

Doctoral School of Regional and Business Administration Sciences

Szechenyi Istvan University, Győr

Brigitta Bánhidi

THE POWER OF ONE-TO-ONE

Doctoral dissertation

Supervisor: Attila Kurucz, PhD

Hungary, 2025



Brigitta Bánhidi

**THE POWER OF ONE-TO-ONE
DISCUSSIONS IN THE HYBRID WORKING
ENVIRONMENT**

Doctoral dissertation

Supervisor: Attila Kurucz, PhD

Doctoral School of Regional and Business Administration Sciences

Szechenyi Istvan University, Győr

Hungary, 2025

AUTHOR'S DECLARATION

No portion of the work referred to in this dissertation has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or other university or other institution of learning.

Furthermore, this dissertation contains no material previously written and published by another person, except where an appropriate acknowledgment is made in the form of bibliographical references.

Brigitta Bánhidi

July, 2025, Győr

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to express my deepest gratitude to all those who have supported me throughout my PhD journey.

First and foremost, I extend my sincere thanks to my mentor, Dr. Zoltán Baracska, and my Supervisor, Dr. Attila Kurucz, for their invaluable guidance, encouragement, and insightful feedback. Your expertise and unwavering support have been instrumental in completing this dissertation.

The ever inspiring environment provided by the Széchenyi University's Doctoral School of Regional Sciences and Business Administration on Transdisciplinarity specialization has been fundamental in my academic growth. I extend my sincere thanks to Professor László Komlósi for his continuous support, and to Kitty Szabó for her precise administrative assistance.

My heartfelt gratitude goes towards my ex-classmates, and my inspiring business and scientific partners for the past four years. Judit Bilinovics-Sipos, Gergely Hódosi, Attila Miklós, your willingness to contribute your time, mental and emotional support and insights was crucial to the success of my PhD journey.

I am forever thankful to my husband and my daughters, for their unwavering love and patience throughout the whole process. Your encouragement has been my greatest motivation.

Thank you all for making this achievement possible.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

AUTHOR’S DECLARATION.....	2
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS.....	3
TABLE OF CONTENTS	4
LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES.....	5
INTRODUCTION.....	6
1. Context and Significance	6
2. Research Focus and Development	9
3. Overview of the Research Papers and the Research Questions	10
4. Research Design and Methodological Overview.....	14
5. Key Contributions to the Field.....	17
6. Structure of the Dissertation.....	19
EVOLUTION OF IDEAS.....	21
1. Phases of Research and Sequential Development	21
2. The Tool and Personal Contribution	24
3. Transdisciplinary Contributions and Broader Implications	26
FULL TEXT RESEARCH PAPERS.....	27
1. PAPER 1	28
2. PAPER 2	42
3. PAPER 3	54
4. PAPER 4	66
5. PAPER 5	79
CONCLUSION AND REFLECTIONS	100
1. Synthesis of Novel Contributions	100
2. Academic Implications	102
3. Managerial Implications.....	103
LIMITATIONS.....	105
FUTURE DIRECTIONS.....	106
GLOSSARY.....	108
REFERENCES.....	110

LIST OF TABLES AND FIGURES

Figure 1. Overview of research arc	10
Table 1. Summary table of research papers.....	12
Figure 2. Concept map of PhD research.....	13
Figure 3. Concept map of "WOW-Ways of Working..."	22
Figure 4. Concept map of "Navigating Leader-Subordinate Dynamics..."	23
Figure 5. The transdisciplinary approach behind the ALIGN Questionnaire	24
Figure 6. The Hybrid Alignment Leadership Framework for Workforce Advancement.....	101

INTRODUCTION

1. Context and Significance

This dissertation explores how structured communication, particularly one-to-one discussions, influences leader-follower relationships in hybrid working environments. The core research question guiding this inquiry is: *How do structured communication practices, particularly one-to-one discussions, impact leader-follower relationships in hybrid working environments?* In addressing this question, the dissertation contributes to both theory and practice by (1) synthesizing current leadership literature on hybrid work, (2) developing and validating a novel measurement tool (the ALIGN Questionnaire), and (3) offering evidence-based insights to help organizations enhance leadership effectiveness in distributed work models.

The landscape of corporate work has undergone unprecedented transformations in recent years, propelled by global changes such as technological advancements, geopolitical shifts, and the disruptive force of the COVID-19 pandemic. Central to this evolution is the emergence of *hybrid working environments*¹, a flexible arrangement that blends remote and in-office work, requiring a fundamental reevaluation of traditional *leadership* paradigms.

The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the adoption of hybrid work, creating an acute period of uncertainty for organizations (Kniffin et al., 2021). As companies scrambled to implement remote work policies, many struggled with communication, productivity, and team cohesion (Leonardelli, 2022). *Leaders* found themselves navigating unfamiliar terrain, attempting to maintain employee engagement and performance in an environment that lacked traditional workplace structures (Minbaeva, 2021). While hybrid working environments offer flexibility and efficiency, they also present unique challenges that demand new leadership strategies (Chamakiotis et al., 2021).

¹ meaning of terms printed in *Italic* are defined within the Glossary on page 108

Organizations transitioning to hybrid models faced significant challenges that required a shift from traditional hierarchical leadership models to adaptive leadership strategies focusing on *structured communication*, digital collaboration, and relationship-building.

One of the most pressing challenges was uncertainty in work structures. Many companies lacked a clear strategy for hybrid work implementation, leading to inconsistencies in expectations and processes (Chamakiotis et al., 2021; Tzabbar and Baburaj, 2019). The rapid transition to hybrid work required organizations to develop new frameworks for scheduling, task allocation, and performance monitoring, often without established guidelines. This uncertainty created confusion for both leaders and employees, highlighting the need for structured leadership approaches.

Another major issue was the new demand for communication. The absence of spontaneous workplace interactions necessitated structured, intentional communication to sustain collaboration (Mitchell and Brewer, 2021; Dinh et al., 2021). Research has shown that hybrid teams require clear, frequent, and purpose-driven communication practices to maintain cohesion and engagement (Kulshreshtha & Sharma, 2021). Leaders who actively structured communication routines, such as weekly check-ins and agenda-driven meetings, were more successful in reducing miscommunication and enhancing team alignment (Feitosa & Salas, 2021).

Trust and engagement also emerged as critical leadership concerns in hybrid environments. Studies indicate that maintaining trust within hybrid teams requires leaders to adopt proactive trust-building strategies (Maynard and Gilson, 2021). The invisibility factor in remote work can lead to employees feeling disconnected from their teams and undervalued by their leaders, necessitating intentional efforts to sustain engagement and psychological safety (Eisenberg & DiTomaso, 2021). Trust-building in hybrid teams is heavily dependent on consistent, structured communication, with research emphasizing the effectiveness of *one-to-one discussions* in maintaining strong *leader-follower relationships* (Golden, 2021).

Finally, the transition to hybrid work necessitated a redefinition of leadership roles. Leaders had to balance autonomy and oversight, ensuring that employees remained productive while also feeling supported (Purvanova and Bono, 2009). Traditional leadership approaches that relied on direct supervision and physical presence became obsolete, requiring leaders to develop skills in remote performance management, virtual coaching, and digital leadership (Jarvenpaa & Tanriverdi, 2003). Research has shown that leaders who embrace a coaching-

oriented approach, focusing on employee development rather than micromanagement, experience higher engagement levels and greater team performance (Olariu and Aldea, 2014).

In response to these challenges, leadership strategies in hybrid environments have evolved toward structured, trust-based, and communication-intensive models. These adaptations set the foundation for the next section, which explores the role of leadership in shaping hybrid work dynamics through structured communication practices.

Hybrid work has amplified the need for structured leadership approaches that ensure clarity, engagement, and accountability. The transition to hybrid work reshaped leadership priorities, shifting from authority-based models to relationship-focused, trust-based leadership (Bánhidi, 2021). As leaders lost physical visibility over *followers*, they had to compensate by strengthening communication quality, engagement, and motivation strategies (Newman & Ford, 2021).

Structured communication in hybrid leadership is not just about frequency but about intention and content. One-to-one discussions allow leaders to personalize their approach based on individual employee needs (Hambley, O'Neill & Kline, 2007). The medium of communication (e.g., virtual vs. face-to-face) is secondary to the consistency and predictability of interactions (Mitchell & Brewer, 2021). Leaders must be explicit about meeting structures, agendas, and follow-ups to compensate for the loss of spontaneous workplace interactions (Eubanks et al., 2016).

Hybrid work has also influenced employee outcomes by improving psychological safety, allowing employees to feel heard and valued, which contributes to higher engagement (Maynard & Gilson, 2021). Trust is built through consistency: Leaders who maintain regular one-on-one discussions reduce perceived distance, strengthening a sense of belonging despite physical separation (Eisenberg & DiTomaso, 2021). Studies further support the idea that effective leader-follower communication positively correlates with job satisfaction, performance, and retention (Golden, 2021).

Among various leadership strategies, one-to-one discussions have proven particularly effective in hybrid settings by providing individualized coaching, *feedback*, and engagement opportunities (Olariu & Aldea, 2014). Remote employees often experience a sense of

detachment from organizational goals, and leaders can bridge this gap through regular, structured, and purposeful conversations (Chamakiotis et al., 2021).

2. Research Focus and Development

Building upon the existing research on hybrid leadership, structured communication, and leader-follower relationships, this dissertation seeks to bridge the gap between theoretical models and practical applications. The increasing reliance on hybrid work arrangements has highlighted the critical role of structured one-on-one discussions in fostering engagement, trust, and alignment between leaders and employees (Eisenberg & DiTomaso, 2021; Feitosa & Salas, 2021). While previous studies have explored the general principles of effective leadership in remote and hybrid contexts (Newman & Ford, 2021; Maynard & Gilson, 2021), there remains a need to examine how intentional, structured communication practices contribute to *leadership effectiveness*. Research has shown that communication consistency, predictability, and content play a more significant role in relationship-building than the communication medium itself (Mitchell & Brewer, 2021; Kulshreshtha & Sharma, 2021).

Given the above presented insights, this dissertation formulates the following core research question that integrates all the findings and seeks to advance the discourse on leadership in hybrid environments.

How do structured communication practices, particularly one-to-one discussions, impact leader-follower relationships in hybrid working environments?

The next chapter will outline how the research questions evolved across the inquiry of our research, showing the progression from broader leadership challenges in hybrid work to the specific role of structured communication and leader-subordinate interactions. This development reflects the deepening focus of the dissertation and its contribution to understanding effective leadership in hybrid environments.

As the research aims to explore key aspects of hybrid leadership, we needed to define clear objectives that align with the research questions. Through these objectives, the study systematically leads to the formulation of hypotheses, ensuring a structured approach to

investigating leadership effectiveness in hybrid work environments. The key objectives of this research are thus to:

- define the challenges and shifts in leadership caused by hybrid working models,
- analyze the role of structured communication (e.g., one-to-one meetings) in sustaining engagement, trust, and team performance,
- develop and validate a leadership measurement tool (ALIGN Questionnaire) tailored for hybrid working environments,
- provide empirical evidence on how leaders can optimize their approach to hybrid workforce management,
- demonstrate the intellectual evolution of *hybrid leadership* research across the five papers.

3. Overview of the Research Papers and the Research Questions

The five papers included in this dissertation form a logical progression, illustrating the shift from conceptualization to empirical validation. Figure 1. provides a brief overview of the logical arc of the studies:

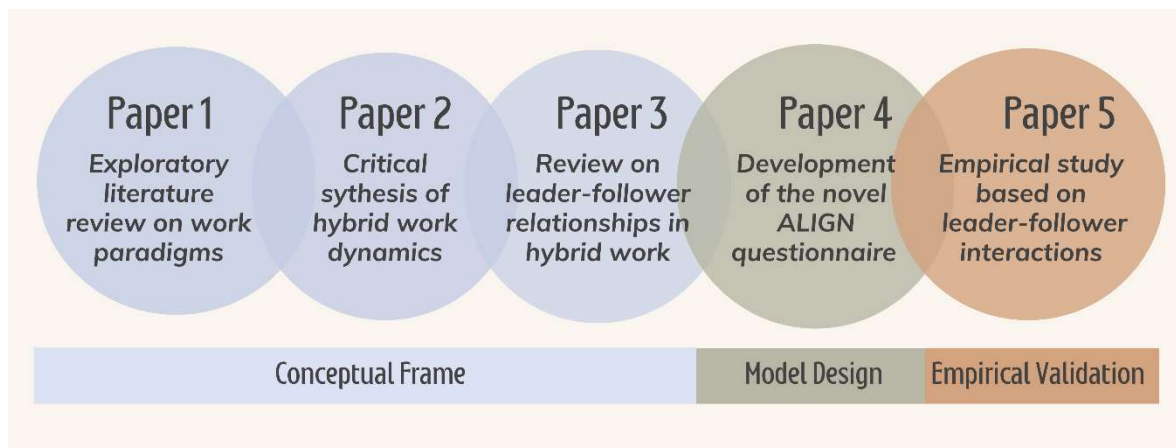


Figure 1. Overview of research arc, Source: own elaboration

Together, these papers illustrate how leadership in hybrid working environments has evolved from an initial reactive phase to a structured, strategic approach focused on individual engagement and communication. The following pages (*Table 1.*) provide a structured presentation of each paper by their key features.

<i>Category</i>	<i>Description</i>
Paper 1	A Paradigm Shift for Leaders to Cope with the Pandemic
Type	Critical literature review based on 20 papers
Research question	How has the COVID-19 pandemic changed leadership practices and what are the effects of the transition to hybrid working environments?
Findings	The study establishes the foundational shift in leadership due to hybrid work, discussing the increasing importance of emotional intelligence and leader adaptability. Leaders have to focus on performance outcomes and personal connection rather than physical presence.
Paper 2	WOW - Ways of Working - New Leadership in the Hybrid Corporate Reality
Type	Critical literature review based on 36 papers
Research question	How has the shift to hybrid work environments reshaped leadership practices, and what leadership behaviors and communication strategies are most effective in maintaining productivity and engagement in hybrid teams?
Findings	Relationship management is replacing decision-making as the core of leadership, highlighting the need for leaders to engage in structured communication to maintain engagement and productivity in hybrid work.
Paper 3	Navigating Leader-Subordinate Dynamics in the Hybrid Corporate Environment
Type	Critical literature review based on 35 papers
Research question	How do leader-subordinate interactions, particularly one-to-one discussions, impact employee engagement, trust, and well-being in the hybrid corporate environment, and what leadership strategies are most effective in sustaining cohesive team dynamics in a dispersed, technology-driven workspace?
Findings	Leaders have to balance task-oriented leadership with people-focused strategies. Outlines how psychological safety and engagement strategies shape team performance while highlighting the challenges of hybrid working environments in maintaining long-term engagement and trust.
Paper 4	Assessing Leadership in Hybrid Work – Developing a Comprehensive Framework for Leader-Follower Dynamics
Type	Conceptual paper – tool development
Research question	How can a measurement instrument capture leader-follower interactions in hybrid work environments, and what insights does it provide into leadership effectiveness, communication practices, and employee engagement?
Findings	The study presents the development of a novel measurement instrument that combines elements of the previously validated <i>Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)</i> , <i>Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ)</i> , and

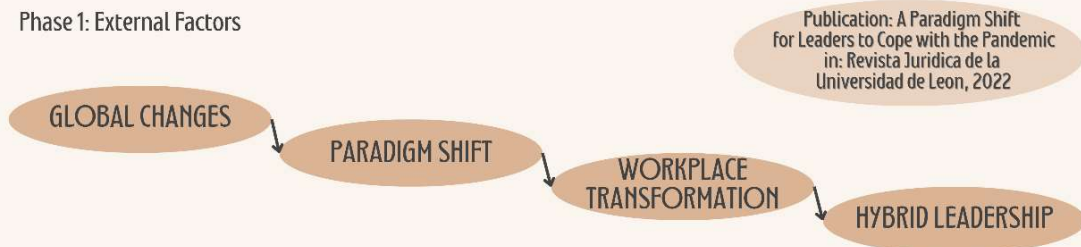
	<i>Coaching Behavior Scale (CBS)</i> , establishing a comprehensive framework for evaluating hybrid leadership effectiveness.
Paper 5	Bridging the Distance: How Interaction Frequency, Duration, Form and Topic Drive Leader-Follower Relationships in Hybrid Working Environments
Type	Empirical study validating the newly developed tool
Research question	How do the frequency, form, and duration of one-to-one discussions influence the perceived quality of leader-follower relationships in hybrid work environments?
Methodology	Using quantitative data, it tests multiple hypotheses on how structured communication enhances trust and engagement in hybrid teams through which it provides empirical validation of the novel questionnaire. It combines survey-based data collection and statistical analysis to validate the instrument's reliability and assess its implications for leadership effectiveness.
Hypotheses	<p>H1: A higher frequency of one-to-one interactions between leaders and followers in hybrid environments is associated with improved perceptions of leader-follower relationship quality (LMX).</p> <p>H2: In hybrid environments, in-person one-to-one interactions between leaders and followers are linked to higher perceived quality of leader-follower relationship (LMX).</p> <p>H3: Longer durations of one-to-one interactions between leaders and followers in hybrid settings are positively related to leaders' perceptions of leader-follower relationship quality (LMX).</p> <p>H4: The topics discussed in effective one-to-one interactions typically cover both operational matters relevant to the organization and personal matters significant to the follower.</p>
Findings	The study finds data demonstrating that frequent and structured one-to-one discussions improve leader-follower relationship through increased trust and engagement thereby confirms 3 out of the 4 hypotheses and provides a foundation for further research on how leaders can optimize hybrid engagement models.

Table 1. Summary table of research papers, Source: own elaboration

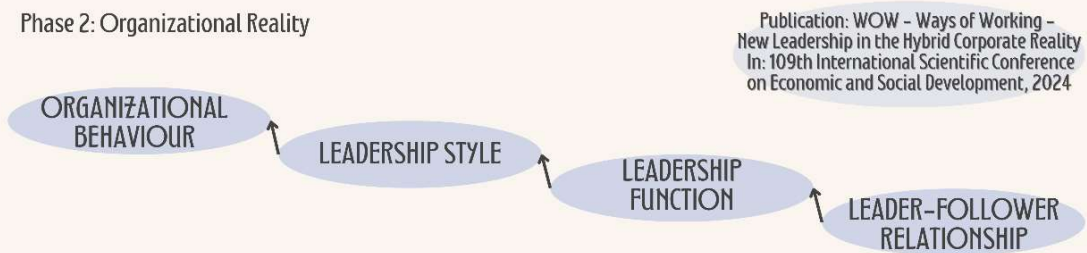
The following Figure 2. is the concept map of this dissertation which provides a structured visual representation of the research framework. It illustrates the key phases, core themes, and interconnections that shape the study of hybrid leadership and leader-follower relationships. It outlines the progression from initial literature review to the field study, highlighting the role of structured communication in hybrid working environments.

The Power of One-to-One Concept Map of PhD Research

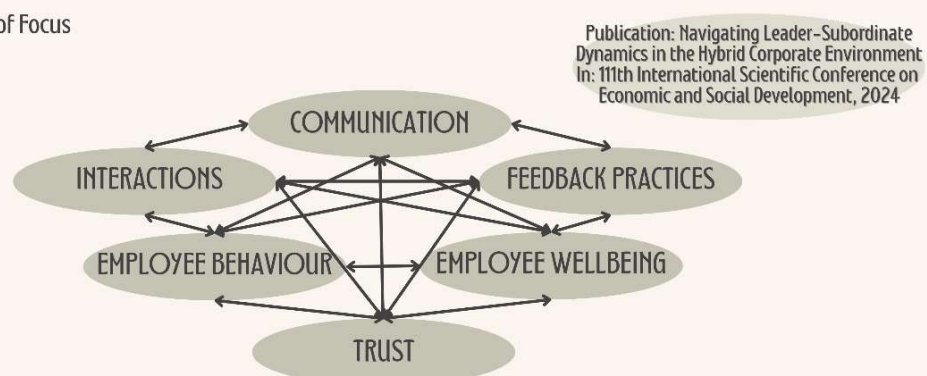
Phase 1: External Factors



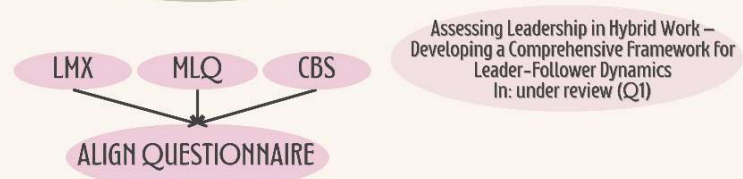
Phase 2: Organizational Reality



Phase 3: Areas of Focus



Phase 4: Tool Development



Phase 5: Field Research

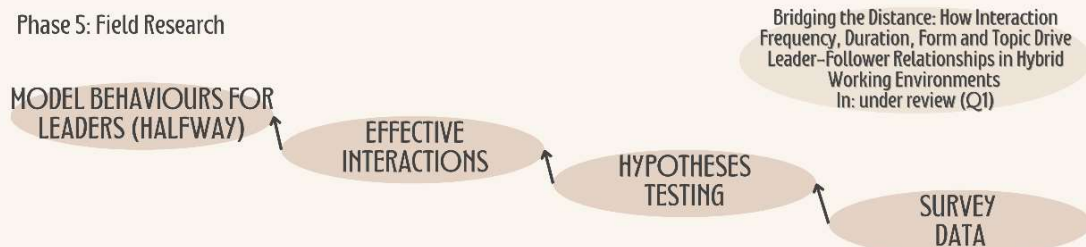


Figure 2. Concept map of PhD research, Source: own elaboration

4. Research Design and Methodological Overview

This dissertation is grounded in a post-positivist paradigm, which assumes that while objective reality exists, our understanding of it is inevitably shaped by context, perspective, and measurement. This stance is particularly appropriate given the complexity of hybrid work environments, where leadership dynamics vary across industries, cultures, and organizational structures. A post-positivist approach allows for structured empirical investigation while acknowledging the limitations of full objectivity and the importance of context.

Within this framework, the dissertation adopts a mixed-methods design: the conceptual and critical literature reviews (Papers 1–3) follow a more interpretivist logic to explore emerging theoretical perspectives, while the empirical papers (Papers 4–5) employ quantitative methods (survey-based research and advanced statistics) to develop, validate, and test a structured measurement tool. This methodological combination, along with the iterative development of the research approach, aligns with the overarching research goal: to generate actionable insights into hybrid leadership through both theoretical synthesis and empirical generalization. The choice of a quantitative empirical design in the second phase reflects the need to identify repeatable patterns in leader-follower communication, validate constructs, and assess causal relationships. This dual-method strategy enhances the internal coherence of the dissertation and supports its contribution to both academic theory and leadership practice.

The **conceptual analysis phase** (Papers 1–3) established the theoretical underpinnings of hybrid leadership, highlighting the limitations of traditional leadership models and the emerging need for structured communication in hybrid work environments. All three papers are critical literature review based on multiple sources thoroughly referenced through the papers. In hybrid working environments, leadership increasingly takes the form of supportive, coaching-style presence rather than directive control. This view aligns well with knowledge management theories (Sveiby, 1997), where the leader's role is to foster trust, enable learning, and support the flow of knowledge amongst their followers. The relational and reciprocal nature of this leadership makes it a complex phenomenon. These findings raised the need for empirical validation of the role of structured communication and one-to-one leader-follower interactions in hybrid settings.

As a response, Paper 4 introduced a **survey-based research design**, targeting the leader's point of view, incorporating key variables identified in the literature review and previous studies. The ALIGN Questionnaire was proposed as a systematic measurement instrument, ensuring that leader-follower relationships in hybrid settings could be quantified through validated constructs. The survey design was influenced by three established leadership scales, each selected to address specific aspects of hybrid leadership:

- Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Theory – Used to measure the quality of leader-follower relationships and trust-building mechanisms.
- Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) – Integrated to assess transformational and transactional leadership behaviors in hybrid work.
- Coaching Behaviors Scale (CBS) – Included to capture leadership development behaviors, particularly how structured communication supports follower engagement.

The inclusion of previously validated Likert-scale questions ensured comparability with prior studies, improving the reliability of the results. Furthermore, the survey structure was carefully designed to align with the overarching research questions by addressing:

- The frequency, duration, and form of structured one-to-one discussions in hybrid leadership.
- The impact of these discussions on leader-follower relationship quality, trust, and engagement.
- The effectiveness of structured leadership communication in a hybrid work environment.

The survey was administered to leaders and managers working in hybrid settings within corporations with 100 or more employees, including three layers of professionals managing teams across both remote and in-office contexts. The inclusion criteria required respondents to lead at least five direct reports in a hybrid setting, follow a structured 2+3 days or 3+2 days work model, and engage in regular leader-follower interactions. Additionally, participants were required to have a minimum tenure of six months in their leadership role within a hybrid work environment to ensure familiarity with structured communication practices. The survey captured demographic data (age, gender, job role, tenure, and frequency of remote work), leadership behaviors, communication patterns, and perceptions of effectiveness in a hybrid work context.

A convenience and snowball sampling method was employed to recruit participants, leveraging professional networks, leadership forums, and industry contacts to reach a diverse pool of hybrid leaders. This approach ensured access to leaders with practical experience managing hybrid teams, while snowball sampling allowed for an organic expansion of the participant base through referrals, further increasing the study's relevance to real-world leadership scenarios. Responses were gathered through structured, and previously widely validated Likert-scale questions assessing trust-building, engagement strategies, communication frequency, and adaptability. Data collection resulted in a sample size of 100 leaders reporting about 182 leader-follower pairings, providing a strong foundation for subsequent validation.

The followed research methodology integrates both qualitative and quantitative methods to provide a comprehensive analysis of hybrid leadership. This multi-method approach was chosen to address different levels of inquiry:

- Theoretical development through literature review → Understanding the conceptual evolution of hybrid leadership and identifying key leadership challenges in hybrid teams.
- Survey-based quantitative research → Empirically testing the impact of structured communication using a validated measurement instrument.
- Statistical validation and hypothesis testing → Establishing causal relationships between structured communication, trust, engagement, and leadership effectiveness.

The selection of these methods followed the principles of methodological triangulation, ensuring that insights gained from qualitative research could be validated through empirical data, enhancing both internal and external validity.

The final **empirical phase** (Paper 5) employed advanced statistical methods to validate the ALIGN Questionnaire and assess the relationships between structured communication and leader-follower relationships. The use of confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) ensured that the constructs measured in the questionnaire aligned with theoretical expectations. The key statistical techniques applied include:

- Cronbach's Alpha Reliability Testing – Applied to evaluate the internal consistency of the questionnaire scales.

- Regression Analysis – Used to assess the strength of relationships between communication patterns and leadership effectiveness.
- Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA) – Conducted to validate the theoretical structure of the ALIGN model and assess construct reliability.

Findings from these statistical analyses reinforced the importance of structured one-to-one discussions in hybrid work environments. The results demonstrated that interaction frequency and content had a significant impact on leader-follower trust and engagement, while the medium of communication (in-person vs. virtual) was statistically insignificant. This evidence-based validation confirmed the theoretical assumption that communication structure matters more than communication modality in hybrid leadership.

The progression of research questions throughout the five papers directly influenced each methodological decision. The conceptual analysis phase identified gaps in hybrid leadership literature, prompting the need for a structured measurement approach. This led to the development of the ALIGN Questionnaire, designed to quantify leader-follower interactions based on validated theoretical frameworks. The empirical phase then applied statistical methods to test hypotheses derived from both the conceptual framework and the survey findings.

By integrating qualitative and quantitative research, this dissertation provides a holistic understanding of hybrid leadership, offering both theoretical advancements and practical insights into structured communication strategies.

5. Key Contributions to the Field

This dissertation makes a contribution to the existing body of leadership research by addressing the evolving demands of hybrid work environments and their implications for effective leadership. It provides both theoretical advancements and empirical insights, offering a comprehensive framework for understanding and enhancing leadership practices in hybrid working environments.

First, the research identifies the shift in guiding leadership approaches that has emerged as a result of the widespread adoption of hybrid working models. Traditional leadership approaches, which were largely developed for fully in-person work settings, have been increasingly challenged by the transition to hybrid working environments. This study

examines how leadership approaches have evolved, emphasizing the need for adaptability, trust-building, and structured communication to ensure both organizational efficiency and employee engagement.

Second, the dissertation establishes the critical role of structured one-to-one discussions in hybrid leadership effectiveness. While informal interactions in physical workspaces once played a significant role in fostering relationships and alignment, hybrid working environments necessitate intentional and structured communication practices to replace these lost spontaneous exchanges. The research demonstrates that regularly scheduled one-on-one discussions between leaders and subordinates contribute to enhanced trust, engagement, and overall relationship quality, reinforcing their significance as a core leadership practice in hybrid teams.

Third, this study develops and validates the ALIGN Questionnaire, a novel measurement instrument designed to assess hybrid leadership effectiveness. By integrating elements from established leadership theories (such as Leader-Member Exchange, Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire, and Coaching Behaviors Scale) the ALIGN Questionnaire provides a reliable and structured approach for evaluating leader-follower interactions, communication effectiveness, and leadership behaviors in hybrid contexts. The validation process, supported by quantitative survey data and advanced statistical analyses, confirms the tool's robustness and applicability for both academic research and practical leadership assessment.

Fourth, the dissertation provides empirical evidence on optimal leadership behaviors in hybrid working environments, offering data-driven insights into how leaders can effectively balance oversight with autonomy in dispersed teams. The findings demonstrate that communication frequency and structure are more influential than the communication medium itself (e.g., in-person vs. virtual), challenging conventional assumptions about remote leadership. Through statistical validation and hypothesis testing, the study highlights key leadership behaviors that contribute to trust development, engagement, and performance outcomes in hybrid teams.

Fifth, this research extends beyond theoretical contributions by offering actionable recommendations for leaders and organizations navigating hybrid work models. The findings provide practical guidance on implementing structured communication strategies, optimizing leadership behaviors, and fostering a work culture that balances flexibility with accountability. These recommendations serve as a bridge between research and practice,

enabling leaders to apply evidence-based strategies to enhance team cohesion, communication, and performance in hybrid settings.

Finally, the dissertation situates its contributions within the broader academic discourse on leadership and workforce evolution, linking its findings to ongoing discussions on digital transformation, remote work, and leadership adaptation. As hybrid work becomes a permanent feature of the modern workplace, this research adds long-term relevance by contributing to the understanding of how leadership must continue to evolve in response to shifting workplace dynamics.

