism, pragmatism, and critical realism. The following Table 5 summarises and compares philosophical assumptions among these four paradigms, and the next section discusses how these paradigms are applied in trust research field.

TABLE 5 SUMMARY OF PHILOSOPHICAL ASSUMPTIONS OF POSITIVISM, INTERPRETIVISM, PRAGMATISM AND CRITICAL REALISM

Dimensions of comparison	Positivism	Interpretivism	Pragmatism	Critical realism
--------------------------	------------	----------------	------------	------------------

Ontology	External, concrete, and objective, independent reality.	Socially constructed and subjective, may change.	Reality is relative concept. View is chosen to answer research questions.	Objective, exists independently from human thoughts, but people cannot completely comprehend.
Epistemology	Credible data or facts were provided only by observable phenomena. Focus on causality and generalisations.	Data collected from subjective meanings and social phenomena. Focus on a reality behind details, subjective meanings, and motivating actions.	Either or both observable phenomena and subjective meanings can provide acceptable. Focus on practical applied studies to answer research questions.	Observable phenomena provide credible data, facts. Insufficient data may deliver inaccurate results, and phenomena create sensations which are open to misinterpretation. People's perception of reality is always incomplete and fallible. Focus on explaining within a context or contexts.
Methodology	Deductive	Inductive	Inductive/Deductive/Abductive	Inductive/Deductive/Abductive
Methods	Quantitative	Qualitative	Quantitative/Qualitative/Mixed methods	Quantitative/Qualitative/Mixed methods
Aims and goals	Discovery Causal relationship Theory confirming	Invention Deeper understanding of meanings	Answer research questions	Exposure Theory building or development
Outcome	Causality	Understanding	Pragmatic results	Correlation

3.1.2 Research paradigms in the trust research field

Positivist researchers usually conduct questionnaire-based survey to quantify organisational trust among companies to investigate the function of trust in customer satisfactions and cooperation relationships with suppliers, or the mediating effects of trust in companies (Karatepe et al., 2018; Ismail, Alam & Hamid, 2017; Isaeva et al., 2015; Bylok et al., 2015). In this research field, positivist investigations improved and/or connected existing theories by examining causal relationships among variables, such like job satisfaction, organisational justice, organisational citizenship behaviour (Karatepe et al., 2018; Üsdiken, 2010). As a result, positivist studies have provided wide coverage for future practices, and offer justifications for organization development (Karatepe et al., 2018; Isaeva et al., 2015; Adams, Khan & Raeside, 2014). However, for exploratory studies without certain theories, positivism cannot properly provide a research framework for researchers (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). In addition, since positivists advocate scientific and objective knowledge, studies conducted under a positivist view tent to create law-like generalizations, causal explanations and predicting behaviours (Blaikie & Priest, 2017). Therefore, the other most common judgement of positivism is the lack of context sensitivity (Reed & Carstensen, 2012). In this research, the one of the main purposes is to explore what factors could influence trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs, rather than testing hypotheses or making prediction. As a result, positivism is not a suitable view to the research.

Interpretivists, who conduct research with an interpretivist lens, tend to analyse and explore different constructions and meanings according to their personal experiences rather than gathering statistical data or measuring occurrence frequency of certain patterns (Adams, Khan & Raeside, 2014; Arnott, 2007). Depending on interpretivists' view of world, construction and deeper understanding of meanings are key to contribute to knowledge (Goldkuhl, 2012). Therefore, they tend to understand and learn from different people about trust relationships rather than generalising data (ibid). Interpretivists provide new angle and concepts of trust in the research field, which widens the range of understanding of trust (Arnott, 2007). The main critic of interpretivism is interpretivist paradigm usually create and construct knowledge contingent on sense making, which only presents personal subjective ideas and can barely be generalised (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). As a result, interpretivism presents low reliability, since outcomes from interpretivist views could be affect by emotions, environments, and experiences (ibid). Though interpretivists could in-depth understand one's options and create potential possibilities in the research field, the result to a large extent could be considered as bias (Carminati, 2018).

In organisational trust research field, **pragmatists** follow a practical manner to test and/or explain trust relationships to improve business performance (Lorino, 2018; Isaeva et al., 2015; Elkjaer & Simpson, 2011; Morgan, 2007; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Sanzo and his colleagues (2012) applied a pragmatist view to analyse the mediating effect of trust among organisational learning and marketing capabilities, which creates a new model to explain marketing capabilities. Viitaharju and Lahdesmaki (2012) conducted a sequential exploratory study to investigate the antecedents of organisational trust in food sectors, which explores the key factors of trust building between companies. The emergence of pragmatism provides researchers a new approach to conduct research, and it has been applied in organisational trust research field to practically solve issues including trust relationships, influence of trust, mediating factors of trust and implications of quality trust relationships etc. (Lorino, 2018). However, since pragmatism have a flexible assumption of ontology and epistemology and apply whatever methods needed to solve problems, pragmatism generally has been criticized from a range of perspectives (Kaushik & Walsh, 2019). Without a sound foundation of truth and knowledge, almost all ideas or virtual ideas are warranted, and the results and/or explanations are products of "make-believe" (Smith, Bekker & Cheater, 2011; Rorty, 2007). Bourne and other critics (2003) argued if there is no stable and consistent belief of truth, any results can be proved and disproved at the same time.

Critical realism mediates the polarization of positivism and interpretivism and proposes a more realist stance for social science researchers (Shannon-Baker, 2016). Critical realism, in some aspect, is similar to pragmatism, however, their ontological and epistemological assumptions are different (Modell, 2009). Critical realists view there is a certain truth which is too complex to grasp, and the unobservable entities are still real, while pragmatism believes at the end of history there is a truth, but current truth is tentative and changeable over time (Shannon-Baker, 2016). Critical realism emphasizes perspective diversity and relationships among people, as a result, it allows process-based causal investigations and evaluation-oriented studies (Maxwell & Mittapalli, 2010).

However, critical realists have a different view of causality from positivists, since CR-based studies introduce how and why events occur and provide causal explanations rather than predictions (Wynn & Williams 2012). Under a critical realist view, the reality is independent from human interpretations, and repeated observations and intellectual skills from researchers could only help people close to the reality (ibid). Therefore, in terms of critical realistic causality, causal explanations describe the tendency or possibility of certain relationships in a specific context rather than a law-like pattern, and repeated observations cannot reveal the real causes of social events (Hu, 2018).

In organisational trust studies, critical realism is applied to understand implications of trust and emphasize importance of trust in organisations (Wallo & Kock, 2018; Mesu et al., 2015). For exploratory research, critical realists hold a view to emphasise ontological questions (i.e. what is X? how does it work?) rather than epistemological questions (i.e. how to know X?), and qualitative methods help in-depth understand mechanisms (Vincent & O'Mahoney, 2018). Trust studies, with a critical realism paradigm, investigate how trust work between workers, and discuss how to build trust relationship etc. (ibid).

Critics of critical realism focus on operation issues, since it hard to prescribe which methods are suitable for exploring which problems (Edwards, O'Mahoney & Vincent, 2014). The choice of methods contingent on researchers' experiences and intuitions (Vincent & O'Mahoney, 2018; Adams, Khan & Raeside, 2014). Moreover, it can barely generate specific domain level theories, it can only help to understand a specific context or stratified situation from social world (Zachariadis, Scott & Barrett, 2013).

3.1.3 Justification for adopting a critical realist approach

According to the discussion of critical realism above, critical realists seek out casual mechanisms through a focus on what people can achieve to infer the causes of events in a certain social context (Hu, 2018). Under the critical realist view, the causal mechanisms are invisible to observers, and they are identified through researchers' inferences based on the analysis of collected data (Stutchbury, 2022). Therefore, critical realism is more appropriate for uncovering underlying causes and correlations than observable and measurable outcomes (Wynn & Williams 2012). For exploratory research, critical realists hold a view to emphasising ontological questions (i.e., what is X?; how does it work?) rather than epistemological questions (i.e., how to know X?), and qualitative methods help in-depth understand mechanisms (Vincent & O'Mahoney, 2018).

The purpose of this research is to generate a conceptual framework and enhance comprehension regarding the various elements that may influence trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs. By examining factors that influence trust from the perspectives of both leaders and followers, this research seeks to contribute to the development of organisational trust theory on a dyadic level. Additionally, it aims to offer practical suggestions to SME practitioners on how to foster trust between leaders and followers in the workplace. Critical realism focuses on generating mechanisms through inference and suggesting solutions for certain contexts (Wallo & Kock, 2018), which reconciles with the motivation of this research to generate a conceptual framework

to develop organisational trust theory, and to develop leader-follower trust relationships for SME practitioners. In order to uncover the underlying causes of leader-follower trust, this research proposes two main questions. Firstly, the first research question is, “*What factors could facilitate leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs?*”, which aims at investigating whether existing theories could be applied in a SME context and exploring if there are any extra factors that could facilitate trust in SMEs. Secondly, the second research question is, “*What are the similarities and/or differences between the perspectives of leaders and followers with regard to influential factors on leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs?*”, which aims at in-depth investigating trust relationships between leaders and followers and summarising differences and similarities to critically develop trust theories on a dyadic level by understanding perspectives from both leaders and followers.

The criticism that qualitative analysis cannot produce causal knowledge was objected by critical realists, in which critical realism suggests that in-depth and intensive qualitative research is best placed to make causal conclusions (Fryer, 2022; Danermark et al., 2001). Additionally, exploratory qualitative research might be more suitable for generating mechanisms and uncovering underlying causes for social science researchers (Fryer, 2022). The arguments coincide with the methodological choice and the data collection techniques of this research. This research adopted a qualitative method to gain an in-depth understanding of leaders and followers’ perspectives on influential trust factors and applied interview techniques to collect data. The details of methodological choice and data collection techniques are discussed in 3.2 and 3.3.

After clarifying philosophical stance of the research, the next section introduces methodological choice with presenting trust measurement contents firstly. Then it discusses methods applied in trust research field and explain the methodological choice of this research.

3.2 Methodological choice

Due to the dynamic and subjective nature of trust, the biggest challenge for trust researchers is its measurement contents (Chang, Hussain & Dillon, 2006). Individuals cannot explicitly define and measure willingness, capability, and other internal factors, as a result, trust is usually measured and estimated through evaluation, behaviour observation and correlation (McEvily & Tortoriello, 2011). Moreover, trustworthiness is considered as a measuring content in trust-related studies (Ben-Ner & Halldorsson, 2010; Hardin, 1993), since trustworthiness as a characteristic is easier to be quantified and calculated than trust (Dietz & Den Hartog, 2006). However, Bauer (2019) and Wright (2010) disagreed that measurement of trustworthiness can only present individual characteristic of trustees. They argued trust relationships include two parties (trustors and trustees), and the measurement of trustworthiness simply ignores perceived trust of trustees (i.e., the trust from trustors to trustees, and what trustees perceived) (Bauer, 2019; Wright, 2010). Additionally, trust has a dynamic nature, trustors’ trustworthiness affects trust relationships as well (Korsgaard, Brower, & Lester, 2015). Therefore, in trust research field, there is no consensus of trust measurement contents (Arteaga, 2020). In order to conduct

this research and decide the methodological choice of this research, the following section clarified trust contents of organisational trust.

3.2.1 Measurement contents of organisational trust

Understanding the notion of trust is the first question of measuring of trust, and there are some related concepts are usually confused with trust (Uslaner, 2015). These concepts include trustworthiness, faith, and confidence, and these concepts or terms not always encompass trust itself (ibid). The distinct difference from trust and trustworthiness is trust emanates from a person, and trustworthiness is one of objects of trust (Wolfensberger & Wrigley, 2019). The logical relationship between trust and trustworthiness is people trust in others because of one's signal of trustworthiness, however, there are other objects or clues of trust which cannot be presented by trustworthiness (Flores & Solomon, 2001). For instance, intimate relationships, such like couples or parent-children relationships, could create trust without trustworthiness (Kruse, 2007).

Moreover, trust is not the same as faith, since faith usually have no reasons (McCraw, 2015). Trust needs people take risks, and it is important to have reasons to make strategic decisions which help minimise uncertainties for trustors as much as possible (Bauer, 2019; McCraw, 2015). Trust does not exist if one has all information, and if one trusts others with no information, there is no need for trust as well (Corritore, Kracher & Wiedenbeck, 2003). Therefore, to some extent faith is on the opposite side of trust, since faith illustrates a fully supported behaviour from one person to another without reasons (Wolfensberger & Wrigley, 2019). In terms of confidence, confidence is the concept that most easily confused with trust, since confidence as a justified expectation is based on trustee's previous performances (Mosch & Prast, 2010). Similar to faith, though confidence encompass certain risks, confidence itself implies stability (Mosch & Prast, 2010). In other words, the risk is not perceived much enough to need a trust relationship (Wolfensberger & Wrigley, 2019).

However, the clarification between differences of trust and other confusing concepts does not mean trustworthiness or confidence cannot present trust, it aims at illustrating that measurement of only trustworthiness and/or confidence is not enough for trust researchers (McCraw, 2015). Trust as a multi-disciplinary concept and a cognitive mental state needs to be enriched with more contents (ibid). After outlining differences of confusing concepts and trust, three main measurement contents of trust are discussed.

The first measurement content is **trust belief** which indicates one party's positive expectancy/belief towards another part (Dumouchel, 2005). In another words, trust belief means one party assume the other party's behaviour will meet their expectancy (Dumouchel, 2005; Rousseau et al., 1998; Mayer, Davis & Schoorman, 1995). One approach to present trust belief is assessing others' trustworthiness, and another approach to present trust belief is discussing perceived trust (Dietz & Den Hartog, 2006). However, McEvily et al. (2003) argued trust belief is according to trustors' feelings and hopefulness, which may not result in trust actions and/or behaviours. As a result, trust decision and trust action as measurement contents was proposed to reflect trust (Park & Kim, 2012; McEvily, Perrone & Zaheer, 2003).

Trust decision is based on one's intention to trust and one's propensity to trust, while trust action is a trusting behaviour which specifically describes individual performance (Gillespie, 2004). Both measurement contents are easy to be recorded and observed (ibid). However, critiques about these two measurement contents discuss that trust decision is strongly linked to personal attributes and intention which does not contain any information from the other party (Gill et al., 2005). Additionally, similar to trust belief, trust decision cannot guarantee any trust behaviours as well (Nooteboom, 2003). In terms of **trust action**, Dumouchel (2005) argued that not all trust action is trust-based, and there are usually other reasons might influence trust action. Therefore, discerning which behaviours are trust-based requires analysis of reasons, which means observation of trust action is unable to reflect trust as well (Wolfensberger & Wrigley, 2019). Each measurement content of trust has its own weaknesses and strengths, the choice of measurement content needs to be linked with research purpose. The next section introduces the measurement content of trust in this research.

3.2.2 Measurement content of this research

In order to choose a measurement content, it is important to review the trust definition and the main purpose of this research. According to the definition of trust for this research mentioned in literature review, the author considers trust as a positive belief from one party to another party and a willingness to render oneself vulnerable. Concerning of the definition, the measurement of trust belief and trust decision is more suitable to reflect the trust in this research. In terms of the research purpose, this research aims at exploring dyadic trust between leaders and followers in SMEs, and accordingly the opinions and perceived trustworthiness from both parties is important. The measurement content needs to contain the consideration from both parties. Since trust decision is an observation of trustor's trust intention, and it is hard to consider trustees' decision from the view of trustors. Therefore, trust belief which demonstrates ones' positive expectation towards others could reflect trustors' trust intention and could also show perceived trust from trustees. Additionally, this research aims at investigating trust influential factors rather than outcomes or implications of trust, a specific trust behaviour or action is not necessary to be presented. With the analysis of the trust definition and the purpose, the measurement content of this research is trust belief.

As mentioned above, one possible approach to present trust belief is assessing others' trustworthiness, and variables related to trustworthiness are ability, benevolence, and integrity (Dietz & Den Hartog, 2006). Another approach to present trust belief is analysing perceived trust which could be affected by other party's behaviours (McEvily & Tortoriello, 2011). Additionally, the research context is in SMEs where leaders and followers usually share a close relationship. Therefore, in order to take the close relationship into consideration, influence of long-term relationships on trust was evaluated as well. More thorough information about measuring contents is discussed in *section 3.4 research design*. After clarifying measurement content of this research, following discussion covers some related research methods.

3.2.3 Research methods in trust research field

According to the discussion of paradigms in 3.1, it summarised and mentioned in trust research field, all qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method could be applied to make contributions to trust studies under a critical realist view.

In terms of quantitative method, the most frequently applied instrument for measuring trust belief is a scale called organisational trust inventory (OTI), and trustworthiness is applied as an indicator to present trust (Kourdi & Bibb, 2017). OTI was proposed by Mayer, Davis and Schoorman in 1995, and this scale has been developed and added with new items by scholars to measure trust quantitatively (e.g., Poon et al., 2006; Tzafrir & Dolan, 2004; Huff & Kelly, 2003; Tyler, 2003; Gillespie, 2003). Studies which adopted quantitative method usually applies secondary data or questionnaire survey to test hypothesis and develop existing theories, therefore, quantitative method needs supports from abundant resources of data to ensure the validity of inquiries (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012).

Studies of trust with qualitative method include applying grounded theory, case study, interview, focus group, and observation as research techniques to in-depth understand and explore trust related issues (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). By leaving space to participants and having in-depth conversation in a specific context and a topic, the results could constructively provide creative suggestions and/or uncover new themes to research questions (Cropley & Cropley, 2015).

Mixed method which mixes qualitative method and quantitative method in research design has the most flexible combination of research techniques (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). Applying qualitative methods and quantitative methods in different sequence could suit any research purpose, such like exploratory research, explanatory research, convergent research, and embedded research (Harrison & Reilly, 2011; Bryman, 2006). As mixed method at least needs the contribution from two different types of methods, it is considered as a complex and time-consuming method in social science research (Teddlie & Tashakkori, 2003).

In the context of this research, due to the fact that the database of SMEs is generally small, there is insufficient data available in SMEs to support quantitative research or mixed-method research (Ardic, Mylenko, & Saltane, 2012). In addition, trust studies in SMEs are rare, and there is still a gap in leader-follower trust relationships in this context (Schaefer et al., 2016). In order to in-depth understand leader-follower trust relationships in this context, the qualitative approach could facilitate enriching the findings, providing a more comprehensive result, and answering research questions (Gerstenfeld & Roberts, 2017; Armstrong et al., 2014; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012; McEvily & Tortoriello, 2011). This research aims to investigate leader-follower trust relationships as influential factors on a dyadic level, which requires an in-depth understanding of opinions from both leaders and followers. Therefore, considering time, data access, research context, and research aims, a qualitative approach is more suitable to achieve the exploratory goal of this research.

3.3 Data collection techniques

3.3.1 Structured interview

Interviewing has become a prevalent method for researchers to understand social complexities and collect data in various research fields (Adams, 2010). Interviews provide a useful way for researchers to approach the world of others and learn attitudes of others, though real understanding may be hard to achieve (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). For exploratory qualitative research, with the application of interviews as data collection method, it allows researchers to in-depth understand a research topic in limited time (Adams, Khan & Raeside, 2014). For individual interviews, the major types of interviews include structured interview, semi-structured interview, and unstructured interview (Williamson, 2013).

Semi-structured interviews and unstructured interviews are usually flexibly designed to study a one person's experience of a phenomena or to capture the perspectives of participants as much as possible on issues relevant to a topic (Peters & Halcomb, 2015). Both types of interviews provide participants opportunities to reveal their opinions and free-flowing thoughts towards an issue, and basically the followed questions prompted by researchers were generated or inspired by participants' answers (ibid). One advantage of these two methods is that they can produce powerful data according to participants' personal experiences, perceptions, or opinions (Goldkuhl, 2012). The disadvantage is obvious though, since interview questions are not scheduled in advance, researchers, especially novice or untrained researcher, cannot fully control the range of discussed topics (Carminati, 2018).

In structured interviews, interview questions were scheduled and pre-established by researchers, and all participants are interviewed with the same questions (Qu & Dumay, 2011). Structured interviews therefore lack flexibility as researchers need read from a script and ask questions as planned (ibid). There are three significant advantages of structured interview. Firstly, structured interviewing ensures both researchers and participants highly focus on one topic, and it motivates participants to provide high quality responses as researchers establish a rapport with participants through personal interaction (Williamson, 2013). Secondly, structured interviewing avoids "don't know" answers and non-responses situations, since researchers could explain and clarify questions to participants (Burino, Awan & Lanjwani, 2017). Thirdly, structured interviews allow researchers to obtain extra information through observing participants or chatting with participants before and after the interview (Harrell & Bradley, 2009).

Due to the influence of COVID-19 during data collection process, changes of working styles not only increase the difficulties of finding participants, but also make physical face-to-face interviews unworkable. As a result, all interviews were implemented online via Zoom. For the past ten years, online interview has been discussed with the development of video chat, such like Skype, Teams, and Zoom etc. (Archibald et al., 2019). Online interviewing allows researchers to collect data without the influence of time and location of participants, and it ensures privacy of the conversation since both researchers and participants can choose a comfortable place to take interviews (Peters & Halcomb, 2015). Additionally, online interviewing without geographical distance is

considered as a cost-effectively approach to conduct interviews, and it is able to connect researchers and participants cross the world (Oates, 2015).

This research aims at generating a conceptual framework and enhance comprehension regarding the various elements that may influence trust relationships between leaders and followers. In order to obtain insights from participants and adjust to online interviews, the author applied structured interview to collect data. Firstly, structured interview can help both the author and participants focus on the topic precisely, which ensures the quality of the conversations. Additionally, online interview includes uncertain distractions, such like interruptions of family members or notifications of emails, structured interview could guarantee a good involvement and it is easy for participants to follow even they are interrupted. Secondly, this research had two parties, leaders and followers, structured interview could help see patterns, differences, and/or similarities in their answers (Rashidi et al., 2014; Segal et al., 2006), which makes it easier to analyse data and answer research questions. Thirdly, to ensure participants had opportunities to express their opinions freely and to in-depth understand their perspectives towards leader-follower trust relationships some open-ended questions were included in interview questions, and the interview contents are presented in section 3.4. After clarifying the main research method of the research, the next section discusses validity and reliability of the data.

3.3.2 Validity and reliability

The main concern of structured interview is how to minimise researcher bias and develop generalizability of the results (Qu & Dumay, 2011). From the perspective of researchers, researcher bias may affect the designing of interview questions; while from the perspective of participants, participants may be affected by the researchers' opinions or revealed expectations consciously or unconsciously and choose to provide answers in ways they consider acceptable to researchers (Dowling, 2006). Moreover, generalizability is a common debatable topic of interview method, as researchers cannot get a large number of participants due to limited time or cost (Vasileiou et al., 2018).

In order to minimise research bias and generalise research results, consideration of validity and reliability of research instruments are significant to findings (Alshenqeeti, 2014). Validity in qualitative research includes two types, internal validity and external validity (Creswell & Poth, 2016). Internal validity means if the research applies appropriate method, processes, or tools to reflect the specific concepts and deliver accurate results (Leung, 2015; Alshenqeeti, 2014); while external validity indicates objectivity and generalizability of the results (Creswell & Poth, 2016; Berg, 2007). Reliability in qualitative research refers to if the results and processes are replicable (Carcary, 2009).

There are some strategies for qualitative researchers to minimise the possibility of bias and lead to higher validity and reliability. Before the start of interview, conducting a pilot interview provides researchers opportunities to rethink the rationale of interview questions from interactions with pilot test participants (Jansen, 2010). During the interview, researchers need to avoid asking leading questions, since participants sometimes tend to provide

answers which seems acceptable by the researcher (Grossoehme, 2014; Cohen et al., 2007). Additionally, it is better to give the participants opportunities to summarise and clarify the points they have made rather than summarising participants' messages (Toye et al., 2013).

With a view to ensure validity and reliability of the data, the author did pilot test with friends and colleagues to edit interview questions before formal interviews. During the interview, active listening as a technique is applied to avoid leading participants with the authors' perspectives. Section 4.6 introduces details of data collection process with clarifying the process of data collection, ethnical consideration, and active listening via Zoom. In addition to structured interview, the author also applied focus group interview to develop the validity and reliability of the data. The next section discusses details of focus group method.

3.3.3 Focus group interviews

In focus group interviews, several people are interviewed around one topic through a flexible and exploratory discussion atmosphere (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). As a convenient and time-saving method for both researchers and participants, focus group interviews are widely applied in qualitative research (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013). Interesting ideas can be simulated through group interactions, and focus group interviews provide the opportunities for researchers to collect richer information from participants (Williamson, 2013). Especially when participants are well informed or professional specialists, focus group interviews could contribute more on research topics (Krueger & Casey, 2009). For this reason, different opinions or innovative suggestions amongst participants are likely to emerge during discussions (*ibid*). Additionally, since researchers leave more discussion spaces for participants, potential bias caused by researchers in individual interviews could be reduced (Harrell & Bradley, 2009).

However, on the negative side, these ideas may not be fully discussed or developed due to limited time (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). In addition, even if the focus group is carefully controlled, it is hard to manage the direction of discussion (Kamberelis & Dimitriadis, 2013). Popular views may dominate the discussion, while minority thoughts may have less chance to be heard (Adams, Khan & Raeside, 2014). Moreover, sensitive topics are not suitable for focus group interviews, as participants may be reluctant to discuss in public or mind disclosure of personal information (Harrell & Bradley, 2009). Consequently, background commonality and maintenance of anonymity are essential to encourage contribution and conduct a successful focus group interview (*ibid*).

Since this research applied structured interviews to collect individual perspectives towards trust relationships in the workplace, it is possible that participants may be affected or led by research questions. Even if open-ended questions were asked during interviews, and the author tried to inspire participants to explain more, the research results could be influenced and limited by the numbers of participants. In order to provide supportive evidence and a comprehensive view for the results, focus group interviews were selected as a follow-up technique to explore and expand on information obtained through individual structured interviews.

In the next section, rationale of designing structured interview questions and focus group questions are explained and introduced.

3.4 Research design

3.4.1 Interview framework

3.4.1.1 Four aspects adopted to explore participants opinions of building trust between leaders and followers in SMEs

In order to explore trust relationship influential factors between leaders and followers, the interview was designed in four aspects. Table 6 below shows details of the four aspects. Questions asked to leaders and followers in Aspect One, Aspect Three, and Aspect Four were basically the same, which ensures the validity of results would not be affected by information asymmetry. The second aspect is related to leadership and followership, and the content differences are explained in the next section.

TABLE 6 DETAILED INFORMATION OF FOUR ASPECTS OF THE INTERVIEW

	Rational-based trust (Examples and Explanations)		Relational-based trust (Examples and Explanations)	
Aspect One Characteristics (ABI model)	Ability (Expertise; Competence)	Professional skills; Qualifications or Certificates.	Benevolence (Sincerity; Goodwill)	Include others (Listen with intent; Give others a chance to talk); Extend trust to others; Care and help others.
			Integrity (Credibility; Honesty)	Tell the truth (e.g., Do not take credits for others' work); Admit when you don't know something; Admit when you're wrong.
Aspect Two Leadership & Followership	Transactional leadership	Fairness; Follow commitments.	Transformational leadership	Supportive and active communication; Active listening.
	Passive followership	Being obedient; Being flexible; Not challenging the status quo.	Proactive followership	Active, taking initiative; Responsive; Independent (e.g., offering solutions before being asked by leaders; voicing concerns).
Aspect Three Exchanges & Interactions	Negotiated exchanges	Rewards (Money; Paid leave); Training opportunities.	Reciprocal exchanges	Being valued; Being cared; Mutual respect.
			Repeated interactions	Familiarity; Reputation; Friendship; Long-term relationship.

<p>Aspect Four</p> <p>External factors</p>	<p>All participants were asked open-ended questions about what external factors could affect their trust in their leaders/followers. Furthermore, questions about COVID-19 was be explicitly proposed for discussion with all participants.</p>
---	---

External factors and environmental changes may positively or negatively affect trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs (Woo & Kang, 2020). In order to explore what factors would affect trust relationships, at the end of interview, questions related to external factors were asked to both leaders and followers. In addition, most people are forced to work from home and accept the new working style during Covid-19 restrictions, questions about trust relationships and the influence of working from home were asked as well.

This framework aims to answer research main question one (*What factors could facilitate leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs?*).

3.4.1.2 Collecting opinions from both leaders and followers

In addition to investigate trust relationship influential factors within SMEs, another purpose of this research is to explore if leaders and followers have different perspectives towards influential factors of leader-follower trust relationships. Therefore, this research includes two parties, leaders and followers, and both parties' opinions were collected. In another words, in this research, trust from leaders to followers, and trust from followers to leaders are covered, which presents leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs on a dyadic level.

Therefore, in aspect Two from Table 6, behaviours of leaders and followers were asked to participants differently to explore influence of different leadership styles and followership styles on trust relationships. After clarifying the structure of the interview framework and the two parties involved in this research, the following sections explain the rationale and contents of questions designed in each aspect.

This design aims to answer research main question two (*What are the similarities and/or differences in perspectives of leaders and followers with regard to influential factors on leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs?*).

3.4.2 Interview contents

3.4.2.1 Individual characteristics

For the first aspect, individual characteristics were mainly discussed. In order to help participants to know the key concepts of the interview and relieve tensions, the author provided some polls for participants (See

Appendix B & C for more interview contents). In order to select suitable and typical examples to present each characteristic (*ability, benevolence, integrity, etc.*), 12 tests for intra-organisational trust were used as references (McAllister, 1995; Robinson, 1996; Cummings & Bromiley, 1996; Clark & Payne, 1997; Brockner et al., 1997; Spreitzer & Misha, 1999; Mayer & Davis, 1999; Shockley-Zalabak & Ellis, 2000; Huff & Kelly, 2003; Tyler, 2003; Gillespie, 2003; Tzafrir & Dolan, 2004) to design a poll for each characteristic. In the process of designing polls, the author firstly coded items for these 12 tests into short phrases by NVivo.

For instance, in McAllister's test (1995), the first item "We have a sharing relationship, and we can freely share our ideas, feelings and hopes." was coded as "Sincere to communicate" in Benevolence sector. Since this item aims at presenting freely sharing ideas through communication, which shows leaders are benevolent to communicate with their followers.

However, not all items in 12 tests can be coded into these short phrases, items related personal identification (for instance, in Shockley-Zalabak and Ellis's test (2000), the item "My value are similar to the values of my supervisors." is related to personal value and identification), general assessment (for instance, in McAllister's test (1995), the item "Other work associates of mine who must interact with this individual consider her/him to be trustworthy." generally assessed individual trustworthy), and organisational trust (for instance, in Shockley-Zalabak and Ellis's test (2000), the item "We are highly satisfied with the capacity of the organization." indicated trust in an organisational level) were deleted in the NVivo. Appendix A shows the frequency of each phrase.

With the launch of each poll, participants' general perceptions towards a trustworthy leader/follower were asked first. Participants then were asked to select 2-3 factors which they think are important when deciding to trust a leader/follower. After knowing their general views of a trustworthy leader/follower in the workplace, the reason of why these factors is important was asked. In addition, compared with selected factors, participants' assessments towards their own leader/follower were asked. At the end of the discussion of the first aspect, participants were asked to rate and explain the importance among ability, benevolence and integrity when deciding to trust a leader/follower.

This part aims to answer research sub-question one (What individual characteristics will facilitate trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs?).

3.4.2.2 Leadership styles and followership styles

For the second aspect, there are two versions of interview questions for leaders and followers. In order to explore participants' perceptions of trust towards different leadership styles and followership styles, the author started this part with two polls which lists some statements people may be experienced in workplace.

These statements demonstrated personal behaviours which could represent different types of leadership and followership. In this part, the purpose of the polls is to help participants to recall memories of their

leader/follower's behaviours in workplace, and to inspire them to discuss their perspectives of the effect of different leadership/followership styles on trust.

Followership styles

Polls for leaders were selected and summarised from Kelley's followership questionnaire (KFQ) (Kelley, 1992). Kelley is not the only scholar to emphasize followership in organisations, Carsten and his colleagues (2010) and Uhl-Bien (2007) stated the significant role of followership as well. However, Kelley is the first one to propose that followership is as important as leadership in management field, and suggested types of followers (Gatti et al., 2014). Moreover, his questionnaire has been applied in a number of published articles (Gatti et al., 2014; Blanchard et al, 2009; Tanoff & Barlow, 2002).

In Kelley's work (1992), two dimensions were proposed to demonstrate followership, independent critical thinking (ICT) and active engagement (AE). ICT indicates behaviours with constructive criticism and innovation; while active engagement stated the propensity to take initiative and participate actively (Kelley, 1992). Followers with independent critical thinking (ICT) and active engagement (AE) are considered as proactive followership, and followers with dependent uncritical thinking (DUT) and passive engagement (PE) are considered as passive followership (Bremner, 2011).

Therefore, in order to understand the effect of different types of followership on trust, the author extracted several statements/behaviours from Kelley's questionnaire to motivate discussion during the interview. There are 20 items in the questionnaire, similar items (including reversed questions) were deleted. Appendix A shows the details of the category of each statement.

Leadership styles

Polls for followers were selected and summarised from Multiple Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) (Bass, 1985). The MLQ was initially developed by Bass (1985), the original questionnaire has 142 items (questions). Since then, the MLQ has been developed and revised in different version (Avolio & Bass, 2004). The MLQ-5X is revised and developed in 2000 and 2004 by Bass and Avolio, which contains 36 questions that measures nine components of the full range model of leadership. It is now a standard instrument to evaluate a range of transformational, transactional and non-leadership scales, and the effectiveness has been proven in many countries around the world (Boamah & Tremblay, 2019).

Transformational leadership includes five dimensions: idealized influence-attributes (IDA), idealized influence-behaviour (IDB), inspirational motivation (IMOT), intellectual stimulation (ISTM), and individualized consideration (ICON). Transactional leadership includes three dimensions: contingent reward (CREW), management-by-exception-active (MBEA) and management by-exception-passive (MBEP) (Avolio, 1999). As the poll is used to inspire participants and make them know the concept in an easy way, only a few of items (questions) were selected from MLQ-5X. Appendix A shows the details of the category of each statement.

After each poll, participants were asked “based on how you selected in the poll, how do these statement choices impact on your level of trust in your leader/follower”, which aims to understand participants perspectives of the effect of different styles of leadership/followership on trust. In addition, participants were asked if there are any other behaviours could influence their trust on their leader/follower, in order to explore factors that didn't mentioned in the polls.

This part aims to answer research sub-question two (What leadership/followership styles will facilitate trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs?).

3.4.2.3 Exchanges and interactions

For the third aspect, questions were mainly focused on personal feelings, including reciprocal exchanges and interactions. For **reciprocal exchanges**, individuals have their own choice to decide if they will reciprocate in the future, so such exchanges could be unilaterally (Molm et al., 2007). In reciprocal exchanges, most exchanges cannot be measured, such as mutual respect, care, assistance, advice etc., in such uncertain circumstances, reciprocal exchanges enable trust (Savage & Bergstrand, 2013). Therefore, in order to explore if reciprocal exchanges are essential for trust relationships, participants perceptions towards the relationship between trust and mutual respect, being emotionally supported and being valued were asked.

According to interactions, one's **reputation** could facilitate initial interaction between two parties, as individual reputation could send credible signals to their counterparts, consequently, two engaged parties are likely to cooperate and build trust gradually (Xiao & Benbasat, 2003). In addition, during repeated interactions, **familiarity** which denote reliable expectations increases between two parties, and trust increases during their cumulative interactions (Luhmann, 1979). Different from cognitive trust, cognitive trust decides the occur of the first trust behaviour, which is initial trust; while trust built through interactions among people is emotional, emotional trust decides how long a trust relationship will be retained (Molm et al., 2000). Building a **long-term** trust relationship needs more efforts from each party through repeated interactions, and in return, a spiral reinforced relationship will strengthen the trust relationship between two parties (Xiao & Benbasat, 2003). Interview questions for leaders and staff could be found in Appendix B and Appendix C.

This part aims to answer research sub-question three (Which types of exchanges or interactions could influence trust relationships between leaders and followers?).

3.4.2.4 External factors

For the fourth aspect of interview contents, some open-ended questions were asked to investigate what external factors could affect trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs. During the process of designing interview questions, a special social restriction, COVID-19 lockdown, occurs as an external

environment factor which may influence working efficiencies or team communication (Collings, 2021). Therefore, in order to explore if external environment could influence relationships, all participants were asked to assess to what extent COVID-19 has influenced their trust relationships in the workplace.

This part aims to answer research sub-question four (What external factors influence trust relationships in the workplace?).

At the end of the interview, some overview questions were asked. Firstly, participants were asked to choose the most important factor that influences them to build trust relationship in the workplace between leaders and followers from all discussed factors. Secondly, participants were asked if they have anything to add or emphasize regarding trust relationships in the workplace.

This part aims to answer research sub-question five (What is the most important aspect in determining leader-follower trust relationships from within individual characteristics, leadership/followership styles, exchanges and interactions, and external factors? What are the drivers or determinants that make this aspect so important?).

3.4.3 Data saturation and focus group design

Qualitative approach and in-depth interviews delve more deeply into what factors could help to build trust in the workplace (Adams, Khan & Raeside, 2014). For qualitative research method, a sample of loosely around 30 participants is considered as a medium size for a subject pool, and a sample of 12 is the minimum number to deliver a proper analysis and generate enough quotes for discussion (Baker & Edwards, 2012). Hennink and his colleagues (2017) examined 12 interviews for a qualitative study can achieve and deliver a proper result. However, it is not a generic sample size for saturation, due to different characteristics of different research fields. Therefore, Hennink and his colleagues (2017) through examining 25 in-depth interviews suggested that 16-24 interviews were generally needed to develop a proper understanding of issues for qualitative studies. They introduced code saturation which indicates when researchers have “heard it all” and meaning saturation which indicates “understand it all” to explain how many people is needed for a proper sample pool for qualitative researchers (Hennink et al., 2017). For a qualitative method, they found a minimum number of 9 participants could reach data saturation, while more interviews need to be conducted and analysed to reach meaning saturation (ibid).

Fusch and Ness (2015) stated that data saturation can be reached when further coding is not possible, when additional information cannot be attained, and when enough information is replicated. To ensure that data saturation is achieved, they suggested having a focus group is appropriate if one have already conducted individual interviews with a small number of participants (Fusch & Ness, 2015). The reason of conducting a focus group is to ensure individual perspectives and group perspectives are relevant, and it is a good strategy to shorten data collection process (ibid).

As a method of inquiry, the purpose of planning to conduct focus group interviews is to receive feedback from participants towards the analysis report about trust building. By conducting focus groups with leaders and followers, the interaction of group members could stimulate participants to think beyond their own private thoughts and to articulate their opinions, also during the interview some new perspectives may be discovered (Kleiber, 2003). In addition, by conducting a follow-up group interview, the author could provide a more comprehensive trust relationship model and robust conclusions. In order to collect opinions from both leaders and followers, the author arranged two focus group interviews via Zoom online. As online meeting would face more challenges and uncertain technical issues, the number of participants in each group is four, which ensures better involvement and avoids unexpected interruptions or chaotic situations.

In terms of designing of focus group questions, from one perspective, general questions related to trust relationships in SMEs, and some specific questions according to initial analysis results were proposed to be discussed. The key issue is to know their feedback and opinions towards the interview results. From another perspective, to avoid turning focus group meetings towards interviewing four participants in sequence, some open questions were asked to stimulate discussion as well. The outline of focus group questions shows in Appendix D.

After clarifying the research design with interview framework and contents, the next section introduces the sample and sampling approaches. In terms of research sites, Assistive Technology industry and mental health sector were selected, the next section introduces these two industries and state the reason and significance of choosing these two industries as research objects. Then, according to the selection of interview participants, the next section also explains who, why and how they were selected.

3.5 Sample and sampling

3.5.1 Introduction of research sites

There are four types of SMEs, dependent firm, dominated firm, isolated firm, and innovative firm (Rannie, 1989; Scase, 2003). Comparing to other types of SMEs, innovative firms require employees to be more creative, and hierarchical leadership is becoming less important (Ahmed, 2018; Riggio, Chaleff & Lipman-Blumen, 2008). In order to encourage creativity and passion, trust between leaders and followers could help to foster a relaxed working environment and facilitate authorization (Delmas & Pekovic, 2018; Hasel & Grover, 2017; Carey & Naudin, 2006). Trust is vital for the development of innovative SMEs, and it could help SMEs to maintain market competitiveness (Hasel & Grover, 2017; Armstrong et al., 2014).

Since different industries have their own features in development, it is impossible to generate one trust relationship model for all SMEs. This research focuses on Assistive Technology (AT) industry and mental health sector to conduct research, and intends to generalise findings and made contributions to similar innovative SMEs, especially innovative SMEs in health care sector. In addition, development of AT and mental health industries

have high values to the society and people, the stability and development of these two sectors are important for vulnerable people to overcome hardship (Vigo et al., 2020).

3.5.1.1 Assistive Technology industry

Assistive Technology (AT) refers to systems or services which provide products or services to improve or maintain an individual's functioning and independence (WHO, 2018a). People who are suffering from dyslexia, autism, dementia, or mobility restraints could apply AT products, software, or services to promote their well-being and live a dignified and independent life (ibid). AT products such like hearing aids, wheelchairs, communication aids, spectacles, pill organizer and memory aids are applied in social health care sector and education sector in the society (Parant et al., 2017).

With an ageing population and an increase in noncommunicable diseases, it is expected that more than 2 billion people worldwide will require at least one assistive product by 2030 (WHO, 2018). AT products could improve people's quality of life at home, work, or in public places, as well as provide access to better education and employment opportunities for those in need (MacLachlan et al., 2018). Using AT products could lower labour costs, health and social care costs, and other expenses for caregivers and caregiving organisations (ibid). As a result, this industry is becoming more important and receiving more attention than ever before (Khaksar et al., 2021).

Since the AT industry provides professional products and services to vulnerable people, most employees must be trained in the fundamentals of AT products and services (Borisoff, 2011). R&D (research and development) professionals, for example, require relevant educational background to invent new products, and installers or customer service personnel should also be trained to recommend appropriate products or provide necessary maintenance (ibid).

Small companies confront more market challenges than larger businesses because they lack the funds and resources to develop new products or retain customers (Borisoff, 2011). There are more challenges in the AT industry, such as 1) training and sales support issues, 2) regulatory issues, 3) ongoing servicing, and 4) dealing with more people in the supply chain (ibid). Though there are challenges for small AT companies to overcome in the market, there are also opportunities (Alper & Raharinirina, 2006). First of all, a small business could offer products to customers or create products specifically for them while maintaining a high standard of quality (ibid). Second, larger corporations may be hesitant to develop new products because new products may confuse customers and partners (Khan, 2018). Consequently, small businesses have the chance to design and redesign new products (ibid). Third, because the majority of AT SMEs provide services and products in a specific area, they may have a better understanding of the nuances of niche markets (Borisoff, 2011).

3.5.1.2 Mental health sector

Due to the small database in AT SMEs, it was challenging to find enough leaders and followers to participate in interviews. In order to gain access to a sufficient number of participants, this research broadened the database by selecting similar types of SMEs for pragmatic reasons.

Mental health restoration is critical for individuals, communities, and societies, and the mental health sector provides advice and treatments to individuals and organisations in order to maintain mental well-being (NHS, 2019). Mental health is more than the absence of mental disorders or disabilities; it reflects a state of total physical, mental, and social well-being (WHO, 2018b). Mental health can be influenced by socioeconomic, biological, and environmental factors, and people who are in a healthy mental health state can cope with normal stresses of life, work productively, and make contributions to communities (ibid). Restoration of mental health is essential for individuals, communities and societies, and mental health sector which provides advice and treatments to individuals and organisations to maintain mental well-being (NHS, 2019).

Both industries require highly skilled professionals, and a healthy and relaxed working environment may allow professionals to help people in need or invent new products (Maslach & Leiter, 2016). In order to maintain a stable working environment, trust is important in this process (Mudahogora-Murekezi, 2020; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). Since most workers in the AT and mental health industries are highly skilled and rarely rely on leaders, hierarchical leadership is becoming less important (Ahmed, 2018; Riggio, Chaleff & Lipman-Blumen, 2008). Therefore, influential factors of leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs may differ from these in bigger companies, due to hierarchical distinction (Shamir & Howell, 2018; Sullivan-Taylor & Branicki, 2011). Studies of trust need to focus on SMEs.

Additionally, the majority of research on trust in healthcare sector has concentrated on the role of leadership or the relationships between employees and patients, studies of trust between leaders and followers are rare (Ellwood & Garcia-Lacalle, 2015). However, the role of followership and followers may be more important, especially since followers account for at least 80% of the healthcare workforce (Crawford & Daniels, 2014). Therefore, studies of trust in SMEs should concentrate on the dyadic relationship between leaders and followers (Savolainen, Ivakko & Ikonen, 2017).

During this research, as a consequence of COVID-19, most small firms have experienced a difficult time (OECD, 2020b). The pandemic outbreak immediately altered the majority of businesses' management practises, had an impact on people's daily lives, and altered the dynamics between leaders and followers in relation to their surrounding environment (Lopez-Fresno, Savolainen & Miranda, 2021). Furthermore, the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has had a profound and long-term impact on the mental health of millions of people in our country (Hummel et al., 2021). Due to rapidly changing nature of the COVID-19 outbreak, all businesses were subjected to restrictions, lockdowns, and uncertainty during the pandemic (Gössling Scott & Hall, 2020). A healthy working environment is much more important for these two industries, as it ensures that employees in companies could provide quality services to people in need (Andaleeb & Conway, 2006).

Trust is essential for businesses to recover from disruptions of economy and facilitate the efficiency of risk management in organizations (Revilla-Camacho, Cossío-Silva & Vega-Vázquez, 2014). When relationships between people become more temporal and virtual, a paradoxical situation is that trust is more needed to facilitate cooperation, while at the same time fewer cues are presented to build trust in such circumstances (Bijlsma & Koopman, 2003). When people are forced to work from home during COVID-19, trust is needed more than before, and it is essential to maintain a trust relationship in a hardship time to ensure organisational performance, maintain working effectiveness and stable a healthy virtual working environment (Ireland et al., 2002). The next section explains why, how and who were selected as participants to take interviews.

3.5.2 Selection of SMEs and interview participants

This research intends to provide and generate a model for innovative SMEs to develop leader-follower trust relationships. The Assistive Technology industry was first selected. Firstly, the author had a network in this industry. Secondly, Assistive Technology SMEs could be considered innovative types of SMEs. The main sampling strategies were simple random and snowballing. With the help of the first participant, who is the owner of an AT SME, the author interviewed him and one of his followers. In order to approach more participants and SMEs, the author tried snowballing. However, as the author collected data during the COVID-19 pandemic, only a limited number of people volunteered for this research. Then the author collected AT SMEs' information (including email addresses and phone numbers) from two associations' websites: BHTA (British Healthcare Trades Association) and BATA (British Assistive Technology Association). Sending emails and calling the office line were ineffective when most people were working from home. The author almost contacted all members of these two associations, however, the participants from AT SMEs were not enough to conduct the research. Most SMEs faced challenges with the new working style, and people communicated less effectively than before due to manpower shortages and unexpected changes.

Due to the small database in AT SMEs, it was challenging to find enough leaders and followers to participate in interviews. In order to gain access to a sufficient number of participants, this research broadened the database by selecting similar types of SMEs for pragmatic reasons. In order to collect contact information for mental health SMEs, the author visited the Mental Health Foundation website. By sending emails and calling the office, the author got a few participants; however, the number of participants was still not enough to conduct the research.

Therefore, the author changed the contacting strategy to start finding active users on LinkedIn (the world's largest professional network for the global workforce). With the help of LinkedIn, it is easy to check companies' basic information, including company's mission, official website, size, etc., and it is easier to verify if the company operates well. Therefore, Assistive Technology and mental health SMEs who were actively posting on LinkedIn were selected as targeted SMEs.

After selecting targeted companies, the author started to contact potential participants. Since this research aims at exploring trust relationships between leaders and followers from a dyadic level, it is preferred to interview leaders and followers with a direct management relationship. To expand the number of participants, random sampling (randomly building connections on LinkedIn) and snowballing were mainly applied as sampling strategies. The author contacted SMEs' owners or leaders first and asked them to introduce their followers to participate in the research (the cover sent on LinkedIn is presented in Appendix E). By introducing research purposes and practical implications, the author arranged an online Zoom meeting with volunteer leaders and asked permission to interview their followers. Due to the sensitive feature of trust, however, not all owners or leaders were willing to introduce their followers. Additionally, some owners mentioned that due to the working from home policy, workloads increased, and not all followers had time to accept interview invitations. Considering the influence of COVID-19 and the challenges of communication, the author aims at balancing the numbers of participated leaders and followers. In order to balance the numbers leaders and followers, the author also connected with followers who are working in selected SMEs on LinkedIn. By collecting information from similar numbers of leaders and followers, it is reasonable to compare and analyse data from a macro level about the leader-follower relationship.

Since selected SMEs included small-sized companies (with employees under 50) and medium-sized companies (with employees between 50 and 250). In order to collect data as much as possible from different sources and directions, the author decided to interview at most two people (one pair of leader and follower) in small-sized company and six people (three pairs of leaders and followers) in medium-sized company.

In order to enrich data collection sources and the validity of data, the author arranged focus groups to collect more information. The next section introduces the arrangement and selection of focus group participants.

3.5.3 Focus group participants

As a reflective process, in order to deliver robust conclusions and practical recommendations according to trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs, the author arranged focus groups to discuss some initial analysis results. By conducting focus groups with leaders and followers, the interaction of group members could stimulate participants to think beyond their own private thoughts and to articulate their opinions, also during the interview some new perspectives may be discovered (Kleiber, 2003). Moreover, focus groups discussion could be helpful to understand responses and results from individual interviews (Morgan, 2002).

Focus group participants were mainly selected from previous participants, which simplifies introduction process and facilitates group discussion. Furthermore, to avoid limiting thoughts and to collect data from different sources and angles, some experts from the two industries were invited to the interview. These experts include professionals who have worked with AT SMEs and mental health SMEs in related organisations, as well as people who have worked as a human resource consultant or trainer in AT SMEs and mental health SMEs in related organisations.

Two focus group interviews with a mix of leaders and followers were scheduled. It is expected to deliver robust conclusions and practical recommendations after discussing initial analysis results with various groups of people. Some technical issues and operational difficulties cannot be ignored due to the influence of online meetings. Therefore, the number of participants were controlled in 3-4 people for each group, which ensures better involvement and considerable results (Fusch & Ness, 2015; Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). However, due to unexpected absences and last-minute cancellations, only two people attended each focus group. Despite the small number of participants, the discussion went well, and answers were fully developed within focus groups. Their responses provided detailed thoughts and supporting evidence to the research, which is displayed in analysis sections.

The next sections introduce data collection process firstly, and the consideration of some ethical improvements is discussed. Since this research was conducting online via Zoom, some techniques applied to improve online interviews for this research are introduced.

3.6 Data collection process

3.6.1 The process of conducting interview

Before formally conducting the interview with selected participants, pilot tests of interview questions were conducted. In order to adapt to Zoom interviews and test the rationale of interview questions, the author carried four pilot interviews with friends who have working experiences online. By conducting pilot tests, interview questions were developed to a more reasonable and concise version, in the meanwhile, the duration of each interview could be controlled in 40 minutes.

The duration of data collection stage was relatively long due to the difficulties of finding enough participants, and the details of challenges and solutions of data collection are explained in 3.8.1. The earliest time of a formal interview was in December 2020, while the latest time of a formal interview was in November 2021. In order to save time for conducting focus group and data analysis, the author transcribed recordings after each interview. After the initial analysis of the data, the focus group, as a follow-up interview with previous participants, was conducted to collect suggestions and opinions towards some key results or phenomenon found in completed interviews. By understanding participants' perspectives towards initial analysis results, the author could recognise whether this research approaches data saturation.

This research aims at investigating why people trust another in the workplace, it inevitably includes some personal information. The next part explains some ethical considerations.

3.6.2 Ethical consideration

Respect of every participant's autonomy is an essential ethical issue for social science researchers to proceed investigation (Garner & Scott, 2013; Hammersley, 2012). Though this research would not pose participants or the researcher in a dangerous context, trust as a sensitive topic associated with various personal feelings and individual privacy, people may be reluctant to tell truth about their genuine feelings to a stranger. Therefore, before each interview, a consent was given to every participant. Also, a short information sheet about this research was sent to participants. Appendix F is the consent, and appendix G is the short information sheet for participants.

During the interview, in order to assure participants' autonomy, participants were informed that they are under observation during the whole interview process, and what they said was recorded. Participants were informed that they have the right to withdraw anytime without reasons. After interview, any information which were not recorded will not be used in the research, and researcher is willing to send them transcription to let them review whether it reflects the truth. In addition, research kept the content during interview anonymous, and would not mention any details in reports or publication. Appendix H is the privacy notice.

The above two parts explained how data were collected, how participants were engaged, and some ethical considerations. However, during the interview, the role of researcher is significant, especially for a qualitative study. The next part explains the role and function of the researcher as an active listener during the interview.

3.6.3 Active listening via Zoom

Active listening plays a significant role as a technique in qualitative research, which helps qualitative researchers to increase the length and depth of participants' responses (Louw, Todd & Jimarkon, 2011). As a technique, active listening could be described as "involved listening with a purpose", and it aims at increasing participants interests by creating empathy, building rapport, and making the participant feel listened (Pearsons et al., 2007). A sense of participation is important for both researchers and participants in an interview, body language and gestures could be signals for good involvement (Furnham & Petrova, 2010).

Under restrictions of COVID-19, however, all interviews of this research were conducted online via Zoom. It is hard to show body language or observe participants gestures through webcam, and it is harder to ensure well involvement with participants than face-to-face interviews. Lupton (2020) stated participants may be easily distracted during online interviews, since they are staying at home with their families. In addition, some participants may suffer from burdens caused by pandemic, such like anxiety, caring responsibilities, financial issues, or illness (Lupton, 2020).

However, Lowenthal et al. (2020) suggested that Zoom could offer several advantages to researchers under pandemic. Firstly, Zoom is relatively accessible, since participants could enter meetings by clicking a web link rather than downloading and installing any software. By applying Zoom as a digital platform, it is accessible for researchers to contact people over the world, which is cost effective and saves time (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2021).

Secondly, as both researchers and participants can choose their spaces to interact and involve in a conversation, it makes people feel relax and comfortable (Kirk & Rifkin, 2020). Thirdly, evidence supported that online interview makes participants comfortable to discuss their personal issues, since they are at home and have a safe distance with researchers (Gray et al., 2020). In addition, without the stimuli of external environment, researchers could concentrate on participants verbal responses, which develops effective and active listening (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2021).

In order to ensure good involvement, maintain advantages of online meeting, and inspire participants to response actively, the author applies some strategies to make online active listening successful. Firstly, to ensure participants quickly understand the aim of the research, the author created lists of key themes in polls with the help of Zoom. Zoom could set questions with choices in advance in a poll format, by listing themes related to research purposes, participants can understand and be involved in this research quickly. Secondly, to inspire extended responses and encourage participants to reveal more, the author prepared open-ended questions and probing questions such like “*why do you think...*” and “*could you please give some examples about...*” to improve participants desire of expression. Thirdly, during the interview, the author sometimes repeated or interpreted key words or phrases from participants’ answers to encourage further explanations. Repetition of key words could show researchers’ understanding of participants, make participants feel they are well listened, and facilitate reflection of both researchers and participants during interviews (Gray et al., 2020).

After clarifying data collection process, the next section introduces data analysis techniques with analysis process and coding framework.

3.7 Data analysis techniques

3.7.1 Analysis process

In order to provide a framework for SMEs to develop their leader-follower trust relationships, this research needs to focus on summarising as many factors as possible from the data set and then simplifying it to create the framework. Thematic analysis (TA), as one of the most popular methods in social science, is wildly applied by positivists, constructivists, and critical realists (Fryer, 2022). Under a critical realist approach, it is possible to produce causal knowledge through qualitative research, and TA could help to identify themes and generate mechanisms (Danermark et al., 2001). TA aims at examining individuals' perspectives, highlighting similarities and differences, and generating unexpected insights by identifying and organising themes from a data set that is suitable for exploratory studies (Braun & Clarke, 2006; King, 2004). There are relatively few studies exploring leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs from a dyadic standpoint; thus, this research is exploratory. Therefore, TA is applied to summarise themes and generate frameworks, which generate mechanisms and uncover underlying causes for this research (Willig, 2013).

Data was collected and analysed simultaneously, and the analysis begun at the time of data collection and ended before the thesis was written up. Collecting and analysing data simultaneously was recommended, which ensures the accuracy of data analysis and make sense of the data (Charmaz, 2006). Interview transcripts were transcribed after each interview, and they were input in NVivo for analysis. After inputting interview transcripts, the author read transcripts and divided them into chunks and started coding to set themes.

There are two main questions of the research, 1) What factors could facilitate leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs?; 2) and what are the similarities and/or differences between perspectives of leaders and followers with regard to influential factors on leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs? Findings aims at investigating these two main questions and other sub-questions listed at the end of literature review chapter.

According to literature review and the structure of the interview questions, the author extracted and sorted key statements into themes, and simplified key themes into four main aspects. The four aspects are individual characteristics, leader/follower behaviours, exchanges and interactions, and external factors and others. The initial sight and divided aspects provided a clear understanding of collected structure, and it pictured and highlighted specific aspects that leaders and followers care about trust relationships in the workplace. The next section presents coding structure and explains coding stages in detail.

3.7.2 Coding framework

Coding process was done by using NVivo, the software enables the author to count the frequency of codes/themes and provides a convenient way to mark the emergence of new codes. There are mainly five stages of coding process. Figure 7 shows the stages of coding process. Appendix K presents detailed coding template.

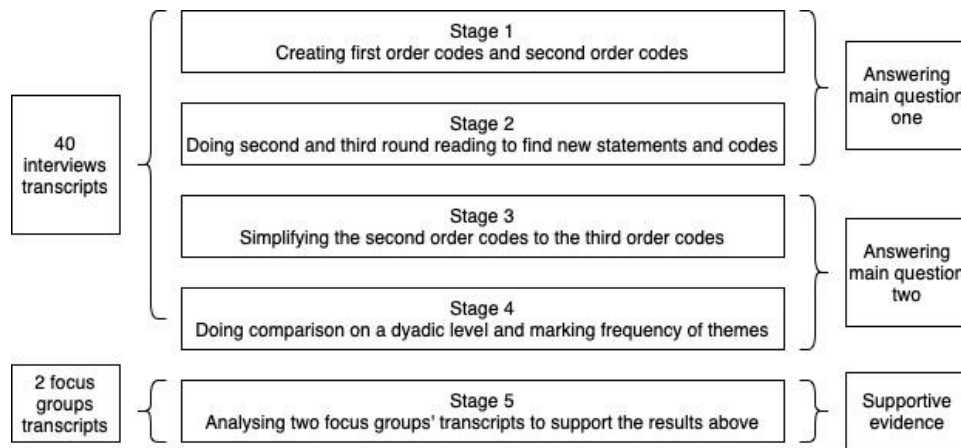


FIGURE 7 STAGES OF CODING PROCESS

In the first stage, while holding the research questions in mind, the author was seeking short sentences and pithy words that could be seen as influential factors in trust relationships from interview transcripts. These sentences and words were considered the first-order codes (in Appendix K, all first-order codes were extracted from interview transcripts and listed in short sentences or words). After the selection of the first-order codes, the author compares these statements with a literature review and found 41 first-order codes reconciled with the influential factors from existing literature. These 41 first-order codes suggest existing theory could help understand leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs. At this stage, initial themes about what factors could facilitate leader-follower trust relationships were generated.

The second stage involved re-reading transcripts and summarising other first-order codes into second-order codes. Following the summarization of these statements, some new second order codes and themes were created, and the number of second order codes was increased to 62. For example, during interviews, participants frequently mentioned “dependable, responsible, steady, and can be counted on”, so a new theme named “reliability” was created to summarise these relevant statements. Appendix K displays and highlights new codes/themes discovered from data. The findings from stages one and two aim to demonstrate what factors could facilitate and/or influence trust relationships between leaders and followers in the workplace, answering the main question one (What factors could facilitate leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs?). A third-round reading was being conducted prior to the third stage’s start to make sure the author hadn’t overlooked any potential statements or themes.

In the third stage, the second order codes were simplified into 19 words as the third order codes. The third order codes were developed to simplify the analysis process and to investigate differences and/or similarities in leaders’ and followers’ perspectives on trust relationships in the workplace on a dyadic level. The reduction in the number of themes provides a clearer angle for both readers and the author to present results.

In the fourth stage, there are four key clusters from the coding structure to aggregately discern what aspects could affect the leader-follower trust relationship, including individual characteristics, leader/follower behaviours, exchanges and interactions, and external factors. These key clusters were reconciled with the literature review and research design.

With a clear framework, these four clusters or aspects could be compared separately. In this research, only aspects one (individual characteristics) and three (exchanges and interactions) can be compared since participants were asked the same questions in terms of these two aspects. Table 7 below presents the themes that could be compared, and the frequency of these themes was calculated at this stage. These findings aim to illustrate differences and/or similarities in leaders' and followers' perspectives on building trust in the workplace on a dyadic level, answering the main question two: (What are the similarities and/or differences between perspectives of leaders and followers with regard to influential factors on leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs?).

TABLE 7 COMPARISON BETWEEN PERSPECTIVES OF LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS

Aspects	Themes (Leaders and followers)
Individual characteristics	Reliability
	Ability
	Benevolence
	Integrity
	Others (Characteristic related)
Exchanges and interactions	Mutual respect
	Supports
	Diversity and similarity
	Reputation
	Friendship

In the fifth stage, two focus group interviews were analysed as supportive evidence for results of main question two. The goal of focus group interviews is to collect data in order to reflect and discuss some key findings from the initial analysis. Some differences could be explained by conducting interviews with previous participants (both leaders and followers). Meanwhile, disagreements and agreements regarding the initial analysis were collected, and focus group interviews allow for the emergence of new ideas through discussion.

Several challenges emerged during the research, and the following section firstly clarified the challenges of this research and related solutions to these difficulties. Then the following section went over the research method's limitations.

3.7.3 Analysis of direct leader-follower relationships and other indirect leader-follower relationships

The initial plan for this research was to interview people with direct subordinate relationships, however, due to the influence of COVID-19 and a lack of interview participants, interviews were conducted with people who have leader or employee experience. Since this research did not focus on individuals or their private views about their subordinate relationships, participants' experiences as leaders and employees can also contribute to the research aims.

Furthermore, interview questions are not limited to asking about personal experiences, and expectations regarding what factors could contribute to leader-follower trust relationships are also included in the interview discussion. As a result, the existing data could provide answers to research questions. In this research, however, there are nine pairs of participants with direct subordinate relationships. These data are also analysed in order to have a thorough understanding of the data. The analysis is divided into two parts. The first part is to do within-group analysis on nine pairs of participants, and the second part is to compare the data of these nine pairs with that of all participants and other participants.

For the first part, the analysis focuses on the nine pairs of participants with direct subordinate relationships. The main research questions are 1) What factors could facilitate leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs? and 2) What are the similarities and/or differences between perspectives of leaders and followers with regard to influential factors on leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs?

While the analysis of all data is more appropriate and thorough for answering the first research question, the examination of nine participant pairs with direct subordinate relationships may enrich the findings regarding the second research question. As a result, the analysis mainly focuses on comparing the similarities and differences between leaders and followers regarding factors that were subjected to the same interview questions. Both leaders and followers were asked the same questions about the influence of individual characteristics, exchanges, and interactions on leader-follower trust relationships. During the analysis, firstly, the nine pairs of participants with direct subordinate relationships were extracted and listed in pairs. Secondly, the results of the leader and follower towards the influence of individual characteristics, and exchanges and interactions on leader-follower trust relationships were listed in pairs, in order to present leaders and followers' perspectives towards influential factors in the leader-follower trust relationship clearly and logically.

For the second part, the analysis focuses on comparing the data of these nine pairs with that of all participants and other participants. In order to compare the nine pairs and all the data, firstly, the nine pairs of participants were divided into leader groups and follower groups. Secondly, the results of nine pairs of participants were presented in leader groups and follower groups, in order to compare with the results from all the data. In order to compare the nine pairs with other participants who did not have a direct subordinate relationship, both nine pairs and others' trust relationship rating numbers were calculated and compared to see whether there were any distinct differences.

3.8 Challenges and limitations of the research method

3.8.1 Challenges and solutions

The author began collecting data in 2020, and the data collection process was unavoidably influenced by policies during the COVID-19. Working from home policies and other subsequent changes influenced organisational management and worker working styles. People who were contacted or interviewed stated that working from home distracted them and that they were much busier than before. Unexpected changes necessitated more time for adaptation, which means influenced individuals have to adapt to new working software, uncertain technical issues, and new leadership styles, among other things. The author's data collection was slowed by the situation, which limited the number of leaders and followers interviewed.

The most difficult challenge during the data collection stage was increasing the number of participants for both types of interviews. Despite using LinkedIn as a networking platform, the author had limited access to people willing to conduct interviews. After accepting a connection invitation, people on LinkedIn can message each other, and the author attempted to message people who accepted the connection invitation. Sometimes invitations were accepted, however, messages were mostly ignored.

To address the previously stated challenge, the author actively built networks with people in the two industries, prioritising message leaders, owners, and front-line managers from selected organisations. To achieve data saturation and shorten the data collection process, the author conducted 40 interviews, 22 leaders and 18 followers, with nine direct subordinate relationships between leaders and followers.

3.8.2 Methodological limitations of this research

Firstly, this research inherently limited by the focus of trust relationships between leaders and followers in two industries in the UK. Other relationships, such like inter-organisational trust or trust between peers with the same position are not considered in this research. Furthermore, in this research, the measurement content of trust is the intention to trust (i.e., trust belief), trust behaviours or trust decisions were not considered.

Secondly, this research adopted a pure qualitative method to collect and analyse data, the main limitation is how to generalize qualitative results. Pure qualitative methods are criticised with limitations of generalising results (Loseke, 2012). However, for this research, the subjective topic, trust, is hard to be quantified, and qualitative research could explore and discover more information in-depth and in details. Moreover, with increasing of numbers of participants or conducting focus group discussion, it is likely to generalise results and provide practical recommendations to targeted objects.

In addition, since this research adopted mainly structured interview as the data collection method, the willingness of participants to share their genuine feelings could affect the validity of the research. Building rapport through screen with participants is less effective than having face-to-face interactions, and it is possible

that participants may be hesitate or apprehensive to discuss the sensitive topic, trust, with a stranger. To solve this issue, the author stated their rights of withdrawing the interview at any time firstly, which helps to establish a relax discussion atmosphere. Moreover, participants were encouraged to discuss details with examples, which helps participants reflect on previous experiences and inspire in-depth discussion. The author mainly played as an active listener during the interview, which leaves participants time and chances to think and present their thoughts.

Thirdly, the other limitation was due to access issues. In the workplace, people tend to maintain friendly interpersonal relationships to ensure productivity and collaboration (Taylor, 2011). Therefore, people may not have overly intimate trusting relationships (ibid). Evaluating trust relationships and talking about trust makes people aware and start thinking about whether the leader/employee trusts themselves. If the relationship was not stable, discussion and evaluation of trust relationships may affect the normal leader-follower relationship. Though the author promised no personal information would be identified in this research, few leaders were confident enough in their leader-follower relationships to introduce their followers for interviews, which is why only nine pairs of leaders and followers have a direct supervisory relationship.

In addition, due to the pandemic, the company was facing new challenges and most employees were busier than before. Working from home causes several issues, for instance, people might be distracted by family members, or they don't have a proper "home office" to work. As a result, expanding the numbers of pairs of leaders and followers was more difficult than before. This research attempted to interview leaders and followers with direct supervisory relationships, however, interviews with leaders and followers without direct supervisory relationships were also conducted to increase the number of participants for pragmatic reasons. At a macro dyadic level, their working experiences and suggestions could still reflect the relationship or importance of trust building in the workplace.

The next chapter presents the findings of this research with evidence of quotes from participants and analysis results from NVivo.

Chapter 4 Findings

There are two main questions for this research to address, 1) What factors could facilitate leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs?; 2) What are the similarities and/or differences between perspectives of leaders and followers with regard to influential factors on leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs?

There are four aspects found in the literature review that have an influence on leader-follower trust relationships in the workplace, including individual characteristics, leadership/followership styles, exchanges and interactions, external factors. As presented in the research design (details in methodology chapter, section 3.4, p.81), *Aspect One* discusses individual characteristic related questions, and both leaders and followers were asked the same list of questions. *Aspect Two* discusses leadership and followership with leaders and followers separately, which mainly explores how behaviours could affect trust relationships. *Aspect Three* discusses exchanges and interactions between leaders and followers, and both leaders and followers were asked the same questions. *Aspect Four* includes discussion of external influential factors on leader-follower trust relationships, and questions are open-ended.

In order to present findings logically and answer the above research questions, the findings chapter is divided into four sections, the following introductions present outlines of each section in this findings chapter.

Section One of the findings chapter aims to demonstrate leaders' and followers' perspectives towards trust relationship influential factors from a dyadic level. In individual interviews, all participants were asked the same structured questions in interviews (questions of Aspect One and Aspect Three in interviews, Appendix B & C present the interview questions), and they were asked to discuss their perspectives towards related trust relationship influential factors. Characteristic-related questions and interaction-related questions were mainly discussed, in this part, the author shows some numerical evidence and quotes from interview transcripts to show both types of participants' opinions about what makes a trustworthy leader/follower in the workplace. Additionally, information gathered from focus group interviews is added as supportive evidence to elaborate or explain findings from individual interviews.

Therefore, Section One mainly presents differences and commonalities of leaders and followers' perspectives towards trust relationships on the same factors. It showed that, in the workplace, leaders and followers have some different considerations of one's trustworthiness according to their positions in the company. In order to explore more on influential factors of trust relationships between leaders and followers, Section Two of findings chapter presents what leadership styles, followership styles, and external factors could affect trust relationships.

Section Two of the findings chapter aims to present an analysis of other influential factors of trust relationships between leaders and followers. These factors include leadership and followership styles firstly. Individual interviews (questions of Aspect Two in interviews, Appendix B & C present the interview questions) collected leaders' perspectives towards followership styles and followers' perspectives towards leadership styles, leaders and followers were asked to discuss what types of leadership or followership could affect their trust

relationships. The analysis presents leaders and followers' perspectives separately. The thesis has recognised that, leader-follower trust relationships within a company cannot be only affected by each other's characteristics, behaviours, or interactions (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). The trust relationships may also be influenced by the external environment (*ibid*). In order to explore external influential factors on leader-follower trust relationships, Section Two of the findings chapter presents an analysis of open-ended responses from the individual interviews. Analysis of focus group interviews is added to support and explain findings from individual interviews.

Section Three of the findings chapter aims to show participants' perspectives on building trust online and to what extent the emerging of COVID-19 could reshape leader-follower trust relationships. Being affected by COVID-19, most companies have changed their management structure or working styles to survive and adapt to the pandemic, mentioned by all participants. As part of this analysis of wider contextual factors, participants discussed the impact of COVID-19 and the subsequent changes of leadership styles and how this influenced their trust relationships. Since they shared a great number of valuable opinions towards building trust online and remote working, the author separates this topic alone from other topics. In this section, it presents findings about online supervision and trust, changes of management structures and trust, and thoughts of virtual trust and physical trust. Additionally, focus group interview data is added as supportive evidence to above findings.

In this research, nine pairs of leaders and followers with direct subordinate relationships were interviewed. In order to gain a robust result from findings and provide enrich understandings of leader-follower trust relationships with a direct relationship, Section Four analyses data from the nine pairs leaders and followers with direct subordinate relationship in the interview. The first part of the analysis is comparisons within the nine pairs of participants with direct subordinate relationships. The second part of the analysis compares data between nine pairs of direct subordinate participants and others.

Before presenting the analysis, the next section introduces demographic information of this research.

4.1 Demographic analysis

The main approach of conducting this research is doing in-depth interviews and follow-up focus groups. Forty participants helped and contributed their valuable opinions to this research in individual interviews (Table 8 presents participants' demographic information). Two focus group interviews were conducted, and each interview had two participants, within the two participants are one leader and one follower.

TABLE 8 GENDER AND POSITION

	Male	Female	
Leader	10	12	22
Follower	10	8	18
Total	20	20	40

There are 27 participants from Assistive Technology industry and 13 participants from mental health sector, including 17 Assistive Technology companies and five mental health companies. Around 65% participants were contacted directly from LinkedIn, 35% participants were introduced by previous participants or the author’s supervisors. Overall, there are nine pairs of leaders and followers have direct subordinate relationships.

Table 9 below shows the size of 17 Assistive Technology (AT) SMEs, 5 mental health (MH) SMEs, and numbers of participants interviewed from these companies. There were 7 micro-sized companies (workers less than 10 people), 10 small-sized companies (workers between 11 to 50) and 5 middle-sized companies involved in this research (workers between 51 to 250). There were 7 participants (6 leaders and 1 follower) from micro-sized companies, 20 participants (9 leaders and 12 followers) form small-sized companies, and 13 (7 leaders and 5 followers) participants from middle-sized companies.

TABLE 9 INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR COMPANIES’ SIZES

Companies size	Numbers of participants	Companies size	Numbers of participants	Companies size	Numbers of participants
AT1 (11-50)	2	AT10 (11-50)	2	MH1 (2-10)	1
AT2 (2-10)	1	AT11 (11-50)	2	MH2 (51-250)	5
AT3 (11-50)	2	AT12 (51-250)	4	MH3 (11-50)	2
AT4 (11-50)	2	AT13 (11-50)	1	MH4 (51-250)	1
AT5 (2-10)	1	AT14 (11-50)	1	MH5 (51-250)	2
AT6 (2-10)	1	AT15 (2-10)	1		
AT7 (11-50)	4	AT16 (51-250)	1		
AT8 (2-10)	1	AT17 (2-10)	1		
AT9 (11-50)	2				

Table 10 lists the basic information of participants, including gender, position, company, age, years of working, and subordinate relationships. The subordinate relationship pairs in the table mean the participants who were numbered have direct subordinate relationships in this research.

TABLE 10 PARTICIPANTS' DEMOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

Participant	Gender	Position	Company	Age	Years of working	Direct subordinate relationships
Participant1	Male	Leader	AT1	57	23	
Participant2	Male	Leader	AT1	43	12	
Participant3	Female	Leader	AT2	58	27	
Participant4	Female	Leader	MH1	52	13	
Participant5	Male	Leader	AT3	46	8	1 pair
Participant6	Male	Follower	AT3	34	4	1 pair
Participant7	Female	Leader	AT4	42	3	2 pair
Participant8	Female	Follower	AT4	23	<1	2 pair
Participant9	Male	Follower	AT5	45	4	
Participant10	Female	Follower	MH2	47	5	3 pair
Participant11	Male	Follower	MH2	33	4	
Participant12	Female	Leader	MH2	32	1	3 pair
Participant13	Female	Leader	MH2	58	13	4 pair
Participant14	Male	Follower	MH2	21	<1	4 pair
Participant15	Male	Leader	MH3	52	3	5 pair
Participant16	Male	Leader	AT6	37	2	
Participant17	Male	Follower	MH3	26	1	5 pair
Participant18	Male	Follower	AT7	28	4	6 pair
Participant19	Female	Follower	AT7	24	3	
Participant20	Female	Leader	AT7	38	5	6 pair
Participant21	Female	Follower	AT7	35	3	
Participant22	Male	Leader	AT8	47	9	
Participant23	Male	Leader	AT9	42	4	7 pair
Participant24	Male	Leader	AT10	41	1	8 pair
Participant25	Female	Follower	AT9	49	2	7 pair
Participant26	Male	Leader	AT11	51	3	
Participant27	Female	Leader	AT11	43	7	
Participant28	Male	Follower	AT10	34	2	8 pair
Participant29	Female	Leader	MH4	46	1	
Participant30	Female	Follower	MH5	38	5	
Participant31	Female	Leader	AT12	46	14	9 pair

Participant32	Female	Leader	AT12	40	4	
Participant33	Male	Follower	AT13	39	2	
Participant34	Male	Follower	AT12	54	2	
Participant35	Female	Follower	AT12	30	1	9 pair
Participant36	Female	Follower	AT14	27	3	
Participant37	Male	Leader	AT15	44	7	
Participant38	Male	Follower	AT16	46	<1	
Participant39	Male	Leader	AT17	47	3	
Participant40	Female	Leader	MH5	38	2	

Participants were asked to rate their perceived trustworthiness of their leaders or followers on a scale of 0 to 10 (0 means no trust, 10 means completely trust) to describe how much they trust their leaders or followers. The concept of perceived trustworthiness is based on how ability, benevolence, and integrity a trustee is seen by the trustor (Ferrin & Dirks, 2003). Table 11 shows that the total average rating score of participants for the perceived trustworthiness of their leaders or followers was 8.44. Leaders' perceived trustworthiness of followers was 8.09, which was lower than followers' perceived trustworthiness of leaders, 8.86.

TABLE 11 PARTICIPANTS' AVERAGE SCORES OF PERCEIVED TRUSTWOWITTHINESS CLASSIFIED BY THEIR POSITIONS

	<i>Average rating score</i>	<i>Numbers of participants</i>
<i>Total</i>	8.44	40
<i>Leader</i>	8.09	22
<i>Follower</i>	8.86	18

In addition, since not all participants had a direct subordinate relationship, the following Table 12 lists participants who had direct subordinate relationships and summarises their rating scores of perceived trustworthiness of each other. Overall, the perceived trustworthiness ratings for leaders and followers are similar, and leaders are trusted more by their followers than their followers are by their leaders.

TABLE 12 SCORES OF PERCEIVED TRUSTWORTHINESS BETWEEN LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS WITH DIRECT SUBORDINATE RELATIONSHIPS

Participant Number	Rating Scores	Participant Number	Rating Scores
No5—No6	8—8.5	No20—No18	8.5—8
No7—No8	8—9	No23—No25	8—8
No12—No10	8.5—9	No24—No28	8—10

No13—No14	9—10	No31—No35	8—8
No15—No17	7—7.5		

*Participant number in the front represents a leader, and participant number in the back represents a follower. For example, in the first cell, participant No5 is a leader, and participant No6 is a follower of No5.

Trust propensity is a trait-based characteristic of trustor and an important antecedent of trust, and it illustrates a tendency to be willing to trust others in a general context (McKnight, Cumming & Chervany, 1998). During interviews, participants were asked to describe their trust propensity, according to response of participants, the author classified them into cynical, moderate, and trusting. In total, four people indicated they were cynical and usually had low trust in others, while nine people had a moderate attitude toward trusting others, indicating they would observe first before acting any trusting behaviours. The remaining 27 people tended to trust others until others disappoint them. Figure 8 shows their trust propensity and rating score of their perceived trustworthiness of their leaders or followers. Only five participants rated their trust in their leaders or followers as 7 to 8, while the majority rated it as 8 or higher. Participants who described their trust propensity as cynical rated their leaders or followers from 7.5 to 8.5; participants who described their trust propensity as moderate and trusting rated their leaders or followers from 7 to 9 and from 7.5 to 10, respectively.

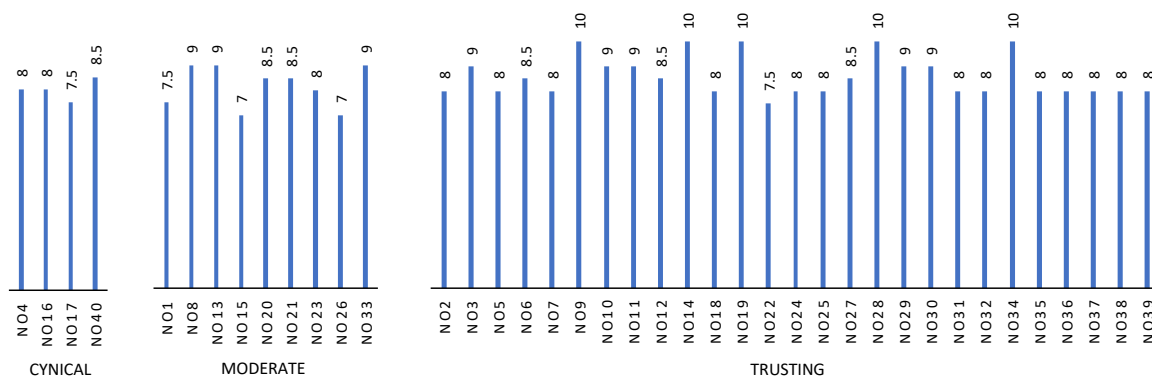


FIGURE 8 PARTICIPANTS TRUST PROPENSITY AND RATING TOWARDS THEIR LEADERS OR FOLLOWERS' TRUSTWORTHINESS

4.2 Section One: Influential factors of dyadic trust between leaders and followers

4.2.1 Characteristics-related trust relationship influential factors

4.2.1.1 Introduction and results

Investigation of characteristic-related trust relationship influential factors revolved around three main characters, ability, benevolence, and integrity (Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012). To help participants understand the meaning of main characters and to explore participants perceptions towards different characteristic-related trust relationship influential factors, the author selected some sub-factors from literatures to present main

characters (selection process in 3.4 research design, p.81). By asking leaders and followers the same questions during the interview, (e.g. *“Please select or name the three most important factors (related to ability/benevolence/integrity) in the list that are important for you generally when deciding to trust a leader/follower?”*), results could reflect opinions of participants towards different individual characteristics.

The author summarises leaders and followers’ choices and showed the frequency in Table 13. Characteristics highlighted in Table 13 were new themes added by participants during interviews. During the discussion of “ability” with participants, two leaders proposed emotional intelligence as an important ability to a trustworthy follower, and they mentioned self-awareness and self-learning as two sub-factors to reflect a high emotional intelligence. During the discussion of “benevolence” with participants, one leader added empathy to reflect benevolence of a trustworthy followers. Similarly, during the discussion of “integrity”, responsible and dependable were proposed by participants to reflect one’s integrity in the workplace. The author referred to these two factors as “reliability” in the table. According to Guinot and Chiva’s (2019) systematic review, reliability was discussed as responsibility and dependability by some scholars (e.g., Webber, 2008; McAllister, 1995). Additionally, at the end of the discussion of individual characteristics, four leaders added two extra characteristics into the discussion, confidence and enthusiasm. They are summarised in the table as “others” by the author.

TABLE 13 SUMMARY OF LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS’ CHOICES OF CHARACTERISTIC-RELATED TRUST RELATIONSHIP INFLUENTIAL FACTORS

Characteristics		Frequency		Characteristics		Frequency	
Factors	Sub-factors	Leaders	Followers	Factors	Sub-factors	Leaders	Followers
Ability	Certain qualifications (Certificates)	1	1	Integrity	Consistency	8	7
	Relevant experiences	8	9		Fairness	1	7
	Specialised capabilities	4	4		Maintaining confidentiality	12	3
	Verbal & Written communication skills	15	11		Honesty	14	8
	Problem-solving skills	15	9		Acknowledge others’ efforts	5	3
	Time-management skills	8	0		Openness	4	6
	Decision-making skills	5	12	Reliability	Responsible	1	2
	Team-working skills	8	10		Dependable	2	0
Emotional intelligence	Self-awareness	2	0	Others	Confidence	2	0
	Self-learning		0		Enthusiastic	2	0
Benevolence	Volunteer to help others	6	1				
	Forgive & forget mistakes	7	6				

Include others	4	12				
Sincerity	13	10				
Loyalty	13	3				
Empathy	1	0				

From the results of Table 13 above, there are some commonalities and differences in leader-follower identification of factors that contribute to trust building. The next section introduces leaders and followers' common perspectives about characteristic-related trust relationship influential factors from the results.

4.2.1.2 Key commonalities of leaders and followers' perspectives on characteristic-related trust relationship influential factors

To begin, analysis revealed some consensus between leaders and followers' views on some of the sub-factors concerning trust relationships. Both leaders and followers highlighted *verbal and written communication skill*, *sincerity*, and *honesty* as important factors to trust their followers or leaders in the workplace. The frequency of these three factors is higher than other factors' frequency among both leaders and followers.

A) Verbal and communication skills

Having good communication skills is considered as one of the important factors by leaders and followers in terms of building trust in workplace, and 26 participants mentioned communication is the key to build trust and the development of a healthy working environment.

Participants explained a good communication skill would effectively help people understand relevant information. Especially in Assistive Technology industry, most products or services are high-tech products, a salesperson with good communication skills could effectively offer suitable products or services to their clients. Additionally, trainers or engineers who possess good communication skills could deliver their ideas clearly to investors or suppliers to facilitate cooperation. A capable follower who could successfully deal with clients and suppliers could earn leaders' trust in the workplace, emphasised by leaders.

The following quote is from a leader, she said:

"Our company basically cooperates with big companies who need software supports, understanding their needs and selling our services need a good communication skill. If we cannot communicate with them, it wastes both of our times and influence our reputation." [Participant 40, leader, AT, Female]

From the perspective of building a healthy working atmosphere, participants illustrated good communication skills include instant feedback, active listening and sharing information before making decisions. In addition,

with the advent of COVID-19, people were forced to work remotely, which means maintaining high-quality communications and relationship is especially important in a period of crisis. One leader explained:

"...people now are working from home, and it is hard to meet them and speak to them as before, a good feedback loop could maintain performance." [Participant 27, leader, MH, Female]

However, there is a slight difference between leaders and followers about why they believe communication skill is important. From leaders' angle, communication skill is significant in communicating with clients or suppliers.

The following quote is from a leader, he said:

"Verbal and written communication is very important, because you need to express yourself when you're working with Assistive Technology.....Being able to relate to people who come to you and to tell them what you know about the equipment that you want them to use is important. You need to be able to tell them, you need to be able to write to them, give them the information. Having a good communication skill would help either the clients or suppliers know your equipment and services." [Participant 1, leader, AT, Male]

From the perspective of followers, participants emphasised they would prefer to trust a leader who can communicate with them directly and openly. A follower stated:

"I think if you're a good communicator as a leader, you can resolve all sorts of problems that come up. Also, you need to articulate what you want to accomplish as a leader, and people can follow and develop." [Participant 21, follower, AT, Female]

Though they both emphasised communication skill is an important factor in building a trust relationship in the workplace, there are slight differences between them due to their position in organisations. Leaders tend to focus on followers' communication skill with clients, while followers care more if leaders are able to present themselves and communicate openly.

B) Sincerity

There were 13 leaders and 10 followers selected sincerity as a significant trust relationship influential factor in the workplace. Participants illustrated that being sincere includes being mindful, conscientious, and respectful to others. In the workplace, sincere communications or behaviours could help build connections between workers in the workplace (Hoy & Tarter, 2004). Especially in small or medium sized companies, participants mentioned leaders and followers share a relatively close relationship with each other, sincerity contributes to a long-term collaboration and facilitate interpersonal relationships. Also, participants believed that sincere communication and listening could resolve problems effectively and avoid time-wasting on disagreements. One leader mentioned:

“To be sincere means the person is genuine and is willing to listen to others and help others. It is an essential quality for a trustful person, whatever in the company or life, though sometimes you need to show your weakness.” [Participant 4, leader, MH, Female]

From the perspectives of followers, the results revealed that sincerity from leaders is significant for followers. Followers who selected sincerity as a trust influential factor during interview stated that sincere exchanges and concentration from leaders improve their belongingness and job satisfaction. As a result, a sincere leader who care his/her colleagues could gain trust from them. One follower said:

“Sincerity means a lot to me, I hope my manager can listen to my voice without judgement, and I would prefer to share my opinions with her. I just feel building a better rapport and better understanding in a group, sincerity seems important, it shows leaders understand what is going on and understand your concerns.” [Participant 35, follower, AT, Female]

Similarly, another follower mentioned:

“I would prefer somebody to say, ‘I don’t agree with you’, rather than do nothing about it...Just be told the truth and be told that something that was right or wrong, you’ll feel the person is genuine, at least you know you’ll always get an honest answer...My manager, she’d have a strong enough say if she doesn’t like something, and let you know, and give you some reasons why it may not work. I think it’s very good.” [Participant 11, follower, MH, Male]

C) Honesty

Participants who selected “honesty” as a trust relationship influential factor during interviews emphasized honesty is the foundation of a trust relationship, and honesty is essential for a relationship to function and develop. Both leaders and followers mentioned honesty contributes to increase credibility and reputation, which is the most direct representative character of trusting relationships. For instance, a leader stated honest behaviours, such as admitting wrong behaviours, sharing constructive feedback, and keeping commitments, could facilitate organisation development and increase collective performance. From interview results, 22 participants in total view honesty plays essential role in leader-follower trust relationships, the following two quotes from leaders and followers reflect honesty is a precious inner quality closely links with trust.

One leader suggested:

“...and honesty, I think, honesty in any occupations and relationships is important, it is one of the most important qualities for a trustworthy man.” [Participant 2, leader, AT, Male]

One follower stated:

“Because being able to provide information and feeling free to share information to me is important, but if you don’t have honesty and you’re just open, it doesn’t mean that you’re telling the truth, so the factor ‘honesty’, I selected, is rather important than other factors to me.” [Participant 21, follower, AT, Female]

4.2.1.3 Key differences of leaders and followers’ perspectives on characteristic-related trust relationship influential factors

However, from the results of Table 13 (p.107), there are some factors favoured by followers but not leaders. For instance, there were 12 followers that considered *including others* is a significant signal for a trustworthy leader, while there were only four leaders that chose *including others* as an important factor of a trustworthy follower. Therefore, leaders and followers also have different opinions towards trust relationship influential factors.

Furthermore, the author asked participants to choose the most significance factor among ability, benevolence, and integrity when they decide to trust their leaders/followers in the workplace, and Table 14 below presents participants’ choices. There were 19 leaders mentioned integrity is the most significant factor to assess a trustworthy follower, three leaders chose ability, and no one selected benevolence; while from the perspectives of followers, 10 followers believe integrity is important for them to trust a leader, six followers selected benevolence, and two followers chose ability.

TABLE 14 LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS’ CHOICES TOWARDS ABILITY, BENEVOLENCE, AND INTEGRITY

	Leader	Follower
Ability	3	2
Benevolence	0	6
Integrity	19	10

A review of the literature found that, in addition to ability, benevolence, and integrity, individual trust propensity could have an effect on the trust relationships. Combining participants’ individual trust propensity and their choices of ability, benevolence, integrity, Table 15 below presents the summarised results. Participants who described themselves as cynical had a similar number of choices for these three influential factors, and more people chose “ability” as a relatively important factor of trust building. People who believe they could trust others easily or on a moderate level, however, chose integrity as a relatively important factor in their trust relationships.

TABLE 15 INDIVIDUAL TRUST PROPENSITY AND CHOICES TOWARDS ABILITY, BENEVOLENCE AND INTEGRITY

	Cynical	Moderate	Trusting
Ability	2	1	2

Benevolence	1	1	4
Integrity	1	7	21

A) Integrity or benevolence

The main differences in perspective between leaders and followers in regard to the factors that contribute to trust relationships concerned their varying views on 'integrity' and 'benevolence'. Around 90% leaders (19 out of 22) believe integrity is the most important characteristic to assess followers' trustworthiness, here are some quotes from two leaders:

"Integrity, just the obvious, trust is built upon it. I mean, I would probably have more trust in someone who worked here for a long time but generally, integrity is important." [Participant 2, leader, AT, Male]

"I'm now in supervising or managing roles within my organisation, but I cannot be there to supervise people all day, I need people to have consistent behaviour whether I'm around or not integrity, for me, is very, very much at the forefront standard." [Participant 29, leader, MH, Female]

During the interview, some sub-factors belong to integrity were listed for participants to select. "Maintaining confidentiality" as one of reflected sub-factors of integrity was selected and emphasized by 12 leaders (22 leaders interviewed in total), while only three followers selected the same factor. From the perspective of leaders, they emphasized maintaining clients' confidentiality is vital. Since the industries they work in are perceived as special, in particular, leaders felt they need of staff who can respect the confidentiality of the final users. The sectors concerned provided services to disabled people with sensitive health conditions and needs. The following quote from a leader said:

"I think confidentiality is really important, because we do have information about other people on financial information, and we work with a whole range of other organizations. They need to be able to provide us with information...this information is sensitive, and we need to be confidential." [Participant 15, leader, AT, Male]

However, from followers' perspectives, six followers (18 followers interviewed in total) stated benevolence is the most important characteristic for a trustworthy leader, while ten followers selected integrity as the most important character.

Here is a quote from a follower who emphasized why integrity is important for him to trust a leader:

“Integrity is important to me beyond other factors, I’d like to hear genuine and constant feedback of my work performance from my manager. You can’t trust someone who is not honest or says nothing.”
[Participant 14, follower, MH, Male]

In terms of benevolence, a follower who stated benevolence is significant for trust relationships said:

“Honestly, benevolence is important. Because I think that you can be trained up in anything though you have no skills in a certain area, as long as I had a supportive team around me that were really kind and actually cared about me as a person, I think I would go a lot further.” [Participant 8, follower, AT, Female]

Key differences discussed in benevolence section is “including others”. There were only four leaders selected including others as a trust relationship influential factor, while 12 followers view including others as an important signal for a trustworthy leader. The following two quotes are from two followers:

“...this comes back to work as a team, you know, we don’t want individuals to work on their own, we want them to include others, and you will get feedback and communications, and you know how the whole things flow.” [Participant 14, follower, MH, Female]

“When you include others in a team, it means you’re listening to them. To me, that would mean the leader care enough and also help. So, including others is the origin of progression to trust in benevolence, and I would be happy to be heard, which also encourages me to speak more in the team.” [Participant 19, follower, AT, Female]

From the analysis results of frequency about three main individual characteristics (ability, benevolence, integrity), the obvious difference between leaders and followers lies in their perspectives towards benevolence and integrity. Leaders consider integrity as a significant trustworthy character of followers and pay less attention than followers concern about benevolence, while followers believe benevolence is important in a trusting relationship. Though ten followers selected integrity as an important signal for a trustworthy leader, compared to leaders, followers also mind about being heard and being cared.

B) Decision-making skills

Though both leaders and followers didn’t consider ability as significant trust relationship influential factor between leader-follower relationships, there is a notable difference which is leaders and followers’ perspective towards decision-making skills, one of the sub-factors of “ability”. Compared to 12 followers who selected decision-making skills, only five leaders named the option. One leader chose problem-solving skills beyond decision-making skills and didn’t associate decision-making skills with leader-follower trust relationships. She explained with reasons:

"...compared to decision-making skills, I trust a person with good problem-solving skills more...when we deliver or install equipment to our clients, some unexpected problems may occur, I hope they can act on time and resolve problems. Decision-making is a judgement, but problem-solving is more practical, proactive, like an action." [Participant 20, leader, AT, Female]

Followers believe decision-making skills could present leaders management strategy, which decides the direction of organisation development. The following two quotes from follower introduced their thoughts:

"Decision-making is not a simple act, it includes problem seeking, listening from others and reflection on the past and so on. A leader or an owner practices a business, it is the first step to attract people to work for them." [Participant 9, follower, AT, Male]

"...people may make unwise decisions, and possibly they may still make that decision. A good decision-making means at least they've had the opportunity to reflect on, and minimise the downside." [Participant 34, follower, AT, Male]

4.2.1.4 New characteristic-related themes explored during interviews

During interviews, participants were also encouraged to show their own experiences of trust relationships between leaders and followers, and the highlighted factors in Table 13 (p.107) were factors that proposed by participants, including *learning ability* (an ability-related factor), *kindness and empathy* (two benevolence-related factors), *responsibility and dependability* (summarised as reliability-related factors), *confidence and enthusiasm* (summarised as other factors).

A) Emotional intelligence

Two leaders added emotional intelligence as an important ability of a trustworthy follower, they described emotional intelligence as an ability to self-learning and self-awareness. In terms of self-awareness, one leader stressed that self-awareness ensures active engagement of learning. Accordingly, the leader explained people could aware personal limitations and expect to become proactive to do things which could improve themselves, in the meanwhile, the organisation develops with collective efforts. She stated:

"Self-awareness and emotional intelligence are much more important to me, because if you are self-aware, then you can be open and if you're open, then you can learn." [Participant 29, leader, MH, Female]

Compared to other abilities, the leader who proposed self-learning skills believed that self-learning ability is hard to be trained, it represents ones' curiosity and shows one's initiative to learn new things as an intrinsic motivation. Despite learning from books, in business practice, learning from experiences and reflecting on

previous cases contributes to the increase of individual performance (Schutte et al., 2002). Especially in Assistive Technology, the leader stated learning skills assist engineers to understand emerged techniques. Additionally, learning from experiences allow workers to identify and notice clients' needs. The following quote is from a leader, he said:

"Learning is another one (ability) I think is important, it shows you are capable to learn new things and interested in new things. It's not just reading or something, it shows you're proactive and want to grow."
[Participant 23, leader, AT, Male]

Another leader made the point that it's crucial to learn from mistakes. She mentioned that making mistakes at work is inevitable but learning from them and avoiding them in the future will help future performance. Additionally, an employee's performance may also be quickly improved if they could learn from the mistakes of others. She stated:

"I think learning as another ability is quite important. Learning is all about making mistakes, but if someone is consistently making the same mistakes, it would be bad. As long as they can learn from mistakes, that's ok, and even if better if they can learn from others' mistakes." [Participant 29, leader, MH, Female]

B) Benevolence-related factors

There was one leader identified empathy as a benevolence-related trust relationship influential factor. The leader who emphasised empathy and the value of sharing feelings with others works in the mental health field. She stated that the company she works for requires communication with people who have intelligence or mobility disadvantages. Therefore, if a follower could show his/her awareness of others pain or suffering and share the feelings of others, it would earn respect and trust. She said:

"You know teams got to be agile and flex to each other, being aware of things and seeing someone else struggling, they can step in and help. It is I think probably empathy awareness and productivity, is important for trust." [Participant 31, leader, AT, Female]

C) Reliability

In addition to benevolence, integrity and ability, analysis of data identified reliability as a new theme. Reliability was perceived by three leaders and two followers to be made up of two sub-themes, i.e., taking responsibility and being dependable. Taking responsibility as a new added theme was mentioned by three participants (one leader and two followers). Both leaders and followers agreed being responsible or taking responsibilities is

essential for a trustworthy person in the workplace, and a responsible person could earn trust from others in the workplace. The following quote is from a follower, he said:

“One more thing it could be reliability, I think. A leader needs to blame less when things happen, you know, after that we can have reflection or feedback whatever, but I feel taking responsibilities is why I trust.” [Participant 18, follower, AT, Male]

Another sub-theme added to reliability is dependability, there were two leaders disclosed that they hope followers’ behaviours are dependable and they can be relied on. One leader stated:

“I hope, as a manager, my team members can be relied on, by me or by our clients. It is related to ability I think, well, sometimes the delivery or installation of equipment is not always going well, I need to assure there are someone can deal with it. If there is a person can make me relied on, I’d trust him.” [Participant 1, leader, AT, Male]

D) Other characteristics

Other individual characteristics added to this research are enthusiasm and confidence. Enthusiasm was proposed and mentioned by two leaders who are working in mental health sector, while confidence was added to discussion by two leaders who are working in Assistive Technology industry. One leader from mental health sector emphasised, she needs people who bring be vigour or passion to the work, since they need to leave a positive impression among the people who need help. Employees may be more optimistic when confronted with difficulties if they are enthusiastic about their jobs or careers. Another leader also stressed the significance of enthusiasm, she explained:

“...I think that it’s one of the most important characteristics, is to want to do the job and to care about the company and to care about the customers to be. Enthusiastic to not just you know turn up nine to five, not just do the bare minimum, but to want to do more.” [Participant 31, leader, AT, Female]

Discussion of confidence was proposed by two leaders in the Assistive Technology industry, they pointed out that self-assurance and self-trust play a significant role in companies. Expressing oneself in a confident manner could help earn trust from clients, and the following quote is from a leader who stated:

“...another I think is confidence, is important at work. Lack of confidence could hinder key information, like they may not share their ideas with me. And it is important to show confidence and professionals when you are giving instructions of certain equipment to your clients.” [Participant 39, leader, AT, Male]

4.2.2 The influence of exchanges and interactions on leader-follower trust relationships

4.2.2.1 Introduction and results

During interviews, participants were asked to reflect on some exchange-related or interaction-related trust influential factors. Discussion themes include six themes, including mutual respect, emotional supports, workplace gossip, recommendation/reputation, friendship, and workplace diversity. In the six themes, mutual respect and emotion supports present reciprocal exchanges, while gossip, recommendation, friendship, and workplace diversity present interactions between leaders and followers (3.4 research design explained theme selection in details, p.81).

The format of interview questions in this part is “Do you believe (a theme) is relevant to trust?”, and participants were encouraged to openly discuss the theme and trust with examples or relevant experiences. Table 16 below shows results from this part of this research. When participants presented a clear yes or no in their answers, the author checked their answer with “Yes” or “No” in the table; while if participants showed hesitation or applied “it depends”, “maybe” or “have no idea” or “haven’t considered before” or didn’t have certain tendency in their answers or didn’t think the factor could affect leader-follower trust relationships, the author translate it to not sure opinions and marked it as “Not Sure” in the table.

TABLE 16 SUMMARY OF LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS’ PERSPECTIVES TOWARDS THEMES RELATED EXCHANGES AND INTERACTIONS

Themes related to exchanges and interactions	Frequency					
	Leader			Follower		
	Positive	Not sure	Negative	Positive	Not sure	Negative
Mutual respect	22	0	0	18	0	0
Emotional supports	21	0	1	18	0	0
Diversity	14	8	0	2	12	4
Recommendation	5	15	2	2	13	3
Gossip	0	5	17	0	7	11
Friendship	4	3	15	5	9	4

4.2.2.2 Commonalities of leaders and followers’ perspectives on exchange/interaction-related trust relationship influential factors

From the results in Table 16, leaders and followers exhibited the same opinions towards four themes, including mutual respect, emotional supports, recommendation, and gossip. For mutual respect and emotional supports, almost all participants believed these two factors have positive effect on leader-follower trust relationships in the workplace; for recommendation, 28 participants have hesitant attitudes or not sure about the influence of it on trust; for workplace gossip, 27 participants believed gossip is not relevant to trust, and it is detrimental to trust relationships.

A) Mutual respect

All 40 participants agreed mutual respect is the foundation of trust relationships in the workplace. Respect is the precursor of trust (Walumbwa & Schaubroeck, 2009). Participants pointed that respect in a relationship allow each other to feel safe, secure and being supported. When people receive positive and genuine feedback from others, they would prefer to communicate and open to others (Koay et al., 2020). Through reciprocal exchanges, people have opportunities to know each other and build bonds with others, which helps to build a strong team (ibid). Additionally, participants explained mutual respect could reduce potential conflicts and stress in the workplace, and they believed that with a healthy working environment come quality teamwork and trust.

The following two quotes from two followers showed they expect a reciprocal relationship, and mutual respect is a foundation of a trust relationship with leaders.

“Respect is definitely a big thing, if I show you respect, I’d expect you would treat me the same way. And if you did, I’d like to be around you and trust you.” [Participant 11, follower, MH, Male]

“Generally, yes, you know, if you don’t respect someone then you know you’re not going to have the same amount of trust. I think the two are quite have a link, you know, if you don’t respect and you will not be trusted, and vice versa.” [Participant 19, follower, AT, Female]

The following quote is from a leader explained the way of building a strong team, and explicitly emphasized mutual respect is vital, she said:

“Mutual respect, I think it’s a massively important thing for my team. You know, being able to understand the way that they work and being able to understand their strengths and weaknesses, and they understand mine, that does build a level of mutual respect. I respect my staff massively largely...I think they’ve got my back I’ve got theirs. It’s implicit, and it builds trust.” [Participant 31, leader, AT, Female]

B) Emotional supports

Emotional supports between leaders and followers, as one of reciprocal exchanges in the workplace, could improve belongingness of people and facilitate quality leader-follower relationships (Weber, Johnson & Corrigan, 2004). Being emotional supportive and receiving emotional supports from others could help people cope with upset feelings and making them feel being valued (Atoum & Al-Shoboul, 2018). There were 39 participants believed emotional supports or reassurance could help them cope with challenging situations and make them they are valued or cared by their leaders or followers. They stated the emotional bond could facilitate leader-follower trust relationships in companies. Participants explained reasons with their personal experiences and

mentioned how followers/leaders' emotional supports could help them overcome difficulties. The following quotes from two leaders explained why emotional supports could be helpful to trust relationships. Also, it articulates emotional supports and feelings of being valued during hard time could develop strong relationships. They said:

"I've been through a tough time years ago...the staff knew and several of them are very supportive, and they tried to comfort me. And with that, the staff was here for me, and I will be here for them. It strengthens our relationship." [Participant 2, leader, AT, Male]

"I'm definitely being valued. I think any employee wants to feel valued. It encourages you to work together to the same target." [Participant 12, leader, MH, Female]

Furthermore, some participants added that supports during COVID-19 pandemic made them feel they are understood and felt less stressed. One follower provided examples based her own experience:

"Now I need to work from home and my schedule changed a lot...we're consistently busy doing things and I have to take care of my families. So, predict my productivity might be a little bit lower than it's been, she (her manager) understands that she knows that I'm more than capable and willing to take my words (that I can finish my work on time)." [Participant 21, follower, AT, Female]

C) Workplace gossip

Workplace gossip is unavoidable, and people may be influenced and distracted by gossips, there were 28 participants (17 leaders and 11 followers) mentioned gossips brought negative effects to trust, and it influence individual objective attitudes towards others. They stated gossip is a signal of a toxic working environment, and it should be controlled. One leader said:

"Gossip is dangerous, and I don't think there's anything we can do to stop it. The things that can be challenging I think when it starts to negatively impact on other people, as a leader, you need to intervene. You need to make it clear, that certain behaviours can't be accepted...if there are too many complaints, that's not a good working environment." [Participant 15, leader, AT, Male]

Gossips cannot only influence the recipients' perspectives towards the gossip object, but also could affect the reputation of the gossipers themselves (Farley, 2011; Burt, 2001). Participants who believed gossip would influence their trust perceptions towards others agreed workplace gossip is detrimental, and they stated they would try to ignore gossips and attempt to not be influenced by gossips. They stated they would try to be objective when hearing gossip and try to not judge people according to others' opinions. However, the content of gossips includes not only public news, but also sometimes the people around you will be discussed (Kurland & Pelled, 2000). They illustrated if gossipers were talking about someone behind their back privately, their attitudes towards the gossiper might be changed.

One leader explained that gossip is unavoidable, and he said:

"I just suppose, as long as they're honest and decent people, that will not affect it. Everyone gossips certain extent, as long as it's not malicious or ritualistic...It's doesn't matter, as long as it doesn't nasty. It doesn't have any effect on me, but if they will perhaps talk about each other, I wouldn't like that."
[Participant 2, leader, AT, Male]

There were also 12 participants, five leaders and seven followers, had mixed opinions of workplace gossip. One leader mentioned some gossip may help personal reflection, which could facilitate personal performance. Especially the information was useful and from a valuable person, he explained:

"Gossip to me that's just hearsay, they are depending on the person whose opinion it is...if it's someone that let's say I valued, they may have seen something that is my blind spot...that allows me to pay attention and take any action on it, but it really depends on whose opinion it is...Not all information is useful." [Participant 37, leader, AT, Male]

One follower also mentioned gossip in the workplace could either be beneficial or detrimental to a trust relationship. Since sharing secrets could improve interpersonal relationships, while negative opinions could create toxic working environment, she said:

"I think it's (gossip at work) interesting because I think it both builds trust, but also decreases trust. Gossiping in the sort of side chatter increases the relational aspect you have with people, because it's like, 'oh we're sharing something', 'we're disclosing something about each other', 'we're really building relationship'. So I think that part increases trust. I think the part that decreases trust is the content of what it is that you're talking about, it can lead to things being like 'Oh, did you see this person, what do you think of what they were doing'. And it can go down a negative path if people are still holding that high regard, so I think it's a double-edged sword, in the sense that it can increase trust it can also decrease it, and so I think it's challenging." [Participant 19, follower, AT, Female]

D) Recommendation

Recommendation is regarded as an influential factor in the development of trust in the workplace (Granatyr et al., 2015). The reputation of those who have been recommended could be enhanced (ibid). Unlike workplace gossip, which usually has a negative impact on reputation, other people's recommendations can help people make a good first impression in front of others (YEO, 2020; Farley, 2011). It would be beneficial to build trust after establishing a good reputation, and both leaders and followers could be recommended by others in the workplace (Esenyel & Emeagwali, 2019). In the workplace, participants discussed recommendation could only influence the initial impression, however, people may be influenced by positive assessments from both leaders and followers in the workplace. From the results, there were 28 participants showed neither positive nor negative perspectives towards the influence of recommendation on building leader-follower trust relationships.