By integrating conceptual analysis, empirical validation, and practical application, this dissertation offers a holistic and evidence-based perspective on hybrid leadership. It advances scholarly knowledge while providing leaders and organizations with actionable strategies, ensuring that leadership practices remain effective in the ever-changing landscape of hybrid work.

6. Structure of the Dissertation

Following this introduction, the dissertation is organized into distinct chapters that logically guide the reader through the evolution of the research, its empirical findings, and its broader implications for leadership in hybrid work environments. The structure ensures that the development of ideas, methodological approaches, and theoretical contributions are clearly articulated, allowing both academic reviewers and practitioners to trace the research progression and its impact on leadership discourse.

The next chapter, *Evolution of Ideas*, outlines the intellectual development of the research and the connections between the five studies included in the dissertation. This section details how the research questions evolved over time, reflecting shifting priorities and emerging insights from both theoretical analysis and empirical findings. By tracing the conceptual and methodological refinements across the five papers, this chapter establishes a cohesive narrative that underscores the dissertation's contributions to the field of hybrid leadership.

The *Full-Text Research Papers* section presents the five published or submitted research papers in their entirety, maintaining the continuity of research development and allowing readers to engage directly with the studies that form the core of this dissertation. Each paper builds upon the previous one, offering a comprehensive investigation into structured communication, leader-follower interactions, and leadership effectiveness in hybrid work

environments. By including the full texts, this dissertation maintains transparency in its research process and provides a detailed reference for future scholars working on related topics.

The *Conclusion and Reflections* chapter synthesizes the key findings from the research papers, emphasizing their theoretical and practical contributions to leadership studies. It articulates the novelty of the research, demonstrating how the dissertation advances existing knowledge in the field by introducing empirical evidence, validated measurement tools, and leadership strategies tailored to hybrid environments. This section also critically examines the research's alignment with the central research question, ensuring that the dissertation delivers a coherent and impactful scholarly contribution.

The *Limitations and Future Directions* chapter addresses the methodological constraints of the study, acknowledging potential limitations related to sampling, measurement, and generalizability. It also provides an outlook on future research opportunities, suggesting areas where additional empirical studies could further refine leadership theories in hybrid work contexts. This section offers guidance for scholars and practitioners, emphasizing how the dissertation's findings can serve as a foundation for ongoing inquiry into leadership effectiveness in evolving workplace structures.

This structured approach ensures that opponents, reviewers, and future readers can systematically follow the evolution of ideas, understanding how the dissertation addresses key challenges in hybrid leadership while situating its findings within the broader academic and practical discourse on leadership in contemporary work environments.

Having presented the context, purpose, methodological foundations, and individual contributions of each research paper, the next chapter synthesizes the intellectual trajectory of the dissertation. The *Evolution of Ideas* section traces the conceptual and empirical development across the five papers, highlighting how the research questions matured over time and how each phase built upon the previous one to form a coherent and cumulative body of knowledge.

EVOLUTION OF IDEAS

1. Phases of Research and Sequential Development

The research journey unfolds through distinct phases, progressing systematically from literature analysis to field research. These phases are represented in the concept map (see Figure 2.), moving sequentially from left to right, signifying the evolution from understanding external complexities to influencing essential processes. The publication *"A Paradigm Shift for Leaders to Cope with the Pandemic"* provides insights into the initial impact of global disruptions on leadership practices, focusing on the interplay of order and chaos in leadership strategies. Initially, the study addresses organizational reality, focusing on challenges and opportunities that hybrid work environments present. This phase highlights the interplay of order and disorder, where periods of stability ("order") correspond to negative feedback loops, and periods of chaos ("disorder") facilitate innovation through positive feedback loops. The iterative nature of these phases underscores the complexity inherent in hybrid work environments. By recognizing that new ideas and systems emerge from disorder, this *research positions leadership as a dynamic process capable of adapting to and leveraging such chaos.*

A key element of the research is the interaction between external factors and essential processes. The complexity of hybrid working environments, driven by external forces such as global economic shifts, technological advancements, and changing employee expectations, exerts a top-down influence on organizational structures and leadership strategies. This aligns with findings presented in *"WOW - Ways of Working: New Leadership in the Hybrid Corporate Reality,"* which emphasize the importance of co-creating hybrid work structures to address these challenges. These external pressures create a need for adaptive leadership practices capable of addressing emerging challenges.

Simultaneously, essential processes, including leader-follower relationship, leadership function and leadership style, all within organizational behavior, operate as bottom-up influences, shaping leadership strategies from within. These processes ensure that leadership remains aligned with the realities of hybrid work settings. By focusing on core concepts and areas of influence, this research reduces complexity, enabling targeted interventions that address both macro-level and micro-level dynamics.

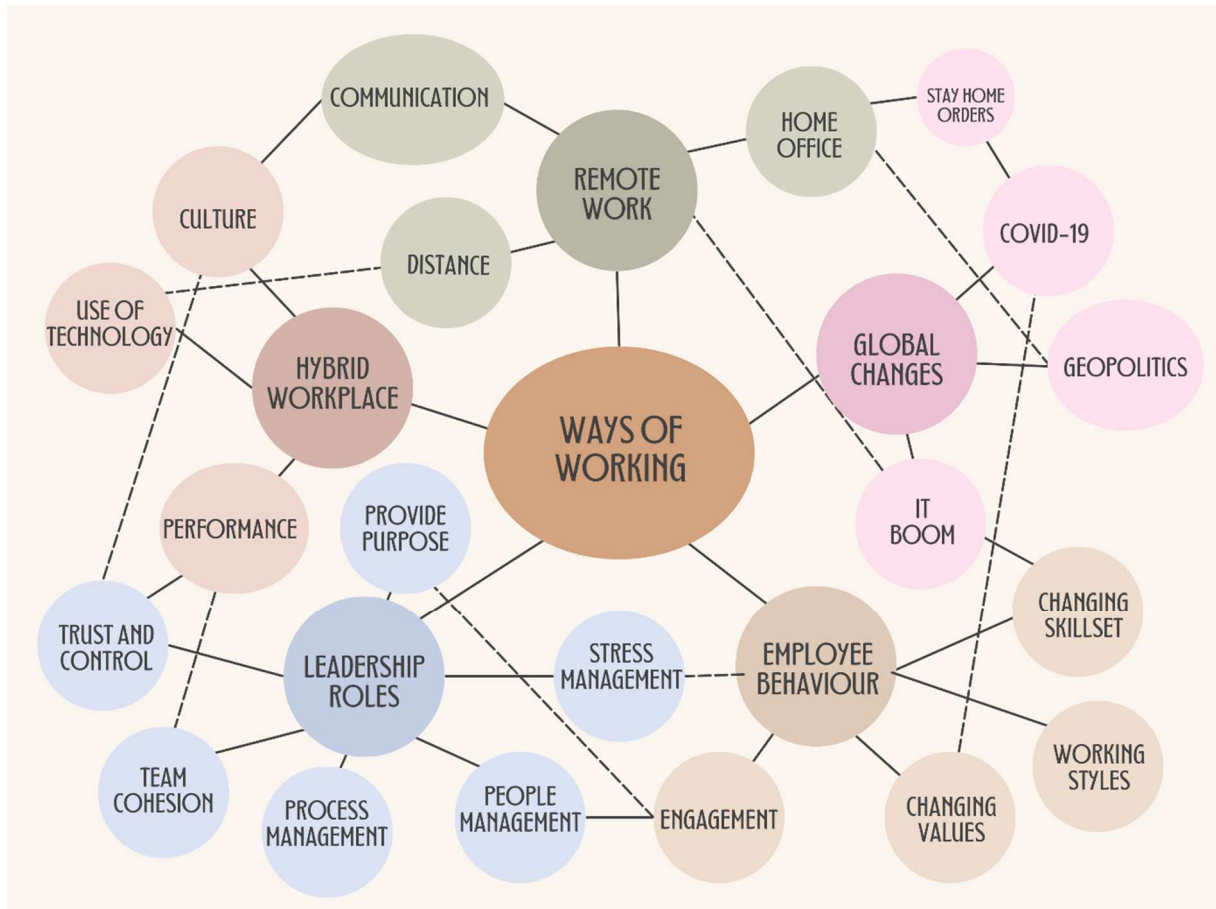


Figure 3. Concept map of "WOW-Ways of Working: New Leadership in the Hybrid Corporate Reality",
 Source: own elaboration

This dual-directional framework highlights the critical importance of areas of focus, such as communication and trust, in mitigating the complexity of hybrid environments. By influencing essential processes through strategic interventions, leaders can achieve greater alignment with organizational goals.

At the core of this research lies a web of relationships, which encapsulates the interdependencies that define hybrid leadership dynamics. Trust, communication, interactions and feedback practices form the backbone of this web, acting as critical mediators in achieving leadership effectiveness, complemented with employee behavior and employee wellbeing factors. Trust is found to be a foundational element, facilitating meaningful engagement and ensuring that *leader-follower interactions* are anchored in mutual respect and reliability.

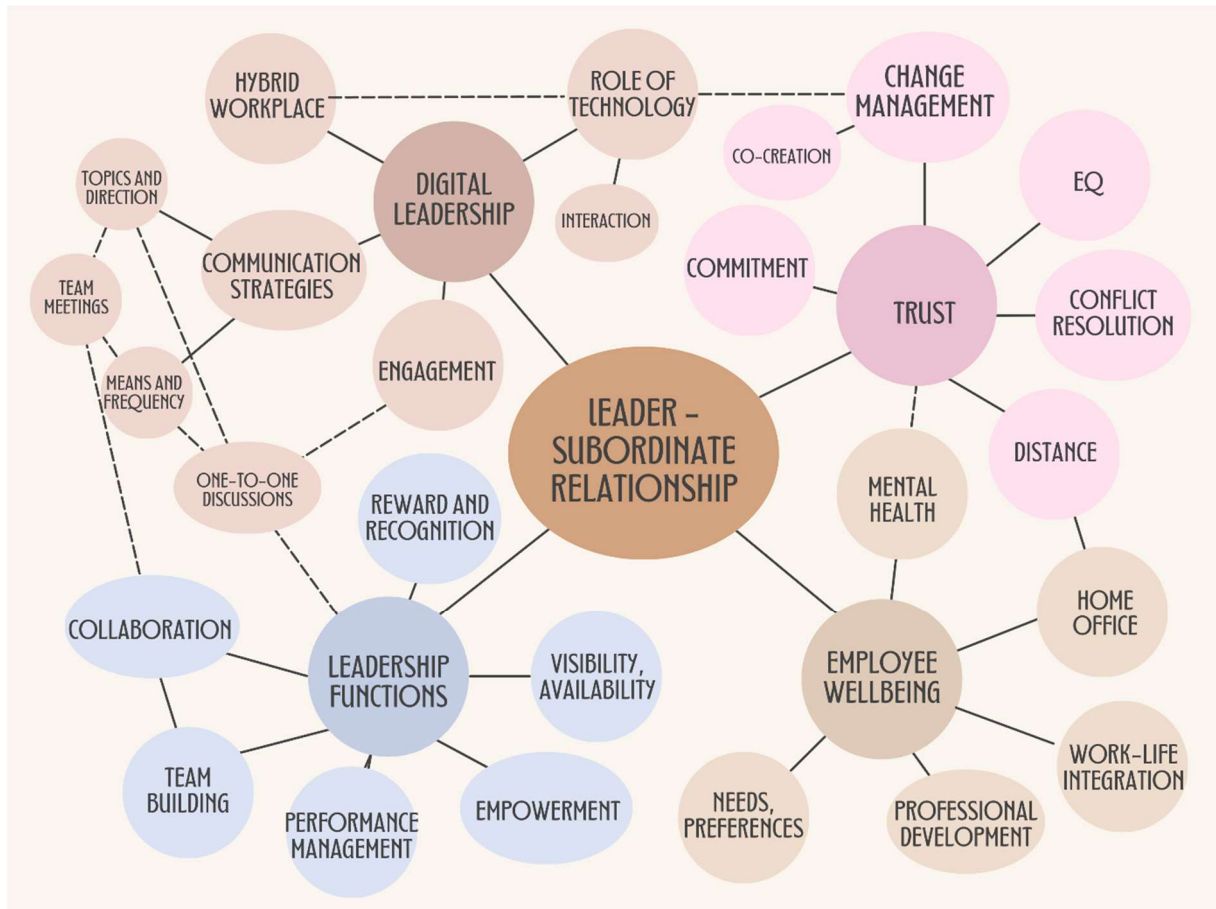


Figure 4. Concept map of "Navigating Leader-Subordinate Dynamics in the Hybrid Corporate Environment",
Source: own elaboration

Communication, as illustrated in the concept map, encompasses both frequency and content, underscoring that structured one-to-one interactions are central to fostering alignment and collaboration. Feedback, serving as a cyclical process, reinforces these interactions by providing continuous opportunities for growth and realignment. The interconnected nature of this web not only aligns with adaptive leadership strategies but also underscores its relevance in addressing the nuanced demands of hybrid work environments. By examining this web, the research contributes to a more robust understanding of how leaders can effectively manage relational dynamics to enhance organizational outcomes. This theme is further elaborated in the publication titled *"Navigating Leader-Subordinate Dynamics in the Hybrid Corporate Environment,"* which investigates trust-building strategies in hybrid settings. Structured one-to-one communication facilitates this foundation by providing a consistent mechanism for the exchange of feedback, which is essential for fostering alignment and mutual understanding. Furthermore, feedback practices play a reinforcing role, cyclically strengthening both trust and communication. This cyclical interplay,

illustrated in the concept map, demonstrates the interconnected nature of these processes and their collective contribution to adaptive leadership strategies.

2. The Tool and Personal Contribution

A significant outcome of this research is the development of the *ALIGN – Assessing Leadership Interactions and Growth in New Workplaces Questionnaire*, a tool designed to address the complexities of hybrid leadership. By integrating established frameworks such as Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), and Coaching Behaviors Scale (CBS), the ALIGN Questionnaire provides a comprehensive assessment of *leadership effectiveness* in hybrid environments.



Figure 5. The transdisciplinary approach behind the ALIGN Questionnaire,
 Source: own elaboration

The ALIGN tool is particularly valuable in reducing complexity, offering leaders a structured approach to evaluate and improve their practices. This tool was introduced in the conceptual publication „*Assessing Leadership in Hybrid Work – Developing a Comprehensive Framework for Leader-Follower Dynamics*” emphasizing its relevance in hybrid environments. Its design reflects the iterative nature of the research, incorporating insights from both top-down and bottom-up influences.

The findings from this field research offer a nuanced understanding of hybrid leadership dynamics, seen through the lenses of the ALIGN Questionnaire. The empirical data collected were used to test hypotheses about effective leadership practices within hybrid working environments. The analysis revealed the main characteristics of functional interactions which then were used to define model behaviors for leaders of hybrid working environments. The findings are organized as follows:

Communication Frequency and Impact

Leaders who engaged in frequent, structured one-to-one interactions perceived significantly better leader-follower relationship (LMX). Weekly or biweekly interactions, lasting 15-60 minutes, were found to be the most effective in maintaining alignment and fostering collaboration, particularly in hybrid settings.

Content of Communication

The dual focus on operational and personal matters in leader-follower interactions was shown to enhance relationship quality. Leaders who balanced task-oriented conversations with personal support reported stronger Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) scores.

Role of Feedback Practices

Findings reveal that the form of communication (e.g., in-person, virtual, or written) was largely irrelevant in determining leader-follower relationship quality. Instead, the frequency and content of the communication had the most significant impact. Leaders who prioritized meaningful and consistent discussions, regardless of the medium, fostered higher levels of trust and engagement.

Use of the ALIGN Questionnaire

The ALIGN tool effectively captured the complexities of hybrid leadership, providing quantitative insights into areas such as trust, communication, and leadership adaptability. The field research has confirmed the reliability and relevance of the tool in diagnosing leadership challenges and recommending targeted interventions.

These results underscore the importance of structured communication, trust-building, and adaptability in hybrid working environments. By addressing these areas, leaders can effectively navigate the complexities of hybrid leadership, ensuring both individual and organizational success. These conclusions are presented in the paper "*Bridging the Distance:*

How Interaction Frequency, Duration, Form and Topic Drive Leader-Follower Relationships in Hybrid Working Environments," which highlights the critical role of communication content and structure.

3. Transdisciplinary Contributions and Broader Implications

This research contributes to multiple academic disciplines, including organizational psychology, organizational behavior, and leadership development. By addressing both systemic influences and relational dynamics, it bridges theoretical advancements with practical applications. The interplay between stability and innovation, reflected in the phases of order and chaos, underscores the need for adaptive and context-sensitive leadership strategies. As depicted in the concept map's final column, the circular model illustrates the reciprocal nature of leadership and organizational outcomes. This circularity emphasizes how interventions in leadership practices influence broader organizational contexts, which in turn shape subsequent leadership strategies. The alignment of organizational goals and leadership adaptability creates a feedback loop, reinforcing the importance of strategic leadership tailored to hybrid work environments.

This chapter mapped the evolution of ideas throughout the research, tracing its progression from conceptual foundations to practical applications. By integrating insights from multiple disciplines and methodologies, this work provides a comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing the complexities of hybrid leadership. The following will present the referenced papers in their entirety for a more detailed understanding on the topic.

FULL TEXT RESEARCH PAPERS

The following chapters are structured around five research papers that form the core of this dissertation. Each paper has been published or is currently under publication review. To aid clarity and provide a concise overview, each section begins with a summary table outlining the paper's key features, including its title, type, summary and bibliographical details.

- 1) Brigitta, Banhidi: A PARADIGM SHIFT FOR LEADERS TO COPE WITH THE PANDEMIC
In: Revista Juridica de la Universidad de Leon, 10 pp. 73-86. , 14 p. (2022)
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.18002/rjule.i10>
- 2) Brigitta, Banhidi: WOW - WAYS OF WORKING - NEW LEADERSHIP IN THE HYBRID CORPORATE REALITY
In: 109th International Scientific Conference on Economic and Social Development "Green Economy & Sustainable Development" : Book of Proceedings (2024) pp. 68-77. , 10 p.
- 3) Brigitta, Banhidi: NAVIGATING LEADER-SUBORDINATE DYNAMICS IN THE HYBRID CORPORATE ENVIRONMENT: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW
In: Barbara, Huszar; Zoltan, Baracska; Nicholas, Recker (szerk.) Economic and Social Development : 111th International Scientific Conference on Economic and Social Development – "Navigating into the Future: The new Employee Experience" : Book of Proceedings
Varazdin, Horvátország : Varazdin Development and Entrepreneurship Agency (2024) pp. 160-169. , 10 p.
- 4) Brigitta, Banhidi and Attila, Kurucz Dr: *Assessing Leadership in Hybrid Work – Developing a Comprehensive Framework for Leader-Follower Dynamics*
Revision Requested (Human Resource Development International, Taylor&Francis, Q1), 17 p.
- 5) Brigitta, Banhidi and Judit, Berkes Dr: *Bridging the Distance: How Interaction Frequency, Duration, Form and Topic Drive Leader-Follower Relationships in Hybrid Working Environments*
Under Review (Business Research Quarterly, Sage, Q1), 27 p.

1. PAPER 1

Title	A Paradigm Shift for Leaders to Cope with the Pandemic
Type	Literature review
Summary	This paper explores the initial impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on leadership thinking and work design, arguing that hybrid models require a shift toward employee-centric leadership and emotional intelligence for sustained productivity.
Citation	Brigitta, Banhidi: A PARADIGM SHIFT FOR LEADERS TO COPE WITH THE PANDEMIC In: Revista Juridica de la Universidad de Leon, 10 pp. 73-86. , 14 p. (2022) DOI: https://doi.org/10.18002/rjule.i10

A PARADIGM SHIFT FOR LEADERS TO COPE WITH THE PANDEMIC

Brigitta Banhidi

Abstract

The 2020 Covid-19 outbreak has turned our approach to work upside down as it allowed millions of employees to experience the benefits of working from the safety of their homes. Two years later hybrid working arrangements have become widespread and several companies tend to mix on-site and remote working and seek to take advantage of both. A paradigm shift is about to take place whereby individual decisions would be driven by putting the needs of the human before that of the business growth. Inspired by the need of managers and leaders to understand unprecedented implications of such a ‘new normal’, in this paper we (a) discuss the pandemic’s implications on the working environment, (b) identify the grounds for having hybrid teams and (c) list the findings of our literature review as tools leaders may use to maintain the required productivity level within their teams. We have found that managers might consider shifting their focus from on-site employee presence to deliveries and to re-invent workplace together with their colleagues to integrate private preferences. Leaders seem to be more effective in a hybrid working environment if their people management skills are enhanced, and they operate on a higher EQ level than before.

Keywords: leadership, Covid-19, hybrid working environment, paradigm shift, EQ

INTRODUCTION

The challenge of COVID-19 induced shifts in overall human preferences of using our time for life and work purposes requires researchers to explore the resulting changes in workplace arrangements. Hybrid working structures (a combination of an employee working part time in the company office and part time from their own homes) have become one of the most important developments of the past 2 years that have an unexplored impact on business KPIs, e.g., business performance, profitability, fluctuation, and engagement as well. This paper intends to explore some aspects of applying a hybrid working arrangement, such as a) the pandemic's implications on the working environment, b) the grounds for having hybrid teams and c) the tools leaders can utilize to maintain the required level of productivity.

As Hume claimed, once we get used to how the world is working, habit makes it easier for us to cope with problems. This is true as long as they can be solved within our existing paradigm. As Covid-19 has changed the way we think about allocating our time between work and life purposes, a paradigm shift is about to take place whereby individual decisions would be driven by putting the needs of the human before that of the business growth.

This paper intends to serve as a guideline in these times as the decreased level of face-to-face meetings with team members require leaders to develop stronger people management skills ('soft skills') and operate on a higher EQ level than they were used to in the previously existing in-office working setup.

1. CHANGES IN OUR WORLD

The sudden outbreak of a pandemic, the so called Covid-19, has been a systemic shock of the 21st century, just like the 1918-1920 Spanish flu or WWII were for the 20th century. A systemic shock shakes the previously existing economic and social status quo, and it can induce long-lasting global changes to processes, practices, and attitudes towards basic human needs (Kniffin et al., 2021). Covid-19 is both a human and an economic tragedy that can have a catastrophic impact on humanity and it might induce a recession in the world, like that of the Spanish Flu or the Black Death.

As of today, reported deaths of Covid-19 have exceeded 6.5 million worldwide, families have been impoverished, businesses have gone under, children have missed out on education – just to name a few of the negative consequences. The turbulence of the whole world

becomes extreme, we no longer know what facts are solid and it is almost impossible to replicate experiences.

There are already some lessons to be learnt through. First is that our health systems were not prepared to deal with such a shock, and it had to rely almost exclusively on its most important resource: people (doctors, nurses, health workers). We have also changed the ways we work, home office and hybrid working arrangements becoming a general setup that questions the need for long daily commutes and business offices, thus raising the need for changes to our physical environment. Overall, science's stakes are high with Covid as no historical evidence exists and changes happen overnight. We can observe the humanity perform the three perspectives that Hume (1999) described about everyday personal interactions: 1) people want to feel free and do what they want (i.e., travel freely and decide about vaccinations by themselves); 2) governments expect people to behave in a certain way (i.e., get vaccinated or stay home when requested); and 3) we want to believe people are calculable (i.e., trust in they will do what they said would do).

The world, as we knew it before the Covid-19 pandemic has been driven by the constant need for growth, has been pivoted on economic aspects. In search of business profit and higher standards of life, our humanity has created a significant health risk by conquering more and more territory in nature, from the wildlife, which has led to certain animal-related diseases to come closer to humans. Lyme, MERS, Ebola and now Covid-19 are examples of those. One Health initiative (run by the American Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, <https://www.cdc.gov/onehealth>) is an approach that acknowledges that human health is inextricably linked to the health of animals and our common environment. Changes in the environment and ecosystems might create new chances for illnesses to spread to animals that have to be tackled consciously and in advance. An essential component of human resilience must be to fix the social safety nets that have been torn asunder.

In the short run, firms have typically participated in empathetic reactions to Covid-19, and many have significantly transformed how and where their employees work (Howe et al., 2021). Economically, the globe has never been more intertwined, and it has never been subjected to such widespread disruption. While many people have felt and acknowledged the pandemic's short-term repercussions, the resultant paradigm alterations will almost certainly have long-term consequences with unknown breadth and influence. One thing is

for sure though: the genie is out of the bottle, and we cannot simply go back to doing what we did before, there is a ‘new normal’ to come.

Reasons for a paradigm shift

Thomas Kuhn, an American philosopher proposed a historical approach to science in his 1962 book *The Structure of Scientific Revolutions*. He introduced the term „paradigm” as referring to his views about how science behaves and changes over time. In his context, a paradigm is a ruling theory in a discipline, a window, through which we see the world. Being a set of values that guide our thinking and behaviour, one person can only have one, a guiding paradigm at a time. Referring to Kuhn (2021), there is a natural lifecycle of a paradigm: under-developed disciplines are in a pre-paradigmatic state, then a paradigm forms, and we arrive to a ‘normal science’ stage where unsolved problems are seen as puzzles and solved within the ruling paradigm until a crisis arrives and revolutions come in search for a new power.

Going back in history, we can take mathematics and physics as examples of such a process. These started to evolve and grow onto a stage when it could not fit into any one person’s head anymore, so they had to fall apart to pieces and form separate disciplines. Their research communities related to a distinguished member, the ‘guru’ of the discipline and a new paradigm has started to define what was acceptable new knowledge and what was not appropriate to think.

In today’s world we refer to paradigms as models or patterns for something that may be copied or as a group of ideas about how something should be done or thought about. The very basics of the ruling paradigm are contained in textbooks and transferred to education and practice. By this way, it all builds into the society of a given era as part of the conventional wisdom and helps humans to find a subjective meaning of life.

Several paradigms live side by side to describe the several factors of our lives. These are, just to mention a few: we can make use of nature, competition makes businesses (and people) better, governments work for the greater good, globalisation is keeping prices lower, information can be accessed without limits, social connections can be made online, etc.

They are useful for humanity to ease our thinking and help us decide what is acceptable to do but not necessarily mean the one-and-only solution to all questions.

Historical process of paradigm shifts

Like the widely known theories on children's development as a series of discrete stages marked by periods of transition, Kuhn (2021) described two kinds of scientific change: incremental developments in 'normal science' and scientific revolutions between those relatively stable periods. The author suggested that a scientific revolution involves a 'paradigm shift', an important change that happens when the usual way of doing or thinking about something is replaced by a new and different way. It usually comes when a certain problem area is widely conceptualised and there is general agreement on how the problems are to be solved – there is not much left to solve. At this stage, if a crisis happens, the world changes a bit, and a new paradigm starts to emerge on the outline. A synthesis is produced soon that is sufficiently attractive to many people in the community.

A great historical example of a paradigm shift is from the 16th century. A Polish astronomer, Copernicus changed the geocentric understanding of the universe, centred around Earth, to a heliocentric understanding, centred around the Sun. The 19th century brought another significant paradigm shift with Darwin, who proposed the idea that species change over time (referred to as 'evolution'), give rise to new species, and share a common ancestor. Mendels (2007) recalls the French Revolution as another paradigm shift that converted religious energy into social energy.

To understand the paradigm shifts in the global economies, we must go back to Columbus who was the first to open up trade between the old world and the new world in 1492, hence countries got globalised. This was followed by the industrial revolution and the 20th century formation of multinational companies who went for global markets and cheap labour – businesses got globalised. The 21st century brought us the third era of globalisation, that of the people, when the chance is given to the individuals to collaborate and compete globally mainly due to information technology.

As for turning to today's guiding paradigm, an observation is made by Friedmann (2005) in his book *'The World is flat'*, where he says that the rise of new technology has made the world a global electronic village. Informatics helped in standardising processes, improving availability of knowledge to all at a fast pace thereby our world has become unified.

Clarke and Clegg (2000) identified several signs of paradigm shifts in the management world: offices are exchanged for virtual space, authority is overpowered by influence, managers are complemented with leaders, loyalty to company is exchanged by loyalty to

self and finally, job security became less important than personal freedom and control over life choices by the turn of the 21st century.

2. RECENT CHANGES TO OUR WORKPLACES

The very first governmental reactions to the global outbreak of the Covid-19 virus were immediate lockdowns and transitions to remote workplaces in all scopes of activities that did not require presence (Chamakiotis et al., 2021). According to a quantitative research study by Béland et al. (2020) conducted on the US Current Population Survey's Labor Statistics with 60000 households included, the following chapters must be considered when measuring the impact of Covid-19 on the workforce. The physical destruction (e.g., sick leaves due to infections and death) of human capital decreases labour supply; the increased level of uncertainty and fear changes the general consumer behaviour and in the long run, there may also be changes in the investment behaviour by business owners. The authors highlight that some occupations are affected heavier than others. Essential workers, such as health care, public transportation, law enforcement, first responders, food and agriculture workers, communications and ICT, critical manufacturing, finances, face the highest level of demand by the public and they have few choices but to continue showing up for work. On the next level, there are the ones who interact with the public and require contact with others, such as hospitality, which may increase the likelihood of infection, and are experiencing a lower level of engagement and work ethics. The non-essential functions and occupations are mainly those that have previously used ICT tools to support home office initiatives; therefore, their workforce may easily be mandated to work from home as virtual teams in Covid-19 times.

When talking about the emphasis being on reaching business targets, we often end up chasing short term goals. Even company leaders are in big trouble trying to balance between investments for long term innovations and quick wins for short-term shareholder satisfaction. Covid-19 has put companies to a test in that sense too: only those could survive the past 2 years with ease that had already acknowledged the changing needs of their employees and customers (e.g., digital transformation, sustainability aspects and increasing authority of the self). The immediate threat of death by the outbreak of the pandemic had faced many employees with the question about the meaning of their lives and a significant ratio came out by changing their preferences about how they want to conduct their days, allocate their time regarding work and life aspects. As the several waves of the pandemic have passed, many could have returned to their offices, but we see a reverse trend: voluntary

unemployment is at a historical high and employees are leaving companies that require in-office presence which means individual freedom and control over one's life choices has become more important recently.