Leaders mentioned sometimes recommendation letters could reflect one's ability in the workplace, but actual working outcomes are more important to evaluate one's trustworthiness. One leader explained:

"...probably not so much. I kind of need to see it for myself and build those relationships myself rather than based on other people's opinions. The problem is, a lot of organizations, they will write a recommendation letter. You know, we've written recommendation letters for staff we've let go who aren't right for the organization, because we don't want to stop them trying to succeed in another organization." [Participant 31, leader, AT, Female]

Also, a follower who is working as a human resource worker mentioned:

"You know, people know you can only give a good reference. And I suppose if you asked for reference from somebody and they refuse to give a reference, then I would be like, what's happened here. But it is not a severe problem." [Participant 35, follower, AT, Female]

Similarly, followers stated positive comments from other employees could only influence their primary impression about the leader, further interactions determine whether the leader is trustworthy. Therefore, participants believed recommendation act as a first impression in a trust relationship, and trust could be reinforced or reduced during further interactions.

4.2.2.3 Differences of leaders and followers' perspectives on exchange/interaction-related trust relationship influential factors

The areas of disagreement between leaders and followers are their perspectives concerning whether team diversity and friendship can facilitate leader-follower trust relationships. For the discussion of diversity, 14 leaders agreed diversity could help trust relationships in the workplace, and would prefer to develop a diverse team, while followers' perspectives towards team diversity is neutral or they expressed no opinion. With regard to the role of workplace friendship, leaders and followers revealed different opinions. Seventeen leaders provided clear responses that friendship is not relevant to trust relationship, while followers' answers were neutral.

A) Friendship

The results showed leaders and followers have different perspectives towards the relationship between trust and friendship in the workplace. Only four leaders would like to build a friendship with their staff in the workplace, and they believed friendship can have positive effects on trust relationships. In contrast, 15 leaders stated friendship could not facilitate trust and they would not consider it appropriate to be friends with their followers, while another one leader showed uncertain attitudes towards friendship and trust relationships.

Leaders who showed negative attitudes towards workplace friendship explained they prefer to have boundaries with their followers to ensure working efficiency, as close relationships can affect working relationships. The following two quote from leaders explained the situation:

"...it was easier to trust someone who was a friend rather than if you take on someone that you've never met before, and you need time to build trust with them...But for people I don't know before, I'm friendly with them...I would have socialized with them at work event, but we didn't socialize with any of them on one-to-one basis. I wouldn't have them Facebooks, for example...I would rather have a relationship of being a friendly managers and friendly staff." [Participant 2, leader, AT, Male]

"A lot of times, where a lot of junior managers kind of go wrong...they feel like they have to become friends with their team, in order to get their respect and trust. And what the difficulty with that is once you become friends, imagine you have to do a performance review or put someone on the performance management plan, how awkward is that to do to a friend...this is a trap for junior managers, they're not develop trust correctly, unfortunately." [Participant 37, leader, AT, Male]

Followers' perspectives towards workplace friendship and trust varied. Four followers mentioned being friends with their supervisors sometimes makes them feel hard to directly point mistakes made by their leaders, and they would prefer to have a working relationship with leaders in the workplace. One follower said:

"No, I don't...I think that there's a professional ball to be upheld, and so I don't think our friendship crosses that line. And it is hard to be harsh to a friend in the workplace." [Participant 21, follower, AT, Female]

Nine followers mentioned they would prefer to be friend with their leaders if there is a chance, however, they just stated friendship or after-work social events could only help to generate a friendly and relax atmosphere, and friendship is not necessary to build trust. The following quote is from a follower, she explained:

"My relationship with my manager is definitely friendship. My part anyway, I don't know. But I also know that if I do something wrong or something happens, she will then become a manager...Making friends in an office is a good idea, because you're there for most of your time...but I think that people also need to realize that when something happens, the relationship just changes to manager employee type thing. So, eventually, it's good, but it's not necessary for trust." [Participant 35, follower, AT, Female]

Whereas there are five followers agreed friendship with leaders could positively affect trust in the workplace, since they believe being friends with their supervisors sometimes makes them feel they are included in the team and accepted by the leaders. The findings showed that, four followers who showed "yes" as an answer are under 30 years old, and another follower is just over 30. The following quote is from a follower, she said:

"Very important, I think, friendship is super important. Being able to communicate not only what's happening in your work life, but what's happening outside to that may influence your performance or

your mood. How tired you are on a certain day and just having someone who's able to understand that you're a person and living a life is important...we really often have conversations about what's going on in our lives." [Participant 8, follower, AT, Female]

B) Workplace diversity

Another different opinion is participants' perceptions about team diversity. Fourteen leaders prefer to have a diverse team in the workplace, which could bring new thoughts to organisations and develop creativity. They believed that a diverse team with people from different countries or people who have different religions demonstrates a high level of inclusiveness in this team, which means people with different background can find a sense of belonging in this team. The sense of belonging could improve team cohesion and benefit leader-follower trust relationships (Dincer, 2011).

Another eight leaders had "not sure" perspectives towards diversity and trust, since they haven't got chance to manage a diverse team. Additionally, they assumed potential cultural boundaries or language boundaries may negatively affect leader-follower trust relationships, however, they stated diversity has no negative effects on trust relationships though.

One leader affirms the positive effect of diversity in trust relationships, since a diverse working environment can support employees from all backgrounds, employees could care each other's well-being and support individual differences. The leader explained:

"...As an individual when you are not supported you feel very alone, and that's the first time you recognize that colour of your skin, for example, or your difference. If the team is diverse, they will feel the more trusted and respected as individuals, and the more diverse you have, the more diverse opinions you're going to get, because if I always get the same type of individuals and surround them...and no one will challenge, because everyone say 'yep, that's the best one', and the best environments are where you have the challenge you have someone saying 'Oh, this is a different way to look at it', so to me a diverse team is the strongest team." [Participant 37, leader, AT, Male]

Whereas, from the perspectives of followers, there were 12 followers showed neutral perspective towards diversity and trust. They mentioned as long as the person can complete his/her work, diversity could not affect their trust perspectives. One follower said:

"It wouldn't hurt. We're a quite diverse team, we respect each other's religions and celebrate holidays from other cultures. But it is not necessarily related trust, I think, as long as you can get your job done." [Participant 21, follower, AT, Female]

4.2.3 Focus group evidence

4.2.3.1 Characteristic-related discussions

Participants in two focus group interviews agreed with key commonalities, participants affirmed integrity and reliability is essential in the workplace for both leaders and followers. Dependable behaviours, such like keeping commitments, being responsible, being timely, show ones' integrity and reliability, which is vital for trust relationships in business practice. The following quote from focus group interviews stressed and supported the significance of integrity and reliability:

"I think integrity is really important, you know that people are true to their words they're reliable and they're consistent in us. You know if you delegate something, and they say they're gonna do it. Then they do it. And if they don't do it, they feedback in time to make sure that something else can be done about it."

From the results, leaders considered integrity as an important factor for trust relationships, while followers believed benevolence is an influential factor for trust relationships as well. Focus group participants understood the differences, since leaders and followers have different expectations due to their positions in companies. From leaders' perspectives, kindness or benevolence is a unidirectional behaviour which happens from top to bottom. As a result, leaders being kind to followers from the top to bottom, while they would expect trust or respect in return. Moreover, integrity and task completion are more important for leaders, and leaders would trust a follower if the person were reliable or consistent.

The following quotes from a leader explained:

"...kindness and benevolence feed down, it doesn't need to feed back. What feeds back is trust and all respect. I wouldn't have thought that the leader doesn't need the follower to be kind or benevolent except to the people below them or to their peers. But it is definitely strange that a leader need benevolence of their followers. Though that would be quite egotistical."

From followers' perspective, followers expect help or care from leaders when problems occur. Either problems related to personal life or related to work, followers as individuals need supports when they affected by negative attitudes or tough issues. The following quote from a follower, she said:

"I think, with the kindness and benevolence, it's if you think of it as the employees is like on sick or has to go home because of something. They would hope that their manager would be more sympathetic towards that. The other way around it doesn't really matter."

4.2.3.2 Exchanges and interactions

From the results, reciprocal exchanges like mutual respect and emotional supports were considered as positive influential factors on trust relationships. In contrast, gossip with negative intention could decrease the level of trust. Focus group participants shared similar thoughts with commonalities found from results above. Participants agreed with the importance of mutual respect. For any workable relationship, either professional relationship or personal relationship, respect is the foundation which starts interactions and cooperation. The following quote agreed by the other participant in the same focus group interview:

“Mutual respect is the key factor. You won’t get anywhere, unless the people working with you respect you. You won’t feel right in an organization if you’re not respected by the people of you...I think respect comes before trust.”

Discussions concerning gossip highlighted the influence of different types of conversations. Participants agreed gossip or daily conversation about a person is unavoidable in the workplace, but negative attitudes or hostile conversations are detrimental to trust relationships. One participant stated:

“...so office gossip, when people sit around talking about what happened on a Saturday night, and what they’re doing are normal, office gossip is everywhere. I think there’s different types of conversations and gossiping, talking on kindly about a person behind their back seems ok. But whenever there’s conversations that are intended to harm another person and then that I think is problematic.”

From the analysis results, leaders and followers had different opinions towards friendship and workplace diversity. With regard to the former, the key element is having boundaries in the workplace is important. Though all four participants stated they feel friendship is not necessary in the workplace and would not influence trust relationships, they also provided explanations about the relationship between friendship and trust relationships in the workplace.

One leader explained:

“Work relationships professional relationships don’t need elements of friendship. In the sense that I use the word ‘friendship’ which is more than mere acquaintance, so with most of your work colleagues, you get on with them as acquaintances not as friends.”

One follower suggested potential reasons, she said:

“From my opinion, friendship is not necessary. But I feel I can understand why someone need it in the workplace. Generations may affect the results. Younger people would prefer to share, or simply have a place to think about nothing, don’t include work. I think that’s why.”

Concerning the influence of diversity in organisations, participants revealed neutral opinions towards its relationship with leader-follower trust relationships. They agreed inclusiveness is important for minority groups, but it is not necessarily linked with diversity. The sense of inclusiveness and organisational environment is more significant. One leader showed her opinions towards diversity:

“Minority groups are more vulnerable, as a consequence, inclusiveness is important. As far as diversity is concerned, I don’t think diversity impacts trust. Inclusiveness impacts trust or lack of inclusiveness, it would impact trust. With the whole question of diversity, I think organisations need to create the right environment for people to feel they are included, that they are able to be open about their identity.”

4.3 Section Two: Factors influencing trust relationships between leaders and followers

4.3.1 What Leadership and followership styles influence leader-follower trust relationships

4.3.1.1 Introduction and result

Influenced by different functions and goals of leaders and followers caused by their positions in organisations, participants showed different expectations towards follower/leaders’ behaviours in the workplace. During interviews, participants were asked to choose experienced behaviours from some statements related to leadership/followership styles. For instance, leaders were asked to choose some passive behaviours (e.g., *“Obey my orders and just completes what I asked”*) and proactive behaviours (e.g., *“Staff take the initiative to share their opinions with me”*) of their followers they have experienced in the workplace (Appendix B & C shows interview questions in detail). Additionally, to deeply investigate the influence of leader/follower behaviours on trust relationships, participants were encouraged to propose extra desired behaviours and explain why these behaviours could facilitate trust. Proactive followership and passive followership were as examples to ask leaders during interviews, while transformational leadership and transactional leadership were as examples to ask followers during interviews.

From the analysis of results, all participated leaders showed positive attitudes to proactive behaviours from followers and demonstrated proactive actions could earn their trust. Meanwhile, though followers’ passive behaviours were not desired by leaders, leaders indicated that passive activities may not significantly influence their trust. From the view of followers, both transformational and transactional leadership styles could positively affect their trust towards leaders, while transformational behaviours deemed a more comfortable leadership style in leader-follower relationship. Moreover, four followers expected power-sharing and/or empowering activities from leaders in a trusting relationship. The author summarises and presented these behaviours as empowering leadership style in findings part. The next two sections analyse and present evidence using quotes from interviews, with leaders’ and followers’ perspectives presented in sequential order.

4.3.1.2 Leaders’ perspectives about followership styles and trust relationships

A) Proactive followership

From the assessment of followership styles by leaders, eight leaders evaluated their followers as passive followers, while 14 leaders assessed their followers as proactive followers. All participating leaders reported that they prefer to trust a proactive follower, since such behaviours are seen as indications of high dedication to organisations and favourable attitudes about work. Proactive followership behaviours indicate that they are self-managed and capable of problem solving (Benson, Hardy & Eys, 2016). During interviews, proactive behaviours that were frequently highlighted include offering timely feedback, asking questions when unexpected challenges arise at work, proposing creative opinions, and taking initiative at work. One leader said:

“I’ve actually got a very high proactive team.....proactive in the time you know if they’re doing things off your own back and they’re coming back to you. That level of interest and passion is greater than someone who is passive.” [Participant 22, leader, AT, Male]

Seven leaders expressed negative attitudes toward some independent behaviours such as *“employees rarely rely on me and can solve problems on their own”*, although agreeing that this is a proactive behaviour. They indicated they would prefer communicating with staff rather than knowing nothing about the progress of their work. One leader mentioned independent problem-solving skills are essential for staff, it is not an ideal situation to receive little feedback though. Participants also stated that independent behaviours would not influence their trust, however, they prefer to trust followers who are proactive to communicate and facilitate collective decisions. One leader suggested that followers should give proper feedback of leaders’ behaviours and communicate directly if they have any questions at work, which could help leaders to adjust their behaviours and develop companies. The leader explained:

“Honest feedback from the staff, you know, if you think something is wrong, you need to come back and tell.” [Participant 32, leader, AT, Female]

According to extra desired behaviours, critical reflection activities were mentioned by two leaders, they believed that reflection activities ensure meaningful practice and develop personal abilities. Both followers and leaders need to have a regular reflection pattern, especially for new recruiters. They indicated that seeing employees have active reflection activities increase their trust on them, since reflection is a process of learning which is the foundation of progress. The following quote from one of the leaders, she explained:

“I’ve always been a big believer and having a supervision that supports critical reflection. New to work people deeply on their practice, what they’re doing, why they’re doing it, what informs, what they’re doing, you know, what they bring to the job, and reflect more deeply on their strengths and the contributions to them.” [Participant 29, leader, MH, Female]

B) Passive followership

Compared to proactive followers, passive followers are those who need specific directions or instructions to complete tasks (Latour & Rast, 2004). There were 11 leaders implied passive behaviours from followers make

them feel the follower is not capable to complete tasks on their own. Most frequently mentioned passive follower's behaviour was *"rarely share opinions with me, even if I ask"*. Especially in decision-making process, leaders expected different opinions and contributions from followers. Some followers was reported never provide suggestions.

At the same time, while passive follower behaviours were not desired by leaders, five participants showed an understanding as to why followers exhibited such behaviours. They mentioned that passive followers are not irresponsible or untrustworthy at work, they are just quiet sometimes and have their own working habit though. It is hard to culture proactive behaviours, and individuals' characteristics or working routine need to be respected, as long as s/he can complete assigned tasks. One leader said:

"I feel they lack confidence, it could be, because they're shy, it could be, because you know they're quite introverted that could be many numbers of reasons why someone is passive. So, it doesn't really affect me." [Participant 29, leader, MH, Female]

Though half of leaders implied negative attitudes towards passive behaviours, two leaders showed agreements to some passive behaviours. Participating leaders stated they would appreciate followers who ask before action and do what was required. They believed passive followers usually cannot be perceived in organisations, however, they were steady and contributed to the development progress of organisations as well. As a result, passive behaviours cannot be rewarded with extra marks, passive followers' efforts could be noticed by leaders though. Therefore, from leaders' views, passive followership in general contributed less to trusting relationships, while leaders preferred to trust followers with proactive actions and quality involvement in organisations.

4.3.1.3 Followers' perspectives about leadership styles and trust relationships

A) Transformational and transactional leadership styles

From the analysis of interviews, two followers identified their leaders' leadership style as transactional, while 16 evaluated their leaders' style as transformational. There were only four followers stated they haven't experienced any transactional behaviours in workplace, the rest 14 participated followers indicated they experienced both transactional and transformational leadership styles. Followers who experienced both transactional and transformational leadership styles agreed both leadership styles could help establish trust. The most frequently mentioned transactional statement was *"leaders tell me the standards I have to know to carry out my work"*, and most followers believed that having clear standards and direction at work is important to a stable working environment.

Participants mentioned transactional leadership style could help build trust due to the clear directions and standards generated by leaders, however, all participating followers prefer a transforming style of management. They implied that transactional leadership is regarded as a micro-management style that focuses on exchanging and supervising. Though transactional leadership aids in leader-follower trust relationships, followers who

preferred transformational leadership style discussed transformational leadership style could provide possibilities for growth and self-learning. One follower said:

“The second one (transformational leadership), the way is less supervision versus encouragement. I say the second one is more trusting.....Yet you’re the leader, so you need to support people, and push them, and sort of guide them, if needed. Supervision is a day-to-day basis, I cannot say the first one is not trustful, it’s okay, but the second one is better actually.” [Participant 17, follower, AT, Male]

All participating followers indicated that they have experienced transformational leadership behaviours in the workplace. There were three frequently mentioned transforming behaviours, including *“provides active and supportive communication”, “shows determination to accomplish organisational goal”, and “encourages followers to express ideas and rethink ideas when solving problems”*.

During interviews, followers claimed that celebration of accomplishments are important to a positive working environment, as it makes them feel valued by the leader and the company. Followers implied that recognition and rewards for their efforts increase their trust on leaders. They explained acknowledgement and praise of individual achievements mean the leader share emotional supports and enthusiasm with followers, which makes followers feel perceived and appreciated by leaders. As a result, followers would prefer to work and learn more under the encouragement, which is beneficial for everyone in organisations. Furthermore, the significance of independent training and growth opportunities were mentioned by nine followers during interviews. They said they would be loyal to the organisation and trust the leader if their leaders could provide a variety of training programmes and care about their personal growth.

According to findings, followers evaluated leaders’ transformative behaviours through their experience of the level of consideration, determination, and motivation they receive, and followers prefer to trust leaders who encourage people and provide growth opportunities when needed. One follower expressed her gratitude for her leader’s transformational behaviours and assistance, saying:

“All of the things I selected, I can see in her, and more. She is kind she is always willing to help, even when I’m not asking, she says is there anything I can do to help you. And then she gives me opportunities to learn and grow. And, to feel that I’m a valuable component of our team.” [Participant 21, follower, AT, Female]

Another follower mentioned though transactional leaders could reward followers according to certain efforts, supports and encourages from leaders are more valuable, he explained:

“I think the second one (transformational leadership style) is more like my (manager). You know, (for transactional leaders) if you do well and work hard, you will be rewarded, and I don’t think it’s always as simple as that. Even if you are working hard, it can be going the wrong ways. A leader know how you work and then support you is more important.” [Participant 17, follower, AT, Male]

B) Empowering leadership style

Four followers responded that empowering behaviours from leaders were desirable, such as sharing decision-making power with followers and allowing followers to complete work independently. Empowerment and authorization were signals of being trusted by leaders, and followers would prefer to trust in return. Furthermore, empowerment suggested a cooperative relationship between leaders and followers rather than a supervisory relationship. Rather than being supervised or managed, followers answered that they would want to be helpful and cooperative with leaders. Though greater responsibilities come with power sharing, followers also want to learn and collaborate with leaders to improve businesses.

Furthermore, followers stated that empowering behaviours could promote open communication and help them feel more confident at work. Since sharing power and achieving group goals requires validation of followers' talents, the collaborative approach requires more open communication. Furthermore, followers stated that micromanagement and severe supervision could not be perceived as leadership styles, and supervisory management rarely facilitate trust relationships between leaders and followers. One follower explained:

"The empowering leader I find a lot more trustful than the supervisory one. Because I feel that a supervisory one is just micromanaging and that doesn't build the trust.....With an empowering one it's almost like they're saying, you know, be free and go and try these things.....They're still there as a backup, provide help.....They just leave you spaces to learn and grow, and engage in the development of organisations." [Participant 30, follower, MH, Female]

4.3.1.4 A sense of humour between leader-follower relationships

Two leaders and two followers added "a sense of humour" as an influential factor of trust relationships. Humour refers to a person's benevolent action which intends to amuse another person by sharing certain stories or events (Kim, Lee & Wong, 2016). During interviews, participants explained the influence of humour on trust with two aspects. Firstly, they stated a sense of humour could help build a relaxing working environment. They explained people spent the majority of their days at work with colleagues, and a pleasant environment may improve employee work satisfaction and assist new recruiters in breaking down barriers with previous employees. One leader who played induction role in the company explained:

"I usually like to start off (the induction) with an embarrassing story about myself just to humanise me..... it just kind of breaks the ice and come straight at ease. Then, to continue that throughout training, I believe in being as open as possible about the fact that we're not going to have a perfect day. We've gotten a lot of positive feedback about how relaxed it feels because we're not putting on a show, it's just our authentic this is what's happening selves okay." [Participant 32, leader, AT, Female]

Secondly, they believed sometimes open humiliation of self could help people know the person and get familiar with him/her, and it helps trust relationships when people know each other better. Moreover, one leader

explained if a leader admits mistakes or errors that they have made in front of other colleagues, it is a signal that the working environment is safe. Accordingly, staff may have less fear to report personal mistakes, and leaders could cooperate with employees to solve problems. One leader stated:

"I don't really believe people turn up to work to want to make mistakes. I guess when it starts to annoy me as if they repeatedly make the same mistake, or when it crosses my boundary, and I'll be sitting down with them and trying to work that out, you know whether it is just a lack of lack of attention, lack of care for the job. But generally, I think it's essential to be in a safe environment and hold your hands up and say, 'I have made a mistake here'. It's horrible living in fear of making a mistake and we're all humans, everyone is going to do it. A sense of humour could help pass it." [Participant 31, leader, AT, Female]

According to followers, the two people who proposed a sense of humour indicated that it could help them reduce working stress and develop a more cheerful working environment. Furthermore, one follower who only works with people from the UK mentioned that a sense of humour can help bridge relationships between co-workers, allowing people to become involved in the company and build trust, though humour could be a complicated component if working with a diverse team. The following two quotes demonstrate their perspectives on trust relationships and the impact of humour:

"...a sense of humour (to help build trust) as well, we just need to go on with stressful situations, there were times my colleague and managers, we just sat and had a laugh or just say what we really feel and express frustrations." [Participant 10, follower, MH, Female]

"I think we build trust in a different way, if I was working with people only in the UK, it would be much more based like making fun of each other. That would be how we become close and get them become trustworthy or build trust amongst ourselves, whereas with an international team I think it's more difficult to use humour because everyone has different types of humour. And it's also more difficult to make those sorts of jokes over zoom or very remote working, because you don't know quite know how things aligned." [Participant 18, follower, AT, Male]

4.3.1.5 Focus group evidence about leadership/followership styles on trust relationships in the workplace

In terms of preferred leadership and followership styles in leader-follower trust relationships, focus group participants agreed with results from individual interviews. There was a consensus that proactive followership and transformational leadership would assist trust relationships between leaders and followers. Concerning passive followership style, it would not significantly affect leader-follower trust relationships. All participants agreed as long as the staff could complete tasks, it would not negatively affect trust relationships, though proactive employees are more trustworthy. However, according to empowering leadership style, focus group participants suggested the balance between delegation and management was vital. Since over empowering

could blur boundaries and make leaders fail to follow task progress, and a lack of empowerment would lead to micromanagement which leads to stress among followers. Also, sometimes micromanagements may be perceived as a lack of trust, which may negatively influence trust relationships. Therefore, the balance and strategies of how to empower employees were significant in a healthy and trusting relationship.

Additionally, focus group participants argued that proactive behaviours and transforming behaviours interact gradually, either in a positive way or a negative way. Consistent and timing feedback from followers would cause encouragement and communication from leaders, and vice versa. Meanwhile, trust relationships could be reinforced with positive spiral, and efforts from both sides were required. Negative spiral and/or uncooperative behaviours would burden each side in a management relationship, and it inevitably cause the lack of trust. As a result, they added that different from individual characteristics, relationships need efforts from both sides and require more time to adjustment.

According to a sense of humour, all focus group participants agreed it assists people to know each other well, and a relaxing atmosphere facilitates trust relationships. A sense of humour is like a bridge between leaders and followers, however, they mentioned it requires boundaries. Firstly, mutual respect is the foundation of “making jokes”. Since sometimes open humiliation or humour could be offensive, and only kind humour could facilitate trust. Second, a sense of humour is only appropriate in certain situations. Lateness to work, for example, could be dealt with informally, whereas serious errors should be dealt with properly. Otherwise, repeated errors could have a negative impact on organisational performance and trust. Finally, participants stated that the way humour is defined and presented is critical. A sense of humour could help people form healthy relationships when they were in the same situation. If people are unable to completely comprehend events or misunderstand others, a sense of humour may be ineffective or even harmful to leader-follower relationships. The following quotes from a focus group discussion explained:

“I think, having a sense of humour is able to deal with (stressful) situations and to deal with difficult, but seeing other people’s point of view is important, you’ve just got to watch again the boundaries of humour, what’s humorous for one person is maybe not for another.....so I think keeping these things apart, having a kind view and keeping up a sense of humour I don’t think is a problem.”

“Yes, a sense of humour is always a bonus, as long as it’s not detrimental to the other people around them, or as long as no aim to broke or to be offensive.”

4.3.2 External factors which influence leader-follower trust relationships

4.3.2.1 Introduction and results

In addition to personal characteristics, interactions, and leadership or followership styles, leader-follower trust relationships could be inevitably affected by development and changes of environment (Pfeffer & Salancik, 2003). External factors as the final discussion part during interviews, all participants were encouraged to openly

present their opinions of the relationship between external factors and leader-follower trust relationships. Four external factors were proposed and discussed by participants, wherein 22 participants proposed “COVID-19”, five participants mentioned “financial issues”, two participants discussed “policy issues”, four participants suggested “commercial issues”.

External factors may influence leader-follower trust relationships, according to 28 participants, but no external factors may directly or instantly influence a trust connection, according to 12 participants. Eight of the participants admitted that they had never encountered or thought about related circumstances. The remaining four participants expressed confidence in their leader-follower trust relationships and claimed that external circumstances would have no impact on trust building. One leader who was working in the Assistive Technology industry mentioned that due to the nature of their business, they provided services to those in need or with impairments, which attracted similar people to the organisation and linked them together. People naturally shared the same purpose and value in the company, and their trust relationships were barely altered by external factors, she said:

“I can’t think of any external factors necessarily would be immediately linked to trust building. For us, I think, for people coming into our organisation, you know, (we work for people who have) difficulties or disabilities, having people with those conditions, immediately makes them (followers) more trusting towards the organization and then each other.” [Participant 31, leader, AT, Female]

4.3.2.2 Four external factors that influence leader-follower trust relationships

A) Financial issues

Financial climate could affect the development of organisations and cause survival difficulties for business (Revilla-Camacho et al., 2014). There were three leader and two followers proposed financial issues as an influential factor on leader-follower trust relationships. From the perspective of followers, salary discrepancy is the first financial issue that influence followers’ attitudes towards leaders, and it could also affect relationship among followers. Secondly, a sudden change of financial climate could bring followers the fear of job security, and any adjustments could be considered as a threat to trust relationships. Thirdly, when crisis emerged, leaders who have the management and decision-making power in business may change their decision-making approach to respond to potential threats. If leaders cannot provide feasible actions, solutions, or explanations during stressful period, they could lose followers’ trust. In the meantime, leaders’ integrity and motivation may be doubted or challenged by followers if they fail to address forthcoming challenges, which inevitably influences followers’ assessment of leaders.

From the perspective of leaders, when a financial crisis strikes, leaders may be concerned and question the commitment of their staff. Not only may followers be concerned about job security, but some leaders may be concerned about rising turnover rates (Abualrub & Alghamdi, 2012). In addition, especially for start-ups, start-

up leaders usually cannot pay as high as a large corporation, and sometimes staff have difficulties to understand why start-ups cannot raise their salaries (Yukl, 2012). Participants mentioned being misunderstood or lacking supports from followers would have a significant impact of leaders' trust on followers. Therefore, financial issues could to some extent impact leaders and followers trust and integrity in organisations. The following quotes from leaders explained:

"When things are stressful and uncertain decisions have been made, it will influence trust. Economic stuff like financial so obviously (will bring stressful situations), right now the company is bootstrapping it, but it could have been really terrible." [Participant 16, leader, AT, Male]

"Financial pressures could naturally be more worried; I think it's definitely going to impact the trustworthiness. With the external factors I'm struggling to be able to put into words about it, especially we've had redundancies last year. I think is going to be natural, especially because it's a small and middling company, it doesn't feel as solid as a massive corporation.....If there are rumours about financial instability, I naturally wouldn't choose a small to medium business to work for if I was a new person. I think the only way for the company is to be as transparent as possible." [Participant 32, leader, AT, Female]

B) Political issues

Two participants within one leader and one follower presented political issues as external influential factors on leader-follower trust relationships. Organisations need to attract investment or funding from government or other organisations, and changes of political agenda affect workforce stabilisation. People can be confused by sudden increases or decreases in employee numbers, as well as changes in management structure. It's significant and tricky how openly and strategically a leader can be amid these adjustments. A stable team is valuable for organisations, explained by a follower, working with familiar people would help increase work effectiveness.

Alongside the consideration of funding and investment political agenda, Brexit was mentioned as another external influential factor by one leader. She explained the massive influence caused by Brexit affected their HR requirements. She articulated employees from other countries or issues related refugees required HR department to recheck documents, and employees started to be more sensitive than before. Accordingly, the leader stated people at work need to care more than before, and it caused decrease of working effectiveness and trust relationships. She then indicated:

"I think being fairly distressing for a lot of people and that has gone against the principles of the organisation. We've kind of been trained to be sensitive...People have to jump through hoops in order to work." [Participant 29, leader, MH, Female]

C) Commercial pressure

Commercial pressure was proposed by people who were working in Assistive Technology, four participants (two leaders and two followers) argued commercial pressure affected their leader-follower trust relationships. From followers' perspectives, employees who are working in small companies would be trained to know similar skills. For instance, they explained, development team also need to have some knowledge of marketing. Consequently, when company cannot meet demands or lose market share, staff may feel anxious about losing jobs (De Vries et al., 2006). In addition, participants mentioned small companies confront challenges from other small companies and big corporates, there is always things to be learned. When new technology occurs, pressure caused by competitors and market demands makes people sensitive and anxious (Kim, Hornung & Rousseau, 2011). Accordingly, staff may doubt their leaders and affect their trust on leaders (ibid). In contrast, one follower stated people cannot always share the same information, though in a small business. Multiple tasks and different progress may cause information differences and misunderstanding, which needs more time to communicate or simply destroys trust relationships. One follower said:

"I think external factor might be like commercial pressures. (Our work) might be a need to get product out by a certain deadline, but then there's maybe remaining work that needs done too, there's a sort of conflicts between commercial pressure and getting other things done quickly. (Leaders) need to make everyone trust the decision was right, to sure everyone is okay, and to make sure everyone knows what they're doing, and sometimes a bit of a balance is hard." [Participant 18, follower, AT, Male]

From leaders' perspectives, the key issue of commercial pressure is it could blur the organisational goal. One leader explained organisations almost always have multiple programmes running at the same time, with various deadlines, meanwhile, there is still work needs to be done, such as daily routine work. Participants indicated that daily routine work resembles a strategic business goal for sustainable development, while some urgent commercial programmes with limited deadlines are short-term objectives. As a result, employees may become confused about the difference between urgent tasks and important but not urgent everyday duties. One leader articulated that it's crucial to find a balance between getting things done quickly and keeping to a long-term organisational goal. The leader then explained if employees are unable to fully understand the organization's goals and frequently misplace urgent tasks and important tasks, it could affect leaders' trust in their employees. Therefore, commercial pressure would stress employees, increase the cost of communication, and blur the organisational goal, which influence trust relationships between leaders and followers.

D) COVID-19

Financial issues, policy issues and commercial issues as pervasive external factors were discussed by some leaders and followers above. Since this research was conducted during the advent of COVID-19, most participants and their companies were impacted by the pandemic.

The advent of COVID-19 increased the discussion among trust, management structure and online supervision among participants, and 28 participants shared their valuable opinions towards leader-follower trust relationships and the influence of COVID-19. Additionally, discussion of differences of virtual trust and physical trust evoked conversation of how to build and remain virtual trust in practice. Since the discussion contains different aspects which cannot be presented simply as an external influential factor on trust relationships, the author analyses and shows results systematically in 4.4.

4.4 Section Three: Influence of working online and working remotely on trust relationships

4.4.1 Introduction and results

Interviews of COVID-19 and trust was accompanied by a discussion on online supervision, remote working management structure, and techniques of building trust online. Since people were not working in a normal way like before, changes naturally motivated views and judgements of the new working style. Participants who were either forced to work from home or initially working remotely showed their perspectives towards trust relationships and online working.

Seventeen participants showed negative perspectives towards working from home. They mentioned there are several distractive things when working from home, and remote working is not an ideal way to build trust with colleagues. Only five of them like the new working style, as they have a more flexible working time, and they are able to enjoy work and life at the same time. The remaining 18 participants, nine of whom indicated they worked remotely before the start of COVID-19 and that the current situation has only a little impact on them. The impact of COVID-19 and trust relationships were not mentioned by seven of the participants, since they worked in an international context and had experience of online working. They generated information of online working and remote working instead, which includes how to build trust online. The remaining two people claimed that they had to wear personal protection equipment to work every day due to special working requirements, and the change had little impact on them.

Though 17 participants agreed working from home and remote working style could negatively affect leader follower trust relationships in workplace, they also mentioned the influence of COVID-19 on trust was not permanent. Trust can be built eventually, however, they implied it definitely will take longer than before.

Changes of working styles, pressure of company survival issues, and worry of losing jobs could influence one's confidence on followers or leader (Yukl, 2012). Participants mentioned in addition to the existence of COVID-19, however, these issues continue to persist. Therefore, existence and changes of COVID-19 just exposed problems rather than generating them. Though it may be difficult to establish trust over a screen, people may eventually find ways to do so.

The participants' final opinion on the impact of COVID-19 on their trust relationships is that trust could be built eventually, however, the advent of COVID-19 may lengthen leader-follower trust relationships. When asked how COVID-19 affected their trust relationships at work, participants mentioned three key changes caused by the pandemic: usage of new technical software, emergence of new working styles, and techniques of building trust online. The following sections presents findings in sequence.

4.4.2 How the adaptation of technical software influenced leader-follower trust relationships

In terms of *technical software adaptation*, both leaders and followers indicated learning and finding proper online software were time-consuming at the beginning. Communication started relying on emails and web-meetings, which may not always be stable and workable. Participants stated the changes challenged individual learning ability, computer hardware, and internet quality. Additionally, they explained though home might be the most familiar place for people, the distraction and chaos caused by other family members were unpredictable and inevitable.

Four people in interviews mentioned learning and selecting new software were time-consuming and bewildering. Since lacking information and being neglected were more common when people were working alone without communities, unprofessional software operation and poor communication skills could stress employees and erode trust. Leaders and followers encountered difficulties such as how to adequately deliver messages using online technologies and ensuring that everyone in an organisation shared enough information. One leader said:

“Navigating the online system is quite complicated... I think in a real office space make that easier, because you can set them see what your colleague has. It took several months for me to figure that (online system) out virtually.” [Participant 29, leader, MH, Female]

Both leaders and followers learning ability and communication skills were challenged by technical software adaptation during the transaction of online supervision. Two followers frankly claimed that it was difficult to manage online tools and complete work as usual, and it was stressful at the beginning. However, with the assistance of colleagues and leaders, they were able to adapt to technological issues after only one month. Similarly, two leaders stated that selecting safe software and introducing operation skills were difficult, but that the situation improved after three to four weeks. Furthermore, they indicated that lifelong learning or education was important in developing and maintaining trust. One leader said:

“All of our learning abilities were challenged... (having difficulty learning new technological software) has no effect on trust as long as people learn it quickly.” [Participant 40, leader, AT, Female]

Despite the unexpected difficulties in implementing new software and the isolation of the working environment caused by working from home, there were two benefits to implementing online tools at work. The first was that online tool assisted leaders in making informed decisions, which increased trust between leaders and followers. The other was that information would be disseminated in a systematic manner, ultimately saving people time.

Stress would be eliminated once people became accustomed to new technologies. One leader said their company applied online communication tools to support individuals, which helps them to develop team performance:

“A healthy working place, we’ve got quite a few things to support individuals online. We’ve got an APP that enables people to just talk to get to know each other and support people, and you know some of those things are kind of less business related, we’ve got ways in which we’ve got set up our teams within.”
[Participant 7, leader, AT, Female]

Though emerging changes influenced communication effectiveness, participants indicated that communication issues would be solved as long as people acclimate to the new technical software and the new communication style. Furthermore, participants mentioned the introduction of technical software could help increase information openness and organise information in a systematic manner, which aids leader-follower trust relationships and improves working efficiency. Working-from-home as a new working style for most participants, however, it changed leadership styles in companies. The next section presents findings of the influence of emergence working styles on leader-follower relationships.

4.4.3 Influence of emergence working styles on leader-follower trust relationships

With occurrence of new working styles come changes in leadership styles. There were 38 participants mentioned they were entirely working online at first due to home working policy caused by pandemic (the other two people was wearing personal protection equipment to work every day due to special working requirements). With the easiness of the pandemic, hybrid working styles (for example, 70 percent of the week at home and 30 percent of the week at the office) have been proposed. Both leaders and followers believe new working styles had positive and negative impacts on leader-follower trust relationships, the following section presents findings of negative impacts the new working styles firstly.

4.4.3.1 Negative impacts of new working styles on leader-follower trust relationships

From perspectives of followers, three followers felt they were closely monitored by their leaders. They believed they were being watched and distrusted since their activities were being recorded by software, though they understood it was one of strategies for leaders to follow task progress and maintain working efficiency. One follower claimed that their online system was invented by themselves, and leaders could remotely watch employee online actions at any moment. She expressed uncomfortable feelings towards the supervision and said:

“I feel I am being watched all the time when I’m working from home. For eight hours per day, like emails and schedules.....Yeah, if my leader wants to know, our system even shows what kind of websites I’m

visiting, which is stressful.....It just makes me feel I'm not trusted sometimes." [Participant 25, follower, AT, Female]

The other two followers reflected their working time was unconsciously increased. They said their leaders may expect instant responses from followers at any time to maintain working efficiency, ignoring normal working hours. Accordingly, their leaders would occasionally email or talk about work beyond normal working hours. Lack of work-life boundaries and being forced to do extra work makes them uncomfortable, even though they understood their leader were attempting to follow up on working progress. One of the followers said:

"It's different, let's say you go to work at nine on Monday, and you'll go home at five. But if you're working from home, you need to communicate your team or manager online regularly (instead of walking their office), and sometimes the phone call will be at ten past five. Though you need the update, but it still like there is no boundaries." [Participant 14, follower, MH, Male]

The three participants who were negatively impacted by the online supervision transaction stated that their leaders' approaches to maintaining working efficiency were out of boundaries or stressful, making them feel they are not trusted by their leaders.

From perspectives of leaders, they mentioned the main disadvantage of new working styles was communication efficiency issues, according to participated leaders. Working at the office, workers were able to exchange information with other colleagues through daily chats in minutes. Participants stated that working from home, compared to the traditional and normal working style, required them to contact each other via emails or online chat groups, which lacks guarantees of immediate responses. Participants mentioned the transmission of information is delayed, which has an impact on working efficiency. When people adapted to new rules and understood how the new technical software works, however, most participants believed the issues could be solved.

4.4.3.2 Positive impacts of new working styles on leader-follower trust relationships

There are four advantages of new working styles, proposed by participants. Firstly, remote working or hybrid working style allow people work without distraction and enjoy flexible working time, according to participants. Nine participants said they were working remotely before COVID-19, and the current situation only has a minor influence on them. They claimed working-from-home was enjoyable. A remote working style provided a more flexible working schedule, which allows them to balance work and life on their own. Followers who were allowed to have a flexible working schedule felt they are trusted by their leaders. Additionally, participants indicated working from home could avoid distractions in the office, which improves their working effectiveness. One follower said:

"I enjoy working at home and spending time with my families, and I don't think it influenced our trust relationships." [Participant 25, follower, AT, Female]

Secondly, the remote working style encourages people to respect each other's working schedules, which improves their trust relationships. One leader explained:

“Back to office, people used to pop into the office anytime, and sometimes is distractive, especially when you're focusing on something. But working from home help people respect each other's time schedule, people can still have a chat when they have needs by checking others calendar.” [Participant 37, leader, AT, Male]

Thirdly, participants stated working online allow them to make meetings easily and retrace the work have been done clearly. According to leaders, though the adaptation of working from home and new technological tools took time at first, the situation improved after people accepted and learned new technological tools. Having an accessible timetable for everyone online made it simple and efficient to plan individual schedules and collaborate effectively. Additionally, online calendaring or meeting software could automatically summarise and record each action in chronological sequence, making it simple to track work progress and assign clear duties. Accordingly, with long-term use of online numeric summaries, the reflection process proceeds naturally. Technical tools could display observable achievements and/or milestones in a month or a season, which actually saves time. Consequently, as long as people adjust to new technology software, the new working styles could improve work efficiency. One leader explained:

“Actually, people report that their productivity has increased. They certainly feel that because they're not wasting time commuting. Employers are noticing it. So, whilst there are some employers who are saying it's all over everybody back into the office, and many employers and I think we will find the end of the day, it will be the majority will embrace flexible working.” [Participant 29, leader, AT, Male]

Finally, participants showed preferences to hybrid working style, and indicated it could be an ideal working style which could ensure working effectiveness, flexibility, and social needs. Two leaders indicated a preference for hybrid working styles. According to one leader, the hybrid working style may aid in the process of building trust. Because if the leader works in the office one day per week, he can complete small and detailed tasks on that day while focusing on important issues on the other days of the week. Two followers who appreciated the hybrid working style, saying it meets both work effectiveness and social needs.

To sum up, according to some of the followers, the main negative impacts of new working styles on leader-follower trust relationships were caused by leaders' strict online supervision and a lack of work-life balance. Though they recognised that changes in management strategies could help to maintain working efficiency, the strict approaches inevitably affected their leader-follower trust relationships. Followers who were not subjected to strict management online supervision and who enjoyed new working styles noted that a flexible work schedule had a positive or no effect on leader-follower trust relationships. Additionally, according to participants, the usage and usefulness of online management tools and mutual respect contributed to the positive effects of

new working styles. Most leaders believed that though adapting to new working styles took time, the benefits exceeded the drawbacks.

4.4.4 Techniques of building trust online

With the presenting of findings of new working style come opinions of how to build trust online, which is the third topic caused by COVID-19. Following the explanation of virtual/physical trust definitions proposed by participants, some suggestions on how to develop and sustain virtual trust are presented.

4.4.4.1 Differences of building virtual trust and physical trust in the workplace

Participants indicated translating physical trust to virtual trust was a natural process for people who had previously worked together in an office, and there were no distinct differences between virtual trust and physical trust based on their responses. This new topic was proposed and discussed by new recruits and people who need to interact with new recruits during interviews. They indicated that virtual trust relationships lacked the emotional connections and richness of face-to-face communication.

In terms of emotional connections, two leaders implied because people can only see others through a screen, it is difficult to show others full body language or expression, making it difficult to create natural interactions or bonding activities in the short term. Building trust online, according to one leader, is difficult due to the difficulty of understanding enough emotional messages, he said:

“Sometimes I feel it (working from home) is very difficult to get that connection, and to read an individual’s body language..... I think it’s very difficult to get that over online conferencing, and that certainly has made it (maintaining trust relationships) more difficult.” [Participant 39, leader, AT, Male]

Participants mentioned, for new recruits, the process of building trust may be slowed if they do not understand others’ emotional messages. Furthermore, new recruits may be ignored in large online meetings because they barely know each other and find it difficult to engage in conversations. One participant who had training responsibility at the company said:

“(I found) sometimes new recruiters may be ignored during online meetings, especially the monthly meeting or social events. They rarely speak directly unless asked by their line managers or have projects they are responsible for.” [Participant 35, follower, AT, Female]

In terms of the richness of face-to-face communications, online working environment sabotages the building process of interpersonal relationships, according to participants. One leader explained, in physical working environment, people could choose to privately talk to people even in a public social event. The topics of conversation varied during interactions, and people can join any small groups in which they are interested at

any time. As a result, people may become acquainted with others through interpersonal interactions. Interpersonal relationships aid in the development of trust, however, this is unlikely to occur in an online working environment (Nicola et al., 2020). Participants stated that, online group meetings require people to speak in turn in order to avoid chaos. Compared to physical social events, participants mentioned people cannot randomly propose irrelevant or interesting topics in a smaller group, so the richness and variety of discussion could be affected. In addition, one follower said if no one knows each other and the organisers fail to motivate participation, the online meeting may end in awkward silence. As a result, either chaos or silence may harm online trust relationships. One follower expressed his opinions towards online social events:

“I can’t see any benefits of our monthly social events, usually it lasts two hours, and all staff were suggested to join. But sometimes I even can’t talk, you know, in a large group and online, we cannot hear each other clearly. I felt I was forced to it.....I enjoy working from home, it helps me concentrate.”
[Participant 28, follower, AT, Male]

Furthermore, two participants with induction and training experiences stated that online meetings have a negative impact on leader-follower trust relationships for new recruiters. Because the person on the other side of the screen could occasionally turn off the webcam, which reduces their motivation and desire to communicate. Negative listening and no feedback reduce their desire to build trust with others through online meetings. The following section outlined some skills proposed by participants to facilitate leader-follower trust relationships in order to build trust online.

4.4.4.2 Techniques for building trust online

Participants proposed four online trust-building skills, including sharing organisational goals, celebrating specific team and individual successes, building active feedback loop, and creating meaningful online social events.

Firstly, for online trust relationships, it is critical for leaders to quickly share organisational goals and clarify organisational cultures, especially with new recruits. Participated leaders mentioned it is critical for people to know each other in order to work as a team, and the first step is to match organisational goals and individual identification. According to an Assistive Technology leader, new recruits understand that the organisation aims at supporting people who suffer physical or mental disadvantages. This foundation implies that the organisation’s goal or culture is to provide high-quality services and products to people in need. As a result, without extensive preparation or adaptation, new recruits could participate in discussions and interact with people about the topic. Similarly, the leader proposed, in any industries, if there is a good alignment between individual values and organisational cultures, it could aid in leader-follower trust relationships. One leader who was asked to create a new induction plan for new recruiters shared her opinions:

“One of the biggest things I have found is being able to feel part of a team. The virtual world, it’s taken longer for us to find my feet in relation to that, but the one of the good things was everybody’s been

very welcoming, they will give you an update every month of the different things that are going on around the organisation. So that there is a whole cultural thing of having someone with you and helping you in settling in.” [Participant 29, leader, MH, Female]

Secondly, it was critical to motivate the team by celebrating specific team and individual successes. Participants believed that recognizing and praising others’ efforts was an effective way to foster positive competition and cheer on the team. Some leaders indicated changes in working styles may have an impact on working efficiency at first, however, if leaders can encourage people with specific team successes, it could motivate workers and imply that the changes haven’t had a significant impact on the company. Furthermore, two followers mentioned when people worked from home, information spread slowly, and individual efforts were sometimes overlooked. They believed celebration of a specific person reflects how leaders perceived individual efforts, and the person will feel valued. A pleasant and equitable working environment may aid in the process of establishing trust, one of the followers explained:

“We’ll have a monthly online meeting to talk about what people have achieved, and he (leader) will check if there’s anything that he can be doing for us. I think it is a good way to acknowledge efforts, I think it’s pretty good.” [Participant 36, follower, AT, Female]

Thirdly, participants illustrated regular communication and an active feedback loop may help to foster virtual trust in the workplace. Long meetings, whether online or offline, were not beneficial to workers (Yoerger, Crowe, & Allen, 2015). When changes occur, leaders tend to hold lengthy meetings, however, the habit of regular communication is more important than weekly long meetings (ibid). Participants suggested leaders and followers could establish an active feedback loop through regular communication, facilitating active listening and positive expression. Furthermore, they mentioned through regular communication, people can provide and receive emotional support from others, which aids in individual well-being. As a result, active interactions will gradually build trust, one leader said:

“I would trust someone that would put themselves out there, get feedback on what I said, and I’d give them some feedback in return... Again, communication and interaction are important, especially now we’re doing everything online.” [Participant 27, leader, MH, Female]

Finally, having meaningful social events and turning on webcams could help build trust. Most people who work from home lack social activities, and leaders could benefit from using online tools to initiate meaningful social activities or to establish a social community (Nobre & Silva, 2014). Participants mentioned Calandly, Zoom, Teams, Notion, Asana, forum, and Snapchat as platforms for sharing individual life and engaging in social activities online. However, participants indicated if social events were meaningless, and these social events could not aid in the development of trust. Three followers mentioned that they have weekly or monthly online social events. They felt compelled to join them, however, they stated that adjusting to a virtual social environment was difficult.

4.4.5 Focus group evidence

With regard to the influence of COVID-19, focus group participants presented different perspectives. One leader stated the change of working styles may be normal in the future, and currently working-from-home had less influence on their trust relationships. Moreover, they mentioned the new and flexible working style presented positive influence on leader-follower trust relationships, since people would enjoy a more relaxing working environment at home. One follower indicated, a lack of social events could negatively affect a trust relationship, however, trust could be established eventually. Other two participants showed a neutral perspective, working-from-home or/and the threat of COVID-19 hadn't affected their trust relationships. Additional financial concerns were the primary factor influencing consumer trust in businesses.

Focus group participants agreed that trust relationships depend on interpersonal relationships and that virtual relationships influence interactions. Building trust with leaders or followers remotely is not impossible, it takes time though. Participants explained trust can be gradually built with the help of online tools by sharing organisational goals and communicating on a regular basis. One manager stated that some of his employees enjoy working from home, and that the new working style had no significant impact on productivity. He was considering change the working style to a hybrid one, he said:

“Somebody is perfectly capable of shirking in the office and if they're that sort of person, they're going to do it at home. And you will judge by their results. So, curiously we're actually getting to the sort of place. So I think people now recognize that it is possible to trust remote workers in the same way as you trust from workers in the office.”

During focus group interviews, participants additionally addressed the importance of communication skills. Because people were working alone, it was critical to ensure that relevant persons received information on time. Furthermore, by storing information online, participants stated that everyone can check and review it, promoting a transparent working atmosphere, and transparency aids leader-follower trust relationships and boosts new recruiter confidence in organisations.

4.5 Section Four: Findings of direct and in-direct leader-follower trust relationships

4.5.1 Comparison between leader-follower pairs with direct subordinate relationships

In this research, nine pairs of leaders and followers with direct subordinate relationships were interviewed. Table 17 below shows their brief information (including gender, trust propensity, and participant's position, e.g., L5 means the fifth participant was a leader, F6 means the sixth participant was a follower, and they had a direct subordinate relationship, they were numbered Pair 1 in the table) and their perspectives on some trust-influential factors. In this analysis, only results about characteristic-related factors and interaction-related

factors are compared, since participants were asked to answer the same question only in these two parts. Though participants were asked about leadership and followership-related questions (followers were asked about what leadership styles/behaviours could facilitate leader-follower trust, leaders were asked about what followership styles/behaviours could facilitate leader-follower trust), their answers could not be compared due to a lack of self-assessment on personal leadership and followership styles.

TABLE 17 RESULTS BETWEEN LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS WITH DIRECT SUBORDINATE RELATIONSHIPS

Pairs	Participants	Gender	Propensity	Rating	ABI	Recommendation	Gossip	Diversity	Friendship
Pair 1	L5	M	Trusting	8	Integrity	N	Negative	N	N
	F6	M	Trusting	8.5	Integrity	N	Negative	N	Positive
Pair 2	L7	F	Trusting	8	Integrity	N	N	Positive	Negative
	F8	F	Standard	8.5	Benevolence	N	N	Negative	Positive
Pair 3	L12	F	Trusting	8.5	Integrity	N	Negative	Positive	N
	F10	F	Trusting	9	Benevolence	N	Negative	N	Negative
Pair 4	L13	F	Standard	9	Integrity	N	N	N	Negative
	F14	M	Trusting	10	Integrity	N	N	Positive	N
Pair 5	L15	M	Standard	7	Ability	N	Negative	Positive	Positive
	F17	M	Cynical	7.5	Benevolence	Positive	N	Positive	Negative
Pair 6	L20	F	Standard	8.5	Integrity	N	N	Positive	Negative
	F18	M	Trusting	8	Integrity	N	Negative	Negative	N
Pair 7	L23	M	Standard	8	Integrity	N	N	Positive	Negative
	F25	F	Trusting	8	Integrity	N	N	N	Negative
Pair 8	L24	M	Trusting	8	Integrity	N	Negative	N	N
	F28	M	Trusting	10	Ability	Positive	N	N	Positive
Pair 9	L31	F	Trusting	8	Integrity	N	N	Positive	Positive
	F35	F	Trusting	8	Integrity	N	Negative	N	Positive

**Note: N in this table means participants didn't give any attitudes towards the factor, or they didn't think the factor could negatively or positively affect leader-follower trust relationships.*

The first part of the analysis was comparisons within the nine pairs of participants with direct subordinate relationships. From the results of Table 17, though these nine pairs of participants have direct subordinate relationships, their rating scores towards the other sides' trustworthiness were not always the same. The rating scores from followers were generally higher than the rating scores from leaders, which means most followers in this research trust their leaders more than their leaders trust them in return.

About other influential factors on leader-follower relationships, participants also have different opinions towards each factor. The main differences were their attitudes about the influence of diversity and friendship

on leader-follower trust relationships. Six pairs of leaders and followers had different opinions on diversity, and seven pairs of leaders and followers had different opinions on friendship.

In terms of diversity, leaders believed having a diverse team could facilitate trust through communication and addressing bias. Additionally, they believed a diverse team could also encourage innovative ideas to develop companies, therefore, most leaders would prefer a diverse working environment. However, their followers suggested that working with similar people is more comfortable, and it is easier to trust people in similar situations. The following quotes from Pair 6 show their opinions about the influence of diversity on trust:

L20: "I think it (diversity) will improve trust relationships because, I mean, we kind of break down some stereotypes, so in a way, we work with people from different cultures. Actually, there are a few individuals that are quite good, more than we expect, so I would see that way."

F18: "I think the way we build trust is different (under different cultural backgrounds). I'd say maybe it makes it a bit more difficult, with the diversity, actually, for me."

In terms of friendship, seven pairs of leaders and followers had different opinions. From the side of leaders, they would prefer boundaries between their work relationships, which could help them manage the team without considering personal friendships. In addition, leaders believed trust was not related to friendship, and they would care for and value followers by forming leadership. From the side of followers, they hoped leaders could be their friends and cared about their personal feelings, and they believed working with friends was comfortable. The following quotes from Pair 2 show their different attitudes towards friendship and trust:

L7: "I think I would hope that they do see us as a leader. I mean, we're close as a team. But there's a difference there in the sense that we are providing a supportive environment for the growth and development of the team; we are forming our leadership. Why do you cross-reference that to more friends than leadership?"

F8: "I think friendship is super important. It's all about being able to communicate not only what's happening in your work life but also what's happening outside that may influence your performance, your mood, etc. How tired are you on a certain day, and just having someone who's able to understand that you're a person is important."

4.5.2 Comparison between pairs of direct subordinate participants and others

In comparison results from the nine pairs, results from others, and results from all participants, Table 18 below illustrates their trust rating scores classified by their subordinate relationships. The results showed that followers trust their leaders more than their leaders trust them in return, regardless of their subordinate relationships.

TABLE 18 PARTICIPANTS' AVERAGE SCORES OF PERCIEVED TRUSTWORTHINESS CLASSIFIED BY THEIR SUBORDINATE RELATIONSHIPS

Trust rating scores

Leaders in subordinate relationship pairs	8.1
Followers in subordinate relationship pairs	8.6
Other leaders	8.07
Other followers	9.1
Total leaders	8.04
Total followers	8.86

The following Table 19 summarises the attitudes of the nine pairs towards the influence of ABI on leader-follower trust relationships. The results were similar to those of all participants. There were no distinct or novel findings by comparing the nine pairs with the others or with the all.

TABLE 19 LEADERS AND FOLLOWERS WITH DIRECT SUBORDINATE RELATIONSHIPS' CHOICES TOWARDS ABILITY, BENEVOLENCE, INTEGRITY

	Leader	Follower	All leader	All follower
Ability	1	1	3	2
Benevolence	0	3	0	6
Integrity	8	5	19	10

4.5.3 Which aspect is more important in leader-follower trust relationships than others

The author designed four aspects of interview questions (individual characteristics, leadership/followership styles, exchanges and interactions, and external factors) to investigate influential factors of trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs. In order to understand if there is an aspect that is more important than others in affecting leader-follower trust relationships, participants were also encouraged to share opinions and explain the reasons.

Four different and distinct aspects were discussed during interviews, in order to discover which aspect or sub-theme is the most important trust relationship influential factor among all of these themes, the author asked participants at the end of the interview, "Which aspect/theme is the most important factor to affect one's trust in the workplace? Why do you think it is more important than other factors?" and reviews these discussed sub-themes with them (sub-themes: ability, benevolence, integrity, leadership/followership styles, mutual respect, emotional supports, reputation, diversity, friendship, and external factors). Table 20 below showed their choices.

TABLE 20 THE MOST IMPORTANT TRUST RELATIONSHIP INFLUENTIAL FACTOR AMONG ALL DISCUSSED THEMES

Key themes		Leaders	Followers
Characteristics	Ability	2	2
	Benevolence	0	4
	Integrity	19	8
Leadership/followership styles		1 (Proactive followership)	
Exchanges and interactions	Mutual respect	0	4
	Emotional supports	0	0
	Diversity	0	0
	Reputation (Gossip; Recommendation)	0	0
	Friendship	0	0
External factors		0	0

According to the findings, participants believed that individual characteristics were the most important aspect that contributed to the trust relationships between leaders and followers in the workplace. There were 27 participants who chose integrity as the most important factor in leader-follower trust relationships. One leader explained the reason why he chose integrity again over other themes:

“Abilities could be trained, and benevolence is not that important as long as the person is cooperative and completes tasks, but integrity cannot be trained, I think I’d still choose it. I can’t imagine working with people lack integrity.” [Participant 39, leader, AT, Male]

The following chapter discusses the findings in accordance with the literature in order to provide systematic and practical recommendations on how to build trust for leaders and followers in SMEs, and it elaborates research contributions.

Chapter 5 Discussion and Conclusion

5.1 Structure of this chapter and review of the research questions

Based on the literature review, there are mainly two gaps in the trust research field. Firstly, studies of trust in SME contexts are rare (Schaefer et al., 2016). Since SMEs have fewer employees than larger competitors, their leadership styles differ, and the majority of SMEs, particularly micro-sized firms, lack clear management strategies (Grey & Garsten, 2001). As a result, the process of building trust in SMEs may differ from that of larger corporations (Hasel & Grover, 2017). Trust relationships between leaders and followers could facilitate organisations development and increase competitiveness (Bouncken & Kraus, 2013; Chin et al., 2012). More attention is needed to investigate trust in SMEs, in order to develop organisational performance and marketing competitiveness.

Secondly, previous research has focused on trust from followers to leaders, with little attention paid to what factors influence leaders to trust followers (Hughes & Saunders, 2021; Jawahar, Stone & Kluemper, 2019; Bozer & Jones, 2018). Trust is not always mutual due to its asymmetry nature, and investigating trust on a unidirectional level may limit its practical contribution in business practices (Gillespie, Fulmer & Lewicki, 2021). More attention should be paid to the study of dyadic trust between leaders and followers, and perspectives from both leaders and followers regarding influential factors of trust need to be considered.

The purpose of this research is to generate a conceptual framework and enhance comprehension regarding the various elements that may influence trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs. By examining factors that influence trust from the perspectives of both leaders and followers, this research seeks to contribute to the development of organisational trust theory on a dyadic level. Additionally, it aims to offer practical suggestions to SME practitioners on how to foster trust between leaders and followers in the workplace.

In order to fill research gaps and achieve research purpose, this research proposes two research questions. The first research question (What factors could facilitate leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs?) aims to fill the first research gap. By investigating leader-follower trust relationships in SME contexts, the results are summarised as a conceptual framework, and the framework contributes to explaining what factors could influence trust relationships between leaders and followers in SME contexts. Section 5.2.1 explains the details of the conceptual framework.

The second research question (What are the similarities and/or differences between perspectives of leaders and followers with regard to influential factors on leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs?) aims to fill the second research gap. By investigating leader-follower trust relationships on a dyadic level, both leaders and followers' perspectives towards trust relationships in the workplace were considered in this research. The result of this question indicates leaders and followers place different weight on trust-related influential factors, which enriches the organisational trust theory on a dyadic level. Section 5.2.2 discusses more about the theoretical contribution.

Sections 5.3 and 5.4 address the **second main research question and the first & third sub-questions**. This research discovers that leaders and followers have different perspectives on the impact of individual characteristics and interactions on trust relationships. Their perspectives on the impact of benevolence, friendship, and team diversity on leader-follower trust relationships are key differences. Aside from differences, interviews revealed some common views on developing trusting relationships between leaders and followers. Both leaders and followers agreed on the importance of integrity as a trust relationship influential factor; additionally, reciprocal exchanges such as mutual respect and emotional support could facilitate leader-follower trust relationships in the workplace.

Section 5.5 attempts to answer the **second sub-question**. The findings revealed that leader-follower trust relationships in the workplace are influenced by leadership and followership styles. Proactive followership is perceived as more trustworthy to leaders than passive followership, while transformational leaders or empowering leaders are preferred and trusted by followers.

Section 5.6 addresses **the fourth question**. Participants stated that some pervasive external issues, such as financial, political, and commercial issues, could not have a significant impact on their trust relationships. However, extreme changes or crises, such as COVID-19, influenced their trust relationships to some extent. Changes in management and working styles, adaptation to technological tools, and the need to build trust online accompany the advent of a pandemic. This section discusses the negative and positive effects of external environment factors on trust relationships, as well as how COVID-19 affects the leader-follower trust relationship, using relevant literature.

Section 5.7 discusses the results from the nine pairs who have a direct subordinate relationship in this research. And section 5.8 attempts to answer **the fifth sub-questions**. In addition, Section 5.9 reviews the new themes added to the conceptual framework, which makes the conceptual framework more suitable for applying to innovative SMEs.

This chapter concludes with a discussion of this research's methodological contribution, and practical contributions of this research for leaders and followers in SMEs, limitations of this research and future research directions, and a concluding and reflection on research questions. Methodological contribution is discussed in section 5.10, and practical implications for building trust between leaders and follower in SMEs is discussed in section 5.11. Section 5.12 discusses the limitations of this research and suggest some future research directions. Finally, section 5.13 concludes the whole thesis.

The purpose of this chapter is to provide interpretive insights into this research's findings through critical analysis of previous studies, to answer research questions, and to provide a conceptual framework for this research. The conceptual framework, as the primary contribution of this research, addresses **the first main research question**. The following section articulates the rationale of the conceptual framework and what it contributes to the research field.

5.2 The contribution of this research

5.2.1 Conceptual framework of building dyadic trust between leaders and followers

This research combines four aspects, three different direct influential factors (individual characteristics, leadership/followership, and exchanges and interaction) and one indirect influential factor (external environment factors), to articulate and present what factors would affect the trust relationships between leaders and followers while considering perspectives from both leaders and followers, and developed a conceptual framework to depict influential factors of trust between leaders and followers.

The conceptual framework in Figure 6 (referred from p.64) presents influential factors of leaders and followers trust relationships found in the trust literature review. From the findings above, all factors found in the trust literature review were mentioned by interview participants and were relevant to leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs. Additionally, this research found some additional influential factors of leader-follower trust relationships, and the new Figure 9 below added these factors in the conceptual framework (words showed in bold and italic form), which enriches the conceptual framework and makes the framework more suitable in SME context.

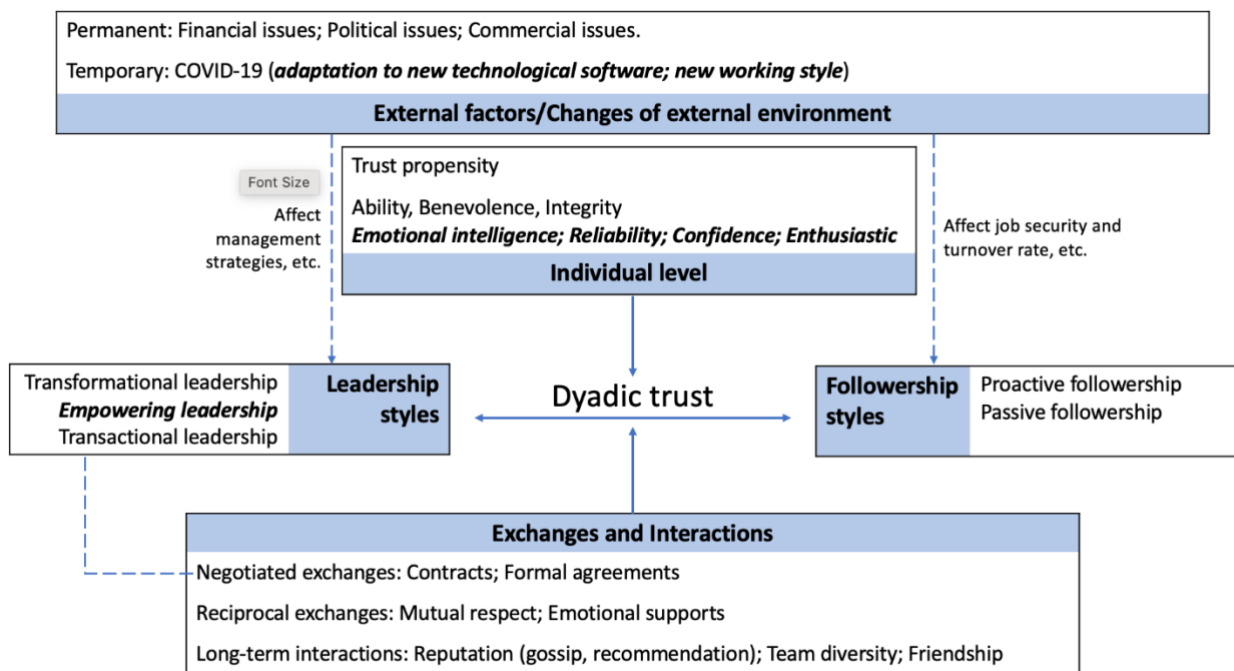


FIGURE 9 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK OF THIS RESEARCH WITH NEW FACTORS FOUND IN FINDINGS

*The words in bold and italic form are new factors found in the findings.

The conceptual framework facilitates understanding of trust relationships between leaders and followers by revealing what factors may influence leader-follower relationships from four aspects. In terms of individual level, Individual trust propensity and trustee characteristics (ability, benevolence, integrity, etc.) may influence the

establishment and development of trust relationships in the workplace. In regard to exchanges and interactions, negotiated exchanges, reciprocal exchanges, and long-term interactions contribute to leader-follower trust relationships.

Additionally, in contrast to peer trust, trust relationships between leaders and followers are impacted by leadership and followership styles. Leadership styles such as transformational leadership and transactional leadership could facilitate or hinder followers' trust in their leaders according to the circumstances. Transactional leaders, for instance, increase and establish trust with their followers through negotiated exchanges (contracts or formal agreements), however, ignorance of caring employees' emotional situations or a strict focus on employees' performances and outcomes may damage long-term leader-follower trust relationships (Nadeak et al., 2019; Zaech & Baldegger, 2017). Leaders' trust in followers may be influenced by followership styles such as proactive followers or passive followers.

Moreover, the impact of the external environment on leader-follower trust relationships could not be neglected (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2013). Leadership and followership styles could be influenced by external changes, therefore, external environment changes may have an indirect impact on leader-follower relationships in the workplace. Some pervasive external factors, such as financial and policy issues, as well as emerging changes, such as COVID-19, may both trigger changes in leadership and followership styles, affecting leader-follower trust relationships.

As a result of the literature review and qualitative interviews, the conceptual framework explains what factors could affect trust relationships between leaders and followers and provided a relatively comprehensive framework from four aspects (including individual characteristics, leadership/followership styles, exchanges and interactions, and external influential factors). Furthermore, this research discovers that trust is not always mutual between leaders and followers, and it investigates the perspectives of leaders and followers on trust relationship influential factors, theoretically developing organisational trust theory on a dyadic level.

5.2.2 Theoretical contribution of this research

This research investigates whether leaders and followers have different perspectives when assessing the trustworthiness of others, and the findings revealed that leaders and followers have different perspectives on individual characteristics, exchanges, and interactions. A contribution of this thesis is further theoretical development of organisational trust at the dyadic level.

There have been few studies or systematic frameworks of dyadic trust between leaders and followers, and the investigation of trust in a dyad feature could provide a deeper understanding of trust relationships and improve organisational performance (Lussier, Grégoire, & Vachon, 2017; Korsgaard, Brower, & Lester, 2015). Trust studies used to focus on unidirectional trust relationships between leaders and followers, primarily on how to build trust from followers to leaders (Jawahar, Stone & Kluemper, 2019; Den Hartog, 2018). Consequently, participants were asked to rate their trust level on their leader/follower. In this research, rating scores from

leaders and followers were calculated separately, and the results present that followers trust their leaders more than leaders trust their followers, with scores of 8.09 and 8.86, respectively (See Table 11, p.105). These differences suggest that trust between leaders and followers is not always mutual. These results are in a similar vein to Korsgaard and colleagues (2014), and others (Jones & Shah, 2016; Winnie, 2014; Laeequddin et al., 2010).

From an individual level, both leaders and followers would be affected by each other's personal characteristics, Mayer and his colleagues (1995) mentioned personal trust propensity, ability, benevolence, and integrity could affect their perspectives of others. However, the weight of the influence of individual characteristics on leader-follower trust relationships may differ at the dyadic level, and leaders and followers may have different opinions of individual characteristics towards the building of trust relationships (Gillespie, Fulmer & Lewicki, 2021; Savolainen, Ivakko & Ikonen, 2017).

This research found that the differences in leaders' and followers' perspectives on individual characteristics revolve around their attitudes toward benevolence (See Table 14, p.111). Leaders stated that benevolence was not an important factor in their decision to trust a follower at work, whereas followers stated that they would prefer to trust benevolent leaders. Furthermore, leaders added emotional intelligence, empathy, confidence, and enthusiasm as important characteristics of a trustworthy follower, while followers added responsibility as a key characteristic of a trustworthy leader (See Table 13, p.107).

With regard to exchanges and interactions, the differences in perspectives on interactions between leaders and followers were concerned with their attitudes towards friendship and team diversity. In terms of workplace friendship, leaders prefer to have boundaries with their followers rather than be friends, and they did not associate building friendship with having trust relationships with their employees. Some followers suggested that friendship with leaders could improve trust relationships at work, however, the majority of followers believed that friendship had no effect on trust relationships. In terms of team diversity, leaders believed diversity could facilitate trust relationships, while most followers did not associate diversity with leader-follower trust relationships.

This research investigates dyadic trust to increase the predictive power of a proposed trust model in a dyadic relationship (Korsgaard, Brower & Lester, 2015). Previous literature indicated trustees' trustworthiness and trustors' propensity to trust as antecedents of trust between entities (individual, groups or organizations), and it is accepted by scholars as the frame includes characteristics of two parties (trustor and trustee) in a trust relationship simultaneously (Jawahar, Stone & Kluemper, 2019; Park & Kim, 2012; Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012; Wiley, 2009). Mayer's model firstly separate consequences and antecedents of trust, which provides a new angle for scholars to investigate how to build trust and how trust can be established and predicted by the influence of individual characteristics (Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012).

However, individual characteristics are not the only influential factor on trust relationships between leaders and followers in the workplace (Martinez et al., 2012), this research introduced leadership and followership styles into discussion, also exchanges and interactions could affect one's perception of trustworthiness (Huff & Kelley,

2003). In a positive exchanges and interactions, trust will be reinforced by both parties' trusting behaviour and vice versa, while individual trustworthiness and trust propensity were not changed (Park & Kim, 2012). Consequently, trust was influenced by relationships between two parties (Serva et al., 2005). Therefore, in a dyadic relationship, not only personal characteristics can interdependently affect building of dyadic trust, but also relationships between two parties could influence dyadic trusting behaviour (Park & Kim, 2012).

As trust is not always mutual, investigating the dyadic relationship from the perspective of only one dyad member may be theoretically deficient, as a unilateral approach may assume each party receives equivalent attitudes and feelings, which is uncommon to observe and achieve (Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012). This research investigates both leaders' and followers' perspectives and discovers that, in the workplace, leaders and followers have different weights for trust-influencing factors. In terms of individual characteristic-related factors, leaders consider integrity to be the most important factor when assessing followers' trustworthiness, while followers believe both benevolence and integrity are important when assessing leaders trustworthiness. In terms of exchanges and interactions, leaders believe team diversity is important in leader-follower trust relationships, while followers suggest workplace friendship is important in leader-follower trust relationships. The findings develop and improve organisational trust theory on a dyadic level by considering both the perspectives of leaders and followers towards trust relationships. The following sections discusses key findings with relevant literature.

5.3 Different perspectives between leaders and followers towards trust relationships

This section of this research makes a contribution by demonstrating that trust is not mutual, and studies of trust relationships between leaders and followers should consider both parties' perspectives. It presents and discusses findings on the different perspectives of leaders and followers toward trust relationships, based on their attitudes towards others' individual characteristics and interactions. The sections that follow first discusses the differences between leaders and followers in terms of the impact of benevolence and ability on leader-follower trust relationships. Second, it discusses the impact of personal trust propensity on leader-follower trust relationships. Finally, it discusses the differences between leaders and followers in terms of the impact of friendship and team diversity on leader-follower trust relationships.

5.3.1 Differences between leaders and followers regarding characteristic-related influential factors

5.3.1.1 Different choices and perspectives on trustworthiness as trust relationship influential factors

Mayer and his colleagues (1995) proposed that trustworthiness which consists of ability, benevolence and integrity is an essential antecedent of trust in interpersonal relationships. Although numerous characteristics could affect another's trustworthiness, these three antecedents related to characteristics explained up to 80%

of the decision to trust (Jawahar, Stone & Kluemper, 2019; Wiley, 2009). In this research, discussion of the influence of individual characteristics on leader-follower trust building mainly revolved around these three factors as well.

The findings revealed that 31 participants agreed that these individual characteristics fully explained another's trustworthiness and did not propose other characteristic-related factors into discussion, whereas nine participants suggested and enriched the list with five additional characteristics, including emotional intelligence, reliability, empathy, enthusiasm, and confidence. Section 5.9 discusses these new characteristic-related factors. Though the majority of participants agreed that ability, benevolence, and integrity could reflect one's trustworthiness and facilitate leader-follower trust relationships, leaders and followers have different opinions about to what extent these three factors could influence their trust perspectives.

A large majority of leaders chose integrity as the most important trust relationship influential factor among ability, benevolence, and integrity, while the choice of followers varied: 10 followers chose integrity, six followers chose benevolence, and two followers chose ability as the most important trust relationship influential factor. From the perspective of followers, Knoll and Gill (2011) discovered that benevolence and integrity were more important than ability when trusting a leader. Similarly, Heyns and Rothmann (2015) examined that from the view of followers, integrity had the significant effect on perceived trustworthiness of leaders, followed by benevolence and ability, respectively. However, studies on what factors could influence leaders trust on employees or which characteristics are relatively important for leaders to trust employees were scarce (Lussier, Grégoire & Vachon, 2017).

This research found that approximately 90% of leaders (19 out of 22 participants) stated that integrity is relatively important to leader-follower trust relationships, whereas followers considered more factors than leaders before trusting their leaders, both benevolence and integrity could affect their perceptions of trust in their leaders.

Different considerations and choices between leaders and follower among ability, benevolence, and integrity could be explained by power differences (Cook et al., 2005). Cook et al. (2005) found power differences between leaders and followers influence their perceptions of leader-follower trust relationships and perceived trustworthiness. People in powerful positions (usually leaders) are less concerned with the details of relationships with people in low-power positions (usually followers), which means low-power parties ruminate on trust relationships more than high-power parties (Cook, Hardin & Levi, 2005). Similarly, some studies agreed that employees are more aware of interaction nuances than their leaders (Lu & Guy, 2019; Harris & Spillane, 2008; Batt et al., 2005). Due to the inherent power differences between leaders and followers, followers are concerned with more factors before trusting their leaders, which explains why followers chose both benevolence and integrity as important trust relationship influential factors in this research, whereas leaders only chose integrity as a sign of trustworthy followers.

Benevolence was the most distinct difference in the choice of relative importance of trustworthiness components between leaders and followers. Based on the discussion from the focus group interview, there are two possible explanations for why leaders and followers had different opinions on the impact of benevolence on leader-follower trust relationships.

From followers' perspective, most followers during the interview stated that being included, helped, or cared for by their leaders could increase their trust level in their leaders. According to Caldwell and Dixon (2010), benevolent leaders' commitment to the welfare and supportiveness or caring for others can earn and maintain trust from their employees. Svare et al (2020) and Bligh (2017) agreed that benevolence-based trust facilitates communication and allows for general cooperation, which could result in trust relationships between leaders and followers. Conversely, from leaders' perspective, focus group participants suggested benevolence or benevolent behaviour flows from high-power parties to low-power parties from the perspective of leaders. Additionally, they argued instead of benevolence or kindness, high-power parties expect loyalty or trust from low-power parties. Cook et al. (2005) discovered that high-power parties are less attentive to the behaviours of low-power parties, implying that leaders may be less concerned with kind or caring behaviours compared with integrity or loyalty.

5.3.1.2 Leaders and followers' different perspectives on the influence of ability on perceived trustworthiness

During interviews, compared to benevolence and integrity, ability as an element of trustworthiness was deemed a relatively less important factor in developing trust relationships by leaders and followers. Both leaders and followers believed that most abilities could be trained, while benevolence and integrity could be to be trained or developed in the short term. According to Jawahar et al. (2019), ability implied "can-do," benevolence implied "will-do," and integrity indicated if two parties could share the same value, therefore, ability is easier to observe or be trained than benevolence and integrity.

However, there were some differing perspectives during the discussion of the influence of ability on leader-follower trust relationships. Followers associate decision-making skills with perceived trustworthiness of leaders, while most leaders chose problem-solving skills as trust relationship influential factors instead of decision-making skills.

Making effective decisions is an essential leadership and management skill, and a good decision-maker can take actions that benefit both themselves and others (Moeuf et al, 2018). Leaders typically make final decisions on management approaches, development directions, or/and organisational goals in the workplace (ibid). Each decision has an impact not only on the development of the organisation but also on the working environment of one's employees (Avolio & Bass, 2001). Leaders who can make decisions that benefit both organisations and employees are more trustworthy, since employees are more satisfied when their opinions are considered or listened to by leaders (Kang & Sung 2017; Avey, Wernsing & Palanski, 2012). Furthermore, leaders are more

responsible than employees for the development of organisations, and leaders' ability to make effective decisions determines an organization's survival issues (Kang & Sung 2017).

In the workplace, problem solving refers to the ability to deal with challenging issues or unexpected circumstances (Bass & Avolio, 1990). Employees with outstanding problem-solving skills could thoroughly examine issues, find a variety of viable solutions, and properly resolve issues (Mintu-Wimsatt, Garci & Calantone, 2005). Fisher (2010) indicated employees with problem solving skills are valuable and trusted in organisations. Agreed by Zurba et al. (2012), employees who are able to engage in complex tasks and propose creative solutions are more trustworthy in the workplace.

5.3.2 Influence of individual trust propensity on perceived trustworthiness of leaders or followers

Participants in this research had worked with their leaders or employees for at least three months, and their perceived trustworthiness ratings for their leaders or followers ranged from 7 to 10. (0 means no trust, 10 means complete trust in this research). Since this rating scores showed no specific rules, the results implied that individual trust propensity has a minor impact on leader-follower trust relationships. Participants who described themselves as cynical people rated their trust in their leaders or followers at 8 or 8.5, while some of those who described themselves as moderately trusting or generally trusting others rated their leaders or followers at 7 or 7.5. (Figure 8 in findings chapter showed scores in detail, p.106).

Trust propensity is another antecedent of trust, and it refers to trustors' general tendency to trust other people or groups (Alarcon et al., 2018; Mayer & Davis, 1999). Mayer and his colleagues (1995) described one's propensity to trust as a trait-based and an individual difference characteristic, and indicated that trust propensity usually functions prominently in the early stage of the trust process (Jones & Shah, 2016; Colquitt et al., 2007). In other words, trust propensity influences a trustor's perception of a trustee who is unfamiliar to them or with whom they have barely interacted (Alarcon et al., 2018).

Previous studies on the influence of trust propensity rendered mixed results (Alarcon et al., 2018; Jones & Shah, 2016; Heyns & Rothmann, 2015; Searle et al., 2011; Colquitt et al., 2007), indicating that the effect of trust propensity should be investigated further in the future. Heynns and Rothmann (2015) and Mayer and Gavin (2005) discovered that trust propensity is irrelevant to trust decisions or trust beliefs at work when leaders and followers interact with each other, which supports the findings of this research. Alarcon et al. (2018) concluded that trust propensity, as an individual characteristic of trustors, influences trust relationships at the early stage, when trustors and trustees lack interactions. Trust relationships will be gradually built as trustors gain more information from trustees, and trust propensity has little effect on leader-follower trust relationships (Jones & Shah, 2016).

However, Searle et al. (2011) suggested trust propensity is a significant influential factor in trust relationships, they examined that trust propensity could predict and affect employees' trust in their leaders or organisations

regardless of the length of interactions. They concluded personal trust propensity has influence on trust relationships between leaders and followers in the workplace (Searle et al., 2011).

When it came to characteristic-related trust influential factors between leaders and followers, the findings of this research demonstrated that most participants who are either moderate or trusting considered integrity to be the most important trust-influential factor, followed by benevolence and ability, whereas participants who are cynical regarded ability to be more important than ability and benevolence (Table 15 in findings chapter showed results in detail, p.111). Therefore, people with varying levels of trust propensity make different choices regarding the influence of ability, benevolence, and integrity on leader-follower trust relationships.

However, since there are only four cynical participants in this research (two participants chose ability, one participant chose benevolence, and one participant chose integrity as the most important trust influential factor), the differences in numbers are small, which may not reveal or support the differences were caused by trust propensity.

In general, the findings suggested that personal trust propensity has a minor influence on why trustors trust in trustees (weight differences between ability, benevolence, and integrity) rather than overall trust levels. In future studies on the influence of trust propensity on trust relationships, researchers could investigate the relationships between trust influential factors and trust propensity rather than the relationships between trust propensity and overall trust levels.

5.3.3 Differences between leaders and followers regarding interactions and trust relationships

5.3.3.1 Different perspectives about the influence of friendship on leader-follower trust relationships

The perspectives of followers on workplace friendship and trust yielded mixed results. Four followers thought workplace friendships might have a negative impact on building trust, half of followers thought it could have either a positive or negative effect, and the remaining followers believed friendship could help trust relationships.

The repeated nature of interactions in the workplace offers opportunities for continuous contact between leaders and followers and reinforces trust in accordance with positive feedback or performance, in addition to the individual level influence (i.e., the influence of personal characteristics on trust relationships) (Cook, Hardin & Levi, 2005). Friendship is defined as an informal relationship between two or more people, typically involving emotional support and exchanging information (Sias & Shin, 2019; Berman, West & Richter, 2002). In the workplace, friendship has a positive effect on employee satisfaction, co-worker trust, individual performance, and an improvement in employees' sense of belonging (Akyüz, 2020; Bhardwaj et al., 2016).

However, research on the impact of friendship on leader-follower trust relationships was scarce. According to the findings of this research, leaders and followers have different perspectives on workplace friendship and its

impact on trust. Most leaders prefer to maintain their working relationships with their followers friendly and professional, and implied workplace friendship between leaders and followers has a negative impact on trust relationships. Crossman (2022) examined workplace friendship and potential workplace romance from an ethical perspective, and he concluded that while workplace friendship can provide additional support between two parties, a close relationship can be negatively judged by other colleagues and affect the entire working environment. Furthermore, in this research, leaders stated that workplace friendship and affectionate relationships could have an impact on the professional relationships at work, since it is difficult to be harsh to a friend, especially when leaders need to correct or comment on issues.

Pillemer and Rothbard (2018) argued that friendship between leaders and followers at work could blur boundaries and negatively affect individual, group, and organisational outcomes. According to Jiang et al. (2014), being followed by leaders on social media can limit employees' online freedom. During the interview, two follower expressed reluctance to be followed by leaders on Facebook. Followers, in this research, who believed friendship had a positive impact on trust relationships mentioned exclusive exchanges or knowledge sharing as methods for increasing trust in leaders. Workplace friendship, according to West and Turner (2018) and Cowan and Horan (2014), could foster quality exchanges between leaders and followers, as well as facilitate leader-follower trust relationships. Interestingly, in this research, followers who believed the beneficial effect on trust relationship were under or just above 30-years-old. Due to the small number of interviews, it is difficult to determine whether workplace friendship influences trust or whether young people are more positive to the influence of friendship on trust. In future research, the influence of age on workplace friendship and leader-follower relationships could be considered.

5.3.3.2 Different perspectives about the influence of team diversity on leader-follower trust relationships

This research found that most leaders agreed that a diverse team could help develop trust relationships, whereas followers did not perceive diversity or similarity as a trust relationship influential factor between a leader and a follower. Uslaner (2006) proposed that lack of contacts or interactions, rather than a lack of diversity, was the primary cause of a lack of trust in teams. Dincer (2011) also suggested that increasing the frequency of contact between different ethnic groups could improve trust relationships in any diverse team. Contact issues could be alleviated with the improvement of online communication tools (Öberg, Oskarsson & Svensson, 2011), and diversity could not be a detriment to trust (Beugelsdijk & Klasing, 2016).

However, the diversity of team members has negative impact on the development of trust in the workplace (Cureu & Schrujijer, 2010; Peters & Karren, 2009; Shachaf, 2008). Zolin et al. (2004) discussed that team members tend to trust people who share the same cultures with them. The diversity of team includes functional diversity and cultural diversity, and issues caused by team diversity include language barriers, misunderstanding or confusion, conflicts, time differences, managing virtual teams etc. (Finseraas et al., 2019).

In this research, leaders who had a diverse team agreed that with proper communication tools online, team diversity could not negatively influence trust, and there are some benefits to having a diverse team. The first advantage of having a diverse team is that it reduces differences between in-group and out-group members, potentially creating a more open working environment for out-group members (Estel et al., 2019; Dincer, 2011). Acceptance of others and an open and diverse working environment may increase out-group people's sense of belongingness and facilitate trust (Estel et al., 2019). Secondly, a diverse team is more innovative, according to the leaders during interviews. According to Sturgis et al. (2011), a diverse team may initially compete for resources, but after bridging gaps between in-group and out-group members, a diverse team may produce more creative ideas and be more resilient.

To summarise, leaders and followers had different perspectives on some trust-influential characteristics and exchange-and-interaction factors. Regarding characteristic-related factors, leaders believe integrity is more important than benevolence and ability in evaluating followers' trustworthiness, whereas followers believe both integrity and benevolence are important for a trustworthy leader. Leaders suggested that team diversity is important for building leader-follower trust relationships, while followers stated that workplace friendship could help facilitate trust relationships.

Based on the previous discussion, leaders and followers have different perspectives on trustworthiness due to power differences (Cook et al., 2005). It is critical to understand both leaders' and followers' perspectives on how to build trust. Understanding leaders' and followers' perspectives on trust relationship influential factors could first help followers in obtaining information, guidance, and resources from leaders (Schoorman et al., 2016; Allen et al., 2004), and secondly facilitate leaders in developing organisational development and increasing followers' work initiative (De Jong & Dirks, 2012; Brower et al., 2009).

5.4 Similar perspectives between leaders and followers and other influential factors regarding trust relationships

This section of the research made a contribution by highlighting the shared perspectives of leaders and followers on the positive and negative influence of certain individual characteristics, reciprocal exchanges, and interactions on leader-follower trust relationships, and it enriched the conceptual framework with additional characteristics proposed by participants during interviews.

This section discusses, firstly, both leaders and followers regarded integrity as an essential influential factor of trust relationships. Additionally, verbal and written communication skills and sincerity could promote trust relationships. Secondly, all participants aggregated reciprocal exchanges including mutual respects and emotional supports could facilitate trust relationships. Third, in addition to positive effects, leaders and followers recognised that some negative interactions, such as negative gossip, could have an impact on one's reputation (either the gossiper or the targeted person), and that a toxic workplace caused by negative gossip could harm

leader-follower trust relationships. Finally, participants proposed and added some new characteristics that could affect leader-follower trust relationships, such as emotional intelligence, empathy, reliability, confidence, and enthusiasm.

5.4.1 Characteristics-related factors that could positively affect trust relationships

5.4.1.1 The consensus among leaders and followers on the importance of integrity as a trust relationship influential factor

According to the findings, participants agreed that, when compared to other characteristics, integrity is the most important factor in building trust. They explained that while most abilities could be trained, integrity reflects one's values and is hard to be changed. Connelly et al. (2018) proposed that integrity is an important factor in reflecting trustworthiness and determining whether people can be consistent in their manners. Integrity means that a person has strong ethical and moral principles and follows these principles regardless of whether they are monitored or not (Trevino, Hartman & Brown, 2000). Additionally, in this research, leaders mentioned integrity is more important than benevolence because if an employee acts kind without honesty, the person is not trustworthy, and the situation does not benefit organisational development. Hoch (2013) investigated the importance of integrity in presenting trustworthiness, and leaders would trust employees who are honest and can do the right thing even without supervision.

During a discussion about the importance of integrity in influencing trust relationships, both leaders and followers emphasised three sub-factors: behavioural consistency, honesty, and maintaining confidentiality.

Behavioural consistency refers to someone who tends to behave in ways that match previous behaviours, or who has the same attitudes toward different people or situations, or who makes decisions in the same way (Gelei & Dobos, 2022; Engelbrecht, Heine & Mahembe, 2017). According to Wolf et al. (2011), inconsistency in a relationship could cause doubt or suspicion, which can be detrimental to a stable relationship. Additionally, Engelbrecht and his colleagues (2017) proposed that consistency and predictability are components of trust building, and that leaders who are consistent in their management practises may increase trust between leaders and employees. Participants in this research agreed that behavioural consistency implied that one's actions were anticipated and predicted, which provided them with more information before taking any trust actions.

Several scholars tested and investigated the significant influence of honesty on the trust relationship between leaders and followers (Norman et al., 2019; Connelly, et al., 2018; Lam 2013; Trevino, Hartman & Brown, 2000). Honesty as a significant character to resent integrity refers to being truthful about errors, changes in any company regulations, and/or feedback that could facilitate cooperation, create a healthy working environment, and build and maintain trust relationships (Moorman, Blakely & Darnold, 2018). Participants mentioned that since their clients are special, maintaining the confidentiality of their clients' information is critical. They stated that maintaining confidentiality at work is a basic requirement, and that those who failed to maintain clients'

confidentiality would be considered untrustworthy. According to Fitch (2011), maintaining confidentiality and integrity in the health care industry is the foundation for building trust. Joseph (2016) also proposed that maintaining confidentiality at work could assist in the process of building trust between leaders and followers.

5.4.1.2 Influence of verbal and written communication skills on leader-follower trust relationships

Participants chose verbal and written communication skill as the most important ability-related factor for leader-follower trust relationships during a discussion of what ability-related factor is important for establishing trust between leaders and followers. A proper communication skill with leaders/employees, co-workers, and clients is important in the workplace, according to the 26 participants. Communication is a bridge to build trust relationships, and effective communication refers to exchanging opinions, ideas, knowledge, data, and messages in a clear and proper manner at work (Katz & Lazarsfeld, 2017). Leaders with effective communication skills can clarify organisational goals, establish feedback loops, and recognise and acknowledge employees' efforts; whereas employees who could communicate with leaders are able to properly state personal issues, express creative ideas, and collaborate effectively at work (Goutam, 2013; Guo & Sanchez, 2005). Furthermore, communication is essential for avoiding conflicts, creating a healthy working environment, and facilitating practise success (Fassier & Azoulay, 2010). Participants also agreed that clear and open communication between leaders and followers could encourage cooperation, speed up problem resolution, and strengthen trust relationships.

Furthermore, online or remote working environments require effective communication in facilitating trust and long-term relationships (Panteli et al., 2022; Srivastava, 2020; Brennan & Johnson, 2007). Without social activities and regular interactions with co-workers, effective verbal and written communication skills could keep people informed of changes and improve working efficiency (Panteli et al., 2022). Participants also mentioned that, especially when working from home, timely and effective communication about tasks and issues is more important than working at the office to maintain interactions, provide support, and establish trust.

5.4.2 Positive influence of reciprocal exchanges on trust relationships

According to findings, all participants agreed and emphasised mutual respect is the foundation of trust relationships, showing respect and being respected is the antecedent and necessary requirements of starting a relationship. Cook and her colleagues (2005) argued that power differences at work are the primary obstacle to building trust in relationships, however, mutual exchanges often facilitate and benefit the development of trust relationships. Similarly, Cunningham and Hillier (2013) proposed being respected at work can make people feel safe and supported, and trust relationships are often formed in a safe environment. Furthermore, Kupperschmidt (2006) experimentally tested lack of respect may lead to conflicts among colleagues, which is detrimental to the maintenance and establishment of trust relationships.

Reciprocal exchanges indicated that in a relationship one party starts the process independently by performing a beneficial behaviour for the other party without knowing whether, when, or to what extent the other party will reciprocate (Gerbası & Cook, 2008). Reciprocal exchanges do not typically expect profits or interests in return; instead, individuals who perform behaviours such as showing respect and providing emotional support expect similar respect or support in return (Toegel, Kilduff & Anand, 2013).

In terms of emotional support, Chiang and Wang (2012) argued that emotional safety is the foundation of a healthy relationship, and that being vulnerable to personal emotions could assist in the development of trust. Similarly, Daibes (2016) agreed that emotional supports could alleviate workplace stress, which is critical for remote workers. Due to the impact of COVID-19, most participants were forced to work from home. Participants mentioned that emotional support and understanding from their followers and employees could strengthen their relationships and facilitate trust. Nadeak et al. (2019) claimed that genuine encouragement, reassurance, and understanding from others could improve one's overall wellness and assist in the maintenance of a healthy relationship between two parties.

5.4.3 Interactions that may negatively affect trust relationships in the workplace

In terms of recommendation, this research found that most participants did not associate positive recommendation with trust, and they mentioned either direct or indirect recommendation from previous supervisors, former co-workers, or other colleagues could barely influence their perceptions of trust. Participants stated that a lack of information or receiving negative information from the new recruit's previous supervisor would have an impact on their trust in new recruits.

Reputation is important in social relationships because it provides information about a person, allowing strangers or acquaintances to learn about the person by connecting the person's friends or business contacts (Cook, Hardin & Levi, 2005). Positive information, such as a proper recommendation letter from a previous supervisor, would suggest a good reputation of the recruit in the workplace, whereas negative information may influence one's reputation and influence trust building (Hoff & Bashir, 2015).

Traditional communication methods, such as recommendation letters from previous supervisors, are inaccurate and contribute little to trust relationships (Tian & Liang, 2017). Furthermore, according to Furnham and Taylor (2004), most leaders would not intentionally leave negative information in order to make it difficult for their employees to find new jobs. Similarly, in this research, most participants stated they would not be affected by positive recommendation information, whereas lack of recommendation or negative recommendation could influence their trust perceptions.

Moreover, according to findings of this research, more than half of participants perceived gossiping as a negative signal in the workplace and stated that the negative side of gossip could harm one's reputation. Despite their claim that gossip is subjective, they were influenced by these gossiping opinions sometimes. The majority of

participants believe gossip has a negative impact on trust relationships, and only a small number of participants believe gossip can help people form closer bonds and increase trust.

There are some studies showed the positive side of workplace gossip could facilitate trust building interpersonally. Wu et al. (2016) mentioned there are positive and negative gossip in the workplace. Negative gossip creates a toxic work environment and anxiety in the workplace, whereas positive gossip includes privately exchanging information or casual chat and may relieve stress at work (Ellwardt, Wittek & Wielers, 2012). Farley (2011) agreed that workplace gossip can create a hostile working environment that undermines the development of trust relationships as a negative influence on trust relationships. Thoth et al. (2014) investigated whether gossip is an effective way to share information and whether gossip can foster intimacy, based on the positive influence of gossip on trust relationships.

5.5 Influence of leadership and followership styles in leader-follower trust relationships

A contribution from this part is to demonstrate the influential factors of leadership styles and followership styles on trust relationships in the workplace. Proactive followership styles, from the perspective of leaders, could positively facilitate leader-follower trust relationships. Leaders perceived followers' proactive behaviours as a sign of independence and willingness to self-improve, however, leaders did not regard passive followership style or followers' passive behaviours as negative influential factors in leader-follower trust relationships.

From the perspective of followers, all participants agreed that transformational leadership could contribute to the process of building trust. Although followers believed that transactional leadership style had no effect on their trust in their leaders, they preferred to trust transformational leaders or empowering leaders at work. Furthermore, some followers suggested that an empowering leadership style could improve leader-follower trust relationships.

In addition, some participants introduced a sense of humour as an influential factors of leader-follower trust relationships, since a sense of humour could ease stressful situations and create relaxing and safe working environment. Participants believed it could improve the quality of leader-follower relationships and facilitate trust building, the boundaries of making jokes are tricky and important though.

5.5.1 Influence of followership styles on leader-follower trust relationships

In response to two interview questions about followership styles, all participating leaders stated that they preferred to trust proactive followers because of their commitment and positive work attitudes. Shahzadi et al. (2022) proposed that proactive behaviours such as making concrete suggestions for organisational development or providing timely feedback on work could increase leaders' trust in employees. Additionally, leaders stated that they would prefer to empower and involve proactive followers in decision-making. Benson et al. (2016)

found that leaders are more likely to endorse proactive follower behaviours, and they suggested that followers could show their initiative at work to build quality relationships with leaders. In addition, Shahzadi et al. (2017) demonstrated that proactive followers are valued and trusted by leaders, and leaders are more likely to delegate authority to proactive followers.

Burris (2012), however, stated that leaders would misinterpret followers' proactive behaviours, such as completing work without leaders' instructions or permissions, as a threat to their authority, thereby damaging the leader-follower relationship. Furthermore, due to the power dynamics associated with leader follower relationships, independent behaviours without specific feedback may create an unhealthy working environment and negatively affect leader-follower trust relationships (Benson, Hardy & Eys, 2016; Carsten et al., 2010). In this research, seven leaders expressed similar concerns that some independent behaviours, such as rarely relying on leaders and often solving problems independently, could have a negative impact on the leader-follower trust relationship, and claimed that they prefer to communicate with employees and value their efforts to work.

Eleven leaders suggested that passive behaviours indicated that the followers may be unable to complete duties on their own, making passive followership less trustworthy than proactive followership. According to Zacher and Bal (2012), passive followers are perceived as less trustworthy by leaders when compared to proactive followership. Furthermore, Bremner (2011) stated that regardless of the followers' actual capabilities, leaders would assume a passive follower has only moderate ability at best, and a passive follower would not be considered having the same values as the leader, reducing leaders' trust in him/her. However, five leaders demonstrated understanding of their followers' passive behaviours, such as barely communicate at work, which could be caused by their personalities. Additionally, leaders emphasised that though passive followership might hardly contribute to a trust relationship, followers' efforts will still be recognised.

When asked if there were any other desired behaviours that could improve leader-follower trust relationships, two leaders suggested critical reflection activities. According to Glowacki-Dudka and Barnett (2007), critical reflection is valuable at work, and people who practise self-critical reflection can benefit from a meaningful and long-lasting experience. Followers' critical reflection activities indicated that they are able to learn from previous experiences and are aware of the need to develop personal abilities, implying that they will have more opportunities to achieve desired outcomes in the future (Leitch, Hill & Harrison, 2010).

5.5.2 Influence of different leadership styles on leader-follower trust relationships

5.5.2.1 Transformational leadership and transactional leadership

According to the findings, most participants indicated that they had experienced both transactional and transformational leadership styles in the workplace, and that they believed both types of leadership styles could, to some extent, facilitate trust. Ismail et al. (2010) experimentally tested both leadership styles are significantly correlated with trust in leaders.

In this research, followers who thought transactional leadership styles were trustworthy indicated that having clear instructions and work standards, as well as being rewarded as promised, were important factors in their decision to trust a transactional leader. Dai et al. (2013) proposed transactional leaders foster employee trust through distributive justice, which refers to principles and standards in decision-making processes or procedures, as well as a system of award and punishment. Transactional leaders, according to Ismail et al. (2010), who have a clear rewarding and punishment system and exchange rewards for followers' efforts, could increase followers' trust in them.

Even though followers agreed that transactional leaders could be trusted, they all preferred to work with a transformational leader. They explained that it is critical for a leader to fulfil commitments, such as rewarding employees on time, however, they admitted that not all tasks could be completed as expected and planned. Leaders' encouragement and support are more important at work, and they would prefer to work with and trust a transformation leader more.

Transformational leaders could strategically envision shared value, foster team spirit, motivate and encourage employees, and provide active support (Kleynhans, Heyns & Stander, 2021; Joo, Yoon & Jeung, 2012; Bass & Avolio, 1995). Furthermore, transformational leaders would encourage and obligate employees to do extra work, which would benefit the improvement of organisational performance (Goodwin et al., 2011). Joo and Lim (2013) proposed transformational leadership can improve leader-follower trust relationships and facilitate followers' performance. Similarly, Yuan et al. (2021) stated that transformational leadership would affect followers' attitudes, behaviours, and trust in leaders. Participants in this research also stated that they would prefer to do extra work if their leaders encouraged or valued them, and that leaders' consideration, determination, and encouragement could increase their trust in leaders.

5.5.2.2 Empowering leadership style

When asked what other behaviours (aside from transformational and transactional behaviours) leaders could exhibit to increase their trust level, four followers mentioned empowering behaviours such as sharing decision-making power with followers and allowing followers to complete work independently. Furthermore, followers stated that micromanagement and strict supervision could not be perceived as leadership styles, and strict supervision rarely facilitates the process of trust relationships between leaders and followers.

Empowering leadership refers to the behaviours of leaders that share power with employees and delegate decision-making authority in order to motivate employees' investment in their work (Amundsen & Martinsen, 2014; Lorinkova, Pearsall & Sims, 2013; Zhang & Bartol, 2010; Spreitzer, 1995). Several researchers have empirically tested the impact of an empowering leadership style on increasing followers' trust in their leaders (Li, Huo & Long, 2017; Miao et al., 2013; Gao, Janssen & Shi, 2011). However, Gao et al. (2011) argued that empowering leadership could have negative consequences since not all employees preferred to be authorised or take on full responsibilities. Furthermore, overly distributing autonomy power may be viewed as irresponsible

leadership behaviours, which may have a negative impact on leader-follower trust relationships and organisational performance (Wang et al., 2022; Sharma & Kirkman, 2015).

Some leaders in this research stated that they would prefer to delegate power to proactive followers since these followers are not only proactive in communicating or taking initiative to complete tasks, but they are also more willing to take on challenges. As previously discussed in terms of leaders' perspectives on proactive followership, proactive followers may earn more trust from their leaders than passive counterparts. According to Carsten et al. (2017), proactive employees have more opportunities to be delegated and involved in decision-making. Similarly, Han et al. (2019) proposed empowering leadership and proactive followership have relational relationships in which the two types of leadership and followership are dependent on one another and reinforced.

Therefore, if followers want to be empowered and trusted, followers should be proactive; whereas leaders could empower proactive followers, if leaders want to be trusted. The relational relationship between these two types of leadership and followership indicated that trust is a reinforced process, and that leadership and followership types are dependent on and interact with one another.

5.5.3 A sense of humour and leader-follower trust relationships

Although there has been research on the effect of humour on leader-follower relationships and leadership styles, research on how humour could facilitate trust is scarce (Rosenberg et al., 2021). This research discovers the impact of humour on trust relationships between leaders and followers.

From the findings of the interviews, four participants (two leaders and two followers) added and explained the impact of humour on leader-follower trust relationships, and focus group participants agreed that a positive sense of humour could create a healthy and relaxing working environment and facilitate trust between leaders and followers. For the past decade, scholars in the management and social psychology research fields have investigated the role of humour in the workplace (Jawahar, Stone & Kluemper, 2019; Kim, Lee & Wong, 2016; Mesmer-Magnus, DeChurch & Wax, 2012; Gkorezis, Hatzithomas & Petridou, 2011). Humour is defined as an intentional act in which a person attempts to amuse another person or a group of people by sharing certain stories or events (Cooper, 2005).

The positive type of humour includes self-enhancing humour, which indicates that the shared story is funny and is intended to cheer them up, and affiliative humour, which indicates that the humour is intended to facilitate interpersonal relationships (Martin et al., 2003). Both types of humour have benevolent intention and aims at facilitating positive atmosphere (Kim, Lee & Wong, 2016). Participants who proposed humour during the interview mentioned that "a good sense of humour" could build a bridge between leaders and followers, not only offering to help people cope with stressful feelings, but also assisting leaders and followers' close relationships and develop trust. Martin et al. (2003) proposed that positive humour as a coping mechanism could

minimise negative emotions and effectively cope with adversity. Agreed by Lampreli and his colleagues (2019), humour is an important component in developing successful relationships and improving group interactions.

Participants indicated that humour could develop team cooperation, facilitate trust relationships, and generate cohesion in the workplace, and create quality leader-follower relationship. Studies have investigated on how humour as a management strategy or a leadership attribute could assist to problem solving, group cohesion, job performance, and conflict mediation in the workplace (Lampreli, Patsala & Priporas, 2019; Cann, Zapata & Davis, 2009; Collinson, 2002; Decker & Rotondo, 2001). Furthermore, followers with a good sense of humour could be able to express personal feelings or aggression in an acceptable manner (Murata, 2014; Martin et al., 2003). Similarly, Robert et al. (2016) claimed that the application of humour as a component of leadership style could enhance employee job satisfaction. However, Quinn (2000) and Banas et al. (2011) claimed that humour may cause detrimental consequences, especially when it contains sexual contents or improper offensive information. Therefore, the consensus of humour or the manner of expression was critical (Lampreli, Patsala & Priporas, 2019).

5.6 Influence of external environment on leader-follower trust relationships

Individual characteristics, exchanges and interactions, and leadership/followership styles are regarded as direct influencing factors of dyadic trust between leaders and followers in the conceptual framework. This research introduced external environment as an indirect trust influential factor, which enriched the understanding of the workplace trust relationships between leaders and followers.

Changes in the external environment were considered and proposed as indirect influential factors of leader-follower trust relationships by participants. The findings revealed that strict online supervision negatively affects leader-follower trust relationships, and followers stated that changes in leadership styles stress them and make them feel untrustworthy of their leaders. Furthermore, findings on how COVID-19 can affect trust relationships confirmed that learning ability, transformational leadership style, proactive followership style, emotional supports, and mutual respects could contribute to trust relationships and online virtual trust. Some participants even stated that working from home helped them build trust relationships and improve their working efficiency, since they could arrange their work schedules more flexibly and avoid office distractions.