As organisations become more reliant on information technology, the number of disciplines in which knowledge workers (teachers, attorneys, architects, doctors, nurses, engineers, and scientists) are required to work has exploded. Peter Drucker created the knowledge worker term back in 1959, and it was subsequently refined in 1999 to describe someone who works primarily with information or develops and applies knowledge in the workplace. The author claimed that *'the most valuable asset of a 21st-century institution, whether business or non-business, will be its knowledge workers and their productivity. [...] And knowledge workers are not subordinates; they are 'associates.'* For, once beyond the apprentice stage, knowledge workers must know more about their job than their boss does—or else they are no good at all.' (Drucker, 2001, p.78.). A similar observation is made by Frick (2010) when he states that knowledge workers are individuals valued for their ability to gather, analyse, interpret, and synthesise information within specific subject areas to advance the overall understanding of those areas and allow organisations to make better decisions. This calls for providing an increasing level of authority and involvement in one's job.

Collins also studied high-performing organisations to determine whether there were any trends in the cultures of the employees. He made two controversial statements: *'...expending energy trying to motivate people is largely a waste of time'* (Collins, 2001, p. 74.), and *'You cannot manufacture passion or 'motivate' people to feel passionate. You can only discover what ignites your passion and the passion of those around you'* (Collins, 2001, p. 74.).

It is this human passion that may help us overcome our current systemic shock, the Covid-19 pandemic as well. According to Hume (1999), passion will tell us where to go and reason will tell us how to get there. If it is in our everyday habit to recognize things we don't know, we will be able to learn even from our mistakes. The new paradigm after Covid-19 therefore (and in result of all the above aspects) would be to put the human being, the worker, into the centre of our world instead of the business that has been there for the past centuries.

Song (2004) used a metaphor with body parts to describe different eras of science. After the 'hands-on' for inquiry movement during 1960s-70s and the 'minds-on' for constructivism during 1980s-90s, the 21st century brought us the 'hearts-on' science that can also be applied for the shifted focus of our guiding principles. When following our hearts, problems like

risking our family's health to pursue business goals or working as many hours as possible to get to burnout will be easily solved in the favour of the human which change in preferences may lead to a quicker end of a pandemic situation too.

The grounds for the post-pandemic hybrid teams

The first signs of virtual teams date back to the 1990's when technological innovation accelerated, and mobile phones became a commodity as well as a tool for business communication. The ever-increasing development of telecommunication has played a significant role in globalisation as human resources, in particular talent has become available throughout the globe, without location constraints. The widespread use of virtual teams came only though when technological development provided ground for high-speed, real-time oral and digital, written communication. The benefits of virtual teams are inevitable: they provide access to talent irrespective of its residence, they reduce travel and commuting costs and give opportunity for a more flexible work-life time-distribution. Chamakiotis et al. (2021) also describe characteristics that tell apart Covid-19 induced virtual teams in comparison to the previously existing ones. A very important difference is that the pandemic induced teams had to involve employees that previously did not want to work from home or were not considered as capable of doing so. Covid-19 induced virtual teams were primarily local with little diversity of culture, time-zone, and location. Team members knew each other and the organisation well in most of the cases, so leaders had tasks mainly in adapting to the technology-mediated processes: online meetings, performance management and employee-wellbeing responsibilities. The level of technological maturity within companies also differed, and many employees had to use their own devices when they were suddenly sent to lockdown. As months passed by and the pandemic seemed to be lasting for a longer period, companies started to invest in technology, and a large-scale digital transformation has taken place in the past two years. Most researchers consider that Covid-19 has played a disruptor and a catalyst role in the virtualization processes: companies had no choice but to switch to remote working arrangements if they wanted to continue business when governments brought regulations about social distancing for health and safety reasons (Collins, 2001, p. 74.).

The level of virtuality a team has –based on their geographical distribution – will be a factor to be considered when observing different leadership scenarios (e.g., globally dispersed teams on the one hand, and in-office team members working from home temporarily, on the other hand)(Kniffin et al., 2021). A team's level of virtuality can vary widely based on the

ratio of face-to-face and virtual contacts that is significantly determined by the above factors. Mitchell and Brewer (2021) define hybrid teams as the ones who have face-to-face contact in addition to their technology-supported collaboration. The hybrid dispersion factors that are described by the authors are location, organisation, time zone and culture. The difficulty of a hybrid team is to live up to the one-team idea and create unity regardless of their different physical or time-zone locations.

To date, the following hybrid working models have been used: at-will employment, split weeks, shift work and flexible work week (Beno, 2020). According to a Gartner (2021) poll, 99% of HR leaders expect employees to work in a hybrid arrangement soon as it allows both organisations and employees to benefit from both worlds.

3. LEADERSHIP IN A HYBRID ENVIRONMENT

The special implications for leaders of virtual teams in the post-Covid-19 era are still not clear as we are currently undergoing the change. However, some directions are already visible. As in peaceful times, pandemic leadership also requires a balanced mix of optimism and realism regarding the future. Kniffin et al. (2021) suggest that leaders and managers should make the right decisions and provide reassurance to their teams when projecting visions. It is inevitable for the members to be committed to a common purpose (Mitchell & Brewer, 2021). This can be done by *shifting to results-focused assessment* as opposed to presence-requirements.

It is difficult to find balance between local priorities and company needs on a larger scale and to create a corporate identity in teams that are globally dispersed (Chamakiotis et al., 2021). Mitchell and Brewer (2021) argue that the manager of a hybrid team must actively *work on reshaping the workplace* in ways that fully leverage both (in-office and remote) worlds' advantages. As the authors put it *'The goal of managers in this new environment is to recognize the strengths and weaknesses of place and time and leverage them in a way that can lead teams towards their goals.'* Collins, 2001, p. 74.). The importance of realising the different characteristics of each working arrangement puts the hybrid team's manager into a determining role. On the other hand, Mitchell and Brewer (2021) also found that hybrid arrangements achieve more successful team buy-in when leaders *offer partnership to their teams* in identifying the tasks that require face-to-face work (collaboration tasks) versus the ones that can preferably be done remotely (focused work).

Hybrid teams can easily lack team trust as non-presence relationships often result in communication gaps. As Mitchell and Brewer (2021) convey, team development is an underlying challenge: how a manager can build trust between team members, how can the team set up an effectively working communication platform, how team knowledge can be shared and how they manage conflict within the organisation. The lack of cohesion between team members requires leaders of virtual teams to *be bridges that develop trust throughout the team* and promote motivation and commitment. Beno (2021) also argues that the ideal workplace culture focuses on activities that generate and demonstrate trust. In their research about Austrian companies that work either with an in-office setup or in a hybrid working model they found that hybrid workers are more often supporting, caring, rewarding, forgiving, and inspiring than cubicle workers, while there is no significant difference in treating each other with respect, demonstrating integrity, fostering dignity and showing appreciation for one another. Though there was an overall experience about different working cultures leading to different levels of e-working, Beno concludes that *'hybrid is characterised by flexibility and choices'* (Beno, 2021, p. 333.). As Covid-19 opened the gate for individual preferences, employees no longer want to be told what and when to do, but rather pick their own preferred way of completing the job and are pushing for new work arrangements.

A common fear for working in a hybrid setup is the development of subgroups, i.e., the division of the whole group into smaller groups based on demographic attributes or workplace preferences. Mitchell and Brewer (2021) argue that the leader is called to do all and even more in *recognizing and rewarding achievements* irrespective of the level of in-office presence a team member shows. Chamakiotis et al. (2021) suggest in their article that virtual teams can reach higher performance with additional, *informal intra-team leaders* that help the official leader to listen to the team members while providing on-the-job support.

The most widely recognized challenges of teamwork in any setup are related to communication. Some of these are waiting to speak, one member's speaking domination, misunderstandings due to language constraints, poorly defined goals, and insufficient planning. Infocommunication tools cannot be substitutes for face-to-face encounters between a leader and his colleagues because the extensive use of ICT has negative effects on the organisational culture. It limits the opportunity for personal rapport and provides ground for misunderstanding resulting in conflicts. Basic human resources management functions, e.g., performance appraisals, feedback, and counselling sessions, are *better held*

when both parties are present at the same location. In their recent study about the impacts of Covid-19 to workplaces, Kniffin et al. (2021) argue that asynchronous e-communication, such as e-mails, chats, and project management tools, lack richness of emotions and understanding; thus, it easily results in conflicts escalating. Another study states that employees who are mostly led by social apps, e.g., chat and task management software, may become indifferent and show lower productivity levels in the long run (Beno, 2021, p. 333.). It was also observed by the authors that the managers tend to pass on tasks in quickly written text messages as a side-activity, while being engaged in some other work at hand. This practice bears several risks: difficulties to interpret the leader's original intent and misunderstanding of circumstances, tasks, and responsibilities on the receiving end, deteriorating social connections between the parties and burnout of the sender due to the extensive use of one's own resources.

Mitchell and Brewer (2021) also warn us about the different feelings that can arise with the employees on hybrid: once it reduces stress due to increased productivity while on the other hand increases stress due to lack of separation between work and home. It is wise to know that people have individual constraints, and it is the leader's responsibility to *stay alert to signs of burnout* and optimise team member's own productivity with health and wellness. Some companies operate with meeting-free-days once a week or once a month, for example. The fun factor is also critical for the overall health of a team and is indeed influential in the development of team trust.

It is the management's sole responsibility to create an environment with a balanced mix of working effectively for achieving business targets and maintaining interpersonal connections within the team (Kulshreshtha & Sharma, 2021). The latter has an essential role in team cohesion and team unity, creating a sense of belonging, raising individual happiness. A high level of collaboration allows for increased resources, better creativity and innovation, improved decision quality and in turn, increased return on investment (Mitchell & Brewer, 2021). If *synchronous collaboration time is organised* in a hybrid setup, it can be the heartbeat of a team as it provides a prioritised block of time with high responsiveness. Such occasions emulate the spontaneous brainstorming and rapid problem-solving practices of the old-school in-office work.

Several research deals with the importance of *running hybrid meetings effectively*. Based on the findings of Mitchell and Brewer we can say that the sole purpose of meetings is to gain

the wisdom of the crowd therefore they need to be intentionally planned and invitations need to go out to required participants with a clear agenda, goals, and preview material in advance. It is every company's interest to establish meeting norms and determine the accepted and preferred platform for a given type of discussion. This includes adopting policies to start and end times, tracking assignments and deadlines and summarising action items. As the authors claim, a typical profile of a hybrid meeting is as follows: social chat and introductions, discussion of the main topic, documentation of meeting minutes, assigning actions and owners to agreed tasks. The most important meeting messages and takeaways need to be repeatedly communicated using multiple technology capabilities (Mitchell & Brewer, 2021).

A straightforward conclusion of all the above is made by Beno (2021) when he claims that the managers of the past are not necessarily equipped to manage their teams in this modern workplace. Even though their research found that hybrid working helps to decrease toxic workplace cultures (because 25 of 29 tested workplace practices had more positive impact in hybrid than compared to cubicle-only work setups), they agree that the face-to-face interaction of executives is preferable to maintain social cues within the team.

To summarise our findings about useful leadership tools in the post-pandemic hybrid working arrangements, please refer to the table below:

Workplace characteristics		Pandemic-emphasised leadership tools used to maintain performance
Before Covid-19	Since pandemic	
In-office presence	Virtual and hybrid teams	Partnership in designing work Bridging stakeholders Cooperation and people management tasks in presence, rest in remote
Work within office hours	Work around the clock	Set communications channels and times Results focus, performance requirements Recognize achievements
Standard chain of command	Dispersed responsibilities	Informal intra-team leader Empower talents Alert to emotions

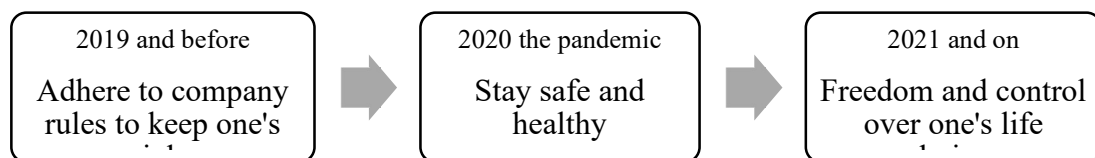
*Table 1.: Summary of changes to the workplace and emerging leadership tools,
Source: author's own research and editing*

4. CONCLUSIONS

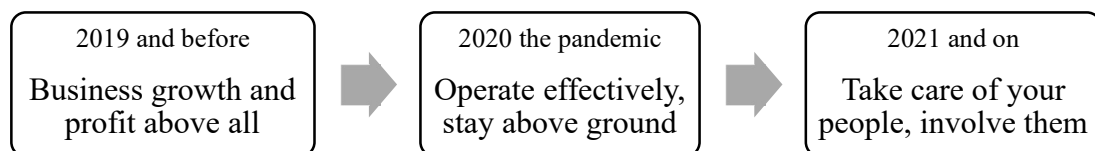
This study examines the implications of the Covid-19 induced hybrid working arrangements on the leadership tools and practices that can be used when driving a team towards desired business performance. To do this, we first analyzed the effects Covid-19 has made on the

overall labor market and on general human preferences. After defining ruling paradigms, we turned into discussing workplace consequences and finally listed several leadership areas that showed changes in approach since the outbreak of the 2020 pandemic.

During our literature review we have established that Covid-19 is a systemic shock that has affected billions of individuals all over the world. The health issues, fatalities, and the level of disturbance to our everyday lives have never been seen before. The pandemic has decreased the labor supply and increased uncertainty and fear in humanity which also shifted preferences about working. Business growth and high standards of living are the most important, yet selfish paradigms of our developed world and they have led to nature being over-used by humans. If we can understand the recent changes in human preferences towards work and life aspects, we can use this current pandemic to learn from our previous mistakes. As for the effects on paradigms, research suggests that we see a paradigm shift that will result in taking the human being back to the centre of our thinking which may lead to a more balanced and healthier use of our world.



*Graph 1. Noted changes in ruling paradigms for individuals
Source: author's own research and editing*



*Graph 2. Noted changes in ruling paradigms for companies
Source: author's own research and editing*

As companies developed their communication and organizational practices rapidly within the year of the pandemic, even newer forms of work arrangements have risen: the different forms of hybrid, a mix of in-office and work-from-home days. This setup is recognized to serve both the transformed individual preferences of the workforce and the talent retention, control and profitability needs of an employer.

We have intended to explore the best practices a leader can follow if being responsible for a hybrid team but there is no one-size-fits-all recipe as of now, in the middle of the change process. As we already see, a manager should shift its focus from employee presence to

results delivered and should work on reshaping the workplace in partnership with its colleagues to incorporate special needs. This will build trust within the team and help form effective ways of communication that result in a sustainable and lifting workplace culture – should the leader commit time and monetary resources on building and maintaining it. When different communication platforms are used wisely, infocommunication tools are serving transactional and operational tasks while face-to-face meetings cover soft topics and bonding. All in all, leaders need to develop stronger people management skills and operate on a higher EQ level than they were used to in the previously existing in-office working setup.

There is still potential for further research in this area: we propose a more thorough literature review while primary research is also to be conducted with leaders from different sizes of companies who have become e-leaders due to the pandemic to examine how they have changed their ruling paradigms.

The above Paper 1. examined how the immediate shock of the COVID-19 pandemic prompted a paradigm shift in leadership thinking. It highlighted the need for emotional intelligence and employee-centric leadership approaches as leaders navigated an abrupt transition into hybrid work models. While the emphasis was on coping strategies and short-term adaptation, the pandemic also set in motion deeper systemic changes that would redefine workplace dynamics.

The following Paper 2. builds on this foundation by moving beyond the reactive phase. It explores how hybrid work has evolved into a new structural reality requiring sustained leadership transformation. Rather than temporary accommodations, organizations now face long-term sociotechnical shifts that demand relationship-oriented leadership and redesigned ways of working. This paper continues the conversation by critically analyzing the leadership imperatives necessary to thrive in a permanently hybrid corporate world.

2. PAPER 2

Title	WOW - Ways of Working - New Leadership in the Hybrid Corporate Reality
Type	Critical literature review
Summary	This paper critically reviews hybrid leadership challenges by identifying sociotechnical changes in work and proposing that relationship-oriented leadership becomes essential in the post-pandemic context.
Citation	Brigitta, Bánhidi: WOW - WAYS OF WORKING - NEW LEADERSHIP IN THE HYBRID CORPORATE REALITY In: 109th International Scientific Conference on Economic and Social Development "Green Economy & Sustainable Development" : Book of Proceedings (2024) pp. 68-77. , 10 p.

WOW - WAYS OF WORKING - NEW LEADERSHIP IN THE HYBRID CORPORATE REALITY

Brigitta Bánhidi

Abstract

Accelerated technological breakthroughs of the past decades have resulted in a new paradigm of work; it may now be performed at any time, in any physical location, or via technology. The virtual world and its many communication tools have established a new framework for leadership and cooperation. As the COVID-19 pandemic passed, hybrid working arrangements became widespread, and several companies tended to mix on-site and remote working, seeking to take advantage of both. A growing ratio of employees prefer to prioritize their own needs ahead of the business growth of their employer, which all together has led to a need for managers and leaders to understand the unprecedented implications of such hybrid setups. This paper serves as a critical literature review that aims to explore the way leadership can operate in this ‘new normal’ of a working environment. The study focuses on three aspects of the problem at hand and thus intends to: (a) identify the social and economic changes that led to having hybrid teams; (b) discuss the new ways of working that have been implied by such changes; and (c) debate the findings of the literature review about the different scenarios of leadership behaviors that managers of hybrid teams may follow to ensure the desired productivity level is met by their teams. First and foremost, as

a widely accepted conclusion, managers might consider re-inventing the workplace in close discussions with their colleagues in order to integrate private preferences. Furthermore, enhanced people management skills and an increased EQ level might help leaders be more effective. It is perceived that the focus of leadership shifts from decision-making to relationship management in the post-pandemic era. That relationship is best maintained by one-on-one leader-subordinate discussions.

Keywords: COVID-19, EQ, Hybrid working environment, Leadership, People management

1. INTRODUCTION

The 2020 Covid-19 outbreak turned our approach to work upside down as it allowed millions of employees to experience the benefits of working from the safety of their homes as opposed to the previously ruling work-from-office paradigm. Four years later, amid the Russian Ukrainian war, the energy crisis and an increasing inflation rate, hybrid working arrangements (a combination of an employee working part time in the company office and part time from their own homes) have become widespread and several companies tend to mix on-site and remote working and seek to take advantage of both. As we are still in the wake of this new era, the impact of the hybrid setup on business KPIs, e.g., business performance, profitability, fluctuation, and engagement are still highly unexplored.

The purpose of my study is to present how the term “work” is changing, and what kind of work environment is expected to stay with us for the longer run in our hybrid corporate reality. My review of existing literature has focused on i) the economic and societal developments, ii) the grounds for having hybrid teams, iii) its implications on the working setup and employee behavior and finally to iv) find the tools leaders may use to maintain the required productivity level within their teams. As the hybrid setup will most probably reshape the working environment in the long run, research to be built on this literature review would be of great novelty and highly helpful for both leaders and the academia in the coming few years.

For my literature review, I searched ScienceDirect to identify relevant articles. My search criterion required that at least one key term (remote work, virtual teams, hybrid work, leadership, employee behaviour, performance management) be part of the abstract, title or keywords. Furthermore, I have performed a Google search to identify in-press research as well to make my review as current as possible. Note to the reader that existing research on

hybrid setup is scarce due to the novelty of this phenomenon and a large portion of published papers are stating opinion without field research.

As my research has unfold, I have realized several interconnected areas that need to be considered when dealing with the matter on hand. The key findings are presented in the below conceptual map.

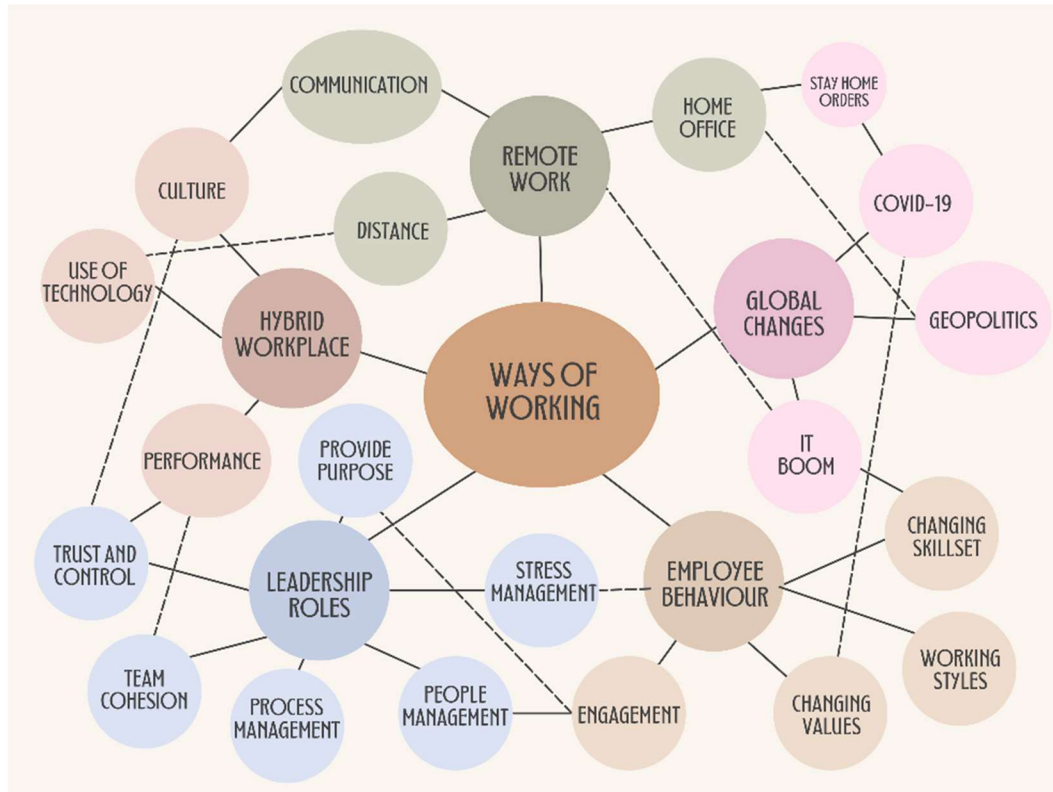


*Figure 1: Conceptual map of critical literature review
(Source: Author's own elaboration)*

2. GLOBAL CHANGES TO OUR LIVES

The way most of our workplaces are designed today originates from Taylorism and the functional structures are built on labor economics models. The ruling paradigm ever since the Industrial Revolution says that organizations and structures are permanent and co-located, tasks are organized into jobs with specific descriptions and chains of command and authority regulate the workforce and workflow (Leonardelli, 2022; Minbaeva, 2021). As significant environmental, sociological, and political changes of the past few decades have altered our everyday lives and our economies have most certainly moved on from the industrial age to the age of technology, it has also severely affected how people are managed within corporations. It has become inevitable to challenge our theoretical compass to show alternative ways of successfully navigating the evolving landscapes of human resource management.

Three major megatrends are significant in their implications to reassess our approach towards people management. As businesses try to navigate away from free trade and free movement and into a new reality of fractured relationships, broken supply chains, and restrictive migration regulations, geopolitics rose to the top of the corporate agenda. The altered and extensive use of technology and data is an additional topic for discussion and investigation (Minbaeva, 2021). While these help us make better business decisions, it is already witnessed that our understanding of them is limited. Technology changes not simply the nature of work but also the skillset and knowledge needed by the workforce. The growth in the usage of digital technology is seen to shift the labor market away from permanent types of work, towards a per-task basis.

The abrupt outbreak of a pandemic in 2020 was a systemic shock of the 21st century that caused long-lasting global changes to processes, practices, and attitudes regarding fundamental human needs (Kniffin et al., 2021). As Béland et al. (2020) predicted, Covid-19 has also resulted in a recession in the world similar to the Spanish Flu or the Black Death. Most researchers consider that Covid-19 has played a disruptive and a catalyst role in the virtualization processes: companies had no choice but to switch to remote working arrangements (Béland et al., 2020; Chamakiotis et al., 2021; Leonardelli, 2022; Kniffin et al., 2021).

3. HYBRID TEAMS ARE BORN

3.1. Remote work

The first signs of virtual teams date back to the 1990's when technological innovation accelerated, and mobile phones became a commodity as well as a tool for business communication. New ways of working started to evolve decades ago with the introduction of concepts like e-mail consoles on mobile phones, flexible workspaces, and videoconferencing, all these bore the intention to ease people's burdens by using digitalization for automating work processes. Information technology made it first possible, later also easy to coordinate work without boundaries in time and/or space. This evolution was quicker in knowledge-intensive companies, mostly in the technology and the science-based sectors than in sectors that require a human-to-human interaction (like healthcare or hospitality). Jarvenpaa and Tanriverdi talked about a "transition from tree-like hierarchical structures into flat, web-like organizations that enable better knowledge flows among business units" as early as in 2003

(p.403.). They also envisioned the blurred organizational boundaries between customers, suppliers and partners and considered them as a wider network. As Chamakiotis et al. (2021) highlight, the benefits of remote/virtual teams are inevitable: they provide access to talent irrespective of its residence, they reduce travel and commuting costs and give opportunity for a more flexible work-life time-distribution. It is important to mention that even though the term ‘virtual team’ was first used in 1992 (Gilson et al., 2021), remote work and virtual teams had not become common for decades and were considered as ‘revolutionary’ mainly due to control considerations.

In 2021, as the COVID-19 pandemic eased up, most companies requested their workforce to return from lockdown and work from the offices, but the advancement of home office arrangements, that seemed like a short-term inconvenience at the wake of the crises had since become a permanent shift in how and where people would like to work (Leonardelli, 2022) and companies need to adapt a hybrid working structure to balance the needs of both their business and workforce.

3.2. Hybrid workplaces

Hybrid teams are the ones who “have face-to-face contact in addition to their technology-supported collaboration” (Mitchell and Brewer, 2021, p.1). The authors characterize the hybrid dissemination factors as location, organization, time zone, and culture. A rather similar definition was made by Hambley, O’Neill and Kline already back in 2007 when they state that “virtual teams are defined as interdependent groups of individuals that work across time, space and organizational boundaries with communication links that are heavily dependent upon advanced information technologies” (p.1.). We underline the ‘interdependent’ characteristic of such teams as several researchers postulate it as a vital factor when determining the desired team setup. In their theoretical paper about e-leadership and virtual teams, Cascio and Shurygailo (2003) states three major distinguishing factors that can determine if a group of people are working as a team or not: members should interact, they must work towards a common goal that they agreed upon and they should continuously adapt to any changes in circumstances to come to their goals. These are applicable for both in-person and virtual teams.

It can be argued though if the setup has a determining role of team performance, or it can be influenced by teammates. The manager of a hybrid team, according to Mitchell and Brewer (2021), may actively engage in changing the workplace in ways that fully harness the benefits of both (in-office and remote) worlds. As Tzabbar and Baburaj (2019) found,

moderate regional dispersion enables businesses to get fresh data from various information networks and use it to produce creative results. Even though each member offers something different, too much dispersion might result in information overload. As practice underlines the author's findings, hybrid arrangements achieve more successful team buy-in when a leaders offer partnership to their teams in identifying the tasks that require face-to-face work versus the ones that can preferably be done remotely.

4. SHIFTED EMPLOYEE BEHAVIOUR

The goal of today's new ways of working is to maintain performance while improving employee satisfaction and retention by bringing in changes to time spent at work (employees don't need to put in 9 to 5 hours, but the emphasis is on the result), to the workplace itself (employees don't need to be physically present at a given location), and to the contracts (people no longer need to be bound by full-time contracts). The main characteristics of organizational setup, such as employees are organized into teams that are led by managers and leaders, are not yet changing though. The purpose of a team is to effectively integrate the contributions and the performance of the individuals that it is built of (Zaccaro et al., 2011). To reach the desired performance, team members should coordinate and synchronize their actions, whether they are conducted in a virtual or in a face-to-face setup. In the following paragraph some important aspects of the new working setup and the related employee behavior are collected and challenged.

4.1. Working styles

In their empirical research Eisenberg and DiTomaso (2019) found that members of remote teams experience distance in a variety of ways therefore collaboration is a major challenge for most teams that can be overcome with the extensive use of technology. This is supported by Chamakiotis et al. (2021) when stating that leaders of the pandemic-induced virtual teams had to focus mainly on adapting to the technology-mediated processes: online meetings, performance management and employee-wellbeing responsibilities. Based on the findings of Mitchell and Brewer (2021), the typical hybrid meeting starts with a social chat and introductions to warm up distance parties, then turns on to discussing the main topic, documenting meeting minutes, and assigning actions and owners to agreed tasks. All this seems to put a higher burden on the leaders that they were used to in the traditional in-office setups. The advantages of having more creative sources available due to geographic dispersion are likely to be offset if team members have any type of fears. Teams that are

widely scattered find it more difficult to collaborate and learn because members are more inclined to consider the environment hazardous (Tzabbar and Baburaj, 2019).

Since a team member's perceptions of psychological distance from other team members have a greater impact on the quality of their cooperation than their actual physical distance (Eisenberg and DiTomaso, 2021), it is essential to investigate the elements that may influence the establishment of such psychological perceptions. Tzabbar and Baburaj (2019) talk about the need to develop a creative culture that provides psychological safety for the employees. Managerial choices on how to build a team, how to assign workloads across many teams, and where to put members may create diverse microclimates that impact how team members interact with each other, which affects how they assess team processes and emergent states like trust. Eisenberg and DiTomaso (2021) score a very important point by stating that team arrangements affect perceived psychological distance of their members, and this may not always rise linearly as physical distance does.

4.2. Changing values

Working remotely, workers may sense less trust and support from their boss and the firm than it is experienced in the face-to-face environment. Beno (2021) maintains that an optimal workplace culture emphasizes activities that generate and demonstrate trust. In their study of Austrian companies with either an in-office setup or a hybrid working model, they discovered that hybrid workers are frequently more supportive, caring, rewarding, forgiving, and inspiring than cubicle workers, whereas there is no significant difference in terms of respecting one another, demonstrating integrity, fostering dignity, and expressing appreciation. Beno (2021) states that "hybrid is characterized by flexibility and choices" (Beno, 2021, p. 333). COVID-19 made it possible for employees to seek out their personal preferences, so a large proportion of subordinates no longer want to be instructed on what to do and when to do it. Rather, they prefer to choose their own preferred method of completing the job and are advocating for new work arrangements.