5.6.1 What external influential factors affect leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs

According to the findings, some people indicated that external factors could barely affect their leader-follower trust relationships, since they had been working together for a long time and were confident in their relationships. While most participants agreed external changes had negative impact on leader-follower trust relationships, and they proposed four external influential factors (political issues, financial issues, commercial

pressures, and COVID-19) that could affect leader-follower trust relationships. However, they stated that rather than having a direct impact on their relationships of trust, changes in the external environment would only exacerbate current problems (such like job insecurity, leadership styles, and ineffective work performance) and have a negative impact on their trust relationships.

In terms of job insecurity, participants mentioned that when companies experience financial instability, the tendency of redundancies could negatively affect trust relationships between leaders and followers, particularly in SMEs compared to large corporations. In comparison to large corporations, SMEs usually have fewer financial reserves to deal with financial difficulties (Daskalakis, Jarvis & Schizas, 2013). Redundancy may relieve some financial pressure, however, it may increase employees' feelings of job insecurity, increase suspicion and jealousy, and reduce trust between leaders and followers (Huie et al., 2020). Furthermore, Urbini et al. (2020) argued that an unstable and flexible labour market increases job insecurity, turnover rates, and employment uncertainty at work. Barbier (2004) agreed that, unlike permanent employment relationships, unstable employment relationships have a negative impact on trust relationships among leaders, employees, and colleagues. The conceptual framework of this research demonstrated that long-term interactions, and integrity as a characteristic-related factor could facilitate trust and a stabilise working environment.

In terms of leadership styles, external changes could affect organisational decision-making process and leadership styles (Sulich, Sołoducho-Pelc & Ferasso, 2021). Karamat (2013) posited that effective changes of leadership facilitates organisational sustainability and develops resilience in dynamically changing business environments. Similarly, Breakwell (2020) stated that leaders should create a relatively safe and secure workplace for employees in order to develop and maintain trust relationships. Leaders are responsible for motivating and inspiring employees to cope with external or internal changes, channelling energies to group members to navigate crisis, and developing clear strategies to help employees understand and confront risks (Haslam, 2020; Gibson & Tarrant, 2010). In the conceptual framework, it emphasised the influence of leadership styles on dyadic trust at work, and pointed the potential influence of external factors on leadership styles.

In terms of ineffective work performance, both leaders and followers should maintain communication during a crisis, with leaders providing clear directions for future development and setting visionary goals, and followers communicating with leaders when confronted with any difficulties (Haslam, 2020; Peche and Oakley, 2005). Breakwell (2020) suggested clear directions and communication among leaders, employees, and co-workers could help companies adapt and respond to volatile environment while maintaining trust. The conceptual framework stated ability related characteristics, including communication ability, exchanges and interactions, and leadership/followership styles could contribute to the establish of dyadic trust.

Shahid (2018) indicated a stable and positive work environment could help maintain trust between leaders and followers, despite of the changes of external environment. However, most studies claimed that external factors or changes had a negative impact on organisational trust, since external changes could result in internal changes that increase employment risks and uncertainty (Kleynhans, Heyns & Stander, 2021; Yukl, 2012; De Vries, Ramo & Korotove, 2009). Richter and Näswall (2019) pointed that the dynamic of the business environment creates

risks of employment situations and stresses employees in their working lives, which causes job insecurity among employees and decreases leader-follower trust relationships. Huie and his colleagues (2020) argued that job insecurity may negatively affect leader-follower trust relationships and cause jealousy and destructive competitive relationships in the workplace.

There have been few studies on how external contexts affect leader-follower trust relationships (Gillespie & Siebert, 2017). According to Siebert et al. (2015), studies of influences on organisational trust were limited to what happened within organisations, however, there are several important context variables that should be considered in discussions of maintaining organisational trust. Furthermore, Gillespie and Siebert (2017) stated that global trends in employment, politics, economy, and governance regimes could all influence organisational trust, the existing research paradigm has not recognised the influence though.

This research sheds light on the indirect influence of external influential factors on leader-follower trust relationships, pointing out that some external changes (such as policy changes, global financial environment changes, or commercial situation changes) could decrease the leader-follower trust level by increasing employee job insecurity, changing leadership styles, and decreasing work efficiency.

5.6.2 How COVID-19 affect leader-follower trust relationships

Since this research was conducted during the COVID-19 global pandemic, the majority of participants mentioned its impact on leader-follower trust relationships. Given the high-quality information and large number of valuable opinions about COVID-19's influence on leader-follower trust relationships, this section presents a systematic discussion of how COVID-19 affects leader-follower trust relationships.

The most significant change caused by COVID-19 was a transition in working practises, as people were forced to work from home following the outbreak of the pandemic (Savić, 2020). According to the findings, half of the participants had negative attitudes toward working from home, and only a few participants stated the preference of the new working style.

Participants who believed that working from home had a negative impact on trust mentioned that the new working structure limits their interactions with colleagues, that distractions from home could reduce their working efficiency, and that adapting to new technology takes time. According to Lopez-Fresno and Savolainen (2020), remote working and a digitalized business environment transform "presence" work into "nonverbal communication" work, which challenges trust relationships and leads to exhaustion. Furthermore, technological barriers may lead to misinterpretation of others' messages and intentions (Lopez-Fresno, Savolainen & Miranda, 2021). Management and accuracy of information transmission are more difficult in a virtual working environment, and building a trusting environment is a time-consuming process (*ibid*).

Despite the fact that participants mentioned the negative impact of COVID-19 on leader-follower trust relationships, they also mentioned factors that could facilitate online trust building. According to the findings, this section introduces what factors could facilitate building trust online between leaders and followers.

5.6.2.1 Characteristics that facilitate trust relationships during COVID-19

During interview, the most frequently mentioned issue caused by the new working style was the adaptation to new technology. Participants indicated that choosing appropriate online communication software, training employees to understand a new online working process, and learning how to effectively communicate online are difficult and challenging. The COVID-19 outbreak promoted most employees to accept an online working style, and workers should adapt to nonverbal communication and meetings online with the assistance of online communication tools and internet access (Tramontano, Grant & Clarke, 2021; Eurofound, 2020). Working in a virtual environment may have an impact on communication effectiveness and trust relationships; learning ability may facilitate adaptation of online tools and, as a result, improve communication effectiveness and trust relationships (Men, Qin & Jin, 2022). Some non-technical abilities such as communication skills, active listening, learning ability, according to Jiménez-Rodríguez et al. (2020), could generate trust in an online working environment. Neufeld (2010) proposed that leaders' and followers' communication strategies for remote work could influence their trustworthiness, leadership performance, and management practise.

Furthermore, participants who were positive about working from home suggested that the new working style has advantages in terms of working flexibility, saving time on commuting, and avoiding distractions at the office. In addition, they mentioned that as people become more familiar with online tools, their trust relationship may improve due to increased information openness, systematic organised schedules, and traceable work. Kłopotek (2017) stated that, despite the lack of social interactions, an online working environment could increase working efficiency since it reduces office distractions and saves time commuting. Similarly, Diem et al. (2021) argued that technological tools could increase organisational trust by facilitating information sharing and openness. As long as employees become familiar with novel techniques and leaders clarify the new management practise, online tools have the potential to improve organisational performance and foster trust (Diem et al., 2021). Therefore, according to the conceptual framework and previous discussion of the influence of individual characteristics on leader-follower trust relationships, with the eruption of COVID-19, learning ability, communication ability, and integrity could mitigate the negative effects of the COVID-19 and maintain leader-follower trust relationships.

5.6.2.2 How leadership styles affect employees during work-from-home period

According to the findings, followers shared their perceptions of leadership when they switched to working online. Three followers mentioned they experienced strict management when working from home, including being closely monitored through technical software and being asked to provide instant responses despite working

time. They claimed that their leader-follower trust relationships were affected by strict and transactional leadership styles. The management approaches with which leaders confront challenging events may have a direct impact on leader-follower relationships, and changing leadership styles may be detrimental and stressful during difficult times (Tourish et al., 2004). Employees who assume they are being closely monitored or are not trusted will be stressed at work, and ineffective leadership styles will be detrimental to leader-follower relationships (Sarpong & Rees, 2014). Participants also stated that while they appreciated their supervisors' intentions in monitoring the working process, being watched and required to work additional hours made them uncomfortable.

Given that it was difficult for leaders to monitor and track task processes in a remote working environment, leadership and management strategies were critical to maintaining organisational performance and trust (Kleynhans, Heyns & Stander, 2021). While confronted with emerging risks, an effective leadership should establish cohesion for organisations to navigate the crisis and channel energies for group members to boost morale in companies (Haslam, 2020; Gibson & Tarrant, 2010). Furthermore, an effective leadership is necessary for workers to understand what to do and inspire them to contribute to organisations, which could maintain organisations trust and help companies to survive (Haslam, 2020).

Most participants had positive attitudes toward the changes in working style compared to those who had negative perspectives, and some even claimed the new working style had improved their trust relationships. These participants stated that working remotely allows them to have flexible working hours and encourages people to respect each other's work schedules. Kleynhans et al. (2021) proposed that empowering employees and establishing clear directions based on risk understanding could improve leadership performance and foster trust. In a virtual working environment, a transformational leadership model could improve communication, facilitate cooperation, and foster trust between leaders and followers (Sinclair et al., 2021). Therefore, despite the influence of individual characteristics on leader-follower trust relationships, transformational leadership style could develop and maintain leader-follower trust relationships in a virtual working environment, according to the conceptual framework and the discussion above.

5.6.2.3 Reciprocal exchanges and interactions help trust relationships when working remotely during pandemic

The emergent crisis not only causes changes in working styles but also causes emotional distress and well-being issues (Fontenelle-Tereshchuk, 2021). Understanding and helping others through tough time and having empathy could facilitate trust building and develop organisational cohesion (Jiménez-Rodríguez et al., 2020). Participants also mentioned how emotional supports affect leader-follower trust relationships. Most participants mentioned how supportive their leaders/followers were during the advent of pandemic, how much emotional supports they received, and how reciprocal supports increased their trust relationships. Lamb et al. (2021) claimed that respect and emotional supports are important to build trust for people who are forced to work from home during the pandemic.

Other techniques mentioned in findings about how to maintain trust between leaders and followers include sharing organisational goals, celebrating specific team and individual successes, building active feedback loop, and creating meaningful online social events. Participants mentioned two differences between building physical trust and virtual trust: first, virtual trust relationships lack interactions, and second, instant message replying cannot be guaranteed. They implied that the two disadvantages of virtual teams could hinder leader-follower trust relationships. Ford et al. (2017) suggested informal interactions and casual chat online could serve as a temporary substitute for face-to-face meetings and provide social and emotional support for virtual team members, facilitating trust in virtual teams. All of the techniques mentioned by the participants aim to create effective communication loops and active interactions within the team.

5.7 Discussion of direct and in-direct leader-follower trust relationships

5.7.1 Trust is not always mutual

Due to the asymmetric nature of trust, trust varies in direction and degree, which means trust relationships could be unidirectional (e.g., A trusts B but B does not trust A) or the trust level between both parties in a relationship is not the same (Tomlinson, Dineen & Lewicki, 2009; Gill et al., 2005). Similarly, Korsgaard et al. (2014) stated that mutual trust, which indicates both parties have the same level of trust in each other, is uncommon in most contexts. As a result, trust asymmetry is more common in trust relationships than mutual trust; studies cannot generalise the trust-influencing factors of both parties in a trust relationship by investigating only one party's trust-influencing factors (Spadaro et al., 2020; Krasikova & LeBreton, 2012).

Therefore, trust studies should consider the perceptions of both parties in a trust relationship. The analysis of the nine pairs with direct subordinate relationship also suggested that trust is not mutual, even they had a direct trust relationship in the workplace. The findings in Table 17 showed their rating scores of their leaders/followers' trustworthiness, and most of the pairs didn't have an equivalent level of trust.

In addition, the findings also showed that leaders and followers' trust in each other was influenced by different factors. Leaders and followers' different positions, values, or backgrounds are relevant to the production of trust, which causes trust asymmetry (Johnsen & Ford, 2008). Storl and Muhanna (2012) indicated that power asymmetry can lead to trust asymmetry in companies. This research found that leaders believed diversity could facilitate trust, while some followers had opposite opinions, and followers believed friendship was essential for trust relationships, while leaders preferred some boundaries in the workplace. Due to the position differences, leaders aim at organisational development, goal achievements, and motivating their followers, while followers focus on self-development, team cooperation, engagement, and being valued and successful in their careers (Amanchukwu, Stanley, & Ololube, 2015; Crossman & Crossman, 2011; likewise, Bjugstad et al., 2006). Therefore, positional differences cause trust asymmetry.

According to the findings, some leaders considered that diversity could facilitate trust by reducing bias, and they believed a diverse team could provide more innovative ideas, which benefits organisational development. While some followers preferred to trust and work with people with similar backgrounds, which facilitates team cooperation and engagement. In terms of friendship, some leaders suggested trust is not related to friendship, while some followers in this research stated that being friends with their leaders makes them feel valued and cared for, which facilitates trust relationships. Therefore, in order to facilitate leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs, considering the different opinions from leaders and followers on diversity and friendship, leaders should balance the team diversity and encourage communications between followers, and followers could try to be understanding and respecting different people with different backgrounds. In terms of the influence of friendship on trust, leaders could show more appreciation or care to their followers, and followers should also respect the boundaries with their leaders in the workplace.

Moreover, nine pairs' results were similar to findings from participants who didn't have direct subordinate relationships and were similar to findings from all participants. It supported the idea that the results of this research could be generated between leaders and followers in SMEs, whether they share direct leader-follower relationships or a normal hierarchical relationship (i.e., an indirect subordinate relationship).

5.7.2 Possibilities of developing dyadic trust with leaders and followers having direct subordinate relationships

The analysis of the nine pairs of leaders and followers having direct subordinate relationships and the comparisons between the nine pairs and others who didn't have direct subordinate relationships didn't present any special findings. The results from the nine pairs were similar to the overall results from all participants.

Compared to bigger companies, SMEs have a relatively flat management structure, and most leaders and followers are closer to each other regardless of having hierarchical differences (Borgloh et al., 2013). As a result, the findings from direct subordinate relationships are similar to those of others who didn't have a subordinate relationship. However, due to the lack of enough pairs of direct subordinate participants, trust-influential factors between leaders and followers with direct subordinate relationships in SMEs need further investigation.

Moreover, this research didn't aim at investigating personal feelings, it aims at generalising results to other similar SMEs. Therefore, most questions were general questions, and participants were allowed to propose influential factors that they expected to see in the workplace or behaviours they felt could benefit leader-follower trust relationships. Any factors or scenarios they felt could facilitate trust were encouraged to be shared during the interview, and the answers were not limited to describing existing trust relationship circumstances.

Some people provided workplace examples (e.g., I believe benevolence is important, [boss name] is benevolent and cares about others, so I trust him/her) and shared their experiences. Some of the participants just stated what factors they would want to see (e.g., I believe benevolence is more important; others (characteristics) can

be trained but integrity can't; I would like to trust benevolent people) and described their expectations. As a consequence, the answers from participants included both their experiences and expectations about factors that could facilitate leader-follower trust relationships, which is not only about participants' current trust situations.

The way of asking both experiences and expectations may be another reason why the findings from nine pairs were similar to the findings from the others. There are possibilities of investigating leader-follower trust relationships with direct subordinate relationships by increasing the number of participants and asking targeted questions to each pair.

5.8 Which aspect is more important in leader-follower trust relationships

This research found four aspects that could facilitate trust relationships in SMEs, including characteristics, leadership and followership styles, exchanges and interactions, and external factors. However, participants place different weight on the influence of these aspects on leader-follower trust relationships. Table 20 (referring to p. 146) shows that 35 participants consider characteristic-related factors to be the most important factor affecting leader-follower trust relationships in the workplace. They explained they believed individual characteristics or personality traits are hard to change or train, compared to leadership styles or followership styles.

Bleidorn et al. (2021) stated that personality traits are stable and malleable, but changes in personalities will not be easily achieved without targeted interventions or events. Fraley and Roberts (2005) and Roberts and Mroczek (2008) also indicated personality traits tend to be stable in adulthood and have no significant change between 10-year time lags without interventions. Similarly, Fortinberry and Murray (2016) suggested that a permanent personality alteration requires at least 18 months of concentrated intervention.

The ABI model (ability, benevolence, and integrity) is important in determining trustworthiness (Heyns & Rothmann, 2015; Smollan, 2013; Colquitt, Scott & LePine, 2007). These individual characteristics reflect the trustee's trustworthiness, and each of them may function independently of leader-follower trust relationships (Lee et al., 2012). Ability denotes what a trustee *can do* at work, while benevolence denotes the trustee's good willingness and what s/he *will do* (Colquitt, Scott & LePine, 2007). Integrity denotes the trustee's personal value, which matches the trustor's value and also reflects what s/he *will do* (*ibid*). Trustors could observe these characteristics and use them to forecast trustee behaviour (Lin Dar, 2009).

Some people argued the influence of individual characteristics on trust relationships is not decisive (Isaeva, Gruenewald & Saunders, 2020). Nootboom (2021) criticised the ABI model of trustworthiness, claiming that character traits could be influenced, developed, or even changed by other people, the external environment, or relationships. In addition to individual characteristics, familiarity, friendship, identification, habits, or opportunities or threats of regulations, institutions, and/or governance could all influence one's trustworthiness

(Nooteboom, 2021). Furthermore, several scholars confirmed that leadership styles and followership styles have a significant impact on the trustworthiness of leaders or followers (Leung et al., 2018; Franco & Matos, 2015; Lee, 2014; Breevaart et al., 2014; Pieterse & Van Knippenberg, 2010).

However, leadership and followership can be taught and trained systematically (Luedi, 2022; Thompson, 2012; Mole, 2010; Parks, 2005), while personality traits are hard to be changed (Bleidorn et al., 2022). In addition, conscientiousness, one of the personality traits, is related to integrity, openness, a tendency towards spontaneity, and decision-making, and it is stable during adulthood (Bleidorn et al., 2022; Damianet et al., 2019). These evidence supports and explains why participants in this research believed characteristic, especially integrity, is the most important factor in influencing leader-follower trust relationships compared to other factors.

This research found that among the four aspects of trust influential factors, individual characteristics were deemed the most significant aspect to affect trust relationships between leaders and followers in the workplace than other influential factors, and most participants chose integrity as the most important factor among characteristic-related factors (i.e. among ability, benevolence, and integrity). Participants explained they believed individual characteristics are hard to change in a short time, and other factors, like leadership or followership, could be trained or taught. In addition, participants mentioned integrity as a sign of honesty, and being ethical is important in AT SMEs and mental health SMEs since the patients in these two SMEs are more vulnerable and require privacy.

All research questions were answered after discussion and analysis of the findings, and the main contribution of this research is the conceptual framework (Figure 9, p.151), which combines four aspects that influence the trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs. Different from the original conceptual framework extracted from literature (Figure 6, p.64), there are some new themes explored during the research. The following section discusses the new themes added to the conceptual framework.

5.9 New themes added to the conceptual framework

5.9.1 New characteristic-related themes explored in this research

Participants all agreed that ability, benevolence, and integrity could affect trust between leaders and followers in the workplace after discussing the influence of individual characteristics. According to Wiley (2009), these three characteristics explained up to 80% of the antecedent to trust. Participants in this research proposed some additional characteristic-related factors that could influence leader-follower trust relationships, including empathy, emotional intelligence, reliability, confidence, and enthusiasm.

Since this research was conducted in the Assistive Technology and mental health industries, both industries help people who have mental and/or physical diseases. As a result, three leaders emphasised emotional intelligence

and empathy as important characteristics of a trustworthy employee. They stated that, in comparison to other industries, employees in their industries should feel empathy and be aware of their clients' feelings, and leaders explained that employees with emotional intelligence and empathy could gain their trust. Empathy of employees in clinics, health care sectors, or the service industry is critical to building trust and having a strong organisational structure (Bahadur et al., 2020; Rahman, 2016; Koehn, 2012). Additionally, Rahman (2016) proposed that employees' empathy and trust in the workplace could improve working conditions and increase business survival and continuity.

In terms of emotional intelligence, Salovey and Mayer (2004, p.4) defined emotional intelligence as "an ability to perceive and express emotion, assimilate emotion in thought, understand and reason with emotion, and regulate emotion in self and others". Dong and Howard (2006) proposed that an employee with high emotional intelligence could respond appropriately to workplace stress and the emotions of others, resulting in long-term health, good relationships with co-workers, and trust. In this research, leaders mentioned self-awareness and self-learning to demonstrate high emotional intelligence of employees, and these abilities indicate that employees understand their intrinsic motivations and are proactive in learning. Some scholars agreed and stated that in banking sector or service sectors high emotional intelligence of employees could develop quality leader-follower relationships, facilitate employee-client relationships, and improve organisational performances (Christie, Jordan & Troth, 2015; Du Plessis & Nel, 2015; Heffernan et al., 2008).

Aside from empathy and emotional intelligence, five participants (three leaders and two followers) in this research mentioned reliability as a significant trust relationship factor in the workplace between leaders and followers. Some scholars have proposed and investigated the impact of reliability on trust relationships (Wang, Ngamsiriudom, & Hsieh, 2015; Söllner & Leimeister, 2013; Dyer & Chu, 2003). Reliability indicates that a trustee's future actions can be predicted and guaranteed, with a low risk of being disappointed and a high probability of positive outcomes (Usono et al., 2007). Trustors may have a high intention to work with a reliable trustee again in future projects if they are confident in the outcome (ibid). Participants in this research explicitly described reliability as dependability and responsibility, and they indicated that a dependable and responsible leader or employee is more trustworthy. LoCurto and Berg (2016) conducted research in the health care sector and proposed that dependability and responsibility implied trustees are reliable and provide confidence in future outcomes.

Furthermore, as characteristic-related influential factors of a trustworthy employee, two leaders from mental health organisations added enthusiasm, and two leaders from Assistive Technology organisations added confidence. Enthusiasm describes a person's positive attitude at work, indicating that he or she is willing to communicate with others and has interests for work (Fisher, 2010). Leaders mentioned in this research that enthusiastic workers could commit to jobs and facilitate a positive working environment, and employees who demonstrate a positive attitude could earn their trust. Though research linking enthusiasm to trust relationships is scant, Fisher (2010) stated enthusiastic attitudes could facilitate a relaxing working environment and improve job satisfaction. A confident personality indicates that a person has an inner knowledge that he or she is capable

and is realistic about his or her abilities (Goleman, 2018). Although confidence has not been investigated as a personality trait as a contributor to leader-follower trust relationships, leaders in Assistive Technology stated in this research that an employee with self-assurance and self-trust could earn their trust. The effects of enthusiasm and confidence as individual characteristics on trust require further investigation.

5.9.2 Empowering leadership style

During the interview, most followers claimed that they had experienced both transactional and transformational leadership in the workplace, and they stated that both types of leadership could facilitate their trust relationships with their leaders. When discussing other behaviours (aside from transformational and transactional behaviours), four followers proposed empowering behaviours such as sharing decision-making power with followers and allowing followers to complete work independently. They stated that strict micromanagement rarely facilitates leader-follower trust, and empowering behaviours allow them to improve individual skills and encourage them to be more creative in the workplace.

The cognition of empowerment could change personal behaviours, and followers would prefer to change their attitudes and behaviours if they had positive experiences of empowerment (Laschinger et al., 2004). There are some results showing that empowering leadership could affect employees' innovative behaviour (To et al., 2015; Yidong and Xinxin, 2013; Knol and Van Inge, 2009). Janssen (2005) found that the level of perceived empowerment has a significant positive impact on employees' innovative behaviour. In addition to the influence of empowering leadership on innovative behaviours, several researchers have empirically tested the impact of an empowering leadership style on increasing followers' trust in their leaders (Li, Huo, & Long, 2017; Miao et al., 2013; Gao, Janssen, & Shi, 2011).

Considering the research context of this research, all employees in Assistive Technology SMEs and mental health SMEs are professional workers. Empowering leaders could encourage employees' talents, innovation, and passion in the workplace (To et al., 2015), which allows professional workers to take initiative to invent products or provide quality service and helps corporations increase competitiveness (Mudahogora-Murekezi, 2020; Maslach & Leiter, 2016). In addition, empowerment basically reflects the sharing of power from leaders to their followers (Raub & Robert, 2010). Being empowered by leaders, followers will have great autonomy to complete tasks on their own and feel they are trusted by leaders (Wang et al., 2022; Sharma & Kirkman, 2015). Therefore, empowering leadership styles could benefit innovative SMEs and facilitate leader-follower trust relationships. The addition of the empowering leadership style to the conceptual framework makes the framework more suitable for innovative SMEs.

The following sections discuss this research's methodological contribution, practical contribution for SMEs, research limitations, and future research directions.

5.10 Methodological contribution of this research

In the trust research field, quantitative methods are frequently applied to analyse data and investigate positive outcomes, or mediating influences of organisational trust in companies (Young et al., 2016). There are assessment scales of organisational trust for scholars to collect data and analyse trust related studies (Poon et al., 2006), and the most frequently applied scale called organisational trust inventory (OTI) which was proposed by Mayer, Davis and Schoorman in 1995. Studies which adopted quantitative methods like questionnaires or secondary data analysis usually aim to investigate relationships between trust and other variables, or the mediating role of trust among other variables (Saunders, Lyon & Möllering, 2015). Quantitative method is rarely applied for trust antecedents' studies (ibid).

In terms of the antecedents of trust, ability, benevolence and integrity as proposed by Mayer, Davis and Schoorman, are considered key factors that affect trust relationships interpersonally, and there are several existing scales to quantify and test these factors (Bachmann, Gillespie & Kramer, 2012). However, trust is context-based, and there is no existing trust instrument that can be applied in every research field and designing or improving new measurement instruments needs further validation and examination (Gillespie, 2011). As a result, it is hard to prove if there are any other factors that could influence trust relationships interpersonally through quantitative methods alone (Jehn & Jonsen, 2010).

Qualitative method within trust research field is important for investigating trust relationships and developing trust theory, as qualitative approach explores 'why' trust is important and 'how' to build trust (Saunders, Lyon & Möllering, 2015). Qualitative methods explore trust relationship influential factors without assumptions, and it could maximize understanding of the rich and complex nature of trust and interrelations (ibid). However, due to the subjective nature of trust, participants who are interviewed or observed may protect them from potential harms (Jehn & Jonsen, 2010). Therefore, conducting research only by interview or observation may deliver a biased result.

As trust is difficult to be measured and quantified due to its dynamic nature (Cho, Chan & Adali, 2015), neither qualitative nor quantitative methods can be relied to fully measure trust. Consequently, a combination of different measurement techniques is needed to improve validity and provide additional insights to research results (Paine, 2003). In addition, qualitative method is a most useful method to explore an under-researched area (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2009; Paine, 2003).

Therefore, as this research aims at conducting research in an under-researched area (trust relationships in SMEs), a qualitative method is applied to in-depth understand how to build trust between leaders and followers in workplace. In order to avoid biased results caused by single qualitative technique, structured interviews were conducted with both leaders and followers firstly, and focus groups were followed to test and discuss results from interview analysis. By conducting a qualitative study with two techniques, it methodologically provided another angle to investigate trust relationships issues.

5.11 Practical implications of this research

5.11.1 Development of leader-follower relationship

Leadership is a core issue in management science, and traditionally is approached from a top-down perspective (Radda, Majidadi & Akanno, 2015). Leadership investigation can vary but tends to be considered from a leader-centred view, e.g., how effective the leader is and how this impacts organisational success (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011; Uhl-Bien, 2006).

Very little attention has been given in the organisational trust research field to how followers can be trusted (Hughes & Saunders, 2021; Jawahar, Stone & Kluemper, 2019). Most literature has investigated how leaders can be trusted, which means results from literature presented how to be a good leader and ignored interactions between leader-follower relationship (Den Hartog, 2018; Hasel & Grover, 2017; Bjugstad et al., 2006; McKnight & Chervany, 2006; Uhl-Bien, 2006). However, interactions between leaders and followers are the foundation of building a quality leader-follower relationship in workplace, and mutual understanding and recognition are essential to practice business and build a healthy working environment (Den Hartog, 2018).

Investigating trust from leaders to followers has two benefits. First, it may help followers learn how to improve personally and gain access to more information and resources (Schoorman et al., 2016). Allen et al. (2004) stated leaders tend to share information and provide resources to their trusted followers, and these followers may improve their career prospects and earn a higher salary. If followers are aware of the factors that might affect their leaders' perceptions of their trustworthiness, they may make a conscious effort to be reliable and succeed in their professional careers (Allen et al., 2004). Second, in organisations, a positive leader-follower trust relationship may help improve organisational performance (De Jong & Dirks, 2012). The positive outcomes of cooperation can only be reinforced when both parties in a relationship recognise that they are trusted (Brower et al., 2009). Trust relationships have a positive impact when leaders and followers both understand how to improve personal behaviours in order to earn each other's trust in the workplace (ibid). Consequently, a healthy work environment created by leader-follower trust relationships could lead to increased organisational performance (Haslam, 2020; Peche and Oakley, 2005).

Researchers have gradually shifted their attention to followership, and attempted to understand leadership and management from followers' perspectives (Blanchard et al., 2009). People can be followers and leaders at the same time in a workplace, the view of followership is a complement of leadership, which is an approach from bottom to top (Colangelo, 2000). An active follower role which is supportive and takes initiative in workplace can shape interdependency of leader/follower interaction (Gilbert & Matviuk, 2008). Moreover, exploring of followership confirmed that leadership behaviours can be affected by followers, and a relational interaction between leaders and followers is more beneficial to develop a successful and stable organisation (Cunliffe & Eriksen, 2011).

This research generated a conceptual framework that depicted how aspects could influence trust relationships between leaders and followers. Understanding the conceptual framework allows leaders and followers to

attempt to improve their trust level from characteristic-related aspects and exchanges-and-interactions-related aspects. Moreover, leaders and followers can learn how to improve their work behaviours and trust relationships by applying different leadership and followership styles. In addition to these three aspects, this framework has the potential to protect the decrease of trust from the negative influence of external influential factors. As a result, this research investigates trust relationship influential factors from both parties, and it could assist leaders and followers in practically understanding leader-follower trust relationships from four aspects at a dyadic level.

5.11.2 Studies within SMEs

Trust relationships in companies could make employees feel they are more empowered and make leaders feel they are more supported (Brower et al., 2009). Previous literature showed trust studies focused mainly on larger companies, building trust between staff and clients, and trust relationships between organizations (Ter Huurne et al., 2017). Studies of trust relationships between leaders and followers within SMEs are scant (Guinot & Chiva, 2019). Compared with larger companies, SMEs often have a flat management structure, and closer relationships between leaders and followers could potentially improve working efficiency by solving problems with leaders directly (Borgloh et al., 2013). However, Rainnie (2016) disagreed that in SMEs leaders may notably pressurize employees and limit employee's creativity and initiative, and employees may feel they are under supervision and not being trusted.

This research focuses on the trust relationship influential factors in AT and mental health SMEs in the UK, and the participants who took part in individual interviews stated they trusted their leaders and followers. This research developed a conceptual framework by analysing their valuable opinions on how to build trust relationships in the workplace. Unlike previous research, this research discovers some new factors that may influence leader-follower trust relationships, such as enthusiasm, confidence, empathy, a sense of humour, self-learning ability, and self-awareness. These newfound factors may be caused by the features of selected industries. Since both the AT and mental health industries require professional workers and provide services to people with mobility needs or mental illnesses (Khaksar et al., 2021; Maslach & Leiter, 2016), people working in these industries may need to be more enthusiastic, confident, and empathetic at work than people working in other industries. Meanwhile, self-learning ability and self-awareness could help improve their professional performance at work (Savolainen, Ivakko, & Ikonen, 2017), and a sense of humour could help workers have a healthy and relaxing working environment (Mudahogora-Murekezi, 2020). It is expected that the research findings could be applied to other similar SMEs that have a professional team and/or aim to provide services to people with health-related issues to practically increase trust levels between leaders and followers.

Furthermore, with the advent of COVID-19 people were working from home, this research found some factors have significant influence on trust relationships when working remotely, including learning ability, mutual respect, transformational leadership style, and proactive followership style. Therefore, this research provided

results on how to build trust in SMEs, and it could practically provide more views and suggestions towards building trust in a virtual team or working remotely.

5.12 Limitations of this research and future research directions

5.12.1 Limitations of this research

Although the research questions were answered and some contributions to the trust research field and the development of leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs were proposed, there are three main limitations of this research, and this section concludes them below.

There is a lack of generalizability of this research. This research adopted pure qualitative method to collect data, which has been criticised for its limitations in generalising results (Loseke, 2012). The research results and findings could only explain leader-follower trust relationship factors in the UK and in the two industries chosen, Assistive Technology and mental health industries. The findings are difficult to apply to other SMEs in the UK or other countries to explain other leader-follower trust relationships. However, due to subjective nature of this research topic, trust, and the scarcity of literature in SME leader-follower trust relationships, qualitative research is more useful in exploring and discovering more information in-depth (Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 2012). Furthermore, by combining individual and focus group interviews, it is possible to generalise results and provide practical recommendations to specific objects (the two industries, Assistive Technology industry and mental health sector, in the UK).

The second limitation was due to participant access issues. This research collected data from 17 Assistive Technology SMEs and five mental health SMEs, with a total of 40 individual interview participants, including 22 leaders and 18 followers. There were nine direct subordinate relationships between leaders and followers. Two groups of two participants each were interviewed for focus group interviews. As all participants were forced to work from home, they were busier than usual and could be distracted by other family members. As a result, increasing the number of interview participants and pairs of leaders and followers was more difficult than usual. However, the participants in this research gave their consent and were willing to express their views on the factors that they believed were important for fostering trust between leaders and followers. Furthermore, at the final stage of the individual interviews, participants proposed fewer new themes or information. Data saturation was achieved based on coding results, additionally, focus group interviews provided supportive explanations for existing results rather than adding new themes (Fusch & Ness, 2015). Despite the fact that this research lacks enough pairs of direct subordinate relationships of leader-follower and has a small sample of interviewed participants, data saturation and opinions from both leaders and followers' sides could reflect the relationship or importance of trust building in the workplace at a macro dyadic level.

Finally, the measurement of trust belief may be influenced by individual mood or attitudes that are beyond one's control. Trustors' perceptions of trustee trustworthiness may be influenced by stress or mood as temporal

factors (Jones & Shah, 2016). This research was carried out during the pandemic, which drastically altered workers' working environments, and the stress caused by the change may have influenced interview participants' perceptions of trustworthiness. Despite the fact that their feelings and attitudes were influenced by the pandemic, they still provided valuable opinions on how emergent situations and remote working have influenced the trust relationships, and the results provided valuable results on how to build remote working trust relationships. Furthermore, Ferrin and Gillespie (2010) proposed that trust belief is related to personal experiences such as cultural background and cognitive bias. Additionally, trust propensity was not fully investigated in this research as a significant influential factor of trust (Heyns & Rothmann, 2015). Most participants demonstrated a tendency to trust others, and the absence of cynical opinions may have influenced some of the research findings. It should be developed in future research, and the following section discusses some future research directions in the field of trust research.

5.12.2 Future research directions

This research investigates leaders' and followers' different and common perspectives on the leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs at a dyad level, and discovers that leaders and followers place different weight on certain trust relationship influential factors. Future research directions could include experimental tests of the conceptual framework, development of direct subordinate trust relationships, and investigation of the reasons for asymmetry trust.

The research combines three direct influential aspects and one external aspect of leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs, and the conceptual framework depicted the development of dyadic trust between leaders and followers. Since this research applied qualitative methods, the conceptual framework was enriched and explored as much as possible through interviews. Future research should attempt to test and develop the conceptual framework through experimental research. Furthermore, previous research has shown that trust propensity (Jones & Shah, 2016), cultural backgrounds (Ferrin & Gillespie, 2010), and self-identity (Lord, Gatti, & Chui, 2016) could influence trustors' perceptions of trustworthiness, and future research could also investigate the effects of these factors on trust relationships.

Considering the investigation of trust relationships between leaders and followers with direct subordinate relationships, firstly, future studies could investigate further into leaders and followers with direct subordinate relationships. Even though the aim of this research was to identify leaders and followers who are in direct subordinate relationships, the author only discovered nine pairs due to the limitations of participant access caused by the pandemic. Investigating leaders and followers with direct subordinate relationships may assist in the establishment of dyadic trust between leaders and followers at the micro level (Walumbwa et al., 2011). Secondly, since this research's interview questions focus on general questions about leader-follower trust relationships rather than focusing on personal feelings, future studies of trust between direct subordinate relationships could focus more on personal feelings and develop the interview questions. Thirdly, this research

didn't include self-assessment of personal leadership styles and followership styles, which leads to a lack of comparisons between personal perspectives and others perspectives. The inclusion of self-assessment could increase objectivity and reduce personal bias in the research results.

Last but not least, this research attempts to combine four aspects that influence leader-follower trust relationships and discovers that most people regard individual characteristics as the most important factor influencing trust. Since there is a lack of literature comparing the four aspects, future research could test which aspect is more important to trust and investigate reasons. Additionally, while this research revealed the existence of trust asymmetry in leader-follower trust relationships, it did not explain how it occurs or how to moderate the situation and increase mutual trust. To enrich and develop the trust research field, future research could focus on reasons for asymmetry trust between leaders and followers.

5.13 Concluding and reflection on research questions

To sum up, despite the limitations of this research, the conceptual framework explains the research questions. This research aims at investigating what factors could affect trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs, and whether or not leaders and followers place different weight on some factors. All participants shared their opinions towards trust relationships between leaders and followers during interviews, and among four aspects (individual characteristics, leadership/followership styles, exchanges and interactions, and external factors), participants agreed individual characteristic was the most significant aspect that could affect their leader-follower trust relationships in the workplace. The answer resolved the fifth sub-question of this research: *“What is the most important aspect in determining leader-follower trust relationships from within individual characteristics, leadership/followership styles, exchanges and interactions, and external factors? What are the drivers or determinants that make this aspect so important?”*

In terms of individual characteristics, Table 13 (p.107) summarises leaders and followers' choices of characteristic-related trust relationship influential factors. This thesis discusses three main factors: ability, benevolence, and integrity, and the majority of leaders and followers believed that integrity was the most significant characteristic-related factor affecting their trust in their leader/follower in the workplace. Participants discussed and proposed 26 sub-factors, with communication skills, problem-solving skills, sincerity, loyalty, honesty, and maintaining confidentiality being the most frequently mentioned as trustworthy characteristics in the workplace. Furthermore, some participants added emotional intelligence, empathy, reliability, confidence, and enthusiasm to the discussion, broadening and enriching the characteristic-related trust relationship influential factors. The answer addresses this research's first sub-question: *“What individual characteristics will facilitate trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs?”*.

In terms of the influence of leadership/followership styles on leader-follower trust relationships, leaders believed that proactive followers are more trustworthy. Although leaders have stated that passive followers are not untrustworthy, proactive behaviours (such as providing timely feedback, asking questions when unexpected

challenges arise at work, proposing creative solutions, and taking initiative at work) indicate that the follower is self-managed and capable of problem solving. As a result, the independent behaviours and high level of engagement of proactive followers may contribute more to the company than passive followers, and leaders would prefer to trust proactive followers in the workplace. From the perspective of followers, they believed both transformational and transactional leadership styles could facilitate leader-follower trust relationships. Transactional leadership style could help build trust due to the clear directions and standards generated by leaders. However, all participating followers prefer a transforming style of management, since transformational leaders could provide possibilities for growth and self-learning and supportive communication in the workplace. Some followers also suggested an empowering leadership style, as empowering behaviours could promote open communication, active cooperation, and help them feel more confident at work. Furthermore, this research discovers that a sense of humour between leaders and followers could facilitate trust relationships in the workplace, since a sense of humour between leaders and followers could create a relaxing working environment and help people develop close relationships and trust. The answer resolved the second sub-question: *“What leadership/followership styles will facilitate trust relationships between leaders and followers in SMEs?”*.

In terms of exchanges and interactions, Table 16 (p.117) summarises leaders and followers’ perspectives towards themes related to exchanges and interactions on trust relationship influential factors. Six factors were discussed during the interviews, and all participants agreed that mutual respect and emotional supports have a positive effect on leader-follower trust relationships in the workplace. They claimed that in a relationship, respect allows each other to feel safe, secure, and supported, whereas emotional supports could improve belongingness of people, facilitate quality leader-follower relationships, and make people feel valued. Furthermore, participants stated that workplace gossip has a negative impact on trust, though they stated that they would try to ignore gossip and remain objective. The answer dressed the third sub-question: *“Which types of exchanges or interactions could influence trust relationships between leaders and followers?”*.

In terms of external factors, participants mentioned financial issues, political issues, commercial pressure, and COVID-19. More than half of the participants contributed valuable discussion about how COVID-19 affected the leader-follower trust relationship, as well as how trust relationships were built when working remotely while under the influence of COVID-19. According to findings, there were three topics proposed by participants, including usage of new technical software, emergence of new working styles, and requires of building trust online. Firstly, introduction of technical software required learning ability and could waste time, however, the benefits (including openness of information, viewable working progress, online numeric achievements) brought by online management tools could facilitate trust relationships. Secondly, new working styles allowed flexible working time and avoided distractions at the office, and mutual respect of each other’s schedule could improve leader-follower trust relationship. However, uncomfortable feelings brought on by strict online supervision and a lack of work-life balance may have unintended consequences, such as deterioration of leader-follower trust relationships or increase of employee stress. Thirdly, in order to build trust relationships, participants proposed four techniques, including sharing organisational goals, celebrating specific team and individual successes,

building active feedback loop, and creating meaningful online social events. The answer resolved the fourth sub-question: *“What external factors influence trust relationships in the workplace?”*

Answers to these four sub-questions resolved the first main questions of this research: *“What factors could facilitate leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs?”*. Furthermore, the conceptual framework combines four aspects to illustrate this question and provided a direction for future research to investigate leader-follower trust from four perspectives to achieve a comprehensive result.

Furthermore, another main question of this research is to investigate *“What are the similarities and/or differences between perspectives of leaders and followers with regard to influential factors on leader-follower trust relationships in SMEs?”*. In order to examine whether leaders and followers place different weight on some trust influential factors. According to the findings, leaders believed integrity was important in assessing followers’ trustworthiness, whereas followers proposed that both integrity and benevolence were important in facilitating leader-follower trust relationships with their leaders. Since a benevolent leader is usually willing to help and care for his or her followers, feelings of being cared for and supported by leaders may increase followers’ trust in their leaders.

In regards of exchanges and interactions, leaders believed that team diversity was important in developing leader-follower trust, whereas followers believed that workplace friendship could help develop leader-follower trust. Leaders believed that a diverse team would reduce differences between members of the in-group and out-group, potentially creating a more open working environment and facilitating cooperation. As a result, an open and diverse team could assist in the growth of trust. While followers suggested that friendship could improve knowledge sharing and create a more relaxed work environment, which facilitates in the development of a leader-follower trust relationship. Different perspectives from leaders and followers affirm that trust is not mutual, and research on trust between two parties should consider both parties’ perspectives in order to fully comprehend a trust relationship and practically develop trust in the workplace.

References

- Abualrub, R. F., & Alghamdi, M. G. (2012). The impact of leadership styles on nurses' satisfaction and intention to stay among Saudi nurses. *Journal of nursing management*, 20(5), 668-678.
- Agho, A. O. (2009). Perspectives of senior-level executives on effective followership and leadership. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 16(2), 159-166.
- Ahmad, N. H., Halim, H. A., & Zainal, S. R. M. (2010). Is entrepreneurial competency the silver bullet for SME success in a developing nation. *International Business Management*, 4(2), 67-75.
- Ahmed, A. (2018). Perceptions of using Assistive Technology for students with disabilities in the classroom. *International Journal of Special Education*, 33(1), 129-139.
- Akyüz, M. (2020). The mediating role of individual performance in the effect of workplace friendship on organisational trust. *İşletme Araştırmaları Dergisi*, 12(3), 2193-2204.
- Alarcon, G. M., Lyons, J. B., Christensen, J. C., Klosterman, S. L., Bowers, M. A., Ryan, T. J., ... & Wynne, K. T. (2018). The effect of propensity to trust and perceptions of trustworthiness on trust behaviors in dyads. *Behavior research methods*, 50(5), 1906-1920.
- Alesina, A., & La Ferrara, E. (2002). Who trusts others?. *Journal of public economics*, 85(2), 207-234.
- Allen, T. D., Golden, T. D., & Shockley, K. M. (2015). How effective is telecommuting? Assessing the status of our scientific findings. *Psychological science in the public interest*, 16(2), 40-68.
- Allen, T. D., Eby, L. T., Poteet, M. L., Lentz, E., & Lima, L. (2004). Career benefits associated with mentoring for protégés: A meta-analysis. *Journal of applied psychology*, 89(1), 127.
- Alper, S., & Raharinirina, S. (2006). Assistive Technology for individuals with disabilities: A review and synthesis of the literature. *Journal of Special Education Technology*, 21(2), 47-64.
- Alvarez, S. A., Barney, J. B., & Bosse, D. A. (2003). Trust and its alternatives. *Human Resource Management: Published in Cooperation with the School of Business Administration, The University of Michigan and in alliance with the Society of Human Resources Management*, 42(4), 393-404.
- Amah, O. E., & Oyetunde, K. (2019). Human resources management practice, job satisfaction and affective organisational commitment relationships: The effects of ethnic similarity and difference. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 45(1), 1-11.
- Amanchukwu, R. N., Stanley, G. J., & Ololube, N. P. (2015). A review of leadership theories, principles and styles and their relevance to educational management. *Management*, 5(1), 6-14.
- Ambrose, A. (2001). In G. Amado & A. Ambrose. *The transitional approach to change*, 1-28.
- Amoako, I. O. (2018). *Trust, institutions and managing entrepreneurial relationships in Africa: An SME perspective*. Springer.
- Amundsen, S., & Martinsen, Ø. L. (2014). Empowering leadership: Construct clarification, conceptualization, and validation of a new scale. *The leadership quarterly*, 25(3), 487-511.
- Andaleeb, S. S., & Conway, C. (2006). Customer satisfaction in the restaurant industry: an examination of the transaction-specific model. *Journal of services marketing*.

Appelbaum, E., Bailey, T., Berg, P., Kalleberg, A. L., & Bailey, T. A. (2000). *Manufacturing advantage: Why high-performance work systems pay off*. Cornell University Press.

Arham, A., Boucher, C., & Muenjohn, N. (2013). Leadership and entrepreneurial success: A study of SMEs in Malaysia. *World Journal of Social Sciences*, 3(5), 117-130.

Armstrong, C., Craig, B., Jackson III, W. E., & Thomson, J. B. (2014). The moderating influence of financial market development on the relationship between loan guarantees for SMEs and local market employment rates. *Journal of Small Business Management*, 52(1), 126-140.

Artz, D., & Gil, Y. (2007). A survey of trust in computer science and the semantic web. *Journal of Web Semantics*, 5(2), 58-71.

Asencio, H., & Mujkic, E. (2016). Leadership behaviors and trust in leaders: Evidence from the US federal government. *Public Administration Quarterly*, 156-179.

Atoum, A. Y., & Al-Shoboul, R. A. (2018). Emotional support and its relationship to Emotional intelligence. *Advances in social sciences research journal*, 5(1).

Avey, J. B., Reichard, R. J., Luthans, F., & Mhatre, K. H. (2011). Meta-analysis of the impact of positive psychological capital on employee attitudes, behaviors, and performance. *Human resource development quarterly*, 22(2), 127-152.

Avey, J. B., Wernsing, T. S., & Palanski, M. E. (2012). Exploring the process of ethical leadership: The mediating role of employee voice and psychological ownership. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 107(1), 21-34.

Avolio, B. J. (2007). Promoting more integrative strategies for leadership theory-building. *American psychologist*, 62(1), 25.

Avolio, B. J., & Bass, B. M. (2004). Multifactor leadership questionnaire (TM). *Mind Garden, Inc. Menlo Park, CA*.

Avolio, B. J., & Bass, B. M. (Eds.). (2001). *Developing potential across a full range of Leadership Tm: Cases on transactional and transformational leadership*. Psychology Press.

Avolio, B. J., & Reichard, R. J. (2008). The rise of authentic followership. In Riggio, R. E., Chaleff, I., Lipman-Blumen, J. (eds) *The Art of Followership: how great followers create great leaders and organizations*. Jossey-Bass, The United States of America.

Avolio, B. J., Sosik, J. J., Jung, D. I., & Berson, Y. (2003). Leadership models, methods, and applications.

Avolio, B. J., Yammarino, F. J., & Bass, B. M. (1991). Identifying common methods variance with data collected from a single source: An unresolved sticky issue. *Journal of management*, 17(3), 571-587.

Bachmann, R. (2001). *The role of trust and power in the institutional regulation of territorial business systems*. Research School Systems, Organisation and Management.

Bachmann, R., & Inkpen, A. C. (2011). Understanding institutional-based trust building processes in inter-organizational relationships. *Organization studies*, 32(2), 281-301.

Baddeley, M. (2010). Herding, social influence and economic decision-making: socio-psychological and neuroscientific analyses. *Philosophical Transactions of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 365(1538), 281-290.

Badshah, S. (2012). Historical study of leadership theories. *Journal of Strategic Human Resource Management*, 1(1), 49.

Bahadur, W., Khan, A. N., Ali, A., & Usman, M. (2020). Investigating the effect of employee empathy on service loyalty: The mediating role of trust in and satisfaction with a service employee. *Journal of Relationship Marketing*, 19(3), 229-252.

Bajaj, R., Sinha, S., & Tiwari, V. (2013). Crucial Factors of Human Resource Management for Good Employee Relations: A Case Study. *Int J Mining Metallurgy Mech Eng*, 1(2), 90-92.

Baker, M. J., & Hart, S. J. (2007). *Product strategy and management*. Pearson Education.

Baldwin, K., & Huber, J. D. (2010). Economic versus cultural differences: Forms of ethnic diversity and public goods provision. *American Political Science Review*, 104(4), 644-662.

Banalieva, E. R., Eddleston, K. A., & Zellweger, T. M. (2015). When do family firms have an advantage in transitioning economies? Toward a dynamic institution-based view. *Strategic Management Journal*, 36(9), 1358-1377.

Banas, J. A., Dunbar, N., Rodriguez, D., & Liu, S. J. (2011). A review of humor in educational settings: Four decades of research. *Communication Education*, 60(1), 115-144.

Barbier, J. C. (2004). A comparative analysis of 'employment precariousness' in Europe. *Learning from employment and welfare policies in Europe, European Xnat Cross-national research papers, Seventh series*, 7-18.

Bass, B. M. (1985). Leadership: Good, better, best. *Organizational dynamics*, 13(3), 26-40.

Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1990). Developing transformational leadership: 1992 and beyond. *Journal of European industrial training*.

Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1994). Transformational leadership and organizational culture. *The International Journal of Public Administration*, 17(3-4), 541-554.

Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1997). Concepts of leadership. *Leadership: Understanding the dynamics of power and influence in organizations*, 323.

Bass, B. M., & Bass, R. (2009). *The Bass handbook of leadership: Theory, research, and managerial applications*. Simon and Schuster.

Bass, B. M., & Steidlmeier, P. (1999). Ethics, character, and authentic transformational leadership behavior. *The leadership quarterly*, 10(2), 181-217.

Bass, B. M., Avolio, B. J., Jung, D. I., & Berson, Y. (2003). Predicting unit performance by assessing transformational and transactional leadership. *Journal of applied psychology*, 88(2), 207.

Batt, R., Doellgast, V., Kwon, H., & Agrawal, V. (2005, January). Service Management and Employment Systems in US and Indian Call Centers [with Comment and Discussion]. In *Brookings trade forum* (pp. 335-372). Brookings Institution Press.

Bedford, O. (2022). The relation between guanxi and interpersonal trust in the workplace. *Integrative Psychological and Behavioral Science*, 56(2), 385-404.

Beer, M., & Nohria, N. (2000). Cracking the code of change. *HBR's 10 must reads on change*, 78(3), 133-141.

BEIS (2021a). National statistics Business population estimates for the UK and regions 2021: statistical release. Retrieved on 24th Nov 2021 at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/business-population-estimates-2021/business-population-estimates-for-the-uk-and-regions-2021-statistical-release-html>

BEIS (2021b). Longitudinal Small Business Survey: SME Employers (businesses with 1-249 employees). Retrieved on 24th Nov 2021 at https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/889656/LSBS_2019_employers.pdf

Bennis, W. (2003). *The emotionally intelligent workplace: How to select for, measure, and improve emotional intelligence in individuals, groups, and organizations*. John Wiley & Sons.

Benson, A. J., Hardy, J., & Eys, M. (2016). Contextualizing leaders' interpretations of proactive followership. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 37(7), 949-966.

Benson, A. J., Hardy, J., & Eys, M. (2016). Contextualizing leaders' interpretations of proactive followership. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 37(7), 949-966.

Berg, J., Dickhaut, J., & McCabe, K. (1995). Trust, reciprocity, and social history. *Games and economic behavior*, 10(1), 122-142.

Berman, E. M., West, J. P., & Richter, Jr, M. N. (2002). Workplace relations: Friendship patterns and consequences (according to managers). *Public Administration Review*, 62(2), 217-230.

Besley, T., & Reynal-Querol, M. (2014). The legacy of historical conflict: Evidence from Africa. *American Political Science Review*, 108(2), 319-336.

Beugelsdijk, S., & Klasing, M. J. (2016). Diversity and trust: The role of shared values. *Journal of comparative economics*, 44(3), 522-540.

Bews, N. F., & Rossouw, G. J. (2002). A role for business ethics in facilitating trustworthiness. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 39(4), 377-390.

Bews, N., & Rossouw, D. (2002). Contemporary organisational change and the importance of trust. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 28(4), 2-6.

Bhardwaj, A., Qureshi, I., Konrad, A. M., & Lee, S. H. (2016). A two-wave study of self-monitoring personality, social network churn, and in-degree centrality in close friendship and general socializing networks. *Group & Organization Management*, 41(4), 526-559.