Golden (2021) amongst other researchers underlines that the most often noted challenge with teleworking is balancing the demands between work and family. Employees working from their homes on given days are also immersed in their typical family domain packed with reminders of their non-work demands and interests. In their empirical research in 2020 in the US, George et al. (2022) found that 44% of respondents claimed their job demands have raised since working from home as compared to the previously common in-office work (Fig.1., p.3.). In their paper about the challenges of working from home in times of crises,

Toniolo-Barrios and Pitt (2021) claim that practicing mindfulness may help employees in several ways. First, it helps oneself to disconnect from work, second it improves attention span thus performance, and third it allows for a better recovery from screen fatigue. To conclude, the stress and anxiety resulting from the increased workload and the blurred lines between work and personal life more and more seem as factors that leaders will need to consider and tackle in hybrid working setups.

5. NEW LEADERSHIP

The desire for flexibility, autonomy, and a redefined work-life balance has necessitated a recalibration of leadership roles and expectations. This has implications for leadership roles, particularly in communication, team cohesion, building trust and people management.

5.1. Communication

It might be found difficult to communicate within virtual teams. Multiple methods, including instant messaging, a corporate social media platform and videoconferencing, are used by virtual teams to connect with one another. Larson and DeChurch claim that in all these, the fundamental problem is the absence of nonverbal communication, such as physical proximity and body language, to express interpersonal intimacy while participants are at a distance. It is argued if virtual gatherings are sufficient at all, or leaders should try to bring team members together face-to-face regularly to facilitate chances for cooperation. The mere act of sitting next to someone in a conference room may provide comfort and confidence during a heated meeting, but this is not achievable in a virtual environment (Dinh et al., 2021). If synchronous collaboration time is organized in a hybrid setup, it can be the heartbeat of a team as it provides a prioritized block of time with high responsiveness. Such occasions emulate the spontaneous brainstorming and rapid problem-solving practices of the old-school in-office work. Mitchell and Brewer (2021) claim that a high level of collaboration allows for increased resources, better creativity and innovation, improved decision quality and in turn, increased return on investment.

Kulshreshtha and Sharma (2021) also warn that information communication tools cannot replace face-to-face interactions among a leader and his colleagues due to the negative effects of ICT on organizational culture. It reduces the potential for personal connection and fosters misunderstandings that lead to conflicts. When both parties attend the same location, basic human resource management functions, such as performance evaluations, feedback, and coaching sessions, are performed more effectively. Some researchers distinguish leader-

employee interactions based on the number of attendants and claim that “One-on-one meetings are an opportunity for the leader to lead, inspire, influence, motivate, coach, listen, solve problems, make decisions, and create an environment where employees feel energized” (Olariu and Aldea, 2014, p.382.). Not to forget that leadership is a relationship based on voluntary obedience, Joullié et al. (2020) remind us that the way a leader communicates determines whether their social interactions are authoritative or authoritarian. Considering a hybrid setup with all its complexity, a leader must not let themselves slip into authoritarian means of expressing power.

5.2. Team cohesion

A significant factor in handling power-related difficulties lies within the social connections gained from belonging to a team. Leaders of geographically dispersed and hybrid teams should make extra effort to establish a stronger feeling of connectedness and shared purpose (Eisenberg and DiTomaso, 2021). They may do it by promoting, supporting, and rewarding increased levels of team member interactions using whatever channels are available. During their empirical research of transformational leadership (when a leader uses its charisma to influence team members, motivates via inspiration, provides intellectual stimulation and considers individual behaviors), Purvanova and Bono (2009) found that leaders are more effective if they increase their transformational leadership behavior in a virtual setup and that its effect on team performance is stronger in virtual teams than in face-to-face ones. The limitation of this conclusion might be the difficulty for a leader to perform the exact same behavior within different team contexts.

5.3. Building trust

Most leaders recognize the necessity for teams to build robust emotional emergent states such as trust and cohesion. Maynard and Gilson (2021) concluded that strong personal relationships are a key predictor of trust within the work teams. Cognitive states such as shared mental models and transactive memory systems are just as important as a behavioral integration process. According to studies by Jarvenpaa and Tanriverdi (2003) and Larson and DeChurch (2020), shared styles of leadership promote team performance more than hierarchical types. With shared leadership, everyone contributes to the team goals in a dynamic and interactive process of influencing each other.

The conventional conception of a successful leader is someone who is more informed and capable than others. Higher social standing is attributed to the perception of a leader's ability to use their influence and authority. However, research indicates that corporate managers

should also participate in modest questioning (Cojuharenco and Karelaia, 2020). Whenever leaders pose questions to which they have no answers they presumably demonstrate a realistic confession of their own limits, a desire to learn from others, and a regard for the other's viewpoints and expertise; these are the defining features of humility.

5.4. People management

A performance and engagement premium is registered with leaders who engage in regular one-to-one discussions with their team members to openly ask them questions of any kind. Leader-subordinate relationships are considered to have a crucial effect also on employee wellbeing (Glaso and Einarsen, 2006). Successful leadership combines team needs assessment and considers aspects that increase job happiness, such as employee emotions of autonomy. Sinclair et al. (2021) found that leaders must assess employees' perspectives and seek insight into their happiness and sense of connection in a way that allows for open and honest communication.

Beno (2020) reaches an unambiguous conclusion when he asserts that managers of previous eras are not inherently prepared for handling their teams in the modern workplace. Even though their research indicates that hybrid working reduces noxious workplace customs, they conclude that face-to-face interaction between executives is preferable for preserving social signals within the team.

6. DISCUSSION

As we delve into the intricacies of the hybrid corporate environment, the examination of literature offers valuable insights, yet a nuanced discussion reveals disparities between the findings of academic studies and the unfolding realities in today's workplaces. This discussion seeks to illuminate the contradictions that persist between conventional narratives and the evolving practices of remote and hybrid work, shedding light on the areas that have witnessed substantial change and emphasizing the reconfigured values within organizations. Global catalysts such as the IT boom, geopolitical shifts, and the transformative effects of the COVID-19 pandemic have been acknowledged, but the extent to which they shape the day-to-day experiences of employees and leaders in hybrid setups is often underestimated. Real-world practices show the dynamic nature of this environment, needing an adaptable organizational culture capable of responding to ongoing changes.

Remote work, a prominent aspect of the hybrid model, has been a recurrent theme in literature, emphasizing its influence on communication, distance, and the use of technology.

However, the lived experiences of employees reveal a more complex reality with the challenges of maintaining effective communication, establishing a cohesive corporate culture, handling stress and ensuring equitable performance evaluation. In real-world scenarios, the integration of technology is accompanied by challenges related to accessibility, cybersecurity, and the digital divide among employees. Cultural nuances in a hybrid setting demand continuous attention and empathy towards one another.

Employee behavior, encompassing changing values, skillsets, and working styles, forms a critical aspect of the hybrid work environment. While literature recognizes this transformation, the lived experiences of employees showcase a more profound shift. Leaders are grappling with the challenge of aligning organizational goals with the changing values of a diverse and remote workforce. The evolving nature of the hybrid workplace requires leaders to adapt rapidly. The practical challenges of maintaining team cohesion in a virtual environment, building trust without physical proximity, and managing stress in a dispersed workforce underscore the shifting role of leaders.

The literature reveals a notable transformation in the importance of one-to-one discussions between leaders and subordinates. This shift is driven by the need for personalized approaches in addressing individual concerns, fostering a sense of purpose, and building trust. As the hybrid model blurs the lines between professional and personal spheres, leaders choose to invest in meaningful conversations that transcend traditional hierarchical boundaries.

In conclusion, the hybrid corporate environment demands a reevaluation of leadership approaches to navigate the contradictions between old narratives and current practices. The evolving values, skillsets, and working styles of employees necessitate a more personalized and adaptive leadership style. The increasing importance of one-to-one discussions emerges as a key theme, underlining the critical role these interactions play in enhancing engagement and maintaining organizational cohesion in the evolving world of work.

7. CONCLUSION

During my literature review my intention was to collect available sources on several aspects of the development of the post-pandemic hybrid working setup with the goal to check whether research has already identified the desirable leadership behavior or not.

The topic is widely complex and after reading and analyzing a wide number of sources we may say that we have some knowledge about the important characteristics of employee behavior and its leadership implications within the new paradigm. In a modern organization, firm-centric leadership, in which activity is directed to one stakeholder group without respect for other stakeholders, does not fit. On the contrary, contemporary leaders must align organizational goals with the evolving values of a diverse and remote workforce, which leaves them facing practical challenges in maintaining team cohesion, building trust without physical proximity, and managing stress in a dispersed workforce.

In essence, the hybrid corporate environment calls for a reevaluation of leadership approaches to reconcile theoretical narratives with practical realities. The evolving values of employees require a personalized and adaptive leadership style. There is a significant need for leaders to involve team members in decisions that affect team cohesion, their cooperation, and communication. The focus of leadership shifts from decision-making to relationship management. The importance for leaders to spend one-on-one time with their teammates to coordinate and ensure belonging has thus increased compared to the previously existing working-in-office setup. As it is only four years since we are experimenting with hybrid structures worldwide, the implication of my literature review is that we need to vest more efforts into studies to understand how these leadership behaviors, especially one-on-one discussions affect performance and engagement once the hybrid setup settles as a new norm.

While the above Paper 2. framed hybrid leadership as a response to sociotechnical shifts, the following Paper 3. turns attention to the relational core of leadership. It synthesizes emerging evidence on trust, engagement, and wellbeing, identifying structured one-to-one discussions as a key mechanism for navigating hybrid leader-subordinate dynamics. This marks a shift from contextual analysis to exploring the quality and structure of leadership interactions themselves.

3. PAPER 3

Title	Navigating Leader-Subordinate Dynamics in the Hybrid Corporate Environment: A Comprehensive Review
Type	Critical literature review
Summary	This comprehensive review synthesizes digital leadership, trust, engagement, and wellbeing literature, underscoring the pivotal role of structured one-to-one leader-subordinate discussions in hybrid team performance..
Citation	Brigitta, Bánhidi: NAVIGATING LEADER-SUBORDINATE DYNAMICS IN THE HYBRID CORPORATE ENVIRONMENT: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW In: Barbara, Huszar; Zoltan, Baracscai; Nicholas, Recker (szerk.) Economic and Social Development : 111th International Scientific Conference on Economic and Social Development – "Navigating into the Future: The new Employee Experience" : Book of Proceedings, Varazdin, Horvátország : Varazdin Development and Entrepreneurship Agency (2024) pp. 160-169. , 10 p.

NAVIGATING LEADER-SUBORDINATE DYNAMICS IN THE HYBRID CORPORATE ENVIRONMENT: A COMPREHENSIVE REVIEW

Brigitta Bánhidi

Abstract

This paper critically examines the multifaceted aspects of leader-subordinate relationships within the evolving landscape of the hybrid corporate environment. With a focus on the intersectionality of leadership functions, employee wellbeing, digital leadership, trust, and engagement, this review synthesizes existing literature to illuminate key challenges and opportunities inherent in the hybrid work paradigm. Our study aims to investigate how leaders adapt to change, navigate through remote work challenges, and facilitate cohesive team dynamics in a dispersed, technology-driven workspace. The paper critically analyzes the influence of digital leadership on leader-subordinate interactions, emphasizing the requisite skills and qualities needed for effective leadership in a digital landscape. Additionally, we scrutinize the impact of leader-subordinate discussions on employee wellbeing, considering the vital role of leaders in promoting work-life integration, recognizing individual contributions, and fostering a healthy work environment. Central to our exploration is the examination of trust-building mechanisms, recognizing trust as a

potential factor to successful leader-subordinate relationships. This requires our literature review to also address the crucial issue of employee engagement, investigating strategies to sustain engagement levels in a hybrid setup through effective communication, feedback mechanisms, and recognition efforts. In conclusion, this comprehensive review underscores the critical importance of leader-subordinate interactions, particularly one-to-one discussions, as pivotal tools for fostering sustained engagement within the hybrid corporate environment. As a next step, we advocate for a focused analysis of the dynamics within these individualized discussions, recognizing their potential to catalyze enhanced engagement, trust, and overall success in the evolving landscape of hybrid work. This targeted examination promises to offer nuanced insights and actionable strategies for organizations committed to optimizing leader-subordinate relationships in the dynamic landscape of hybrid work.

Keywords: Digital leadership, Employee wellbeing, Hybrid working environment, Leader-subordinate relationship, Trust

1. INTRODUCTION

The landscape of corporate work has undergone unprecedented transformations in recent years, propelled by global changes such as the IT boom, geopolitical shifts, and the disruptive force of the COVID-19 pandemic. Central to this evolution is the emergence of the hybrid workplace, a dynamic blend of remote and in-office work that demands a reevaluation of traditional leadership paradigms. As organizations strive to adapt, the role of leaders in fostering meaningful connections with their subordinates becomes paramount, especially within the context of one-to-one discussions.

This paper seeks to explore the intricate interplay of leader-subordinate relationships within the hybrid corporate environment. We will delve into the multifaceted challenges faced by leaders in the hybrid realm, exploring their roles in adapting to change, navigating remote work dynamics, and cultivating cohesive team dynamics amid technological advancements. Our goal is to critically analyze the influence of digital leadership on these interactions and underscore the importance of employee wellbeing as a cornerstone of successful leader-subordinate relationships.

While existing literature offers valuable insights into leadership functions, digital leadership, employee wellbeing, trust-building mechanisms and strategies for sustaining engagement, there remains a notable gap— a paucity of research that delves into the characteristics of leader-subordinate discussions and their impact on employee engagement. This paper

contends that these individualized interactions serve as pivotal tools in the leader's arsenal, possessing the potential to significantly impact trust, engagement, and overall team success in the hybrid setup.

In essence, this study serves as a clarion call, advocating for a deeper, more nuanced exploration of leader-subordinate relationships, with a particular emphasis on the deterministic role of one-to-one discussions.

The following is a visual aid for understanding the interrelated concepts that are covered in my current literature review.

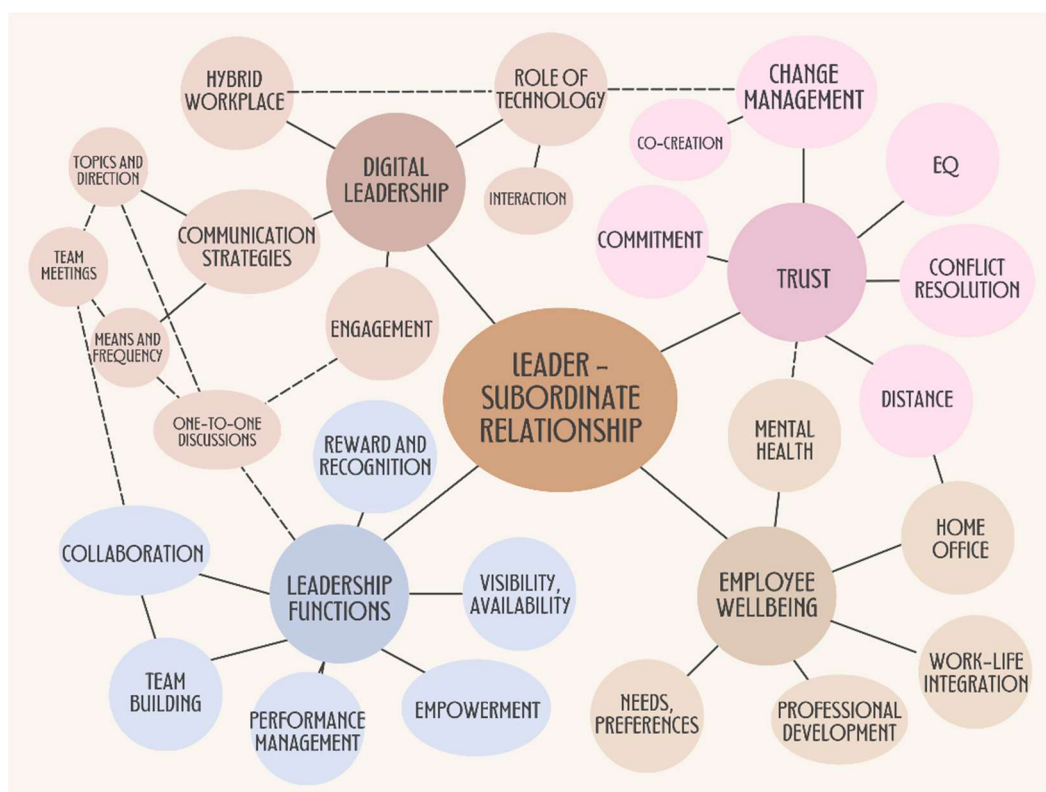


*Figure 1: Conceptual map of critical literature review
(Source: Author's own elaboration)*

2. LEADERSHIP FUNCTIONS IN A HYBRID WORKPLACE

As Sheryl Sandberg, former COO of Facebook cites Harvard MBA professor Moon in her book 'Lean in' (2013), "leadership is about making others better as a result of your presence and making sure that impact lasts in your absence" (p.115). While she was not even talking about hybrid teams, she referred to an important point by saying that a leader is measured by the strength of its team and the performance they can deliver. Several leadership behaviors are examined by various researchers to test their applicability either in face-to-face or within virtual teams. Agreeing with Aroles et al. (2021) our time is characterized by

work that is not disappearing but rather resurfacing in a fresh guise, as if undergoing a process of self-reinvention. As some formal forms of labour are vanishing, work is also becoming more invisible as it spreads across all social settings. The division and proliferation of labour, together with the expansion and complexity of work methods,

Team leadership may be conceptualized as acts made by one or more team members to guarantee that the team's performance goals are addressed. Jarvenpaa and Tanriverdi (2003) claim that the responsibility of organizational leadership is to address gaps in the structure of the organization. The leader's influencing behaviors directs the activities of the organization's long-term survival. When aimed towards change, influence behaviors supersede compliance and guidance supplied by the organizational structure. In instances when the structure fails to give proper guidance, leadership may supplement the framework. The results of extensive research on team dynamics by Eubanks et al. (2016) indicate the significance of task-oriented behaviour in virtual settings and confirm previous findings about the value of task-oriented leadership behaviour in a broader sense. The authors claim that individuals may be assigned specific tasks within a virtual team, furthermore, that the existence of particular combinations of roles within a hybrid team is linked to greater performance.

The review of Aroles et al. (2021) recalls the experiences of remote workers who have adopted individualized work methods that prioritize outcomes and efficiency, leading to a sense of disconnectedness and a loss of prior work connections. However, they also engage in a process of re-establishing and controlling their shared identity, as workers actively create alternative definitions to maintain their relationships and communities, avoiding inactivity. The key feature of this re-regulation process is that workers enact management tactics, rather than waiting for management to have those imposed upon them. Some remote workers also seek alternative workspaces within communities to recreate social connections and collaborative environments. These development highlight the developing trend of a shared leadership role within the hybrid corporate environment. As D'Innocenzo et al. (2021) recall, shared leadership is characterized by the distribution of informal leadership roles and influence among team members, with reciprocal and mutually reinforcing leadership and followership. Research shows that shared leadership is positively correlated both with performance and team trust.

3. DIGITAL LEADERSHIP: NECESSITIES AND CHALLENGES

Most organizational leaders would agree with Leonardelli (2022) in saying that “leading remotely has historically faced resistance” (p.2.). The basic concepts that are hindered without

co-location are trust, identity, cooperation, respect, kindness, and acceptance, just to name a few. The two biggest challenges identified by Reyes, Luna and Salas (2021) are the difficulty of establishing accountability and the tendency of people feeling disconnected from the organization when working from home for long. In another study, Feitosa and Salas (2021) recite four major items for a leader to focus on within today’s virtual teams: to monitor trust, to harvest contact points, to support psychological safety and to reflect upon and provide feedback on teamwork. As it can easily be seen, researchers tackle the issue from a slightly different viewpoint though they agree on the very basics: a hybrid team needs to work on creating and maintaining trust and look for ways to utilize all their efforts let them be individual or cooperation facilitated.

Effective digital cooperation in dispersed teams requires team members' proficiency in self-organization, self-care, and mastery of digital technologies. In their paper, Späth et al. (2021) argue that building organizational and technological standards and personal, team, and leadership abilities are crucial. Technologies that facilitate collaboration and task completion can enhance cooperation. Distributed teams can benefit from collaboration technologies used by on-site teams, but the variety of tools and individual preferences may pose challenges.

Digital technologies and collaboration platforms enhance team size, complexity, and dispersion, making the leadership function an increasingly vital one. Team effectiveness is strongly correlated with shared mental models that organize information and understanding about the team's mission, work, and collaboration. Shared mental models are formed by the team members' collective behavior expectations. As a virtual network structure boosts the company's general ability to deal with information and make quick choices, one may assume that leaders in such organizations have fewer leadership gaps to fill. Distributing responsibility and leadership functions across multiple members of the virtual team is more effective (D’Innocenzo et al., 2021; Lungeanu et al., 2022) as leading in a hybrid environment requires more time and effort from a single individual than in face-to-face teams.

Chamakiotis et al. (2021) also suggest that virtual teams can reach higher performance with additional, informal intra-team leaders that help the official leader to listen to the team

members while providing on-the-job support. Some authors argue that a single leader can reach agreement more quickly, leaves grounds for less conflict and can better foster knowledge sharing within the team (D’Innocenzo et al., 2021).

Culture defines how members of an organization work together based on its values and beliefs (Kurucz & Potháczky Rácz, 2018). Working from home unavoidably weakens workers' connections to the corporate culture's values, beliefs, and norms, since cultures are formed via interactions with individuals in that context and the visible reminders of cultural values found in an office's signs, symbols, and artifacts. In a hybrid context, re-establishing and updating the work culture is a leadership priority as also emphasized by Newman and Ford (2021). A strong culture may assist virtual workers replace for the loss of in-person interactions and serve as a driver for excellent communications across and within the team. Newman and Ford (2021) found that the lack of regular informal contact requires executives to provide their virtual workforce with new communication tools and approaches.

Flavián et al. (2022) claims that the effectiveness of leading a virtual team depends on the leader's ability to evaluate subordinates' personalities and delegate tasks appropriately. Specifically, it was observed that the association between neuroticism and trust is weakened due to negative reinforcement. To minimize this, virtual team leaders should allocate more in-person meetings and increase interaction with emotionally unstable subordinates.

Several research claim that leaders in charge of remote personnel may have to work more to connect with and address the needs of their employees than their peers in charge of an in-person workforce (Larson & DeChurch, 2020; Leonardelli, 2022). Research conducted by Kurucz (2018) clearly shows that managers consider the areas of communication, work organization, training, mentoring, and IT skills development to be of great importance in the digital transition. Digital leadership skills are recognized, but there is limited exploration of how these skills manifest in one-to-one interactions, where leaders must balance digital proficiency with personal connection and emotional intelligence.

4. NURTURING EMPLOYEE WELLBEING IN A HYBRID SETTING

Considering respect in organizations and the role leaders play in overseeing corporate performance, Rudolph et al. (2021) supply us with a timeline of the development of leadership approaches over the past century. Even though the “New Leader” concept has been formulated in the 1980s and the “Caring Leadership” started to take roots in the 1990s, the intensive need for growth and profit maximization took over the 2000s with leaders build

ing on appraisal and vertical respect. OECD (2020) has recently called for a ‘redefining’ of the growth narrative to put the well-being of people at the centre of our efforts.

Harney and Collings (2021) state that disruptive immigration reforms have altered the mechanics of talent accessibility, pushing firms to rethink retention methods. In addition, millennials, and Gen Z workforce account for a growing proportion of today’s global workforce raising highly different issues than the aging population of seasoned professionals (Deloitte, 2016). Since talent platforms are increasingly being utilized to connect contractors with open positions, some scholars (e.g., Dundon and Rafferty, 2018) assert that the structure of the global workforce is fundamentally changing and that it is moving "beyond employment." These alternate platforms for employment offer more flexibility in the workplace, a better work-life balance, and the chance to engage in more fulfilling work. However, important issues like sustainable careers and personal or professional identity continue to be raised. It seems that there has been a considerable transfer of risk and uncertainty from the employer to the workforce.

In their study about the impact of flexible work arrangements on work-family conflicts Shockley and Allen (2007) found that the level of family responsibilities that workers have plays a significant role in determining the extent to which flexible work arrangements impact work-family conflict. Some family-related activities require daytime attention (e.g., doctors appointment, PTA meetings) that are easier to address if working in a (partly) remote setting therefore members of hybrid teams may experience less work-family conflicts than face-to-face ones.

In their systematic literature review, Athanasiadou and Theriou (2021) state that establishing clear boundaries between family and work is linked to improved work-life balance and enhanced well-being, which is supported by flexibility. They also claim that employees who find social engagement to be emotionally demanding and unwanted tend to gain from engaging in part-time telework, as it may help to reduce the detrimental impact of excessive engagement by providing a brief respite or mini-break.

A study by Prodanova and Kocarev (2021) found that employees' anxiety of infocommunication tools and smartphone addiction lead to job interruptions and negatively affect job efficacy. Hybrid working arrangements require employees to have confidence in implementing infocommunication tools in their everyday working routines, which can result in disrupted and troubled tasks. The study concluded that addressing both distraction and

efficacy elements is crucial for achieving adequate job performance in work-from-home environments which puts additional burden on the leaders of hybrid teams.

Not to forget the wellbeing of leaders themselves, Sharma et al. (2016) offer a five-step approach to proactively cope with stressors emerging in hybrid working environments, these are: build resources, screen the environment, execute initial appraisal, activate cognitive and behavioral functions to prevent a suspected stressor and gather feedback on potentially required additional coping efforts. These are not only necessary to maintain the leader's mental health but also to become and stay an authentic leader that bears the trust of their team.

5. BUILDING TRUST: A CORNERSTONE OF LEADER-SUBORDINATE RELATIONSHIPS

In a team context, trust assumes that others will behave as expected. Building trust through interactions is crucial in dispersed situations. An extensive research run by Flavián et al. (2022) revealed a positive correlation between extroverted people and their inclination to trust their leaders. Extroverted employees play a crucial role in virtual work teams, since they are essential for achieving high performance, facilitating engagement, and promoting effective cooperation. The research further discovered a favourable correlation between trust and team commitment, especially for members who are located in different geographical locations. Their research also indicated that the gender of a leader does not have an influence on how personality qualities affect trust.

Sturm et al. (2021) recall that economists possess a sophisticated theoretical comprehension of the external incentive effects of power dynamics, however, it is equally crucial to consider the influence of power on internal motivation in order to organise interactions between leaders and followers in a manner that optimises efficiency.

In their unusual approach, Bayraktar (2021) compares the leader-follower relationship to dancing as it involves active listening, barriers to communication, and effective feedback. The relationship is a reciprocal process, and developing cooperation and trust is vital. Dance reflects an equal emphasis on both the leader and the follower and the co-creation process is what makes a dance harmonious and elegant. Should leaders copy the rules of dancing, their efforts may result in an intuitive connection between the partners.

The value produced by face-to-face encounters can only partially be replaced using technology. The study of Ayoko et al. (2012) that focused on managing emotions in virtual

teams found that the team's disruptive behaviours during the storming phase (defined as a developmental phase of a team by Tuckman (1965)) indicate a challenging period of group growth as unsolicited comments during this phase can lead to interpersonal conflict. To achieve successful performance, team members should actively seek input from others with the help of their leader. This involves being receptive and humble about one's contributions, encouraging collaboration and serving as an example for others. Requesting feedback helps transition from the storming phase to the norming phase, providing explanations and elaborations of ideas, calming emotions, and allowing individuals to apologise and improve previous interactions.

6. COMMUNICATION THAT SUSTAINS EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT IN A HYBRID SETUP

Regular encounters enable team members to understand the boundaries and latitude of faraway team members and foster the growth of mutual knowledge. Maynard and Gilson (2021) found that teams that meet in person on a schedule outperform those that only operate virtually. Hill et al. (2014) utilized the LMX (Leader-Member Exchange) model to explore the role of leaders in promoting psychological empowerment and positive work outcomes for employees using electronic communication and their study found a positive correlation between the two. Tzabbar and Baburaj (2019) warn leaders to maintain a shared vision and a set of goals for a team to work well. Dispersed teams find it difficult to take advantage of brainstorming sessions or conversations at the water cooler, especially in the early stages of a collaborative project. Kim and Leach (2020) also claim that leaders have a transformative role in encouraging team-buy-in for any virtual/hybrid working setup via promoting informal communication and maintaining an always-positive mindset.

Hambley, O'Neill and Kline (2007) emphasize that an e-leader bears the support of an advanced information technology to exercise social influence through, in order to produce changes to attitudes, feeling, thinking and behavior on the employee's side to drive performance. Their research offered valuable insights into the impacts of three distinct communication mediums. Teams participating in face-to-face interactions showed greater levels of constructive engagement compared to teams using videoconference or chat platforms. However, the defensive interactions between teams in all three mediums were similar. In addition, the teams who met face-to-face and those that spoke using video conferencing showed more unity compared to the teams that used chat as their

communication method. All three media teams exhibited comparable task performances. The data are inconclusive but indicate that not all of these mediums are equally efficacious, therefore, it is crucial to establish strong leadership, effective interaction styles, coherence, and ultimately performance right from the beginning of a virtual team.

Kim and Leach (2020) conducted a research aimed to understand how organizational structure and communication climate affect employee voice and its outcomes. It analyzed two forms of employee voice: identifiable in-person voice and anonymous digitally-enabled voice. Results showed an inverse relationship between centralization and freedom of speech, increased employee voice via anonymous social media and at work, and positive correlation between organizational change and both forms of employee voice and commitment. The study also highlighted the importance of communication climate and the effectiveness of digitally-enabled anonymous voice, and proposed employee voice as a multidimensional construct comprising content, identifiability, and modality.

Virtual teams use various communication channels, including asynchronous, synchronous, one-to-one and one-to-many, presenting challenges for e-leaders in communication, coordination, and knowledge dissemination. According to Snellman (2014) in order to effectively convey intentions through technology, leaders must develop communication protocols, requiring skills like social networking, global perspective, emotional awareness, and constant availability. E-leaders must adapt to the virtual world and find ways to overcome emerging obstacles to effectively lead and collaborate.

As Eisenberg and DiTomaso (2021) claim, team leaders and members must create a psychologically secure environment where all input is acknowledged and evaluated impartially. Managers can use performance assessment and one-to-one discussions to incentivize behaviors that promote psychological safety, as this can enhance communication and overall team performance.

7. DISCUSSION

The studies on hybrid workplace underscore the evolving nature of leadership roles amidst changing work dynamics. Leaders play a crucial role in fostering team effectiveness and adaptability. In hybrid settings, organizational leadership extends beyond structural norms to include adaptive influence behaviors essential for organizational survival. Task-oriented leadership behaviors are particularly vital in virtual teams, correlating with improved performance. Additionally, the emergence of shared leadership reflects a shift towards

distributed influence and collaborative decision-making, enhancing both team performance and trust. Overall, understanding and adapting to these evolving leadership functions are essential for navigating the complexities of hybrid workplaces effectively.