Bibb, S., & Kourdi, J. (2004). *Trust matters: For organisational and personal success* (pp. 121-131). Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan.

Bicchieri, C., Xiao, E., & Muldoon, R. (2011). Trustworthiness is a social norm, but trusting is not. *Politics, Philosophy & Economics*, 10(2), 170-187.

Bijlsma, K., & Koopman, P. (2003). Introduction: trust within organisations. *Personnel Review*.

Bird, B. (2019). Toward a theory of entrepreneurial competency. In *Seminal ideas for the next twenty-five years of advances*. Emerald Publishing Limited.

Bjugstad, K., Thach, E. C., Thompson, K. J., & Morris, A. (2006). A fresh look at followership: A model for matching followership and leadership styles. *Journal of behavioral and applied management*, 7(3), 304-319.

- Blanchard, A. L., Welbourne, J., Gilmore, D., & Bullock, A. (2009). Followership styles and employee attachment to the organization. *The Psychologist-Manager Journal*, *12*(2), 111-131.
- Blau, P. M. (2017). *Exchange and power in social life*. Routledge.
- Bliese, P. D., Chan, D., & Ployhart, R. E. (2007). Multilevel methods: Future directions in measurement, longitudinal analyses, and nonnormal outcomes. *Organizational Research Methods*, *10*(4), 551-563.
- Bligh, M. C. (2011). Followership and follower-centred approaches. *The Sage handbook of leadership*, 425-436.
- Bligh, M. C. (2017). Leadership and trust. In *Leadership today*(pp. 21-42). Springer, Cham.
- Bodenhause, G. V., Kang, S. K., & Peery, D. (2012). Social categorization and the perception of social groups. *The Sage handbook of social cognition*, 318-336.
- Boersma, M. F., Buckley, P. J., & Ghauri, P. N. (2003). Trust in international joint venture relationships. *Journal of Business Research*, *56*(12), 1031-1042.
- Bolden, R., Gosling, J., Marturano, A., & Dennison, P. (2003). A review of leadership theory and competency frameworks.
- Borisoff, J. F. (2011). Small markets in Assistive Technology: Obstacles and opportunities. In *Design and Use of Assistive Technology* (pp. 105-113). Springer, New York, NY.
- Bormann, K. C. (2017). Linking daily ethical leadership to followers' daily behaviour: The roles of daily work engagement and previous abusive supervision. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *26*(4), 590-600.
- Borum, R. (2010). The science of interpersonal trust.
- Bouncken, R. B., & Kraus, S. (2013). Innovation in knowledge-intensive industries: The double-edged sword of competition. *Journal of Business research*, *66*(10), 2060-2070.
- Bozer, G., & Jones, R. J. (2018). Understanding the factors that determine workplace coaching effectiveness: A systematic literature review. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, *27*(3), 342-361.
- Branzei, O., Vertinsky, I., & Camp II, R. D. (2007). Culture-contingent signs of trust in emergent relationships. *Organizational behavior and human decision processes*, *104*(1), 61-82.
- Braun, S., Peus, C., Weisweiler, S., & Frey, D. (2013). Transformational leadership, job satisfaction, and team performance: A multilevel mediation model of trust. *The leadership quarterly*, *24*(1), 270-283.
- Breakwell, G. M. (2020). Mistrust, uncertainty and health risks. *Contemporary Social Science*, *15*(5), 504-516.
- Breevaart, K., Bakker, A., Hetland, J., Demerouti, E., Olsen, O. K., & Espevik, R. (2014). Daily transactional and transformational leadership and daily employee engagement. *Journal of occupational and organizational psychology*, *87*(1), 138-157.
- Bremner, N. (2011). *The Influence of Follower Behaviour on Leaders' Trust in Followers*. University of Ottawa (Canada).
- Brennan, L. L., & Johnson, V. E. (Eds.). (2007). *Computer-Mediated Relationships and Trust: Managerial and Organizational Effects: Managerial and Organizational Effects*. IGI Global.
- Brighenti, A. M. (2010). *Visibility in social theory and social research*. Springer.

- Brower, H. H., Lester, S. W., Korsgaard, M. A., & Dineen, B. R. (2009). A closer look at trust between managers and subordinates: Understanding the effects of both trusting and being trusted on subordinate outcomes. *Journal of management*, 35(2), 327-347.
- Brower, H. H., Schoorman, F. D., & Tan, H. H. (2000). A model of relational leadership: The integration of trust and leader–member exchange. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 11(2), 227-250.
- Bruno, H. E. (2007). Gossip-free zones: Problem solving to prevent power struggles. *YC Young Children*, 62(5), 26.
- Bstieler, L., Hemmert, M., & Barczak, G. (2017). The changing bases of mutual trust formation in inter-organizational relationships: A dyadic study of university-industry research collaborations. *Journal of business research*, 74, 47-54.
- Buculescu, M. M. (2013). Harmonization process in defining small and medium-sized enterprises. Arguments for a quantitative definition versus a qualitative one. *Theoretical and Applied Economics*, 9(586), 103-114.
- Burleson, B. R. (2003). The experience and effects of emotional support: What the study of cultural and gender differences can tell us about close relationships, emotion, and interpersonal communication. *Personal relationships*, 10(1), 1-23.
- Burns, J. M. (1978). *Leadership*. New York, NY: Harper & Row.
- Burns, J. M. (1998). Transactional and transforming leadership. *Leading organizations*, 5(3), 133-134.
- Burris, E. R. (2012). The risks and rewards of speaking up: Managerial responses to employee voice. *Academy of management journal*, 55(4), 851-875.
- Burt, R. S. (2001). Gossip in Social Networks. *Networks and Markets*, 30.
- Caldwell, C., & Dixon, R. D. (2010). Love, forgiveness, and trust: Critical values of the modern leader. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 93(1), 91-101.
- Calhoun, C. S., Bobko, P., Gallimore, J. J., & Lyons, J. B. (2019). Linking precursors of interpersonal trust to human-automation trust: An expanded typology and exploratory experiment. *Journal of Trust Research*, 9(1), 28-46.
- Call, M., & Korsgaard, M. A. (2013). Noise and trust asymmetry in dyads. In *73rd annual meeting of the Academy of Management, Orlando, FL*.
- Cann, A., Zapata, C. L., & Davis, H. B. (2009). Positive and negative styles of humor in communication: Evidence for the importance of considering both styles. *Communication Quarterly*, 57(4), 452-468.
- Canner, N., & Ethan, B. (2016). Why is micromanagement so infectious. *Harvard Business Review Digital Article*. 2, 5.
- Carey, C., & Naudin, A. (2006). Enterprise curriculum for creative industries students: An exploration of current attitudes and issues. *Education+ Training*.
- Carruth, E., & Field, T. (2016). Person-Centered approaches: Providing social and emotional support for adult learners. In *Supporting the success of adult and online students*. CreateSpace.
- Carsten, M. K., Uhl-Bien, M., & Huang, L. (2018). Leader perceptions and motivation as outcomes of followership role orientation and behavior. *Leadership*, 14(6), 731-756.

Carsten, M. K., Uhl-Bien, M., West, B. J., Patera, J. L., & McGregor, R. (2010). Exploring social constructions of followership: A qualitative study. *The leadership quarterly*, 21(3), 543-562.

Carter, S., & Jones-Evans, D. (Eds.). (2006). *Enterprise and small business: Principles, practice and policy*. Pearson Education.

Carter, S., Ram, M., Trehan, K., & Jones, T. (2013). Diversity and smes: Existing evidence and policy tensions: Erc white paper no. 3.

Cases, A. S. (2002). Perceived risk and risk-reduction strategies in Internet shopping. *The International Review of Retail, Distribution and Consumer Research*, 12(4), 375-394.

Cavusgil, S. T., & Knight, G. (2015). The born global firm: An entrepreneurial and capabilities perspective on early and rapid internationalization. *Journal of International Business Studies*, 46(1), 3-16.

Chaleff, I. (2009). *The courageous follower: Standing up to & for our leaders*. Berrett-Koehler Publishers.

Chaleff, I. (2016). In praise of followership style assessments. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 10(3), 45-48.

Chaleff, R. S. (2012). Department of Central Research & Development Experimental Station. *Genetic Engineering of Plants: An Agricultural Perspective*, 26, 257.

Chang, M. K., & Cheung, W. (2005, January). Online trust production: Interactions among trust building mechanisms. In *Proceedings of the 38th Annual Hawaii International Conference on System Sciences* (pp. 181c-181c). IEEE.

Chang, M. K., Cheung, W., & Tang, M. (2013). Building trust online: Interactions among trust building mechanisms. *Information & management*, 50(7), 439-445.

Charalampous, M., Grant, C. A., Tramontano, C., & Michailidis, E. (2019). Systematically reviewing remote e-workers' well-being at work: A multidimensional approach. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology*, 28(1), 51-73.

Charles, N. A., Ojera, P. B., & David, O. (2015). Factors influencing choice of strategic management modes of small enterprises. *Journal of Innovation and Entrepreneurship*, 4(1), 1-22.

Charoensukmongkol, P., & Phungsoonthorn, T. (2021). The effectiveness of supervisor support in lessening perceived uncertainties and emotional exhaustion of university employees during the COVID-19 crisis: the constraining role of organizational intransigence. *The Journal of general psychology*, 148(4), 431-450.

Chen, C. W., Chang, M. L., Tseng, C. P., Chen, B. C., & Chang, Y. Y. C. (2013). Retracted: Critical human factor evaluation of knowledge sharing intention in taiwanese enterprises. *Human Factors and Ergonomics in Manufacturing & Service Industries*, 23(2), 95-106.

Chen, G., Ployhart, R. E., Thomas, H. C., Anderson, N., & Bliese, P. D. (2011). The power of momentum: A new model of dynamic relationships between job satisfaction change and turnover intentions. *Academy of Management Journal*, 54(1), 159-181.

Chen, J. K., & Sriphon, T. (2021). Perspective on COVID-19 pandemic factors impacting organizational leadership. *Sustainability*, 13(6), 3230.

Chiang, C. F., & Wang, Y. Y. (2012). The effects of transactional and transformational leadership on organizational commitment in hotels: The mediating effect of trust. *Journal of hotel and business management*, 1(1), 1-11.

Child, J. (2015). *Organization: contemporary principles and practice*. John Wiley & Sons.

Child, J., & Rodrigues, S. B. (2003). Corporate governance and new organizational forms: Issues of double and multiple agency. *Journal of Management and Governance*, 7(4), 337-360.

Chin, T. A., Hamid, A. B. A., Rasli, A., & Baharun, R. (2012). Adoption of supply chain management in SMEs. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 65, 614-619.

Christensen, L. J., Parsons, H., & Fairbourne, J. (2010). Building entrepreneurship in subsistence markets: Microfranchising as an employment incubator. *Journal of business research*, 63(6), 595-601.

Christie, A. M., Jordan, P. J., & Troth, A. C. (2015). Trust antecedents: emotional intelligence and perceptions of others. *International Journal of Organizational Analysis*.

Clifford, E. (1963). Social visibility. *Child Development*, 799-808.

Cogliser, C. C., Schriesheim, C. A., Scandura, T. A., & Gardner, W. L. (2009). Balance in leader and follower perceptions of leader-member exchange: Relationships with performance and work attitudes. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 20(3), 452-465.

Collinson, D. L. (2002). Managing humour. *Journal of management studies*, 39(3), 269-288.

Colquitt, J. A., Sabey, T. B., Rodell, J. B., & Hill, E. T. (2019). Content validation guidelines: Evaluation criteria for definitional correspondence and definitional distinctiveness. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 104(10), 1243.

Colquitt, J. A., Scott, B. A., & LePine, J. A. (2007). Trust, trustworthiness, and trust propensity: a meta-analytic test of their unique relationships with risk taking and job performance. *Journal of applied psychology*, 92(4), 909.

Connelly, B. L., Crook, T. R., Combs, J. G., Ketchen Jr, D. J., & Aguinis, H. (2018). Competence-and integrity-based trust in interorganizational relationships: Which matters more?. *Journal of Management*, 44(3), 919-945.

Conway, N., & Briner, R. B. (2005). *Understanding psychological contracts at work: A critical evaluation of theory and research*. Oxford University Press.

Cook, D. A., & Beckman, T. J. (2006). Current concepts in validity and reliability for psychometric instruments: theory and application. *The American journal of medicine*, 119(2), 166-e7.

Cook, K. S., Cheshire, C., Rice, E. R., & Nakagawa, S. (2013). Social exchange theory. *Handbook of social psychology*, 61-88.

Cook, K. S., Hardin, R., & Levi, M. (2005). *Cooperation without trust?*. Russell Sage Foundation.

Cooper, C. D. (2005). Just joking around? Employee humor expression as an ingratiation behavior. *Academy of management review*, 30(4), 765-776.

Corritore, C. L., Kracher, B., & Wiedenbeck, S. (2003). On-line trust: concepts, evolving themes, a model. *International journal of human-computer studies*, 58(6), 737-758.

Costa, A. C., Fulmer, C. A., & Anderson, N. R. (2018). Trust in work teams: An integrative review, multilevel model, and future directions. *Journal of Organizational Behavior*, 39(2), 169-184.

Costigan, R. D., Litter, S. S., & Berman, J. J. (1998). A multi-dimensional study of trust in organizations. *Journal of managerial issues*, 303-317.

Cowan, R. L., & Horan, S. M. (2014). Love at the office? Understanding workplace romance disclosures and reactions from the coworker perspective. *Western Journal of Communication, 78*(2), 238-253.

Cox, M. F., Cekic, O., & Adams, S. G. (2010). Developing leadership skills of undergraduate engineering students: Perspectives from engineering faculty. *Journal of STEM Education: Innovations and Research, 11*(3).

Crawford, J., & Daniels, M. K. (2014). Follow the leader: How does “followership” influence nurse burnout?. *Nursing Management, 45*(8), 30-37.

Cropanzano, R., & Mitchell, M. S. (2005). Social exchange theory: An interdisciplinary review. *Journal of management, 31*(6), 874-900.

Cropanzano, R., Dasborough, M. T., & Weiss, H. M. (2017). Affective events and the development of leader-member exchange. *Academy of Management Review, 42*(2), 233-258.

Crossman, B., & Crossman, J. (2011). Conceptualising followership—a review of the literature. *Leadership, 7*(4), 481-497.

Crossman, J. (2022). *Workplace Communication: Promoting Workplace Wellbeing and Interpersonal Relationships in Multicultural Contexts*. Taylor & Francis.

Cunningham, J., & Hillier, E. (2013). Informal learning in the workplace: key activities and processes. *Education+ Training*.

Cureu, P. L., & Schruijer, S. G. (2010). Does conflict shatter trust or does trust obliterate conflict. *Revisiting the Relationships Be-tween Team Diversity, Conflict, and Trust, 14*(1), 66-79.

Curran, J., & Blackburn, R. (2000). *Researching the small enterprise*. Sage.

Daft, R.L. (2002): *The Leadership Experience*, 2nd ed., Harcourt: Orlando FL.

Dai, Y. D., Dai, Y. Y., Chen, K. Y., & Wu, H. C. (2013). Transformational vs transactional leadership: which is better? A study on employees of international tourist hotels in Taipei City. *International Journal of Contemporary Hospitality Management*.

Daibes, F. (2016). *Leadership of project teams and emotional intelligence in the interior* (Doctoral dissertation).

Dartey-Baah, K. (2015). Resilient leadership: A transformational-transactional leadership mix. *Journal of Global Responsibility*.

Daskalakis, N., Jarvis, R., & Schizas, E. (2013). Financing practices and preferences for micro and small firms. *Journal of Small Business and Enterprise Development*.

Dass, M., & Kumar, P. (2011). The impact of economic and social orientation on trust within teams. *Journal of Business & Economics Research (JBER), 9*(2).

Dattner, B., & Dunn, A. (2010). Credit and blame at work. *Psychology Today*. Retrieved from <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/credit-and-blame-work/201104/re-enacting-family-dynamics-in-the-workplace>.

De Cuyper, N., De Jong, J., De Witte, H., Isaksson, K., Rigotti, T., & Schalk, R. (2008). Literature review of theory and research on the psychological impact of temporary employment: Towards a conceptual model. *International Journal of Management Reviews, 10*(1), 25-51.

De Jong, B. A., & Dirks, K. T. (2012). Beyond shared perceptions of trust and monitoring in teams: Implications of asymmetry and dissensus. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 97*(2), 391.

De Meo, P., Fotia, L., Messina, F., Rosaci, D., & Sarné, G. M. (2018). Providing recommendations in social networks by integrating local and global reputation. *Information Systems*, 78, 58-67.

De Vries, M. F. K. (2006). *The leader on the couch: A clinical approach to changing people and organizations*. John Wiley & Sons.

De Vries, M. K., Ramo, L. G., & Korotov, K. (2009). Organizational culture, leadership, change and stress. *International handbook of work and health psychology*, 409-426.

Decker, W. H., & Rotondo, D. M. (2001). Relationships among gender, type of humor, and perceived leader effectiveness. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 450-465.

Delgado-Ballester, E., & Munuera-Aleman, J. L. (2002). Development and validation of a brand trust scale across product categories: a confirmatory and multigroup invariance analysis. In *American Marketing Association. Conference Proceedings* (Vol. 13, p. 519). American Marketing Association.

Delgado-Márquez, B. L., Hurtado-Torres, N. E., & Aragón-Correa, J. A. (2012). The dynamic nature of trust transfer: Measurement and the influence of reciprocity. *Decision Support Systems*, 54(1), 226-234.

Delhey, J., & Newton, K. (2005). Predicting cross-national levels of social trust: global pattern or Nordic exceptionalism?. *European sociological review*, 21(4), 311-327.

Delmas, M. A., & Pekovic, S. (2018). Corporate sustainable innovation and employee behavior. *Journal of business ethics*, 150(4), 1071-1088.

Den Hartog, D.N. (2018). Leadership and trust. In R. Searle, A.M. Nienaber, S.B. Sitkin (Ed.), *The Routledge Companion to Trust* (pp. 455-468). Routledge.

DeRue, D. S., & Ashford, S. J. (2010). Who will lead and who will follow? A social process of leadership identity construction in organizations. *Academy of management review*, 35(4), 627-647.

S. D. (2011). Is gossip power? The inverse relationships between gossip, power, and likability. *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 41(5), 574-579.

Dery, K., & Hafermalz, E. (2016). Seeing is belonging: Remote working, identity and staying connected. In *The impact of ICT on work* (pp. 109-126). Springer, Singapore.

Desmet, P. T., De Cremer, D., & van Dijk, E. (2011). Trust recovery following voluntary or forced financial compensations in the trust game: The role of trait forgiveness. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 51(3), 267-273.

Dess, G. G., & Lumpkin, G. T. (2005). The role of entrepreneurial orientation in stimulating effective corporate entrepreneurship. *Academy of Management Perspectives*, 19(1), 147-156.

Deutsch, M. (1958). Trust and suspicion. *Journal of conflict resolution*, 2(4), 265-279.

Dewettinck, K., & Van Ameijde, M. (2011). Linking leadership empowerment behaviour to employee attitudes and behavioural intentions: Testing the mediating role of psychological empowerment. *Personnel Review*.

Diefenbach, T. (2009). New public management in public sector organizations: the dark sides of managerialistic 'enlightenment'. *Public administration*, 87(4), 892-909.

Diem Le, C. T., Pakurár, M., Kun, I. A., & Oláh, J. (2021). The impact of factors on information sharing: An application of meta-analysis. *Plos one*, 16(12), e0260653.

- Dietz, G. (2011). Going back to the source: Why do people trust each other?. *Journal of Trust Research*, 1(2), 215-222.
- Dietz, G., & Den Hartog, D. N. (2006). Measuring trust inside organisations. *Personnel review*.
- Dietz, G., Gillespie, N., & Chao, G. T. (2010). Unravelling the complexities of trust and culture. *Organizational trust: A cultural perspective*, 3-41.
- Dinç, L., & Gastmans, C. (2013). Trust in nurse–patient relationships: A literature review. *Nursing ethics*, 20(5), 501-516.
- Dincer, O. C. (2011). Ethnic diversity and trust. *Contemporary Economic Policy*, 29(2), 284-293.
- Dirks, K. T., & Skarlicki, D. P. (2004). Trust in leaders: Existing research and emerging issues. *Trust and distrust in organizations: Dilemmas and approaches*, 7, 21-40.
- Dong, Q., & Howard, T. (2006, July). Emotional intelligence, trust and job satisfaction. In *Competition forum* (Vol. 4, No. 2, p. 381). American Society for Competitiveness.
- Doole, I., & Lowe, R. (2012). *International marketing strategy*. Cengage Learning.
- Dowling, M., O’gorman, C., Puncheva, P., & Vanwalleghem, D. (2019). Trust and SME attitudes towards equity financing across Europe. *Journal of World Business*, 54(6), 101003.
- Du Plessis, M., & Nel, P. (2015). The influence of emotional intelligence and trust on servant leadership. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology*, 41(1), 1-9.
- Dumitru, C. (2021). *Building Virtual Teams: Trust, Culture, and Remote Working*. Routledge.
- Eagly, A. H., & Chaiken, S. (2007). The advantages of an inclusive definition of attitude. *Social cognition*, 25(5), 582-602.
- Easterly, W., & Levine, R. (1997). Africa’s growth tragedy: policies and ethnic divisions. *The quarterly journal of economics*, 1203-1250.
- Eisenberger, R., Stinglhamber, F., Vandenberghe, C., Sucharski, I. L., & Rhoades, L. (2002). Perceived supervisor support: contributions to perceived organizational support and employee retention. *Journal of applied psychology*, 87(3), 565.
- Elenkov, D. S. (2002). Effects of leadership on organizational performance in Russian companies. *Journal of business research*, 55(6), 467-480.
- Ellis, A. M., Bauer, T. N., Erdogan, B., & Truxillo, D. M. (2019). Daily perceptions of relationship quality with leaders: implications for follower well-being. *Work & Stress*, 33(2), 119-136.
- Ellwardt, L., Labianca, G. J., & Wittek, R. (2012). Who are the objects of positive and negative gossip at work?: A social network perspective on workplace gossip. *Social Networks*, 34(2), 193-205.
- Ellwardt, L., Wittek, R., & Wielers, R. (2012). Talking about the boss: Effects of generalized and interpersonal trust on workplace gossip. *Group & organization management*, 37(4), 521-549.
- Ellwood, S., & Garcia-Lacalle, J. (2015). The influence of presence and position of women on the boards of directors: The case of NHS foundation trusts. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 130(1), 69-84.
- Engelbrecht, A. S., Heine, G., & Mahembe, B. (2017). Integrity, ethical leadership, trust and work engagement. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, 38(3), 368-379.

Ensley, M. D., Pearce, C. L., & Hmieleski, K. M. (2006). The moderating effect of environmental dynamism on the relationship between entrepreneur leadership behavior and new venture performance. *Journal of Business Venturing*, 21(2), 243-263.

Erkutlu, H., & Chafra, J. (2013). Effects of trust and psychological contract violation on authentic leadership and organizational deviance. *Management Research Review*.

Ermisch, J., Gambetta, D., Laurie, H., Siedler, T., & Noah Uhrig, S. C. (2009). Measuring people's trust. *Journal of the Royal Statistical Society: Series A (Statistics in Society)*, 172(4), 749-769.

Esenyel, V., & Emeagwali, O. (2019). The relationship between perceived corporate reputation and employee's positive word of mouth behavior: The mediation effect of trust to managers. *Management Science Letters*, 9(5), 673-686.

Essa, E. B., & Alattari, A. (2019). The relationship between followership styles and leadership styles. *Research in Educational Administration and Leadership*, 4(2), 407-449.

Estel, V., Schulte, E. M., Spurk, D., & Kauffeld, S. (2019). LMX differentiation is good for some and bad for others: A multilevel analysis of effects of LMX differentiation in innovation teams. *Cogent Psychology*, 6(1), 1614306.

Eurofound (European Foundation for the Improvement of Living Working Conditions). (2020). Living, Working and COVID-19: First Findings, April 2020.

European commission. (1996). *Commission Recommendation: concerning the definition of small and medium-sized enterprises (96/280/EC)*. Official journal of the European Union.

European commission. (2003). *Commission Recommendation: concerning the definition of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (2003/361/EC)*. Official journal of the European Union.

European Commission. (2005). *The new SME definition: User guide and model declaration*. Enterprise and Industry Publications.

European Commission. (2009). *Proposal for a directive of the European Parliament and of the Council amending Council Directive 78/660/EEC on the annual accounts of certain types of companies as regards micro-entities (2010/C 349 E/28)*). Official journal of the European Union.

European Commission. (2011). *Study on Accounting requirements for SMEs Final Report Submitted by Can Interpreta*. Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry, European Commission.

European Commission. (2015). *User guide to the SME definition*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Evans, A. M., & Krueger, J. I. (2016). Bounded prospection in dilemmas of trust and reciprocity. *Review of General Psychology*, 20(1), 17-28.

Evans, J. B., Slaughter, J. E., Ellis, A. P., & Rivin, J. M. (2019). Gender and the evaluation of humor at work. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 104(8), 1077.

Fairholm, G. W. (2011). *Real Leadership: How Spiritual Values Give Leadership Meaning: How Spiritual Values Give Leadership Meaning*. ABC-CLIO.

Fana, M., Milasi, S., Napierala, J., Fernandez-Macias, E., & Vázquez, I. G. (2020). *Telework, work organisation and job quality during the COVID-19 crisis: a qualitative study* (No. 2020/11). JRC Working Papers Series on Labour, Education and Technology.

Fang, E., Palmatier, R. W., Scheer, L. K., & Li, N. (2008). Trust at different organizational levels. *Journal of marketing, 72*(2), 80-98.

Fang, Y., Qureshi, I., Sun, H., McCole, P., Ramsey, E., & Lim, K. H. (2014). Trust, satisfaction, and online repurchase intention. *Mis Quarterly, 38*(2), 407-A9.

Farh, C. I., Bartol, K. M., Shapiro, D. L., & Shin, J. (2010). Networking abroad: A process model of how expatriates form support ties to facilitate adjustment. *Academy of Management Review, 35*(3), 434-454.

Farh, J. L., Tsui, A. S., Xin, K., & Cheng, B. S. (1998). The influence of relational demography and guanxi: The Chinese case. *Organization science, 9*(4), 471-488.

Farndale, E., Biron, M., Briscoe, D. R., & Raghuram, S. (2015). A global perspective on diversity and inclusion in work organisations.

Farrukh, M., Kalimuthuan, R., & Farrukh, S. (2019). Impact of job satisfaction and mutual trust on employee loyalty in Saudi hospitality industry: A mediating analysis of leader support. *Int. J. Bus. Psychol, 1*, 30-52.

Fassier, T., & Azoulay, E. (2010). Conflicts and communication gaps in the intensive care unit. *Current opinion in critical care, 16*(6), 654-665.

Favara Jr, L. F. (2009). Putting followership on the map: Examining followership styles and their relationship with job satisfaction and job performance. *Journal of Business & Leadership: Research, Practice, and Teaching (2005-2012), 5*(2), 68-77.

Ferrari, F. (2015). In praise of gossip: The organizational functions and practical applications of rumours in the workplace. *Journal of Human Resources Management Research, 2015*.

Ferrin, D. L., & Gillespie, N. (2010). Trust differences across national-societal cultures: Much to do, or much ado about nothing. *Organizational trust: A cultural perspective, 42-86*.

Ferris, G. R., Liden, R. C., Munyon, T. P., Summers, J. K., Basik, K. J., & Buckley, M. R. (2009). Relationships at work: Toward a multidimensional conceptualization of dyadic work relationships. *Journal of management, 35*(6), 1379-1403.

Finseraas, H., Hanson, T., Johnsen, Å. A., Kotsadam, A., & Torsvik, G. (2019). Trust, ethnic diversity, and personal contact: A field experiment. *Journal of Public Economics, 173*, 72-84.

Fisher, C. D. (2010). Happiness at work. *International journal of management reviews, 12*(4), 384-412.

Fitch, K. (2011). *Allowing a Lie: A Study of the Impact of Soft Lies on the Leader-Follower Relationship*. Gonzaga University.

Floyd, D., & McManus, J. (2005). The role of SMEs in improving the competitive position of the European Union. *European Business Review*.

Flynn, F. J. (2005). Identity orientations and forms of social exchange in organizations. *Academy of Management Review, 30*(4), 737-750.

Fontenelle-Tereshchuk, D. (2021). Mental health and the COVID-19 crisis: The hopes and concerns for children as schools re-open. *Interchange, 52*(1), 1-16.

Ford, J., & Harding, N. (2018). Followers in leadership theory: Fiction, fantasy and illusion. *Leadership, 14*(1), 3-24.

Ford, R. C., Piccolo, R. F., & Ford, L. R. (2017). Strategies for building effective virtual teams: Trust is key. *Business Horizons, 60*(1), 25-34.

Ford, R. M., Williams, K. J., Smith, E. L., & Bishop, I. D. (2014). Beauty, belief, and trust: toward a model of psychological processes in public acceptance of forest management. *Environment and Behavior, 46*(4), 476-506.

Franco, M., & Matos, P. G. (2015). Leadership styles in SMEs: a mixed-method approach. *International Entrepreneurship and Management Journal, 11*(2), 425-451.

Freeman, S. F. (2004, June). Beyond traditional systems thinking: resilience as a strategy for security and sustainability. In *3rd International Conference on Systems Thinking in Management Session on Sustainability* (pp. 1-12).

Freitag, M., & Bühlmann, M. (2009). Crafting trust: The role of political institutions in a comparative perspective. *Comparative Political Studies, 42*(12), 1537-1566.

Fukuyama, F. (1995). *Trust: The Social Virtues and the Creation of Prosperity*. New York: The Free Press.

Fulmer, C. A., & Gelfand, M. J. (2012). At what level (and in whom) we trust: Trust across multiple organizational levels. *Journal of management, 38*(4), 1167-1230.

Furnham, A., & Taylor, J. (2004). *The dark side of behaviour at work: Understanding and avoiding employees leaving, thieving and deceiving*. Springer.

Gajda, K. (2020). Factors shaping inter-organizational trust in e-commerce based on literature review.

Gambetta, D. (1988). Trust: Making and breaking cooperative relations.

Gambetta, D. (2000). Can we trust trust. *Trust: Making and breaking cooperative relations, 13*, 213-237.

Gao-Urhahn, X., Biemann, T., & Jaros, S. J. (2016). How affective commitment to the organization changes over time: A longitudinal analysis of the reciprocal relationships between affective organizational commitment and income. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 37*(4), 515-536.

Gao, L., Janssen, O., & Shi, K. (2011). Leader trust and employee voice: The moderating role of empowering leader behaviors. *The Leadership Quarterly, 22*(4), 787-798.

Garg, P. (2014). Impact of employee engagement on it sector. *International Journal of Management Research and Reviews, 4*(1), 62.

Gebreyesus, M., & Mohnen, P. (2013). Innovation performance and embeddedness in networks: evidence from the Ethiopian footwear cluster. *World Development, 41*, 302-316.

Gelei, A., & Dobos, I. (2022). Evolving trust in business relationships—A behavioural experiment. *Acta Oeconomica, 72*(2), 231-247.

Gelens, J., Dries, N., Hofmans, J., & Pepermans, R. (2013). The role of perceived organizational justice in shaping the outcomes of talent management: A research agenda. *Human Resource Management Review, 23*(4), 341-353.

D. M., Sitkin, S. B., Burt, R. S., & Camerer, C. (1998). Not so different after all: A cross-discipline view of trust. *Academy of management review, 23*(3), 393-404.

George, D. (2016). Trust & Growth in the Workplace: an Analysis of Leadership in Flat Organizations.

Gerbasi, A., & Cook, K. S. (2008). The effect of perceived trustworthiness on affect in negotiated and reciprocal exchange. In *Social structure and emotion* (pp. 141-165). Academic Press.

Gerstenfeld, A., & Roberts, H. (2017). Size matters: barriers and prospects for environmental management in small and medium-sized enterprises. In *Small and medium-sized enterprises and the environment* (pp. 106-118). Routledge.

Gherghina, Ş. C., Botezatu, M. A., Hosszu, A., & Simionescu, L. N. (2020). Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs): The engine of economic growth through investments and innovation. *Sustainability*, *12*(1), 347.

Ghosh, R., Shuck, B., Cumberland, D., & D'Mello, J. (2019). Building psychological capital and employee engagement: Is formal mentoring a useful strategic human resource development intervention?. *Performance Improvement Quarterly*, *32*(1), 37-54.

Gibson, C. A., & Tarrant, M. (2010). A 'conceptual models' approach to organisational resilience. *Australian Journal of Emergency Management, The*, *25*(2), 6-12.

Gibson, C., Hardy III, J. H., & Buckley, M. R. (2014). Understanding the role of networking in organizations. *Career Development International*.

Gilbert, J. A., Carr-Ruffino, N., Ivancevich, J. M., & Konopaske, R. (2012). Toxic versus cooperative behaviors at work: the role of organizational culture and leadership in creating community-centered organizations. *International Journal of Leadership Studies*, *7*(1), 29-47.

Gill, H., Boies, K., Finegan, J. E., & McNally, J. (2005). Antecedents of trust: Establishing a boundary condition for the relation between propensity to trust and intention to trust. *Journal of business and psychology*, *19*(3), 287-302.

Gillespie, N. & Siebert, S. (2017). Organizational Trust Repair. In Searle, R., Nienenbar, A., & Sitkin, S. *The Routledge Companion to Trust*. London: Routledge. pp 284-301.

Gillespie, N., Fulmer, C. A., & Lewicki, R. (2021). A multilevel perspective on organizational trust. In *Understanding Trust in Organizations* (pp. 3-13). Routledge.

Gillespie, C. A. Fulmer, R. J. Lewicki (Ed.), Den Hartog, D.N. (2018). Leadership and trust. In R. Searle, A.M. Nienaber, S.B. Sitkin (Ed.), *Understanding Trust in Organizations: A Multilevel Perspective* (pp. 3-13). Routledge.

Gillespie, R. (2004). Community assembly through adaptive radiation in Hawaiian spiders. *Science*, *303*(5656), 356-359.

Giltinane, C. L. (2013). Leadership styles and theories. *Nursing standard*, *27*(41).

Gkorezis, P., Hatzithomas, L., & Petridou, E. (2011). The impact of leader's humor on employees' psychological empowerment: The moderating role of tenure. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 83-95.

Glowacki-Dudka, M., & Barnett, N. (2007). Connecting critical reflection and group development in online adult education classrooms. *International Journal of Teaching and Learning in Higher Education*, *19*(1), 43-52.

Goeschl, T., & Jarke, J. (2014). The Blind Trust Game: Costly Monitoring is Not Detrimental to Cooperation.

- Goethals, B., Laur, S., Lipmaa, H., & Mielikäinen, T. (2004, December). On private scalar product computation for privacy-preserving data mining. In *International Conference on Information Security and Cryptology* (pp. 104-120). Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg.
- Goethals, G. R., & Sorenson, G. J. (Eds.). (2007). *The quest for a general theory of leadership*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Goffee, R., & Scase, R. (2015). *Corporate realities (routledge revivals): The dynamics of large and small organisations*. Routledge.
- Goldmark, J. C. (2020). *Impatient crusader: Florence Kelley's life story*. Plunkett Lake Press.
- Goleman, D. (2018). What makes a leader?. In *Military Leadership* (pp. 39-52). Routledge.
- Golesorkhi, B. (2006). Gender differences and similarities in judgments of trustworthiness. *Women in Management Review*.
- Goodwin, V. L., Whittington, J. L., Murray, B., & Nichols, T. (2011). Moderator or mediator? Examining the role of trust in the transformational leadership paradigm. *Journal of Managerial Issues*, 409-425.
- Gössling, S., Scott, D., & Hall, C. M. (2020). Pandemics, tourism and global change: a rapid assessment of COVID-19. *Journal of Sustainable Tourism*, 29(1), 1-20.
- Gottfridsson, A. (2013). Dual leadership: An example of how leadership might be shared in a non-profit organisation.
- Gouldner, A. W. (1960). The norm of reciprocity: A preliminary statement. *American sociological review*, 161-178.
- Goutam, A. (2013). Effective communication at workplace. *Irc's international journal of multidisciplinary research in social & management sciences*.
- Goutam, D. (2013). Influence of brand ambassadors on buying behavior of soft drinks: with reference to Belgaum City. *International journal of research in business Management*, 1(4), 9-18.
- GOV. UK, (2020). Spending Review 2020, Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/spending-review-2020-documents/spending-review-2020>, (Accessed: 23 Nov, 2021).
- Graebner, M. E. (2009). Caveat venditor: Trust asymmetries in acquisitions of entrepreneurial firms. *Academy of management Journal*, 52(3), 435-472.
- Graebner, M. E., Lumineau, F., & Fudge Kamal, D. (2020). Unrequited: Asymmetry in interorganizational trust. *Strategic Organization*, 18(2), 362-374.
- Graen, G. B., & Uhl-Bien, M. (1995). Relationship-based approach to leadership: Development of leader-member exchange (LMX) theory of leadership over 25 years: Applying a multi-level multi-domain perspective. *The leadership quarterly*, 6(2), 219-247.
- Granatyr, J., Botelho, V., Lessing, O. R., Scalabrin, E. E., Barthès, J. P., & Enembreck, F. (2015). Trust and reputation models for multiagent systems. *ACM Computing Surveys (CSUR)*, 48(2), 1-42.
- Grant, C. A., Wallace, L. M., & Spurgeon, P. C. (2013). An exploration of the psychological factors affecting remote e-worker's job effectiveness, well-being and work-life balance. *Employee Relations*.

- Grant, C., & Clarke, C. (2020). Digital Resilience: A Competency Framework for Agile Workers. In *Agile Working and Well-Being in the Digital Age* (pp. 117-130). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
- Gray, C., & Mabey, C. (2005). Management development: key differences between small and large businesses in Europe. *International small business journal*, 23(5), 467-485.
- Gregg, D. G., & Walczak, S. (2010). The relationship between website quality, trust and price premiums at online auctions. *Electronic Commerce Research*, 10(1), 1-25.
- Grey, C., & Garsten, C. (2001). Trust, control and post-bureaucracy. *Organization studies*, 22(2), 229-250.
- Gronn, P. (2009). Leadership configurations. *Leadership*, 5(3), 381-394.
- Grosser, T., Kidwell, V., & Labianca, G. J. (2012). Hearing it through the grapevine: Positive and negative workplace gossip. *Organizational Dynamics*, 41, 52-61.
- Groves, K. S., & LaRocca, M. A. (2011). An empirical study of leader ethical values, transformational and transactional leadership, and follower attitudes toward corporate social responsibility. *Journal of business ethics*, 103(4), 511-528.
- Guenter, H., Schreurs, B., van Emmerik, I. H., & Sun, S. (2017). What does it take to break the silence in teams: authentic leadership and/or proactive followership?. *Applied Psychology*, 66(1), 49-77.
- Guinalú, M., & Jordán, P. (2016). Building trust in the leader of virtual work teams. *Spanish Journal of Marketing-ESIC*, 20(1), 58-70.
- Guinot, J., & Chiva, R. (2019). Vertical trust within organizations and performance: a systematic review. *Human Resource Development Review*, 18(2), 196-227.
- Gunay, E. N., & Kazazoglu, G. N. (2016). *National Innovation Efficiency During the Global Crisis: A Cross-Country Analysis*. Springer.
- Guo, L. C., & Sanchez, Y. (2005). Workplace communication. *Organizational behavior in health care*, 4, 77-110.
- Hackman, J. R., & Wageman, R. (2007). Asking the right questions about leadership: Discussion and conclusions.
- Halbesleben, J. R., & Wheeler, A. R. (2015). To invest or not? The role of coworker support and trust in daily reciprocal gain spirals of helping behavior. *Journal of Management*, 41(6), 1628-1650.
- Hambley, L. A., O'Neill, T. A., & Kline, T. J. (2007). Virtual team leadership: Perspectives from the field. *International Journal of e-Collaboration (IJeC)*, 3(1), 40-64.
- Hambley, L. A., O'Neill, T. A., & Kline, T. J. (2007). Virtual team leadership: The effects of leadership style and communication medium on team interaction styles and outcomes. *Organizational behavior and human decision processes*, 103(1), 1-20.
- Hamel, L. H. (2011). *Knowledge discovery with support vector machines* (Vol. 3). John Wiley & Sons.
- Hamstra, M. R., Van Yperen, N. W., Wisse, B., & Sassenberg, K. (2014). Transformational and transactional leadership and followers' achievement goals. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 29(3), 413-425.
- Han, S., Harold, C. M., & Cheong, M. (2019). Examining why employee proactive personality influences empowering leadership: The roles of cognition-and affect-based trust. *Journal of occupational and organizational psychology*, 92(2), 352-383.
- Hardin, R. (1993). The street-level epistemology of trust. *Politics & society*, 21(4), 505-529.

- Harms, P. D., Bai, Y., & Han, G. H. (2016). How leader and follower attachment styles are mediated by trust. *Human Relations, 69*(9), 1853-1876.
- Harris, A., & Spillane, J. (2008). Distributed leadership through the looking glass. *Management in education, 22*(1), 31-34.
- Harris, K. J., & Kacmar, K. M. (2006). Too much of a good thing: The curvilinear effect of leader-member exchange on stress. *The Journal of social psychology, 146*(1), 65-84.
- Hasel, M. C., & Grover, S. L. (2017). An integrative model of trust and leadership. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal.*
- Haslam, S. A. (2020). Introduction: COVID-19 and society. In *Psychological Insights for Understanding COVID-19 and Society* (pp. 1-12). Routledge.
- Hayashi, Y., & Krysanov, V. (2013). An empirical investigation of similarity-driven trust dynamics in social networks. *Procedia-Social and Behavioral Sciences, 79*, 27-37.
- Heffernan, T., O'Neill, G., Travaglione, T., & Droulers, M. (2008). Relationship marketing: The impact of emotional intelligence and trust on bank performance. *International Journal of bank marketing.*
- Hernandez, M., Eberly, M. B., Avolio, B. J., & Johnson, M. D. (2011). The loci and mechanisms of leadership: Exploring a more comprehensive view of leadership theory. *The Leadership Quarterly, 22*(6), 1165-1185.
- Hernandez, M., Long, C. P., & Sitkin, S. B. (2014). Cultivating follower trust: are all leader behaviors equally influential?. *Organization Studies, 35*(12), 1867-1892.
- Hersey, P., & Blanchard, K. H. (1982). Leadership style: Attitudes and behaviors.
- Heyns, M., & Rothmann, S. (2015). Dimensionality of trust: An analysis of the relations between propensity, trustworthiness and trust. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology, 41*(1), 1-12.
- Hinojosa, A. S., McCauley, K. D., Randolph-Seng, B., & Gardner, W. L. (2014). Leader and follower attachment styles: Implications for authentic leader–follower relationships. *The Leadership Quarterly, 25*(3), 595-610.
- Hobday, M. (2000). The project-based organisation: an ideal form for managing complex products and systems?. *Research policy, 29*(7-8), 871-893.
- Hoch, J. E. (2013). Shared leadership and innovation: The role of vertical leadership and employee integrity. *Journal of Business and Psychology, 28*(2), 159-174.
- Hoegl, M., & Muethel, M. (2007, August). Shared leadership in dispersed innovation teams: Mutual influence and proactive followership. In *Academy of management proceedings* (Vol. 2007, No. 1, pp. 1-6). Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510: Academy of Management.
- Hoff, K. A., & Bashir, M. (2015). Trust in automation: Integrating empirical evidence on factors that influence trust. *Human factors, 57*(3), 407-434.
- Hogg, M. A. (2003). Social identity.
- Hooghe, M. (2007). Social capital and diversity generalized trust, social cohesion and regimes of diversity. *Canadian Journal of Political Science/Revue canadienne de science politique, 40*(3), 709-732.
- Hosmer, L. T. (1995). Trust: The connecting link between organizational theory and philosophical ethics. *Academy of management Review, 20*(2), 379-403.

- Hough, M., Jackson, J., Bradford, B., Myhill, A., & Quinton, P. (2010). Procedural justice, trust, and institutional legitimacy. *Policing: a journal of policy and practice*, 4(3), 203-210.
- Howell, J. M., & Avolio, B. J. (1993). Transformational leadership, transactional leadership, locus of control, and support for innovation: Key predictors of consolidated-business-unit performance. *Journal of applied psychology*, 78(6), 891.
- Howell, J. M., & Shamir, B. (2005). The role of followers in the charismatic leadership process: Relationships and their consequences. *Academy of management review*, 30(1), 96-112.
- Howell, J. P., & Costley, D. L. (2006). Understanding effective behaviors for leadership.
- Hoy, W. K., & Tarter, C. J. (2004). Organizational justice in schools: No justice without trust. *International Journal of Educational Management*.
- Hsieh, C. C., & Wang, D. S. (2015). Does supervisor-perceived authentic leadership influence employee work engagement through employee-perceived authentic leadership and employee trust?. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 26(18), 2329-2348.
- Huang, J., & Fox, M. S. (2006, August). An ontology of trust: formal semantics and transitivity. In *Proceedings of the 8th international conference on Electronic commerce: The new e-commerce: innovations for conquering current barriers, obstacles and limitations to conducting successful business on the internet* (pp. 259-270).
- Hughes, C., & Saunders, M. N. (2021). Building and maintaining trust in virtual teams. In *Handbook of research on remote work and worker well-being in the post-COVID-19 era* (pp. 264-285). IGI Global.
- Huff, L., & Kelley, L. (2003). Levels of organizational trust in individualist versus collectivist societies: A seven-nation study. *Organization science*, 14(1), 81-90.
- Huie, C. P., Cassaberry, T., & Rivera, A. K. (2020). The impact of tacit knowledge sharing on job performance. *International Journal on Social and Education Sciences*, 2(1), 34-40.
- Hummel, S., Oetjen, N., Du, J., Posenato, E., de Almeida, R. M. R., Losada, R., ... & Schultz, J. H. (2021). Mental health among medical professionals during the COVID-19 pandemic in eight european countries: Cross-sectional survey study. *Journal of medical Internet research*, 23(1), e24983.
- Hurwitz, M. (2018). Exploring distributed leadership: A leader–follower collaborative lens. In *Distributed leadership* (pp. 1-25). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.
- IFRS. (2017). IFRS for Small and Medium-sized Entities (IFRS for SMEs). Retrieved November 3, 2018, from <https://www.iasplus.com/en/standards/other/ifrs-for-smes>.
- Ikonen, M. (2013). *Trust development and dynamics at dyadic level: A narrative approach to studying processes of interpersonal trust in leader-follower relationships* (Doctoral dissertation, Itä-Suomen yliopisto).
- Ingram, G. P. (2014). From hitting to tattling to gossip: An evolutionary rationale for the development of indirect aggression. *Evolutionary Psychology*, 12(2), 147470491401200205.
- International Finance Corporation, World Bank Group. (2012). *Interpretation Note on Small and Medium Enterprises and Environmental and Social Risk Management*. Washington: International Finance Corporation (IFC).

Iqbal, S., Farid, T., Ma, J., & Mehmood, Q. (2018). Cultivating employees' communal relationship and organizational citizenship behavior through authentic leadership: studying the influence of procedural justice. *Psychology Research and Behavior Management, 11*, 545.

Ireland, S. C., Beamesderfer, R. C. P., Paragamian, V. L., Wakkinen, V. D., & Siple, J. T. (2002). Success of hatchery-reared juvenile white sturgeon (*Acipenser transmontanus*) following release in the Kootenai River, Idaho, USA. *Journal of Applied Ichthyology, 18*(4-6), 642-650.

Isaeva, N., Gruenewald, K., & Saunders, M. N. (2020). Trust theory and customer services research: theoretical review and synthesis. *The Service Industries Journal, 40*(15-16), 1031-1063.

Ismail, A., Mohamad, M. H., Mohamed, H. A. B., Rafiuddin, N. M., & Zhen, K. W. P. (2010). Transformational and Transactional Leadership Styles as a Predictor of Individual Outcomes. *Theoretical & Applied Economics, 17*(6).

Jawahar, I. M., Stone, T. H., & Kluemper, D. (2019). When and why leaders trust followers: LMX as a mediator and empowerment as a moderator of the trustworthiness-trust relationship. *Career Development International*.

Jenkins, H. (2006). Small business champions for corporate social responsibility. *Journal of business ethics, 67*(3), 241-256.

Jensen, U. T., Andersen, L. B., Bro, L. L., Bøllingtoft, A., Eriksen, T. L. M., Holten, A. L., ... & Würtz, A. (2019). Conceptualizing and Measuring Transformational and Transactional Leadership. *Administration & Society, 51*(1), 3-33.

Jessup, S. A., Schneider, T. R., Alarcon, G. M., Ryan, T. J., & Capiola, A. (2019, July). The measurement of the propensity to trust automation. In *International Conference on Human-Computer Interaction* (pp. 476-489). Springer, Cham.

Jiang, Y., Hughes, J. L., & Pulice-Farrow, L. (2014). Coworkers and Supervisors on Facebook? Effect of Workplace Friendship, Trust, and Sex. *Psi Chi Journal of Psychological Research, 19*(3).

Jiménez-Rodríguez, D., Belmonte García, M. T., Santillán García, A., Plaza Del Pino, F. J., Ponce-Valencia, A., & Arrogante, O. (2020). Nurse training in gender-based violence using simulated nursing video consultations during the COVID-19 pandemic: A qualitative study. *International journal of environmental research and public health, 17*(22), 8654.

Johnsen, R. E., & Ford, D. (2008). Exploring the concept of asymmetry: A typology for analysing customer-supplier relationships. *Industrial marketing management, 37*(4), 471-483.

Jones, S. L., & Shah, P. P. (2016). Diagnosing the locus of trust: A temporal perspective for trustor, trustee, and dyadic influences on perceived trustworthiness. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 101*(3), 392.

Joo, B. K. B., Yoon, H. J., & Jeung, C. W. (2012). The effects of core self-evaluations and transformational leadership on organizational commitment. *Leadership & organization development journal*.

Joo, B. K., & Lim, T. (2013). Transformational leadership and career satisfaction: The mediating role of psychological empowerment. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies, 20*(3), 316-326.

Joseph, T. (2016). Developing the Leader-Follower Relationship: Perceptions of Leaders and Followers. *Journal of Leadership, Accountability & Ethics, 13*(1).

- Judge, T. A., & Piccolo, R. F. (2004). Transformational and transactional leadership: a meta-analytic test of their relative validity. *Journal of applied psychology, 89*(5), 755.
- Jung, D. I., & Avolio, B. J. (2000). Opening the black box: An experimental investigation of the mediating effects of trust and value congruence on transformational and transactional leadership. *Journal of organizational Behavior, 21*(8), 949-964.
- Kadefors, A. (2004). Trust in project relationships—inside the black box. *International Journal of project management, 22*(3), 175-182.
- Kalkan, F. (2016). Relationship between professional learning community, bureaucratic structure and organisational trust in primary education schools. *Educational sciences: theory & practice, 16*(5).
- Kanagaretnam, K., Mestelman, S., Nainar, S. K., & Shehata, M. (2010). Trust and reciprocity with transparency and repeated interactions. *Journal of Business Research, 63*(3), 241-247.
- Kanbur, R. (2015). Globalization and inequality. In *Handbook of income distribution* (Vol. 2, pp. 1845-1881). Elsevier.
- Kang, D. S., & Stewart, J. (2007). Leader-member exchange (LMX) theory of leadership and HRD: Development of units of theory and laws of interaction. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*.
- Kang, D. S., Gold, J., & Kim, D. (2012). Responses to job insecurity: The impact on discretionary extra-role and impression management behaviors and the moderating role of employability. *Career Development International*.
- Kang, M., & Sung, M. (2017). How symmetrical employee communication leads to employee engagement and positive employee communication behaviors: The mediation of employee-organization relationships. *Journal of Communication Management*.
- Kanaz, E. A. (2019). *Transformational and transactional leadership styles as predictors of trust in leader and perceived leadership effectiveness: Moderating role of affect intensity*(Master's thesis, Middle East Technical University).
- Karamat, A. U. (2013). Impact of leadership on organizational performance. *Unpublished doctoral dissertation, University of Applied Sciences, Finland*.
- Kark, R., & Van Dijk, D. (2007). Motivation to lead, motivation to follow: The role of the self-regulatory focus in leadership processes. *Academy of management review, 32*(2), 500-528.
- Kashif, M., & Zarkada, A. (2015). Value co-destruction between customers and frontline employees: A social system perspective. *International Journal of Bank Marketing*.
- Katz, E., & Lazarsfeld, P. F. (2017). *Personal influence: The part played by people in the flow of mass communications*. Routledge.
- Kauppi, K. (2013). Extending the use of institutional theory in operations and supply chain management research: Review and research suggestions. *International Journal of Operations & Production Management*.
- Kaushik, M., & Guleria, N. (2020). The impact of pandemic COVID-19 in workplace. *European Journal of Business and Management, 12*(15), 1-10.

Kavanagh, M. H., & Ashkanasy, N. M. (2006). The impact of leadership and change management strategy on organizational culture and individual acceptance of change during a merger. *British journal of management*, 17(S1), S81-S103.

Kellerman, B. (2008). How followers are creating change and changing leaders. *Boston, MA: Harvard Business School*.

Kelley, R. E. (1988). *In praise of followers* (pp. 142-148). Harvard Business Review Case Services.

Kelley, R. E. (1992). *The power of followership: How to create leaders people want to follow, and followers who lead themselves*. Broadway Business.

Kelley, R. E. (2008). Rethinking followership.

Kelly, E. P. (1998). Transformational leadership: industry, military and educational impact. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 5(3), 169-169.

Kelly, M. (2020). WHAT COVID-19 TEACHES US ABOUT ESG'S IMPORTANCE. *Internal Auditor*, 58-58.

Keskes, I. (2014). Relationship between leadership styles and dimensions of employee organizational commitment: A critical review and discussion of future directions. *Intangible Capital*, 10(1), 26-51.

Khaksar, S. M. S., Khosla, R., Singaraju, S., & Slade, B. (2021). Carer's perception on social Assistive Technology acceptance and adoption: moderating effects of perceived risks. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 40(4), 337-360.