Key challenges for leaders include establishing trust, fostering accountability, and maintaining organizational culture in dispersed work settings. Leaders must prioritize technological proficiency and collaboration while navigating diverse tools and individual preferences. Understanding and accommodating subordinates' personalities are crucial for building trust and mitigating negative reinforcement. In sum, digital leadership requires a balanced approach that integrates technological acumen with interpersonal skills and proactive strategies to address the evolving needs of remote and hybrid teams.

The discourse on nurturing employee wellbeing in hybrid settings highlights evolving leadership approaches, demographic shifts impacting retention strategies, and potential benefits of flexible work arrangements in reducing conflicts. Authors stress the importance of clear work-life boundaries, and highlight challenges with infocommunication tools. Overall, proactive navigation of complexities is essential to foster wellbeing in hybrid teams. Building trust in leader-subordinate relationships is vital for virtual teams. Extroverted individuals tend to trust their leaders more, nevertheless, leaders should consider both external incentives and internal motivations for efficiency. Active listening and reciprocal cooperation also play crucial roles, however, technology cannot fully replace face-to-face interactions in managing emotions and conflicts. Overall, trust is fostered through proactive leadership and effective communication in dispersed teams.

Communication is essential in hybrid setups for sustaining employee engagement. In-person meetings are superior for team performance, while electronic communication fosters positive outcomes when leaders promote psychological empowerment. Maintaining a shared vision and goals is crucial, but dispersed teams struggle with informal interactions. Face-to-face interactions are most conducive to engagement, and leaders play a transformative role in fostering team buy-in through informal communication.

8. CONCLUSION

During this literature review the intention was to collect available sources on leader-subordinate relationships within the evolving landscape of the hybrid corporate environment. In conclusion, the exploration of the hybrid corporate environment reveals a

significant gap between academic theory and real-world dynamics. Acknowledged global catalysts, like the IT boom and the impact of COVID-19, set the stage for profound change, yet their day-to-day impact is often underestimated.

Real-world practices expose the complexity of remote work, emphasizing challenges in communication, cultural integration, stress management, and equitable performance evaluation. The lived experiences of employees reveal a profound shift in values, skillsets, and working styles, demanding adaptive leadership.

Leaders must align organizational goals with the evolving values of a diverse and remote workforce, facing practical challenges in maintaining team cohesion, building trust without physical proximity, and managing stress in a dispersed workforce. One-to-one discussions emerge as crucial, reflecting a shift in their importance towards personalized approaches and trust-building.

In essence, the hybrid corporate environment calls for a reevaluation of leadership approaches to reconcile theoretical narratives with practical realities. The evolving values of employees require a personalized and adaptive leadership style. The increasing importance of one-to-one discussions underscores their pivotal role in enhancing engagement and maintaining organizational cohesion in the transforming modern workplace. As Kwok et al. concluded in their research already in 2021, most leadership programs are focused on developing a leader's knowledge, skills, and abilities. We might want to consider revisiting the curriculum of these to include the necessary amendments applied to hybrid workplaces. My current paper is an invitation to researchers, practitioners, and organizational leaders to collectively contribute to a comprehensive understanding of leadership dynamics that will shape the future of work in our evolving corporate landscape.

Building on the conceptual foundations laid in the above Paper 3, which emphasized the importance of structured communication in hybrid leader-follower dynamics, the following Paper 4. proposes a practical response. It introduces the development of the ALIGN Questionnaire, a comprehensive framework designed to systematically assess leadership effectiveness in hybrid settings. By integrating key dimensions from established models (LMX, MLQ, and CBS), this paper transforms theoretical insights into a tailored measurement instrument.

4. PAPER 4

Title	Assessing Leadership in Hybrid Work – Developing a Comprehensive Framework for Leader-Follower Dynamics
Type	Conceptual paper
Summary	This paper proposes the development of the ALIGN Questionnaire, a hybrid-specific leadership assessment tool integrating LMX, MLQ, and CBS elements to evaluate structured communication and leadership effectiveness within hybrid working environments.
Citation	Brigitta, Bánhidi and Attila, Kurucz Dr: <i>Assessing Leadership in Hybrid Work – Developing a Comprehensive Framework for Leader-Follower Dynamics</i> , 17 p. Reviewed – Minor revisions under discussion (In: Human Resource Development International, Taylor&Francis, Q1)

ASSESSING LEADERSHIP IN HYBRID WORK – DEVELOPING A COMPREHENSIVE FRAMEWORK FOR LEADER- FOLLOWER DYNAMICS

Brigitta Bánhidi

Attila Kurucz Dr

Abstract

The rise of hybrid work environments has fundamentally altered leadership dynamics, challenging traditional models of leader-follower interactions, feedback mechanisms, and employee development. Existing leadership assessment tools, such as the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Questionnaire, Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), and Coaching Behavior Questionnaire (CBQ) were developed for either fully in-person or fully remote settings, leaving critical gaps in understanding leadership effectiveness in hybrid workplaces. This paper explores the complexities of hybrid leadership, addressing key challenges such as fluctuating communication patterns, trust-building, and equitable coaching opportunities. Drawing from transdisciplinary research in organizational behavior, psychology, and leadership studies, we propose the ALIGN Questionnaire as a novel assessment tool tailored to hybrid work environments. The questionnaire integrates validated elements from existing leadership frameworks while incorporating hybrid-specific variables, such as digital communication frequency, leadership accessibility, and structured feedback

mechanisms. By providing a more nuanced evaluation of leadership effectiveness, the ALIGN Questionnaire offers both organizations and researchers a method to identify leadership strengths, inform development strategies, and support adaptive leadership practices in evolving workplace structures. This study contributes to the ongoing discourse on hybrid leadership by presenting an assessment framework that reflects contemporary organizational realities and provides practical insights for enhancing leadership effectiveness in the hybrid era.

Keywords: Hybrid working environment, leader-follower dynamics, feedback, transformational leadership, coaching leadership, one-on-one discussions

INTRODUCTION

Hybrid work has reshaped organizational structures worldwide, reducing office space demand while increasing workforce size (McKinsey, 2023; World Bank, 2024). The shift toward flexible work arrangements has challenged traditional leadership models, as leaders now navigate physical distance, asynchronous communication, and digital interactions (Verma et al., 2022). Although hybrid work offers benefits such as flexibility, cost reduction, and potential productivity gains (Adnams, 2020), it also disrupts leader-follower dynamics, requiring new approaches to relationship-building, feedback, and employee development.

Leadership theories such as Leader-Member Exchange (LMX), Transformational Leadership, and Coaching Leadership were conceptualized primarily for either fully in-person or fully remote settings, leaving gaps in understanding leadership effectiveness in hybrid contexts (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Milner et al., 2023). Established leadership assessment frameworks fail to account for hybrid-specific variables, such as fluctuating communication patterns and the role of technology in trust-building. Consequently, there is a pressing need to examine how leadership operates in hybrid work environments.

This paper applies a transdisciplinary approach, drawing from organizational behavior, psychology, sociology, leadership studies, and communication research to explore hybrid leadership challenges. We propose a newly developed assessment tool that provides a clearer picture of leader-follower relationships in hybrid settings and evaluates leadership effectiveness in achieving desired outcomes. By improving our understanding of hybrid leadership, organizations can make informed decisions on leadership development, feedback mechanisms, and structural adaptations to support high-performance leadership models.

LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES IN HYBRID WORKING ENVIRONMENTS

Two decades have passed since Griffith and Neale (2001) stated their suggestions for leaders of virtual teams on how to drive their teams towards better performance. Still, hybrid work has only become a dominant model post-pandemic, with many organizations adopting 3+2 or 2+3 schedules (EY, 2023). Research has shown that while hybrid work offers flexibility and productivity benefits (Golden, 2021), it also introduces new challenges, particularly in maintaining engagement, trust, and collaboration across virtual and physical spaces (Jia et al., 2024).

Leader-Follower Relationships

A primary challenge in hybrid leadership is maintaining high-quality leader-follower interactions. Digital communication alters relationship-building dynamics, reducing spontaneous interactions and limiting informal knowledge-sharing opportunities (Dinh et al., 2021). Building trust within hybrid teams remains a significant challenge, as leaders must foster connections without the benefit of frequent in-person interactions (Dinh et al., 2021). Without frequent in-person engagement, hybrid leaders must intentionally structure interactions to maintain trust, ensure consistency in feedback, and mitigate the risk of an “in-group” vs. “out-group” divide based on physical presence.

The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) suggests that the quality of leader-follower relationships significantly influences employee engagement, job satisfaction, and performance (Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997; Khan et al., 2022). High-quality LMX relationships correlate with increased workplace citizenship behaviors and organizational commitment (Uhl-Bien et al., 2022). However, hybrid work environments introduce disruptions in communication frequency and modality, potentially weakening these relationships (Hahn & Semrau, 2022). Traditional LMX assessments assume consistent, face-to-face exchanges, making them less applicable to hybrid contexts, where leaders must navigate asynchronous communication, physical distance, and digital collaboration tools (Golden & Veiga, 2008).

To adapt LMX for hybrid settings, leaders must establish structured communication strategies, including regular check-ins, synchronous and asynchronous updates, and intentional use of collaboration technologies to maintain relationship quality. Additionally, the emotional and psychological distance in hybrid environments alters traditional LMX

dynamics, requiring revised assessment tools that account for fluctuations in interaction patterns and the impact of digital communication on leader-follower trust and engagement (Hahn & Semrau, 2022).

Reevaluating LMX within hybrid leadership contexts allows organizations to better support leaders in maintaining high-quality exchanges that drive performance and engagement. By integrating structured communication strategies and updated assessment tools, leaders can adapt their relationship-building efforts to hybrid work's unique demands.

Rethinking Motivation in Hybrid Work

Transformational leadership, as defined by Bass and Avolio (2004), emphasizes inspiring and motivating employees beyond transactional exchanges. Research consistently demonstrates its positive impact on engagement and performance (Wang et al., 2011; Popli & Rizvi, 2016). However, hybrid work challenges the effectiveness of traditional transformational leadership behaviors, as key components (charisma, inspirational motivation, and individualized consideration) rely on direct, personal interactions that are often diminished in digital settings (Mysirlaki et al., 2020; Ruggieri, 2009; Hoch & Kozlowski, 2014).

To sustain motivation and engagement in hybrid environments when face-to-face interaction is lacking, leaders must adopt virtual leadership strategies, including:

- Video check-ins and synchronous discussions to reinforce vision and motivation (Franzen-Waschke, 2021).
- Personalized virtual feedback and asynchronous coaching sessions to maintain individualized attention (Franzen-Waschke, 2021).
- Recognition and reward systems integrated into digital platforms to ensure clear expectations and reinforcement (Popli & Rizvi, 2016).

These adaptations help bridge the gap between traditional transformational leadership practices and the realities of hybrid work. By rethinking how motivation, engagement, and leadership presence function in a hybrid world, organizations can ensure that transformational leadership remains effective, even when face-to-face interaction is limited.

The Feedback Environment in Hybrid Work

A positive feedback environment is essential for employee development, engagement, and performance (Steelman et al., 2004). In traditional workplaces, feedback exchanges occur

naturally through spontaneous face-to-face interactions, allowing for immediate reinforcement, real-time coaching, and informal recognition (Hunt & Weintraub, 2007). However, in hybrid environments, delayed feedback, reduced informal recognition, and reliance on digital communication tools create new challenges for leaders and employees alike (O'Connor et al., 2022).

Leaders in hybrid settings must intentionally structure feedback mechanisms to ensure employees feel valued and supported. Effective strategies include:

- Scheduled virtual feedback meetings to provide structured performance discussions (Ford et al., 2015).
- Asynchronous performance reviews to accommodate flexible work arrangements (Rosen et al., 2006).
- Digital recognition platforms to reinforce achievements and maintain motivation (Konovalova et al., 2022).

While these tools help address feedback challenges, traditional leadership assessments do not fully capture the hybrid-specific nuances of feedback delivery, such as variability in communication frequency, accessibility, and leader responsiveness. As a result, new measurement approaches must account for these factors to provide a more accurate evaluation of feedback effectiveness in hybrid work environments. By rethinking feedback structures, organizations can foster continuous engagement and development despite the limitations of hybrid communication channels.

Developing Followers within Hybrid Settings

Coaching leadership, which emphasizes continuous feedback and personalized development (Milner et al., 2023), plays a crucial role in enhancing employee engagement and performance (Liu & Batt, 2010). Traditionally, coaching leadership relies on frequent, in-person interactions, where direct guidance fosters professional growth and trust. However, hybrid work environments disrupt conventional coaching methods, requiring leaders to adjust their practices to ensure consistent development opportunities for both remote and in-office employees.

Research highlights the importance of structured digital coaching techniques to maintain leadership effectiveness in hybrid settings. Effective adaptations include:

- Virtual one-on-one mentoring and digital coaching sessions to replicate in-person guidance (Gan et al., 2022).
- Asynchronous feedback loops to provide employees with ongoing developmental input despite differing work schedules (Franzen-Waschke, 2021).
- Digital learning platforms to support long-term employee skill-building and career advancement (Lerner, 2008).

One of the key risks in hybrid environments is unequal access to coaching opportunities, particularly for employees who work remotely more frequently (Franzen-Waschke, 2021). Without structured digital adaptations, remote employees may experience limited career growth, fewer leadership interactions, and weaker workplace integration. To counteract these disparities, leaders must implement intentional coaching structures that ensure equitable development opportunities, regardless of an employee's work location.

By adapting coaching leadership for hybrid work, organizations can create a more inclusive and effective development environment, helping employees thrive in distributed teams while maintaining engagement and performance.

TOWARDS A NEW FRAMEWORK

Effective leadership, according to Sveiby (1997), is distinguished by the capacity to manage intangible assets, especially knowledge, and to promote a culture of cooperation within the company. This strategy underlines that good leadership includes the design of surroundings fit for knowledge exchange, learning and performance even if that means that a leader has to adapt to a „new normal”. Several years into the hybrid operations scientists and organizations are both still unsure about the consequences of leader-member dynamics on performance, on knowledge management and self-development while loyalty and engagement to employers are also under the magnifying glass (EY, 2023). In her 2020 paper, Minbaeva quotes a Deloitte survey that asserts HR specialists are the ones who can provide workable solutions to the aforementioned issues. Thus, our proposal is to develop a new leadership assessment tool that reflect the realities of hybrid workplaces and gives us a clearer picture about what leadership behaviours are productive and effective in contemporary workplaces.

Chart 1 presents a conceptual framework illustrating how leadership dynamics in hybrid work environments are influenced by key challenges, mediating factors, and chosen leader behaviors, ultimately shaping employee outcomes. This model underpins the need for a better understanding of the leadership practices within the complexities of hybrid work.

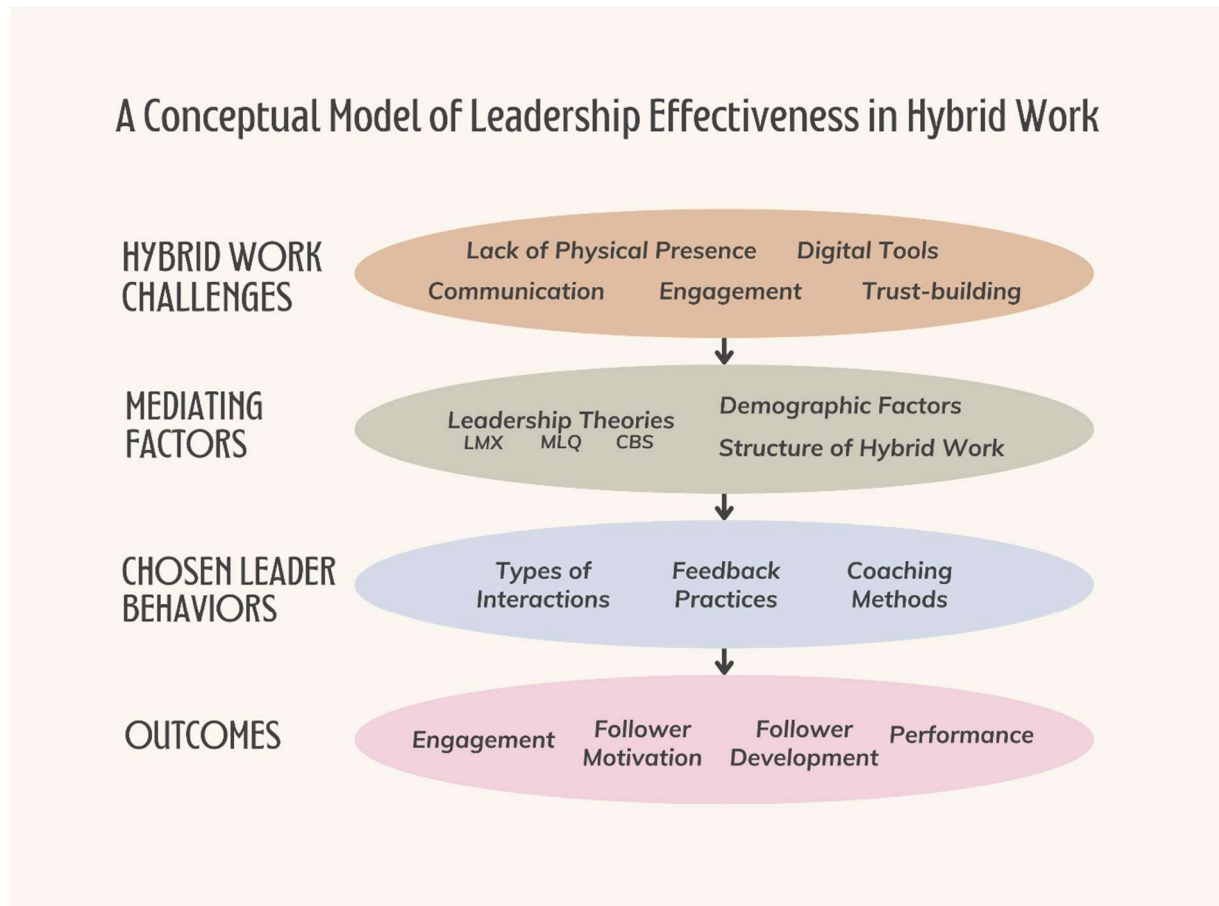


*Chart 1. A Conceptual Model of Leadership Effectiveness in Hybrid Work,
 Source: authors' own elaboration*

Assessing leadership effectiveness has traditionally relied on well-established tools such as the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Questionnaire, Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ), and Coaching Behavior Questionnaire (CBQ). Each of these instruments provides valuable insights into different aspects of leadership and leader-follower interactions. However, they were developed primarily for traditional or fully remote settings, leaving gaps in understanding leadership within hybrid work environments, where leaders and subordinates interact through a combination of physical and digital channels.

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Questionnaire

The LMX-7 Questionnaire (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995) is a widely used tool designed to measure the quality of relationships between leaders and subordinates based on trust, respect, and obligation. Research has demonstrated its effectiveness in evaluating job satisfaction, performance, and commitment (Wayne, Shore, & Liden, 1997). However, LMX assessments assume consistent, face-to-face interactions, which may not accurately reflect relationship-building dynamics in hybrid environments (Golden & Veiga, 2008). Key challenges include:

- Asynchronous communication and digital collaboration disrupting the ability to develop trust and mutual understanding (Hahn & Semrau, 2022).
- Limited ability to assess how well leaders recognize and support employees' needs when they interact primarily through digital platforms.
- The emotional and psychological distance in hybrid work altering traditional LMX dynamics, making it necessary to reassess how trust, recognition, and engagement are maintained.

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ)

The MLQ (Bass & Avolio, 2004) evaluates transformational, transactional, and laissez-faire leadership styles through a set of 36 items. While transformational leadership has been associated with higher engagement and motivation (Wang et al., 2011; Popli & Rizvi, 2016), hybrid work presents challenges that MLQ does not fully address:

- Charisma and inspirational motivation, key elements of transformational leadership, are often weakened in digital interactions (Mysirlaki et al., 2020; Ruggieri, 2009; Hoch & Kozlowski, 2014).
- Individualized consideration, which involves coaching and mentorship, is harder to implement without frequent in-person interactions.
- Contingent rewards may be more ambiguous in hybrid settings, where informal recognition is less frequent, making it difficult to assess whether leaders effectively align expectations and rewards in a digital-first environment.

Coaching Behavior Questionnaire (CBQ)

The CBQ, originally developed for coaching in sports settings (Mageau & Vallerand, 2003) and later adapted for managerial contexts (Haan & Nilsson, 2017), assesses leadership

behaviors that promote subordinate development through instruction, feedback, and support. Research highlights the importance of coaching in leadership (Hunt & Weintraub, 2007), particularly in hybrid settings where employees require structured guidance and continuous feedback. However, traditional coaching models do not fully capture:

- How hybrid leaders balance in-person and digital coaching (Franzen-Waschke, 2021).
- The impact of asynchronous feedback and virtual mentoring on employee development (Gan et al., 2022).
- Differences in accessibility—some employees may receive less developmental support due to reduced face-to-face interactions.

The Need for a Hybrid-Specific Leadership Assessment Tool

Given the limitations of LMX, MLQ, and CBQ in capturing hybrid leadership effectiveness, there is a need for a tool that evaluates how leaders operate in hybrid environments and how effective they are in achieving desired outcomes. The ALIGN Questionnaire is designed to fill this gap by:

- Measuring leader-follower interactions across both digital and in-person settings.
- Capturing how leadership styles adapt to fluctuating communication patterns.
- Assessing coaching effectiveness in a context where physical presence is inconsistent.
- Identifying how leaders balance trust, feedback, and recognition when leading hybrid teams.

By integrating key components from LMX, MLQ, and CBQ, the ALIGN Questionnaire provides a more nuanced, hybrid-specific perspective on leadership effectiveness. It also incorporates demographic and work-related variables, such as age, gender, tenure, structure of hybrid work, and the structure of one-on-one interactions (frequency, form, length, topic). These factors play a crucial role in shaping leadership dynamics in hybrid settings, influencing access to mentorship, feedback frequency, and overall engagement. Understanding these contextual elements allows for a more accurate interpretation of leadership effectiveness, helping organizations develop targeted interventions to enhance hybrid leadership strategies. This new approach enables organizations to make informed decisions about leadership development, hybrid work policies, and employee engagement strategies, ensuring that leaders remain effective in an evolving workplace.

The proposed *ALIGN - Assessing Leadership Interactions and Growth in New Workplaces Questionnaire* was developed throughout a transdisciplinary research so it could incorporate multiple layers of reality. We have aimed it to holistically examine leader-follower interactions in hybrid work environments, with a specific emphasis on communication form and frequency, leadership behaviours, and coaching techniques. The combination of questions from different validated instruments into a single coherent tool enables a more thorough examination of these dynamics in the context of hybrid work. As Kets De Vries et al. (2010) stated, scientifically designed questionnaires are extremely important for executive training and coaching. A graphical overview of the disciplines involved in developing the ALIGN questionnaire is presented below.

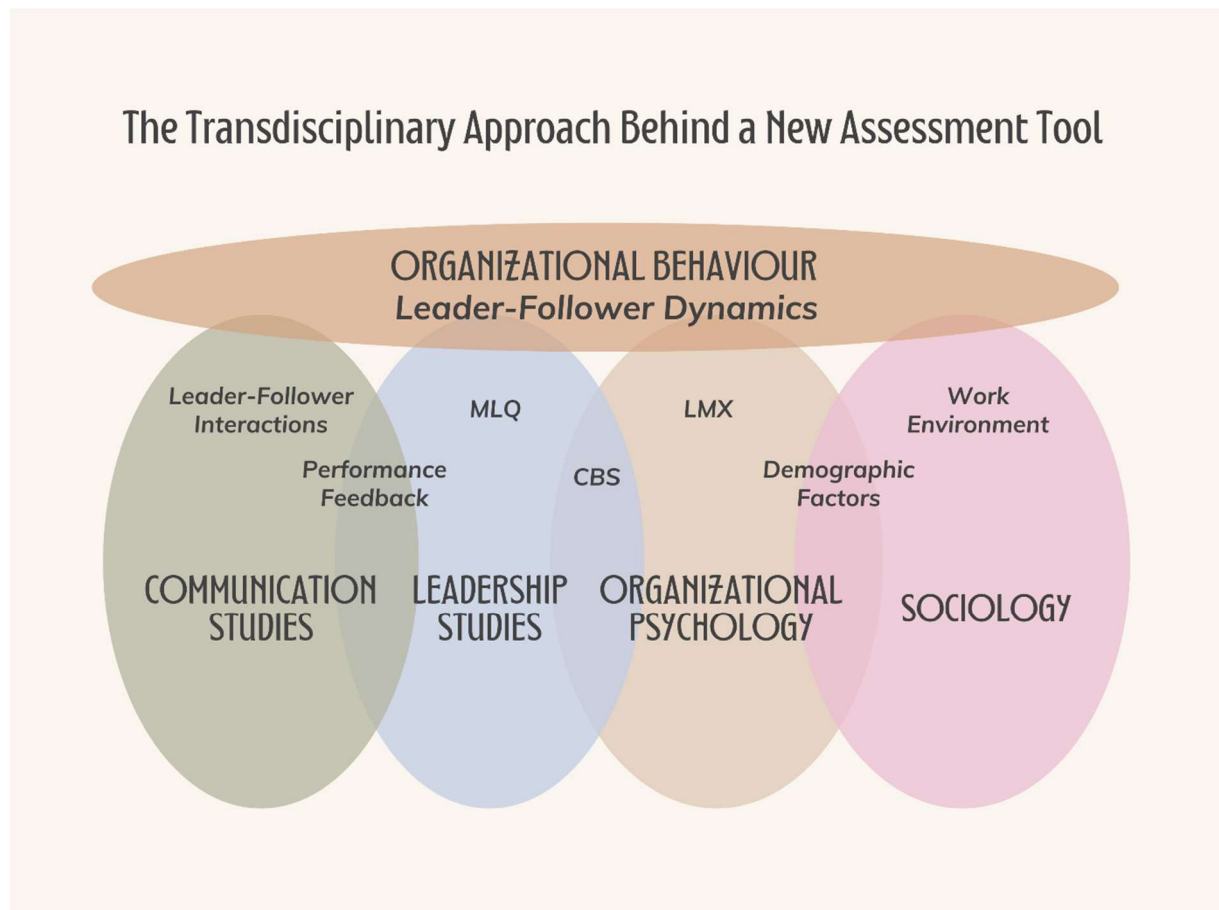


Chart 2. The transdisciplinary approach behind the *ALIGN - Assessing Leadership Interactions and Growth in New Workplaces Questionnaire*, Source: authors' own elaboration

APPLICATION AND RESEARCH POTENTIAL OF THE ALIGN QUESTIONNAIRE

Organizations can leverage such tool to assess and improve leadership performance in hybrid workplaces. By focusing on communication frequency, transformational leadership behaviors, and coaching practices, the questionnaire helps identify areas for development in leadership styles. Insights derived from assessments can inform targeted training programs, such as specialized coaching courses tailored for hybrid work environments, ensuring leaders effectively support and engage their teams.

Beyond corporate use, the questionnaire provides valuable opportunities for academic and applied research. Once validated, it can be used to:

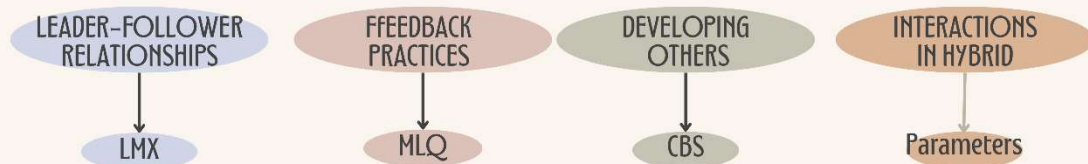
- Examine leadership dynamics across work settings (hybrid, remote, and in-person) and analyze how hybrid work influences leader-follower interactions and team performance.
- Track changes in leadership effectiveness over time, offering insights into how shifting work structures affect leadership approaches.
- Facilitate cross-cultural studies, investigating how cultural differences impact hybrid leadership practices and their effectiveness across global work environments.

The questionnaire integrates elements from LMX, MLQ, and CBQ, offering a comprehensive assessment of leadership effectiveness in hybrid settings. By capturing both remote and in-office interactions, it provides a multi-dimensional perspective on leadership development, feedback mechanisms, and coaching strategies. Additionally, it enables a deeper exploration of leader-follower communication quality and its impact on engagement and performance.

However, as with any new assessment tool, validation is required to ensure reliability and consistency. The questionnaire may have limited applicability for organizations operating exclusively in fully remote or fully in-person settings. Additionally, self-reported data may introduce biases, as participants might overestimate or underreport their leadership behaviors and interactions.

Despite these limitations, the ALIGN Questionnaire represents a critical step in bridging the gap in leadership assessment for hybrid work environments, equipping organizations and researchers with a specialized tool to navigate evolving workplace dynamics.

The proposed ALIGN Questionnaire



Questions of the LMX-7 questionnaire asked from the leader

- Do you know where you stand with your follower?
- How well do you understand your follower's problems and needs?
- How well do you recognize your follower's potential?
- What are the chances that you would use your power to help your follower solve problems in their work?
- What are the chances that you would "bail out" your follower at your own expense?
- I have enough confidence in my follower that I would defend and justify their decision if they were not present to do so.
- How would you characterize your working relationship with your follower?

Questions about Individualized Consideration and Contingent Reward

- I provide others with assistance in exchange for their efforts.
- I discuss in specific terms who is responsible for achieving performance targets.
- I make clear what one can expect to receive when performance goals are achieved.
- I express satisfaction when others meet expectations.
- I spend time teaching and coaching.
- I treat others as individuals rather than just as a member of a group.
- I consider an individual as having different needs, abilities, and aspirations from others.
- I help others to develop their strengths.

Groups of questions selected from the CBS questionnaire

When acting as a coaching style leader, I tend to:

- make myself accessible to them when needed
- ask them to express feelings which may be blocking them
- inquire into what they want to achieve
- challenge them about what they may be avoiding
- note areas where I see room for improvement
- encourage them to express their feelings, emotions
- ask for their interpretation of a particular situation
- show my willingness to help
- encourage them to find their own solutions
- show genuine appreciation for a job well done
- point to information which may be relevant
- propose what I believe to be the best action
- offer positive and affirming feedback
- point out that they could look at the issue in a different way
- help them to express more personal insights
- advise them of what action to take

- How often do you have one-to-one discussions with your follower?
- What are the primary purposes or objectives of these one-on-one discussions?
- What form do these discussions usually take?
- How long do these discussions usually last?
- How frequently do you interact with your follower?
- Please indicate the topics typically discussed during your one-to-one meetings.