Khan, H. D. (2018). *Prospects of Mediation As an Alternative Dispute Resolution Mechanism In the UAE Construction Industry* (Doctoral dissertation, The British University in Dubai (BUiD)).

Khan, S. N., Busari, A. H., & Abdullah, S. M. (2019). The essence of followership: review of the literature and future research directions. *Servant Leadership Styles and Strategic Decision Making*, 148-170.

Khodyakov, D. (2007). Trust as a process: A three-dimensional approach. *Sociology*, 41(1), 115-132.

Kiely, G., Butler, T., & Finnegan, P. (2022). Global virtual teams coordination mechanisms: building theory from research in software development. *Behaviour & Information Technology*, 41(9), 1952-1972.

Kietzmann, J. H., Hermkens, K., McCarthy, I. P., & Silvestre, B. S. (2011). Social media? Get serious! Understanding the functional building blocks of social media. *Business horizons*, 54(3), 241-251.

Kim, G., Shin, B., & Lee, H. G. (2009). Understanding dynamics between initial trust and usage intentions of mobile banking. *Information Systems Journal*, 19(3), 283-311.

Kim, T. G., Hornung, S., & Rousseau, D. M. (2011). Change-supportive employee behavior: Antecedents and the moderating role of time. *Journal of Management*, 37(6), 1664-1693.

Kim, T. Y., Lee, D. R., & Wong, N. Y. S. (2016). Supervisor humor and employee outcomes: The role of social distance and affective trust in supervisor. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 31(1), 125-139.

Kim, T. Y., Wang, J., & Chen, J. (2018). Mutual trust between leader and subordinate and employee outcomes. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 149(4), 945-958.

Kinnie, N., Purcell, J., Hutchinson, S., Terry, M., Collinson, M., & Scarbrough, H. (1999). Employment relations in SMEs: Market-driven or customer-shaped?. *Employee relations*.

Klein, H. A., Lin, M. H., Miller, N. L., Militello, L. G., Lyons, J. B., & Finkeldey, J. G. (2019). Trust across culture and context. *Journal of Cognitive Engineering and Decision Making*, 13(1), 10-29.

Kleynhans, D. J., Heyns, M. M., & Stander, M. W. (2021). Authentic leadership and follower trust in the leader: The effect of precariousness. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology, 47*(1), 1-10.

Kłopotek, M. (2017). The advantages and disadvantages of remote working from the perspective of young employees. *Organizacja i Zarządzanie: kwartalnik naukowy*.

Knights, D., & McCabe, D. (2000). 'Ain't misbehavin'? Opportunities for resistance under new forms of 'quality' management. *Sociology, 34*(3), 421-436.

Knoll, D. L., & Gill, H. (2011). Antecedents of trust in supervisors, subordinates, and peers. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*.

Koay, K. Y., Sandhu, M. S., Tjiptono, F., & Watabe, M. (2020). Understanding employees' knowledge hiding behaviour: the moderating role of market culture. *Behaviour & Information Technology, 1-18*.

Kock, N., Mayfield, M., Mayfield, J., Sexton, S., & De La Garza, L. M. (2019). Empathetic leadership: How leader emotional support and understanding influences follower performance. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies, 26*(2), 217-236.

Koehn, D. (2012). *Rethinking feminist ethics: Care, trust and empathy*. Routledge.

Koopman, C., Mitchell, M., & Thierer, A. (2014). The sharing economy and consumer protection regulation: The case for policy change. *J. Bus. Entrepreneurship & L., 8*, 529.

Korsgaard, M. A., Brower, H. H., & Lester, S. W. (2015). It isn't always mutual: A critical review of dyadic trust. *Journal of Management, 41*(1), 47-70.

Kozlowski, S. W., & Klein, K. J. (2000). A multilevel approach to theory and research in organizations: Contextual, temporal, and emergent processes.

Krafft, P., Engelbrecht, A. S., & Theron, C. C. (2004). The influence of transformational and transactional leadership on dyadic trust relationships through perceptions of fairness. *SA Journal of Industrial Psychology, 30*(1), 10-18.

Kramer, R. M. (1999). Trust and distrust in organizations: Emerging perspectives, enduring questions. *Annual review of psychology, 50*(1), 569-598.

Kramer, R. M. (Ed.). (2006). *Organizational trust: A reader*. Oxford University Press on Demand.

Krasikova, D. V., & LeBreton, J. M. (2012). Just the two of us: misalignment of theory and methods in examining dyadic phenomena. *Journal of applied psychology, 97*(4), 739.

Kupperschmidt, B. (2006). Addressing multigenerational conflict: Mutual respect and carefronting as strategy. *Online Journal of Issues in Nursing, 11*(2).

Kurland, N. B., & Pelled, L. H. (2000). Passing the word: Toward a model of gossip and power in the workplace. *Academy of management review, 25*(2), 428-438.

Kutsyruba, B., & Walker, K. (2015). The lifecycle of trust in educational leadership: An ecological perspective. *International Journal of Leadership in Education, 18*(1), 106-121.

Laequddin, M., Sahay, B. S., Sahay, V., & Waheed, K. A. (2010). Measuring trust in supply chain partners' relationships. *Measuring Business Excellence*.

Lake, A. (2016). *Smart flexibility: Moving smart and flexible working from theory to practice*. CRC Press.

Lam, M. L. L. (2013). Building trust between American and Chinese business negotiators. In *(Dis) Honesty in Management*. Emerald Group Publishing Limited.

Lamb, T. L., Ruskin, K. J., Rice, S., Khorassani, L., Winter, S. R., & Truong, D. (2021). A qualitative analysis of social and emotional perspectives of airline passengers during the COVID-19 pandemic. *Journal of Air Transport Management, 94*, 102079.

Lampreli, A., Patsala, P., & Priporas, C. V. (2019, September). Humor usage by female and male managers at the workplace: findings from a pilot study. In *12th Annual Conference of the EuroMed Academy of Business*.

Larson, H. J., Clarke, R. M., Jarrett, C., Eckersberger, E., Levine, Z., Schulz, W. S., & Paterson, P. (2018). Measuring trust in vaccination: A systematic review. *Human vaccines & immunotherapeutics, 14*(7), 1599-1609.

Latour, S. M., & Rast, V. J. (2004). Dynamic followership: The prerequisite for effective leadership. *Air & Space Power Journal, 18*(4), 102.

Lawler, E. J., Thye, S. R., & Yoon, J. (2008). Social exchange and micro social order. *American sociological review, 73*(4), 519-542.

Lee, D., Moon, J., Kim, Y. J., & Mun, Y. Y. (2015). Antecedents and consequences of mobile phone usability: Linking simplicity and interactivity to satisfaction, trust, and brand loyalty. *Information & Management, 52*(3), 295-304.

Lee, H. W., Robertson, P. J., Lewis, L., Sloane, D., Galloway-Gilliam, L., & Nomachi, J. (2012). Trust in a cross-sectoral interorganizational network: An empirical investigation of antecedents. *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly, 41*(4), 609-631.

Lee, J. J., & Ok Ph D, C. (2011). Effects of workplace friendship on employee job satisfaction, organizational citizenship behavior, turnover intention, absenteeism, and task performance.

Lee, M. (2014). Transformational leadership: is it time for a recall?. *International journal of management and applied research, 1*(1), 17-29.

Lee, M. K., & Turban, E. (2001). A trust model for consumer internet shopping. *International Journal of electronic commerce, 6*(1), 75-91.

Legood, A., Thomas, G., & Sacramento, C. (2016). Leader trustworthy behavior and organizational trust: The role of the immediate manager for cultivating trust. *Journal of Applied Social Psychology, 46*(12), 673-686.

Leicht, C., de Moura, G. R., & Crisp, R. J. (2014). Contesting gender stereotypes stimulates generalized fairness in the selection of leaders. *The Leadership Quarterly, 25*(5), 1025-1039.

Leisink, P., & Steijn, B. (2008). Recruitment, attraction, and selection. *Motivation in public management: The call of public service, 118-135*.

Leitch, C. M., Hill, F. M., & Harrison, R. T. (2010). The philosophy and practice of interpretivist research in entrepreneurship: Quality, validation, and trust. *Organizational Research Methods, 13*(1), 67-84.

Leitch, C. M., McMullan, C., & Harrison, R. T. (2009). Leadership development in SMEs: an action learning approach. *Action Learning: Research and Practice, 6*(3), 243-263.

Leung, C., Lucas, A., Brindley, P., Anderson, S., Park, J., Vergis, A., & Gillman, L. M. (2018). Followership: A review of the literature in healthcare and beyond. *Journal of critical care, 46*, 99-104.

- Lewicki, R. J., & Bunker, B. B. (1996). Developing and maintaining trust in work relationships. *Trust in organizations: Frontiers of theory and research*, 114, 139.
- Lewicki, R. J., & Wiethoff, C. (2000). Trust, trust development, and trust repair. *The handbook of conflict resolution: Theory and practice*, 1(1), 86-107.
- Lewicki, R. J., Tomlinson, E. C., & Gillespie, N. (2006). Models of interpersonal trust development: Theoretical approaches, empirical evidence, and future directions. *Journal of management*, 32(6), 991-1022.
- Li W., Liu K., Tang Y., Belitski M. (2017) E-Leadership for SMEs in the Digital Age. In: Ellermann H., Kreutter P., Messner W. (eds) *The Palgrave Handbook of Managing Continuous Business Transformation*. Palgrave Macmillan, London.
- Li, S. L., Huo, Y., & Long, L. R. (2017). Chinese traditionalism matters: Effects of differentiated empowering leadership on followers' trust in leaders and work outcomes. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 145(1), 81-93.
- Liang, T. P., Wu, S. P. J., & Huang, C. C. (2019). Why funders invest in crowdfunding projects: Role of trust from the dual-process perspective. *Information & Management*, 56(1), 70-84.
- Lin Dar, O. (2009). Trust in coworkers and employee behaviors at work.
- Lin, W. T., Cheng, K. Y., & Liu, Y. (2009). Organizational slack and firm's internationalization: A longitudinal study of high-technology firms. *Journal of World Business*, 44(4), 397-406.
- Lindgren, P. (2012). Business model innovation leadership: How do SME's strategically lead business model innovation?. *International Journal of business and management*, 7(14), 53.
- Littlejohn, P. (2012). The missing link: using emotional intelligence to reduce workplace stress and workplace violence in our nursing and other health care professions. *Journal of Professional Nursing*, 28(6), 360-368.
- Liu, D., Hernandez, M., & Wang, L. (2014). The role of leadership and trust in creating structural patterns of team procedural justice: A social network investigation. *Personnel Psychology*, 67(4), 801-845.
- Liu, T. H. (2018). How Trust Pursuing Businesses Play in an Asymmetric Power Network?. *IEEE Transactions on Engineering Management*, 67(1), 18-29.
- Liu, Y., & Tang, X. (2018). The effects of online trust-building mechanisms on trust and repurchase intentions: An empirical study on eBay. *Information Technology & People*.
- LoCurto, J., & Berg, G. M. (2016). Trust in healthcare settings: Scale development, methods, and preliminary determinants. *SAGE open medicine*, 4, 2050312116664224.
- Loecher, U. (2000). Small and medium-sized enterprises—delimitation and the European definition in the area of industrial business. *European Business Review*, 12(5), 261-264.
- Lopez-Fresno, P., & Savolainen, T. (2020, October). Building trust in workplace meetings: Intangible factors contributing to intellectual capital enhancement. In *17th International Conference on Intellectual Capital, Knowledge Management & Organisational Learning ICICKM 2020* (p. 247).
- Lopez-Fresno, P., Savolainen, T., & Miranda, S. (2021, September). TRUST BUILDING FOR INTEGRATIVE TRADE NEGOTIATIONS Challenges posed by Covid-19. In *22nd European Conference on Knowledge Management, ECKM 2021* (pp. 501-508).

- Lopez-Perez, M., & Rodriguez-Ariza, L. (2013). Ownership and trust in the governance structures of Spanish-Moroccan SMEs constituted as international joint ventures. *Central European Journal of Operations Research*, 21(3), 609-624.
- Lord, R. G., Gatti, P., & Chui, S. L. (2016). Social-cognitive, relational, and identity-based approaches to leadership. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 136, 119-134.
- Lorinkova, N. M., Pearsall, M. J., & Sims Jr, H. P. (2013). Examining the differential longitudinal performance of directive versus empowering leadership in teams. *Academy of Management Journal*, 56(2), 573-596.
- Loxbo, K. (2018). Ethnic diversity, out-group contacts and social trust in a high-trust society. *Acta Sociologica*, 61(2), 182-201.
- Lu, X., & Guy, M. E. (2019). Emotional labor, performance goal orientation, and burnout from the perspective of conservation of resources: A United States/China comparison. *Public Performance & Management Review*, 42(3), 685-706.
- Lucia-Casademunt, A. M., Cuéllar-Molina, D., & García-Cabrera, A. M. (2018). The role of human resource practices and managers in the development of well-being: Cultural differences in the changing workplace. *Cross Cultural & Strategic Management*.
- Luhmann, N. (2017). *Trust and power* (C. Morgner & M. King, Eds.; H. Davis, J. Raffan, & K. Rooney, Trans.). Cambridge: Polity.
- Lukács, E. (2005). The economic role of SMEs in world economy, especially in Europe. *European integration studies*, 4(1), 3-12.
- Lukić, J. M., & Vračar, M. M. (2018). Building and nurturing trust among members in virtual project teams. *Strategic Management-International Journal of Strategic Management and Decision Support Systems in Strategic Management*, 23(3).
- Luo, X. (2002). Trust production and privacy concerns on the Internet: A framework based on relationship marketing and social exchange theory. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 31(2), 111-118.
- Lussier, B., Grégoire, Y., & Vachon, M. A. (2017). The role of humor usage on creativity, trust and performance in business relationships: An analysis of the salesperson-customer dyad. *Industrial Marketing Management*, 65, 168-181.
- Lysaght, R. M., & Larmour-Trode, S. (2008). An exploration of social support as a factor in the return-to-work process. *Work*, 30(3), 255-266.
- Lyttle, J. (2007). The judicious use and management of humor in the workplace. *Business horizons*, 50(3), 239-245.
- Ma, J., Schaubroeck, J. M., & LeBlanc, C. (2019). Interpersonal trust in organizations. In *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Business and Management*.
- Ma, X., & Jiang, W. (2018). Transformational leadership, transactional leadership, and employee creativity in entrepreneurial firms. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 54(3), 302-324.
- Maak, T. (2007). Responsible leadership, stakeholder engagement, and the emergence of social capital. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 74(4), 329-343.

MacLachlan, M., Banes, D., Bell, D., Borg, J., Donnelly, B., Fembek, M., ... & Hoogerwerf, E. J. (2018). Assistive Technology policy: a position paper from the first global research, innovation, and education on Assistive Technology (GREAT) summit. *Disability and Rehabilitation: Assistive Technology*, 13(5), 454-466.

Malakyan, P. G. (2014). Followership in leadership studies: A case of leader–follower trade approach. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 7(4), 6-22.

Malecki, E. J. (2010). Global knowledge and creativity: new challenges for firms and regions. *Regional studies*, 44(8), 1033-1052.

Malhotra, D. (2004). Trust and reciprocity decisions: The differing perspectives of trustors and trusted parties. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 94(2), 61-73.

Markos, S., & Sridevi, M. S. (2010). Employee engagement: The key to improving performance. *International journal of business and management*, 5(12), 89.

Martin, R. A. (2001). Humor, laughter, and physical health: methodological issues and research findings. *Psychological bulletin*, 127(4), 504.

Martin, R. A., Puhlik-Doris, P., Larsen, G., Gray, J., & Weir, K. (2003). Individual differences in uses of humor and their relation to psychological well-being: Development of the Humor Styles Questionnaire. *Journal of research in personality*, 37(1), 48-75.

Martin, R., Guillaume, Y., Thomas, G., Lee, A., & Epitropaki, O. (2016). Leader–member exchange (LMX) and performance: A meta-analytic review. *Personnel psychology*, 69(1), 67-121.

Martinez, A. D., Kane, R. E., Ferris, G. R., & Brooks, C. D. (2012). Power in leader–follower work relationships. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 19(2), 142-151.

Maslach, C., & Leiter, M. P. (2016). Understanding the burnout experience: recent research and its implications for psychiatry. *World psychiatry*, 15(2), 103-111.

Mayer, R. C., Davis, J. H., & Schoorman, F. D. (1995). An integrative model of organizational trust. *Academy of management review*, 20(3), 709-734.

Mayer, R. C., & Gavin, M. B. (2005). Trust in management and performance: Who minds the shop while the employees watch the boss?. *Academy of management journal*, 48(5), 874-888.

Mayo, M., & Pastor, J. C. (2009). Leadership embedded in social networks. *Followercentered perspectives on leadership: A tribute to the memory of James R. Meindl*, 93.

Mayseless, O. (2010). Attachment and the leader—follower relationship. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 27(2), 271-280.

McAllister, D. J. (1995). Affect-and cognition-based trust as foundations for interpersonal cooperation in organizations. *Academy of management journal*, 38(1), 24-59.

McEvily, B., & Tortoriello, M. (2011). Measuring trust in organisational research: Review and recommendations. *Journal of Trust Research*, 1(1), 23-63.

McEvily, B., Perrone, V., & Zaheer, A. (2003). Trust as an organizing principle. *Organization science*, 14(1), 91-103.

McKnight, D. H., & Chervany, N. L. (2001a). What trust means in e-commerce customer relationships: An interdisciplinary conceptual typology. *International journal of electronic commerce*, 6(2), 35-59.

- McKnight, D. H., & Chervany, N. L. (2001b). Trust and distrust definitions: One bite at a time. In *Trust in Cyber-societies* (pp. 27-54). Springer, Berlin, Heidelberg.
- McKnight, D. H., & Chervany, N. L. (2006). Reflections on an initial trust-building model. *Handbook of trust research*, 29.
- McKnight, D. H., Cummings, L. L., & Chervany, N. L. (1998). Initial trust formation in new organizational relationships. *Academy of Management review*, 23(3), 473-490.
- Meier, M., Lütkevitte, M., Mellewig, T., & Decker, C. (2016). How managers can build trust in strategic alliances: a meta-analysis on the central trust-building mechanisms. *Journal of Business Economics*, 86(3), 229-257.
- Mekpor, B., & Dartey-Baah, K. (2017). Leadership styles and employees' voluntary work behaviors in the Ghanaian banking sector. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*.
- Men, L. R., & Stacks, D. (2014). The effects of authentic leadership on strategic internal communication and employee-organization relationships. *Journal of public relations research*, 26(4), 301-324.
- Men, L. R., & Yue, C. A. (2019). Creating a positive emotional culture: Effect of internal communication and impact on employee supportive behaviors. *Public relations review*, 45(3), 101764.
- Men, L. R., Qin, Y. S., & Jin, J. (2022). Fostering employee trust via effective supervisory communication during the COVID-19 pandemic: Through the lens of motivating language theory. *International Journal of Business Communication*, 59(2), 193-218.
- Men, R. L., & Bowen, S. A. (2016). *Excellence in internal communication management*. Business Expert Press.
- Mesmer-Magnus, J. R., DeChurch, L. A., & Wax, A. (2012). Moving emotional labor beyond surface and deep acting: A discordance–congruence perspective. *Organizational Psychology Review*, 2(1), 6-53.
- Miao, Q., Newman, A., Schwarz, G., & Xu, L. (2013). Participative Leadership and the Organizational Commitment of Civil Servants in China: The Mediating Effects of Trust in Supervisor. *British Journal of Management*, 24, S76-S92.
- Milner, K., Russell, J., & Siemers, I. (2010). Friendship in socially isolating work environments. *South African Journal of Psychology*, 40(2), 204-213.
- Mintu-Wimsatt, A., Garci, R., & Calantone, R. (2005). Risk, trust and the problem solving approach: a cross cultural negotiation study. *Journal of Marketing Theory and Practice*, 13(1), 52-61.
- Mishra, A. K., & Mishra, K. E. (1994). The role of mutual trust in effective downsizing strategies. *Human Resource Management*, 33(2), 261-279.
- Mishra, K., Boynton, L., & Mishra, A. (2014). Driving employee engagement: The expanded role of internal communications. *International Journal of Business Communication*, 51(2), 183-202.
- Mitchell, M. S., Cropanzano, R. S., & Quisenberry, D. M. (2012). Social exchange theory, exchange resources, and interpersonal relationships: A modest resolution of theoretical difficulties. In *Handbook of social resource theory* (pp. 99-118). Springer, New York, NY.
- Moeuf, A., Pellerin, R., Lamouri, S., Tamayo-Giraldo, S., & Barbaray, R. (2018). The industrial management of SMEs in the era of Industry 4.0. *International Journal of Production Research*, 56(3), 1118-1136.

- Moldjord, C., & Iversen, A. (2015). Developing vulnerability trust in temporary high performance teams. *Team Performance Management*.
- Molina-Morales, F. X., Martínez-Fernández, M. T., & Torlò, V. J. (2011). The dark side of trust: The benefits, costs and optimal levels of trust for innovation performance. *Long Range Planning*, 44(2), 118-133.
- Möllering, G., & Sydow, J. (2019). Trust trap? Self-reinforcing processes in the constitution of inter-organizational trust. In *Trust in contemporary society* (pp. 141-160). Brill.
- Molm, L. D. (2003). Theoretical comparisons of forms of exchange. *Sociological Theory*, 21(1), 1-17.
- Molm, L. D., Collett, J. L., & Schaefer, D. R. (2007). Building solidarity through generalized exchange: A theory of reciprocity. *American journal of sociology*, 113(1), 205-242.
- Molm, L. D., Peterson, G., & Takahashi, N. (1999). Power in negotiated and reciprocal exchange. *American sociological review*, 876-890.
- Molm, L. D., Peterson, G., & Takahashi, N. (2003). In the eye of the beholder: Procedural justice in social exchange. *American Sociological Review*, 128-152.
- Molm, L. D., Schaefer, D. R., & Collett, J. L. (2007). The value of reciprocity. *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 70(2), 199-217.
- Molm, L. D., Schaefer, D. R., & Collett, J. L. (2009). Fragile and resilient trust: Risk and uncertainty in negotiated and reciprocal exchange. *Sociological Theory*, 27(1), 1-32.
- Molm, L. D., Takahashi, N., & Peterson, G. (2000). Risk and trust in social exchange: An experimental test of a classical proposition. *American Journal of Sociology*, 105(5), 1396-1427.
- Moorman, R. H., Blakely, G. L., & Darnold, T. C. (2018). Understanding how perceived leader integrity affects follower trust: Lessons from the use of multidimensional measures of integrity and trust. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 25(3), 277-289.
- Morgan, R. M., & Hunt, S. D. (1994). The commitment-trust theory of relationship marketing. *Journal of marketing*, 58(3), 20-38.
- Moriano, J. A., Molero, F., Topa, G., & Mangin, J. P. L. (2014). The influence of transformational leadership and organizational identification on intrapreneurship. *International entrepreneurship and management journal*, 10(1), 103-119.
- Mudahogora-Murekezi, A. (2020). *The influence of managerial leadership styles on the sustainable growth of small and micro enterprises in South Africa* (Doctoral dissertation).
- Murata, K. (2014). An empirical cross-cultural study of humour in business meetings in New Zealand and Japan. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 60, 251-265.
- Myers, T. A., Maibach, E. W., Roser-Renouf, C., Akerlof, K., & Leiserowitz, A. A. (2013). The relationship between personal experience and belief in the reality of global warming. *Nature climate change*, 3(4), 343-347.
- Nadeak, B., Iriani, U. E., Naibaho, L., Sormin, E., & Juwita, C. P. (2019). Building Employees' Mental Health: The Correlation between Transactional Leadership and Training Program with Employees' Work Motivation at XWJ Factory. *Indian Journal of Public Health Research & Development*, 10(6), 1373-1379.

Nadin, S., & Cassell, C. (2007). New deal for old? Exploring the psychological contract in a small firm environment. *International Small Business Journal*, 25(4), 417-443.

Nanjundeswaraswamy, T. S., & Swamy, D. R. (2015). Leadership styles and quality of work life in SMEs. *Management Science Letters*, 5(1), 65-78.

Neufeld, D. J., Wan, Z., & Fang, Y. (2010). Remote leadership, communication effectiveness and leader performance. *Group decision and negotiation*, 19(3), 227-246.

Newell, S., & Swan, J. (2000). Trust and inter-organizational networking. *Human relations*, 53(10), 1287-1328.

Ngah, R., & Ibrahim, A. R. (2012). The relationship of intellectual capital, innovation and organizational performance: A preliminary study in Malaysian SMEs. *Advances in Global Business Research*.

Nguyen, N. T., & Umemoto, K. (2009). Understanding leadership for cross-cultural knowledge management. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 2(4), 23-35.

NHS, (2019). How to access mental health services, Available at: <https://www.nhs.uk/mental-health/nhs-voluntary-charity-services/nhs-services/how-to-access-mental-health-services/>, (Accessed: 25 Nov, 2021).

Nicola, M., Alsafi, Z., Sohrabi, C., Kerwan, A., Al-Jabir, A., Iosifidis, C., ... & Agha, R. (2020). The socio-economic implications of the coronavirus pandemic (COVID-19): A review. *International journal of surgery*, 78, 185-193.

Nienaber, A. M., Hofeditz, M., & Searle, R. H. (2014). Do we bank on regulation or reputation? A meta-analysis and meta-regression of organizational trust in the financial services sector. *International journal of bank marketing*.

Nienaber, A. M., Romeike, P. D., Searle, R., & Schewe, G. (2015). A qualitative meta-analysis of trust in supervisor-subordinate relationships. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*.

Nikolova, N., Möllering, G., & Reihlen, M. (2015). Trusting as a 'leap of faith': Trust-building practices in client–consultant relationships. *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 31(2), 232-245.

Nobre, H., & Silva, D. (2014). Social network marketing strategy and SME strategy benefits. *Journal of Transnational Management*, 19(2), 138-151.

Nolan, C. (2002). Human resource development in the Irish hotel industry: the case of the small firm. *Journal of European Industrial Training*.

Nooteboom, B. (1996). Trust, opportunism and governance: A process and control model. *Organization studies*, 17(6), 985-1010.

Nooteboom, B. (2002). *Trust: Forms, foundations, functions, failures and figures*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Nooteboom, B. (2021). Criticism of the ABI model of trustworthiness. *Academia Letters*, 2.

Nooteboom, B., & Six, F. (Eds.). (2003). *The trust process in organizations: Empirical studies of the determinants and the process of trust development*. Edward Elgar Publishing.

Norman, S. M., Avey, J., Larson, M., & Hughes, L. (2019). The development of trust in virtual leader–follower relationships. *Qualitative Research in Organizations and Management: An International Journal*.

Northouse, P.G. (2004). *Leadership theory and practice* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Öberg, P., Oskarsson, S., & Svensson, T. (2011). Similarity vs. homogeneity: Contextual effects in explaining trust. *European Political Science Review*, 3(3), 345-369.

Obiwuru, T. C., Okwu, A. T., Akpa, V. O., & Nwankwere, I. A. (2011). Effects of leadership style on organizational performance: A survey of selected small scale enterprises in Ikosi-Ketu council development area of Lagos State, Nigeria. *Australian journal of business and management research*, 1(7), 100.

Odumeru, J. A., & Ogbonna, I. G. (2013). Transformational vs. transactional leadership theories: Evidence in literature. *International review of management and business research*, 2(2), 355.

OECD, (2020a). Coronavirus (COVID-19): SME policy responses, Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/coronavirus-covid-19-sme-policy-responses-04440101/>, (Accessed: 23 Nov, 2021).

OECD, (2020b) The territorial impact of COVID-19: Managing the crisis across levels of government, Available at: <https://www.oecd.org/coronavirus/policy-responses/the-territorial-impact-of-covid-19-managing-the-crisis-across-levels-of-government-d3e314e1/>, (Accessed: 22 Nov, 2021).

OECD. (2005). OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms- Small And Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) Definition. Retrieved November 1, 2018, from <https://stats.oecd.org/glossary/detail.asp?ID=3123>.

Offermann, L. R., & Scuderi, N. F. (2007). Sharing leadership: Who, what, when, and why. *Followercentered perspectives on leadership: A tribute to the memory of James R. Meindl*, 93-113.

Ong, L. D. (2013). Workplace friendship, trust in coworkers and employees' OCB. *Актуальні проблеми економіки*, (2), 289-294.

Osteryoung, J.S. and Newman, D. (1993). "What is a Small Business?", *The Journal of Small Business Finance*, 2(3), pp219-231

Owens, D., & Khazanchi, D. (2018). Exploring the impact of technology capabilities on trust in virtual teams. *American Journal of Business*.

Oyetunji, C. O. (2013). The Relationship between Followership Style and Job Performance in Botswana Private Universities. *International Education Studies*, 6(2), 179-187.

Oyserman, D., Coon, H. M., & Kimmelmeier, M. (2002). Rethinking individualism and collectivism: evaluation of theoretical assumptions and meta-analyses. *Psychological bulletin*, 128(1), 3.

Pal, R., Torstensson, H., & Mattila, H. (2014). Antecedents of organizational resilience in economic crises—an empirical study of Swedish textile and clothing SMEs. *International Journal of Production Economics*, 147, 410-428.

Palmer, I., & Dunford, R. (2002). Out with the old and in with the new? The relationship between traditional and new organizational practices. *The International Journal of Organizational Analysis*.

Palvia, S., Aeron, P., Gupta, P., Mahapatra, D., Parida, R., Rosner, R., & Sindhi, S. (2018). Online education: Worldwide status, challenges, trends, and implications.

Panteli, N., Nurse, J. R., Collins, E., & Williams, N. (2022). Trust disruption and preservation in the Covid-19 work from home context. *Journal of Workplace Learning*, (ahead-of-print).

Parant, A., Schiano-Lomoriello, S., & Marchan, F. (2017). How would I live with a disability? Expectations of bio-psychosocial consequences and Assistive Technology use. *Disability and Rehabilitation: Assistive Technology*, 12(7), 681-685.

- Park, W. W., & Kim, S. (2012). The need of leader–subordinate reciprocal dyadic trust to build the subordinate’s trust in the organization: the case of Korean air pilots. *The International Journal of Aviation Psychology, 22*(2), 97-119.
- Pastor, J. C., Mayo, M., & Shamir, B. (2007). Adding fuel to fire: the impact of followers’ arousal on ratings of charisma. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 92*(6), 1584.
- Patton, D. (2004). Training in smaller firms. In *Managing labour in small firms* (pp. 93-118). Routledge.
- Pavlou, P. A., Tan, Y. H., & Gefen, D. (2003, June). Institutional trust and familiarity in online interorganizational relationships. In Proceedings of the European Conference on Information Systems (ICIS) Naples, Italy.
- Pech, R. J., & Oakley, K. E. (2005). Hormesis: an evolutionary “predict and prepare” survival mechanism. *Leadership & Organization Development Journal, 26*(8), 673-687.
- Pelaprat, E., & Brown, B. (2012). Reciprocity: Understanding online social relations. *First Monday*.
- Perry, S. J., Rubino, C., & Hunter, E. M. (2018). Stress in remote work: two studies testing the Demand-Control-Person model. *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology, 27*(5), 577-593.
- Pesämaa, O., Pieper, T., Da Silva, R. V., Black, W. C., & Hair Jr, J. F. (2013). Trust and reciprocity in building inter-personal and inter-organizational commitment in small business co-operatives. *Journal of Co-operative Organization and Management, 1*(2), 81-92.
- Peters, L., & Karren, R. J. (2009). An examination of the roles of trust and functional diversity on virtual team performance ratings. *Group & Organization Management, 34*(4), 479-504.
- Pfeffer, J., & Salancik, G. R. (2003). *The external control of organizations: A resource dependence perspective*. Stanford University Press.
- Pieterse, A. N., Van Knippenberg, D., Schippers, M., & Stam, D. (2010). Transformational and transactional leadership and innovative behavior: The moderating role of psychological empowerment. *Journal of organizational behavior, 31*(4), 609-623.
- Pillai, R. (2013). Transformational leadership for crisis management. In *Handbook of research on crisis leadership in organizations*. Edward Elgar Publishing.
- Pillemer, J., & Rothbard, N. P. (2018). Friends without benefits: Understanding the dark sides of workplace friendship. *Academy of Management Review, 43*(4), 635-660.
- Pillutla, M. M., Malhotra, D., & Murnighan, J. K. (2003). Attributions of trust and the calculus of reciprocity. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 39*(5), 448-455.
- Politis, J. (2014, November). The effect of e-leadership on organisational trust and commitment of virtual teams. In *European Conference on Management, Leadership & Governance* (p. 254). Academic Conferences International Limited.
- Poppo, L., & Zenger, T. (2002). Do formal contracts and relational governance function as substitutes or complements?. *Strategic management journal, 23*(8), 707-725.
- Poppo, L., Zhou, K. Z., & Li, J. J. (2016). When can you trust “trust”? Calculative trust, relational trust, and supplier performance. *Strategic management journal, 37*(4), 724-741.

Powell, C. M., & Heriot, K. C. (2000). The interaction of holistic and dyadic trust in social relationships: An investigative theoretical model. *Journal of Social Behavior and Personality*, 15(3), 387.

Pradeep, D. D & Prabhu, N. R. V. (2011). The Relationship between Effective Leadership and Employee Performance. *International Conference on Advancements in Information Technology with Workshop of ICBMG IPCSIT* Vol.20 IACSIT Press, Singapore pp.198- 207.

Process Bliss. (2019). Scottish SMEs 'lose a third of staff due to stress'. Business Insider. Available at: <https://www.insider.co.uk/news/smes-scotland-stress-health-wellbeing-13891326>, (Accessed: 14 April 2019)

Putnam, R. D. (2007). E pluribus unum: Diversity and community in the twenty-first century the 2006 Johan Skytte Prize Lecture. *Scandinavian political studies*, 30(2), 137-174.

Purwanto, A., Bernarto, I., Asbari, M., Wijayanti, L. M., & Hyun, C. C. (2020). Effect of transformational and transactional leadership style on public health centre performance. *Journal of Research in Business, Economics, and Education*, 2(1).

PytlikZillig, L. M., & Kimbrough, C. D. (2016). Consensus on conceptualizations and definitions of trust: Are we there yet?. *Interdisciplinary perspectives on trust*, 17-47.

Quinn, B. A. (2000). The paradox of complaining: Law, humor, and harassment in the everyday work world. *Law & Social Inquiry*, 25(4), 1151-1185.

Rahman, W. A. W. A. (2016). Empathy and trust: Into a better workplace environment. *Journal of Business and Economics*, 7(12), 2025-2034.

Rai, R., & Prakash, A. (2012). A relational perspective to knowledge creation: Role of servant leadership. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 6(2), 61-85.

Rannie, A. (1989). *Industrial Relations in Small Firms: Small Isn't Beautiful*.

Rawlins, W. K., & Rawlins, S. P. (2005). Academic advising as friendship. *NACADA Journal*, 25(2), 10-19.

Recklies, D. (2001). Small Business—Size as a Chance or Handicap. *The Recklies Management Project—Newsletter*, 20.

Reeves, B., & Read, J. L. (2009). *Total engagement: How games and virtual worlds are changing the way people work and businesses compete*. Harvard Business Press.

Reina, D. S. (2009). *Trust and betrayal in the workplace: Building effective relationships in your organization*. ReadHowYouWant. com.

Rempel, J. K., Holmes, J. G., & Zanna, M. P. (1985). Trust in close relationships. *Journal of personality and social psychology*, 49(1), 95.

reputation

Revilla-Camacho, M. Á., Cossío-Silva, F. J., & Vega-Vázquez, M. (2014). Seeking a sustainable competitive advantage in periods of economic recession for SMEs and entrepreneurs: The role of value co-creation and customer trust in the service provider. In *Entrepreneurship, innovation and economic crisis*(pp. 69-76). Springer, Cham.

Richter, A., & Näswall, K. (2019). Job insecurity and trust: Uncovering a mechanism linking job insecurity to well-being. *Work & Stress*, 33(1), 22-40.

- Riegelsberger, J., Sasse, M. A., & McCarthy, J. D. (2003). The researcher's dilemma: evaluating trust in computer-mediated communication. *International Journal of Human-Computer Studies*, 58(6), 759-781.
- Riggio, R. E. (2014). Followership Research: Looking Back and Looking Forward. *Journal of Leadership Education*, 13(4).
- Riggio, R. E., Chaleff, I., & Lipman-Blumen, J. (Eds.). (2008). *The art of followership: How great followers create great leaders and organizations* (Vol. 146). John Wiley & Sons.
- Ring, P. S., & Van de Ven, A. H. (1992). Structuring cooperative relationships between organizations. *Strategic management journal*, 13(7), 483-498.
- Robert, C., Dunne, T. C., & Lun, J. (2016). The impact of leader humor on subordinate job satisfaction: The crucial role of leader-subordinate relationship quality. *Group & Organization Management*, 41(3), 375-406.
- Robert, L. P., Denis, A. R., & Hung, Y. T. C. (2009). Individual swift trust and knowledge-based trust in face-to-face and virtual team members. *Journal of Management Information Systems*, 26(2), 241-279.
- Robertson, M., & Hammersley, G. O. M. (2000). Knowledge management practices within a knowledge-intensive firm: the significance of the people management dimension. *Journal of European Industrial Training*.
- Rosenberg, C., Walker, A., Leiter, M., & Graffam, J. (2021). Humor in Workplace Leadership: A Systematic Search Scoping Review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 12.
- Rothstein, B., & Stolle, D. (2008). The state and social capital: An institutional theory of generalized trust. *Comparative politics*, 40(4), 441-459.
- Rousseau, D. M., Sitkin, S. B., Burt, R. S., & Camerer, C. (1998). Not so different after all: A cross-discipline view of trust. *Academy of management review*, 23(3), 393-404.
- Roy, A., Singhal, A., & Srivastava, J. (2017). Formation and reciprocation of dyadic trust. *ACM Transactions on Internet Technology (TOIT)*, 17(2), 1-24.
- Ruiz, P., Ruiz, C., & Martínez, R. (2011). Improving the "leader-follower" relationship: Top manager or supervisor? The ethical leadership trickle-down effect on follower job response. *Journal of Business Ethics*, 99(4), 587-608.
- Ruslan, A., Rosli, M., & Hussin, M. (2013). The effects of leadership styles and entrepreneurial orientation on the business performance of SMEs in Malaysia. In *The International Conference on Business, Economics and Accounting*. Bangkok, Thailand.
- Sakiru, O. K., Othman, J., Silong, A. D., Kareem, S. D., Oluwafemi, A. O., & Yusuf, G. O. (2014). Relationship between head of department leadership styles and lecturers job satisfactions in Nigerian public universities. *Asian Social Science*, 10(6), 138.
- Salovey, P., & Mayer, J. D. (2004). Emotional intelligence. In P. Salovey, M. A. Brackett, & J. D. Mayer (Eds.), *Emotional intelligence: Key readings on the Mayer and Salovey model* (pp. 1-27). Dude Publishing.
- Sarpong, S., & Rees, D. (2014). Assessing the effects of 'big brother' in a workplace: The case of WAST. *European Management Journal*, 32(2), 216-222.
- Savage, S. V., & Bergstrand, K. (2013). Negotiating the unknown: The role of uncertainty in social exchange. *Sociology Compass*, 7(4), 315-327.

Savić, D. (2020). COVID-19 and work from home: Digital transformation of the workforce. *Grey Journal (TGJ)*, 16(2), 101-104.

Savlovschi, L. I., & Robu, N. R. (2011). The role of SMEs in modern economy. *Economia, Seria Management*, 14(1), 277-281.

Savolainen, T., Ivakko, E., & Ikonen, M. (2017, March). Trust development in workplace relations during change: A multi-level analysis of narratives from leaders and followers. In *Proceedings of the 5th International Conference on Management Leadership and Governance* (pp. 393-400).

Sbaffi, L., & Rowley, J. (2017). Trust and credibility in web-based health information: a review and agenda for future research. *Journal of medical Internet research*, 19(6), e218.

Scandura, T. A., & Pellegrini, E. K. (2008). Trust and leader—member exchange: A closer look at relational vulnerability. *Journal of Leadership & Organizational Studies*, 15(2), 101-110.

Scanzoni, J. (1979). Social exchange and behavioral interdependence. In *Social exchange in developing relationships* (pp. 61-98). Academic Press.

Scase, R. (2003). Employment relations in small firms. *Industrial relations: Theory and practice*, 1, 470.

Scase, R. (2004). Managerial strategies in small firms. In *Managing labour in small firms* (pp. 76-92). Routledge.

Schaefer, K. E., Chen, J. Y., Szalma, J. L., & Hancock, P. A. (2016). A meta-analysis of factors influencing the development of trust in automation: Implications for understanding autonomy in future systems. *Human factors*, 58(3), 377-400.

Schindler, J. H. (2014). *Followership: What it takes to lead*. Business Expert Press.

Schoorman, F. D., Mayer, R. C., & Davis, J. H. (2007). An integrative model of organizational trust: Past, present, and future. *Academy of Management review*, 32(2), 344-354.

Schutte, N. S., Malouff, J. M., Simunek, M., McKenley, J., & Hollander, S. (2002). Characteristic emotional intelligence and emotional well-being. *Cognition & Emotion*, 16(6), 769-785.

Searle, R., Den Hartog, D. N., Weibel, A., Gillespie, N., Six, F., Hatzakis, T., & Skinner, D. (2011). Trust in the employer: The role of high-involvement work practices and procedural justice in European organizations. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 22(05), 1069-1092.

Sellitto, C. (2011). Organisational structure: Some observations on the importance of informal advice and trust networks. *International Journal of Interdisciplinary Social Sciences*, 6(2), 23-34.

Serva, M. A., & Fuller, M. A. (2004). The Effects of Trustworthiness Perceptions on the Formation of Initial Trust: Implications for MIS Student Teams. *Journal of Information Systems Education*, 15(4).

Serva, M. A., Fuller, M. A., & Mayer, R. C. (2005). The reciprocal nature of trust: A longitudinal study of interacting teams. *Journal of Organizational Behavior: The International Journal of Industrial, Occupational and Organizational Psychology and Behavior*, 26(6), 625-648.

Shachaf, P. (2008). Cultural diversity and information and communication technology impacts on global virtual teams: An exploratory study. *Information & Management*, 45(2), 131-142.

Shahid, A. (2018). Employee intention to stay: An environment based on trust and motivation. *Journal of Management Research*, 10(4), 58.

Shahzadi, G., John, A., Qadeer, F., & Mehnaz, S. (2017). Followership behavior and leaders' trust: Do political skills matter?. *Pakistan Journal of Commerce and Social Sciences*, *11*(2), 653-670.

Shahzadi, G., John, A., Sharif, I., & Mehnaz, H. S. (2022). Being Trusted Requires Being Proactive: An Empirical Investigation of Proactive Followership. *Journal of Management Practices, Humanities and Social Sciences*, *6*(3), 41-51.

Shamir, B., & Howell, J. M. (2018). Organizational and contextual influences on the emergence and effectiveness of charismatic leadership. In *Leadership now: Reflections on the legacy of Boas Shamir*. Emerald Publishing Limited.

Sharma, P. N., & Kirkman, B. L. (2015). Leveraging leaders: A literature review and future lines of inquiry for empowering leadership research. *Group & Organization Management*, *40*(2), 193-237.

Sharp, E. A. (2010). *Exploring community-agency trust before, during and after a wildfire* (Doctoral dissertation, Charles Sturt University).

Shek, D. T., & Lin, J. L. (2015). Factors leading to the creation, development, and maintenance of positive social relationship. *International Journal on Disability and Human Development*, *14*(4), 333-342.

Sheng, S., Zhou, K. Z., & Li, J. J. (2011). The effects of business and political ties on firm performance: Evidence from China. *Journal of Marketing*, *75*(1), 1-15.

Sias, P. M., & Cahill, D. J. (1998). From coworkers to friends: The development of peer friendships in the workplace. *Western Journal of Communication (includes Communication Reports)*, *62*(3), 273-299.

Sias, P. M., & Shin, Y. (2019). Workplace relationships. In *Origins and Traditions of Organizational Communication* (pp. 187-206). Routledge.

Sias, P. M., Heath, R. G., Perry, T., Silva, D., & Fix, B. (2004). Narratives of workplace friendship deterioration. *Journal of Social and Personal relationships*, *21*(3), 321-340.

Siebert, S., Machesky, L. M., & Insall, R. H. (2015). Point of view: Overflow in science and its implications for trust. *Elife*, *4*, e10825.

Simola, S. K., Barling, J., & Turner, N. (2010). Transformational leadership and leader moral orientation: Contrasting an ethic of justice and an ethic of care. *The leadership quarterly*, *21*(1), 179-188.

Sinclair, M. A., Stephens, K., Whiteman, K., Swanson-Bearman, B., & Clark, J. (2021). Managing and motivating the remote employee using the transformational leadership model. *Nurse Leader*, *19*(3), 294-299.

Singh, R. K. (2011). Developing the framework for coordination in supply chain of SMEs. *Business Process Management Journal*.

Siu, W. S., & Bao, Q. (2008). Network strategies of small Chinese high-technology firms: a qualitative study. *Journal of Product Innovation Management*, *25*(1), 79-102.

Skiba, T., & Wildman, J. L. (2019). Uncertainty reducer, exchange deepener, or self-determination enhancer? Feeling trust versus feeling trusted in supervisor-subordinate relationships. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, *34*(2), 219-235.

Skinner, D., Dietz, G., & Weibel, A. (2014). The dark side of trust: When trust becomes a 'poisoned chalice'. *Organization*, *21*(2), 206-224.

- Smollan, R. K. (2013). Trust in change managers: the role of affect. *Journal of Organizational Change Management*.
- Snizek, J. A., & Van Swol, L. M. (2001). Trust, confidence, and expertise in a judge-advisor system. *Organizational behavior and human decision processes*, 84(2), 288-307.
- Söllner, M., & Leimeister, J. M. (2013). What we really know about antecedents of trust: A critical review of the empirical information systems literature on trust. *Psychology of Trust: New Research*, D. Gefen, Verlag/Publisher: Nova Science Publishers.
- Spadaro, G., Gangl, K., Van Prooijen, J. W., Van Lange, P. A., & Mosso, C. O. (2020). Enhancing feelings of security: How institutional trust promotes interpersonal trust. *Plos one*, 15(9), e0237934.
- Sparrowe, R. T., Liden, R. C., Wayne, S. J., & Kraimer, M. L. (2001). Social networks and the performance of individuals and groups. *Academy of management journal*, 44(2), 316-325.
- Spector, B. (2016). *Discourse on leadership: A critical appraisal*. Cambridge University Press.
- Spigel, B., & Harrison, R. (2018). Toward a process theory of entrepreneurial ecosystems. *Strategic Entrepreneurship Journal*, 12(1), 151-168.
- Spreitzer, G. M. (1995). An empirical test of a comprehensive model of intrapersonal empowerment in the workplace. *American journal of community psychology*, 23(5), 601-629.
- Srivastava, P. R. (2020). Communication, Collaboration & Trust: Interpersonal Challenges in Virtual Collaboration Team. *International Journal of English Literature and Social Sciences*, 5(4), 1273-1278.
- Stech, E. L. (2008). A new leadership-followership paradigm. *The art of followership: How great followers create great leaders and organizations*, 41-52.
- Stewart, J. A. (2009). Evaluation of an action learning programme for leadership development of SME leaders in the UK. *Action Learning: Research and Practice*, 6(2), 131-148.
- Stoel, M. D., & Muhanna, W. A. (2012). The dimensions and directionality of trust and their roles in the development of shared business-IS understanding. *Information & management*, 49(5), 248-256.
- Stolle, D., Soroka, S., & Johnston, R. (2008). When does diversity erode trust? Neighborhood diversity, interpersonal trust and the mediating effect of social interactions. *Political studies*, 56(1), 57-75.
- Stone, A. G., Russell, R. F., & Patterson, K. (2004). Transformational versus servant leadership: A difference in leader focus. *Leadership & organization development journal*.
- Storey, D. J. (2002). Education, training and development policies and practices in medium-sized companies in the UK: do they really influence firm performance?. *Omega*, 30(4), 249-264.
- Strong, R., & Williams, J. (2014). Understanding Students as Followers: Discovering the Influence of Followership Style on Self-Directed Learning. *Journal of Agricultural Education*, 55(2), 201-213.
- Sturgeon, T. J. (2002). Modular production networks: a new American model of industrial organization. *Industrial and corporate change*, 11(3), 451-496.
- Sturgis, P., Brunton-Smith, I., Read, S., & Allum, N. (2011). Does ethnic diversity erode trust? Putnam's 'hunkering down' thesis reconsidered. *British journal of political science*, 41(1), 57-82.

Sudweeks, F., & Simoff, S. J. (2005, January). Leading conversations: Communication behaviours of emergent leaders in virtual teams. In *proceedings of the 38th annual Hawaii international conference on system sciences* (pp. 108a-108a). IEEE.

Sulich, A., Sołoducho-Pelc, L., & Ferasso, M. (2021). Management styles and decision-making: Pro-ecological strategy approach. *Sustainability, 13*(4), 1604.

Sullivan-Taylor, B., & Branicki, L. (2011). Creating resilient SMEs: why one size might not fit all. *International Journal of Production Research, 49*(18), 5565-5579.

Svare, H., Gausdal, A. H., & Möllering, G. (2020). The function of ability, benevolence, and integrity-based trust in innovation networks. *Industry and Innovation, 27*(6), 585-604.

Tan, H. H., & Lim, A. K. (2009). Trust in coworkers and trust in organizations. *the Journal of Psychology, 143*(1), 45-66.

Tavanti, M. (2008). Transactional leadership. *Leadership: The key concepts, 166-170*.

Tekleab, A. G., & Chiaburu, D. S. (2011). Social exchange: Empirical examination of form and focus. *Journal of Business research, 64*(5), 460-466.

Thelen, P. D. (2020). Internal communicators' understanding of the definition and importance of employee advocacy. *Public Relations Review, 46*(4), 101946.

Thelen, P. D., & Yue, C. A. (2021). Servant leadership and employee advocacy: The mediating role of psychological empowerment and perceived relationship investment. *International Journal of Communication, 15, 25*.

Thierer, A., Koopman, C., Hobson, A., & Kuiper, C. (2015). How the internet, the sharing economy, and reputational feedback mechanisms solve the lemons problem. *U. Miami L. Rev., 70, 830*.

Thomas, C. W. (1998). Maintaining and restoring public trust in government agencies and their employees. *Administration & society, 30*(2), 166-193.

Thorgren, S., & Wincent, J. (2011). Interorganizational trust: Origins, dysfunctions and regulation of rigidities. *British Journal of Management, 22*(1), 21-41.

Thoth, C. A., Tucker, C., Leahy, M., & Stewart, S. M. (2014). Self-disclosure of serostatus by youth who are HIV-positive: a review. *Journal of behavioral medicine, 37*(2), 276-288.

Tian, H., & Liang, P. (2017). Improved recommendations based on trust relationships in social networks. *Future Internet, 9*(1), 9.

Toegel, G., Kilduff, M., & Anand, N. (2013). Emotion helping by managers: An emergent understanding of discrepant role expectations and outcomes. *Academy of Management Journal, 56*(2), 334-357.

Tomlinson, E. C., & Mryer, R. C. (2009). The role of causal attribution dimensions in trust repair. *Academy of management review, 34*(1), 85-104.

Tomlinson, E. C., Dineen, B. R., & Lewicki, R. J. (2009). Trust congruence among integrative negotiators as a predictor of joint-behavioral outcomes. *International Journal of Conflict Management*.

Tourish, D., Paulsen, N., Hobman, E., & Bordia, P. (2004). The downsides of downsizing: Communication processes information needs in the aftermath of a workforce reduction strategy. *Management Communication Quarterly, 17*(4), 485-516.

Tracey, J. B., & Hinkin, T. R. (1998). Transformational leadership or effective managerial practices?. *Group & Organization Management*, 23(3), 220-236.

Tramontano, C., Grant, C., & Clarke, C. (2021). Development and validation of the e-Work Self-Efficacy Scale to assess digital competencies in remote working. *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*, 4, 100129.

Trevino, L. K., Hartman, L. P., & Brown, M. (2000). Moral person and moral manager: How executives develop a reputation for ethical leadership. *California management review*, 42(4), 128-142.

Triandis, H. C. (1996). The psychological measurement of cultural syndromes. *American psychologist*, 51(4), 407.

Tse, H. H., & Dasborough, M. T. (2008). A study of exchange and emotions in team member relationships. *Group & Organization Management*, 33(2), 194-215.

Tyler, T. R. (2003). Trust within organisations. *Personnel review*.

Tysen, A. K., Wald, A., & Spieth, P. (2014). The challenge of transactional and transformational leadership in projects. *International journal of project management*, 32(3), 365-375.

Uhl-Bien, M. (2006). Relational leadership theory: Exploring the social processes of leadership and organizing. *The leadership quarterly*, 17(6), 654-676.

Uhl-Bien, M., & Maslyn, J. M. (2003). Reciprocity in manager-subordinate relationships: Components, configurations, and outcomes. *Journal of management*, 29(4), 511-532.

Uhl-Bien, M., & Pillai, R. (2007). The romance of leadership and the social construction of followership. *Followercentered perspectives on leadership: A tribute to the memory of James R. Meindl*, 187-209.

Uhl-Bien, M., Graen, G. B., & Scandura, T. A. (2000). Implications of leader-member exchange (LMX) for strategic human resource management systems: Relationships as social capital for competitive advantage. *Research in personnel and human resources management*, 18, 137-186.

Uhl-Bien, M., Riggio, R. E., Lowe, K. B., & Carsten, M. K. (2014). Followership theory: A review and research agenda. *The leadership quarterly*, 25(1), 83-104.

Ünal, Z. M. (2014). Influence of leaders' humor styles on the employees' job related affective well-being. *International Journal of Academic Research in Accounting, Finance and Management Sciences*, 4(1), 201-211.

Upchurch, M., & Marinković, D. (2011). Wild capitalism, privatisation and employment relations in Serbia. *Employee Relations*.