Chart 3. The elements of the ALIGN Questionnaire

CONCLUSION

Organizations that fail to rethink leadership within hybrid models risk disengagement, increased turnover, and weakened leadership pipelines. Without intentional adaptation, hybrid work can create gaps in trust, misalignment in expectations, and inconsistencies in feedback and recognition, ultimately undermining performance and employee satisfaction.

The development of hybrid-specific leadership assessment tools, such as the proposed ALIGN Questionnaire (Chart 3.), marks an important step in addressing these challenges. By capturing how leadership styles, feedback mechanisms, and coaching practices adapt to hybrid settings, the tool provides a clearer picture of leadership effectiveness and offers insights for organizations to refine their leadership development strategies.

As hybrid work continues to evolve, so must our understanding of what makes a leader effective in this new landscape. Future research should focus on how hybrid leadership effectiveness differs across industries, organizational cultures, and demographic factors. Additionally, further refinements are needed to ensure leadership assessment tools remain relevant in a rapidly shifting workplace.

The challenge is clear: are today's leaders truly equipped for the hybrid future? The answer depends on how effectively leadership theories, assessment tools, and organizational practices evolve to meet the demands of this new work reality.

Following the conceptual design of the ALIGN Questionnaire in the above Paper 4., the following Paper 5. puts the proposed framework to the test through empirical analysis. Drawing on data from 100 leaders and 182 leader-follower relationships, this quantitative study examines how structured one-to-one discussions influence LMX quality. It provides statistical validation for the key variables identified in the framework, confirming that communication frequency and content, but not the medium, are decisive in shaping effective hybrid leadership.

5. PAPER 5

Title	Bridging the Distance: How Interaction Frequency, Duration, Form and Topic Drive Leader-Follower Relationships in Hybrid Working Environments
Type	Empirical quantitative study
Summary	Using data from 100 leaders and 182 leader-follower pairs, this study empirically shows that the frequency and structure of one-to-one discussions predict higher-quality LMX relationships, regardless of communication medium.
Citation	Brigitta, Banhidi and Judit, Berkes Dr: <i>Bridging the Distance: How Interaction Frequency, Duration, Form and Topic Drive Leader-Follower Relationships in Hybrid Working Environments</i> , 27 p. Under Review (In: Business Research Quarterly, Sage, Q1)

BRIDGING THE DISTANCE: HOW INTERACTION FREQUENCY, DURATION, FORM AND TOPIC DRIVE LEADER-FOLLOWER RELATIONSHIPS IN HYBRID WORKING ENVIRONMENTS

Brigitta Banhidi

Judit Berkes Dr

Abstract

Purpose: This study explores the role of one-to-one (OTO) discussions in shaping leader-follower relationship quality (LMX) in hybrid work environments. It examines how the frequency, duration, and structure of OTO interactions influence communication effectiveness, employee engagement, and leadership outcomes.

Design/methodology/approach: A cross-sectional survey was conducted with 100 leaders managing hybrid teams, capturing insights from 182 leader-follower interactions. Statistical analyses, including linear regression and ANOVA, were used to assess the impact of interaction frequency, format, and duration on perceived LMX quality.

Findings: Results indicate that frequent and structured OTO discussions, particularly those held weekly or biweekly, significantly enhance LMX quality. Conversations lasting 15–60 minutes correlated with stronger leader-follower relationships, while the communication format (virtual or in-person) showed no significant effect. The most effective discussions balanced operational and personal topics, fostering deeper engagement and trust.

Originality: This study highlights the critical role of structured interpersonal communication in hybrid work environments. It provides empirical evidence that sustained and meaningful OTO discussions enhance communication quality, reinforcing leadership effectiveness in remote and blended settings.

Research limitations/implications: The study focuses on leaders' perspectives, requiring further research on follower perceptions. Longitudinal studies could explore the long-term impact of OTO discussions on performance and retention.

Practical implications: Organizations should implement structured OTO communication strategies, prioritizing frequent, meaningful interactions to strengthen employee relationships, engagement, and productivity in hybrid work settings.

Keywords: *hybrid working environment, one-to-one discussions, leader-follower communication, internal communication, leadership effectiveness, leader-member exchange (LMX), workplace communication strategies*

1. Introduction

Digital technology and the COVID-19 pandemic's unparalleled worldwide disruptions have sparked a profound change in the nature of the workplace (Leonardelli, 2022; Minbaeva, 2021). The transition to hybrid work environments has reshaped traditional workplace dynamics, presenting unique challenges for leadership and organizational behavior (Kniffin *et al.*, 2021). In this evolving landscape, understanding the nuances of leader-follower interactions has become critical, particularly for assessing how these relationships impact engagement, performance, and job satisfaction (Chamakiotis *et al.*, 2021, Schmidt *et al.*, 2023, Zulfadil *et al.*, 2020). Recent discussions have questioned the sustainability of hybrid work models, with some advocating a return to traditional office settings due to concerns about potential declines in efficiency (Buła *et al.*, 2024; Hanzis & Hallo, 2024). This debate underscores the relevance of research into hybrid work environments, particularly in identifying optimal leadership styles and communication strategies (Ryan *et al.*, 2024, Hoch *et al.*, 2023). Effective communication remains a perennial topic, especially in integrating personal interactions within processes dominated by digital technologies. Studies have highlighted the importance of communication, coordination, connection, creativity, and culture in hybrid teams, emphasizing the need for leaders to adapt their

practices to maintain team dynamics and performance (Krajčík *et al.*, 2023, Franzen-Waschke, 2021; Barnes *et al.*, 2024). By capturing essential elements such as interaction frequency and communication modes, this study aims to explore how hybrid environments influence leadership effectiveness. Understanding how leaders and subordinates interact in hybrid workplaces is important for a number of reasons. Firstly, it helps leaders gain insights into driving their teams well in a hybrid setting, which improves the performance of the company and the wellbeing of its workers (Khaliq *et al.*, 2024). Secondly, it adds to the body of research on leadership and organisational behaviour by looking at the special problems and opportunities that hybrid working arrangements indicate. Finally, the study's results can be used to alter the rules and methods that organisations use. This will help leaders build stronger, more flexible, and more productive teams to operate in our ever-changing world.

Research Gap

While leader-follower dynamics in traditional and remote work environments are well-documented (Cascio & Shurygailo, 2003; Gilson *et al.*, 2021; Leonardelli, 2022; Mitchell & Brewer, 2021), research on these relationships in hybrid settings remains scarce. Hybrid work introduces unique challenges, such as managing physical distance, digital communication, and blended team interactions (Tzabbar & Baburaj, 2019). This study addresses this gap by exploring how interaction frequency, form, duration, and discussion topics impact leader-follower relationships, offering new insights into effective leadership in hybrid environments.

2. Literature Review

Leader-Follower Relationships

Literature reviews of the past years have examined the unique characteristics of leader-follower dynamics in hybrid working environments. Banhidi (2024) has found that leadership in hybrid settings requires a balance between task-oriented behaviors and adaptive influence strategies, such as building trust and addressing accountability, to sustain engagement and performance. These strategies influence leader-follower dynamics by fostering a sense of stability and support, which is critical in mitigating the challenges posed by hybrid work structures.

Building on prior research on leadership communication and engagement in hybrid settings, the Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory provides the foundational lens for

understanding leader-follower dynamics, emphasizing that leadership relationships vary in quality across team members (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Recent research, such as London, Volmer, and Zyberaj (2023), expands on LMX theory by incorporating attachment styles to offer a more differentiated view of leader-member interactions, particularly in hybrid work environments. High-quality LMX relationships are characterized by trust, mutual respect, and loyalty, which facilitate higher levels of organizational commitment, job satisfaction, and performance (Gerstner & Day, 1997). Conversely, low-quality LMX relationships often remain transactional and hinder engagement. Previous research indicates that these interactions play a significant role in enhancing job satisfaction and organizational commitment, particularly in traditional workplace settings (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Vintilă *et al.* (2024) examined the impact of transformational, transactional, and passive-avoidant leadership styles on employees' job-related affective well-being within hybrid work environments post-COVID-19. Their findings indicate that transformational leadership positively correlates with employees' positive emotions, suggesting its effectiveness in enhancing well-being in the new normal. Mitson *et al.* (2024) also explored the role of leadership approaches in reducing negative workplace experiences through supportive leadership strategies, which are also integral to enhancing employees' job-related well-being. These studies complement prior research on LMX theory by demonstrating how high-quality LMX relationships can mitigate negative workplace experiences, reinforcing the significance of leader-follower dynamics. However, hybrid work environments introduce physical and psychological distance that may alter these dynamics, creating a need for new insights into how LMX principles apply in flexible work arrangements.

Leadership Strategies

Researchers have identified that leader behaviors prioritizing results over mere presence, avoiding micromanagement, and fostering nurturing relationships significantly enhance remote worker engagement. Freitmuth and Svenander (2024) claim that establishing trust and sustaining effective communication are essential for employee engagement and team performance in hybrid environments. Walsh *et al.* (2024) conducted a three-wave, time-lagged study with 338 participants, revealing that remote work amplifies the effects of leadership behaviors, both transformational leadership and leader incivility, on followers' self-control and work-life balance. Their findings suggest that in remote contexts, positive leadership practices are crucial for enhancing employee self-regulation and maintaining a healthy work-life balance.

Trust in Hybrid Working Environments

Building on the need for adaptive leadership strategies in hybrid settings, Gamage *et al.* (2024) draw on the Social Process of Leadership (SPL) theory to identify essential behavioral leadership characteristics for building trust in virtual and crisis environments. Their study emphasizes the importance of adaptability, transparent communication, and empathy in fostering trust within remote teams during crises. Lee, Mitson, and Xu (2024) explored the impact of leaders' motivational language on employee well-being in remote work settings, focusing on the mediating role of relatedness, a fundamental psychological need. This aligns with London and Zobrist's (2024) emphasis on communication strategies tailored to individual characteristics, suggesting that effective leader communication fosters not only relational quality but also psychological well-being in hybrid environments.

Communication Strategies

Corso *et al.* (2023) conducted semi-structured interviews with millennial employees across Europe to explore leadership communication preferences amid shifts to new working models. Their findings highlight the importance of face-to-face interactions, both virtual and in-person, along with transparent and empathetic communication from leaders, as key factors in enhancing employee engagement during transitions to flexible work arrangements. Mitson, Qin, and Men (2024) further emphasize that vigilant leadership communication plays a crucial role in fostering employee psychological well-being during turbulent times, highlighting the need for trust-building communication strategies. Their findings align with Corso *et al.* (2023), who emphasize the role of transparent and empathetic leadership communication in maintaining engagement during shifts to flexible work arrangements. This highlights the interconnectedness of trust-building and leadership communication strategies in hybrid environments.

Effective leadership communication in hybrid work environments extends beyond information dissemination to include internal listening, where leaders actively engage with employees' concerns, feedback, and emotional needs. Qin (2024) highlights that internal listening fosters perceived organizational support and affective commitment, strengthening employee engagement by making them feel heard and valued. This is particularly crucial in remote and hybrid settings, where the absence of physical presence requires leaders to be more intentional in demonstrating attentiveness and responsiveness.

Face-to-face interactions have been considered the gold standard for relationship-building; however, advancements in virtual communication tools have enabled leaders to maintain relational quality remotely (Kahai *et al.*, 2012). Recent studies, such as Boccoli *et al.* (2024), further support this by demonstrating that supervisors' digital communication skills significantly enhance leader-follower engagement in remote environments. Their study underscores the necessity for leaders to develop digital competencies to effectively engage remote teams.

Chaudhary *et al.* (2022) examined how leaders' e-competencies affect employee well-being in global virtual teams during COVID-19. They found that leaders' emotional intelligence significantly moderates this relationship, enhancing the positive impact of e-competencies on employee well-being. This aligns with Salin and Koponen's (2024) findings, which highlight the strategic selection of communication media in virtual leadership. Drawing on media richness theory, their study found that managers choose specific media, such as audio for facilitating interactive conversations and organizing meetings, to align with their objectives in virtual leadership contexts. Together, these studies emphasize that both the technical competencies of leaders and their communication strategies play a vital role in fostering employee well-being and effective virtual collaboration.

Based on the above findings, the following topics emerge as grounds for furthering our investigations:

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory posits that leader-follower relationships vary in quality, with high-quality relationships characterized by trust, respect, and mutual obligation, ultimately influencing job satisfaction, engagement, and commitment (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). A critical factor in fostering strong LMX relationships is the frequency of leader-follower interactions, as consistent communication deepens relational bonds and enhances perceptions of support (Jansson & Kangas, 2025). Regular engagement between leaders and their followers ensures alignment in expectations and goals, reducing ambiguity and reinforcing a sense of inclusion within the organization (Ellinger & Bostrom, 1999).

In hybrid work environments, where physical and psychological distance can weaken relational ties, intentional one-to-one communication becomes even more vital for sustaining LMX quality (Tzabbar & Baburaj, 2019). Research suggests that frequent communication mitigates uncertainty and fosters trust, making it a fundamental component of leadership effectiveness in remote and hybrid settings (Mitson, Qin and Men, 2024). Moreover,

Wroblewski *et al.* (2022) found that interaction frequency, rather than the mode of communication, significantly influences leadership outcomes, further emphasizing the role of frequent leader-follower engagement in strengthening relational dynamics. Given the importance of frequent communication in maintaining high-quality LMX relationships, particularly in hybrid work environments, we propose the following hypothesis:

H1: A higher frequency of one-to-one interactions between leaders and followers in hybrid environments is associated with improved perceptions of leader-follower relationship quality (LMX).

In hybrid work environments, in-person interactions play a crucial role in enhancing leader-follower relationships. Research indicates that face-to-face meetings facilitate immediate feedback, the exchange of nonverbal cues, and personalized communication, all of which contribute to stronger relational bonds. A study on follower interactions in meetings highlights how such settings allow managers to exhibit leadership effectively and employees to respond appropriately, thereby fostering better leader-follower dynamics. (Gerpott & Kerschreiter, 2022). In-person interactions have been shown to provide a "listening ear" during challenges, reducing job stress and preventing burnout, which further strengthens workplace relationships. (Birmingham *et al.*, 2024). Moreover, ethical leadership is perceived more positively when employees can directly observe leaders' behaviors, underscoring the importance of physical presence in building trust and ethical standards within teams (Serviss *et al.*, 2024). These findings collectively suggest that incorporating in-person one-to-one interactions in hybrid settings can significantly enhance the quality of leader-follower relationships thus our second hypotheses is formulated as follows:

H2: In hybrid environments, in-person one-to-one interactions between leaders and followers are linked to higher perceived quality of leader-follower relationship (LMX).

A study by Jansson and Kangas (2025) highlights that frequent and timely feedback interactions in remote work settings enhance leader-follower alignment and trust, reinforcing the importance of ongoing communication in sustaining high-quality workplace relationships. Flinchum *et al.* (2023) highlight the significance of one-on-one (1:1) meetings between managers and direct reports, noting that these interactions constitute nearly half of all workplace meetings. Despite their prevalence, 1:1 meetings have been under-researched,

presenting a valuable opportunity for meeting science to explore their unique dynamics and impact on organizational outcomes. Thus we propose the following hypotheses for testing:

H3: The durations of one-to-one interactions between leaders and followers in hybrid settings are related to leaders' perceptions of leader-follower relationship quality (LMX).

The quality and consistency of leader-follower communication are critical determinants of relationship quality in hybrid settings. One-to-one discussions provide a platform for leaders to offer feedback, clarify goals, and demonstrate individualized attention (Mitchell & Brewer, 2021). Verhoeven and Madsen (2022) emphasize that employees play active roles in shaping organizational communication, and their ability to engage in meaningful dialogue with leaders enhances mutual understanding and role clarity. Their study highlights that structured one-to-one interactions foster a culture of open communication, ensuring alignment between leadership expectations and employee contributions.

H4: The topics discussed in effective one-to-one interactions typically cover both operational matters relevant to the organization and personal matters significant to the follower.

The following section presents the methodology that was used to test these hypotheses.

3. Methodology

A quantitative, cross-sectional survey method was employed to systematically analyze patterns and relationships in leader-subordinate interactions. This approach provides a comprehensive understanding of leadership dynamics within hybrid workplaces.

The study targeted leaders and managers working in hybrid models (2+3 or 3+2 formats) within organizations of 100+ employees, requiring regular interactions with at least five followers. Organizations were selected based on their publicly available hybrid work policies and their alignment with the study criteria. Participation was voluntary, and only those who met the predefined eligibility requirements were included.

Participants were recruited through professional networks, company HR departments, and leadership development forums. Snowball sampling was utilized to expand participation beyond initial contacts. The inclusion criteria required participants to be in a formal

leadership role with at least 5 direct reports, while exclusion criteria ruled out temporary or contract-based leadership positions to maintain consistency in leadership experience. Validation of participant criteria was achieved through self-reported job titles and tenure, confirmed via optional LinkedIn profile submissions.

The survey, conducted in Hungarian via the Jotform platform, was distributed through targeted emails, internal company bulletins, and LinkedIn professional groups. Invitations were extended to 300 potential respondents, with 100 responding voluntarily on one or more leader-follower dyads. Of these, 182 completed responses met the inclusion criteria and were included in the final analysis. The survey was open for a one-month period in November 2024.

To ensure response validity, participants were required to complete all mandatory survey items before submission. Any incomplete responses were automatically excluded. Responses were evenly distributed across leadership levels (Team Leader, Manager, Senior Leader) to ensure a balanced sample. No financial incentives were offered; however, respondents were informed that aggregated results would be shared with participants who expressed interest in receiving the findings.

The study investigated interaction quality, leadership dynamics, and demographic variables using validated scales. The Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) quality was assessed using items from the LMX-7 scale (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995), a widely accepted tool for measuring leader-follower relationship quality. Interaction frequency and duration were self-reported measures collected through multiple-choice and Likert-scale items to quantify the extent of leader-follower engagement. Demographic and workplace-specific data were captured via binary choices and multiple-selection options, including age, gender, tenure, department, company location, and frequency of remote work. These scales were selected based on their strong reliability and validity in leadership and organizational behavior research. They provide robust insights into leader-subordinate interactions and the influence of communication frequency, duration, and topic focus on perceived relationship quality. The potential limitations of our methodology are listed in Chapter 8.

4. Data Analysis

Survey responses were analyzed using descriptive statistics to summarize demographic distributions and response trends. Initial factor analysis was conducted by IBM SPSS Statistics while further statistical analyses were performed using JMP® Pro 18.0.2 (785088). All charts and graphs presented were directly exported from the latter software to ensure consistency and accuracy.

Key variables, including the frequency, form, and duration of interactions, were summarized using measures of central tendency (mean, median) and variability (standard deviation). Pearson correlation coefficients were computed to assess the strength and direction of relationships between variables, providing initial insights into the hypotheses. One-way ANOVA tests were conducted to identify significant differences across demographic groups (e.g., leadership levels, tenure) and their effects on LMX quality and leadership behaviors.

The study adhered to ethical research guidelines, ensuring participant anonymity and confidentiality. Respondents were required to provide informed consent before completing the survey, and all data was stored securely to prevent unauthorized access.

5. Results

5.1. Descriptive Statistics on Demographics

The survey included 100 respondents, yielding 182 responses as participants reported on multiple followers as a leader may have different practices for one-to-one meetings with different followers. Allowing them to submit more than one answer provided a clearer picture of interaction dynamics. Generation X comprised the majority (60.7%), followed by Generation Y (39.3%), offering insights into experienced and generationally diverse leadership perspectives. Males made up 58.5% of respondents, while females accounted for 41.5%. Geographically, the dataset was predominantly European, with Hungary contributing 118 respondents, followed by the rest of Europe (56), alongside smaller groups from America (5) and Asia (4). Leadership roles were evenly distributed (33.3% each for leaders, managers, and team leaders), ensuring balanced insights. Tenure ranged widely, with a median of 6–10 years. Finance (22%), IT and sales (15% each), marketing (19.1%), operations (17.9%), and HR (11.6%) were the most represented departments, while smaller

groups from data analytics, consulting, logistics, legal, and others added to the dataset's diversity.

5.2. Characteristics of Hybrid Work

The findings reveal that hybrid work models dominate, with 46% of respondents required to work 2 days in the office and 47.5% required 3 days, resulting in a mean of 2.53 days (SD = 0.62). This highlights a balanced approach to remote and in-office work among leaders.

Regarding contact frequency, 54% of leaders report daily interactions with team members, followed by 44% engaging weekly, while monthly interactions are rare (1.6%). This high frequency of communication reflects an emphasis on consistent engagement and hands-on leadership.

In terms of one-to-one discussions, the most common frequency is weekly (1-WY), reported by 88 respondents, followed by biweekly (2-BW) with 38 responses. Less frequent intervals, such as monthly, bi-monthly, and random discussions, account for smaller proportions, emphasizing a preference for structured and regular communication.

The form of one-to-one interactions shows a clear preference for in-person meetings (45.4%), followed by virtual with video (32.8%). Voice-only (12.6%), written communication (7.1%), and mixed methods (2.1%) are minimal, indicating a strong reliance on direct and visual communication methods.

Lastly, the duration of these discussions is most commonly 30–60 minutes (46.4%) and 15–30 minutes (41%), suggesting that medium-length interactions strike a balance between efficiency and meaningful communication. Shorter (1–15 minutes) and longer sessions (60+ minutes) are rare, indicating limited reliance on extreme durations.

When analyzing the topics reported for the most common types of one-to-one discussions (weekly or biweekly and in-person or virtual with video and 15-30 or 30-60 minutes in duration), we have found that respondents reported a wide variety, indicating that most meetings address multiple concerns simultaneously. Problem-solving (102 mentions) emerged as the most frequently discussed topic, Strategy Alignment (93 mentions) followed closely. Work-life balance (87 mentions) featured prominently, showing leaders' attention to employee well-being and sustainable work practices. Other topics include performance appraisals (56 mentions), goal setting (39 mentions) and Career planning (22 mentions)

appeared less frequently. On average, each meeting covers 2–3 topics, balancing operational tasks (e.g., problem-solving), strategic goals, and personal development considerations.

5.3. Analysis of Relationships, Hypotheses Testing

Findings of a factor analysis

The factor analysis of the gained data revealed a three-component structure, aligning with theoretical expectations for Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) and Transformational Leadership. These findings are consistent with prior research highlighting the role of LMX in shaping leader-follower dynamics and the transformational leadership approach in fostering trust and engagement (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Avolio & Bass, 2004). Strengthening these theoretical linkages ensures a clearer contextual grounding for the identified factor structure. The first component, explaining 39.7% of the total variance, showed strong loadings on LMX items, reflecting relationship quality characterized by trust and respect. The second component, contributing 13.9% of the variance, highlighted transformational leadership behaviors (Individualized Consideration). The third component, accounting for 8.3% of the variance, represented Contingent Reward behaviors.

The cumulative explained variance of 62% reflects a robust factor solution. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of 0.877 indicates excellent sampling adequacy, while Bartlett's Test of Sphericity ($\chi^2 = 779.159$, $df = 66$, $p < 0.000$) confirms that the correlations among variables are suitable for factor analysis. Rotated factor loadings, achieved through Varimax rotation, ensured clear component differentiation.

Given the strength of the LMX-related component, which explains the largest share of the total variance (39.7%) and features high factor loadings (e.g., $LMX1 = 0.814$, $LMX2 = 0.855$, $LMX3 = 0.773$), focusing exclusively on LMX ensures analytical rigor while addressing key research objectives. The high communalities for LMX variables (e.g., 0.704–0.754) demonstrate that these items are well-represented by the underlying factor structure, making LMX a robust and reliable construct. By narrowing the analysis to LMX, this study maximizes the explanatory power of the findings within the constraints of the journal format, offering a precise and statistically grounded perspective on how interaction frequency, duration, form and topic drive leader-follower dynamics in hybrid working environments.

The following section presents the findings for H1, H2 and H3 about the relationships between the characteristics of one-to-one (OTO) discussions and leaders' perceptions of

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) quality. Figure 1. pictures the boxplots for all three analysis and visualizes the relationships discovered through the answers of our survey.

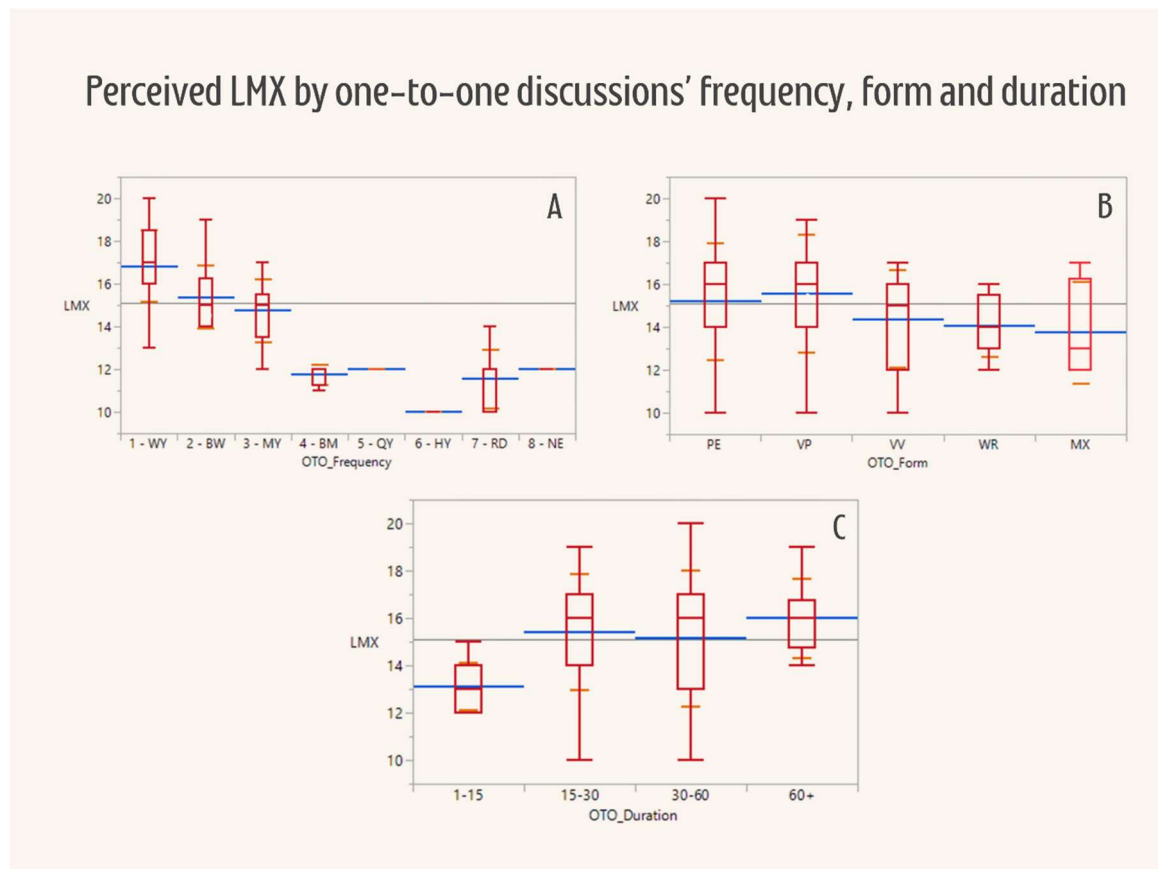


Figure 1.: Perceived LMX by one-to-one discussions' frequency, form and duration,
Source: authors own work

Frequency of one-to-one relationships and preceived LMX

H1 hypothesizes that higher frequencies of one-to-one (OTO) discussions between leaders and followers positively correlate with leaders' perceptions of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) quality.

The 'A' boxplot of Figure 1. visualizes the relationship, showing that weekly (WY) and biweekly (BW) discussions are associated with higher median LMX scores and wider interquartile ranges, while lower frequencies, such as random (RD) or never (NE), result in significantly lower LMX scores and minimal variability. This highlights a positive association between frequent, structured discussions and leader-follower relationship quality.

Regression analysis demonstrates a strong relationship ($R^2 = 0.681$, Adjusted $R^2 = 0.668$), with frequency of one-to-one discussions significantly predicting perceived LMX ($\beta = 0.82$,

$p < 0.001$). The Root Mean Square Error (RMSE) of 1.51 indicates a low level of prediction error, supporting the model's validity.

The one-way ANOVA analysis confirms significant differences across discussion frequencies ($F = 53.33$, $p < 0.0001$). Weekly (WY) interactions yielded the highest mean LMX score ($M = 16.84$), followed by Biweekly (BW) ($M = 15.39$). Less frequent interactions (e.g., Monthly, Bi-Monthly, Random, or Never) showed progressively lower scores, with Random ($M = 11.57$) and Never ($M = 12.00$) at the bottom.

The findings strongly confirm H1: Higher frequencies of one-to-one discussions are positively associated with perceived LMX quality. Weekly and Biweekly meetings provide the best outcomes, while irregular or infrequent interactions lead to notably lower LMX scores. These results emphasize the importance of frequent and structured communication in hybrid work environments for building effective leader-follower relationships.

Form of one-to-one relationships and preceived LMX

H2 hypothesizes that in-person one-to-one discussions are associated with higher perceptions of Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) quality.

The 'B' boxplot of Figure 1. shows that in-person (PE) discussions yield the highest median LMX scores, closely followed by virtual with picture (VP) interactions, suggesting that video-based meetings serve as an effective alternative. However, voice-only (VV) and written (WR) communications show lower median LMX scores, indicating reduced effectiveness, while mixed methods (MX) display moderate scores with high variability.

Descriptive statistics reveal that in-person discussions have the highest mean LMX score (15.20), followed by virtual video-based interactions (15.57). Voice-only (14.39), written (14.08), and mixed methods (13.75) show progressively lower means, with greater variability noted for in-person and video-based interactions.

The one-way ANOVA analysis indicates that differences in LMX quality across communication forms are not statistically significant ($F(4,177) = 1.713$, $p = 0.149$), and the corresponding regression model yielded low explanatory power ($R^2 = 0.0371$). No form of communication produced a statistically significant regression coefficient (all $p > 0.10$). This result suggests that communication form alone may not be a strong determinant of LMX quality in hybrid environments. The preference for in-person or virtual communication may

vary based on individual leader-follower dynamics, industry norms, or organizational culture, which could dilute the overall effect of communication form on LMX quality. The small R^2 value suggests that communication form explains only a minimal portion of the variance in LMX quality.

While descriptive results suggest that in-person and virtual video interactions are preferable for fostering higher LMX quality, the statistical analysis does not confirm this relationship. Thus, H2 is not supported. The findings imply that factors beyond communication form, such as frequency, duration, or leadership behaviors, may play a more substantial role in leader-follower relationship quality in hybrid environments.

Duration of one-to-one relationships and perceived LMX

H3 hypothesizes that the duration of one-to-one discussions between leaders and followers positively correlates with perceived Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) quality.

The 'C' boxplot of Figure 1. demonstrates that discussions lasting 15–30 minutes and 30–60 minutes are associated with the highest median LMX scores and broader interquartile ranges (IQRs), reflecting consistently positive relationship quality. Shorter discussions (1–15 minutes) show the lowest median LMX scores and narrow IQRs, highlighting their limited effectiveness in fostering strong leader-follower relationships. Discussions longer than 60 minutes yield higher median LMX scores than short meetings but display significant variability, likely due to the small sample size ($N = 6$).

Descriptive statistics reveal a clear trend where longer discussion durations correspond to higher mean LMX scores, particularly in the 15–30 and 30–60 minute ranges. The one-way ANOVA confirms statistically significant differences across discussion durations ($F(4,177) = 4.074$, $p = 0.0079$, $R^2 = 0.064$). Regression results further show a positive association between meeting length and perceived LMX, with 15–30 minute ($\beta = 0.42$, $p = 0.003$) and 30–60 minute discussions ($\beta = 0.39$, $p = 0.007$) showing the strongest coefficients. Pairwise comparisons show that the 1–15 minute group has significantly lower LMX scores compared to longer durations. While the 60+ minute group achieves a high mean LMX score (16.00), the wide confidence interval reflects greater variability in effectiveness.

These findings support H3, demonstrating that the duration of one-to-one discussions positively correlates with LMX quality. However, it is worth considering whether there is an

optimal duration beyond which returns diminish or whether excessively long discussions may have unintended effects, such as reduced efficiency or cognitive overload for both leaders and followers. Future research could explore potential nonlinear relationships between discussion duration and perceived relationship quality to refine best practices for hybrid leadership interactions. Based on our research, 15–30 minute and 30–60 minute discussions are optimal for fostering strong leader-follower relationships, while shorter meetings (1–15 minutes) fail to provide sufficient interaction for meaningful connections.

Topics of One-to-One Discussions

H4 hypothesizes that the topics discussed in effective one-to-one (OTO) interactions typically cover both operational matters relevant to the organization and personal matters significant to the follower.

From the earlier analysis of topics reported in one-to-one discussions, the following patterns were observed. Problem Solving (102 mentions) and Strategy (93 mentions) were the most frequently discussed topics, representing key operational matters that address immediate challenges and long-term planning. Work-Life Balance (87 mentions) highlights a clear focus on personal well-being and sustainable working practices, demonstrating leaders' attention to followers' individual needs. Other topics like Performance Appraisal (56 mentions) and Goal Setting (39 mentions) reflect a mix of organizational priorities and individual development. Career Planning (22 mentions) is the least frequent topic but remains relevant as a personal consideration for follower growth.

The data retrieved from the answers on the ALIGN questionnaire shows that each one-to-one meeting typically addresses 2–3 topics on average, combining both operational and personal elements. Leaders balance short-term operational goals (e.g., problem-solving and strategy alignment) with personal concerns (e.g., work-life balance and career development), indicating a multi-faceted approach to these interactions.

While operational matters dominate the agenda, the significant frequency of topics like work-life balance and goal setting confirms that leaders also address personal and developmental needs. This aligns with the hypothesis that effective discussions are comprehensive, integrating both organizational priorities and follower well-being. Thus, the findings support H4. Leaders use these meetings as a platform to address immediate

challenges, align on strategy, and support followers' growth and well-being, demonstrating a balanced and holistic approach to relationship management in hybrid environments.

To strengthen the robustness of the model, variance inflation factors (VIFs) were assessed and found to be within acceptable thresholds (<2.0), confirming no multicollinearity. Model residuals were normally distributed, and homoscedasticity was visually inspected and confirmed, indicating a good model fit across all tested hypotheses.

6. Discussion

This study examined the linkage between interaction characteristics and leader-subordinate relationship in hybrid working environments. The findings offer valuable insights into how interaction frequency, form, and duration, alongside leadership styles, influence perceived Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) quality. Key Findings and Interpretation are presented.

Frequency of One-to-One Discussions and LMX Quality (H1)

Results showed a significant positive relationship between the frequency of one-to-one discussions and leaders' perceptions of LMX quality. Weekly (WY) and biweekly (BW) discussions were associated with the highest LMX scores, while irregular or infrequent discussions (e.g., random or never) corresponded to lower scores. This supports the notion that frequent, structured interactions are essential for building high-quality leader-follower relationships in hybrid settings. These findings align with prior research highlighting the importance of communication frequency in enhancing trust, mutual understanding, and relationship quality (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995).

Form of One-to-One Discussions and LMX Quality (H2)

While descriptive data indicated that in-person and virtual with video (VP) discussions yielded higher LMX scores, this finding aligns with prior research emphasizing the importance of rich communication mediums in fostering relationship quality (Daft & Lengel, 1986). However, it contrasts with studies suggesting that frequency may play a more critical role than medium (Wroblewski *et al.*, 2022). The results of the One-Way ANOVA were not statistically significant. This suggests that while visual and direct communication methods may be perceived as more effective, the form of communication alone does not significantly determine LMX quality. This finding may reflect the adaptability of leaders and followers in

hybrid environments, where technological tools can often compensate for the lack of physical presence.

Duration of One-to-One Discussions and LMX Quality (H3)

The analysis demonstrated that longer durations of discussions (15–30 and 30–60 minutes) are positively associated with higher LMX scores. Shorter discussions (1–15 minutes) were significantly less effective in fostering strong relationships. This underscores the importance of allocating sufficient time for meaningful dialogue, addressing both operational tasks and developmental goals. These findings are consistent with leadership research suggesting that time investment is a critical factor in developing high-quality exchanges and relational trust.

Topics of One-to-One Discussions (H4)

The analysis of the topics of effective (as supported by H1 and H3) one-to-one interactions revealed that they include a balance of operational (e.g., problem-solving, strategy) and personal (e.g., work-life balance, career planning) matters. Thereby leaders focus on multiple dimensions by addressing immediate challenges and aligning on organizational goals while also reflecting attention to employee well-being and growth by dealing with personal topics such as work-life balance and career planning. They typically cover 2–3 topics per meeting, which allow leaders to address both short-term priorities and long-term developmental needs. This balance underscores the role of these meetings as a critical tool for maintaining alignment, addressing challenges, and fostering strong leader-follower relationships.

A visual representation of these relationships is provided in *Figure 2: The Hybrid Alignment Leadership Framework for Workforce Advancement (HALFWAY)*. This model illustrates how one-to-one discussions in hybrid environments influence LMX quality through frequency, form, duration, and topic.

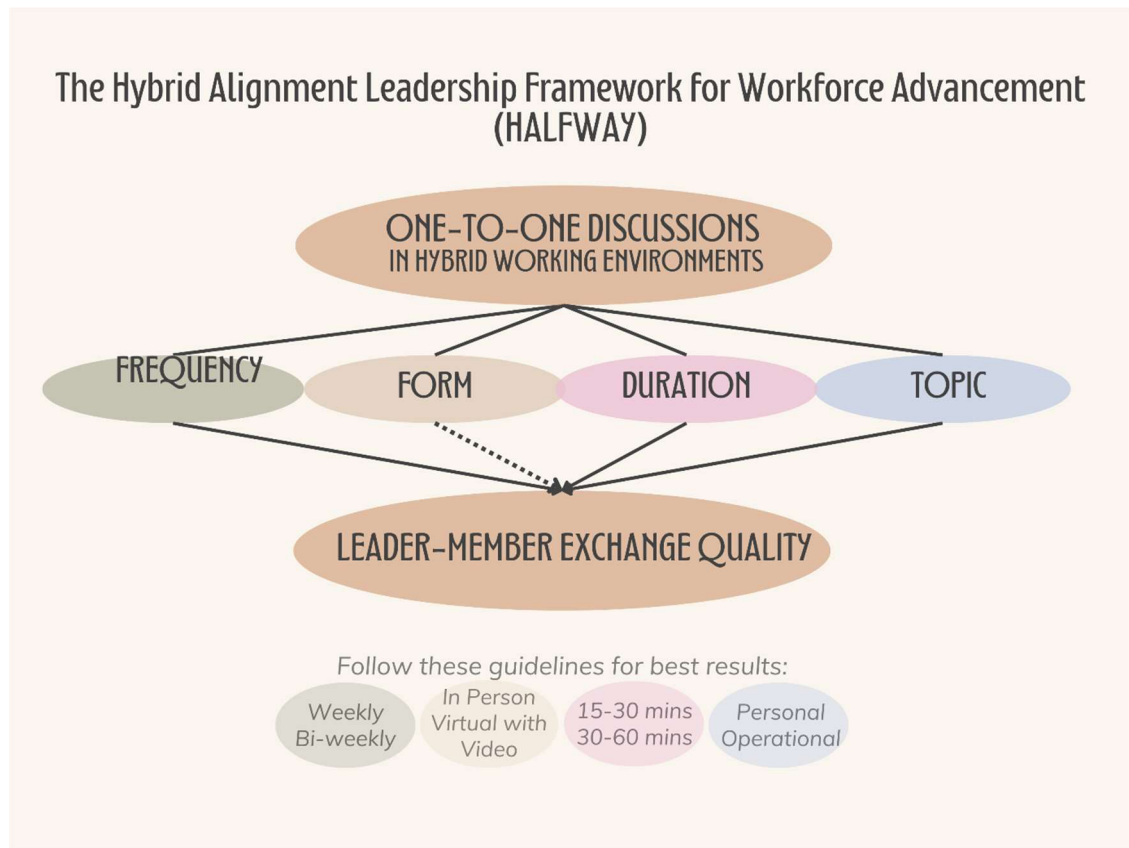


Figure 2: *The Hybrid Alignment Leadership Framework for Workforce Advancement (HALFWAY)*,
 Source: authors' own work

Theoretical Implications

These findings contribute to leadership literature by emphasizing the importance of communication frequency and duration in building high-quality leader-follower relationships, particularly in hybrid work environments where physical presence is limited. This study advances LMX theory by demonstrating that structured and frequent one-to-one interactions can mitigate the relational distance inherent in hybrid settings, reinforcing the role of communication as a key driver of relationship quality. Additionally, it extends leadership and communication theories by illustrating how leaders can effectively balance operational and personal discussion topics to enhance both engagement and trust in hybrid teams, especially in hybrid working environments with limited face-to-face interactions. The study highlights the adaptability of virtual tools for maintaining relationship quality and underscores the value of balancing operational (e.g., problem-solving) and personal (e.g., work-life balance) topics in leadership. It also provides a framework for assessing leader-

follower dynamics in hybrid workplaces, offering validated concepts and variables for understanding relationship quality.

Practical Implications

The findings suggest several key recommendations for leaders navigating hybrid working environments. Prioritizing frequent, structured interactions - such as weekly or biweekly one-to-one discussions - helps maintain strong relationships and enhance communication quality. Discussions should last at least 15–30 minutes to allow for deeper engagement, covering both operational and developmental needs. While in-person meetings remain optimal, video-based virtual discussions can effectively substitute when physical presence is not feasible. Additionally, leaders should structure these meetings to integrate both operational topics (e.g., problem-solving, strategy) and personal matters (e.g., work-life balance, career planning). Addressing multiple dimensions in one-to-one discussions allows leaders to align organizational goals with employee well-being and growth, fostering stronger leader-follower relationships.

Limitations and Future Research

This study provides valuable insights but has its limitations, too. Its cross-sectional design prevents causal inferences, and longitudinal studies could better capture how communication, leadership behaviors, and LMX evolve. The sample reflects a specific group of leaders in hybrid working environments, with potential bias from convenience and snowball sampling, limiting generalizability. Reliance on self-reported data may introduce response bias. Future research should test these findings across industries and consider additional factors like team size, organizational culture, and leader traits. Variables related to transformational leadership behaviors and coaching were excluded due to low factor loadings, narrowing the focus on leadership styles.

7. Conclusion

This study analyzes leader-follower interactions in hybrid work environments, highlighting the importance of structured, regular, and sufficiently timed one-to-one discussions in fostering high-quality leader-follower relationships, indicated by higher Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) scores. Weekly or biweekly meetings are critical for building trust, mutual understanding, and engagement. While in-person interactions are preferred, video-based meetings effectively maintain relationship quality, demonstrating adaptability to hybrid

settings. Medium-length discussions (15–60 minutes) are particularly effective for addressing operational needs and developmental goals. A key contribution is identifying the balance between operational topics (e.g., problem-solving, strategy) and personal considerations (e.g., work-life balance, career planning), reflecting a holistic approach to leadership. These findings extend leadership theories to hybrid settings, emphasizing intentionality, adaptability, and the focus on interaction quality.

For practitioners, the study recommends prioritizing frequent, structured meetings, allocating sufficient time, and balancing agendas to address organizational goals and employee well-being. Future research should explore causal relationships through longitudinal studies and investigate additional leadership styles and contexts, framing hybrid working environments as opportunities to enhance trust and engagement through intentional interactions.

8. Ethical Considerations

Participants' responses were and will be kept confidential, and all data were and will be anonymized. Data are stored securely and only accessible to the research team. Participation was voluntary, and participants can withdraw the consent and answers at any time without penalty.

All grammar and spelling in this paper were reviewed and refined using Quillbot v15.532.6 (under quillbot.com), ensuring clarity and linguistic accuracy throughout the manuscript. The content, analyses, and interpretations presented are entirely the authors' original work.

This chapter has presented the five core research papers that collectively explore hybrid leadership through both conceptual and empirical lenses. By addressing the evolving dynamics of leader-follower interactions in hybrid environments, these studies contribute to a deeper understanding of structured communication and its impact on leadership effectiveness. The following chapters will conclude my dissertation by synthesizing these findings, reflecting on their broader implications, and outlining avenues for future research and practical application.

CONCLUSION AND REFLECTIONS

1. Synthesis of Novel Contributions

This dissertation has made significant contributions to the study of hybrid leadership by systematically integrating conceptual analysis, empirical research, and measurement development. By addressing the core research question (*How structured communication practices, particularly one-to-one discussions, impact leader-follower relationships in hybrid working environments?*) this research has provided new insights into the evolving nature of leadership in distributed workplaces.

The findings reveal that structured communication's frequency and content significantly outweigh the form of communication (in-person vs. virtual) in determining leadership effectiveness. Through the validation of the ALIGN Questionnaire, this study introduces a reliable tool for assessing leader-follower relationships in hybrid settings, bridging the gap between leadership theory and practical implementation. The research further highlights the critical role of trust, structured feedback, and communication length in fostering high-quality leader-follower relationships, offering concrete evidence to support leadership development strategies tailored to hybrid working environments.

Figure 5., titled "*The Hybrid Alignment Leadership Framework for Workforce Advancement*" (abbreviated as HALFWAY, that also reflects the relationship between a leader and its follower) is the author's own product and provides a visual representation of key components influencing the quality of leader-member exchange (LMX) in hybrid working environments. It emphasizes the role of structured one-to-one discussions in fostering effective leader-follower relationships, which are central to hybrid leadership success. Each element in the framework contributes to enhancing LMX quality and is supported by practical guidelines for implementation.

The Hybrid Alignment Leadership Framework for Workforce Advancement

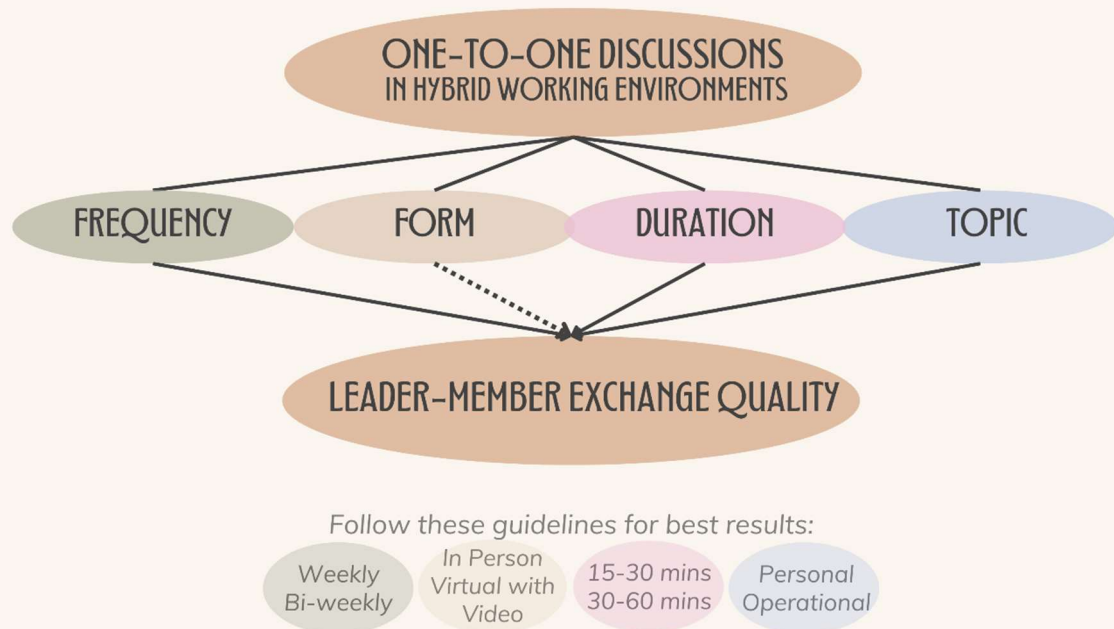


Figure 6. The Hybrid Alignment Leadership Framework for Workforce Advancement,
Source: own elaboration

One-to-One Discussions in Hybrid Working Environments: The framework underscores the *centrality of one-to-one discussions* as the primary mechanism for cultivating trust, alignment, and engagement between leaders and followers in hybrid settings. These discussions serve as the core relational activity through which other factors (frequency, form, duration, and topic) interact to influence leadership outcomes.

Frequency: The regularity of interactions is critical for maintaining engagement and trust. The research outcomes recommend *weekly or bi-weekly* discussions to ensure ongoing alignment and to address both operational and personal concerns promptly. This frequency supports a consistent exchange of feedback and reinforces the relational quality between leaders and their team members.

Form: The form of communication, whether in-person or virtual with video is presented as an adaptable component in hybrid environments. The framework highlights that the medium itself is less important than the consistency and quality of the interaction. Leaders can effectively leverage virtual tools without compromising relational outcomes, provided that the discussions are structured and meaningful.

Duration: The length of discussions plays a significant role in achieving depth and focus. Our analysis suggests two optimal ranges: 15–30 minutes for concise, targeted interactions and 30–60 minutes for more comprehensive discussions. This flexibility accommodates varying agendas while ensuring sufficient time to address key concerns and foster relational depth.

Topic: Effective discussions in hybrid working environments must balance personal and operational topics. Addressing operational concerns ensures clarity on goals and tasks, while personal topics help to build trust, demonstrate empathy, and foster a sense of connection. This balance reflects the dual focus necessary for maintaining both productivity and employee well-being.

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) Quality: The combined impact of frequency, form, duration, and topic converges on the quality of the leader-follower relationship. High LMX quality is characterized by mutual trust, respect, and obligation, which drive engagement, job satisfaction, and team performance. The dotted arrow in the chart illustrates the dynamic and reciprocal relationship between one-to-one discussions and LMX quality, emphasizing that consistent, well-structured communication can strengthen these bonds over time.

2. Academic Implications

This dissertation makes a multifaceted contribution to the academic discourse on leadership by addressing the under-theorized area of structured communication practices within hybrid work environments. The *Hybrid Alignment Leadership Framework for Workforce Advancement* (HALFWAY) represents a conceptual advancement by operationalizing the relational quality of leader-follower dynamics in terms of measurable components: frequency, form, duration, and topic of one-to-one discussions. In doing so, it extends Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) theory to hybrid contexts, emphasizing that trust and engagement are driven less by physical proximity and more by relational structure and intentionality. Abstract concepts such as trust-building and communication frequency are turned into actionable elements, bridging the gap between theory and practice. By integrating empirical findings with practical guidelines, the framework equips leaders to navigate the complexities of hybrid working environments effectively.

Moreover, the study bridges theoretical gaps across leadership, communication, and organizational behavior literature by validating the impact of structured leadership practices within a digitally mediated environment. By demonstrating the interplay between top-down influences (organizational structures and external pressures) and bottom-up processes (leader-follower interactions and engagement strategies), this research underscores the need for adaptive, relational leadership approaches that align with the evolving nature of hybrid organizations. The ALIGN Questionnaire was developed and statistically tested among leaders in large corporate environments where hybrid work is implemented with well-structured processes and clear regulations. Although the sample is not representative, the responses yielded credible, interpretable results that support valid scientific conclusions, so this work contributes an empirically grounded measurement instrument that can be adapted for further academic exploration in both leadership research and hybrid work studies.

From a methodological standpoint, this dissertation presents a replicable model of hybrid scholarship, blending conceptual review, scale construction, and empirical validation. The transdisciplinary integration of leadership theory, communication studies, and hybrid work scholarship provides a novel template for future researchers exploring rapidly evolving workplace phenomena. In a broader sense, the findings challenge legacy assumptions about managerial presence and suggest a shift toward adaptive, distributed leadership models rooted in purposeful interaction rather than control.

3. Managerial Implications

The developed model is not only theoretically robust but also highly applicable in practice, providing a clear framework for hybrid leadership in real-world settings. The study was conducted in environments where hybrid work had been applied in a well-organized manner for an extended period. Based on the clearly indicated practices in the responses, our study was able to describe the key characteristics of effective one-to-one meetings (with the next chapter addressing the study's limitations).

The HALFWAY framework offers a clear, evidence-based roadmap for practitioners leading hybrid teams. Its greatest strength lies in translating abstract leadership principles into concrete, applicable strategies suited for contemporary, digitally enabled workplaces. By focusing on structured one-to-one interactions, the model guides leaders in sustaining high-

quality relationships across physical and digital boundaries, a need in post-pandemic organizations.

Key actionable insights derived from the study include:

- **Structure matters more than medium:** Whether meetings occur in-person or virtually via video is less consequential than their consistency, clarity, and relational depth.
- **Frequency drives connection:** Weekly or bi-weekly discussions significantly enhance trust, motivation, and alignment, therefore leaders should embed these rhythms into their calendar.
- **Time investment signals value:** Conversations of 15–60 minutes, adapted to the topic and follower needs, foster both task effectiveness and relational capital.
- **Balance content:** Deliberately include both personal and operational topics to maintain engagement, build empathy, and align expectations.
- **Tailor leadership:** Hybrid leadership is not one-size-fits-all. The study's findings support the design of flexible leadership development programs that account for context, follower needs, and digital maturity.

By embedding these practices into their routines, managers can not only navigate the challenges of hybrid leadership more effectively but also model the kind of intentional, human-centered leadership that hybrid environments require. The framework provides an implementable toolkit that HR professionals, executive coaches, and team leaders alike can use to enhance performance, cohesion, and well-being in distributed teams.

From a systems perspective, the findings also support the design of leadership development programs that build digital communication fluency, emotional intelligence, and conversational coaching techniques. HR departments may consider embedding these one-to-one discussion routines into performance management systems, ensuring accountability for leadership communication.

Finally, organizations can leverage the validated ALIGN Questionnaire as part of their internal diagnostics to assess the health of leader-follower dynamics and inform targeted interventions at both individual and systemic levels.

While the study offers both theoretical and practical contributions to the understanding of hybrid leadership, it is equally important to acknowledge the methodological limitations that frame the scope and generalizability of its findings – please see next chapter for these.

LIMITATIONS

While this study has yielded significant findings, it also presents methodological challenges that must be acknowledged. One primary limitation lies in the construction of the ALIGN Questionnaire, which integrates items from multiple established leadership assessment models (LMX, MLQ, and CBS). Although steps were taken to ensure construct validity and internal consistency, blending instruments from different theoretical backgrounds may introduce interpretive complexity and warrants further psychometric validation in diverse organizational contexts.

Moreover, the use of self-reported data from leaders introduces potential epistemological limitations, such as biases in self-perception, social desirability, and retrospective rationalization. Furthermore, questionnaire-based measurement (while validated and grounded in established scales) cannot fully capture the complexity and nuance of lived leader-follower interactions, particularly those that unfold informally or contextually. These risks could be mitigated in future studies through methodological triangulation, such as incorporating employee perspectives, observational data, or performance metrics, and by designing longitudinal studies that capture evolving leadership practices over time.

The sampling strategy also imposes constraints on generalizability. The sample, though varied in roles and sectors, tends to be geographically and culturally concentrated, and primarily drawn from large corporations operating under a 2+3 or 3+2 hybrid model. As such, the findings may not extend to smaller organizations, different cultural environments, or industries with distinct hybrid structures (e.g., manufacturing vs. knowledge work). Future research should strive for broader geographic, cultural, and industrial sampling frames to test the robustness of the ALIGN model across settings.

The reliance on convenience and snowball sampling further limits representativeness and generalizability. A high ratio of participants were located in Hungary and embedded in specific cultural and organizational contexts, which may not reflect broader international or

sectoral realities. This geographic and cultural concentration may distort the applicability of the findings to other contexts, particularly in multinational environments. A more stratified or randomized sampling strategy in future research could mitigate these limitations.

The exclusion of variables related to transformational leadership and coaching behaviors due to lower factor loadings narrowed the analytic scope. Future research should refine these constructs or explore alternative formulations that may better capture their role in hybrid environments.

Lastly, contextual variables such as team size, organizational culture, sectoral norms, and leader tenure or personality traits were not deeply explored in this phase. Including these factors in future models would help enrich understanding of the boundary conditions under which structured communication is most effective.

FUTURE DIRECTIONS

This research lays the groundwork for further exploration into hybrid leadership, with several promising avenues for future inquiry:

1. **Expanding the ALIGN Model:** While the study validates the ALIGN Questionnaire, future research should explore its applicability across different industries, and cultural contexts. Refining and expanding the instrument could enhance its utility as a comprehensive hybrid leadership assessment tool.
2. **Longitudinal Studies:** Given the evolving nature of hybrid work, future studies could employ longitudinal designs to examine how leadership effectiveness changes over time, particularly as organizations refine their hybrid working strategies.
3. **Neuroscientific and Behavioral Approaches:** Hybrid leadership research could benefit from interdisciplinary collaborations, incorporating neuroscientific and behavioral insights to understand how leaders process information, make decisions, and adapt communication strategies in hybrid environments.
4. **Exploring Leadership Development Interventions:** This study underscores the importance of structured one-to-one interactions and trust-building in hybrid settings. Future research could test specific leadership development programs, assessing their impact on engagement, performance, and well-being.

5. Integrating AI and Digital Leadership Tools: As technology continues to shape hybrid work, further research is needed to examine how AI-driven leadership tools, digital coaching platforms, and virtual collaboration systems influence leader-follower relationships.

By positioning this research within a broader academic and practical landscape, this dissertation serves as a foundation for future inquiry into adaptive leadership strategies in hybrid work environments. The findings not only advance theoretical understanding but also offer actionable insights for leaders, HR professionals, and policymakers striving to optimize leadership practices in an increasingly digital and flexible workplace.

The transformation of leadership in hybrid settings is ongoing, and this research provides a critical step in unpacking the complexities of leader-follower interactions in the modern work environment. Future explorations will continue to refine, adapt, and expand these insights, ensuring that leaders are equipped to thrive in the ever-evolving world of hybrid working environments.

GLOSSARY²

Coaching Behaviors Scale (CBS) – A leadership assessment tool that measures the extent to which leaders engage in coaching behaviors, such as providing feedback, supporting employee development, and fostering autonomy. It contributes to understanding leadership effectiveness.

Communication Form – The channel through which leader-follower interactions occur, such as in-person meetings, video calls, phone calls, or written messages.

Feedback – Information provided by leaders to their employees regarding performance, behavior, or development areas.

Follower – An individual within an organization who is responsible for achieving organizational objectives while influenced, guided, or supported by a leader. In the context of this research, followers are employees who engage in structured communication with their leaders, and contribute to the overall dynamics of leader-follower relationships in hybrid working environments. Their level of engagement, trust, and responsiveness to leadership practices plays a critical role in shaping leadership effectiveness.

Hybrid Leadership – A leadership approach tailored to hybrid working environments that integrates remote and in-person management practices.

Hybrid Working Environments – Organizational settings where employees split their time between remote and in-office work. In this dissertation, we consider a working environment hybrid, if employees spend working at least two days in the office plus at least two days at home office.

Leader – According to Mintzberg (1973) a leader is an individual who is responsible for motivating their followers along with providing guidance, support, and feedback. A leader facilitates the integration of individual needs and organizational goals.

Leader-Follower Interactions – The ongoing exchanges between leaders and their followers that are meant to convey messages. These interactions include formal and informal, oral or written, structured or unstructured communication instances.

² own definitions, except stated otherwise

Leader-Follower Relationships – The dynamic and evolving connection between a leader and a follower, shaped by the quality, frequency, and effectiveness of their interactions. These relationships are built on trust, communication, and mutual influence, influencing engagement, motivation, and performance.

Leader-Member Exchange (LMX) – A leadership theory that explores the quality of relationships between leaders and their followers. High LMX relationships are characterized by trust, mutual respect, and strong communication, while low LMX relationships tend to be more transactional and less engaged.

Leadership – According to Mintzberg (1973), leadership is an integral part of management, encompassing the role of motivating, guiding, and developing team members while fostering a sense of shared purpose within an organization. Rather than being a separate function, leadership is embedded in managerial activities, requiring continuous engagement, communication, and influence to ensure team effectiveness and cohesion.

Leadership Effectiveness –According to Drucker (1967), leadership effectiveness refers to a leader's ability to set clear objectives, motivate and develop team members, and align organizational goals with individual performance. It is demonstrated through strategic decision-making, clear communication, and adaptability, ensuring cohesion and productivity, particularly in hybrid work environments.

Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ) – A validated leadership assessment tool that measures different leadership styles, particularly transformational and transactional behaviors. It is used in this research to evaluate leadership effectiveness in hybrid settings.