Urban, G. L., Sultan, F., & Qualls, W. J. (2000). Placing trust at the center of your Internet strategy. *Sloan Management Review*, 42(1), 39-48.

Urbini, F., Lo Presti, A., Chirumbolo, A., & Callea, A. (2020). Two is worse than one. The mediating role of precariousness of life in the association between qualitative job insecurity and distress among Italian temps. *Electronic Journal of Applied Statistical Analysis*, 13(3), 634-651.

Uslaner, E. M. (2006). Does diversity drive down trust?.

Usoro, A., Sharratt, M. W., Tsui, E., & Shekhar, S. (2007). Trust as an antecedent to knowledge sharing in virtual communities of practice. *Knowledge Management Research & Practice*, 5(3), 199-212.

Valcea, S., Hamdani, M. R., Buckley, M. R., & Novicevic, M. M. (2011). Exploring the developmental potential of leader–follower interactions: A constructive-developmental approach. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 22(4), 604-615.

Van Vugt, M. (2006). Evolutionary origins of leadership and followership. *Personality and Social Psychology Review*, 10(4), 354-371.

Veil, S. R., Buehner, T., & Palenchar, M. J. (2011). A work-in-process literature review: Incorporating social media in risk and crisis communication. *Journal of contingencies and crisis management*, 19(2), 110-122.

Vera, D., & Crossan, M. (2004). Strategic leadership and organizational learning. *Academy of management review*, 29(2), 222-240.

Vidyardhi, P. R., Liden, R. C., Anand, S., Erdogan, B., & Ghosh, S. (2010). Where do I stand? Examining the effects of leader–member exchange social comparison on employee work behaviors. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 95(5), 849.

Walumbwa, F. O., & Schaubroeck, J. (2009). Leader personality traits and employee voice behavior: mediating roles of ethical leadership and work group psychological safety. *Journal of applied psychology*, 94(5), 1275.

Walumbwa, F. O., Mayer, D. M., Wang, P., Wang, H., Workman, K., & Christensen, A. L. (2011). Linking ethical leadership to employee performance: The roles of leader–member exchange, self-efficacy, and organizational identification. *Organizational behavior and human decision processes*, 115(2), 204-213.

Wang, C. H., & Chen, K. L. (2018). Do Relationships have a Dark Side for Innovation Performance in the High-Tech Industry?. *International Journal of Innovation and Technology Management*, 15(02), 1850018.

Wang, D. S., & Hsieh, C. C. (2013). The effect of authentic leadership on employee trust and employee engagement. *Social Behavior and Personality: an international journal*, 41(4), 613-624.

Wang, H., & Sun, L. (2010, September). Trust-involved access control in collaborative open social networks. In *2010 fourth international conference on network and system security* (pp. 239-246). IEEE.

Wang, H., Law, K. S., Hackett, R. D., Wang, D., & Chen, Z. X. (2005). Leader-member exchange as a mediator of the relationship between transformational leadership and followers' performance and organizational citizenship behavior. *Academy of management Journal*, 48(3), 420-432.

Wang, H., Zhang, Y., Li, P., & Henry, S. E. (2022). You Raise Me Up and I Reciprocate: Linking Empowering Leadership to Organizational Citizenship Behavior and Unethical Pro-Organizational Behavior. *Applied Psychology*.

Wang, L., Law, R., Hung, K., & Guillet, B. D. (2014). Consumer trust in tourism and hospitality: A review of the literature. *Journal of Hospitality and Tourism Management*, 21, 1-9.

Wang, S. W., Ngamsiriudom, W., & Hsieh, C. H. (2015). Trust disposition, trust antecedents, trust, and behavioral intention. *The Service Industries Journal*, 35(10), 555-572.

Warren, M. (2018). Trust and democracy. *The Oxford handbook of social and political trust*, 75-94.

Washington, M. G. (2013). Trust and project Performance: The effects of cognitive-based and affective-based trust on client-project manager engagements.

Waterman, R. H., & Peters, T. J. (1982). *In search of excellence: Lessons from America's best-run companies* (p. 360). New York: Harper & Row.

- Weber, K. D., & Patterson, B. R. (1996). Construction and validation of a communication based emotional support scale. *Communication Research Reports*, 13(1), 68-76.
- Weber, K., Johnson, A., & Corrigan, M. (2004). Communicating emotional support and its relationship to feelings of being understood, trust, and self-disclosure. *Communication research reports*, 21(3), 316-323.
- Welter, F. (2012). All you need is trust? A critical review of the trust and entrepreneurship literature. *International Small Business Journal*, 30(3), 193-212.
- Werbelt, J. D., & Henriques, P. L. (2009). Different views of trust and relational leadership: Supervisor and subordinate perspectives. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*.
- West, R., & Turner, L. H. (2018). *Interpersonal communication*. Sage Publications.
- WHO, (2018a). Assistive Technology, Available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/assistive-technology>, (Accessed: 25 Nov, 2021).
- WHO, (2018b). Mental health: strengthening our response, Available at: <https://www.who.int/news-room/fact-sheets/detail/mental-health-strengthening-our-response>, (Accessed: 26 Nov, 2021).
- Wibowo, A., & Hayati, N. R. (2019). Empowering leadership and trust on team learning behavior. *Journal of Management Development*.
- Wiley, J. (2009). Driving success through performance excellence and employee engagement. *Online: Kenexa Research Institute*.
- Williams, F., & Foti, R. J. (2011). Formally developing creative leadership as a driver of organizational innovation. *Advances in Developing Human Resources*, 13(3), 279-296.
- Williamson, O. E. (1993). Calculativeness, trust, and economic organization. *The journal of law and economics*, 36(1, Part 2), 453-486.
- Williamson, O. E. (Ed.). (1995). *Organization theory: from Chester Barnard to the present and beyond*. Oxford University Press.
- Willie, C. V. (2000). Confidence, Trust and Respect: The Preeminent Goals of Educational Reform. *The Journal of Negro Education*, 69(4), 255–262. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2696244>
- Willis, S., Clarke, S., & O'Connor, E. (2017). Contextualizing leadership: Transformational leadership and Management-By-Exception-Active in safety-critical contexts. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 90(3), 281-305.
- Winnie, P. M. W. (2014). The impact of trustworthiness and customer e-loyalty and e-satisfaction. *International Journal of Academic Research in Business and Social Sciences*, 4(3), 390.
- Wolf, M., Van Doorn, G. S., & Weissing, F. J. (2011). On the coevolution of social responsiveness and behavioural consistency. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B: Biological Sciences*, 278(1704), 440-448.
- Wong, B. (2020, September). Why Should I Respect You? A Critique and a Suggestion for the Justification of Mutual Respect in Contractualism. In *The Philosophical Forum* (Vol. 51, No. 3, pp. 261-278).
- Wong, C. A., & Cummings, G. G. (2009). The influence of authentic leadership behaviors on trust and work outcomes of health care staff. *Journal of Leadership Studies*, 3(2), 6-23.
- Wong, C. A., SPENCE LASCHINGER, H. K., & Cummings, G. G. (2010). Authentic leadership and nurses' voice behaviour and perceptions of care quality. *Journal of nursing management*, 18(8), 889-900.

- Wright, T. S. (2002). Definitions and frameworks for environmental sustainability in higher education. *Higher education policy*, 15(2), 105-120.
- Wu, J., Balliet, D., & Van Lange, P. A. (2016). Reputation, gossip, and human cooperation. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass*, 10(6), 350-364.
- Wu, K., Zhao, Y., Zhu, Q., Tan, X., & Zheng, H. (2011). A meta-analysis of the impact of trust on technology acceptance model: Investigation of moderating influence of subject and context type. *International Journal of Information Management*, 31(6), 572-581.
- Xiao, S., & Benbasat, I. (2003, September). The formation of trust and distrust in recommendation agents in repeated interactions: a process-tracing analysis. In *Proceedings of the 5th international conference on Electronic commerce* (pp. 287-293).
- Xu, A. J., Loi, R., Cai, Z., & Liden, R. C. (2019). Reversing the lens: How followers influence leader–member exchange quality. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 92(3), 475-497.
- Yagoda, R. E., & Gillan, D. J. (2012). You want me to trust a ROBOT? The development of a human–robot interaction trust scale. *International Journal of Social Robotics*, 4(3), 235-248.
- Yakovleva, M., Reilly, R. R., & Werko, R. (2010). Why do we trust? Moving beyond individual to dyadic perceptions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 95(1), 79.
- YEO, S. L. (2020). Reputation matters: Building internal trust and resilience with effective communication.
- Yin, K., Xing, L., Li, C., & Guo, Y. (2017). Are empowered employees more proactive? The contingency of how they evaluate their leader. *Frontiers in psychology*, 8, 1802.
- Yoerger, M., Crowe, J., & Allen, J. A. (2015). Participate or else!: The effect of participation in decision-making in meetings on employee engagement. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*, 67(1), 65.
- Yu, H., & Cui, L. (2019). China's e-commerce: empowering rural women?. *The China Quarterly*, 238, 418-437.
- Yuan, Y., Kong, H., Baum, T., Liu, Y., Liu, C., Bu, N., ... & Yin, Z. (2021). Transformational leadership and trust in leadership impacts on employee commitment. *Tourism Review*.
- Yukl, G. (1999). An evaluation of conceptual weaknesses in transformational and charismatic leadership theories. *The leadership quarterly*, 10(2), 285-305.
- Yukl, G. (2012). Effective leadership behavior: What we know and what questions need more attention. *Academy of Management perspectives*, 26(4), 66-85.
- Yung, C. T., & Tsai, K. C. (2013). Followership: An important partner of leadership. *Business and Management Horizons*, 1(2), 47-55.
- Zacher, H., & Bal, P. M. (2012). Professor age and research assistant ratings of passive-avoidant and proactive leadership: The role of age-related work concerns and age stereotypes. *Studies in Higher Education*, 37(7), 875-896.
- Zaech, S., & Baldegger, U. (2017). Leadership in start-ups. *International Small Business Journal*, 35(2), 157-177.
- Zhang, S., & Fjermestad, J. (2006). Bridging the gap between traditional leadership theories and virtual team leadership. *International Journal of Technology, Policy and Management*, 6(3), 274-291.

- Zhang, X., & Bartol, K. M. (2010). Linking empowering leadership and employee creativity: The influence of psychological empowerment, intrinsic motivation, and creative process engagement. *Academy of management journal*, 53(1), 107-128.
- Zhao, L., Lu, Y., Wang, B., Chau, P. Y., & Zhang, L. (2012). Cultivating the sense of belonging and motivating user participation in virtual communities: A social capital perspective. *International Journal of Information Management*, 32(6), 574-588.
- Zhu, W., Avolio, B. J., & Walumbwa, F. O. (2009). Moderating role of follower characteristics with transformational leadership and follower work engagement. *Group & organization management*, 34(5), 590-619.
- Zolin, R., Hinds, P. J., Fruchter, R., & Levitt, R. E. (2004). Interpersonal trust in cross-functional, geographically distributed work: A longitudinal study. *Information and organization*, 14(1), 1-26.
- Zucker, L. G. (1986). Production of trust: Institutional sources of economic structure, 1840–1920. *Research in organizational behavior*, 8(53), 111.
- Zurba, M., Ross, H., Izurieta, A., Rist, P., Bock, E., & Berkes, F. (2012). Building co-management as a process: problem solving through partnerships in Aboriginal country, Australia. *Environmental management*, 49(6), 1130-1142.

Appendices

Appendix A Frequency summary of interview items

After coding each phrase from these 12 tests, the frequency of each phrase was analysed and calculated, and the following tables show the frequency of each factor in each sector.

A-1 Characteristics: Frequency summary from 12 tests scale

Ability	Frequency
Certain qualifications (Certificates)	4
Relevant experiences	5
Specialised capabilities	10
Verbal & Written communication skills	6
Problem-solving skills	6
Time-management skills	4
Decision-making skills	7
Team-working skills	3

Benevolence	Frequency
Volunteer to help others	7
Forgive & forget mistakes	3
Include others (allow others to talk)	21
Put organizational goal ahead of individual goal	10
Sincere to communicate and listen to your concerns	11
Loyalty	6

Integrity	Frequency
Consistency (consistent manners to everyone, actions match words)	23
Fairness	15
Maintaining confidentiality in the workplace	4
Honesty	15
Acknowledge others' efforts	8
Openness (share information)	13

A-2 Followership: Frequency summary from Kelley's test scale

Passive followership (DUT&PE)

Obeys my orders and just completes what I asked. (PE)

Cares about their personal performance rather than team or organizational performance. (PE)

I need to explicitly outline their job and organisational rules for them. (DUT)

Doesn't point out my mistakes, even if they notice them. (DUT)

Reports all details to me and waits for me to make decisions. (DUT)

Rarely shares opinions with me, even if I ask. (PE)

Proactive followership (ICT&AE)

I can give my staff an assignment without supervision, knowing they can complete it. (ICT)

Takes the initiative on issues and comes up with solutions. (AE)

My staff are willing to work beyond their duties to benefit the company. (AE)

My staff rarely rely on me, and they can solve problems during work by themselves. (ICT)

Staff take the initiative to share their opinions with me. (AE)

They question my decisions if they think they are not appropriate and discuss it with me. (ICT)

A-3 Leadership: Frequency summary form MLQ

Transactional leadership

Provides recognition/rewards when I reach my goals. (CREW)

As long as things are working, s/he doesn't try to change anything. (MBEP)

Tells me the standards I have to know to carry out my work. (MBEA)

Asks no more of me than what is absolutely essential. (MBEP)

S/he is content to let me continue working in the same ways. (MBEA)

Provides me with assistance in exchanges for my efforts. (CREW)

I have experienced none of them above.

Transformational leadership

I'm proud to be associated with my manager. (IDA)

Helps me to find meaning in my work. (IDB)

Seeks differing perspectives and encourages me to rethink ideas when solving problems. (ISTM)

Talks to me about his/her most important values and beliefs. (IMOT)

Pays attention to and concerns staff who seem neglected. (ICON)

Shows determination to accomplish what s/he sets out to do. (IMOT)

Encourages me to express my ideas and opinions. (ISTM)

Provides active and supportive communication with me. (ICON)

I have experienced none of them above.

Appendix B Interview questions for leaders

Q0. Can you describe your team in terms of (e.g. Size, Age range, Gender, Educational background, Ethnicity)?

Aspect One Characteristics

1. Ability (skills, competences, expertise in a specific domain)

Q1. Please select and name the three most important factors (related to ability) listed below that are important for you generally when deciding to trust a staff? (Highlight your selection)

Ask Leaders
Certain qualifications (Certificates)
Relevant experiences
Specialised capabilities
Verbal & Written communication skills
Problem-solving skills
Time-management skills
Decision-making skills
Team-working skills
Others (Type here)

Q2. Why do you believe these three to be important? Why do you think these factors are more important than others?

Q3. Do your current staff possess the factors you selected in the list? What are the implications of this answer for the level of trust you have in your staff?

Q4. To what extend do you think ability will influence your trust level on your staff?

2. Benevolence (goodwill, kindness, altruism)

Q5. Please select and name the two most important factors (related to benevolence) listed below that are important for you generally when deciding to trust a staff? (Highlight your selection)

Ask Leader
Volunteer to help others
Forgive & forget mistakes
Include others (allow others to talk)
Put organizational goal ahead of individual goal
Sincere to communicate and listen to your concerns

Loyalty
Others (Type here)

Q6. Why do you believe these two to be important? Why do you think these factors are more important than others?

Q7. Do your current staff possess the factors you selected in the list? What are the implications of this answer for the level of trust you have in your staff?

Q8. To what extent do you think kindness will influence your trust level on your staff?

3. Integrity (the value s/he hold is similar to yours, or you feel is acceptable)

Q9. Please select and name the two most important factors (related to integrity) listed below that are important for you generally when deciding to trust a staff? (Highlight your selection)

Ask Leader
Consistency (consistent manners to everyone, actions match words)
Fairness
Maintaining confidentiality in the workplace
Honesty
Acknowledge others' efforts
Openness (share information)
Others (Type here)

Q10. Why do you believe these two to be important? Why do you think these factors are more important than others?

Q11. Do your current staff possess the factors you selected in the list? What are the implications of this answer for the level of trust you have in your staff?

Q12. We've discussed ability, kindness, integrity, which one do you think is the most important one when you decide to trust a staff generally?

Aspect Two Followership

4. Passive followership

Q13. Which of the following statements/situations related to staff behaviours have you experienced in your workplace? Choose all that apply. (Highlight your selection)

Obeys my orders and just completes what I asked.
Cares about their personal performance rather than team or organizational performance.
I need to explicitly outline their job and organisational rules for them.
Doesn't point out my mistakes, even if they notice them.
Reports all details to me and waits for me to make decisions.
Rarely shares opinions with me, even if I ask.

Q14. Based on responses above relating to staff behaviours, how does it influence your trust in them? Do you like staff like this?

5. Proactive followership

Q15. Which of the following statements/situations related to staff behaviours have you experienced in your workplace? Choose all that apply. (Highlight your selection)

I can give my staff an assignment without supervision, knowing they can complete it.
Takes the initiative on issues and comes up with solutions.
My staff are willing to work beyond their duties to benefit the company.
My staff rarely rely on me, and they can solve problems during work by themselves.
Staff take the initiative to share their opinions with me.
They question my decisions if they think they are not appropriate and discuss it with me.

Q16. Based on responses above relating to staff behaviours, how does it influence your trust in them? Do you like staff like this compared to the last one?

Q17. Are there any other qualities/behaviours that you would like to see in your staff that would help you to trust them more?

Aspect Three Exchanges and Interactions

6. Reciprocal exchanges

Q18. To what extent do you think mutual respect will influence your trust level on your staff?

Q19. Do feelings such as being valued and/or being emotionally supported by your staff influence your perceptions of trust?

7. Interactions

Q20. Similarity

How do you think similarity and/or diversity in your team is relevant to trust? Why do you think this similarity and diversity affect your perception of trust?

Q21. Reputation

Do you believe that the opinions/views of other workers have influenced your perceptions of other staff members? Do those opinions and views influence your trust in the particular staff members?

Q22. Friendship

How much do you think personal friendships (i.e. established before working together, or built during working together) are relevant to trust in your staff members?

Final Parts

Q26. We've already discussed ability, benevolence, integrity, staff behaviours, mutual respect, similarity, reputations, and friendship; of all these things we have discussed, which are the most important in terms of building trust in the workplace? Why?

Q27. Do you have anything to add with regard to what influences your perception of trust in the workplace?

Q28. Does the COVID (lockdown situation) influenced the trust relationships between you and your followers? How does it influence the trust relationships? (e.g. influence communication, working efficiency etc.) To what extend do you think it influenced your trust relationship?

Could you please introduce one or two of your staff who you trust to take the interview, because I'm concerning trust-building in two sides, both perspectives from leaders and followers are important.

I'm still looking for participants to join the interview, do you mind introducing me to some of your friends who are in this industry to take the interview?

I'll email you a report with results after I finished all interviews.

Appendix C Interview questions for staff

Q0. Can you describe your team in terms of (e.g. Size, Age range, Gender, Educational background, Ethnicity)?

Aspect One Characteristics

1. Ability (skills, competences, expertise in a specific domain)

Q1. Please select and name the three most important factors (related to ability) listed below that are important for you generally when deciding to trust a leader? (Highlight your selection)

Ask Staff
Education background
Relevant experiences
Specialised capabilities
Verbal & Written communication skills
Problem-solving skills
Time-management skills
Decision-making skills
Team-working skills
Others (Type here, or we can discuss later)

Q2. Why do you believe these three to be important? Why do you think these factors are more important than others?

Q3. Does your current manager possess the factors you selected in the list? What are the implications of this answer for the level of trust you have in your supervisor/manager?

Q4. To what extend do you think ability will influence your trust level on your manager?

2. Benevolence (goodwill, kindness, altruism)

Q5. Please select and name the two most important factors (related to benevolence) listed below that are important for you generally when deciding to trust a leader? (Highlight your selection)

Ask staff
Volunteer to help others
Forgive & forget mistakes
Include others (allow others to talk)
Put organizational goal ahead of individual goal
Sincere to communicate and listen to your concerns

Loyalty
Others (Type here, or we can discuss later)

Q6. Why do you believe these two to be important? Why do you think these factors are more important than others?

Q7. Does your current manager possess the factors you selected in the list? What are the implications of this answer for the level of trust you have in your supervisor/manager?

Q8. To what extent do you think kindness will influence your trust level on your manager?

3. Integrity (the value s/he hold is similar to yours, or you feel is acceptable)

Q9. Please select and name the two most important factors (related to integrity) listed below that are important for you generally when deciding to trust a leader? (Highlight your selection)

Ask staff
Consistency (consistent manners to everyone, actions match words)
Fairness
Maintaining confidentiality in the workplace
Honesty
Acknowledge others' efforts
Openness (share information)
Others (Type here, or we can discuss later)

Q10. Why do you believe these two to be important? Why do you think these factors are more important than others?

Q11. Does your current manager possess the factors you selected in the list? What are the implications of this answer for the level of trust you have in your supervisor/manager?

Q12. We've discussed ability, kindness, integrity, which one do you think is the most important one when you decide to trust a manager generally?

Aspect Two Leadership

4. Transactional leadership

Q13. Which of the following statements/situations best describe your current manager/supervisor in your workplace? Choose all that apply. (Highlight your selection)

Provides recognition/rewards when I reach my goals.
As long as things are working, s/he doesn't try to change anything.
Tells me the standards I have to know to carry out my work.
Asks no more of me than what is absolutely essential.
S/he is content to let me continue working in the same ways.
Provides me with assistance in exchanges for my efforts.
I have experienced none of them above.

Q14. Based on how you answered the last question, how do these statement choices impact on your level of trust in your manager?

5. Transformational leadership

Q15. Which of the following statements/situations best describe your current manager/supervisor in your workplace? Choose all that apply. (Highlight your selection)

I'm proud to be associated with my manager.
Helps me to find meaning in my work.
Seeks differing perspectives and encourages me to rethink ideas when solving problems.
Talks to me about his/her most important values and beliefs.
Pays attention to and concerns staff who seem neglected.
Shows determination to accomplish what s/he sets out to do.
Encourages me to express my ideas and opinions.
Provides active and supportive communication with me.
I have experienced none of them above.

Q16. Based on how you answered the last question, how do these statement choices impact on your level of trust in your manager?

Q17. Are there any other leadership qualities/behaviours from the above table that you would like to see in your supervisor that would help you to trust them more?

Aspect Three Exchanges and Interactions

6. Reciprocal exchanges

Q18. To what extent do you think mutual respect will influence your trust level on your manager?

Q19. Do feelings such as being valued and/or being emotionally supported by your manager influence your perceptions of trust?

7. Interactions

Q20. How do you think similarity and/or diversity in your team is relevant to trust? Why do you think this similarity and diversity affect your perception of trust?

Q21. Reputation

Do you believe that the opinions/views of other workers have influenced your perceptions of the leader? Do those opinions and views influence your trust in the leader?

Q22. Friendship

How much do you think personal friendships (i.e. established before working together, or built during working together) are relevant to trust in your leader?

Final Parts

Q26. We've already discussed ability, benevolence, integrity, leaders behaviours, mutual respect, similarity, reputations, and friendship; of all these things we have discussed, which are the most important in terms of building trust in the workplace? Why?

Q27. Do you have anything to add with regard to what influences your perception of trust in the workplace?

Q28. Does the COVID (lockdown situation) influenced the trust relationships between you and your leaders? How does it influence the trust relationships? (e.g. influence communication, working efficiency etc.) To what extent do you think it influenced your trust relationship?

I'm looking for participants to join the interview, do you mind introducing me to some of your friends who are in this industry to take the interview?

I'll email you a report with results after I finished all interviews.

Appendix D Focus group questions

A. Individual characteristics

From the initial analysis of interview records, both leaders and followers agreed communication skill is important for trust-building in the workplace. In addition, from the perspective of leaders, integrity and honesty are mostly mentioned. From the perspective of followers, kindness, benevolence and integrity are frequently mentioned.

What are your opinions towards these differences and similarities? Do you think there are any other characteristics could influence trust-building between leaders and followers in the workplace?

B. Behaviours

Leader-follower relationship shows in behaviours as cooperation, rejection, competition, supervision, obedience etc. From the initial analysis of interview records, proactive followership behaviours (followers who have the initiative to solve problems, prefer to share opinions) and transformational leadership behaviours (leaders who are supportive, encourage followers, provide growth opportunities, empower followers) are considered as trustworthy behaviours in the workplace.

How do you think behaviours could influence leader-follower relationship? What kind of leader-follower relationship could facilitate trust relationships in the workplace? Are there other behaviours could influence your trust on others in the workplace?

C. Exchanges and long-term interactions

*From the initial analysis of interview records, leaders and followers agreed **mutual respect** are essential for trust-building, and **gossip** is detrimental to trust-building in the workplace. While leaders and followers have different opinions towards the influence of friendship and diversity of the team on trust. Most leaders mentioned **friendship** has no effect on trust-building and prefer to have boundaries in the workplace, while half of participated followers stated having a friendship with leaders could positively affect the trust relationships. In terms of **diversity**, leaders preferred to have a diverse team and agreed diversity could facilitate trust-building, while followers felt diversity is irrelevant to trust-building in the workplace.*

What are your opinions towards these differences and similarities? Do you think long-term interactions could influence trust-building between leaders and followers in the workplace?

D. External factors

Four external factors are mentioned that could affect leader-follower trust relationship in the workplace. These four external factors are organisational cultures/atmosphere, humour, Covid (working from home/hybrid working style), financial issues, commercial pressure.

What are your opinions towards these external factors? What external factors could facilitate trust-building in the workplace, and what external factors are detrimental to trust relationships in the workplace? Are there any other external factors could influence your trust on your leader/followers?

How do you think the relationships between organisational cultures/atmosphere (e.g. humour) and leader-follower trust in the workplace? Do you think the humour or organisational atmosphere an individual characteristic or a behaviour or a production of long-term interactions?

E. Final discussion

Any comments to add towards trust-building in the workplace between leaders and followers?

Do you feel there are any differences between building trust virtually and physically?

Appendix E Cover letter sent on LinkedIn and emails

LinkedIn

Hi, xxx

My name is Rui Ma, I'm a doctoral student of the University of Strathclyde. I'm now conducting a research project concerning trust-building factors between leaders and followers in Assistive Technology industry.

I did some research on your company, and noticed you are one of the leading SMEs in AT industry. Understanding trust-building factors from both leaders and followers' perspectives could be helpful to establish a healthy working environment and also develop organisational performance.

The approach of conducting the research is mainly doing interviews, and the duration of each interview will be controlled in 40 mins. In return for your insights and information, I will provide you with a report outlining the results.

At no point will you or your organisation be identified in the report. You and your organisation will be completely anonymised. Could you please help me to do the interview? If you are interested in my research, could you please email me or reply the message?

My email address is rui.ma@strath.ac.uk

Thanks for your time and looking forward to hearing from you.

Regards,

Rui

Email

Subject: PhD researcher from the University of Strathclyde

Dear xxxxxxx Team,

This is Rui Ma from the University of Strathclyde business school, sorry to bother you if there are any inconvenience. The purpose of this email is to ask for access to some of your leaders and followers to participate in my PhD research. I am conducting a research project at the University concerning **trust-building** between leaders and followers in small to medium sized enterprises (SMEs).

The project is particularly concerned with understanding the factors that facilitate trust-building between leaders and followers in small firms. The issue of trust building in SMEs is, and will become an increasingly,

important topic as we emerge from the pandemic. This is because, there are studies that show that trust between leaders and followers are helpful in establishing a healthy working atmosphere, increasing work efficiency and reducing costs. Understanding factors that could be helpful to build trust will therefore benefit yourself, and also your business.

I recently forwarded an email correspondence to you (date), I am just checking that you received the email, and am asking whether you are interested in participating in the research? Insights from both leaders and followers are essential to fully understand trust in working relationships. Therefore, your participation will involve the following:

At a minimum, an interview (within the limits of social distancing) with yourself to discuss the issues around trust between leaders and followers.

Potentially follow-up interviews (within the limits of social distancing) with several of your staff to gain their perspective on trust.

Do you have time recently to arrange a Zoom interview? If you are interested in my research, could you please email me back, and we can discuss more in detail.

Thank you for your time. Looking forward to hearing from you.

Kind regards,

Rui

Rui Ma

PhD researcher

Department of Work, Employment and Organisation

University of Strathclyde Business School,

199 Cathedral Street

Glasgow

G4 0QU

SCOTLAND, UK

Email: rui.ma@strath.ac.uk

Appendix F Consent form

Consent Form

Department of Work, Employment and Organisation

Title of the study:

An investigation of influential factors of leaders and followers trust relationships in UK SMEs: Studies in Assistive Technology and mental health industries

- I confirm that I have read and understood the Participant Information Sheet for the above project and the researcher has answered any queries to my satisfaction.
- I confirm that I have read and understood the Privacy Notice for Participants in Research Projects and understand how my personal information will be used and what will happen to it (i.e. how it will be stored and for how long).
- I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw from the project at any time, up to the point of completion, without having to give a reason and without any consequences.
- I understand that I can request the withdrawal from the study of personal information that identifies me and that whenever possible researchers will comply with my request.
- I understand that anonymised data (i.e. data that do not identify me personally) cannot be withdrawn once they have been included in the study.
- I understand that any information recorded in the research will remain confidential and no information that identifies me will be made publicly available.
- I consent to being a participant in the project.
- I consent to being audio and/or video recorded as part of the project

Yes

/

No

(PRINT NAME)	
Signature of Participant:	Date:

Appendix G Information sheet for participants.



Participant Information Sheet

Department of Work, Employment and Organisation

Title of the study

An investigation of influential factors of leaders and followers trust relationships in UK SMEs: Studies in Assistive Technology and mental health industries

Introduction

My name is Rui Ma. I am a PhD student in the Department of Work, Employment and Organisation at Strathclyde University. I am carrying out research on managers/supervisors and employees in the SMEs for my thesis.

What is the purpose of this investigation?

The main purpose of the research is to investigate different antecedent factors of **Trust Building** among managers and employees in SMEs.

Do you have to take part?

No, you do not need to take part in the research. Your participation is entirely voluntary. Should you agree to take part, you can withdraw at any point.

What will you do in the project?

Your participation will involve taking part in an interview with me via Zoom. The interview should last approximately 30 mins. If you agree to take part, I will contact you within the next couple of weeks and we can arrange a time and place that suits best. For the purposes of accuracy, and with your agreement, I intend to record the interview to ensure that I capture all the relevant information from your response. I can also take detailed notes if this suits you better.

Why have you been invited to take part?

I will be interviewing a number of people who will be in a position to help me better understand Trust-Building factors among managers and employees. I will be interviewing directors, senior managers and line managers and hopefully some of their team members. Insights from both leaders and followers are valuable for my research.

What are the potential risks to you in taking part?

This research will need to interview both managers and their employees at the same workplace, your responses will be kept secure and you, as well as the organisation for which you work, will not be identifiable. Your responses will be combined with responses from other participants to uncover key relevant themes, but no specific participant or organisation will be linked to specific comments in the final report.

What information is being collected?

I have a series of questions that I want to ask you about trust building factors between leaders and followers, I will record the meeting via Zoom, or if this is not acceptable to you, I will take notes of what you say.

Who will have access to the information?

In line with the University of Strathclyde's Privacy Policy (attached), the information you provide will be treated as confidential. No-one other than myself and my supervisors will have access to this data.

Where will the information be stored and how long will it be kept for?

This data will be securely stored during and after the writing of my thesis, after the writing of thesis the data may be used to publish articles. No individuals or organisations will be identified in my thesis. Any illustrative quotes that I may use will be anonymised.

Thank you for reading this information; please ask any questions if you are unsure about what is written here.

What happens next?

I will analyse the data from the interview along with other similar data I am collecting from other participants and then present the results in my thesis.

Researcher Contact Details:

Rui Ma
rui.ma@strath.ac.uk

Chief Investigator details:

This thesis is supervised by Prof. Ian Cunningham who can be contacted at 01415483972, or by email at ian.cunningham@strath.ac.uk, and Dr Tony McCarthy who can be contacted at 01415483113, or by email at joseph.mccarthy@strath.ac.uk.

This investigation has been granted ethical approval by the Research Ethics Committee of the Department of Work, Employment and Organisation.

If you have any questions/concerns, during or after the investigation, or wish to contact an independent person to whom any questions may be directed or further information may be sought from, please contact:

Dr Tony McCarthy
Chair, Department Ethics Committee
Department of Work, Employment, and Organisation
University of Strathclyde
Sir William Duncan Building
130 Rottenrow
Glasgow

Appendix H Privacy notice

Privacy Notice for Participants in Research Projects Introduction

The University of Strathclyde is committed to transparency and to complying with its responsibilities under data protection legislation. This privacy notice sets out important information regarding how we use your information and your rights under the legislation. This privacy notice relates to individuals participating in research projects led by the University of Strathclyde.

Please note that this standard information should be considered alongside information provided by the researcher for each project, which is usually in the form of a Participant Information Sheet (PIS). The PIS will include further details about how personal information is processed in the particular project, including: what data is being processed; how it is being stored; how long it will be retained for, and any other recipients of the personal information. It is usually given to participants before they decide whether or not they want to participate in the research.

Data controller and the data protection officer

The University of Strathclyde is the data controller under data protection legislation. This means that the University is responsible for how your personal data is used and for responding to any requests from you in relation to your personal data.

Any enquiries regarding data protection should be made to the University's Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@strath.ac.uk.

Legal basis for processing your personal information

If you are participating in a research project, we may collect your personal information. The type of information that we collect will vary depending on the project. Our basis for collecting this information is outlined below:

Type of information

Personal information and associated research data collected for the purposes of conducting research.

Certain types of personal information such as information about an individual's race, ethnic origin, politics, religion, trade union membership, genetics, biometrics (where used for ID purposes), health, sex life, or sexual orientation are defined as 'Special Category' data under the legislation.

Basis for processing

It is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest.

It is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest and

It is necessary for scientific or historical research purposes in accordance with the relevant legislation (Data Protection Act 2018, Schedule 1, Part 1, Para 4).

Criminal conviction / offence data

It is necessary for the performance of a task carried out in the public interest and is processed in accordance with Article 10 of the General Data Protection Regulation and the Data Protection Act 2018, Schedule 1, Part 1, Para 4.

Details of transfers to third countries and safeguards

For some projects, personal information may be processed outside the EU. This will normally only be done when research is taking place in locations outside the EU. If this happens, the University will ensure that appropriate safeguards are in place. You will be fully informed about any transferring of data outside the EU and associated safeguards, usually in the Participant Information Sheet.

Sharing data

If data will be shared with other individuals or organisations, you will be advised of this in the PIS.

Retention of consent forms

If you participate in a research project, you may be asked to sign a participant consent form. Consent forms will typically be retained by the University for at least as long as the identifiable research data are retained. In most cases they will be retained for longer, the exact time frame will be determined by the need for access to this information in the unfortunate case of an unanticipated problem or a complaint. 5 years after the research is completed will be suitable for many projects, but beyond 20 years will be considered for any longitudinal or 'high risk' studies involving children, adults without capacity or a contentious research outcome.

Data subject rights

You have the right to: be informed about the collection and use of your personal data; to request access to the personal data we hold about you; you are entitled to request to have personal data rectified if it is inaccurate or incomplete; you have the right to request to object to your data being processed and you can request to restrict the processing of your personal information. To exercise these rights please contact dataprotection@strath.ac.uk.

However, please note - in some research projects, it may **not be** possible to provide these rights because doing so would prevent or seriously impair the achievement of the research purpose. For instance, if you are participating in a focus group with multiple participants, if the research has progressed to a later stage of analysis, or findings have been published, it may not be possible to remove any one individual's personal data without having an adverse effect on the entire dataset.

Right to complain to supervisory authority

If you have any concerns/issues with the way the University has processed your personal data, you can contact the Data Protection Officer at dataprotection@strath.ac.uk. You also have the right to lodge a complaint against the University regarding data protection issues with the Information Commissioner's Office (<https://ico.org.uk/concerns/>).

Appendix I Newfound themes

Second order codes (themes)	Third order codes
Dependable	Reliability
Can be counted on	
Certain qualifications (Certificates)	Ability
Relevant experiences	
Specialised capabilities	
Verbal & Written communication skills	
Problem-solving skills	
Time-management skills	
Decision-making skills	
Team-working skills	
Learning ability	
Volunteer to help others	
Forgive & forget mistakes	
Include others	
Devotion	
Sincerity	
Loyalty	
Kindness	
Empathy	
Consistency	Integrity
Fairness	
Maintaining confidentiality	
Honesty	
Acknowledge others' efforts	
Openness	
Confidence	
Enthusiastic	
Independent critical thinking (ICT)	Proactive followership
Active engagement (AE)	

Self-awareness	
Reflective	
Knowledge sharing/collective knowledge	
Timely feedback	
Dependent uncritical thinking (DUT)	Passive followership
Passive engagement (PE)	
Idealized influence-attributes (IDA)	Transformational leadership
Idealized influence-behaviour (IDB)	
Inspirational motivation (IMOT)	
Intellectual stimulation (ISTM)	
Individualized consideration (ICON)	
Empowering behaviours	
Training opportunities	
Contingent reward (CREW)	Transactional leadership
Management-by-exception-active (MBEA)	
Management by-exception-passive (MBEP)	
Mutual respect	Mutual respect
Emotional supports	Supports
Being valued	
Similarity	Diversity and similarity
Diversity	
Recommendation	Reputation
Gossip	
Friendship	Friendship
Working from home	Covid-19 pandemic
Working remotely	
Management structure	
Online social events	
Commercial pressure	Commercial pressure
Brexit	Brexit

A sense of humour	Others
IT efficiency	

Appendix J Definition of SMEs

1) Qualitative criteria

The most well-known qualitative criterion for defining a SME is independent ownership (Loecher, 2000). According to Recklies (2001), SMEs specialise in specific market niches and frequently dominate their market segment or their specific unique features. Osteryoung and Newman (1993) proposed defining small and medium-sized enterprises as entities that are not publicly traded and in which the owners must personally guarantee any existing funding. The most recent qualitative classification of SMEs is supported by IFRS for SMEs. They define a small and medium-sized enterprise (SME) as “an entity that does not have public accountability and publishes general purpose financial statements for external users” (IFRS, 2017).

2) Quantitative criteria

There are several quantitative criteria for SMEs developed by the European Commission, World Bank, and OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development). These quantitative criteria distinguish SMEs from larger corporations primarily based on employee headcount and financial ceilings. Though there are slight differences in how SMEs are defined in different industries in Europe, the simple and common consensus to define SMEs on a quantitative level is companies with 1-249 employees (Curran & Blackburn, 2000). There is no specific definition of SMEs in the UK yet, and the definition is currently the same as in other European countries (ibid). SMEs’ definitions and detailed information are summarised below.

The European Commission’s definition of SMEs was updated once. The following table compares the European Commission’s two recommended definitions of SMEs.

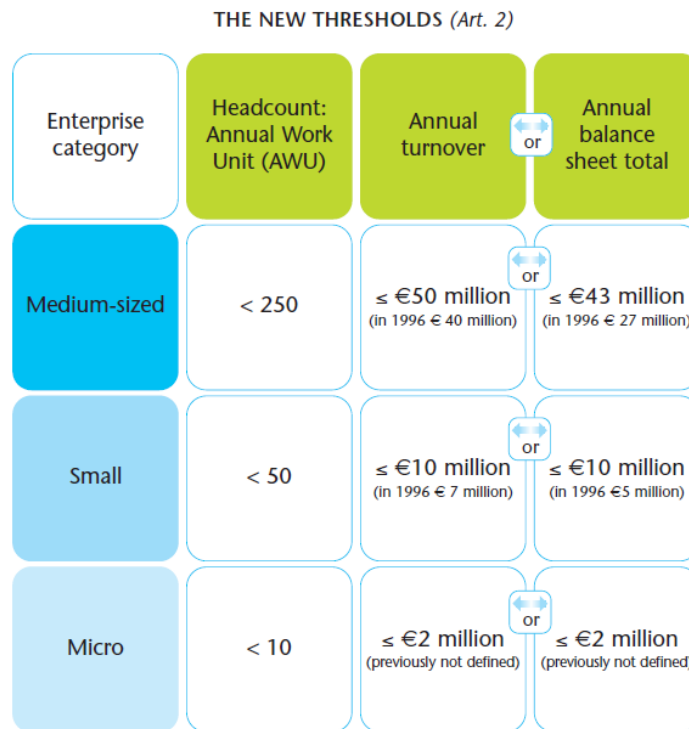
DEFINITION OF SMES, CREATED AND UPDATED BY EUROPEAN COMMISSION

Recommendation 1996/280/EC 3/April/1996	Recommendation 2003/361/EC 20/May/2003
<p>1. Small and medium-sized enterprises, hereinafter referred to as 'SMEs', are defined as enterprises which have fewer than 250 employees, and/or have an annual turnover not exceeding ECU 40 million, or an annual balance-sheet total not exceeding ECU 27 million.</p> <p>2. Where it is necessary to distinguish between small and medium-sized enterprises, the 'small enterprise' is defined as an enterprise which has fewer than 50 employees and/or has an annual turnover not exceeding ECU 7 million, or an annual balance-sheet total not exceeding ECU 5 million.</p> <p>3. Independent enterprises are those which are not owned as to 25 % or more of the capital or the voting rights by one enterprise, or jointly by several enterprises, falling outside the definition of an SME or a small enterprise, whichever may apply. This threshold may be exceeded in the following two cases:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -- if the enterprise is held by public investment corporations, venture capital companies or institutional investors, provided no control is exercised either individually or jointly, -- if the capital is spread in such a way that it is not possible to determine by whom it is held and if the enterprise declares that it can legitimately presume that it is not owned as to 25 % or more by one enterprise, or jointly by several enterprises, falling outside the definitions of an SME or a small enterprise, whichever may apply. 	<p>1. The category of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) is made up of enterprises which employ fewer than 250 persons and which have an annual turnover not exceeding EUR 50 million, and/or an annual balance sheet total not exceeding EUR 43 million.</p> <p>2. Within the SME category, a small enterprise is defined as an enterprise which employs fewer than 50 persons and whose annual turnover and/or annual balance sheet total does not exceed EUR 10 million.</p> <p>3. Within the SME category, a microenterprise is defined as an enterprise which employs fewer than 10 persons and whose annual turnover and/or annual balance sheet total does not exceed EUR 2 million.</p>

Source: European Commission, 2005.

The reason for updating the definition is that more and more micro enterprises are being created, and the definition of micro enterprises improved the financial thresholds for them, which could help them tackle the problems they may encounter at the beginning of their company, particularly during the start-up phase (European Commission, 2005). As the global economy develops, price and productivity developments will allow a number of SMEs to maintain their SMEs' status and ensure their eligibility for support measures; while staff headcount thresholds remain at their previous levels, raising them would have diluted the measures tailored for SMEs (*ibid*).

Since the quantitative limits of micro-entities in Recommendation No. 2003/361/EC are too high, the European Commission proposed in 2009 to reduce the quantitative limits to “A: Balance sheet total EUR 500 000; B: Net turnover: EUR 1 000 000; C: Average number of employees during the financial year: 10” (European Commission, 2009), in order to minimize the burden of financial reporting because most of the times the micro financial reporting requirements are not proportionate to their specific accounting needs (Buculescu, 2013). The Figure below shows the new thresholds of the quantitative criteria of SMEs by European Commission.



DEFINITION OF MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM-SIZED ENTERPRISES (EC SME DEFINITION)

Source: European Commission. (2015). *User guide to the SME definition*. Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union.

Furthermore, at the EU level, the official definition for financial reporting purpose is only in some countries, as shown in the table below, and there are other financial criteria in the report for Austria, Denmark, Germany, Netherlands, Slovenia, Belgium, Spain, and Sweden (European Commission, 2011).

UK SME DEFINITION FOR ACCOUNTING PURPOSE

Medium-sized enterprises	Small-sized enterprises	Micro enterprises

<p>In accordance with the Companies Act 2006, Section 465, a company qualifies as medium-sized if meets at least two of the following conditions for two consecutive years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - net turnover of not more than £ 25.900.000 (€28,412,000); - balance sheet total of not more than £12,900,000 (€14,151,000); - not more than 250 employees (average). <p>PLCs are excluded from the medium-size category.</p>	<p>In accordance with the Companies Act 2006, Section 382, a company qualifies as Small-sized if meets at least two of the following conditions for two consecutive years:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - net turnover of not more than £6,500,000 (€7,130,000); - balance sheet total of not more than £3,260,000 (€3,576,000); - average number of employees must be not more than 50. 	<p>Micro-size entities are not defined for accounting or financial reporting purpose</p>
--	---	--

Source: European Commission. (2011). Study on Accounting requirements for SMEs Final Report Submitted by Can Interpreta. Directorate-General for Enterprise and Industry, European Commission.

Definition from World Bank

The SME market sector includes a wide range of businesses of various sizes (as defined by the number of employees, working capital, and/or annual revenue) and operating in a variety of industries. Companies can be slightly larger than microenterprises at one end of the spectrum and nearly the size of large corporations at the other (see the figure below). SMEs are defined by the IFC as registered businesses with fewer than 300 employees. This category can be further narrowed by distinguishing between SMEs and microenterprises based on the number of employees. SMEs are further classified as small enterprises (SEs) and medium enterprises (MEs) (MEs). Other criteria for defining the sector include sales, assets, and loan or investment size (IFC_WB, 2012).

NOTE ON ENTERPRISE DEFINITIONS FOR MICRO, SMALL AND MEDIUM FIRMS			
Global Financial Markets categorizes its clients' sub-borrowers according to the following definitions:			
(1) Microenterprise if loan < US\$10,000 at origination			
(2) Small Business if loan < US\$100,000 at origination			
(3) Medium Business if loan <US\$ 1 million at origination (US\$2 million for more advanced countries)			
Technically, the above definitions are a proxy for the official IFC definition, based on an enterprise qualifying under two of the following three indicators, as follows:			
Indicator	Micro Enterprise	Small Enterprise	Medium Enterprise
Employees	<10	10<50	50<300
Total Assets	<\$100,000	\$100,000<\$3 million	\$3 million < \$15 million
Total Annual Sales	<\$100 000	\$100,000<\$3 million	\$3 million < \$15 million

IFC'S WORKING DEFINITION FOR SME

Source: International Finance Corporation, World Bank Group. (2012). Interpretation Note on Small and Medium Enterprises and Environmental and Social Risk Management. Washington: International Finance Corporation (IFC).

Definition from OECD (Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development)

Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) are independent, non-subsidiary businesses with fewer than a certain number of employees. This number varies across countries. In the European Union, the most common upper limit for designating a SME is 250 employees. Some countries, however, set the limit at 200 employees, whereas the United States considers SMEs to be firms with fewer than 500 employees (OECD, 2005).

Small firms are generally those with fewer than 50 employees, while micro-enterprises have fewer than 10, or in some cases, 5 workers. Table below shows the summary criteria of OECD definition of SMEs (OECD, 2005).

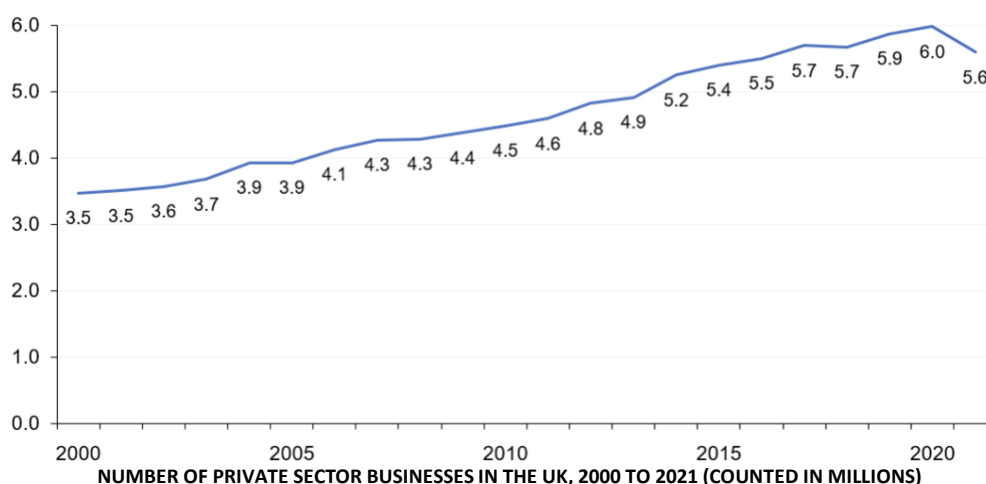
CRITERIA OF OECD DEFINITION OF SMES

Medium-sized enterprises	Small-sized enterprises	Micro enterprises
Between 50-249 employees	Between 10-49 employees	1. Between 1-4 employees (small micro) 2. Between 5-9 employees (micro-entities)

Source: OECD. (2005). *OECD Glossary of Statistical Terms- Small and Medium-sized Enterprises (SMEs) Definition*.

SMEs, as a feature for business practitioners, have fewer employees and lower entry barriers, and they allow people to start their own businesses (Christensen Parsons & Fairbourne, 2010). SMEs differ from larger corporations in a number of ways. The section that follows will outline the features of SMEs, including their role in society and managerial strategies, before discussing the differences in trust relationships between SMEs and larger corporations.

At the start of 2021, the UK had 5.5 million small businesses (0-49 employees) and 35,600 medium-sized businesses (50-249 employees) (BEIS, 2021a). In comparison to 2020, the number of private sector businesses decreased by 6.5% (389,600) (ibid). Figure below depicts the number of private sector businesses in the United Kingdom from 2000 to 2021.



Source: BEIS, 2021. *Business population estimates for the UK and regions 2021: statistical release*.

UK SMEs contributed to societal employment and turnover ([BIES, 2021a](#)). At the beginning of 2021, the total employment in SMEs was 16.3 million (61% of total), with a turnover estimate of £2.3 trillion (52% of total) ([ibid](#)). SMEs are considered the backbone and a key feature of business in the UK economy because their development benefits economic growth and job creation ([Savlovschi & Robu, 2011](#); [Lukács, 2005](#)).

Appendix K Coding template

Coding template				
First order codes (significant statements, sentences and words)	Second order codes (themes)	Third order codes	Aggregated codes (key clusters)	
Responsible	Dependable	Reliability	Individual characteristics	
Can be relied on; his/her behaviour is predictable	Can be counted on			
Has certain educational background; is qualified	Certain qualifications (Certificates)	Ability		
Has certain experiences in the industry	Relevant experiences			
Has knowledge to solve problems	Specialised capabilities			
Has the ability to clarify problems; good at communicating with clients and writing reports; listen to my concerns and solve it	Verbal & Written communication skills			
Evaluate options; come up solutions when facing emergency with clients; evaluate outcomes	Problem-solving skills			
Complete work on time; accomplish goals	Time-management skills			
Contribute to organisational success; creativity	Decision-making skills			
Able to cooperate with others; has willingness to share; seek for collaboration outcomes	Team-working skills			
Has initiative to learn new things; curiosity	Learning ability			
Offer help to others; is willing to help me out	Volunteer to help others			Benevolence
Forgive mistakes and move on	Forgive & forget mistakes			
Allow others to talk	Include others			
Seek for long-term survival; put organizational goal ahead of individual goal	Devotion			
Sincere to communicate and listen to my concerns	Sincerity			
Accountability	Loyalty			
Welfare; allow sick leave	Kindness			
Concern others; understand others	Empathy			
Consistent manners to everyone, actions match words	Consistency	Integrity		
Justice; provide the same opportunity to people	Fairness			
Keep clients individual information carefully; mind employees' individual issues	Maintaining confidentiality			
Be honest to mistakes	Honesty			
Acknowledge others' efforts; give credits to others	Acknowledge others' efforts			
Express true feeling about important issues	Openness			
Self-assurance; self-trust	Confidence			Others
Vigour; passionate	Enthusiastic			
Employees are able to complete works by themselves	Independent critical thinking (ICT)	Proactive followership		Leader/follower behaviours

Take initiative to solve problems; be willing to communicate	Active engagement (AE)		
Self-consciousness; monitor own behaviours	Self-awareness		
Be willing to reflect on previous experiences and learn from them	Reflective		
Share information with others	Knowledge sharing/collective knowledge		
Provide feedback on time	Timely feedback		
Obey rules; rarely share opinions	Dependent uncritical thinking (DUT)	Passive followership	
Rarely point out mistakes	Passive engagement (PE)		
Be proud to work with the leader	Idealized influence-attributes (IDA)	Transformational leadership	
Help employees to find the value of the work	Idealized influence-behaviour (IDB)		
Motivates employees	Inspirational motivation (IMOT)		
Encourage employees to express themselves; encourage employees to rethink	Intellectual stimulation (ISTM)		
Provide active and supportive communication	Individualized consideration (ICON)		
Empower and authorities employees; provide opportunities for them to grow	Empowering behaviours		
Provide training opportunities	Training opportunities		
Exchange rewards with efforts; provide rewards for good performance	Contingent reward (CREW)	Transactional leadership	
Monitor and detect mistakes; micro management	Management-by-exception-active (MBEA)		
Rarely intervene with management process	Management by-exception-passive (MBEP)		
Respect daily routine; respect decision making	Mutual respect	Mutual respect	
Provide supports when feel sad or being sick	Emotional supports	Supports	
Value individual efforts	Being valued		
Gender; age; ethnicity	Similarity	Diversity and similarity	Exchanges and interactions
Culture backgrounds	Diversity		
Recommendation letter; positive feedback	Recommendation	Reputation	
Negative; daily chat; information exchange	Gossip		
Close relationship; boundaries	Friendship	Friendship	
Working efficiency; meeting frequency; working atmosphere; balance of work and life	Working from home	Covid-19 pandemic	External factors and others
Time differences; flexible working time	Working remotely		
Supervision via software; micro or macro online management	Management structure		
Christmas event; weekly quiz	Online social events		
Balance of demands and supply	Commercial pressure		
Change of policies	Brexit	Brexit	

Working atmosphere; relax	A sense of humour	Others	
Meeting management; technical issues	IT efficiency		