One-to-One Discussions – Regular, structured meetings between a leader and a follower designed to provide feedback, address concerns, align expectations, and build trust. These discussions are particularly important in hybrid leadership as they compensate for the reduced informal interactions present in fully in-person settings.

Structured Communication – Deliberate, consistent, and purpose-driven interactions between leaders and followers that have a defined format and frequency. It enhances clarity, predictability, and alignment in leader-follower relationships, playing a crucial role in hybrid working environments.

REFERENCES

- Adnams, S. (2020). The distributed workplace of the future is now. *Gartner, Report G00726412*.
- Aroles, J., Cecez-Kecmanovic, D., Dale K., Kingma S.F., Mitev, N. (2021). New ways of working (NWW): Workplace transformation in the digital age, *Information and Organization*, 31. 4. DOI: 10.1016/j.infoandorg.2021.100378
- Athanasiadou, C., Theriou, G. (2021) Telework: systematic literature review and future research agenda. *Heliyon*, 7, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e08165>
- Avolio, B. J., & Bass, B. M. (2004). Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (3rd ed.). Mind Garden. http://dx.doi.org/10.1207/s1532754xjpr1602_2
- Ayoko, O.B., Konrad, A.M., Boyle, M.V. (2012) *Online work: Managing conflict and emotions for performance in virtual teams*, *European Management Journal*, (30), 156– 174, doi:10.1016/j.emj.2011.10.001
- Banhidi, B. (2024). Navigating Leader-Subordinate Dynamics in the Hybrid Corporate Environment: A Comprehensive Review, in: *Economic and Social Development: 111th International Scientific Conference on Economic and Social Development – "Navigating into the Future: The new Employee Experience"*, 34875226, 160-169
- Barnes, K., Vione, K. & Kotera, Y. (2024), Effective leadership practice among senior leaders working from home and in the hybrid workplace across COVID-19. *SN Business & Economics* 4, 55. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s43546-024-00651-4>
- Bass, B. M., & Avolio, B. J. (2004). Multifactor Leadership Questionnaire (MLQ). Menlo Park, CA, Mind Garden, Inc.
- Bayraktar, S. (2021). Leadership on and off the Dance Floor: “Six Levels of Connection” Framework. *Organizational Dynamics*, 50(2), 100746. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.ORGADYN.2019.100746>
- Béland, L.-P., Brodeur, A., Wright, T. (2020). *The short-term economic consequences of covid-19: Exposure to disease, remote work and government response*. SSRN Electronic Journal. DOI: 10.2139/ssrn.3584922
- Beno, M. (2021). On-site and hybrid workplace culture of positivity and effectiveness: Case study from Austria. *Academic Journal of Interdisciplinary Studies*, 10(5), 331-338. DOI: 10.36941/ajis-2021-0142

Birmingham, W. C., Holt-Lunstad, J., Herr, R. M., & Barth, A. (2024), Social connections in the workplace. *American Journal of Health Promotion*. 38(6):886-891.
doi:10.1177/08901171241255204b

Boccoli, G., Gastaldi, L. & Corso, M. (2024), Transformational leadership and work engagement in remote work settings: the moderating role of the supervisor's digital communication skills, *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, Vol. 45 No. 7, pp. 1240-1257. <https://doi.org/10.1108/LODJ-09-2023-0490>

Buła, P., Thompson, A., & Żak, A.A. (2024), Nurturing teamwork and team dynamics in a hybrid work model, *Central European Management Journal*, Vol. 32 No. 3, pp. 475-489. <https://doi.org/10.1108/CEMJ-12-2022-0277>

Cascio, W. F., Shurygailo, S. (2003). *E-Leadership and Virtual Teams*. *Organizational Dynamics*, 31(4), 362–376. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0090-2616\(02\)00130-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0090-2616(02)00130-4)

Chamakiotis, P., Panteli, N., Davison, R. M. (2021). *Reimagining e-leadership for reconfigured virtual teams due to covid-19*. *International Journal of Information Management*, 60, 102381. DOI: 10.1016/j.ijinfomgt.2021.102381

Chaudhary, P., Rohtagi, M., Singh, R.K., & Arora, S. (2022), "Impact of leader's e-competencies on employees' wellbeing in global virtual teams during COVID-19: the moderating role of emotional intelligence", *Employee Relations*, Vol. 44 No. 5, pp. 1048-1063. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ER-06-2021-0236>

Clarke, T., Clegg, S. (2000). *Changing Paradigms: The Transformation of Management Knowledge for the 21st Century*. HarperCollins

Collins, J., (2001). *Good to Great*. HarperCollins

Corso, T., Allegri, T., Bhebehe, N., Velzen, M., & Poulsen, S., (2023). Employee perspectives on leadership communication in the shift to new ways of working. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/369031976_Employee_Perspectives_on_Leadership_Communication_in_the_Shift_to_New_Ways_of_Working

Daft, R. L., & Lengel, R. H. (1986). Organizational information requirements, media richness and structural design. *Management Science*, 32(5), 554–571.
<https://doi.org/10.1287/mnsc.32.5.554>

Dinh, J. v., Kayga, L., Lindgren, C., Feitosa, J., Reyes, D. L., Salas, E. (2021). *Developing team trust: Leader insights for virtual settings*. *Organizational Dynamics*, 50(1), 100846. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.ORGDYN.2021.100846>

D'Innocenzo, L., Farro, A.C., Griffith, J.A., Kukenberger, M., (2021), *Shared leadership performance relationship trajectories as a function of team interventions and members' collective personalities*, The Leadership Quarterly, 32. 5. DOI: 10.1016/j.leaqua.2021.101499.

Drucker, P. F. (1967). *The effective executive: The definitive guide to getting the right things done*. Harper & Row.

Drucker P.F. (2001). *Management Challenges for the 21st Century*. HarperBusiness.

Eisenberg J., DiTomaso, N., (2021) *Structural decisions about configuration, assignments, and geographical distribution in teams: Influences on team communications and trust*. Human Resource Management Review, 31. 2. DOI: 10.1016/j.hrmr.2019.100739

Ellinger, A. D., & Bostrom, R. P. (1999). Managerial coaching behaviors in learning organizations. *Journal of Management Development*, 18(9), 752–770.
<https://doi.org/10.1108/02621719910300810>

Eubanks, D.L., Palanski, M., Olabisi, J., Joinson, A., Dove, J. (2016) *Team dynamics in virtual, partially distributed teams: Optimal role fulfillment*. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 61, 556e568 <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2016.03.035>

EY Future Workplace Index (2023). https://assets.ey.com/content/dam/ey-sites/ey-com/en_us/topics/real-estate-hospitality-construction/ey-future-workplace-index-2023.pdf
Feitosa, J., Salas, E. (2021). Today's virtual teams: Adapting lessons learned to the pandemic context. *Organizational Dynamics*, 50(1), 100777.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/J.ORGADYN.2020.100777>

Flavián, C., Guinalíu, M., Jordán P. (2022). *Virtual teams are here to stay: How personality traits, virtuality and leader gender impact trust in the leader and team commitment*, *European Research on Management and Business Economics*, 28(2), 100193, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.iedeen.2021.100193>.

Flinchum, J. R., Kreamer, L. M., Rogelberg, S. G., & Gooty, J. (2023). One-on-one meetings between managers and direct reports: A new opportunity for meeting science. *Organizational Psychology Review*, 13(4), 478-505.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/20413866221097570>

Ford, D., Myrden, S. E., & Jones, T. D. (2015). Understanding “disengagement from knowledge sharing”: Engagement theory versus adaptive cost theory. *Journal of Knowledge Management*, 19(3), 476-496.

- Franzen-Waschke, U. (2021). Well-being and Engagement in Hybrid Work Environments: Coaching as a Resource and Skill for Leaders to Develop. *GiLE Journal of Skills Development*, 1(2), 82-98. <https://doi.org/10.52398/gjsd.2021.v1.i2.pp82-98>
- Freitmuth, F., & Svenander, L., (2024) Leadership styles and employee motivation in a hybrid work environment. Umeå University, Retrieved from <https://umu.diva-portal.org/smash/get/diva2%3A1865195/FULLTEXT01.pdf>
- Frick, D. E. (2010). *Motivating the Knowledge Worker*.
- Gamage, A., Muchiri, M., Shahid, S., & Rashid, T. (2024), Leading from a distance: nurturing trust in virtual and crisis environments, *Business Process Management Journal*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/BPMJ-01-2024-0049>
- Gan, J., Zhou, Z. E., Tang, H., Ma, H., & Gan, Z. (2022). What It Takes to Be an Effective “Remote Leader” during COVID-19 Crisis: The Combined Effects of Supervisor Control and Support Behaviors. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 34(15), 2901–2923. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2022.2079953>
- George, T.J., Atwater, L., Maneethai, D., Madera, J. (2021) *Supporting the productivity and wellbeing of remote workers*, *Organizational Dynamics*, 51. 2. DOI: 10.1016/j.orgdyn.2021.100869
- Gerpott, F. H., & Kerschreiter, R. (2022). A conceptual framework of how meeting mindsets shape and are shaped by leader–follower interactions in meetings. *Organizational Psychology Review*, 12(2), 107-134. <https://doi.org/10.1177/20413866211061362>
- Gerstner, C. R., & Day, D. V. (1997). Meta-analytic review of leader-member exchange theory: Correlates and construct issues. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 82(6), 827–844. <https://doi.org/10.1037//0021-9010.82.6.827>
- Gilson, L. L., Costa, P., O’Neill, T. A., & Maynard, M. T. (2021). Putting the “TEAM” back into virtual teams. *Organizational Dynamics*, 50(1), 100847. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.ORGDYN.2021.100847>
- Glasø, L., Einarsen, S. (2006) *Experienced affects in leader–subordinate relationships*, *Scandinavian Journal of Management*, 22(1), 49-73, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.scaman.2005.09.003>.
- Golden, T. D. (2021). *Telework and the Navigation of Work-Home Boundaries*. *Organizational Dynamics*, 50(1), 100822. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.ORGDYN.2020.100822>

Golden, T. D., Veiga, J. F., & Dino, R. N. (2008). The impact of professional isolation on teleworker job performance and turnover intentions: does time spent teleworking, interacting face-to-face, or having access to communication-enhancing technology matter?. *Journal of applied psychology*, 93(6), 1412

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. [https://doi.org/10.1016/1048-9843\(95\)90036-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/1048-9843(95)90036-5)

Griffith, T.L., Neale, M.A., (2001) Information processing in traditional, hybrid, and virtual teams: From nascent knowledge to transactive memory. *Research in Organizational Behavior*, 23, 2001, pp 379-421. DOI: 10.1016/S0191-3085(01)23009-3

Haan, E. & Nilsson, V. (2017). Evaluating coaching behavior in managers, consultants, and coaches: A model, questionnaire, and initial findings. *Consulting Psychology Journal: Practice and Research*. 69. 315-333. 10.1037/cpb0000099.

Hahn, M., & Semrau, T. (2022). Virtual interaction and failure learning – The crucial role of team LMX composition. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 34(15), 2991–3022. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2022.2151846>

Hambley, L. A., O'Neill, T. A., Kline, T. J. B. (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. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.OBHDP.2006.09.004>

Hanzis, A., & Hallo, L. (2024). The experiences and views of employees on hybrid ways of working. *Administrative Sciences*, 14(10), 263. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci14100263>

Harney, B., Collings D.G. (2021). Navigating the shifting landscapes of HRM, *Human Resource Management Review*, 31. 4. DOI: 10.1016/j.hrmr.2021.100824

Hill, N.S., Kang, J.H., Seo, M.-Gu. (2014). *The interactive effect of leader–member exchange and electronic communication on employee psychological empowerment and work outcomes*, *The Leadership Quarterly*, 25(4), 772-783, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2014.04.006>.

Hoch, J. E., Kozlowski, S. W. (2014). Leading virtual teams: Hierarchical leadership, structural supports, and shared team leadership. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 99(3), 390.

Hoch, J. E., Kozlowski, S. W., & Dulebohn, J. (2023). Managing distributed work: An integrative framework. *Academy of Management Proceedings* (Vol. 2023, No. 1, p. 18945). Briarcliff Manor, NY 10510: Academy of Management.
<https://doi.org/10.5465/amproc.2023.18945abstract>

Howe, D. C., Buckley, M. R., Chauhan, R. S., Soderberg, A. T., (2021). *Paradigm shifts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic*. *Organizational Dynamics*, 50(4), 100804. DOI: 10.1016/j.orgdyn.2020.100804

Hume, D. (1999). *An Enquiry Concerning Human Understanding*. Oxford University Press.

Hunt, J., & Weintraub, J. (2007). The Coaching Organization: A Strategy for Developing Leaders. <https://doi.org/10.4135/9781483329062>

Jansson, L.J., & Kangas, H. (2025), The art of staying in touch – exploring daily feedback interactions between a leader and a subordinate in remote work, *Personnel Review*, Vol. 54 No. 2, pp. 660-679. <https://doi.org/10.1108/PR-04-2023-0301>

Jarvenpaa, S. L., Tanriverdi, H. (2003). *Leading Virtual Knowledge Networks*. *Organizational Dynamics*, 31(4), 403–412. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S0090-2616\(02\)00127-4](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0090-2616(02)00127-4)

Jesson, J., Lacey, F. (2006). *How to do (or not to do) a critical literature review*. *Pharmacy Education*, 6(2), 139–148. <https://doi.org/10.1080/15602210600616218>

Jia, J., Wu, L., Xie, Y., He, X., Ren, Y., & Xu, S. (2024). A meta-analysis of the antecedents of flexible work arrangements utilization: based on Job demands-resources model. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 35(14), 2392–2431. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2024.2326843>

Joullié, J. E., Gould, A. M., Luc, S., Spillane, R. (2021). *The language of power and authority in leadership*. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 32(4), 101491. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.LEAQUA.2020.101491>

Kahai, S. S., Huang, R., & Jestice, R. (2012). Interaction effects of leadership and communication media on feedback positivity in virtual teams. *Group & Organization Management*, 37(6), 716–751. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1059601112462061>

Kets De Vries, M. F. R., Vriegnaud, P., Agrawal, A., & Florent-Treacy, E. (2010). Development and application of the Leadership Archetype Questionnaire. *The International Journal of Human Resource Management*, 21(15), 2848–2863. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09585192.2010.528668>

Khaliq, A. A., Nisar, F., & Khalid, M. (2024). Virtual leadership and team cohesion: Communication quality as a mediator and team diversity as a moderator. *Pakistan Languages and Humanities Review*, 8(2), 618-628. <https://doi.org/10.47205/plhr>

Khan, T., & Iqbal, M. Z. (2022). Leader–member exchange congruence and feedback seeking behavior: a role theory perspective. *International Journal of Organization Theory & Behaviour*, 25(34), 186–203. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJOTB-07-2021-0127>

Kim, H., Leach, R. (2020). *The role of digitally-enabled employee voice in fostering positive change and affective commitment in centralized organizations*. *Communication Monographs*, 87(4), 425–444. <https://doi.org/10.1080/03637751.2020.1745859>

Kniffin, K. M., Narayanan, J., Anseel, F., Antonakis, J., Ashford, S. P., Bakker, A. B., Bamberger, P., Bapuji, H., Bhawe, D. P., Choi, V. K., Creary, S. J., Demerouti, E., Flynn, F. J., Gelfand, M. J., Greer, L. L., Johns, G., Kesebir, S., Klein, P. G., Lee, S. Y., ...Vugt, M. van. (2021). *Covid-19 and the workplace: Implications, issues, and insights for future research and action*. *American Psychologist*, 76(1), 63–77. DOI: 10.1037/amp0000716

Konovalova, V.G., Petrenko, B.V., Aghgashyan, R.V. (2022). Choosing a Hybrid Work Model and New Challenges. In: Ashmarina, S.I., Mantulenko, V.V., Vochozka, M. (eds) *Proceedings of the International Scientific Conference “Smart Nations: Global Trends In The Digital Economy”*. *Lecture Notes in Networks and Systems*, 397. Springer, Cham. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-94873-3_69

Krajčák, M., Schmidt, D. A., & Baráth, M. (2023). Hybrid work model: An approach to work–life flexibility in a changing environment. *Administrative Sciences*, 13(6), 150. <https://doi.org/10.3390/admsci13060150>

Kuhn, T. (2021). The Structure of Scientific Revolutions. In M. RUSE (Ed.), *Philosophy after Darwin: Classic and Contemporary Readings* (pp. 176-177). Princeton: Princeton University Press. <https://doi.org/10.1515/9781400831296-024>

Kulshreshtha, K., Sharma, G. (2021). *Understanding e-leadership: Please mind the gap*. *Technological Forecasting and Social Change*, 168, 120750. DOI: 10.1016/j.techfore.2021.120750.

Kurucz, A. (2018). Az Ipar 4.0 hatása a vezetői viselkedésre – Impact of Industry 4.0 on managerial behaviour. In: *Dinya, L., Baranyi, A. (edit.) XVI. Nemzetközi Tudományos Napok : „Fenntarthatósági kihívások és válaszok”*, Gyöngyös, EKE Líceum Kiadó, pp. 1095-1101.

Kurucz, A., & Potháczky-Rácz, I. (2018). The Role of Group Work and Group Learning in Corporate Culture in Hungarian SMEs. In: *T., Loster, J., Langhamrová, J., Vrabcová, Conference Proceedings, RELIK*, 184-194.

Kwok, N., Shen, W., Brown, D. J. (2020). I can, I am: Differential predictors of leader efficacy and identity trajectories in leader development. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 101422. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2020.101422>

Larson, L., DeChurch, L. A. (2020). *Leading teams in the digital age: Four perspectives on technology and what they mean for leading teams*. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 31(1), 101377. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.LEAQUA.2019.101377>

Lee, E., Mitson, R., & Xu, H. (2024), The influence of leaders' motivational language on employee well-being through relatedness in remote work environments, *Journal of Communication Management*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCOM-02-2024-0038>

Lee, W.T., Hom, P., Eberley, M., Li, J. (2018), “*Managing employee retention and turnover with 21st century ideas*”, *Organizational Dynamics*, 47, pp. 88-98. DOI: 10.1016/j.orgdyn.2017.08.004

Leonardelli, G.J. (2022). *Lessons from a Crisis*, *Organizational Dynamics*, 52. 4. DOI: 10.1016/j.orgdyn.2021.100886

Lerner, S. M. (2008). *Leadership best practices that enhance the perceived effectiveness of global distributed hybrid teams* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Phoenix). <https://www.proquest.com/openview/af8342ac67e9a76d0cf5b4b396fc6d34/1?pq-origsite=gscholar&cbl=18750>

Liu, X., & Batt, R. (2010). How supervisors influence performance: A multilevel study of coaching and group management in technology-mediated services. *Personnel psychology*, 63(2), 265-298.

London, M., & Zobrist, C. (2024), Leadership communication behaviors and attachment styles: theory for educating leaders to meet communication challenges, *Journal of Leadership Education*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JOLE-01-2024-0028>

London, M., Volmer, J., & Zyberaj, J. (2023), Beyond LMX: toward a theory-based, differentiated view of leader–member relationships, *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, Vol. 38 No. 4, pp. 273-288. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMP-10-2022-0513>

Lungeanu, A., DeChurch, L. A., Contractor, N. S. (2022). *Leading teams over time through space: Computational experiments on leadership network archetypes*. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 101595. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.LEAQUA.2021.101595>

Mageau, G. A., Vallerand, R. J. (2003). The coach–athlete relationship: A motivational model. *Journal of sports science*, 21(11), 883-904.

Maynard, M. T., Gilson, L. L. (2021). *Getting to know you: The importance of familiarity in virtual teams*. *Organizational Dynamics*, 50(1), 100844. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.ORGDYN.2021.100844>

Mckinsey&Company: Empty spaces and hybrid places: The pandemic’s lasting impact on real estate (2023). <https://www.mckinsey.com/mgi/our-research/empty-spaces-and-hybrid-places-chapter-2>

Mendels, D. (2007). *On memory. An interdisciplinary approach*. Peter Lang.

Milner, J., Milner, T., McCarthy, G., & da Motta Veiga, S. (2023). Leaders as Coaches: Towards a Code of Ethics. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 59(3), 448-472. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00218863211069408>

Minbaeva, D. (2021), Disrupted HR?, *Human Resource Management Review*, 31. 4. DOI: 10.1016/j.hrmr.2020.100820

Mintzberg, H. (1973). *The Nature of Managerial Work*. New York: Harper and Row Publishers, Inc.

Mitchell, A., Brewer, P.E. (2021). *Leading hybrid teams: Strategies for realizing the best of both worlds*. *Organizational Dynamics*, 100866. DOI: 10.1016/j.orgdyn.2021.100866.

Mitson, R., Qin, S., & Men, R. L. (2024). The value of employee trust during turbulent times: Exploring vigilant leadership communication and employee psychological well-being. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 18(3), 228–248. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2024.2331300>

Mysirlaki, S. and Paraskeva, F. (2020), "Emotional intelligence and transformational leadership in virtual teams: lessons from MMOGs", *Leadership & Organization Development Journal*, Vol. 41 No. 4, pp. 551-566. <https://doi.org/10.1108/LODJ-01-2019-0035>

Newman S.A., Ford R.C. (2021). *Five Steps to Leading Your Team in the Virtual COVID-19 Workplace*, *Organizational Dynamics*, 50. 1-11. DOI: 10.1016/j.orgdyn.2020.100802no

O’Connor, P. J., Jimmieson, N. L., Bergin, A. J., Wiewiora, A., & McColl, L. (2022). Leader Tolerance of Ambiguity: Implications for Follower Performance Outcomes in High and Low Ambiguous Work Situations. *The Journal of Applied Behavioral Science*, 58(1), 65-96. <https://doi.org/10.1177/00218863211053676>

- OECD. (2020). *Beyond growth: Towards a new economic approach*.
<https://www.oecd.org/governance/beyond-growth-33a25ba3-en.htm>
- Olariu, C., Aldea, C. C. (2014). *Managing Processes for Virtual Teams – A BPM Approach*.
Procedia - Social and Behavioral Sciences, 109, 380–384.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/J.SBSPRO.2013.12.476>
- Popli, S., & Rizvi, I. A. (2016). Drivers of Employee Engagement: The Role of Leadership Style. *Global Business Review*, 17(4), 965-979.
<https://doi.org/10.1177/0972150916645701>
- Prodanova, J., Kocarev, L. (2021). *Is job performance conditioned by work-from-home demands and resources?* *Technology in Society*, 66, 101672.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/J.TECHSOC.2021.101672>
- Purvanova, R. K., Bono, J. E. (2009). *Transformational leadership in context: Face-to-face and virtual teams*. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 20(3), 343–357.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/J.LEAQUA.2009.03.004>
- Qin, Y.S. (2024), How internal listening inspires remote employee engagement: examining the mediating effects of perceived organizational support and affective organizational commitment, *Journal of Communication Management*, Vol. 28 No. 4, pp. 553-572. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JCOM-11-2023-0117>
- Reyes, D. L., Luna, M., Salas, E. (2021). *Challenges for team leaders transitioning from face-to-face to virtual teams*. *Organizational Dynamics*, 50(2), 100785.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/J.ORGDYN.2020.100785>
- Rudolph, C. W., Katz, I. M., Ruppel, R., Zacher, H. (2021). A systematic and critical review of research on respect in leadership. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 32(1), 101492.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/J.LEAQUA.2020.101492>
- Ruggieri, S. (2009). Leadership in virtual teams: A comparison of transformational and transactional leaders. *Social Behavior & Personality: An International Journal*, 37(8).
- Ryan, G., Emmerling, R.J., Fergusson, L., & Baker, S. (2024), Competencies displayed by multinational corporation senior managers in critical business situations, *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 43 No. 5, pp. 740-754. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-10-2023-0306>
- Salin, L., & Koponen, J. (2024), Top managers' media selection and interaction goals in e-leadership, *Information Technology & People*, Vol. 37 No. 8, pp. 130-153. <https://doi.org/10.1108/ITP-06-2023-0533>

- Sandberg, S., Scovell, N. (2013), *Lean In: Women, Work, and the Will to Lead*. Knopf.
- Schmidt, D.H., van Dierendonck, D., & Weber, U. (2023), The data-driven leader: developing a big data analytics leadership competency framework, *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 42 No. 4, pp. 297-326. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-12-2022-0306>
- Serviss, E. R., Manix, K. G., Oglesby, M. T., Howard, M. C., & Gleim, M. R. (2024). Ethical leadership in a remote working context: implications for salesperson well-being and performance. *Journal of Personal Selling & Sales Management*, 1–14. <https://doi.org/10.1080/08853134.2024.2415081>
- Shah, S. R., Ahmed, F., Khan, R. (2018). *Writing a Critical Review of Literature: A Practical Guide for English Graduate Students*. *Global Language Review*, III(I), 136–153. [https://doi.org/10.31703/glr.2018\(III-I\).09](https://doi.org/10.31703/glr.2018(III-I).09)
- Sharma, P. N., Silvas, J. M., Guadagnoli, M. (2022). Attention leaders: Are you losing the battle with stress? Arm yourself with proactive coping. *Organizational Dynamics*, 51(2), 100845. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.ORGADYN.2021.100845>
- Shockley, K.M., Allen, T.D. (2007) *When flexibility helps: Another look at the availability of flexible work arrangements and work–family conflict*. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 71, 479–493
- Sinclair, M.A., Stephens, K., Whiteman, K., Swanson-Biearman, B., Clark, J. (2021). Managing and Motivating the Remote Employee Using the Transformational Leadership Model, *Nurse Leader*, 19. 3., pp 294-299, DOI: 10.1016/j.mnl.2021.01.001
- Snellman C. L. (2014), *Virtual Teams: Opportunities and Challenges for e-Leaders*, *Procedia – Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 110, pp1251-1261 DOI: 10.1016/j.sbspro.2013.12.972
- Song, J. (2004). Yet another paradigm shift? From Minds-on to Hearts-on. In *Teaching and Learning of Physics in Cultural Contexts*. https://doi.org/10.1142/9789812702890_0004
- Späth K., Storck S., Nass Bauer C., Elberzhager F. (2021). *Fulfilling Remote Collaboration Needs for New Work*, *Procedia from the The 18th International Conference on Mobile Systems and Pervasive Computing (MobiSPC)*, August 9-12, 2021, Leuven, Belgium, DOI: 10.1016/j.procs.2021.07.021
- Steelman, L. A., Levy, P. E., & Snell, A. F. (2004). The feedback environment scale: Construct definition, measurement, and validation. *Educational and psychological measurement*, 64(1), 165-184.

Sturm, R.E., Herz, H., Antonakis, J. (2021) The science of leader power. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 32, 101550, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.leaqua.2021.101550>

Sveiby, K.E. (1997). *The New Organizational Wealth: Managing and Measuring Knowledge Based Assets*. Berett-Koehler Publisher, San Francisco.

Toniolo-Barrios, M., Pitt, L. (2021). *Mindfulness and the challenges of working from home in times of crisis*. *Business Horizons*, 64(2), 189–197. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.BUSHOR.2020.09.004>

Tuckman, B. W. (1965). Developmental sequence in small groups. *Psychological Bulletin*. 63(6), 384–399. doi:10.1037/h0022100. PMID 14314073.

Tzabbar, D., Baburaj, Y. (2019). *Optimizing the effectiveness of geographically dispersed Research & Development teams*. *Organizational Dynamics*, 48(4), 100684. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.ORGDYN.2018.09.006>

Uhl-Bien, M., Carsten, M., Huang, L., & Maslyn, J. (2022). What do managers value in the leader-member exchange (LMX) relationship? Identification and measurement of the manager’s perspective of LMX (MLMX). *Journal of Business Research*, 148, 225–240. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.JBUSRES.2022.04.041>

Verhoeven, W.M. J., & Madsen, T.V. (2022). Active employee communication roles in organizations: A framework for understanding and discussing communication role expectations. *International Journal of Strategic Communication*, 16(1), 91–110. <https://doi.org/10.1080/1553118X.2021.2014503>

Verma, A., Jaiswal, A., Pereira, V., & Kumar, Y. L. N. (2022). Leader-member exchange in the age of remote work. *Human Resource Development International*, 25(2), 219–230. <https://doi.org/10.1080/13678868.2022.2047873>

Vintilă, F., Biea, E.A., Neamțu, F., & Dominici, G. (2024), Looking into the new normal after COVID-19 pandemic: leadership styles and job-related affective well-being, *Kybernetes*, Vol. ahead-of-print No. ahead-of-print. <https://doi.org/10.1108/K-10-2024-2909>

Vitanova, I. (2021). *Nurturing overconfidence: The relationship between leader power, overconfidence and firm performance*. *The Leadership Quarterly*, 32(4), 101342. <https://doi.org/10.1016/J.LEAQUA.2019.101342>

Walsh, M.M., Carleton, E.L., Ziemer, J., & Ortynsky, M. (2024), The salience of remote leadership: implications for follower self-control and work-life balance, *International*

Journal of Manpower, Vol. 45 No. 2, pp. 237-254. <https://doi.org/10.1108/IJM-12-2022-0652>

Wang, G., Oh, I. S., Courtright, S. H., & Colbert, A. E. (2011). Transformational leadership and performance across criteria and levels: A meta-analytic review of 25 years of research. *Group & organization management*, 36(2), 223-270.

Wayne, S. J., Shore, L. M., & Liden, R. C. (1997). Perceived organizational support and leader-member exchange: A social exchange perspective. *Academy of Management journal*, 40(1), 82-111.

World Bank, World Development Indicators database. Estimates are based on data obtained from International Labour Organization and United Nations Population Division. <https://data.worldbank.org/indicator/SL.TLF.TOTL.IN?end=2023&start=2019>

Wroblewski D, Scholl A, Ditrich L, Pummerer L, & Sassenberg K. (2022), Let's stay in touch: Frequency (but not mode) of interaction between leaders and followers predicts better leadership outcomes. *PLoS One*. 2022 Dec 22;17(12):e0279176. doi: 10.1371/journal.pone.0279176. PMID: 36548270; PMCID: PMC9778566

Zaccaro, S. J., Rittman, A. L., Marks, M. A. (2001). *Team leadership*. The Leadership Quarterly, 12(4), 451–483. [https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843\(01\)00093-5](https://doi.org/10.1016/S1048-9843(01)00093-5)

Zulfadil, Hendriani, S., & Machasin (2020), The influence of emotional intelligence on team performance through knowledge sharing, team conflict, and the structure mechanism, *Journal of Management Development*, Vol. 39 No. 3, pp. 269-292. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMD-12-2018-0354>